

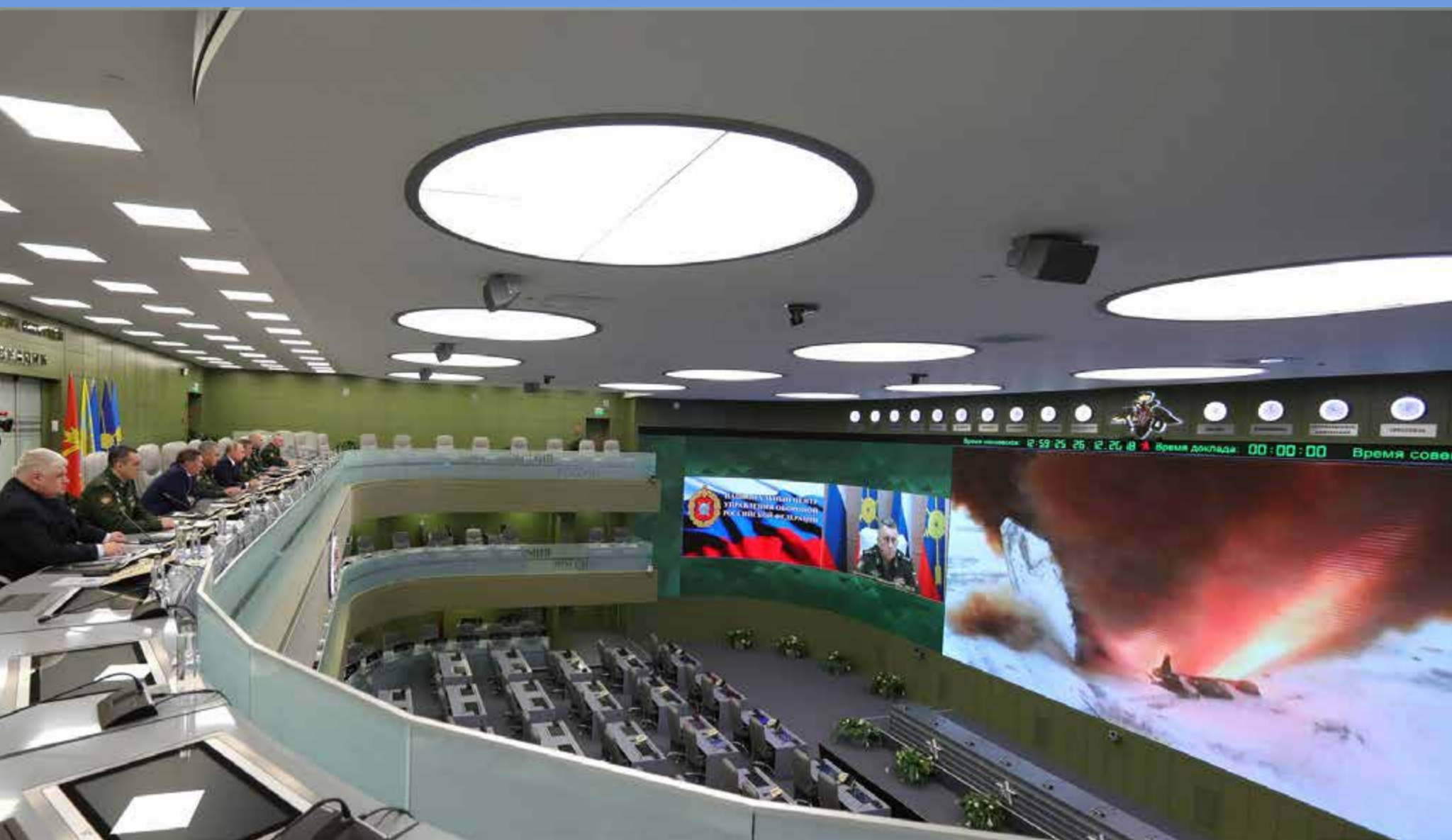
Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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ON THE COVER:

"At the National Centre for State Defence Control. Watching the launch of the Avangard missile complex carrying a hypersonic glide vehicle."

Source: Russian Presidency, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59519/photos/57277>, CC 4.0.

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Russia's "Avangard" Hypersonic Glide Vehicle Enters Serial Production

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation has been pursuing the creation of a Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV) to circumvent ballistic missile defense systems for decades. An HGV is a reentry vehicle that separates from an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), delivering a (likely nuclear) warhead. An HGV will be able to travel at a very high speed, possibly over Mach 20, and will be capable of maneuvering. The combination of extreme speed and maneuverability would make targeting an HGV by a ballistic missile defense system incredibly difficult, as mentioned by the accompanying excerpted article from *Zvezda TV*. The accompanying excerpted article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses how the "Avangard" HGV is now entering serial production. If this reporting is accurate, Russia has solved the numerous technical problems of delivering a nuclear warhead accurately at extreme speeds (and associated heat), and now has at least a prototype of an operationally capable system. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* explains that Russia will start to train specialists to operate this HGV and associated ICBM, the Sarmat. Interestingly, computer programming is a key part of the training, apparently the HGV's flight parameters can be adjusted by military personnel prior to launch. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

"Starting this training year, the Defense Ministry has begun training specialists who will engage in servicing Sarmat and Avangard strategic missile complexes."

Source: Konstantin Sivkov, "Названо главное преимущество комплекса «Авангард» (The Main Advantage of the 'Avangard' System)," *Zvezda TV*, 12 December 2018. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/opk/content/201812121317-49ln.htm>

Systems such as the Russian Avangard hypersonic missile complex do not exist in any other country in the world. This was stated by Konstantin Sivkov, Deputy President for Information Policy of the Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Sciences.

"The main advantage is that the missile follows a grazing trajectory and it maneuvers in the process of flight. Because of this ballistic missile defense systems will, in fact, be unable to strike it. At present there are no similar systems in the world. American ballistic missiles follow a conventional ballistic trajectory," Sivkov explained in the "Special Report" program *Zvezda*...

Source: Oleg Koryakin, "Россия приступила к серийному производству гиперзвукового «Авангарда» (Russia Begins Series Production of Hypersonic 'Avangard')," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 5 December 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/12/05/rossiia-pristupila-k-serijnomu-vypusku-giperzvukovogo-avangarda.html>

A domestic hypersonic super weapon that is able to overcome any modern ballistic missile defense system has entered series production. The beginning of series production of the Avangard was reported by Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, at a briefing for foreign military attaches.

We recall that it was previously reported in the mass media that missiles equipped with a hypersonic vehicle will assume combat alert in the RVSN [Strategic Missile Troops] in 2019. Initially there will be two complexes as part of a regiment. Later their number will increase to six.

"A domestic hypersonic super weapon [The 'Avangard' Hypersonic Glide Vehicle] that is able to overcome any modern ballistic missile defense system has entered series production."

Source: Roman Kretsul and Aleksey Ramm, "Ракетный кадр: офицеров обучат работе с гиперзвуковым оружием за 5 лет (The Missile Cadre: Officers Will Be Trained to Work with Hypersonic Weapons over Five Years)," *Izvestiya*, 1 November 2018. <https://iz.ru/788805/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/raketnyi-kadr-ofitcerov-obuchat-rabote-s-giperzvukovym-oruzhiem-za-5-let>

Starting this training year, the Defense Ministry has begun training specialists who will engage in servicing Sarmat and Avangard strategic missile complexes. A corresponding program has been introduced at the Strategic Missile Troops Academy...due to the strategic complexes' special characteristics, it is necessary to train cadres from scratch, not to retrain Strategic Missile Troops officers. The academy will produce specialists in servicing the systems, combat crews, and also groups for controlling missiles in flight.

Due to the systems' complexity, a new training program has had to be created. It includes subjects connected with digital technologies and with servicing complex digital systems and products made from composite materials.

It is necessary for future operators of the Sarmat and Avangard complexes to first master the most up-to-date programming technologies, without which it is impossible to set the flight parameters of such missiles, Colonel General Viktor Yesin, the Strategic Missile Troops Main Staff former chief, noted.

"No such system exists anywhere in the world. This is the first complex where the function, let's say, of a UAV is performed by a product that is capable of active maneuvering in respect of both altitude and direction," Viktor Yesin explained to *Izvestiya*. "It was, of course, necessary to develop new programs and to train new specialists. This complex differs so greatly from the present ones that it is easier to train personnel right out of school than to retrain people."

In recent years, due to IT developments, various design systems have also been undergoing changes. And an engineer who services complex automated systems must already not simply know the "hardware" but, first of all, be able to create the software innards, Andrey Proletarskiy, the dean of the Bauman Moscow State Technical University's Information Processing and Management Systems Faculty, explained to *Izvestiya*.



Russia's "Peresvet": Strategic Defense Initiative Redux?

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several years, whenever Russia introduced a new weapon system, it was often accompanied by extensive domestic media coverage to both highlight its capabilities and show off the growing prowess of the country's military-industrial complex. President Putin added his martial flair back in March, when, during a speech to the Federation Council (and shortly before the presidential election) he presented graphic images of five new weapon systems designed to guarantee Russia's defense. One of those new weapons was described as a mobile laser system, designed to shoot down aircraft, and possibly disable guided missiles. In a subsequent contest, the system was designated as "Peresvet" (Пересвет), named after a 14th Century Russian monk who helped to defeat the Mongols. The accompanying excerpt from the centrist news site, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, reacts somewhat doubtfully to the recent Ministry of Defense (MoD) announcement that this system has "already been fielded."

The excerpt asserts that according to the MoD, "training on these weapons began in 2017," while other reports claim that "several of the 'Peresvet' complexes had already been fielded and have begun operation." The author points out that "almost nothing is known about the complex itself, as its tactical and technical characteristics are strictly classified." Because of its "very powerful power plant" the system is currently "transported on at least two wheeled platforms." The exact characteristics of this weapon system have been "interpreted differently by various sources," but according to the article, the system is capable of "searching for, detecting and capturing air targets for tracking and then destroying them with a laser beam." The system allegedly "works under new physical principles," and targets include, "airplanes, rockets and even satellites."

The article ends on a skeptical note, pointing out that "some experts doubt Peresvet's ability to shoot down large air targets," suggesting that the system is likely able to only disrupt the optics and avionics of aircraft, satellites and missiles, "and destroying small drones." Healthy skepticism may be called for. There remains a popular belief among those Russians who regret the loss of their Soviet superpower status, and who claim that the USSR's demise was partially caused by over-reacting (and over-spending) to US plans to deploy an advanced missile defense system (Strategic Defense Initiative or SDI) which would supposedly employ lasers, particle beam weapons and space-based missiles. Peresvet may fall into the same weapon category. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"On 5 December, the Russian Defense ministry released information about the deployment of the Peresvet laser complexes for experimental combat duty."



Peresvet combat laser complex in a firing position.

Source: Mil.ru (CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), <https://goo.gl/mo2Mzv>).

Source: Iskander Batyrov, "Добьет ли 'Пересвет' до цели (Will Peresvet reach its target)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 December 2018. http://www.ng.ru/armies/2018-12-05/2_7456_target.html

On 5 December, the Russian Defense ministry released information about the deployment of the Peresvet laser complexes for experimental combat duty. It was also reported that training on these weapons began in 2017. Preparation for training of the complexes was carried out at the Military Space Academy named after Mozhaisky and at the sites of the enterprise, which was engaged in the development and production of Peresvet.

Almost nothing is known about the complex itself, as its tactical and technical characteristics are strictly classified. From the words of officials, it can be concluded that currently Peresvet is transported on at least two wheeled platforms." The designers were forced to take this measure, because the laser requires a very powerful power plant and its compact version is not yet available.... The combat characteristics of Peresvet are interpreted differently by various sources, but in general, this involves searching for, detecting and capturing air targets for tracking, and then destroying them with a laser beam. The complex is capable of striking optics, structural elements and aircraft weapons. Attack targets can be airplanes, rockets and even satellites. It is noted that "Peresvet" works under new physical principles....

The complex was first announced during the Address to the Federal Assembly on 1 March by Vladimir Putin. Somewhat later, it became known that Russian air defense forces began to master these combat lasers as early as 2017. In particular, in May 2018, the media reported that several of the Peresvet complexes had already been fielded and have begun operation. From which it was possible to conclude that these new air defense weapons were already on duty. For the sake of fairness, it is worth noting that the press organ of the Ministry of Defense, the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda, in its publication of 20 July 2018, nevertheless explained that the Peresvet laser systems used by the Air and Space Forces of Russia are used in training mode. Servicemen are training on the new military equipment at their deployment sites. But all the necessary infrastructure for combat duty has been prepared.

Some experts doubt Peresvet's ability to shoot down large air targets. In their opinion, the complex is so far able only to detect targets and track with laser illumination, disabling avionics satellite and rocket optics and destroying small drones.



Russia's "Penitsillin" Artillery Reconnaissance System

OE Watch Commentary: Since the 1960s, Russia has pursued technologies to determine the location of active enemy artillery. Such artillery reconnaissance is necessary for counterbattery engagement, or in other words, the suppression of enemy guns (by fire). Typically, most of these systems are radar-based and mounted upon wheeled or tracked chassis, functioning by tracking the trajectory of projectiles. In recent years, due to high speed computing, it became possible to determine the trajectories of multiple projectiles, to include their point of impact. Today, the most popular counterbattery radars are the American AN/TPQ-36, AN/TPQ-48, and the Russian Zoopark-1M. These systems are equipped with high-speed computer processors and phased array radars capable of determining the originating point of large enemy artillery at distances of approximately 20 km. Although these systems are quite effective, they do present a significant problem. In order to function these systems emanate a large amount of electromagnetic energy, which makes counterbattery radars easy to find and target on modern battlefields, by either antiradar missiles or artillery systems.

In order to increase the resiliency of artillery reconnaissance capability, the Russians (then Soviets) chose to diversify their technology, to not only include electromagnetic-based systems, but also acoustic (non-electromagnetic-based) systems. In 1987, they fielded the AZK-7 automatic sound-ranging system, which was later upgraded to AZK-7M. The AZK-7M functions by placing three sound monitors certain distances from one another and then triangulating the location of a given (artillery) sound. Although acoustic systems have a shorter effective range, and are much more susceptible to environmental conditions, they are able to passively collect targeting data, a feature that significantly enhances their survivability on the modern battlefield.

The accompanying excerpted articles discuss Russia's most recent attempt to diversify artillery reconnaissance capabilities, the "Penitsillin" automated sonic-thermal artillery reconnaissance system. The Penitsillin is mounted on a Kamaz-6350 chassis, with a detection radius of up to 25 km. It consists of the 1B75 electro-optical module, which works in the infrared and visible spectrum using imaging cameras placed on a telescopic boom, and several ground-installed 1B76 sound and seismic receivers; the system receives and processes thermal, acoustic and seismic signals from enemy fire, calculating their location and transmitting the data to friendly artillery in reportedly less than five seconds.

Although the Russian Armed Forces are keen on the use of UAVs and SIGINT as means of determining locations for artillery targeting, systems such as the Penitsillin make it clear that these are not the only means they are pursuing. The diversification of artillery reconnaissance capabilities is a key feature of Russian military modernization, and one that significantly enhances the Reconnaissance-Fire System (ROS) [разведывательная-огневая система (РОС)]. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“But it (the Penitsillin) has another advantage that bears on operational reliability...it is not susceptible electronic countermeasures.”

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Continued: Russia's "Penitsillin" Artillery Reconnaissance System

Source: Rafael Fakhrutdinov: "Революция в вооружении: в США испугались «Пенициллина» (An Arms Revolution: The United States is in Awe of 'Penitsillin')," *Gazeta.Ru*, 2 December 2018. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2018/12/02/12079747.shtml>

...The new Russian 1B75 Penitsillin sonothermal artillery reconnaissance complex could be a breakthrough "method for eliminating American heavy artillery" and, thereby, bring about an arms revolution, just as its namesake revolutionized the whole of medicine...

Experts point out that the system can find targets in just five seconds within a radius of up to 25 kilometers, and also determine in advance the places where enemy projectiles will fall. The Rostec Russian state corporation notes that the system's detectors are so precise that they can even detect a door slamming. Moreover, the Penitsillin is fully automated.

According to available data, the advantages include low probability of its detection by enemy artillery. This is due to the fact that the Penitsillin does not use electromagnetic waves, which are integral to radar. The system was first presented last year; it is now completing test trials and its serial production is expected in 2019...

Source: Vladimir Tuchkov, "Укол «Пенициллина» заставит пушки НАТО замолчать навсегда (A Shot of Penitsillin Will Silence NATO Guns Forever)," *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 5 December 2018. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/218137>

...In technical terms, the task turned out to be so difficult that the Penitsillin research and development which began in 2006 is coming to an end only now. Serial production of the systems can start at one of the plants of the Roselektronika holding company in 2019 or a year later. The system is ready for this because it has successfully passed tests...

The system includes a push-up telescopic mast with six television cameras and six thermal imaging receivers, four seismic sensors, and a control system with a high-performance computer. In the working position the mast is raised to the required height, which allows a survey of the terrain, while the seismic sensors are fixed in the ground and connected by cable to the processing and control system.

The visual part of the system records flashes from artillery guns and shell bursts. The seismic sensors convert ground tremors into an electrical signal. In the case of massed fire by the enemy, a superimposition of waves on each other is obtained. Very large computational processing power is required to decipher this picture of superimpositions, which at the same time also takes into account the picture of multiple shots and shell bursts obtained from observation cameras. In the event of massed fire the Penitsillin is able to get a bearing on 90 percent of enemy firing points. It takes no more than five seconds to get a fix on each firing point after its "illumination." This is a very important parameter because it makes it possible to hit a self-propelled artillery gun with return fire before it changes position after a shot. At the same time, the system operates in fully automatic mode, disseminating an electronic map of the fire situation to its batteries. This eliminates operator errors that are unavoidable in a high-intensity combat environment.

The Penitsillin monitors a much greater width of the frontline sector than systems using radar. It reaches 25 kilometers. In depth, a mortar can be recorded at a distance of 10 kilometers and a howitzer at about 20 kilometers. Meanwhile, the maximum azimuth error does not exceed 1.5 minutes of angle.

The developers claim that the equipment can record even a door slam. The high accuracy of direction-finding and sensitivity, the large monitoring area, and the ability to work at any time of the day or night all make it possible to assert that the Penitsillin significantly surpasses the combat capabilities of systems based on the use of radar. The Penitsillin can also be used to adjust the actions of its friendly artillery by transmitting data to batteries with the point-of-impact coordinates of projectiles.

We have already said that the system cannot be detected using radio-technical reconnaissance. But it has another advantage that bears on operational reliability...it is not susceptible electronic countermeasures. By the way, sometimes it is possible to encounter the opinion that in the era of drones the use of systems such as the Penitsillin or Zoopark is over. To which it can be replied that drones, under certain conditions, may be suppressed by enemy EW assets.

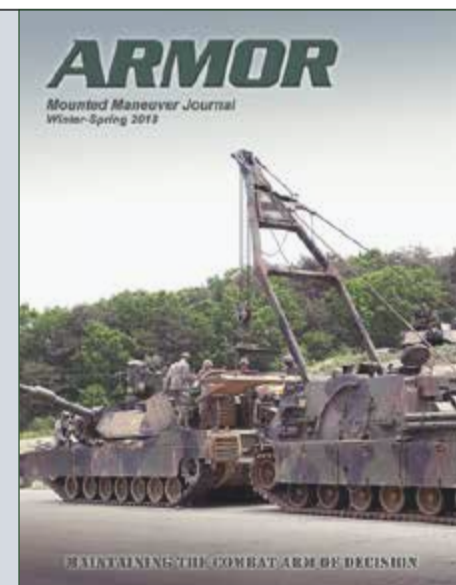
Reconnaissance-in-Force Russian Style

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>





Russian Artillery Chief Describes the Reconnaissance-Fire System

OE Watch Commentary: The Reconnaissance-Fire System (ROS) [разведывательная-огневая система (РОС)] is a concept that Russia is pursuing to fuse intelligence to weapons systems in order to quickly and accurately deliver ground, air, and sea fires for tactical systems (tube and missile artillery) and operational systems (short-range ballistic missiles and ground-launched ballistic missiles). This centralized system permits tasking fires at all levels of combat, from front line artillery to deep strike aviation, through rear area missile strikes, at both the tactical and operational depths. The accompanying excerpted interview with Lieutenant General Mikhail Matveyevskiy, chief of Russia's Artillery Troops, in *Krasnaya Zvezda* describes the implementation of the Reconnaissance-Fire System, aspects of artillery reconnaissance, and the role of precision-guided munitions in the Russian Armed Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“With respect to mortar subunits, they are the foundation of motorized rifle battalion firepower.”

Source: Viktor Khudoleyev, “Огонь и молнии бога войны 19 ноября – День ракетных войск и артиллерии (19 November Is Missile Troops and Artillery Day),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 November 2018. <http://redstar.ru/ogon-i-molnii-boga-vojny>

Lieutenant General Mikhail Matveyevskiy, chief of Russian Federation Armed Forces Missile Troops and Artillery, answers Krasnaya Zvezda's questions...

Mikhail Mikhaylovich, you have said more than once that the ultimate objective of RF Armed Forces Missile Troops and Artillery organizational development is their transition to a qualitatively new status -- a reconnaissance-fire system united by a single automated command and control system. Please tell us in greater detail what it is supposed to represent, particularly about roles set aside for reconnaissance-fire complexes. What already has been done in the Missile Troops and Artillery within the scope of creating?

Yes, indeed, work continues on the Missile Troops and Artillery transition to a qualitatively new status -- a reconnaissance-fire system that represents an organizationally, technically, informationally, and functionally integrated aggregate of fire delivery forces and assets and of operational, tactical, and technical support united by common automated command and control and providing for the discovery and engagement of enemy groupings and facilities.

Already today the Missile Troops and Artillery have the basic characteristics of a reconnaissance-fire system. Missile, rocket, and artillery subunits are employed in the form of reconnaissance-strike (-fire) complexes providing for real-time engagement of enemy targets.

The “reconnaissance-engagement” cycle is minimized here, which permits a several fold time reduction from the moment targets are detected to their destruction. We are not standing still and are continuing work in this direction by creating new advanced high-tech means of fire engagement, reconnaissance, and command and control.

How effective are state-of-the-art artillery reconnaissance assets? What are the prospects for their development, including with respect to the employment of unmanned aerial vehicles [UAVs]? Has the problem been remedied of insufficient operating range of Missile Troops and Artillery reconnaissance assets in the presence of a substantial range capability of weapons?

The experience of local wars and armed conflicts of recent years has shown that combat operations are impossible without the effective use of artillery reconnaissance assets as well as UAVs. The Zoopark-IM and Aistenok artillery reconnaissance assets that have come into the Missile Troops and Artillery inventory have given a positive account of themselves in practical testing.

UAVs are used actively in creating reconnaissance-strike complexes. They provide reconnaissance and real-time monitoring of fire engagement at considerable distances, which substantially increases the capabilities of fire engagement of the enemy. And existing artillery reconnaissance assets and UAVs permit fire engagement of the enemy by reconnaissance-strike complexes at maximum ranges of fire.

Mikhail Mikhaylovich, what is your opinion considering the development of precision-guided munitions? Doesn't the employment of tube artillery, including mortar subunits, lose pertinence in the future?

Domestic and foreign experience of armed confrontation clearly demonstrated the need to revise the essence and content of the very term “precision-guided munitions.” Thus, it is not quite accurate to look at it exclusively from the standpoint of guided weapons, since high accuracy also can be achieved using conventional munitions.

Serving as a perfect example of this is the experience of mission performance by our air grouping in the Syrian Arab Republic, when there was a clear demonstration of achievements of the Russian Federation defense-industrial complex that permitted unguided aerial bombs to engage targets with an accuracy comparable with precision-guided munitions. Necessary and sufficient conditions currently have been created for seeking foremost and advanced technical and technological solutions for subsequent introduction to the production of arms and military equipment.

With respect to mortar subunits, they are the foundation of motorized rifle battalion firepower. Unique battalion-echelon artillery pieces were presented at the Army-2018 forum. These were the Nona-SVK and Khosta 120-mm self-propelled artillery guns. These guns combine in themselves the qualities of mortar and howitzer. Such a combination permits firing both fragmentation-high explosive projectiles as well as all types of domestic and foreign 120-mm mortar rounds. Thus their use will not lose pertinence in the near future...



Look up in the Arctic sky, it's a Bird, it's a Plane... it's a Kalashnikov?

OE Watch Commentary: The ZALA Aerogroup is part of the Kalashnikov Concern which makes firearms and munitions and, since 2015, UAVs as the accompanying excerpt from *Interfax* reports. The Russian military has not bought ZALA UAVs in quantity yet, but the introduction of an Arctic-proof UAV might produce some interest. Kalashnikov has an inside track, since they are part of Rostec, which is a wholly-owned Russian state conglomerate dealing in military and high-technology design and manufacture. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The UAV has its own alternative navigation system, GIRSAM, which was designed to allow navigation of both UAVs and ground/water-surface users amid jamming or the absence of GPS and GLONASS signals.”

Source: “Kalashnikov designs drone for Arctic,” *Interfax*, 6 December 2018.

In a statement, Kalashnikov’s Director, General Vladimir Dmitriev reported that “ZALA Arctic UAVs can successfully perform civil and military missions involving ... research in the Arctic, ensuring sea navigation safety, protecting perimeters around the clock, and creating a full-fledged monitoring system of the Arctic coast and territorial waters.” Explorations and ice monitoring can be carried out safely thanks to the adaptation of the ZALA 421-08M and the ZALA 421-16E for operation in extreme cold... “The capabilities of the ZALA Arctic equipment allow the planning ... to extract oil and gas when precise weather and ice situation forecasts are needed.”

The ZALA UAVs are equipped with the AIS system, which can detect and identify ships at a distance of up to 100 kilometers. The UAV has its own alternative navigation system, GIRSAM, which was designed to allow navigation of both UAVs and ground/water-surface users amid jamming or the absence of GPS and GLONASS signals. “The unmanned aerial vehicles can perform missions at any time of the day in flights lasting up to 250 minutes. High-quality data processing is ensured thanks to the decoding of the original material using its software. The complex is highly ... economical compared to ... traditional monitoring, such as piloted aviation and a ground-based group.”

An all-weather inhabited module based on a 20-foot maritime container, which can also provide technical maintenance for UAVs, has been developed. “The main advantage of the container is the full independence of the operating system from external sources of power, as the complex is equipped with all required equipment. The iron-steel external skin and internal heat insulation of the container with special high temperature-resistant plastic provide for its non-stop operation, even in the coldest temperatures.”

Kalashnikov is the largest Russian manufacturer of combat assault rifles and sniper rifles, guided artillery rounds, and various high-precision weapons. It also makes hunting rifles, sport rifles, motorcycles, instrument-making machines, and tools.



ZALA 421-16E5 at Interpolitex-2016.

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Russia, China and the INF Treaty

OE Watch Commentary: There has been considerable speculation over the past couple of months regarding the future of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the Kremlin leadership claiming that Russia remains in compliance. In the accompanying excerpt from the moderate daily, *Vedomosti*, a Russian expert asserts that Chinese developments in Intermediate-Range missiles could be a contributing factor of the treaty's demise.

The article begins by tracing the development of the Chinese missile and nuclear programs, reminding readers that Russia's relations with the PRC have not always been so cordial. Indeed, as the author points out, "it was the Chinese missile threat that prompted Moscow to deploy the A-35 missile defense system which was very expensive but was also limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty." The author commends Beijing's nuclear and missile advances, claiming that they exemplify the Chinese "common trait... (of) long-term concentration of considerable resources for the achievement of a limited set of priority objectives under the highest leadership's direct control."

While at first the Chinese replicated Soviet missiles, by the early 1970s they "were able to design and produce increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles which did not have direct Soviet counterparts." Instead of a policy of massive retaliation, the author notes that "China developed its missile forces exclusively for the purpose of exercising the so-called minimal nuclear deterrence." This strategy was further refined in the early 1990s when the Chinese began developing highly accurate conventional ballistic missiles "which made it possible to cancel out the technological advantage of a more developed state."

The author describes the impressive inventory of the Chinese missile program, pointing out that given "the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China's military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons." The author concludes by asserting that "Russia does not have any hope of winning any scenario of a major conventional armed conflict with the PRC in the Far East," and that therefore, the "conflict will almost inevitably escalate and turn nuclear in the very first days of a war." Even though relations today with China are good, should the INF Treaty collapse, the Kremlin will likely orient its future intermediate-range missiles toward the west and south. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Considering the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China’s military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons.”

Source: Vasiliy Kashin, "Как Китай развалил договор о ракетах средней и меньшей дальности (How China Destroyed the INF Treaty)," *Vedomosti*, 19 November 2018. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2018/11/19/786779-dogovor-o-raketah>

The United States has cited violations by Russia as the formal reason for its decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty. At the same time, even its officials have made no secret of the fact that China, which is not a party to the treaty, is at least as serious a source of concern....

... It was the Chinese missile threat that prompted Moscow to deploy the A-35 missile defense system which was very expensive but was also limited by the 1972 ABM Treaty.... China made the political decision to create its own nuclear weapons as early as 1955 and the famous Two Bombs, One Satellite program appeared in 1958. There were plans to produce nuclear and thermonuclear bombs and to put [China's] own satellite into orbit around Earth in the next 10 years....

The nuclear missile project became an example for all subsequent Chinese programs of technological breakthroughs, including those that are being implemented now.... Their common trait is long-term concentration of considerable resources for the achievement of a limited set of priority objectives under the highest leadership's direct control.

China relied on Soviet aid and Soviet technologies when it began creating its own ballistic missiles. The first mass-produced missile Dongfeng-2 was a copy of the Soviet medium-range missile R-5 designed by Sergey Korolev. However, when a rift with the Soviet Union occurred in subsequent years, the Chinese were able to design and produce increasingly sophisticated ballistic missiles which did not have direct Soviet counterparts....

...For a long period of time, China developed its missile forces exclusively for the purpose of exercising the so-called minimal nuclear deterrence.... However, in the early 1990s, following the United States' routing of Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, the Chinese leadership revised completely the roles of different weapons systems. During that conflict, ballistic missiles turned out to be among the few means which made it possible to cancel out the technological advantage of a more developed state.

In the 1990s, China began mass deployment on conventional variants of several types of tactical ballistic missiles.... The number of these relatively simple and mass-produced missiles is quite large as there are likely to be around 2,000 of them.

...Considering the special role of the short and medium-range ballistic missiles in China's military potential and the huge investment in their development, the PRC is very unlikely to engage in serious talks on the reduction and especially elimination of this class of weapons.

Unlike the United States, Russia does not have any hope of winning any scenario of a major conventional armed conflict with the PRC in the Far East.... For this reason, conflict will almost inevitably escalate and turn nuclear in the very first days of a war.



Kremlin Support for European Army

OE Watch Commentary: Weakening the NATO alliance remains a key strategic objective for the Kremlin. Rather than portraying the alliance as a guarantor of European stability, Kremlin officials claim that NATO is merely a façade for US hegemonic designs. In their description, they allege that Washington exploits its predominant role in NATO to oppress the valid national interests of other members. This sentiment was played upon by the Kremlin after the recent discussion regarding the possibility of creating a European armed force.

The first accompanying excerpt, from the official government news agency *RIA Novosti*, describes comments made by President Putin during the recent WW I commemoration in Paris in November. When asked about the possible creation of an alternative all-European armed force, Putin stressed that because “Europe is a powerful economic entity, powerful economic union... it is quite natural that they want to be independent, self-sufficient, sovereign in the field of defense and security.” In Putin’s view, belonging to an alliance weakens the notion of sovereignty. He went on to point out that such a development is “a generally positive process in terms of strengthening the multi-polarity of the world.”

The second excerpt comes from comments made by a Russian think-tank director, Alexander Vedrussov, published in the pro-Kremlin daily, *Izvestiya*, and which reiterate and reinforce the Kremlin’s argument. The author asserts that “the possibility of the building of all-European armed forces enhances the significance and independence of the EU.” This expert then provides his explanation as to how the US became so powerful: by delaying its entry into WW I and by allowing the “Soviet Union [to bear] the brunt of the annihilation of Nazism... the United States ... emerged [as the] winner and principal beneficiary.”

The author concludes by claiming that “Russia wants to see the European Union united and prosperous,” however, “such considerations do not apply to NATO,” which Russia regards “as a rudiment of the cold war which has ‘survived its own venom.’” He calls for the EU to “escape from beneath US tutelage,” which happens to align with “the interests of Russia,” and its vision “of multi-polarity.” The Kremlin remains intent upon weakening the NATO alliance and sees the creation of a European army as a key step to achieve this objective. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Об армии ЕС и отношениях с США: Путин дал интервью во время визита в Париж (On the EU army and relations with the United States: Putin gave an interview during a visit to Paris),” *RIA Novosti*, 11 November 2018. <https://ria.ru/world/20181111/1532562803.html>

During his visit to Paris to attend the celebrations of the centenary of the end of the First World War, Vladimir Putin gave an exclusive interview to RT...

Putin called the EU’s desire to ensure its security with its own forces understandable and natural.

“...In principle, Europe is a powerful economic entity, powerful economic union, and in general it is quite natural that they want to be independent, self-sufficient, sovereign in the field of defense and security,” Putin said... He stressed that this is “a generally positive process in terms of strengthening the multi-polarity of the world.”

“In this sense, our positions overlap with France,” Putin added.

Source: Aleksander Vedrussov, “Вместе с Европой (Together With Europe),” *Izvestiya*, 12 November 2018. <https://iz.ru/810995/aleksandr-vedrussov/vmeste-s-evropoi>

The functions staged in Paris on the centenary of the end of WWI were certainly not merely a memorial gathering. Against the backdrop of the festivities timed for the date the argument over the fate of current global security structures has intensified markedly....

The centenary of the end of the WWI represents for Europe a veritably important date. The military dispute, the main winner of which was actually the United States, cost the continent more than 20 million lives. Observing neutrality right up to 1917, the Americans joined the combat operations just a little over a year before they ended, but enjoyed the fruits of victory in full. Four most powerful European empires were left beneath the ruins of war, whereas the young North American state swiftly filled the international vacuum that had formed.

Not even this was the main outcome of the carnage, senseless from the perspective of the interests of the European peoples. The unresolved contradictions of WWI made practically inevitable the next, even bloodier, global conflict. The United States also emerged from this a winner and principal beneficiary, incurring incomparably fewer human and material losses than Europe...The Soviet Union bore the brunt of the annihilation of Nazism and at an incredible price enforced peace on the aggressors in 1945.

...Russia wants to see the European Union ‘united and prosperous.’ Such is the consistent and high-minded position expressed by President Putin repeatedly. At the same time, on the other hand, we have repeatedly made clear to our partners that such considerations do not apply to NATO. Russia continues to regard the North Atlantic alliance as a rudiment of the cold war which has ‘survived its own venom.’ A European Union that is ‘independent, self-sufficient, and sovereign in the field of defense and security’ really does correspond to the pan-continental demand for escape from beneath US tutelage and, consequently, to the interests of Russia, which sees an enhancement of the status and role of the EU as a most important component of the consolidation of multi-polarity.

“Russia continues to regard the North Atlantic alliance as a rudiment of the cold war which has ‘survived its own venom.’”



North of the Arctic Circle: Get Your Kicks on Route E6

OE Watch Commentary: European route E6 is the main north-south road through Norway, and the west coast of Sweden. It was initially 3,088 kilometers long and runs from the southern tip of Sweden at Trelleborg, into Norway and through almost all of the country north to the Arctic Circle to Kirkenes near the Russian border. E6 is now 17 kilometers shorter. Traffic had to originally drive along the southern shores of the Rombaken fjord to a shorter bridge and then continue back to the coast following the northern shores road. As the accompanying excerpted article reports, construction on the Chinese-built Hålogaland bridge started in February 2013 and was due to be finished in the Spring of 2018. It is truly an impressive mega-bridge and is part of the Chinese northern belt and road initiative using the Northern Sea Route through Russian Arctic Waters to Kirkenes. There, goods can travel on the Norwegian-Finnish rail system (see “The New Chinese Silk Road may run through the Arctic,” *OE Watch*, April 2018) or on the E6. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“‘It’s been great to see Chinese participation in this project,’ Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg told reporters at the inauguration ceremony on the Hålogaland Bridge over the Rombaken fjord.”

Source: “Norway’s 2nd Largest Bridge Built by Chinese Firm Opens to Traffic,” *Xinhua*, 9 December 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/10/c_137661984.htm

China’s Sichuan Road and Bridge Group (SRBG) delivered the steel construction and was responsible for the mounting of the bridge, which contributes to a significant shortcut on European route E6 -- the main north-south road through Norway and the west coast of Sweden. “It’s been great to see Chinese participation in this project,” Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg told reporters at the inauguration ceremony on the Hålogaland Bridge over the Rombaken fjord. “It is a very beautiful bridge that is very important for the local community,” she said.

Chinese Ambassador to Norway Wang Min, who was also present at the inauguration ceremony, said the bridge has shown Chinese companies’ efforts to carry out the Belt and Road Initiative. He stated that the project “is an important result of the mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Norway. It will set an important example to further promote economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.”

In 2013, the SRBG won the steel contract for the bridge in a tough competition with the world’s leading builders. The steel contract includes preproduction of all the parts -- cables and steel boxes and site construction. The production of the steel parts was carried out in four different factories in China



Construction of the Hålogaland Bridge, crossing Rombaksfjord between the town Narvik and the village Øyjord in Nordland, Norway (2014).

Source: Torbjørn S [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H%C3%A5logalandsbrua_12._september_2014_04.jpg.



Moscow's Continuing Leverage over Europe, vis-à-vis Energy Dependence

OE Watch Commentary: Quietly building momentum throughout all of its more dramatic foreign policy maneuvering is Russia's continuing – and future – influence over a number of European states in the energy sector. Per EU statistics, the first half of 2018 demonstrated that Russia remained the largest supplier of natural gas and oil to EU countries. Many European states have long relied on Russian imports of natural gas and oil; this has traditionally complicated European efforts to craft broad-based responses to perceived Russian misdeeds. Moreover, European reaction to Russia's recent seizure of Ukrainian naval vessels and personnel may point to a lessening of concrete European resolve in this regard – especially when compared to events in 2014.

In 2014, after a series of varied measures (e.g., travel bans, asset freezes) taken by the EU in response to Russian actions (seizing of Crimea, the destabilization of Ukraine) leading to the adoption of economic sanctions, the European Parliament in the fall of 2014 enacted a resolution that called on EU countries to cancel longstanding plans with Russia regarding the planned “South Stream” gas pipeline. South Stream plans ended in December 2014. After the recent seizure of Ukrainian ships by Russia in the Sea of Azov, however, the European response has been strong diplomatically – but the results are not yet known. A successor gas pipeline to South Stream, the “TurkStream” project (whose first line is intended for the Turkish market) is nearing completion and continues toward an eventual completion of a second gas line that would supply European customers beyond Turkey.

The accompanying excerpted articles mention two possible routes of TurkStream's second line: through Bulgaria (and then Serbia) or via Greece. In the north of Europe, progress continues on “Nord Stream 2,” two additional lines that would bypass traditional transit countries like Ukraine and, largely paralleling the extant Nord Stream pipeline, carry natural gas to Germany directly. In the immediate aftermath of the Azov incident, diplomatic pressure from the EU Parliament included a call for a cancellation of Nord Stream 2 construction. Additionally, German Chancellor Merkel, while addressing the Bundestag, noted that Germany will back an extension of EU sanctions against Russia. However, Nord Stream 2 construction continues throughout, Berlin has not dropped its support of Nord Stream 2, and Germany remains, by far, the largest importer of Russian natural gas in Europe.

While it is not yet certain if Russian gas pipeline plans have truly reached some sort of tipping point, beyond which Moscow may wholly act with impunity in the region without risk of disrupting these plans, it is clear that European reliance on Russian natural gas and oil will continue for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, it is believed that the current and future ability of Russia to supply European customers, without transiting nettlesome states, will offer Moscow even greater freedom of maneuver within these targeted regions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Sarafian)**

“Greece, along with other European countries, is of the opinion that the EU, within the framework of a multipronged energy policy, should cooperate with Russia on TurkStream.”



Nord Stream pipeline map.

Source: OpenStreetMap contributors [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nord_Stream-et_map.png.

Source: “Сербия рассчитывает на газопровод ‘Турецкий поток’ (Serbia is counting on the “Turkish Stream” gas pipeline),” *Vesti Ekonomika*, 26 November 2018. <https://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/110762>

“For Serbia, it is extremely important that Russia considers a route for the TurkStream pipeline - that would pass through our country - to be a priority”, stated [First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister] Dačić.

Source: “Ципрас: “Турецкий поток” может стать “Европейским потоком” (Tsipras: “Turkish Stream” could become “European Stream”),” *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 6 December 2018. <http://vestikavkaza.ru/news/TSipras-Turetskiy-potok-mozhet-stat-Evropeyskim-potokom.html>

Greece is having a dialogue with the EU on the extension of the gas pipeline “Turkstream” through Greek territory to other EU countries.

Greece, along with other European countries, is of the opinion that the EU, within the framework of a multipronged energy policy, should cooperate with Russia on TurkStream, said [Prime Minister] Tsipras.



Arctic Icebreaking Tanker Launched

OE Watch Commentary: Designed by the Finns, built by the Chinese, owned by the Greeks and leased by the Russians, the *Boris Sokolov* is a key piece of insuring that liquefied natural gas (LNG) deliveries reach Asian customers on time as the accompanying excerpted article notes. It will sail between the Sabetta seaport on the Yamal Peninsula and the transshipment terminal currently under construction on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The new tanker also demonstrates the perceived value of Arctic resources. Five million tons of LNG have now been shipped from Sabetta and more and more countries are interested in Arctic transport, Arctic resources and Arctic ecology. Multinational cooperation on economic projects is certainly a growing part of this interest in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The ‘Boris Sokolov’ will shuttle to and from Sabetta, the new terminal in Yamal Peninsula, and ports in Europe and Asia.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “New condensate tanker sails north, gets ready to break ice on Northern Sea Route,” *The Barents Observer*, 6 December 2018. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2018/12/new-condensate-tanker-sails-north-gets-ready-break-ice-northern-sea>

The Guangzhou Shipyard International...built the top ice-class Arc7 carrier. It was handed over to its owner, Greek company Dynacom Tankers Management, more than a year after the original time schedule....The tanker is designed by AkerArctic, the Finnish company that has been instrumental in designing the natural gas carriers for Novatek’s Yamal LNG project, Gazprom Neft’s Prirazlomnaya tankers and several more Arctic ships. “There are not many tankers in the world with an ice class this high,” senior company designer Mauri Lindholm said about the new ship. The reference vessels for the new design are the two 70,000 tdw tankers [tdw=tons dead weight-the total weight a ship can carry] for the Prirazlomnaya project, designed for Sovcomflot about ten years ago. The new ship is named after Boris Sokolov, the Russian captain who commanded the world’s first nuclear-powered icebreaker for almost 40 years

The “Boris Sokolov” will shuttle to and from Sabetta, the new terminal in Yamal Peninsula, and ports in Europe and Asia. The ship is primarily built for LNG deliveries but can also be used as a regular oil tanker...It is 214 meters long and has a deadweight of 43,300 tons. It is able to break through 1.8 meters of thick ice independently.

Gas condensate is a byproduct of fine oil separated from the natural gas before its liquefaction process. It is a low-density mix of light oils and is a valuable raw material for the petrochemical industry or as fuel. The resource base for Yamal LNG project is the South Tambey field, which holds more than 900 billion cubic meters of natural gas. The field also includes 30 million tons of liquid hydrocarbons. The first shipment of condensate from Sabetta took place in late January 2018, only few weeks after the project was launched.



Launch of the third stage of the Yamal LNG plant.
Source: The Russian Government, <http://government.ru/en/news/35055/>, CC 4.0.



The Ongoing Georgian Defense Reforms

OE Watch Commentary: Discussions in Georgia on reforms in the country's Ministry of Defense over the past couple of years have noted the need for upgrades to various weapons and equipment, but also reducing the high percentage of money spent on personnel. The accompanying excerpted article is a summary of Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria's annual report and it provides a look at how the reforms continue to take place. In the report, Defense Minister Izoria reiterates how the two main objectives in the country's defense policy "rest on two principles – deterrence and territorial defense." He also mentions how "the ministry spent 20% of its funds on acquiring military equipment" for the first time in the country's history and that "personnel expenditures has been reduced to 53% of the total budget."

In addition to the budget changes, Defense Minister Izoria mentions "a new National Defense Strategy" for 2019 "based on the principle of total defense" and how there are reorganization plans to make "individual units more mobile" by "increasing the autonomy of their action and decision-making." It is worth remembering that Izoria reestablished conscription in 2017, after it had been eliminated by his predecessor the year before, and has been working on restructuring the reserve system. It is unknown what changes the new National Defense Strategy will include, but if the spending changes over the past year on equipment and personnel are any indication, more changes are likely coming. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



“These objectives, according to Izoria, rest on two principles – deterrence and territorial defense.”

Source: “Minister Reports on Defense Reforms, Outlines Priorities,” *Civil.ge*, 6 December 2018. <https://civil.ge/archives/270242>

Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria presented on December 6 an annual report of the work of the ministry, summing up the results in 2018 and focusing on main defense priorities for the upcoming year...

The minister then said the country's defense policy has two strategic objectives...These objectives, according to Izoria, rest on two principles – deterrence and territorial defense. “The deterrence policy means that our armed forces have to be strong enough so that a potential aggressor knows that in case of attack it will get an adequate response and there will be big political and military costs. As for the territorial defense, this means the aggressor will have to be stopped through military means,” he explained.

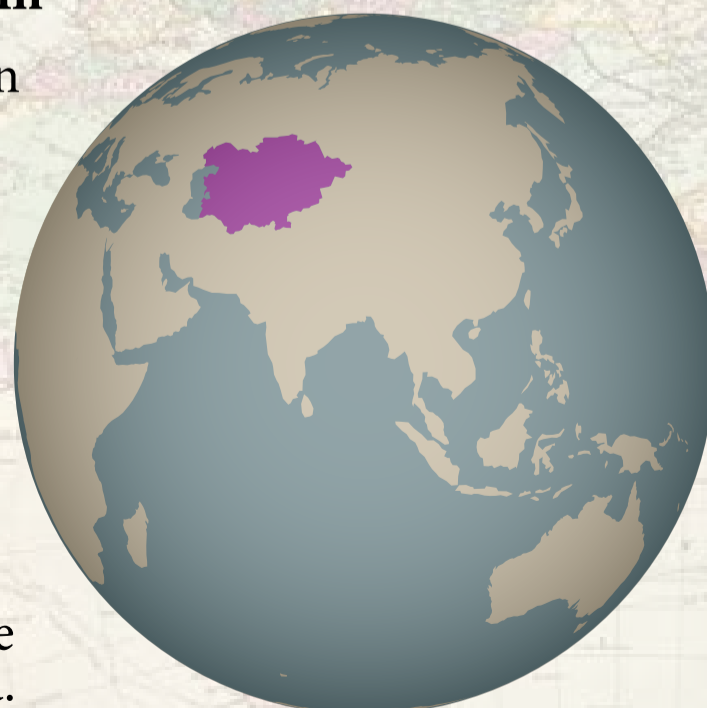
Izoria spoke on the defense budget as well, saying “for the first time in Georgia's history” the ministry spent 20% of its funds on acquiring military equipment...He also stressed the share of personnel expenditures has been reduced to 53% of the total budget under his ministerial tenure.

The minister also announced that a new National Defense Strategy, to be adopted in the beginning of 2019, will be based on the principle of total defense. He also spoke on plans to “reorganize” the armed forces, including through making individual units more mobile, as well as through increasing the autonomy of their action and decision-making...

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>



Ukraine Increases Trade With China at Russia's Expense

by Oleg Varfolomeyev

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OE Watch Commentary: In line with China's continuing westward economic expansion, it may launch free trade talks with Ukraine. Stepan Kubiv, Ukraine's economy minister, coming back from a visit to China where he met Chinese Vice Premier Liu He last month, said Ukraine asked China to start consultations for a possible free trade agreement. The Ukraine-China intergovernmental cooperation commission resumed its activities after a long break. The two sides discussed cooperation in energy, infrastructural projects, machine building, agriculture and digitalization.

Ukraine in 2016 cold-shouldered an offer from China to start talks on a free trade agreement. In the meantime, Ukraine has since 2014 signed free trade agreements with the European Union and Canada, completed talks with Israel, and has been in free trade talks with Turkey. Even without a free trade deal, China has been, along with the EU, Russia and Turkey, among the top four export markets for Ukraine for several years.

With natural gas wars, trade restrictions and the military invasion in 2014, Moscow pushed Kyiv to end its reliance on Russia as Ukraine's key trade and investment partner. The niches left by Russia have been filled mainly by the EU, which signed a free trade deal with Ukraine in 2014. The EU's share in Ukraine's exports grew to 40.5 percent in 2017, from 25.5 percent in 2010; and in imports, it grew respectively to 41.9 from 31.5 percent. China also made impressive progress, with its share in exports almost doubling to 4.6 from 2.5 percent, and in imports to 11.4 from 7.7 percent.

In imports, the current share of China makes it the second-largest single-national import source, behind Russia's 14.2 percent. Although Ukraine has reduced its reliance on Russian gas to the minimum over the last several years, it still largely depends on Russia for nuclear fuel, automotive fuels, and coal. But the share of Russia in Ukraine's imports is set to decline further because of the complicated bilateral relations and Ukraine's efforts to diversify energy sources and reduce energy consumption. Conversely, China's share is likely to grow, as it sells to Ukraine mainly technological and consumer goods, demand for which has been growing along with general economic growth and rising incomes.

China has been trying to expand into the Ukrainian energy market with its relatively cheap technologies. In the nuclear sector, which accounts for about half of local power output, China has been trying to fill the niches from which the Ukrainian government has been squeezing out Russia for obvious reasons. The Ukrainian energy ministry discussed involving China Development Bank in developing local uranium deposits. And Yury Nedashkovsky, the head of the Ukrainian national nuclear power firm, Energoatom, said China National Nuclear Corporation was interested in completing the construction of power units at the Khmelnytsky nuclear plant. Russia had been initially expected to complete construction works at Khmelnytsky, but after Russia's invasion in 2014 Kyiv froze the plan.

China has also been active in the Ukrainian construction sector. This year, Ukraine signed \$200 million worth of contracts for Chinese companies to build highways; and Ukrainian Deputy Infrastructure Minister Viktor Dovhan announced last February that the government mulled borrowing \$7 billion for infrastructural projects from China.

Trade dynamics so far this year have not been in Ukraine's favor. Merchandise exports to China shrank by 0.9 percent year over year between January and September, while Ukraine's total exports grew by 10.3 percent over the period. By contrast, imports from China jumped 29.9 percent, much faster than the total import growth (16.1 percent). Kyiv could try and reverse the disproportions if it starts free trade talks with China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Varfolomeyev)**

“The parties discussed the expansion of cooperation in the development of the nuclear industry of Ukraine and China...”

Source: “Energy Ministry, China's CNNC discuss organization of nuclear fuel production in Ukraine,” *Interfax-Ukraine*, 27 October 2017. <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/457809.html>

...“The parties discussed the expansion of cooperation in the development of the nuclear industry of Ukraine and China, organization of nuclear fuel production and the joint implementation of an investment project on the basis of a newly constructed mine at Novokostiantynivske uranium ore deposit,” the report said.

The parties also discussed the issue of involving China Development Bank (CDB) in financing the project of Novokostiantynivske uranium ore deposit...



Uzbekistan's Readiness Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has worked to be more transparent in government affairs than his predecessor, Islam Karimov. As the accompanying excerpted articles demonstrate, this transparency resulted in press coverage of a recent large-scale, snap military exercise and there are a couple of things to note. Both articles are from *Anhor*, a Russian-language website with news on Uzbekistan, and the first one mentions important aspects of the exercise, including how it began as “a presidential order,” which went through the General Staff “out to the commands of the military districts” and that “before this, these kinds of exercises were not conducted in the army of Uzbekistan.” Additionally, the other article notes how “airborne, artillery, motorized rifle and tank units, as well as the Air Force and special operations forces, took part in the exercises.” Notably, both articles feature several photographs of the exercise, including some of the weapon systems and equipment in Uzbekistan’s inventory. In the past, assessments of the capabilities of Uzbekistan’s Armed Forces had limited access to the conditions and quantities of weapons and equipment in the country. Another exercise of this scale may not take place for some time, but if the transparency of President Mirziyoyev continues to have an impact on the armed forces, a better picture of its capabilities could emerge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Airborne, artillery, motorized rifle and tank units, as well as the Air Force and special operations forces, took part in the exercises.”

Source: “Как прошел первый день масштабных военных учений? (How did the first day of the large-scale military exercise go?),” *Anhor*, 27 November 2018. <https://anhor.uz/news/kak-proshel-perviy-deny-masshtabnih-voennih-ucheniy>

In accordance with a presidential order, a large-scale combat readiness check of the forces of the Ministry of Defense began on Monday. The exercise (was held) from 26 to 30 November... On the first day of the exercise, units deployed in columns of armored vehicles to assigned areas...The Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan (then) issued orders out to the commands of the military districts...before this, these kinds of exercises were not conducted in the army of Uzbekistan...

Source: “Как Мирзиёев наблюдал за учениями на Чирчикском полигоне (How Mirziyoyev observed the exercises at the Chirchik training area),” *Anhor*, 29 November 2018. <https://anhor.uz/news/kak-mirziyoev-nablyudal-za-ucheniymi-na-chirchikskom-poligone-foto>

On 28 November at Chirchik, Shavkat Mirziyoyev observed the special tactical exercises of the units, which were raised to a high state of combat readiness...Airborne, artillery, motorized rifle and tank units, as well as the Air Force and special operations forces, took part in the exercises...



Vladimir Putin had talks with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent (2018).

Source: Kremlin.ru [CC BY 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>) or CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:State_visit_to_Uzbekistan_06.jpg.



Improved Financial Accountability in the Russian Defense Industry?

OE Watch Commentary: Ever since he became Minister of Defense (MoD) six years ago, Sergey Shoigu has effectively used the media to help restore the prestige and honor of the country's armed forces. Whether announcing a new weapon system or more territory reclaimed in Syria, on a daily basis, Russian TV, radio, newspapers, and other sources on the internet proclaim the many achievements of the country's military. The first accompanying excerpt from the official news source, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, published in early December, exemplifies this reporting. It describes an improved system "of interdepartmental cooperation... used by the National Center for Defense Management... [whereby] the efficiency of the entire teamwork is significantly increased."

The article describes how the MoD is using new technologies to monitor and reduce the cost of utilities and can also accurately follow "the implementation of almost 3,500 contracts, the expenditure of which is monitored in each area." According to Shoigu, such a monitoring system makes "it impossible to spend" the allocated funds "on anything else." Reading this article, one might get the impression that under the astute leadership of Sergey Shoigu, the MoD has managed to nearly eliminate the problem of corruption within Russia's defense industry. Such an appraisal is not shared by other sources.

The second excerpt comes from a long, detailed article from the opposition weekly, *Novaya Gazeta*, and describes an elaborate scheme wherein defense expenditures "of a very important missile corporation, which is of strategic importance for the country" are laundered through various shell companies to enrich high-level officials. To make a long story short, the director of the Tactical Missile Corporation (KTRV) set up a semi-private company, placed his daughter in charge of it, and then mandated that "all of the purchases of the corporation and the enterprises that were part of it must be made via" this company. In the process, billions of state-allocated rubles, designed for defense purposes, were skimmed off for private profit.

While *Novaya Gazeta* has a relatively small audience, the results of the investigation into the fraudulent practices of the KTRV were considerably amplified when opposition activist, Alexei Navalny discussed these findings and posted a video of it to his *YouTube* channel (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShFVQFUyLvw>). As of 19 December, the video has been viewed more than 2.3 million times. Even though the MoD has effectively used the Russian media to polish its image, claiming for instance, that new technologies have improved accountability, other sources suggest that corruption within the country's defense industry remains a serious problem. **End**

OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

"... all of the purchases of the very important missile corporation, which is of strategic importance for the country, pass through a private firm linked to a young girl."

Source: Yuri Gavrilov, "Военный расчет: В армии ввели особый контроль расходов (Military calculation: The military has introduced special cost controls)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2 December 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/12/02/v-armii-vveli-osobyj-kontrol-rashodov.html>

Coordination of the activities of state authorities in solving the tasks of the country's defense is becoming increasingly important. The General Staff determines ways to improve the system of interdepartmental cooperation, they are successfully used by the National Center for Defense Management, and as a result, the efficiency of the entire teamwork is significantly increased....

For example, the Ministry of Defense is now simultaneously controlling the implementation of almost 3,500 contracts, the expenditure of which is monitored in each area. "That is, the money allocated to each, say for every cartridge or plane is 'specifically earmarked' and it is impossible to spend it on anything else," explained Shoigu.

Source: Roman Anin, Alisa Kustikova, Dmitriy Velikovskiy "Поднялись на ядерном щите (They Rose on the Nuclear Shield)," *Novaya Gazeta*, 6 November 2018. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/11/06/78470-podnyalis-na-yadernom-schite>

...The Russian President's statements coincided with an investigation that Novaya Gazeta had been conducting for over six months. We were studying how the billions of rubles of the state-owned Korporatsiya Takticheskoye Raketnoye Vooruzheniye (KTRV) [Tactical Missile Corporation], which is involved in the production of the missiles, with which the Russian President frightened the world, were being spent and who was getting them.

The results of our investigation may also frighten people. But not the world, the citizens of Russia: Novaya Gazeta managed to ascertain that all of the purchases of the very important missile corporation, which is of strategic importance for the country, pass through a private firm linked to a young girl – a wedding make-up artist who does make-up and hairdos for brides....

...But the direct management of KTRV is carried out by its General Director. For 15 years now, this post has been held by one person— Boris Obnosov.... But in 2012, Boris Obnosov issued an order stating that all of the purchases of the corporation and the enterprises that were part of it must be made via a so-called authorized organization. In other words, a private company obtained the right to conduct all of the purchasing procedures (auctions and tenders) in the interests of KTRV and to receive a percentage of the state contracts concluded.

...How did a 23-year-old girl responsible for brides' hairdos end up as the co-owner of a firm, via which all of the tenders for the Tactical Missile Corporation go? Novaya Gazeta managed to ascertain that Zorikova is the daughter of Boris Obnosov, the corporation's General Director and the "President's Chief Adviser on Missiles".



Russian Defense against Infectious Disease

OE Watch Commentary: Russian health care has improved after the devastation of the 1990s, although outside of major cities, problems remain with getting prompt medical treatment in modern facilities. Poor prophylactic care in the provinces also aggravates the spread of infectious diseases. For instance, as the first accompanying excerpt from the pro-business daily, *RBK* points out, in 2017, “Russia was recognized as the leader in the rate of spread of HIV in Europe,” with over 100,000 new cases diagnosed. Globally, Russia has been rated in the bottom third of ranking for public health.

Statistics like the above, however, do not align with the current Kremlin mantra that Russia has risen off its knees and is returning to superpower status. The second excerpt, from the pro-government source, *Izvestiya*, illustrates one tactic which the Kremlin uses to explain such contradictions. The article deals with how “the specialists within the radiation, chemical and biological protection (RCBZ) of the Armed Forces will be engaged in identifying the causes of outbreaks of infections in Russia.” These specialists will work “together with the FSB... to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional.” The excerpt includes a quote from a military expert who alleges that “in the age of hybrid wars, the role of such [biological] weapons is greatly increasing.” He goes on to identify the likely culprit, by asserting that “the United States has been deploying biochemical and biological laboratories in neighboring states [of Russia] the purpose of which is declared with deliberate distortion.”

The article insinuates that the US is responsible for “the appearance of infectious diseases, which we did not have before,” to “include African swine fever, which was first registered in Russia in 2008.” It also alleges that the US funded Lugar Center for Public Health Research located near Tbilisi is responsible for “worsening the situation for diseases spread by insect vectors” such as “the anomalous spread of ticks which have caused outbreaks of Hemorrhagic Fever that is not typical for our latitudes, into the Stavropol Territory and the Rostov Region.”

For the past several years, the Kremlin and its pliant media juggernaut have gone to great lengths to convince the Russian people that the West (and the US in particular) will use any available vector to weaken their country. Instead of focusing upon practical measures to stop the spread of communicable sickness, the Kremlin has now directed its security and military services “to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Россию признали лидером по темпу распространения ВИЧ в Европе (Russia recognized as the leader in the rate of spread of HIV in Europe),” *RBK*, 29 November 2018. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/29/11/2018/5bff027b9a7947e9cd717697>

The leaders in the rate of spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among European countries were Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.... Specialists recorded a total of about 160,000 new HIV cases last year, 130,000 in Eastern Europe, with the vast majority of cases – 104,000 diagnoses - registered in Russia.

Source: Alexei Ramm, A. Kozachenko, R. Krepstul, B. Stepovoy, “Домашний очаг: Минобороны установит причины аномальных эпидемий (The Home Hearth: The Ministry of Defense will Establish the Causes of Anomalous Epidemics),” *Izvestiya*, 4 December 2018. <https://iz.ru/816754/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-roman-kretcul-bogdan-stepovoi/domashnii-ochag-minoborony-ustanovit-prichiny-anomalnykh-epidemii>

Possible cases of use of biological weapons will be investigated by the Ministry of Defense together with the Federal Security Service (FSB). All emergency situations associated with outbreaks of infectious diseases of people, animals and agricultural plants on the territory of the country will fall into the sphere of increased attention. As part of the Armed Forces, they will form special educational centers where they will train military biologists. Today, the Ministry of Defense is already engaged in the suppression of foci of diseases, including anthrax, African swine fever, bird flu. In an age of hybrid wars, it is necessary to recognize and prevent the threats of the intentional spread of infections in time....

It is planned that the specialists of the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection (RCBZ) of the Armed Forces will be engaged in identifying the causes of outbreaks of infections in Russia. We are talking about diseases of both people and animals, as well as agricultural plants.... Military biologists and intelligence agencies will need to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional. On this will depend on the tactics of dealing with them....

*...Bacteriological and biological activities of the RCBZ troops are now particularly relevant, says military expert in the field of chemical and biological weapons, Oleg Zheltonozhko. “In the age of hybrid wars, the role of such weapons is greatly increasing,” he told *Izvestiya*. - It is very difficult to prove its use as an act of aggression, therefore such threats must be recognized in time. It is no secret that in the neighboring states of the United States, it is deploying biochemical and biological laboratories, the purpose of which is declared with deliberate distortion.*

In addition, in recent years, cases of the appearance of infectious diseases, which we did not have before, are increasingly recorded. These include African swine fever, which was first registered in Russia in 2008. RCBZ troops have special methods to determine the origin and paths of infection, the expert said.

This year, the Russian Ministry of Defense officially announced that the situation in the region where the bacteriological center of Lugar is located near Tbilisi, which is funded by the United States, is worsening the situation for diseases spread by insect vectors. In particular, the anomalous spread of ticks has already been the cause of outbreaks of the Hemorrhagic Fever Crimea – Congo, which is not typical for our latitudes, in the Stavropol Territory and the Rostov Region....

“Military biologists and intelligence agencies will need to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional. On this will depend on the tactics of dealing with them.”



Fallout from the Syrian Victory

OE Watch Commentary: A major factor in the Kremlin's calculus to become militarily involved in Syria centered upon the assertion that it made more sense to destroy terrorists on Syrian soil rather than waiting for them to strike in Russia. At the time, Kremlin officials claimed that thousands of Russians had traveled to Syria to join the terrorist cause. Now that the fight against ISIS appears to be nearly completed, questions have arisen regarding how to handle those ethnic Russians who fought or lived under the ISIS banner. The accompanying excerpt from the moderate news source, *Kommersant*, describes some of the challenges in repatriating from Syria and Iraq those ethnic Russian women and children associated with ISIS.

The article begins by referring to the huge scale of the problem, claiming "that in Idlib alone there are 7,000 Russian widows. Among them, there are 3,000-3,500 women from the North Caucasus. And each of them has up to four or five children." The article quotes "the head of Chechnya's Human Rights Council," that these women were "brought to territory controlled by the ISIL...by their husbands." Up until this past year, the leadership in Chechnya had been at the forefront in trying to repatriate these women and children, and in 2017, managed to bring back to Russia "more than 90 women and children." However, the procedure regarding repatriation of these women and children has changed, with federal officials now in control, and according to the source quoted in the article, "this year [2018], the Russian authorities have not yet picked up a single woman."

The article describes the painful route of one Russian woman who traveled to Syria with her children in 2014 to join her husband who fought for ISIS. After his death, she returned to Russia in 2017, where she "was detained and sentenced to eight years." She questioned this verdict, claiming that "membership of an illegal armed formation amounted to me cooking and washing for my husband." Her sentence has been "deferred for 13 years until her youngest child reaches the age of 14."

The Kremlin may indeed have helped the government forces of Assad to defeat terrorists within Syria, but the fallout for Russia from this victory has yet to be fully reckoned. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"In September 2018, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that over the three years of the operation in Syria, 87,000 militants, including 4,500 from Russia and the CIS countries, had been annihilated."

Source: Anastasiya Kurilova, Valeriya Mishina, "В Россию просят семь тысяч вдов (Seven Thousand Widows Are Asking to Return to Russia)," *Kommersant*, 14 November 2018. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3798924>

There are several thousand Russian women in Syria, brought to territory controlled by the ISIL [the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Levant] organization, which is banned in Russia, by their husbands. Kheda Saratova, a member of the head of Chechnya's Human Rights Council, stated this. She stressed that not a single woman had managed to return home since the start of the year.... "A guide who took Russian women to a safe place told me that in Idlib alone there are 7,000 Russian widows. Among them, there are 3,000-3,500 women from the North Caucasus. And each of them has up to four or five children," Mrs Saratova told journalists the day before.... According to Mrs Saratova, 700 relatives of women who are in Syria have appealed to her. They are residents of the North Caucasus, Penzenskaya and Voronezhskaya Oblasts, Tatarstan, Buryatiya, Bashkiriya, Permskiy Kray, and other regions.

You may recall that at the beginning of 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin reported that "up to 4,000 people from Russia and about five thousand from the republics of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States]" were fighting on the side of the militants in Syria. In September 2018, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that over the three years of the operation in Syria, 87,000 militants, including 4,500 from Russia and the CIS countries, had been annihilated.... People started to talk about the need for Russian women and their children to come home from Syria in the summer of 2017. At that time the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, spoke about how the mother of four-year-old Bilal Tagirov, who was taken to Syria by his father, had appealed to him... As a result, more than 90 women and children were brought back to Russia before the end of 2017...

"Young people need to be warned so that they do not fall into this trap. We were there and saw everything," Mrs Abakarova told Kommersant. Her husband took her with their two children to Turkey, and then to Syria at the end of 2014. In the spring of 2017, he died and the woman, who already had four children on her hands, started to seek an opportunity to leave. Only in October 2017 did she reach Kurdish territory with her children, from where she was taken by Mr Sabsabi. In Russia, Mrs Abakarova was detained and sentenced to eight years under article 208 of the Russian Federation Criminal Code, deferred for 13 years until her youngest child reaches the age of 14. "Membership of an illegal armed formation amounted to me cooking and washing for my husband," she says....



Other Foreign Perspectives of the Riots in France

OE Watch Commentary: It seems as though just a few years ago some might have assumed that those throwing rocks and burning cars in Paris and other French cities would be Muslim youths. This month the identity of the marchers and rioters was more likely to be farmers or taxi drivers or even just Frenchmen. The first accompanying reference, from *Diario ABC* in Madrid, gives us a Spanish take. The author has little sympathy for the position of French President Macron, whose tax and environmental policies are evidently at the heart of, or at least at the start of, the grievance impelling the French rioting. The second and third references are from Eduardo Mackenzie, a highly regarded Colombian (or perhaps French-Colombian) editorialist who evidently shares much of the Spaniard's viewpoint. He opines that the Macron administration overreached with its fuel taxation, which was felt most heavily among the rural middle class, and that although Macron caved to the demonstrators' immediate demands, the underlying direction of Macron's policies are likely to incur more of the same protests down the road. Much of the protest grievance energy purportedly comes from a French nationalist, anti-European Parliament emotion. While a contextual detail, the appearance of anti-riot armored vehicles emblazoned with the European Union flag instead of the French flag gifted at least a propaganda touchpoint regarding arrogation of French sovereignty by the European collective identity. The touchpoint was made timelier coming in the wake of comments that President Macron had recently made in favor of the creation of a European Army.

Interestingly, the French demonstrations garnered positive commentary from both the French political right and left. The protesters were infuriated by high taxation, but also apparently demanded a higher minimum wage, pension protection and more income redistribution. The immediate unrest was somewhat quelled by concessions made by the administration. The protests spread, however, to Belgium and the Netherlands. We will have to wait to see if these commenters' predictions are accurate - that Macron will face more of the same uprisings unless there are fundamental changes in his administration's policies.

The fourth accompanying reference, also by Eduardo Mackenzie and posted on *Debate Periódico*, is a brief comparison of the French riots with mass ongoing student riots in Colombia. Dr. Mackenzie describes the French riots as being more spontaneous than the Colombian student riots, the latter being organized and maintained by the radical left. One common characteristic is becoming unmistakable and has a consequence for the future of domestic peace going forward: The rioters were quite successful in gaining concessions from their governments, concessions which in both places may not have discouraged use of that particular form of struggle. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Macron will not pull France out of this tumultuous wave with minor reparations...”



Mouvement des gilets jaunes, Bavilliers, 24 Nov 2018.

Source: Thomas Bresson Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/computerhotline/45126386215/in/pool-64927248@N00>, CC BY 2.0.

Source: Juan Pedro Quiñonero, “Francia, en pie de guerra contra Macron (France, on a war footing against Macron),” *Diario ABC*, 1 December 2018. https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-francia-guerra-contra-macron-201812011102_noticia.html

The great majority of the French consider the demands of the yellow jacket movement ‘greatly’ or ‘totally’ justified....In scarcely eight days, Emmanuel Macron and his ministers have radically changed their ‘answer’ to the yellow vest [movement]. In vain, Christophe Castaner [interior Minister] accused Marine Le Pen of ‘organizing’ the pitch battle at the Champs Elysees on Saturday the 24th....A petition against the rise in fuel prices and increase in the cost of living has been signed by more than a million persons....

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Francia: Las protestas contra Macron se agravan (France: The protests against Macron worsen),” *IFM Noticias*, Bogotá, 2 December 2018. <https://ifmnoticias.com/francia-las-protestas-contra-macron-se-agravan/>

‘The government talks to us about the end of the world (if there is no ecologic transition). We are talking about the end of the month.’ The concessions they most frequently call for are concrete: the elimination of the new fuel tax, cancelation of technical controls on motor vehicles, increase in the legal minimum wage, fixing the minimum retirement pension at 1200 Euros and the reinstatement of the tax on large fortunes.

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “¿Macron logrará apagar el incendio? (Will Macron manage to put out the fire?),” @eduardomackenz1, via Álvaro Uribe Vélez Twitter feed, 10 December 2018. <https://twitter.com/AlvaroUribeVel/status/1072135853072248833>

Only after the orgy of violence on 1 December, during which many intoned, ‘Macron démission’ (Macron resign), did the head of state accept the annulment of the fuel tax ‘for 2019’. That did not convince or placate the fury of the yellow jackets....In any case, Macron will not pull France out of this tumultuous wave with minor reparations. A good part of observers coincide in one point: He had better stop irritating the situation with his silence and move toward durable social, political and electoral reforms...

Source: Eduardo MacKenzie, “Manifestaciones en Colombia y Francia: dos procesos diferentes (Demonstrations in Colombia and France: two different processes),” *Debate Periódico*, 21 November 2018. <http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/21228-manifestaciones-en-colombia-y-francia-dos-procesos-diferentes>

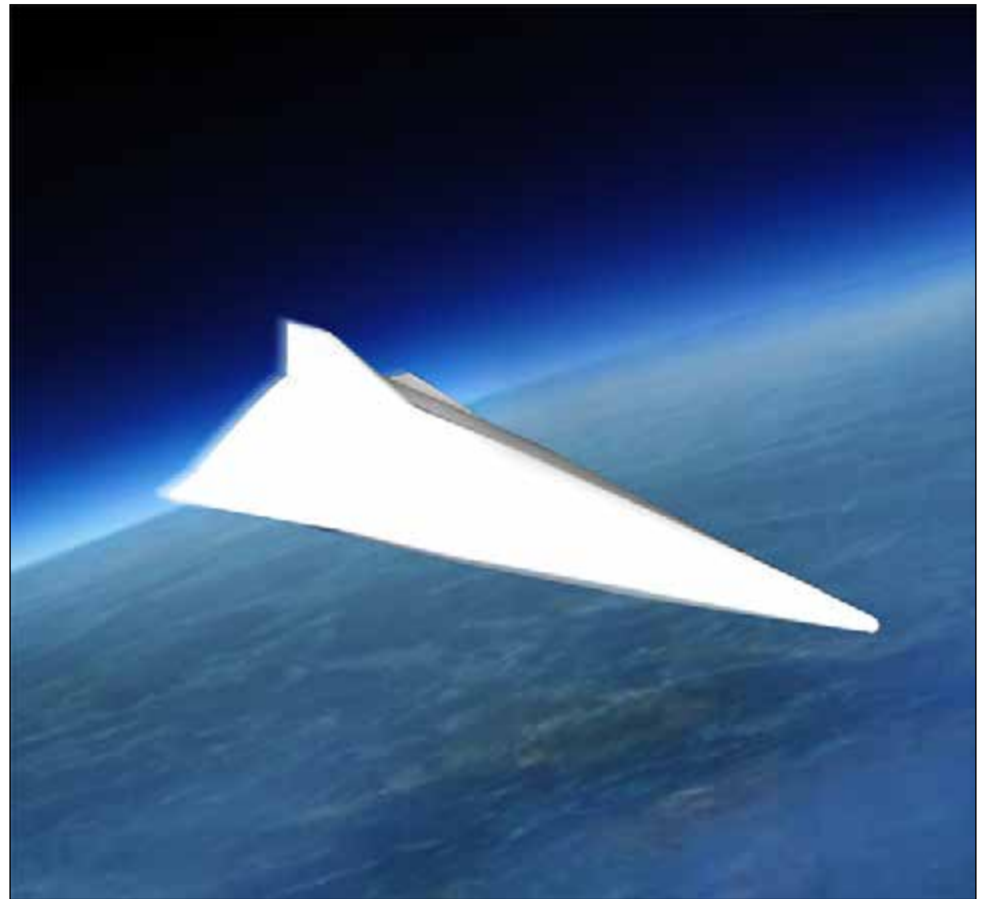
Don’t confuse what happened today in France with the ‘student’ marches in Colombia....In France, the unions didn’t organize this mobilization, nor the parties (these added themselves later), nor subversive groups that play at making socialist revolution...



China Reports Development of Maneuvering Glide Ballistic Missile

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 November, China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) officially reported that it had developed maneuvering glide ballistic missile capabilities. If accurate, this is a significant step forward in the country's military modernization process. The accompanying excerpted articles, published in *China Aerospace News* and *Global Times*, discuss the country's latest reported achievement.

China has been working on developing maneuvering glide ballistic missile technology, otherwise referred to as a hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV), for at least the past three or four years as part of its strategic nuclear deterrence. An HGV is a weapon launched atop a ballistic missile, from which it separates at the edge of the atmosphere before gliding to an impact range. It uses precision guidance control technology and can move in a non-ballistic trajectory at supersonic speeds, making it difficult to counter. The technology combines advantages of the maneuverability of a cruise missile with the speed of a ballistic missile. According to the *Global Times*, the United States and Russia have also been pursuing the technology. However, China reportedly believes that its development in the technology show that its capabilities now "exceed those of the United States and Russia." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



One of the Chinese hypersonic gliding vehicle projects.

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

“CASC has achieved leapfrogging development of conventional surface-to-surface missiles from the traditional ballistic flight to maneuverable gliding flight....”

Source: Yang Cheng and Gao Yiming, “CASC Obtains a Series of Achievements in Push for National Defense Modernization Building,” *Zhongguo Hangtian Bao*, 22 November 2018. <http://www.spacechina.com/n25/n144/n206/n214/c1974301/content.html>

Presently, [China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation] CASC has formed strategic nuclear deterrent systems with both solid and liquid propellants, rockets with complementary ranges, land- and sea-based equipment, and equipment with significantly improved power and efficacy. In doing so, CASC has achieved leapfrogging development of conventional surface-to-surface missiles from the traditional ballistic flight to maneuverable gliding flight, and has produced complementary air-defense and anti-missile defense equipment systems for high, medium, and low altitudes. In addition, they have actively extended their development into areas, such as UAVs, rockets, and guided bombs, and have made important contributions towards modernization building in our national defense and preserving world peace.

Looking to the future, CASC will keep its mission in mind, advance forward, and will strive tirelessly to support the establishment of a world-class army, achieving the Chinese dream, and the dream of a strong army. It will make even greater contributions to protecting national interests and peaceful global development.

Source: “中国官宣掌握机动滑翔式弹道导弹技术 已变身领跑者 (China Makes Official Announcement that it has Achieved Maneuvering Glide Missile Technology),” *Global Times*, 30 November 2018. <http://chinanews.sina.com/gb/chnmilitary/chnmilitary/huanqiu/2018-11-30/doc-iwnpmhhh7709090.shtml>

Coincidentally, countries are also competing to develop motorized gliding ballistic technology.

The leap forward in China's ground-to-ground missiles from traditional ballistic to motorized gliding is of great significance, having gone from lagging behind to achieving military powers that exceed those of the United States and Russia. In line with our interests, our frontiers are expanding into new areas of space. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces has become a strategic force capable of defending the sovereignty of both sea and land. ... this new “killer” will surely improve our military's ability to respond to various threats.



China to Modify Y-20 Transport Aircraft for Aerial Refueling

OE Watch Commentary: A new variant of China's domestically-developed Y-20 strategic transport aircraft appears to be in development as reported by the accompanying excerpted article. China's current aerial refueling capabilities (see accompanying graphic) face limitations in the form of poor platforms, such as the limited fuel capacity H-6U, or insufficient numbers, such as the IL-78 tankers purchased from Russia.

The Chinese Air Force is currently attempting to rapidly improve its strategic power projection capabilities, which include improved bombers and larger numbers of refueling aircraft to give Chinese aircraft more range. The capability would also allow shorter-ranged aircraft, such as the J-10 fighter, to stay aloft longer carrying heavier weapons loads. The Y-20 was designed to help fill the significant gap the Chinese military faced in terms of transporting its forces rapidly within China's borders or even globally. China had previously been forced to charter aircraft to evacuate its citizens from unstable counties. China's current fleet of H-6-derived tankers is insufficient for its current training or wartime refueling needs.

China's other main transport aircraft—the Y-8 and Y-9, have been modified to fill a variety of roles, but are considered poor candidates for tankers due to their design. Other domestically-developed aircraft, such as the C919, a narrow-body passenger jet, are considered unsuitable due to poor fuel carrying capacity. The Y-20 was always meant to help break China's reliance on imports of Russian-built transport and aerial refueling aircraft. After successfully bringing that design into larger-scale production and proving its abilities in the primary role, the adaptation to refueling is a logical next step and will fill an important gap in China's capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

Aerial Refueling Capabilities: US and China											
		Length (m)	Height (m)	Wingspan (m)	Maximum takeoff weight (kg)	Maximum range (km)	Transferable fuel (kg)	Cargo capacity (kg)	Crew	Total	
Chinese Tankers	IL-78	46.59	14.76	50.5	210,000	6,700	96,000	40,000	7	3	
	H-6U	34.8	10.36	33	79,000	7,200	16,800	N/A	4	15	
Potential Platforms	J-15S	21.9	5.9	14.7	33,000	3,500	>1100*		2		
	Y-20	50.5	33	33	220,000	4,500	N/A	40,000	3		
	C919	38.9	11.95	35.8	72,500	4,075	N/A	20,400	N/A		
U.S. Tankers	KC-46	50.5	15.9	48.1	188,240	11,830	94,198	29,500	3		
	F/A-18F	18.31	4.88	13.62	29,937	<2,300*	6,800		2		
	KC-130	29.79	11.84	40.41	70,305	4,000	26,000	33,000	4	58	
	KC-135	41.53	12.7	38.88	146,285	2,419	90,719	37,648	3	397	
	KC-10	54.4	17.4	50	265,500	7,040	160,000	76,560	4	58	

By Peter Wood

Adapted from "Table 2: Sample Global Tanker Comparison" Gabriel Collins, Michael McGauvran, Timothy White, "Trends in Chinese Aerial Refueling Capacity for Maritime Purposes," p. 200, Chinese Aerospace Power: Evolving Military Roles, Andrew S. Erikson and Lyle J. Goldstein, Eds. Naval Institute Press, 2012. Additional numbers from IISS, The Military Balance 2018.

*: indicates rough estimate

(continued)



Continued: China to Modify Y-20 Transport Aircraft for Aerial Refueling

“Although China also operates a few Russian Il-78 tankers, which are much larger than the HU-6, Russia was reluctant to sell more at a reasonable price, leading China to decide to develop its own large tanker.”

Source: “China develops Y-20 variants to perform aerial refueling missions: military insider,” *Global Times*, 26 November 2018. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1129005.shtml>

China is modifying its domestically made strategic transport aircraft Y-20 to take on new missions like aerial refueling, a military insider said. A tanker variant for the Y-20 is now under development, the expert who is familiar with the matter, told the *Global Times* on Sunday on the condition of anonymity. There were a series of reports over the past week, which claimed to have found a prototype for an aerial refueling version of the Y-20 in a commercial satellite photo in Yanliang Airport in Xi'an, capital of Northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

China is in urgent need of an aerial refueling tanker that has a larger fuel capacity than the HU-6, a tanker developed from the H-6 bomber, for its air force to become a strategic one, said the expert, noting that aerial refueling enables a fighter jet to fly much farther without landing and reach more distant targets. The J-20, China's most advanced stealth fighter jet, is able to receive aerial refueling, China Central Television (CCTV) reported earlier this month.

China's Y-20, a domestically made 200 ton-class large multi-purpose transport aircraft, is of similar size to the Russian Il-76 transport aircraft, on which the Il-78 is based, he said. The aircraft began services in the People's Liberation Army Air Force in 2016, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

The fact that the Y-20 is domestically built means that Chinese developers can make alterations relatively easy and makes it a platform to develop more variants, the expert said. China is experienced in making variants from transport aircraft in the past, reports said. China modified the Y-9 transport aircraft into an early warning plane, patrol aircraft and anti-submarine aircraft, according to a CCTV report on Saturday.

The expert noted that it is also possible that China could make more Y-20 variants, noting that an early warning aircraft might be the most feasible one given the Y-20's size and endurance.

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2019



FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES OFFICE:
OVER 30 YEARS OF FOREIGN PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

New Main Battle Tank Unveiled By China

OE Watch Commentary: The Chinese military recently confirmed at an exhibit at the National Museum of China that it has a new lighter-weight tank, the Type 15, in development. The accompanying excerpted article notes the new tank’s suitability for amphibious and airborne operations, both missions that are seeing greater emphasis in the PLA. Much of China’s southern areas are unsuitable for the heavier Type 96 and Type 99 main battle tanks (MBTs). In an amphibious role the Type 15 would likely be used by the PLA Navy Marine Corps [海军陆战队], which has seen rapid expansion, including the establishment of several new brigades. In this role, it would be used alongside the Marines’ current inventory of amphibious tanks. Popular publications in China have also speculated on Chinese Landing Craft Air Cushion’s and other hovercraft’s ability to carry Type 15s.

For China’s Airborne forces, the Type 15 would represent a significant increase in the firepower available to their units. While it is unclear how many Type 15s could be carried by China’s Y-20 or other transport aircraft, the speculation in the article makes it clear that it is meant to be airlift-capable and potentially airdropped. The Chinese Air Forces’ Airborne Corps currently fields the much lighter ZBD-03 air droppable light tank. The models displayed in Beijing showed a combination of reactive frontal armor and slat armor. NORINCO, one of China’s main state-owned defense companies, previously displayed an export-focused VT-5 that shares many characteristics with the Type 15. The Type 15 appears to be filling an important niche between China’s heavier Type 99 and Type 96 MBTs on the one hand, and its light tank and armored personnel carrier forces. The potential for inclusion in rapid-reaction airborne and amphibious forces make it a strong candidate for inclusion in modernizing PLA units **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



	Weight (tons)	Length (meters)	Height (meters)	Speed (km/hr)	Crew	Main Gun (mm)	Engine (hp)	Power-to-weight ratio	Range (km)
Type 15	35	9.2	2.5	70	3	105	1000	27-30 ⁱ	450
Type 88	39	9.3/6.3	2.3	57	4	105	730	19	430
Type 96	42	10.7	2.3	57	3	125	780	18	600
Type 99	54	11/7.3	2.4	70	3	125	1200	24	450

ⁱAll statistics estimates from open sources



Continued: New Main Battle Tank Unveiled By China

“Two scaled models for the Type 15 were displayed at the National Museum of China as part of a grand exhibition to mark the 40th anniversary of the country’s reform and opening-up in Beijing.”

Source: “Light-weight Type 15 better suited for mountain warfare, island landing,” *Global Times*, 25 November 2018.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1128943.shtml>

China has recently unveiled its new 30-ton-class light tank, the Type 15, with experts saying it can outperform other Chinese tanks in combat operations in plateau areas like Tibet while also holding advantages in island landing missions.

Two scaled models for the Type 15 were displayed at the National Museum of China as part of a grand exhibition to mark the 40th anniversary of the country’s reform and opening-up in Beijing.

Wei Dongxu, a Beijing-based military analyst, told the Global Times on Sunday that “the Type 15 is equipped with a 105-millimeter main gun capable of firing armor-piercing rounds and gun-launched missiles, making its firepower not much inferior to a heavier main battle tank.”

Compared with the Type 99 and Type 96, two main battle tanks in service of the People’s Liberation Army, the Type 15 is significantly lighter, weighing about 32-35 tons, Wei said, noting that its engine can provide 1,000 horsepower driving force.

...Another military expert, who asked not to be named, told the Global Times on Sunday that the tank is a great choice for China’s southern area, given its mountainous terrain there.

The Type 15 can also be quickly deployed in Southwest China’s Tibet Autonomous Region if border dispute reoccurs, the expert said. He referred the Type 15’s light weight as advantage when compared with heavier ones in the past. Although the Type 15 was spotted several times by Chinese citizens in the past, this is the first time that China officially introduced its latest light tank. Although the Type 15 was spotted several times by Chinese citizens in the past, this is the first time that China officially introduced its latest light tank.

In July, a tank suspected to be a Type 15, which was painted with naval camouflage was photographed in China at an unknown location. The photo sparked discussions among military observers, with some saying that China could deploy the tank when there is a need to seize an island.

Wei said that the light-weight Type 15 can be transported to an island via landing ships, as the tank can provide strong fire support and cover for infantry.

After gaining ground on the shore, a tank like Type 15 can work better than an amphibious tank when charging into deeper areas due to its higher mobility, Wei noted. The anonymous military expert stressed that the tank can be used in a potential landing operation in case force has to be used to keep Chinese territory integrated.

Wei highlighted the fact that the tank is so light, it is possible for transport aircraft to airlift it to the frontline. Although a traditional airdrop might be difficult, the transport aircraft can fly low and slowly and drop the tank protected by large parachutes, Wei said.

Boasting a similar 105-millimeter main gun, the 30-ton-class VT-5 made by China North Industries Group Corporation is a made-for-export light tank that is also compatible with various types of terrain.



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>



Progress in Chinese Indigenous Attack and Reconnaissance UAVs

OE Watch Commentary: China has been making rapid progress in recent years in the development of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) systems. During the recent 12th China Air Show in Zhuhai, the country finally unveiled its much anticipated Gongji-2 (GJ-2), an integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV. Published in *Xinhua* nearly three weeks after the conclusion of the air show, the accompanying excerpted article offers more detail and possible insight into the GJ-2's capabilities.

According to the report, the GJ-2 (developed by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China's Chengdu Aircraft Design Institute) is an upgraded model of the Gongji-1 (GJ-1), which was displayed during the 2014 China Air Show. The GJ-1 was the first Chinese-made integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV. The report explains that the GJ-2 UAV has a greatly improved propulsion, detection performance, and weapons load capacity. It features synthetic aperture radar, an opto-electronic pod, and an electronic reconnaissance system, all of which allow it to acquire more complete information on its target. It can fly continuously for 20 hours at altitudes of 9,000 meters above sea level and has the capacity to carry up to 12 small missiles underneath its wings, making it an ideal choice in conducting border patrol, according to the article.

In earlier reports, there was confusion about the difference between the GJ-2 and another UAV, the Wing Loong II. Some of these reports had stated that the Wing Loong II had successfully completed its first maiden voyage in October. The Wing Loong II, however, according to this article, is likely the export version of the GJ-2. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Li Guowei and Li Wei, “攻击-2型无人机可以用来干什么 (What Can the Gongji-2 UAV Be Used For?)” *Xinhua*, 29 November 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2018-11/29/c_1210005173.htm

The Gongji-2 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) made its debut at the 12th China air show, held not long ago, attracting everyone's attention. The Gongji-2 is a medium and high altitude, long endurance, integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV system researched and built by China on its own. It is an important piece of equipment for China as it carries out border patrols and fights terrorism.

At the 2014 China air show the Chinese Air Force displayed openly for the first time the Gongji-1 integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV. That aircraft was the first Chinese-made integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV, and it has performed outstandingly in joint anti-terrorism exercises. The Gongji-2 UAV is a high-end integrated reconnaissance and attack UAV researched and built by Aviation Industry Corporation of China's Chengdu Aircraft Design Institute. Compared with the Gongji-1, the Gongji-2 UAV is greatly improved in terms of propulsion, detection performance, and ability to carry things.

The Gongji-2 UAV ... can fly as fast as 370km/h, at a maximum altitude of 9,000 meters.

The mission systems of the Gongji-2 UAV include synthetic aperture radar, an opto-electronic pod, and an electronic reconnaissance system. It can acquire more complete information about a target, thus providing the commander a more complete basis for a decision. Compared with the Gongji-1, the Gongji-2 UAV can carry more weapons and attack more targets, and it can carry heavier weapons and attack targets with strong defenses. There are six weapon suspension points underneath the wings of the Gongji-2 UAV, and at most it can carry 12 small missiles. The additional external suspension capability gives the Gongji-2 greater striking power.

The Gongji-2 UAV ... is capable of flying on its own. It can fly continuously for 20 hours carrying opto-electronic/infrared reconnaissance equipment, and it can conduct omnidirectional reconnaissance and surveillance of a combat area. Patrolling our country's borders involves long patrol lines, high altitudes above sea level, severely cold and changeable weather, and adverse natural environments.

“Compared with the Gongji-1, the Gongji-2 UAV can carry more weapons and attack more targets, and it can carry heavier weapons and attack targets with strong defenses.”



Wing Loong II side view, Dubai Air Show 2017.

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



A Chinese Perspective on U.S. Force Reductions

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 December, the military news section of *sina.com* published the accompanying excerpted Chinese-language article presenting an opinion on the US reduction of forces in Africa. The article makes the point that the US is planning to reduce the total number of its personnel in Africa by 10 percent. However, it suggests this move is only cosmetic, because the US is not intending to reduce the number of operations it carries out. Therefore, the available, but reduced number of US personnel will be responsible for more operations per individual. The article notes the overall purpose of this decision is to allow for greater US military efficiency.

At the same time, the article stated the US is a lone military superpower, but that it has been unable to score military successes, such as in Syria, and that it has military budget concerns, which also drives the reduction of forces in Africa. The article also sees a clash between the White House and the US military. According to the article, the president's decision to raise military spending after initially intending to cut it has led to internal tensions that have reduced the military's prestige.

While the article recognizes the US military has advantages over Russia and China, such as being able to use its own or allied countries' military bases throughout the world, it argues the US has a broader strategy aimed at Russia and China. The author indicates that US officials' confrontational statements about Russia and China are intended to compensate for military shortcomings. It also cites the NATO Trident military exercises in Norway in October and November 2018 as examples of the US seeking to deter Russia. The article reflects a Chinese perspective, whereby China and Russia are rivals of the US military and face similar pressures. The US military's reduction of forces in Africa is evidently also seen in light of such competition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “美军新司令未上任先大放厥词：下一步就是对抗中俄 (The new U.S. military commander has not taken the lead in big nonsense: the next step is to take on China and Russia),” *mil.news.sina.com.cn*, 10 December 2018. <https://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2018-12-10/doc-ihprknvu0363380.shtml>

The U.S. strategic focus has turned to confronting powerful competitors (China and Russia), so special forces still need to exist. Richard Clarke, who was in high spirits, attended a congressional hearing and pointed out that the Special Operations Command must make full use of its various conditions to deal with countries that may pose a threat. If it is possible to develop a strategy that meets U.S. guidelines but can cope with individual threats through its various theater special warfare commands, this will enable the command to confront China and Russia. Clarke also added that U.S. special forces can engage in global warfare through the bases of allies, thus providing the U.S. with a unique military advantage (to fight against China and Russia).

Even if the United States decides to cut about 10% of its African forces, this would be part of the broader strategy of the U.S. military to turn its attention to competitors such as China and Russia. The plan to reduce the total number of non-U.S. troops will not result in a reduction in the total number of U.S. military operations in the local areas. The purpose is to increase the efficiency of the US military operations.

Successive high-ranking U.S. military officials have attacked China and Russia, showing that the U.S. government intends to adopt a more radical military policy to deal with various issues related to China and Russia. The reason for this is that the overall poor performance of the U.S. military forces in recent times has damaged the image of the “lone global superpower”.

Trump has suddenly violated his promise by increasing military spending after at the beginning of the road demanding a large-scale reduction in military spending. This has caused strong dissatisfaction with the military. This kind of “internal conflict” has greatly reduced the prestige of the US military. Therefore, it is necessary for the U.S. military to “save face” by showing “strength” to China and Russia.

“Therefore, it is necessary for the US military to ‘maintain image’ by showing ‘strength’ to China and Russia.”



中非合作论坛第七届部长级会议

7th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation

7^e Conférence Ministérielle du Forum sur la Coopération Sino-Africaine

Beijing, 2 September 2018

2018年9月2日 北京

Beijing, 2 Septembre 2018



The 7th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Beijing.

Source: Flickr (South African Government Online website), <https://www.flickr.com/people/governmentza/>, CC2.0. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/>).



Type 99A Main Battle Tank's Capabilities on Display

OE Watch Commentary: The Type 99A is an improved variant of the Type 99, China's most advanced and expensive main battle tank (MBT) developed in the 1980s. The accompanying excerpts feature an interview with Captain Jia Yuanyou, a Deputy Commander of a Tank Battalion at an unidentified regiment of the Central Theater Command, about the Type 99A. Jia has previously been lauded as an outstanding armor soldier [铁甲兵王], and given the honor of serving as representative to China's 18th National People's Congress in 2012.

The interview highlights what appears to be redesigned elements of the tank more familiar to those driving cars, with a steering wheel/yoke replacing older tanks' dual-lever system and a stick-shift transmission capable of manual or automatic modes. The pedals also follow a traditional car layout with gas and brake pedals. Jia also praised the 99A's superior mobility, including the ability to tackle higher grades and taller obstacles.

One of the most interesting comments during the interview is Captain Jia's assessment of the Type 99A's armor. He notes that the 99A's combination of traditional armor, an unspecified composite mix and reactive armor bricks, has a performance equivalent to more than 1000mm. Contextually, this appears to mean 1000mm of rolled homogeneous armor (RHA), a standard reference for armor thickness in tanks.

While Chinese armor units appear to be adopting the less-powerful Type 96B MBT due to its lower cost-per-unit, the continued improvements to the Type 99 indicate that the Chinese government still has big plans for its armored units. As they become more fully integrated into combined arms brigades across China (a major cultural and organizational shift from previous division-level units), MBTs will continue to be a major part of the PLA ground forces' strength. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Our reactive armor makes our tank's protective performance against armor piercing and armor-piercing reach more than 1000 mm.”



ZTZ-99A MBT.

Source: Tyg728 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ZTZ-99A_MBT_20170902.jpg.

Source: “[中国新闻] “零距离” 体验中国最先进主战坦克——99A主战坦克 | CCTV中文国际 ([China News] Face-to-Face with China's Most Advanced Main Battle Tank—the Type 99A),” *CCTV-13*, 9 November 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u2IMmpEx5w>

(Translator's Note: This is an interview aired on CCTV-13 on 9 November 2018. The interviewer and CCTV host Wang Yan is being introduced to the Type 99A MBT by Captain Jia Yuanyou, a Deputy Commander of a Tank Battalion at an unidentified regiment of the Central Theater Command.)

Jia Yuanyou: *Our [Type] 99A Tank is equipped with an advanced integrated electronic information systems. This system gives our tank internal and external command communication capabilities, cooperation and target search and attack control capability and the real-time acquisition of our battlefield situation.*

Wang Yan: *Captain Jia, we've just discussed information capabilities. Can you explain a little about [the tank's] firepower? The 125mm smoothbore cannon in front of us represents the main firepower of the tank, correct?*

Jia Yuanyou: *In fact, the most advanced is the fire control system of our tank vehicle just mentioned. This fire control system gives us the ability to fire regardless of whether the target is moving or stopped, and the gun has high elevation and pitch capabilities, as well as full 360 degree rotation.*

Wang Yan: *Captain Jia, you introduced us to firepower and information power. Can you introduce the armor protection of the 99A?*

Jia Yuanyou: *In general, the protection of our tanks in the traditional sense is based on armor. The armor of the 99A tank has the body armor of the tank itself and a layer of composite armor...*

[Wang Yan and Jia Yuanyou duck inside the tank]

Wang Yan: *Can you give us a brief introduction to the layout of the tank?*

Jia Yuanyou: *The small steering wheel in front of you is the steering of the tank. The previous tank used our traditional [dual lever] control system. Then on the right side of your body this is our shift lever. It has two modes, manual or automatic. Foot pedals control the throttle speed and brakes. In fact, it is just like operating a personal car. The engine of our 99A tank is very powerful, dramatically increasing the off-road performance of the tank. Its climbing performance, including the angles and height of obstacles it can climb are much higher than our old tanks.*



India Building up Its Naval Fleet to Counter Chinese Encroachment?

OE Watch Commentary: China-India relations have been strained by border disputes and economic competition throughout the past few decades. While it seems that tensions have eased lately, there are still some signs of distrust, which seem to be prompting India to build up its naval fleet. In June 2017, both countries were locked in a tense standoff at Doklam, which lasted 73 days. Doklam is a disputed area between China and Bhutan, but in which India supports Bhutan's claim. Months later, China and India planned to embark on their 7th India-China joint military exercise. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from India's *Tribune* explains, the exercise was postponed after China, which was hosting the exercise, backed out due to the Doklam standoff still being fresh in everyone's minds. Most recently, according to media reports, the two-week exercise was supposed to kick off on 10 December in Kunming, in southeast China.

There have been other signs that tensions have eased. For example, according to the article from *India TV News Online*, since the standoff, China and India have held discussions about setting up a military hotline to avert a Doklam-like crisis in the future. Also, according to the article from *The New Indian Express*, India resumed an exchange program that allowed military personnel to participate in military courses. This program had been discontinued following the stand-off.

Despite these and other signs of tensions easing, the excerpted article from the Russia-based *Sputnik* reports how in October 2018 India spotted a Chinese submarine for the first time since the Doklam standoff, prompting the Indian government to question China's stated motive that the deployment of its warships in the Indian Ocean are primarily in support of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The submarine, which could have been a Type 039A Yuan-class submarine, is believed to have stayed in the area for one month. This has fueled India's desire to modernize its fleet and, according to the article, the government has approved 56 ships and submarines, on top of 32 ships and submarines that are currently under construction. It will be interesting to see how things progress and whether future signs of the thawing of tensions appear or if China's perceived encroachment on the Indian Ocean lights a new flame of concern. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: "First Drill with China Post Doklam," *The Tribune*, 23 November 2018. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/first-drill-with-china-post-doklam/687679.html>

India and China have finally firmed up dates for resumption of their bilateral military exercise 'Hand-in-hand', with the two-week drill set to kick off at Kunming in south-east China on December 10.

The Indian Army will be represented by the 11th battalion of the Sikh Light Infantry. The exercise was originally planned in October-November last year, but China backed out in May following the 73-day (June 16-August 28) Doklam standoff. China was to be the host, as per an arrangement to conduct it in each country by rotation. India had hosted it in 2016.

Source: IANS Beijing, "China, India to Hold Two-Week Military Drill From December 10," *India TV News Online*, 29 November 2018. <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world-china-india-to-hold-two-week-military-drill-from-dec-10-487896>

...Both sides are in talks to set up a military hotline to avert Doklam-like crisis in the future...

Source: "In Sign of Thaw, Chinese Army Officer Trains at Indian Defence Institute," *The New Indian Express*, 5 December 2018. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2018/dec/05/in-sign-of-thaw-chinese-army-officer-trains-at-indian-defence-institute-1907443.html>

In a sign of improved India-China ties, a senior Colonel of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is currently in India for a year-long course in military management... India and China have exchanged personnel for courses in their military establishments but it was discontinued after a trust deficit between the two countries, especially after the 73-day stand-off in Doklam, Bhutan, last year.

Source: "Chinese Submarine Tracked in the Indian Ocean in October – Indian Navy Chief," *Sputnik News*, 3 December 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201812031070345367-india-china-indian-ocean/>

China has maintained that its deployment of warships in the Indian Ocean is primarily to support anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. However, ever since October, when a Chinese submarine was spotted for the first time since the Doklam stand-off last year, India has chosen to view its activity with caution.

Though the present number of Chinese warships in the region is about half of the 14 which were present during the Doklam stand-off last year, 50 Indian Navy ships have remained on alert to secure the safety of India's maritime domain, as part of the country's mission-based deployment. The Indian Navy has a dominant position in the Indian Ocean region...

"The government has approved 56 ships and submarines. Some of these will replace the existing fleet and include new ships like fleet ships, submarines, and mine sweepers," (Indian Navy Chief) Admiral (Sunil) Lanba stated.

“Though the present number of Chinese warships in the region is about half of the 14 which were present during the Doklam stand-off last year, 50 Indian Navy ships have remained on alert to secure the safety of India's maritime domain.”



Is India's Nuclear Triad Complete?

OE Watch Commentary: The Indian Navy's INS *Arihant* received a lot of attention as the first of its namesake class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines when it entered service in 2016. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss the role the INS *Arihant* will continue to play after the Indian government recently announced that the submarine completed its first deterrence patrol. The article from *The Indian Express*, an English-language daily newspaper, mentions how the Indian government already has the “capability to deliver nuclear weapons both from land and from air” and that with the *Arihant*, it “can now also do so from under water.” The author of the article also notes how a “substantial element of the work in developing and equipping this submarine was undertaken in India, by Indians, and accordingly it has a very substantial indigenous component.” The author also points out that the *Arihant* “does not constitute any shift in India's approach towards nuclear weapons” and the Indian government did not change its policy of “no first use of nuclear weapons.”

The article from *The Print*, an English-language news website in India, provides another perspective of the role and capabilities of the *Arihant* following the first deterrence patrol. While the author recognizes the development as “a commendable achievement,” he also mentions how the Russian government “provided the nuclear reactor design” and believes the Indian government's goals of a nuclear triad are not fully realized. He notes how the country's navy “would need at least three boats in the *Arihant* class to ensure at least one is on patrol at any given time” and that “the 750 kms weapon range of the K-15 missile on India's SSBN isn't enough to target Pakistan and China.” The author also points out that the diesel-electric and air-independent powered “Project 75 Scorpene class submarines are almost six years behind schedule” and sees the *Arihant* as having “little utility in a conventional conflict.” Overall, there are plans to continue production of a few more *Arihant* class submarines and while it would provide the Indian government the capability to have a constant deterrence patrol, the status of other submarines in the fleet could be worth watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Smt. Gursharan Kaur, wife of the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh breaking the auspicious coconut on the hull of the 6,000 tonne submarine, INS *Arihant* marking its launch, at Visakhapatnam on July 26, 2009.

Source: Prime Minister's Office (GODL-India) [GODL-India (https://data.gov.in/sites/default/files/Gazette_Notification_OGDL.pdf)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Smt._Gursharan_Kaur,_wife_of_the_Prime_Minister,_Dr._Manmohan_Singh_breaking_the_auspicious_coconut_on_the_hull_of_the_6,000_tonne_submarine_INS_Arihant_marking_its_launch_at_Visakhapatnam_on_July_26,_2009.jpg

(continued)



Continued: Is India's Nuclear Triad Complete?

“The self-complementary tenor of messaging, however, does not obscure the reality that India's sea-based leg is still some distance away from turning credible.”

Source: Satish Chandra, “The Trinity Of Power,” *The Indian Express*, 19 November 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/ins-arihant-nuclear-submarine-deterrence-the-trinity-of-power-national-security-china-pakistan-5452616/>

...it demonstrates that India, apart from its capability to deliver nuclear weapons both from land and from air, can now also do so from under water...the Arihant's successful nuclear deterrence patrol signifies India's attainment of complete mastery over all the highly complex systems and procedures entailed in operating the sea leg of the triad...The validation of the scores of procedures and system checks intrinsic to the sea leg of the triad is a cause of great satisfaction. Clearly, the nuclear deterrence patrol signifies India having come off age as a mature nuclear-armed state.

...It is also gratifying that a substantial element of the work in developing and equipping this submarine was undertaken in India, by Indians, and accordingly it has a very substantial indigenous component. The Arihant is believed to be the first in a series of six submarines. These will form the core of India's sea-based nuclear deterrent and constitute a potent and formidable weapons system which will ensure national security. It is a given that with the serial production of Arihant-type submarines, there will be an even higher element of indigenisation.

In conclusion, it may be underlined that the Arihant's nuclear deterrence patrol does not constitute any shift in India's approach towards nuclear weapons.

As per its nuclear doctrine, India remains committed to “the goal of a nuclear weapon free world, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament”, to no first use of nuclear weapons, and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states...

Source: Abhijit Singh, “INS Arihant is a strategic asset but has little utility for India in conventional conflict,” *The Print*, 14 November 2018. <https://theprint.in/opinion/ins-arihant-is-a-strategic-asset-but-has-little-utility-for-india-in-conventional-conflict/149283/>

Modi govt's self-complimentary message on INS Arihant does not obscure the fact that the submarine alone isn't enough...This is, to begin, a commendable achievement. It was in the early 1980s that Indian engineers and scientists first began research and development on a reactor for a nuclear submarine. The Advanced Technology Vehicle (ATV) was planned to be a technology demonstrator — an indigenous undertaking in which Indian planners would have little help, except from Russia that provided the nuclear reactor design...

From a strategic standpoint, two aspects about the Arihant's first deterrent patrol are noteworthy. First, it moves the nation a step closer to actualising the ‘triad’... Second, the sea-based leg of the triad is the hardest to operationalise, not just organisationally and financially — given the huge investment needed to deliver the SSBN — but also in terms of validating command, control, and communications procedures, critical in the launching of nuclear weapons...

The self-complementary tenor of messaging, however, does not obscure the reality that India's sea-based leg is still some distance away from turning credible. The Indian navy would need at least three boats in the Arihant class to ensure at least one is on patrol at any given time. Moreover, the 750 kms weapon range of the K-15 missile on India's SSBN isn't enough to target Pakistan and China. New Delhi will have to wait for the installation of the K-4 missile (3,500 kms range) on the Arihant, and the induction of the bigger, more capable platforms (S-3, S-4 and S-5) to be able to claim credible deterrence. Already there is speculation that there may have been no nuclear weapons onboard Arihant during the deterrent patrol. With India's nuclear warheads firmly in the custody of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) scientists, many observers remain unconvinced the former were mated with missiles before start of the deterrent patrol.

Whatever the truth about the Arihant's recent mission, the fact is that India's SSBN program is pressurising Pakistan into nuclearising its conventional undersea fleet...Yet, the dominant driver of India's SSBN plans appears to be China's expanding inventory of nuclear submarines. The PLAN has operationalised the Jin class (Type 94) with the JL-2 (7,400 kms range) missile, with the submarine reportedly completing its first deterrent patrol in 2015.

...Indian security planners must also decide if they need a continuous at sea deterrent or a system of ‘bastion control’ wherein the SSBN with long-range missiles is deployed in heavily defended home-waters. Amidst the celebrations following the Arihant's first patrolling mission, it is ironical that the Indian navy's tactical war fighting fleet of diesel-electric submarines continues to languish. The Project 75 Scorpene class submarines are almost six years behind schedule and the follow on Project 75-I is yet to take off. It's worth pointing out that as useful a strategic asset as the Arihant is, it has little utility in a conventional conflict.

Unfortunately, Indian policy makers who frequently extol India's SSBN capability, pay little attention to the crisis of numbers in India's war fighting undersea fleet.



Vietnamese Media Reports on VP Pence's South China Sea Visit

OE Watch Commentary: On 13 November US Vice President, Mike Pence, flew over the South China Sea on the way from Japan to Singapore after attending the East Asian Summit. This did not go unnoticed by the media in Vietnam, whose Vietnamese-language publication, *VnExpress*, published the accompanying excerpted article about Pence's travel. The article reported that Pence's travel route was related to a stronger stance that the US was taking against unilateral Chinese military actions in the South China Sea. The article then quoted Pence, who stated after the flight that the US will exercise its freedom of navigation. Among other Pence quotes, the article also noted that in October he criticized China for bringing warships close to US destroyers in the South China Sea. The article makes clear that Pence supports a US policy that challenges China's claims to sovereignty over 90 percent of the South China Sea and therefore the article writes approvingly of his statements and flight route decision.

In addition, the article reinforces that Vietnam has always claimed sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos in the South China Sea and that in contrast to China, it has always respected international law in those areas. The article also states that Vietnam has urged other countries to follow this example and contribute to the peace, stability, and fulfillment of international law in the South China Sea. The tone of the article, therefore, is supportive of the rhetoric and actions of the US Vice President during his travel in Southeast Asia. This is not surprising, however, because when it comes to geopolitics and security in the South China Sea, the US and Vietnamese positions are mostly aligned. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Phó tổng thống Mỹ bay qua đảo nhân tạo Trung Quốc bồi đắp ở Trường Sa (Vice President of the United States flying over the artificial islands of China in the Spratly Islands),” *VnExpress*, 15 November 2018. <https://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/the-gioi/pho-tong-thong-my-bay-qua-dao-nhan-tao-trung-quoc-boi-dap-o-truong-sa-3839312.html>

On the way from Japan to Singapore for the East Asia Summit (EAS), U.S. Vice President Mike Pence flew over the South China Sea and rightfully encroached over Chinese artificial islands in the Spratly Islands. The U.S. vice president said “We will not be intimidated and will continue to exercise our freedom of navigation.” The news came as the U.S. is taking a firmer stance on China’s unilateral military action in the South China Sea. Mr. Pence in October warned the U.S. not to step back from the threat posed by China in the South China Sea and criticized Beijing for bringing warships close to Washington destroyers.

China claims sovereignty over 90% of the South China Sea by drawing “illegal lines” and carrying out military development activities in the Spratly Islands. The U.S. criticized these actions, while asserting maritime freedom in the South China Sea under international law. Vietnam has always claimed sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos, respecting the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea in accordance with international law.





Malaysia Arrests ISIS-Connected Abu Sayyaf Members

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 November the Malaysian language website *merdeka.com* published the accompanying excerpted article, which details Malaysia's arrests of eight terrorism suspects from diverse backgrounds. According to the article, six of them were members of Abu Sayyaf and seven were Filipinos. One of the Filipinos, a woman, was tasked with recruiting children to join the group as child soldiers, who would also be used as human shields. Two of the other Filipinos were also a construction worker and a technician and were, according to the article, involved in kidnappings and beheadings in Sabah, Malaysia and the southern Philippines. Three of the members who were arrested were also gun-runners for Abu Sayyaf, while another woman worked in a night market, but was arrested after allowing one of the other members stay at her house to avoid detection by the security forces. Lastly, one of the arrested members was a gold-dealer and had been sending money to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria before his arrest in Putrajaya near Kuala Lumpur. The operations to arrest them, according to the article, occurred after a September kidnapping incident of fishermen off the waters of Sabah, Malaysia and one of the members was significant enough to operate alongside Abu Sayyaf Furuji Indama.

The article provides a picture of terrorist activity that may defy common perception or a monolithic view of a terrorist. First, there are both men and women and adults and children involved. Second, there are both Filipinos and Malaysians. Third, they work in a variety of professions. In addition, the article demonstrates that terrorists in Malaysia and the Philippines depend on being able to blend and integrate into local society and networks. Locating and arresting them within that milieu, as occurred in the case of these eight militants, is therefore of paramount importance to the security forces in Malaysia and the Philippines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Police said that a Filipina captured in Ranau, Sabah, was tasked with recruiting children to be human shields.”

Source: “Polisi Malaysia Tangkap 8 Tersangka Teroris, Termasuk Anggota Abu Sayyaf (Malaysian Police Arrest 8 Suspected Terrorists, Including Abu Sayyaf Members),” *merdeka.com*, 16 November 2018. <https://www.merdeka.com/dunia/polisi-malaysia-tangkap-8-tersebut-teroris-termasuk-anggota-abu-sayyaf.html>

Malaysian police arrested eight suspected terrorists, of which six were members of the Abu Sayyaf Group. Fuzi Harun said that the eight were arrested in a raid by a police officer from the anti-terrorist division between 30 October and 12 November in Sabah and Putrajaya. Seven terrorists were Filipinos and one was Malaysian. Police said that a Filipina captured in Ranau, Sabah, was tasked with recruiting children to be human shields.

The man working at the construction site was arrested in an operation that also seized another suspect in the Abu Sayyaf Group from the Philippines, also 46 years old and a technician. Both men were also involved in abduction activities for ransom in Sabah and the Southern Philippines. In addition, another Abu Sayyaf member, aged 30, was arrested in Kinarut, Sabah. He is a group commander and right arm of the group leader, Furuji Indama, police said.

Three other Abu Sayyaf suspects, aged between 27 and 51 and worked as laborers and were arrested in Tenom, Sabah. A 38-year-old Malaysian, who works as a gold dealer, was also arrested in Putrajaya for channeling funds to a member of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Akel Zainal, in 2017 to fund terrorism. The arrests took place after their action on September 11 involved in the abduction of two Indonesian fishermen in offshore waters off Sabah.



Ranau Sabah Masjid.

Source: Photo by CEphoto, Uwe Aranas / https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ranau_Sabah_Masjid-03.jpg.



The Knotted Future of the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) continues to be a uniquely important faction on the Syrian battlefield (for more background, see: “Turkistan Islamic Party Makes its Mark on the Syrian Rebellion,” *OE Watch*, June 2016; “Turkistan Islamic Party Benefiting from Syrian War Dynamics,” *OE Watch*, September 2017). Having played a key role in helping anti-government fighters seize control of Idlib Province, the Uighur jihadists have now settled in fertile, strategically located parts of Idlib and neighboring Lattakia Province, near the Turkish border. With heightened regional tensions and a growing array of international actors invested in Idlib’s fate, the TIP has become more relevant than ever.

Syria is not intended to be the TIP’s final resting point: China’s Xinjiang Province is their homeland and their mission is to “liberate” it from Beijing. In the summer of 2018, it appeared as if TIP fighters and other Central Asian jihadists would leave Syria (see: “Central Asia: Next Stop for Syria’s Foreign Jihadists?” *OE Watch*, August 2018). Since then, the Chinese government’s intensified crackdown on Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang and the Russia-Turkey Sochi agreement to partially freeze Idlib’s status likely shifted the calculus of Uighur jihadists residing in Idlib. In early December 2018, the pro-Hezbollah Lebanese news channel *al-Mayadeen* aired a report claiming that the TIP had declared an “Emirate” in parts of Syria under its control (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUyKZ8Lgd4A>). Perhaps they intend to stay after all.

In early October the *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)*, which throughout the Syrian conflict has been the main source for information from the opposition perspective, published a detailed look (excerpts of which accompany this) at how the TIP has settled in Syria. The strategic town of Jisr al-Shughur has become their base, and sections of the fertile surrounding countryside are also under their control. According to local sources, the TIP sustains itself through farming, trade, looting of former regime-held areas and land grants from its main ally, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the latest incarnation of al-Qaeda’s Syrian presence and Idlib’s most powerful armed group. The report claims that the TIP’s competing with local Syrian farmers has bred resentment, as have their checkpoints and prohibition on gathering firewood in areas under their control. They have gained Syrian adherents, though their attempts to marry into local families and integrate more generally have not been altogether successful.

According to the *SOHR*, “The TIP’s deepest and strongest relationship is with Turkish intelligence and government” and TIP fighters guard Turkish convoys and help secure Turkish observation points surrounding Idlib. The third accompanying excerpted article, from the Qatari daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, lists some potential scenarios on the TIP’s future, all of them volatile and knotted in geopolitical complexity. The worse of bad options, the article’s author believes, involves a Syrian-Russian-Iranian decision to seek a “military solution” in Idlib, leading to a grinding and bloody battle with the TIP and other armed factions in Idlib, with strong and uncertain regional repercussions and disastrous consequences for the province’s civilians.

The third accompanying excerpted article, from Saudi Arabia’s *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, speculates that before TIP jihadists return to Xinjiang, China may come to them. The main threat for China, the article’s author argues, “is not the return of the Uighur extremists to their land but rather their targeting Chinese targets outside of China and throughout the world.” Were China to become heavily invested in Syrian reconstruction, Chinese military engagement with the TIP in Syrian territory seems plausible. The article cites declarations made by China’s ambassador in Damascus to the pro-regime Syrian newspaper *al-Watan* last August, in which he stated: “We know that fighting terrorism and Syria’s battle against terrorism is not only in the Syrian people’s interest but also in the interests of the Chinese people and the world as a whole. There has been good cooperation between our armies in fighting terrorists throughout the world, including terrorists coming from China. This cooperation will continue between the militaries and the involved agencies.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

(continued)



“Islamic Turkistan” - Turkistan Islamic Party Online Publication.
Source: jihadology website, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/turkistacc84n-al-islacc84micc84yyah-magazine-24.pdf>.



Continued: The Knotted Future of the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria

“...The main threat for China is not the return of the Uighur extremists to their land but rather their targeting Chinese targets outside of China...”

Source:

الحزب التركستاني صديق جبهة النصرة

“The Turkistan Party: al-Nusra Front’s Friend,” *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights*, 7 October 2018. <http://www.syriaahr.com/?p=286816>

The city of Jisr al-Shughur has symbolic importance to the TIP, which has raised its flag in the city center since then until now. The TIP fighters continued coming into Syria in large numbers, via Turkey, until early 2016. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) monitored the arrival of many TIP fighters and according to SOHR activists they number around 7,000 fighters. Many Syrians joined them... The TIP is spread from Jisr al-Shughur and its western countryside to the Turkmen and Kurd Mountains in northern rural Latakia, as well as the al-Ghab Plain, including areas along the border with Alexandretta.... The TIP considered the mountain villages of al-Zanbaqi and Katrin safe, as its proximity to the border with Turkey kept it from air strikes and targeting... They began competing with Syrians over their livelihood and lands. Reliable sources told the SOHR that the TIP is active in trade, agriculture, and selling crops after gaining control over them, whether from people forcibly displaced by the battles in rural Jisr al-Shughur and the coastal mountains, or by obtaining them through Fatwas from the main partner, HTS. Trade and selling of crops has become a source of income and material support for the TIP in the area, in addition to “spoils” they obtained in previous battles in the al-Ghab Plain, the Latakia Mountains, and western rural Idlib. The last “spoils” came for Kefraya and Fua, which were inhabited by Shi’ites who were relocated by an international agreement... There is popular resentment in areas where the TIP is present given their competition for livelihoods and their involvement in people’s affairs, specifically the checkpoints spread throughout western rural Jisr al-Shughur and their forbidding civilians from taking tinder and firewood, as they fire on anyone seeking to do so. Meanwhile TIP members take tinder and firewood from the same spot, using it for heating or selling in the market... The TIP’s deepest and strongest relationship is with Turkish intelligence and government, after the latter facilitated and coordinated the TIP’s entry into Syrian territory via Turkish territory, in addition to the material and political assistance provided by Turkish authorities to the TIP, as well as their presence in areas bordering Turkey on the coastal mountains and western Idlib. In turn, the TIP protects Turkish convoys in the al-Ghab Plain, the coastal mountains, and western rural Idlib. The convoys are accompanied by vehicles with medium-caliber machine guns and many fighters. The TIP also protects some of the 12 Turkish observation points...

Source:

تنظيمات “القاعدة” وأخوانها في إدلب: “التركستاني” للانتقام من الصين

Adnan Ahmed. “Al-Qaeda and its Sisters in Idlib: al-Turkistani Seeks Revenge with China,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*. 15 October 2018. <https://goo.gl/ANsWFz>

In light of developments in Idlib and the Sochi agreement, the fate of the TIP is a thorny knot between a series of difficult choices: Will Turkey, for instance, accept them as humanitarian or political refugees once they have turned over their weapons, since it is impossible for them to return to China? Or will Ankara and Beijing sign an agreement whereby China must grant them the right to return and mass amnesty? Or an agreement to send them to a third location via Turkey? It is true that the TIP fighters and their families are not large in number, but this does not make their future any less complicated, given the near-impossibility of their blending into Syrian society, which is historically known for moderate Islam and tolerance, as well as due to their tendency toward isolation and preference to not mix with societies that are foreign to their culture, traditions and language. The final possibility is the most complicated, in that case that the Syrian government-Russia-Iran axis decides to pursue a military solution in areas where they are present and will face a scenario of suicide which they call martyrdom knowing that they are at full strength to do so. This is what is feared will extract a disastrous price from Syrian civilians and their remaining buildings and people in Syria’s north and west.

Source:

داعش يوقظ التنين الصيني حول العالم

“ISIS Awakens the Chinese Dragon Across the World,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 29 October 2018. <https://goo.gl/AVAeMa>

Analysts agree that since 2015, Chinese civilian and military delegations began flowing into Damascus in order to expand support for the Syrian regime. The Chinese Defense Ministry announced that it would help restore Syrian manpower, as well as providing humanitarian assistance... Last 11 August, Qi Qianjin, China’s ambassador in Damascus, told the pro-regime Syrian newspaper *al-Watan*: “We know that fighting terrorism and Syria’s battle against terrorism is not only in the Syrian people’s interest but also in the interests of the Chinese people and the world as a whole. There has been good cooperation between our armies in fighting terrorists throughout the world, including terrorists coming from China. This cooperation will continue between the militaries and the involved agencies.”

It appears that the presence of several thousand Uighurs in Idlib Province is making China speed up the adoption of quick military plans abroad, especially since the Uighur fighters’ political astuteness allows them to occupy the front ranks during battles to defend strategic cities in Idlib Province, such as Jisr al-Shughur and its surroundings. They are described as the Syrian opposition’s secret weapon, after they taught the regime a harsh lesson in fighting and now are in possession of many advanced weapons, such as anti-tank rockets which they obtained in places such as Jubb al-Ahmar, the highest point on the Kurd Mountain.

China’s battle in Syria might now in fact begin. The need for new Chinese power may now be directed toward different sites and issues. Intelligence reports suggest that “The main threat for China is not the return of the Uighur extremists to their land but rather their targeting Chinese targets outside of China and throughout the world.”



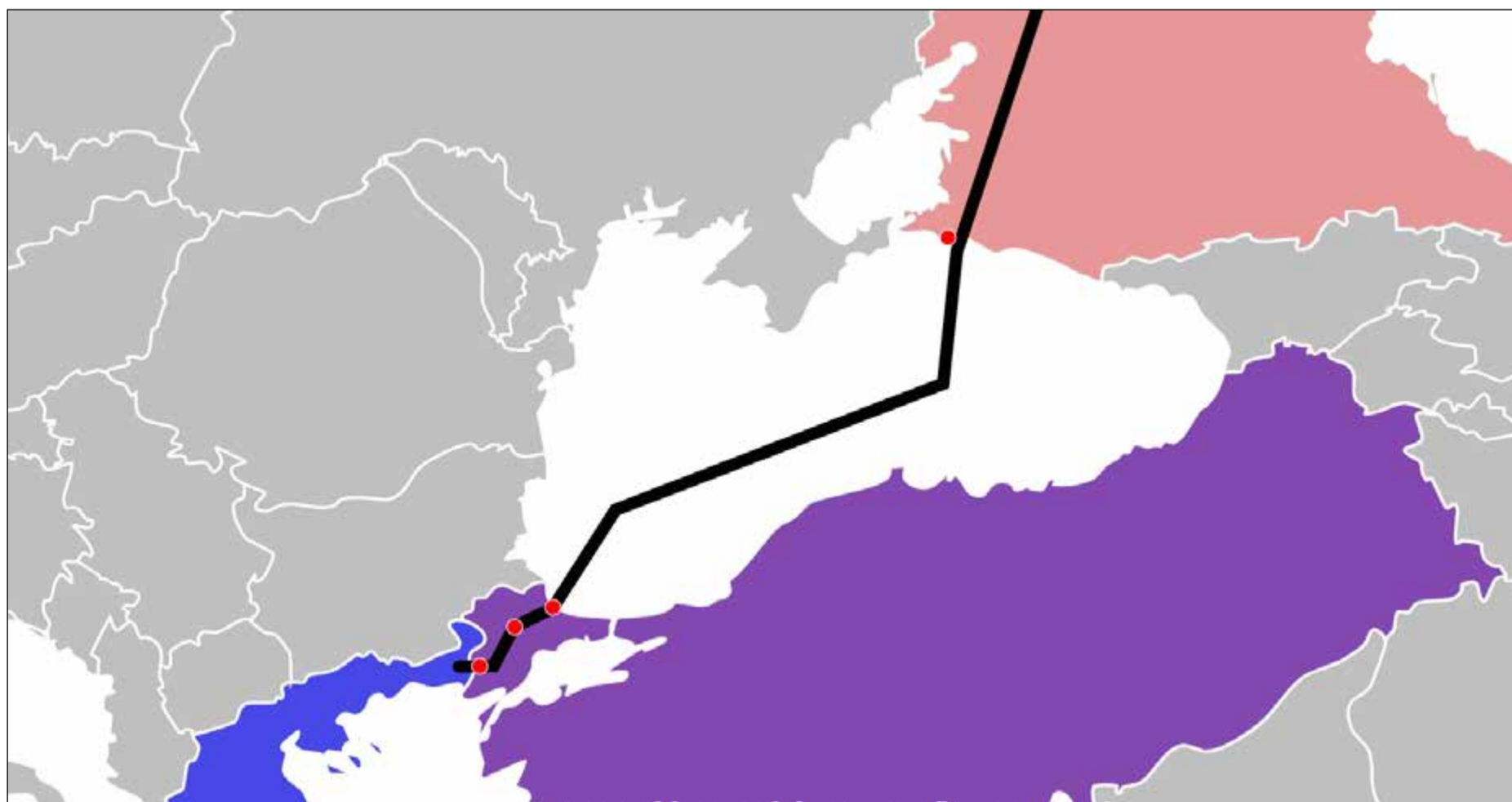
TurkStream and Turkish-Russian Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: The completion ceremony of the offshore section of the Turkish Stream Project (TurkStream), a pipeline project that will carry 31.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to Turkey and Europe, took place in Istanbul on 19 November 2018. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin were present at the ceremony and both praised growing bilateral relations. The pipeline begins at Anapa in Russia and delivers gas through the Black Sea basin to Kiyıköy in the Kırklareli province in northwestern Turkey and then on to Europe. The accompanying excerpted articles, both from *Hurriyet* (one is from the English-language *Hurriyet Daily News*), not only highlight the importance of TurkStream, but also provide insight into Turkish and Russian cooperation.

TurkStream will provide energy security to Turkey and some European countries. According to the first excerpted passage, the project consists of two parallel pipelines of slightly over 580 miles each. The first line was built for Turkish consumers and it is projected to provide “35 percent of Turkey’s natural gas consumption alone. The second is for gas supply to countries in southern and southeastern Europe.” The project was announced in December 2014 to replace the South Stream pipeline, a failed joint venture of the European Union (EU) and Russia. TurkStream will further boost Turkish-Russian cooperation as Russia’s market share in the Turkish natural gas imports will increase to 60 percent. Turkish officials are hopeful that it may also give Turkey an upper hand in its relations with the EU, as Turkey will have some control over the energy supply to it. The first delivery through the pipeline is expected to take place in December 2019.

The Turkish president, speaking at the ceremony, stated that “for us, Russia is a friend we can have long term cooperation with and is an important natural gas supplier.” The Turkish president further praised Turkish and Russian cooperation and signaled the possibility of bigger projects on the horizon. President Putin noted “TurkStream and the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant will be symbols of the development of relations between Turkey and Russia.” The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant is Turkey’s first nuclear power plant that is under construction by the Russian state corporation Rosatom.

The second article entitled “Is our new ally Russia?” notes how both presidents highlighted the importance of trust in their relations while speaking at the TurkStream completion ceremony. The passage states that Turkish and Russian relations are getting closer in several areas. Additionally, Turkey’s decision to purchase S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems has created “momentum in their relations.” Economic cooperation in particular has increased in the past few years with projects like the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant and TurkStream. While Turkish officials publicly consider the purchase of S-400 as a demonstration of political strength for their domestic audience, in reality Turkey relies on its Russian alliance to stay relevant in Syria. Purchasing the S-400 and strengthening its cooperation with Russia is insurance for Turkey to have a seat at the table and remain in Syria to address its national security concerns as the Syrian Civil War unfolds. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**



The Turkish Stream. Version of the map with the internationally recognised borders.

Source: Consigli88 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_Stream.png.

(continued)



Continued: TurkStream and Turkish-Russian Cooperation

“Turkish Stream is a project of historic proportions for our bilateral relations and for energy geopolitics in our region.”

Source: “Erdoğan-Putin mark completion of offshore section of Turkish Stream,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 19 November 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-putin-mark-completion-of-offshore-section-of-turkish-stream-139005>

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Nov. 19 attended the completion ceremony of the offshore section of the Turkish Stream Project (TurkStream).

“For us, Russia is a friend we can have long term cooperation with and is an important natural gas supplier,” the president said, speaking at the ceremony.

He identified that this project is one of the outcomes of a “tested friendship” throughout many years and said Turkey has never judged its relations with Russia over “impositions of other countries.”...

“I believe our solidarity with Putin and the Russian people will be foreshadowing of bigger projects,” the president said... “Turkish Stream is a project of historic proportions for our bilateral relations and for energy geopolitics in our region, on which we have exerted great efforts with our Russian friends,” Erdogan said...

Such an important project would not be realized unless parties had confidence, the Russian president said... TurkStream and the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant will be symbols of the development of relations between Turkey and Russia, he said, noting that his country wants to reach a \$100 billion bilateral trade volume with Turkey.

The TurkStream will deliver Russian natural gas across the Black Sea to Turkey and then onto Europe... Gazprom began construction of the offshore section of the Turkish Stream in May 2017. The Turkish Stream project envisages the construction of two pipelines, each 939 kilometers long.

The first line will be designed for the Turkish market and will meet 35 percent of Turkey’s natural gas consumption alone. The second is for gas supply to countries in southern and southeastern Europe. The capacity of each line is 15.75 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The first deliveries are scheduled for the end of 2019.

...Two lines will have a total throughput capacity of 31.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year. The first stream of gas is expected to flow through the pipeline in December 2019.

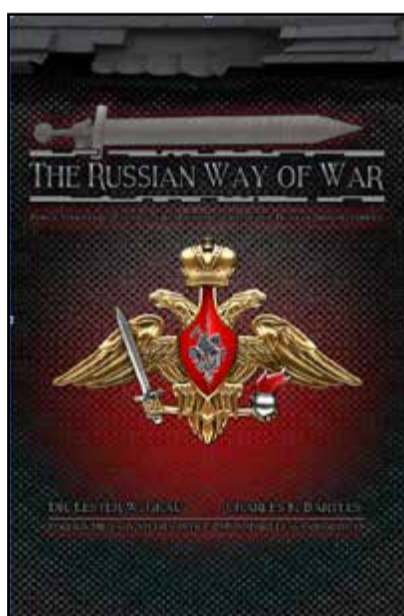
Source: Sedat Ergin, “Yeni müttefikimiz Rusya mı? (Is our new ally Russia?),” *Hürriyet*, 24 November 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/yeni-muttefikimiz-rusya-mi-41029310>

Russian leader Vladimir Putin, speaking at the ceremony of the [TurkStream] natural gas pipeline... said: “This, as my fellow Turkish president mentioned, depends on trust. These projects will not be accomplished without trust.”

It will not be a mistake to place Russia on top of the countries that have warm relations with Turkey... We are experiencing a period of intense relations between Ankara and Moscow focused on all areas.

In terms of political relations, Syria is one of the leading areas where this intensity manifests itself... Turkey’s decision to buy the S-400 air defense system from Russia has played a critical role in gaining this momentum in their relations...

As the recent pipeline project shows, parallel to the warm relations at the political level, rising economic cooperation seems to be marking the future of their relations. The commissioning of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in 2023 will further strengthen cooperation in this area.



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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China, Russia and Iran Seek to Revive Syrian Railways

OE Watch Commentary: In late November, the Syrian Ministry of Transport announced a major plan to repair, update and expand Syria's railway system. As detailed in the accompanying excerpt from the Syrian government daily *al-Thawra*, the plan includes completing an earlier project to connect Deir ez-Zor and Albu Kamal, along the border with Iraq's al-Anbar Province. It also calls for a new line across the Syrian desert, connecting Homs to Deir ez-Zor. Along with helping jump-start the domestic economy, an effective rail network would allow Syria to leverage its strategic location, at the crossroads of historical east-west and north-south trade routes.

The accompanying passage from the Syrian opposition news source *Enab Baladi* highlights the importance of Chinese investment to Syrian reconstruction efforts in general and the railway sector in particular. It cites a Syrian researcher who hints at extensive Chinese involvement in the future ownership of the Syrian rail system, something that, combined with a 2017 agreement allowing China to use the Lattakia Port, means that China will "own the country." Russia is also involved in revamping the Syrian rail network, and the article notes that Russia's UralVagonZavod will be providing new railway cars to Syria starting next year.

Syria's planned railroad extension along the Euphrates from Deir ez-Zor to the Iraqi border dates from before the war. In the present context it is packaged as part of an Iranian project aimed at linking its own railway system with Syria's Mediterranean ports via Iraq. The first link to connect the countries comes from a short track extension to connect the Iraqi city of Basra to the Iranian city of Khorramshahr across the border. The Basra-Khorramshahr link, in conjunction with a separate idea to connect Basra and Kuwait via rail, has according to the accompanying excerpt from *al-Jazeera* elicited popular opposition inside Iraq, based on fears that it will "eliminate Iraqi ports from competition."

Looming over these various regional initiatives is the Chinese plan to develop a "new silk road" to Europe. Indeed the Iran-Syria connection, according to the Syrian Ministry of Transport, "is a part of a project linked with the Central Asian networks, which in turn are connected to the Chinese and Russian railways." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...China's ownership of railways lines, in addition to its signing of a 2017 agreement with Syria to use the Lattakia Port and maritime transport means that China will own the country..."



Syria Transportation Map (2007).

Source: CIA, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/cia-maps-publications/map-downloads/Syria_Transportation.jpg/image.jpg, Public Domain.

Source:

النقل: خطة استراتيجية لإنشاء 2000 كم من السكك الحديدية
Sahar Awidha. "Transport Ministry: Strategic plan to build 2000 kilometers of railway," *al-Thawra*, 26 November 2018. http://thawra.sy/_print_veiw.asp?FileName=29403321620181126000718

The Ministry of Transport prepared a strategic plan for the National Railroad... The source noted that the plan includes 2,000 kilometers of new railway to reach the entirety of Syrian territory and link all vital sites - seaports, airports, mines, oil refineries, industrial zones, economic, trade and tourist activities, while also developing all existing railways extending 2,450 kilometers... The source pointed to the importance and uniqueness of Syria's geographical position, which highlights the importance of developing the railways to serve domestic and international transport along international routes... The second international transport route is east-west, from Europe to Syria via Syrian ports, and from there to Iraq, Iran and the countries of east Asia...

(continued)



Continued: China, Russia and Iran Seek to Revive Syrian Railways

Source:

Osama al-Abboud. "Syria... Future railway axis in the Middle East," *Enab Baladi*, 2 December 2018. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/267033>

سوريا.. محور مستقبلي لسكك الحديد في الشرق الأوسط

Despite distancing itself from supporting the Assad regime compared to the support provided by Russia and Iran, China is considered the biggest economic winner in having the regime maintain power in Syria, given the volume of investment China will make in reconstruction.

Baha al-Darubi, the director of projects at the "Saudi Real Estate" company and formerly a lecturer in economics at the "Baath University" in Syria, pointed to China's role in Syrian railways. He noted that Chinese participation in reconstruction is the only option, as Russia does not have the economic power to finance reconstruction, and China is considered a better choice by the Russians than the International Monetary Fund, the United States, or Europe, who reject participating in reconstruction before a political transition in Syria...

[al-Darubi] believes that "China's ownership of railways lines, in addition to its signing of a 2017 agreement with Syria to use the Lattakia Port and maritime transport means that China will own the country."

Russia will in turn sell railway cars in Syria, according to the Sputnik news agency based on a source from UralVagonZavod, the Russian railway car manufacturing company, published last August. The company will be able to deliver the railway cars in 2019.

Last July, Iran signed an agreement to build a railway linking Iran and Syria, during a meeting between a delegation from the Iranian Ministry of Roads and City Building with the Syrian regime government.

The agreement signed traces the railway from the Iranian city of Shiraz toward the Iraqi city of Basra, through Albu Kamal and Deir Ezzor all the way to the port of Lattakia, on the Mediterranean coast. The Iranian railway portion is considered the least costly, as it will rely on existing railway lines in Iran and Iraq. It will require the addition of only around 32 kilometers of railway at a cost of \$53,000 USD, according to the Iranian Railway Company. The Syrian side will handle the route leading to the port of Lattakia.

Source:

Ammar Saleh. "How will Iraqi ports be affected by the railway link with Iran and Kuwait?" *aljazeera.net*, 21 November 2018. <https://goo.gl/7WRHS4>

كيف ستتأثر موانئ العراق من ربط السكك الحديدية بإيران والكويت؟

A wave of anger and criticism pervades the Iraqi street following statements by President Barham Salih, in which he called on Kuwait and Iran to carry out projects to link their railways to Basra. According to specialists, these projects threaten to "eliminate Iraqi ports."

The project to link with Iran includes laying rail for 32.5 kilometers, beginning in the city of Basra and ending near the Shalamchah border crossing, for the transport of goods and passengers. Kuwait meanwhile seeks to implement a similar project to Basra, in order to transport goods to Iraq.

With increased popular pressure to cancel this project, Basra's governor Asaad al-Ayadani said in a press statement: "Everything involving the railway link between Iraq and Kuwait is mere talk and is part of Kuwait's 2035 vision."

These statements did not prevent the Iraqi street from continuing its demands that the project be scrapped. Civilian activist Hossein al-Asadi said that he and some of his colleagues seek to organize informational discussions and to go out and protest in order to achieve their goals.

Maritime specialist Riyadh al-Asadi said that "the project to link the railways between Kuwait and Iran will negatively affect activities in Iraqi ports, which are of limited depth (no deeper than 12 meters), while Iran and Kuwait have deepwater ports on the Gulf."

Speaking to aljazeera.net, he explained that as a result of these projects, trade will shift to Kuwaiti and Iranian ports near Basra. In addition, the transporting of Iraqi goods by rail will eliminate Iraqi ports from competition.

Source: Adnan Abu Zee. "Iran moving forward with railway link to Syria via Iraq," *al-Monitor*. 30 November 2018. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/11/iran-iraq-syria-railway.html>

[The Syrian Transport Ministry] added, "The Syrian part of the project includes building 32 kilometers [20 miles] of railway, while Iraq will build the rest, which will stretch deep into Iraq to connect Baghdad to Karbala [in central Iraq] and Karbala to Syrian territory. This will facilitate the movement of individuals and goods between Iran, Iraq and Syria."

The ministry denied rumors "that the railway will promote the Iranian influence toward the Mediterranean."

"The railway is a part of a project linked with the Central Asian networks, which in turn are connected to the Chinese and Russian railways," the email continued, referring to Syria's role in the new Silk Road (China's Belt and Road Initiative).



Supreme Leader Addresses America's Muslim Allies

OE Watch Commentary: Diplomacy with Iran often focuses on very precise and immediate items of dispute—Iran's nuclear program, its ballistic missile program, its support for designated terrorist groups, or its seizure of hostages. Lost in such daily diplomatic interactions with Iran is an understanding for how the Supreme Leader bases policy through the lens of ideology. In the accompanying excerpted speech posted on his website, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei addresses a group of senior Iranian officials and visiting luminaries from other Muslim countries. When he turns to the Middle East, he expresses little tolerance for those who cooperate with the United States, suggesting that they are betraying God's law by siding with Washington over Tehran.

Underlying Khamenei's comments is growing Iranian frustration with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who have not only warmed toward Israel despite the decades-old dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, but have also moved militarily to confront and rollback Iranian influence in Yemen. Khamenei's focus on Saudi Arabia and the venom in his voice highlight the worsening relations between the two largest countries by territory in the heart of the Middle East.

Khamenei's embrace of fate and his belief in the ultimate defeat of the United States in the Middle East suggest that meaningful rapprochement is not on the Iranian government's agenda and that, despite the financial crisis it faces because of the precipitous decline of the Iranian rial to record low levels, the Iranian government will remain committed to subsidizing and supplying Palestinian and Yemeni proxies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Didar Mos'valan-e Nizam va Mehmanan-e Konferans-e Vehdat-e Islami (Meeting with Officials and Guests of the Conference on Islamic Unity)," *Khamenei.ir*, 25 November 2018. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/video-content?id=41005>

I want to recommend my Muslim brothers, the Muslim nations, intellectuals, and the religious scholars in the Muslim countries maintain this Islamic movement. Strengthening the Islamic awakening and the Islamic movement will save this region. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslim nations, especially the Muslim scholars, intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, and political elites to foster unity. They are obliged to fulfill such a duty. They have been addressed by the Prophet and should follow his guidance. This is the current task of the Muslim world. In West Asia, everything is ready for the Islamic awakening. All should help to accomplish this task.

My advice to the Muslim countries' rulers is to return to the rulership of God and Islam. They should move under the leadership of God. The guardianship of the United States and the enemies of God will not help them. Unfortunately, today, some Muslim countries in our region, instead of resorting to the guardianship of God, resort to the enemies of God. Instead of following Islam and the Holy Quran, they follow the United States that, due to its arrogance, humiliates them. You -- you all -- heard that the US President, who always prattles, likened the Saudi rulers to a milk cow. This is insulting. He insulted the Saudi nation and the people in the region, the Muslims. If the Saudis do not care about being humiliated. Hell! They will be insulted again. Why should the Muslim rulers accompany the United States in two criminal moves that have ravaged our region? One is the crime against the Palestinians and the important issue of Palestine, another is the crime against Yemenis. Keep this in mind that in both cases the Palestinians and Yemeni people will certainly win the battle. The United States and its agents will fail.

"In West Asia, everything is ready for the Islamic awakening."



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei greets dignitaries following his address.

Source: Khamenei.ir, <http://english.khamenei.ir/d/2018/11/25/4/15136.jpg>



Saudi Arabia and Qatar Compete in Yemen's al-Mahrah Province

OE Watch Commentary: Protests opposing the Saudi Arabian military presence in Yemen's far eastern province of al-Mahrah (bordering Oman) have been ongoing for a few months (for more background, see: "Saudis Seek Pathway to the Arabian Sea," *OE Watch*, October 2018). The dispute took a violent turn in mid-November when security forces, acting under orders from the pro-Saudi provincial governor, used weapons to disperse protesters, killing at least one and injuring several. Local supporters and opponents of Saudi Arabia's presence in al-Mahrah accuse one another of acting in the interest of foreign powers, rather than of the province's residents. As a result, further escalation in al-Mahrah could have regional repercussions.

On one side of the dispute in al-Mahrah are Saudi Arabia and its local partners, most prominently the province's current governor. According to them, many of the protesters are cross-border smugglers who receive funding and take orders from Qatar and, to a lesser degree, Iran. The key leader of the protest movement is Ali Salem al-Harizi, a former officer in the military of South Yemen who was dismissed as deputy governor of al-Mahrah last April, after opposing growing Saudi influence. The first accompanying excerpted article, from the Saudi daily *al-Watan*, intimates that al-Harizi is Qatar's puppet and that the protest movement as a whole is a fabrication staged and encouraged by Qatar and Iran. The second excerpted article, from the Qatari *al-Araby al-Jadid*, argues that the smear campaign against al-Harizi is the result of his refusal to sell his loyalty to the Saudis. The article goes on to explain how Riyadh is using "its media machine" to spread false rumors and execute smear campaigns "as one of the weapons to deceive the province."

Qatari media coverage of the protests has been effective, in tones reminiscent of how they covered the Arab Spring. Protesters were back on the streets the week after the mid-November incident, now also demanding the governor's resignation. The third accompanying excerpted article, from Qatar's *al-Jazeera*, hints at escalation and the possibility of armed resistance against Saudi presence in al-Mahrah. Were this to happen, Saudi Arabia would likely hold Qatar at least partly responsible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...signs point to the possibility of an armed conflict erupting to confront any Saudi military presence in al-Mahrah..."

Source:

تنظيم الحمدين يخطط لإسقاط محافظة المهرة

Salman Askar. "The two Hamids organization plans to bring down al-Mahrah Province," *al-Watan*, 27 November 2018. http://www.alwatan.com.sa/Politics/News_Detail.aspx?ArticleID=353868&CategoryID=1

A Yemeni source said that the protests and events in al-Mahrah Province receive major support and financing from Qatar, describing Qatari money as the motor driving these protests... "Al-Harizi has a long relationship with Qatar and has other nationalities. His actions are driven by obedience and directions from Qatar." He added that al-Harizi's overnight rise to prominence is due to Qatar. The source noted that Iranian officers with their Qatari counterparts are seeking to sow chaos in al-Mahrah and to destroy government institutions, spread fear and overthrow the governor. There are armed cells within the province and in neighboring provinces.

Source:

تنظيم الحمدين يخطط لإسقاط محافظة المهرة

"Bakrit and al-Harizi: al-Mahrah continues to reject Saudi presence," *al-Araby al-Jadid*. 29 November 2018. <https://goo.gl/nj1QYz>

After [the shootings], the participants in the al-Mahrah protests which began some months ago organized an escalatory gathering on November 23, in which they affirmed their continuation of peaceful protests rejecting Saudi presence and in which they increased their demands to include the resignation and prosecution of the governor Bakrit, in light of the killing of protesters."

Bakrit (born in the al-Mahra's Hawf region in 1975) is considered one of the tribal leaders in al-Mahrah. He was appointed advisor to the governor for security matters in 2013, while also working as an official in the "National Security" branch of the province. Since late November 2017, he has turned into the domestic face of acceptance of the Saudi presence, after he was appointed to succeed the previous governor, Mohammed Abdullah Kada, who rejected the deployment of Saudi forces...

Bakrit justifies his support for Saudi influence in terms of support for development and humanitarian projects. He was never a pivotal figure, compared to others with tribal influence in al-Mahra, as is the case with the former deputy governor Ali Salem al-Harizi, who has become a symbol for the popular movement and who has rejected all types of pressure and inducements from Saudi Arabia and paid the price for his stance with his dismissal from his post last April; however, until this day he continues leading the protests...

Riyadh, as the face of the alliance and the host of a decent number of officials from Yemen's legitimate government, has been able to harness its decisions to the benefit of the Saudi project in al-Mahrah. It has used a number of methods, from inducements and attempts to buy domestic loyalties to threatening. Last September, local sources disclosed of a plan by coalition leadership to detain Ali al-Harizi, all the way to using defamation and media campaigns aimed at getting him and accusing him of receiving support from Ansar Allah (the Houthis) and regional powers, as well as of smuggling drugs and other rumors used by Riyadh and its media machine as one of the weapons to deceive the province, which is a unique model in standing against the unjustified presence of Saudi military bases.

Al-Harizi has in turn become an embodiment of the Yemeni struggle, drawing esteem from a broad swathe of Yemenis...

(continued)



Continued: Saudi Arabia and Qatar Compete in Yemen's al-Mahrah Province

Source:

"Because of Saudi Arabia... The situation in al-Mahrah open to all possibilities," *al-Jazeera*, 17 November 2018. <https://goo.gl/NYdWKe>

بسبب السعودية.. الوضع بالمهرة مفتوح على كل الاحتمالات

Political analyst Yasin al-Tamimi said that the situation in al-Mahrah is "open to dangerous possibilities in light of the unruly escalation by Saudi-backed local authorities"... Speaking to *aljazeera.net*, al-Tamimi thought it unlikely that protests would end, pointing to the sacrifices will push toward more sacrifices and open confrontation with forces claiming to be there to support the Yemeni people and its government. He believes the absence of a statement from the government and the presidency means that Saudi forces are leading their own separate battle with the residents of al-Mahrah for geopolitical reasons, taking advantage of the paralysis in legitimate government structures, after the president's health entered an era of uncertainty.

Abd al-Latif Haidar, a journalist and international relations researcher, believes that the signs point to the possibility of an armed conflict erupting to confront any Saudi military presence in al-Mahrah. Speaking to *aljazeera.net*, he noted that the explosion of the situation and the transformation of the conflict from a soft one into an armed one, would lead to the fragmentation of al-Mahrah, which Saudi Arabia would take advantage of. He noted that the choice for protesters is to once again engage with mediators to provide an outlet for the fraught atmosphere. He added that "the use of force against protesters and the launching of intense attacks against them by the governor is a clear indication that Saudi Arabia has been able to extend its influence in the province and it will not allow any opposition to this."



Yemen Administrative Map (2012).

Source: CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/cia-maps-publications/map-downloads/yemen-admin.jpg/image.jpg>, Public Domain.



Iran's Basij in Cyberspace

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic of Iran remains of two minds about the internet. In 1993, Iran became only the second country in the Middle East (after Israel) to connect to the world-wide network and while Iranians culturally embraced it, the connection it afforded ordinary Iranians to outside cultures and ideas has become an increasing concern to Iran's revolutionary authorities. It is in this context that the accompanying excerpted interview with Moslem Mo'in, chief of the Basij Cyberspace Headquarters, is interesting. The Basij Cyberspace Headquarters, founded in 2014, is one of a proliferation of organizations within Iran's bureaucracy charged with controlling Iranians' cyber activities. It joins, for example, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGCs) Passive Defense Organization, the Law Enforcement Force's Cyberpolice, and the Supreme Leader's Supreme Council of Cyberspace.

In the course of the interview Mo'in spoke about the importance the Basij places in monitoring Iranians' use of the internet and its ability, in some cases, to act proactively—presumably to entrap Iranians it suspects might use it for counterrevolutionary purposes. The overall tenor of the interview suggests that the Basij sees itself as the cultural bulwark against the broader Iranian public, which does not share the Basij's commitment to the principles upon which Revolutionary Leader Ruhollah Khomeini based the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Beyond the excerpted portion, Mo'in used the interview both to call for parliamentary action to update and enhance the laws governing the internet in Iran, and to reaffirm his commitment to develop a national intranet as a precursor to disconnecting Iran from the broader internet. With regard to the former, the IRGC has been lobbying since at least October 2017 to amend Iran's press law to close loopholes exposed by the proliferation of online outlets. In addition, Iran's cybercrime law makes the distribution or promotion of any tool to bypass filtering programs illegal. While the Iranian government has widely interpreted the law to make VPNs illegal, the Basij may also seek legislative clarity to tighten what has been to date spotty enforcement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Moslem Mo'in, chief of the Basij Organization Cyberspace Headquarters.
Source: Reza Bagheri Sharaf, Dana.ir, <http://www.dana.ir/content/upload/fe6eb83b-8a3a-4819-bd52-ad9a95eb53eb.jpg>.

“It (the internet) meant the entry of cultural content and Western lifestyle in the country.”

Source: “Basij dar Feza-ye Mojazi Tavan Dakhli Tekiyeh Kard (Basij in Cyberspace Relies on Internal Ability),” *Javan Online*, 23 November 2018. <http://www.javanonline.ir/fa/news/935689>

Moslem Moin, was appointed in July of this year by the order of General Gholam Hossein Gheybparvar, commander of the Basij to lead the Basij's Cyber Organization. On the eve of Basij week, we sat down for a conversation with this cyber specialist, and he spoke about the importance of cyberspace and the contribution of the forces of the revolutionary front in this space....

What is the contribution of the revolutionary front forces in this space?

As you know, the internet entered the country two decades ago without having to adhere to a cultural and necessarily well-defined framework. It meant the entry of cultural content and Western lifestyle into the country, and its day-to-day infusion of Iranian youth. Unfortunately, there was no special supervision at that time... And those people without a specific identity could operate, and this caused a lot of pests to emerge. This is the case not only in Iran but also in Europe, South Korea, China, Russia, and other advanced countries.... In cyberspace, as in other areas, it is necessary to rely on domestic and national expertise. In this regard, the [Basij] cyber organization has become a pioneer. In the various layers of this space, including media and streaming media, animation and gaming, cyberspace technology and infrastructure, gains were made. Of course, the years that these areas were monitored have been minimal, and there are many problems but, thanks be to God, because of the activities of the forces of the Revolution Front organization, as well as those who are sympathetic to the regime, this issue is on the path to improvement.

Are our activities in cyberspace more proactive or reactive...? The subject of media streaming and media activities are dependent upon the topic. In parts of cyberspace, a limited number of Basijis can take proactive action, in order to help meet the general needs of the people, as well as to maintain stability and internal security.



Does Turkey Have a “New Counter-Terrorism Strategy”?

OE Watch Commentary: In the past couple of years the Turkish government has been giving special attention to its military and publicizing its capabilities, especially its fight against terrorism at home and abroad. Pro-government security analysts have supported the government’s efforts by publicizing Turkey’s counter-terrorism strategy. The accompanying excerpted article from *The New Turkey*, a non-profit digital platform launched by the pro-government think tank SETA Foundation, argues that Turkey’s counter-terrorism strategy has three steps, including “paradigm shifts in counter-terrorism strategy, security sector reform following the failed military coup, and the changing military strategy in tactical and operational level on the ground against the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers’ Party).”

According to the article, the first step of Turkey’s new counter-terrorism strategy focuses on strengthening the state’s legitimate authority, especially over its Kurdish population, to reduce the PKK’s influence while incorporating “political, security, economic, and the technological components” to support the state apparatus. One paradigm shift the article refers to is appointing trustees from Ankara to municipalities in Kurdish cities to replace elected Kurdish officials, what the author refers to as “de-PKKization,” as part of the counter-terrorism strategy. The author states that this step has undermined the mobilization of the PKK’s activities. The second shift is to take a multi-dimensional approach to combat the PKK; that is, to conduct military operations not only in the rural areas as a reaction to an attack, but also to carry out operations in the city centers. A final paradigm shift is to curb the PKK’s terrorist campaign and propaganda over Turkey’s Kurdish population through counter-narrative campaigns to stop recruitment.

The second counter-terrorism strategy is reforming the security sector after the failed coup d’état of 15 July 2016. One of these reforms was putting the General Command of the Gendarmerie fully under the control of the Ministry of Interior to strengthen “the effectiveness of the internal counter-terrorism operations” as the Turkish armed forces focused on combating the PKK outside of the Turkish borders, specifically in Iraq and Syria. Previously, the Gendarmerie was a subordinate of the Turkish General Staff in matters relating to training and education while reporting to the Ministry of Interior in terms of executing its law enforcement duties in rural areas. Also, technological capacity and training programs of the Village Guards were improved to increase their effectiveness in combating the PKK in rural areas.

Finally, according to the article Turkey has adopted new technology at the tactical and operational level. It has integrated “the technological capacities of different state/security institutions” while increasing investment in critical infrastructure. The article also notes that there have been improvements in intelligence sharing. The article further argues that the increasing usage of drone technology by the armed forces and the Ministry of Interior has improved surveillance and intelligence gathering capacity to combat terrorism inside and outside of Turkish borders.

End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)



Turkish soldiers on Barsaya mountain, Syria (2018).

Source: Zlatka Hoke (VOA) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_soldiers_on_Barsaya_mountain.png.

(continued)



Continued: Does Turkey Have a “New Counter-Terrorism Strategy”?

“Turkey is revolutionizing its counter-terrorism strategy not only against the PKK in Turkey but also against other terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq.”

Source: Murat Yeşiltaş, “Making Sense of Turkey’s New Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” *The New Turkey*, 23 November 2018.

<https://thenewturkey.org/making-sense-of-turkeys-new-counter-terrorism-strategy>

The recent change in Ankara’s strategy towards certain terrorist organizations has been a game changer...

The success of Turkey’s counter-terrorism strategy was shaped by three revolutionary steps; the paradigm shifts in counter-terrorism strategy, security sector reform following the failed military coup, and the changing military strategy in tactical and operational level on the ground against the PKK...

Firstly, Turkey’s new counter-terrorism strategy integrates and synchronizes political, security, economic, and the technological components that reinforce the state as the ultimate legitimate authority over the population while reducing PKK influence over the Kurdish population, particularly... The counter-terrorism strategy was designed to simultaneously protect the population from PKK violence in city centers and strengthened the capacity of the state institutions to marginalize the PKK’s perception in the eyes of the local people. Especially the process of de-PKKization of the municipalities was one of the most important strategic decisions taken by the government to undermine the PKK’s mobilization activities, particularly in the economic, political and military domains.

The changing understanding regarding the reformulation of the military operation modality is another revolutionary step in containing the PKK threat. Until recently, Turkey’s counter-terrorism strategy had been based on one-dimensional strategic calculation aimed to prevent the terrorist attacks conducted by the PKK against the military and security units... This one-dimensional counter-terrorism strategy is based on the action-reaction operational model in which security forces usually carry a reactionary military operation following the terrorist attack against any target in a specific geographical zone.

The new counter-terrorism strategy, however, is based on non-stop anti-terrorist security and military operations not only in city centers where the PKK-affiliated persons might live but also in rural areas...

Turkey’s superiority in terms of surveillance technology and advanced intelligence capacity also facilitated the effectiveness of its counter-terrorism strategy and helped to prevent potential PKK attacks.

... the numbers show that the PKK has not been effective in recruiting new fighters because of the counter-narrative program of Turkey. This is the new face of the Turkish counter-terrorism strategy in containing PKK influence over the Kurdish population...

The security sector reform process adopted following the July 15 failed military coup attempt is another driving factor that positively shaped Turkey’s counter-terrorism strategy. While the relocation of the Gendarmerie under the Ministry of the Interior was an act strengthening the effectiveness of the internal counter-terrorism operations, the Turkish Armed Forces found a great opportunity to focus on extra-territorial counter-terrorism operations against the PKK, particularly in Iraq, which operationally prevented the terrorist organization to find extra space for maneuver to infiltrate into Turkey.

... the institutional reformulation of the Village Guards (VG) in counter-terrorism operations facilitated the effectiveness of internal operations in rural areas... their technological capacity and training programs were also reformulated and improved following the new requirements of the PKK’s threat.

The harmonization of the technological capacities of different state/security institutions is also a critical infrastructure investment that Turkey has been doing since 2015. The reformulation of intelligence sharing, improvement of joint operation room and joint operational information mechanism facilitated the joint counter-terrorism operations. The number of professionals in Gendarmerie is 65 %, which is incredibly high as compared to previous years. To detect and end terrorist mobilization, especially in special counter-terrorism operations, drone technology provided Turkey another great opportunity in containing the PKK threat...

Turkey is revolutionizing its counter-terrorism strategy not only against the PKK in Turkey but also against other terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq. The new face of terrorism and changing dynamics in the Middle East are likely to push Turkey to revolutionize its military engagements in the near future.



Turkish President's Views on ISIS

OE Watch Commentary: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, addressing the parliamentary group of his party, the Justice and Development Party, on 27 November 2018 said the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is no longer in Syria, only “some small gangs and remnants” exist in the region. However, this is not the first time the Turkish president has downplayed the existence of ISIS in Syria. The accompanying excerpted article from the Turkish daily *Hürriyet* analyzes the Turkish president's views on ISIS and why he believes in the absence of ISIS in Syria.

According to the article, President Erdoğan stated that the terrorist group “is being intentionally exaggerated to frighten the world” and its remnants are a means for “some powers to stir up the region,” without specifying any country. President Erdoğan views ISIS as “a balloon” that Turkey struck a serious blow to with Operation Euphrates Shield, which took place between August 2016 and March 2017. The Turkish President noted that “the reason why ISIS looks as if it continues its presence in certain areas of Syria is the wish to put the same play on stage again. I am making a call to the whole world... there is no ISIS in Syria.” Additionally, the article notes that the statement made after the Turkish National Security Council meeting on 27 November 2018 only referenced ISIS in the context of Iraq. The reason behind the Turkish president's views diverging from those of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS is Turkey's effort to curb support to Kurdish groups in Syria fighting ISIS. The Turkish president's views are contrary to what some analysts and the groups countering ISIS on the ground have pointed out. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**



“We as Turkey are committed to finish the remnants of this organization in a few months. Let's join our hands, and let's show how this can happen.”

Source: Sedat Ergin, “Erdoğan bu kez DEAŞ'ı tartışmaya açıyor (Erdoğan opens ISIS to debate),” *Hürriyet*, 29 November 2018. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/erdogan-bu-kez-deasi-tartismaya-aciyor-41034644>

Is Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) one of the most frightening terror organizations which is creating a serious threat on the field today in Syria and Iraq; or a structure limited to “some small gangs and remnants,” used by some powers to stir up the region?

With President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements during his address on Nov. 27 to the Justice and Development Party's parliamentary group meeting which points to the latter option, these questions are now part of the discussions on ISIS and Syria.

Erdoğan's views that ISIS is being intentionally exaggerated are not new. In a statement made on October 30 the president said that “ISIS was being resurrected though members who are trained again by certain circles, spreading to the region.” He talked about a “focal point” which uses all terror organizations as a tool to reach its targets in the region.

Erdoğan had not clarified which country or countries... while referring to them as certain circles.

...The striking point in this statement made Nov 27, was his reference to ISIS as “a balloon,” and his definition of ISIS as a project that is being intentionally exaggerated to frighten the world.

The following are important to take note of regarding the president's view on ISIS:

“We are destroying this organization which has caused real trouble for Islam. But those saying they are against ISIS unfortunately have not shown the slightest struggle against it. The reason why ISIS looks as if it continues its presence in certain areas of Syria is the wish to put the same play on stage again. I am making a call to the whole world from here and say: there is no ISIS in Syria. Under the disguise of ISIS there are some small number of gangs who are trained and equipped, tolerated to exist to stir up the country and the region. If the terror organizations which continue their occupation to operate the oil wells using ISIS as an alibi were to leave from the places where they are, the whole issue will be solved.”

Erdoğan ended his call to the world with a surprising proposal: “We as Turkey are committed to finish the remnants of this organization in a few months. Let's join our hands, and let's show how this can happen.”

...Erdoğan's approach to ISIS is diverging to a great degree from the arguments of the Western countries starting with United States...

The statement made public following the Nov. 27 National Security Council meeting is striking evidence of this situation. The statement underlined that the “biggest threat to the political solution comes from the terrorist structures in the East of Euphrates.” Reference to ISIS was made only within the framework of Iraq in the document.



Iran Unveils JDAMs?

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic of Iran prides itself on its indigenous military industries, which have allowed it to extend the lifetime of its various military platforms years after other countries retired their own. The Iranian air force, for example, continues to fly the F-14 more than a decade after the US Navy retired its inventory. The accompanying excerpted article, from a website affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), details both upgrades enabling Iran to begin flying long-impounded Sukhoi Su-22s and Iran's alleged development of a Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) guidance system.

The Su-22s to which the excerpted article refers were originally Iraqi Air Force jets which the Iraqi government flew into Iran in 1991 ahead of Operation Desert Storm. While the Iraqi government believed the Iranian government would ultimately return the planes, the Iranian government seized the Su-22s and other military and civilian aircraft which Iraqi pilots transferred, justifying its actions in the reparations Tehran demanded because of Iraq's 1980 invasion. That the IRGC's military industries managed to upgrade and get the decades-old Iraqi aircraft flying again is a testament to the ability of the Iranian government to manufacture spare parts for old aircraft, acquire parts from abroad, or to cannibalize some aircraft to repair others.

The Iranian claim to have developed JDAMs appears exaggerated. While Iran did reportedly develop GPS-guided UAVs (see: "Iran Joins Satellite-Guided Armed UAV Club," *OE Watch*, May 2016), a reverse image search of the photos (using TinEye.com) included in the *Mashregh News* article depicting the supposed JDAM determined that they are more than a decade old and not originally published in Iran. While the excerpted article itself leaves room for doubt, the falsification of photos allegedly taken at the Kish Air Show suggest, in this case, that the announced advance is more ambition than reality. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The image of the new bomb...greatly enhances the possibility of using a satellite-guided bomb.”

Source: “Ravanma-ye az yek Salah-e Jadid baraye Jangandeh Sukhoi-22-e Sepah/JDAM-e Irani bah Emkan Hadayet Mahavareha-ye Miamad (The Unveiling of a New Weapon for the IRGC's Sukhoi-22/Iranian JDAM comes with Satellite Guidance),” *Mashregh News*, 26 November 2018. <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/914750/>

In August of this year, ten Sukhoi-22 attack aircraft were delivered to the IRGC after major repairs and upgrades to new systems. The Sukhoi-22 were uninvited guests that came to Iran, and these joined a number of other aircraft—Sukhoi-24's, MiG-29s, Mirage F-1s—that defense experts upgraded. Certainly, some of the fighters that came to our country in the early 1990s like the Sukhoi-24 and Mirage F-1 were operational and brought into service, but the SU-22s have not had the opportunity to fly for years, but in recent years, these fighters have been transferred into the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Air Force, and our domestic experts were successful with their reconstruction and optimization....

The Kish Exhibition and a New Weapon for the IRGC

But during the 2018 Kish Air Show, which was taking place from 26-29 November, published pictures suggests the presence of new bombs on the Sukhoi-22. But the appearance of the bombs, it looks like an American series, and both at the end of the bomb and at its front, are pods such as can be seen on JDAMs. Certainly, the front of the bomb resembled the Raad-301, but there isn't any report of an optics system or laser guidance. Therefore, the inertial and satellite hybrid navigation is greatly enhanced. Until today, Iran has not officially acknowledged about whether it has access to satellite-based systems, and both internal and external analyzes are based solely on speculation, but the image of the new bomb and in particular the position and the cover installed there, greatly enhances the possibility of using a satellite-guided bomb.

Of course, General [Amir Ali] Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Air Force, in March 2016, gave an interview in which he spoke about a new generation of UAVs in which he said, “These UAVs have the ability to navigate via satellite” and UAVs now widely utilize satellite communications.... Perhaps our country has achieved or is on the verge of achieving some type of satellite navigation and control systems, in which case the defenses of the Islamic Republic will make a significant leap.



photo : Hossein Tahavari

Iran Airshow 2018 on Kish Island.

Source: Tasnim News, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/media/2018/11/27/1885498/iran-airshow-2018-underway-on-kish-island/photo/8>, CC 4.0.



MILGEM Project Delivered Burgazada Corvette

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 November 2018 Turkey's MILGEM (National Vessel) project delivered its third Ada-class corvette, the *TCG Burgazada* (F-513), to the Turkish Naval Forces Command. The MILGEM project was launched in 2004 to build four Ada-class corvettes at the Istanbul Shipyard Command. The accompanying excerpted article from the state-owned *Anadolu Ajansı* provides information about this corvette and the delivery ceremony during which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Vice-President Fuat Oktay, Turkish National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and other senior Turkish officials were present.

According to the article, the corvette is 99.5 meters long, 14.5 meters wide and capable of reaching speeds of over 29 nautical miles per hour. It has a helicopter platform and the capability of undertaking surface warfare, submarine defense, reconnaissance and surveillance, command and control and active asymmetrical warfare. At the ceremony, Minister Akar stated that MILGEM and new submarine projects are significant for Turkey's security and deterrence. According to Turkish officials, the MILGEM project is able to use 65 percent of locally made material, an important number to consider alongside the Turkish government's determination to become a self-sufficient country with its defense industry. Turkey has accelerated the strengthening of its naval forces with new ships equipped with the latest technology, especially after the perceived threats in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gunduz)**

Source: "Milli savaş gemisi Burgazada, Deniz Kuvvetleri'ne teslim edildi (National warship Burgazada delivered to Naval Forces)," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 4 November 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/milli-savas-gemisi-burgazada-deniz-kuvvetlerine-teslim-edildi-/1302545>

TCG Burgazada F-513, the third Ada-class corvette built as part of the MILGEM project was delivered to Naval Forces Command with a ceremony attended by President Erdoğan.

...the construction of the Burgazada corvette began on 17 December 2014, at Istanbul Naval Shipyard Command. The 29 blocks of the corvette were built in 18 months and assembled on the slipway. The ship was launched into the sea on 18 June 2016 upon its completion, 3 months prior to the planned date on the contracts. The corvette is 99.5 meters long and 14.5 meters wide, it weighs 2400 tons.

The ship, which is capable of speeding above 29 nautical miles per hour, has a propeller-driven propulsion system with gas turbines and diesel engines reaching 35 megawatts power.

The ship... 6485 kilometers cruising range and is designed to be able to remain in water for 10 days... The Burgazada corvette is able to undertake surface battles, underwater battles; active air defense, reconnaissance and surveillance, command and control, and active asymmetrical defense operations.

“The Burgazada corvette is able to undertake surface battles, underwater battles; active air defense, reconnaissance and surveillance, command and control, and active asymmetrical defense operations.”



U.S. Navy Cmdr. Russell Caldwell waves to the Turkish corvette TCG Heybeliada (F 511) from aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) in the Mediterranean Sea during a passing exercise Sept. 2, 2014.

Source: MC2 John Herman [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U.S._Navy_Cmdr._Russell_Caldwell_waves_to_the_Turkish_corvette_TCG_Heybeliada_\(F_511\)_from_aboard_the_guided_missile_destroyer_USS_Ross_\(DDG_71\)_in_the_Mediterranean_Sea_during_a_passing_exercise_Sept_140902-N-Y142-159.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:U.S._Navy_Cmdr._Russell_Caldwell_waves_to_the_Turkish_corvette_TCG_Heybeliada_(F_511)_from_aboard_the_guided_missile_destroyer_USS_Ross_(DDG_71)_in_the_Mediterranean_Sea_during_a_passing_exercise_Sept_140902-N-Y142-159.jpg)



China to Host South African Military at Logistics Symposium

OE Watch Commentary: With its first overseas military base recently established in Djibouti, China is building military relationships elsewhere on the African continent. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African *DefenceWeb* site relates, a Chinese delegation from the Central Military Commission Logistics Support Division, steered by its Deputy Chief of Administrative Office, Senior Colonel Huang Dongping, visited the South African Department of Defense Logistics Division in Pretoria and Cape Town between 29 October and 2 November. Her purpose was to finalize hosting of the first military logistics symposium between the two countries. The Chinese and South African militaries, according to the agreement, will hold the logistics symposium in March 2019 at the Logistics University of [the] Chinese People's Liberation Army, located in Chongqing, China.

Topics to be discussed at the upcoming symposium include preservation of warehouses, technical maintenance and repair, uniform production, and supply. According to Senior Colonel Huang Dongping, it is imperative that soldiers be exposed to foreign learning concepts. While the South African National Defense Force has traditionally purchased much of its military equipment from its own relatively large military industrial base as well as from the United States and Europe, South Africa has, in the past few months, tightened its military association with China. With China being one of South Africa's largest trading partners, this military cooperation follows on the heels of that close economic relationship. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Kabelo Tsogang, "China and South Africa to host first military logistics symposium," *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 5 November 2018. http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53638:china-and-south-africa-to-host-first-military-logistics-symposium&catid=47:Logistics&Itemid=110

A delegation from the People's Republic of China (PRC) Central Military Commission Logistics Support division, steered by its Deputy Chief of Administrative Office, Senior Colonel Huang Dongping, have visited the South African Department of Defence Logistics Division in Pretoria and Cape Town to finalize hosting the first military logistics symposium between the two countries.

"The atmosphere that welcomed us on our arrival portrayed the professionalism that is upheld in this School," Dongping said. According to her it is imperative and logical to nurture on fresh soldiers by exposing them to foreign learning opportunities."

"A delegation from the People's Republic of China (PRC) Central Military Commission Logistics Support division...have visited the South African Department of Defense Logistics Division in Pretoria and Cape Town to finalize hosting the first military logistics symposium between the two countries."



"China will be hosting a symposium to improve the logistical support for South African soldiers such as the ones pictured here."

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.



Chinese Military Participation in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: Recently Malian news ran a story about Chinese troops being honored for their role in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali, officially known as United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA). Chinese participation in the peacekeeping mission has been fairly limited in number and scope. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *bamada.net*, the six Chinese soldiers being honored were members of a communications unit, which arrived in Mali in September 2017. Among their jobs while serving in MINUSMA was the installation “new digital last generation radio equipment ‘YYTERA’ provided by the People’s Republic of China.” In addition to providing “highly secure GSM communication coverage of Bamako, Sénou, Kati and their surroundings,” the unit trained Malian soldiers in the basics of military communications. The composition of the unit has been fairly typical of previous Chinese military units participating in UN peacekeeping missions—no combat troops—support and logistics only.

However, the Chinese broke their own norm when in 2013, China announced that it would send a combat unit of 500 troops to Mali. That deployment marked the first time that Chinese combat troops have participated in a UN Mission abroad. Since then, both Chinese infantry and special forces soldiers have served in Mali. The Chinese have also suffered casualties. In 2016 an IED killed one Chinese soldier and wounded four others from the 4th contingent of Chinese peacekeeping troops. Three Chinese civilians were also killed a year earlier, in November 2015, when the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako was attacked.

Chinese casualties at the Radisson Blu may support the notion that the Chinese military has traditionally followed its economic interests. To be sure, China is a significant player in Africa, both in terms of its UN peacekeeping contribution and its many diverse economic endeavors on the continent. However, Mali pales in comparison to other African countries for return on investment. Mali ranks near the bottom in ease of doing business and it is not an oil producing country. Rather than economic, some consider that the Chinese military presence in Mali may be a lever to pull, part of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s concept of “great power diplomacy.”

It can also be argued that the Chinese military in Africa has been historically risk-averse. It is a far cry from a slew of recent Chinese box office sensations like *Wolf Warrior 2*, this one set somewhere on the African continent depicting heroic Chinese special operations soldiers, a willingness to fight any and all bad guys, and a large body count. While the Chinese public has fully embraced the larger than life theatrical depiction of its men and women in uniform, the fact remains that Chinese military participation in Mali and elsewhere in Africa under a UN mandate remains purposefully designated to a supporting and presence role.

This 2018 news piece, and the accompanying similar one from *Africanews* in 2017 (different unit—same ceremony), seem to have been written to highlight the close relationship between the two countries. To be sure, China, in Mali since the 1960s, seems intent to continue its partnership. As China expands its international presence and continues to provide military assistance to protect its growing list of global assets in countries like Mali, teetering on the brink of protracted war, it may find itself in situations where its military will be forced to act. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**



Cérémonie de remise de médaille du 4ème contingent Chinois de la MINUSMA à Gao en présence du Représentant Spécial du Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies, Chef de la MINUSMA, M. Mahamat Saleh Annadif et de l'Ambassadrice de la Chine S.E.Mme LU Huiying.

Source: MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko...MINUSMA 1...17-02-07-SRSG-Chine medal parade Gao_30; MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/minusma/albums/72157678513543170>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Continued: Chinese Military Participation in Mali

Source: “Coopération Mali-Chine: Six Coopérants Chinois Distingués (Mali-China Cooperation: Six Chinese Cooperants Distinguished),” *Bamada.net*, 10 December 2018. <http://bamada.net/cooperation-mali-chine-six-cooperants-chinois-distingues>

...the Chinese team also trained its service technicians on the installation of the new digital radio equipment “YYTERA” of the last generation, provided by the People’s Republic of China. This equipment, he says, will provide highly secure GSM communication coverage of Bamako, Sénou, Kati and their surroundings.

...As for the Chief of the [Malian] General Staff of the Armed Forces, he praised, on behalf of the Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces, the “very strategic” partnership that has existed since the first hours of independence between Mali and China. “Today, China has remained a constant partner, never wavering in its deep relations with Mali...,” said General M’Bemba Moussa Keïta...

Source: “Mali: le 4ème contingent chinois honoré pour sa lutte contre les groupes terroristes (UN Honors Chinese Peacekeepers in Mali),” *Africanews*, 9 February 2017. <http://fr.africanews.com/2017/02/09/mali-le-4eme-contingent-chinois-honore-pour-sa-lutte-contre-les-groupes/>

...The mission in Mali, compared to the mission of fighting Ebola in Liberia is more bloody and closer to the battlefield, especially when we deal with people who suffer penetrating or blast wounds, the injuries are complex, but I have accumulated more experience of rescuing and treating the injured on the battlefield.’ Yang Limin, nurse, medical detachment, 4th contingent of Chinese peacekeeping force in Mali.

“The mission in Mali, compared to the mission of fighting Ebola in Liberia is more bloody and closer to the battlefield.”



Review of the troops of the Major General and Commander of the MINUSMA Force, Jean-Paul Deconinck during the ceremony of decoration and presentation of the United Nations medal to the 395 peacekeepers of the 5th Chinese contingent, including fourteen women who arrived at the Mali in May 2017.

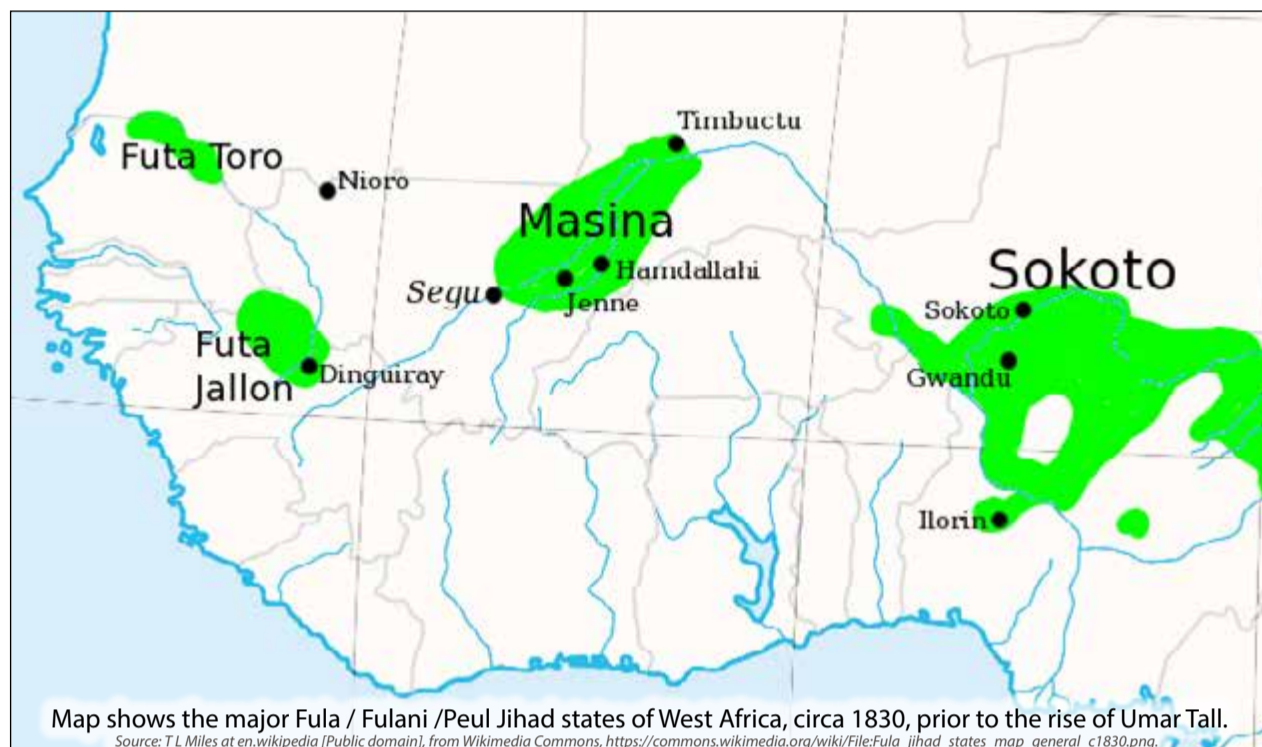
Source: MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko... MINUSMA 1... 17-02-07-SRSG-Chine medal parade Gao_30, MINUSMA/Harandane Dicko
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/minusma/albums/72157678513543170>, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Malian Jihadist Video Reveals Regional Intentions

OE Watch Commentary: The Mali-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)-affiliate, Jamat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), has proven since 2017 to be significantly more active than AQIM itself. While most of its activities have been in Mali and through its own offshoots in Niger and Burkina Faso, it has not until now hinted at a more expansionary agenda. However, the accompanying excerpted French-language article from Mali's *bamada.net* discusses the latest video released by the JNIM leader, Muhammed Koufa, who was originally the leader of the Macina Liberation Front (MLF). The MLF was also known as Ansar Dine Macina, with Macina referring to the name of a historic Fulani emirate in Mali. The video represents a departure from Koufa's prior narratives: for the first time as leader of JNIM the group now seems to be focused on Fulanis and West Africa as a whole, and not just Mali.

“Speaking in Fulani language, he called on members of this community in Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea, and Cameroon to wage jihad with a focus on France and the apostates among the Fulanis.”



According to the article, the video, which was released by JNIM's *al-Zallaqa* media agency, lasted nearly 12 minutes. It was the first appearance since March 2017 of Koufa alongside Iyad Ag Ghaly, the leader of the other northern Mali-based AQIM affiliate, Ansar Dine, and Yahya Abu Hammam, AQIM's emir for the Sahel. The article notes that the fact that these three most important jihadist commanders in Mali could even meet together in-person is impressive considering the military resources being expended to capture all of them. In the March 2017 video, there were two other AQIM members with these three commanders, but, according to the article, those two commanders have since been killed. Notably, however, in early December France claimed it killed Koufa and other militants in an air strike, but it could not be confirmed through other sources.

The article describes other scenes of the video where Koufa preaches to a brigade of his fighters about unity, leads prayers, drives a vehicle, and gathers together fighters.

Although virtually all AQIM and JNIM videos are in Arabic, what is notable about this video is that Koufa speaks not only in Fulani, but also calls on other Fulanis in Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea, and Cameroon to wage jihad. Because Fulanis are West Africa's most widespread ethno-linguistic group, Koufa is evidently attempting to inspire jihadists in all of these other countries that currently do not have a particularly strong al-Qaeda presence (although Boko Haram has a jihadist presence in Nigeria and neighboring countries, its strongest faction is aligned with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, but not al-Qaeda).

There are two other notable aspects of the video, according to the article: it includes nasheeds, or Islamic hymns, from both global jihadi groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and local ones in Fulani; and it was disseminated via the global social media network, WhatsApp. The video could therefore be expected to reach a wide audience, enhance Koufa's profile, and potentially influence aspirant jihadis from Fulani communities elsewhere in West Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Nouvelle Vidéo Du Jnim: Signe De Vie De Amadou Koufa (New Video Of Jnim: Sign Of Life Of Amadou Koufa),” *bamada.net*, 12 November 2018. <http://bamada.net/nouvelle-video-du-jnim-sign-de-vie-de-amadou-koufa>

Produced by al-Zallaqa, the media arm of this group, with a duration of 11 minutes and 55 seconds, this is the first appearance of the head of the Katiba of Ansar Dine in Macina, Amadou Kufa, for over a year. He was seen sitting in the middle of Iyad Ag Ghali and the Algerian Yahya Abu Hammam (aka Jamel Okocha), emir of AQIM in the Sahel. The last video appearance of Kufa goes back to March 2017 when there was the announcement of the creation of JNIM. The first observation is that in this video it was above all to show their unity.

The only one to speak in this recording is also Amadou Kufa. He is seen leading prayers, driving a white pick-up truck, and mobilizing armed men. Speaking in Fulani language, he called on members of this community in Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Guinea, and Cameroon to wage jihad with a focus on France and the apostates among the Fulanis. The first hymn sung in this video is the one belonging to the Al Qaeda Branch in Yemen (AQAP). This is to demonstrate the anchoring of JNIM in the al Qaeda movement in the Arabian Peninsula, or even at the global level. What surprises one most is how these jihadist leaders manage to broadcast quality videos while having to face a significant amount of military pressure around them.



When Foreign Fighters Are Not Foreign

OE Watch Commentary: The UN Security Council defines foreign fighters as “individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration...or participation in terrorist acts.” However, as the accompanying excerpted article from South Africa’s *Institute for Security Studies* explains, the term “foreign fighter” is not always so easy to define in the context of Africa. Perhaps some of the blame for this can be placed on the Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885 that resulted in the colonial powers determining borders for much of the continent. Ethnic groups that traditionally did not get along were sometimes placed in the same country, and of particular relevance to the question of what is a foreign fighter, sometimes single ethnic groups were divided among several countries.

Two ethnic groups in particular are cited by the article as exemplifying the difficulties in determining who exactly is a foreign fighter. The first is the Kanuri who live in the Lake Chad Basin region, the same region where Boko Haram, which draws many of its fighters from the Kanuri, has carried out their deadly terrorist attacks for nearly a decade. The Kanuri people extend across the borders of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. Thus, communities of Kanuri in northern Nigeria may have closer ties to people in southern Niger than to those who live in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, which is located in the center of the country. The second example of an ethnic group crossing borders is in the Horn of Africa, where the Somali people are spread across several countries. As with the Kanuri in the Lake Chad Basin, borders are often porous and readily crossed, both by Somalis engaged in peaceful activities, such as commerce, and the al Shabaab terrorist group, which draws its fighters from the Somali people.

The question of who is a foreign fighter has deeper implications than just semantics. This is especially true with regards to individuals who no longer want to be members of a terrorist group. Reintegrating a former terrorist into a community, or at least the initial steps, is sometimes better or at least easier done in a different country than the one where that person was born. As an example, the article’s author points out the reintegration programs for former terrorists from Chad that are being conducted in Nigeria. Thus, they may be classified as “foreign fighters” by the UN definition, but they are from one large ethnic group that often does not consider such individuals as “foreign.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“In many African contexts where ethnic groups traverse state borders, the notion of ‘foreignness’ is difficult to define. Most borders on the continent have complicated histories and the African context presents particular challenges for understanding the concept of foreign terrorist fighters.”

Source: Akinola Olojo, Uyo Yenwong-Fai, Allan Ngari, and William Els, “How ‘foreign’ are foreign terrorist fighters in Africa,” *Institute for Security Studies*, 29 November 2018. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/how-foreign-are-foreign-terrorist-fighters-in-africa>

A one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work on a continent where ‘foreignness’ is hard to define.

Also, the concept of foreign terrorist fighters in parts of Africa becomes amorphous when marriage occurs between those considered foreign terrorist fighters and local women. Marriage binds the fighter to that community, rendering the ‘foreign’ distinction somewhat irrelevant.

In many African contexts where ethnic groups traverse state borders, the notion of ‘foreignness’ is difficult to define. Most borders on the continent have complicated histories and the African context presents particular challenges for understanding the concept of foreign terrorist fighters.

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Unusual Checkpoint in Burkina Faso

OE Watch Commentary: On 15 November the excerpted French language publication, *ActuBurkina.com*, reported on a security checkpoint that jihadists in Burkina Faso set up one day earlier in the southeast of the country in Pama near the borders with Togo and Benin. The description of that operation is worthy of note not because any deaths were recorded but rather because of what it indicates about the Burkinabe government's control of peripheral areas of the country where jihadists operate. According to the article, eight armed men in Pama were stopping all vehicles that passed through a road in the area. They did not steal items from the drivers or passengers, as one might expect of criminals. Rather, they let them continue their journeys but not before they inspected the vehicles for having indications that they were government vehicles. If they were from the government, then presumably the jihadists would detain or kill the individual inside.

The article mentions that this checkpoint on the road continued for three hours. As a result, residents of the area have become unnerved because they are not being reassured by the government that it has a presence in those areas. They therefore are requesting the government reassert itself. The article concludes by noting that the area where the checkpoint was set up has been known for some time to be a safe haven for armed men.

While the article does not, in fact, name the armed men, it is probable they are from one of the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)-aligned armed groups that have been active in Burkina Faso. This because of the specific anti-government ideology of the men manning the checkpoint, as evidenced by their apparent disinterest in theft of the drivers and passengers of the vehicles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Des passagers blessés par des hommes armés non identifiés (Passengers injured by unidentified gunmen),” *ActuBurkina.com*, 15 November 2018. <http://actuburkina.net/axe-fada-pama-des-passagers-blesses-par-des-hommes-armes-non-identifies/>

Heavily armed men, numbering about eight, were posted this November 15, 2018 on the axis Pama, in particular the zone of the presidential reserve, and stopped the passage of any vehicle, whatever the direction of the journey. According to testimonies, these individuals stopped the vehicles and confirmed the passengers were not from the government before letting them continue their journey. Surprisingly, they did not steal from any vehicles, but suggested “they would not want to see a vehicle with a red background on the axle”. In other words, they no longer want a state vehicle on this path. This new situation further reinforces the anxiety in this part of Burkina Faso where psychosis has begun to seize the people, who are only asking for an intervention to reassure them a little bit of the presence of the State.

“This new situation further reinforces the anxiety in this part of Burkina Faso where psychosis has begun to seize the people, who are only asking for an intervention to reassure them a little bit of the presence of the state.”



Flintlock 2017 small unit tactics training in Burkina Faso 170301-A-ZF167-075.

Source: Spc. Britany Slessman [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flintlock_2017_small_unit_tactics_training_in_Burkina_Faso_170301-A-ZF167-075.jpg.



Nigerian Governor Speaks on Shi'a Leader, al-Zakzaky

OE Watch Commentary: Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, the leader of Nigeria's largest Shi'a movement, has been in government custody since 2015. The custody began when the army clashed with Shi'a protestors in Kaduna, alleging that al-Zakzaky's followers were blocking soldiers, attempting to set the trappings of a state, and using violent means. Al-Zakzaky was finally brought to trial in Kaduna and seen publicly by the media (from a distance) on 7 November. This prompted the accompanying excerpted article in Nigeria's *Daily Post*, which discusses the reaction of Kaduna Governor Nasir al-Rufai to al-Zakzaky's trial.

According to the article, al-Rufai has attempted to respond to misinformation spread by other politicians in the public sphere, such as a reported exorbitant amount of money that the state has spent on feeding al-Zakzaky every month during his detention. Al-Rufai conceded that the monthly amount of money spent on keeping al-Zakzaky's in custody was 3.5 million naira (\$10,000) and was for protecting him from threats, not only feeding him. He claims this is a reasonable amount of money for that purpose.

This monthly cost of keeping al-Zakzaky in custody may seem to provide a reason to release him so the money can be put to better use. However, al-Rufai explained that al-Zakzaky has been charged with murder, "which is not bailable." The article nevertheless notes that there are contradictions in this explanation, because al-Zakzaky was previously granted bail in 2016, which the Nigerian government then refused. The article makes clear that there is no imminent end to the al-Zakzaky situation. It seems, therefore, he will continue in indefinite custody. Nevertheless, the issue of his status will continue to draw the attention of human rights groups, other Nigerian Shia's, foreign governments and, as the article indicates, opposition politicians who are criticizing al-Rufai. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Ibrahim Zakzaky.

Source: Tajo Malli [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sheikh_Zakzaky_1.jpg.

"He (El-Zakzaky) is in custody because he is facing a murder charge which is not bailable, among other charges."

Source: "Gov. El-Rufai speaks on Lai Mohammed's claim of El-Zakzaky's 3.5m monthly feeding," *Daily Post*, 16 November 2018. <http://dailypost.ng/2018/11/16/gov-el-rufai-speaks-lai-mohammeds-claim-el-zakzakys-3-5m-monthly-feeding/>

Nasiru Ahmed El-Rufai of Kaduna State has stated that a monthly amount of N3.5 million was not entirely spent on feeding the detained leader of Islamic Movement in Nigeria, IMN, Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zakzaky, as claimed by the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed. He explained that the Information minister's claim was right but lacked details on how the money was being spent. According to him, the N3.5 million was not spent on the feeding of the Shi'ite leader alone but on everything related to his protective custody.

El-Rufai also said the IMN is an illegal group that is not recognised by the Nigerian government. According to him, "he (El-Zakzaky) is in custody because he is facing murder charge which is not bailable, among other charges.

The Shi'ite leader has been in detention since December 2015. This followed the clash between members of the IMN and the convoy of Nigeria's army chief, Tukur Buratai, in Zaria, Kaduna state. He was charged with murder in May 2018, despite an earlier court ruling in December 2016 granting him bail. The Nigeria government refused and has kept him in detention.



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Mozambique Vigilantes Counterattack Islamists

OE Watch Commentary: In an act of vigilantism, residents of Nangade district, in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado, launched a counterattack against Islamists from the insurgent group Ahlu Sunna Wa-Jama. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Agência de Informação de Moçambique*, Ahlu Sunna Wa-Jama had raided several Nangade villages in the past few weeks. In the village of Lilongo, the insurgents destroyed 60 houses and stole food, clothing, and livestock. Because the Lilongo villagers fled into the bush before the attack, none of them were killed, but the scale of destruction was so large that it is considered the trigger for the vigilante counterattack.

The revenge raid by the improvised village militia, as the article called the counter attackers, resulted in the capture of two suspected insurgents, who were then decapitated. Additionally, an arm was cut off one of the suspected insurgents and displayed beside the house of his family. Seventeen houses belonging to relatives of the suspects were destroyed.

To put the attacks and counterattack in perspective, it helps to have some background information. Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, is roughly 70 percent Christian and 19 percent Muslim, with the Muslim population being particularly prevalent in the north, the same area that is the focus of the accompanying article. Mozambique is an extremely poor country with one of the world's highest birth rates. Muslim discontentment, especially among the youth, along with feelings of marginalization, lack of employment opportunities, and other issues are cited as some of the causes of the rise of Islamic extremism in northern parts of the country. It should be noted that at least some of the attacks by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo have been against rural Muslim villages, purportedly because the insurgents disdain those villagers who practice a more moderate form of the religion.

One other important factor to note is that while the group is Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo, locals refer to it as Shabaab. However, there does not appear to be any direct connection to the Somali terrorist group al Shabaab. Muddying the waters even further are some reports that Shabaab might actually be a second group in Mozambique, but at least for this article, Shabaab and Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo are considered one and the same.

Thus, there are deep social, economic, and religious reasons for the strife in the region. However, it appears that if the vigilantes had thought their actions would discourage Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo they were mistaken. Within days the insurgents launched new attacks, including beheadings. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Armed with knives, axes, hoes and similar weapons, the group captured two men believed to be insurgents. Instead of handing them over to the police, they decided to execute them on the spot.”



Cabo Delgado Province in Mozambique.

Source: Karte: NordNordWest, Lizenz: Creative Commons by-sa-3.0 de [CC BY-SA 3.0 de (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/de/deed.en>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cabo_Delgado_Province_in_Mozambique_2018.svg.

Source: “Mozambique: Nangade Residents Take Revenge On Insurgents,” *Agência de Informação de Moçambique/AllAfrica.com*, 6 December 2018. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201812060927.html>

Armed with knives, axes, hoes and similar weapons, the group captured two men believed to be insurgents. Instead of handing them over to the police, they decided to execute them on the spot. They were beheaded, in retaliation against the decapitations carried out by the islamists against many of their victims. Seven other supposed insurgents were spotted fleeing from the scene.

“Carta de Mocambique” found that one of those beheaded is named Fazil Chungu....He is said to have acted as a guide for the insurgents in some of their attacks.

On Tuesday morning two youths on motor-cycles were ambushed in the Pundanhar administrative post by two men wearing military uniforms and armed with bush knives. One of the youths escaped, but the other was beheaded and his body left by the roadside.



Uganda's Double Game: Arms Supplier and Peace Mediator for South Sudan

OE Watch Commentary: Uganda has been accused of playing another role besides peace broker in the civil war consuming neighboring South Sudan...that of clandestine arms supplier to both sides. As the accompanying excerpt from an article posted on the *Deutsche Welle* website describes, Uganda appears to have taken lawfully exported weapons from the "EU, US, and China," and without the exporters' knowledge, diverted them to South Sudan, possibly violating end-use and non-transfer agreements.

It should be noted that Uganda does not appear to be alone in breaking the arms embargo the UN imposed on South Sudan in 2018. Sudan, South Sudan's northern neighbor and the country from which it gained independence in 2011, has also been implicated in selling ammunition to the forces opposing South Sudan's government. Sudan has something else in common with Uganda besides reportedly breaking the arms embargo; it is also supposed to be serving as a peace broker.

Uganda purchased weapons and ammunition from the EU member states of Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia. The retransfers of at least some of these to the South Sudanese military and its armed allies in Sudan took place after the EU imposed an arms embargo. According to the London-based Conflict Armament Research (CAR) organization, South Sudan acquired the Bulgarian weapons after asking Uganda to issue end-user certificates to give the appearance that they were actually intended for use by the Ugandan military.

The CAR report, produced with funding from both the EU and the German Federal Foreign Office, and on which much of this article is based, has been dismissed by Michael Makuei Lueth, information minister of South Sudan, as being fake. He added that if the EU passes an arms embargo of African countries, they are not bound to follow it since they are not in the EU. As of the writing of this commentary, Uganda has not yet responded to the report. It is worth remembering that South Sudan's warring factions, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its main opposition, the SPLA-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), signed a peace deal in September 2018. It was brokered by Uganda and Sudan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: "Uganda's Double Game in South Sudan Civil War Revealed," *Deutsche Welle*, 29 November 2018. <https://www.dw.com/en/ugandas-double-game-in-south-sudan-civil-war-revealed/a-46500925>

Despite its role as peace broker in neighboring South Sudan, Uganda has been among the clandestine suppliers of weapons that originate in the EU, US and China to both sides of the bloody civil war, a new report shows.

The diversion of the weapons appears to have taken place without the knowledge of the original exporters and may have breached end-use and non-retransfer condition of sale agreements with South Sudan's neighbors, it says.

Chinese-made ammunition, supplied lawfully under contract to the government in Juba between 2011 and 2014, is by far the most common used by the two sides, the report says. Some of this ammunition was supplied by Sudan.

“Despite its role as peace broker in neighboring South Sudan, Uganda has been among the clandestine suppliers of weapons that originate in the EU, US and China to both sides of the bloody civil war, a new report shows.”



SPLA-IO soldiers at Juba in April 2016.

Source: Jason Patinkin (VOA) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPLA-IO_soldiers_\(Juba_-_April_2016\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPLA-IO_soldiers_(Juba_-_April_2016).jpg).



South Sudan: “Roads” to Peace

OE Watch Commentary: With a recently agreed to peace between the government and rebel forces in South Sudan described by many as “fragile,” foreign governments and NGOs are looking for ways to cement this agreement, provide gainful employment to prevent idle hands from taking up weapons again, and help ameliorate the humanitarian crisis that has resulted from years of conflict between warring ethnic groups. As the accompanying excerpted article from the *African Arguments* website details, an infrastructure program emphasizing roads would be a good choice to meet those needs.

To be sure, the war torn country has many needs, all desperate for funds from an international community that has grown increasingly cautious in providing money to a country whose government and rebel elites have earned a notorious reputation for corruption. The health and education sectors in particular have suffered immensely during the conflict. Compounding the issue is that over 90 percent of the South Sudanese people make their living from farming, and the ability to sell their products and thus be able to afford to buy medicines or school supplies has been extremely hampered by the war.

However, with so many needs, the article’s author argues that a significant portion of the donor funding, when there is any, should be directed towards road construction. He cites numerous factors to justify this approach. To begin with, because of the poor condition of the roads South Sudan is one of the most expensive countries in the world in which to deliver aid, especially during the rainy season. It has been estimated that delivering aid in South Sudan costs seven times as much as it does in Somalia, a country devastated by decades of civil war. Indeed, approximately 40 percent of the costs of delivering humanitarian aid to seven million people – over half of the population – that needed it during 2018 can be attributed to transportation.

An additional factor in favor of emphasizing road building is the huge gain in employment, both directly from constructing the road and indirectly from having better trade routes, that has been shown to occur in other parts of Africa from such projects. According to the World Bank, large infrastructure projects – not just roads – boosted employment 30 percent in North Africa and the Middle East during the 2000’s.

Over 70 percent of South Sudan’s population is under the age of 30, with a large portion of those unskilled. When no jobs were available, many would join armed groups as their only viable option. However, with a large-scale road construction project, those individuals could possibly be contributing towards a stronger economic future, both for themselves and the country. As the article’s author states, South Sudan is at a critical juncture, and one of the best ways to spend hard-to-get foreign dollars to cement the peace would be road construction. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



“Up to 40% of the cost of delivering food aid to the people of South Sudan can be attributed to transportation costs. Road improvements would significantly lower that.”

Source: freeimage4life/flickr, <https://goo.gl/T3yWvS>, Public Domain.

Source: Bester Mulauzi, “South Sudan Needs Roads for Peace. Literally,” *African Arguments*, 18 October 2018. <https://africanarguments.org/2018/10/18/south-sudan-needs-roads-for-peace-literally/>

We are at a critical juncture in South Sudan’s history. The situation remains fragile and there are countless challenges ahead, but at this moment, the government and its development partners need strategies that will improve both the social economic status of the country while at the same time creating lasting peace. Investing in large scale infrastructure development programmes like road construction is one of the best ways to achieve this.

Despite these clear benefits, international donors are usually reluctant to fund infrastructure projects, particularly during an ongoing humanitarian response. They fear that the inflow of funds might lead to contestation and deepen ongoing conflicts, especially if the different groups perceive there to be discrepancies in their levels of participation and ownership of the project.

Better roads may seem like a luxury, but the benefits of investing in transport infrastructure are crucial and would spread far and wide.

“The situation remains fragile and there are countless challenges ahead, but at this moment, the government and its development partners need strategies that will improve both the social economic status of the country while at the same time creating lasting peace.”



China Increasingly Turns to Africa for Agricultural Products

OE Watch Commentary: China's push to increase economic ties with Africa is reflected in the accompanying article, partially excerpted here, from *The East African* website that describes how "the effects of the trade war between the US and China have spilled over into East Africa as Beijing starts looking to the region as one of its alternative soybean sources."

Initially, China turned to Brazil for help, but Brazil's supplies were found to be insufficient for China's demand. As a result, China found east Africa, where suppliers were happy to divert their soybeans from African markets to the better paying Chinese one. With China purchasing so much of the soybean crop, prices for the local African users of the commodity have shot up 25 percent in a matter of months. African food processors, whose businesses operate on low profit margins, are finding it difficult to survive in this environment. Besides the higher cost of the product, it is also more difficult to obtain, with companies such as Rwanda-based African Improved Foods, which imports much of its soybeans from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, operating below capacity.

China imports a great many other natural resources from Africa, especially minerals for its manufacturing sector. Therefore it already had significant experience in meeting some of its needs through importing African resources, helping to pave the way for it to import yet another commodity, this time soybeans. Other articles have discussed China's burgeoning investment in African agriculture for additional commodities besides soybeans as it looks for new suppliers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

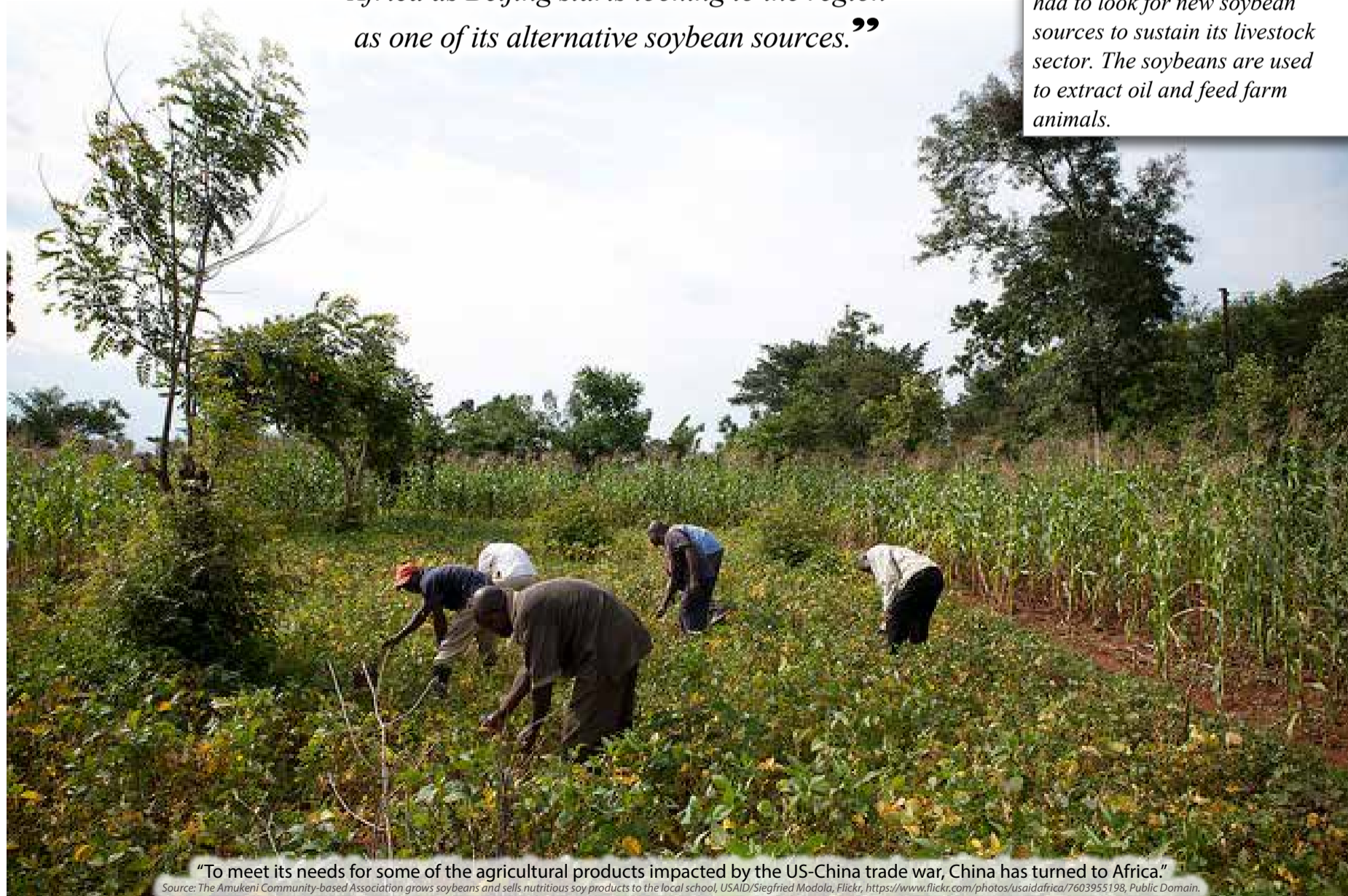
"The effects of the trade war between the US and China have spilled over into East Africa as Beijing starts looking to the region as one of its alternative soybean sources."

Source: Moses K. Gahigi, "Africa, China Buys Up East African Soybean," *The East African*, 12 December 2018. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/business/China-buys-up-East-Africa-soybean/2560-4891734-isa07jz/index.html>

The effects of the trade war between the US and China have spilled over into East Africa as Beijing starts looking to the region as one of its alternative soybean sources.

In retaliation to the US's imposition of punitive tariffs of \$34 billion on Chinese goods, Beijing imposed 25 per cent duty on soybean imports from the US in July, causing major shocks in the global market.

With the tariff war, Beijing has had to look for new soybean sources to sustain its livestock sector. The soybeans are used to extract oil and feed farm animals.



"To meet its needs for some of the agricultural products impacted by the US-China trade war, China has turned to Africa."
Source: The Amukeni Community-based Association grows soybeans and sells nutritious soy products to the local school, USAID/Siegfried Modola, Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaidafrika/7603955198>, Public Domain.



Bolivaria's Allies

OE Watch Commentary: The four accompanying excerpted references compose an efficient and informative series from a major Colombian daily about the broad, if not Western, international support enjoyed by the regime of Nicolás Maduro in Caracas. The title to this article does not have a misspelling of Bolivian, but alludes to the broadly held opinion that none of these international dealings we see Maduro complete would happen without coordination and approval from leaders in the nucleus of the Communist Party of Cuba. The suggestion of the series is that the Bolivarians have an adequate answer to the sanctions brought to bear against the regime in Caracas. That answer, however, has the Bolivarians falling farther and farther into debt, a debt they owe to a rogues gallery of United States' adversaries, which all appear to be gaining strategic advantage in the process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Vladimir Putin met with President of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro on the sidelines of the Third Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum. (2015).

Source: President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50768>, CC 4.0.

“...Maduro shows that he does have diplomatic relations...”

Source: Editors, “Rusia invertirá 6 mil millones de dólares en Venezuela (Russia will invest 6 billion dollars in Venezuela),” *El Colombiano*, 6 December 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/internacional/venezuela/como-apoya-rusia-a-venezuela-YD9775133>

Venezuela completed agreements to receive 6,000 million dollars of Russian investments in the petroleum and mining sectors, according to an announcement from Moscow by Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro...Without specifying timeframes, the ruler asserted that the Russian investment in the petroleum sector will focus on ruso-venezuelan ‘mixed enterprises’, with the objective of raising the production of the South American country by ‘almost a million barrels’...Before traveling to Moscow, he [Maduro] met Monday in Caracas with the president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and in days prior had received the Iranian foreign minister, Hojattolah Soltani, and the leader of the North Korean Supreme Assembly, Kim Jong Nam, representative of State of Kim Jong Un...

Source: Editors, “Las alianzas de Nicolás Maduro con Vladimir Putin (The alliances of Nicolás Maduro with Vladimir Putin),” *El Colombiano*, 5 December 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/internacional/venezuela/venezuela-y-rusia-tejen-alianzas-tras-encuentro-de-nicolas-maduro-y-vladimir-putin-EG9769327>

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, expressed his support to his Venezuelan counterpart, Nicolás Maduro...‘We support your efforts to attain social peace and all your actions to harmonize relations with the opposition...And naturally we condemn all the actions, evidently of a terroristic character, all attempting to bring down’ the government of Maduro ‘with the help of force’...The heir to the deceased Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) claimed in Moscow that in spite of having been ‘submitted to all kinds of aggressions, threats’, in Venezuela ‘we are standing and winning’. We are talking about ‘a learning process.’

Source: Editors, “Rusia y Turquía, los aliados de Maduro ante crisis en Venezuela (Russia and Turkey, Maduro’s allies in facing the crisis in Venezuela),” *El Colombiano*, 4 December 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/internacional/venezuela/nicolas-maduro-presidente-de-venezuela-viaja-a-rusia-para-reunion-con-vladimir-putin-FJ9759272>

Although the Venezuelan ruler did not specify his agenda in that country, relations between Russia and the South American country have turned on support in the energy and military sectors....The trip comes after the support he received on the part of the President of Turkey...which rejects the sanctions against Venezuela by the United States...The commercial interchange with Turkey and Venezuela will reach 800 million dollars this year, according to Maduro...

Source: Editors, “Maduro y sus tres aliados estratégicos (Maduro and his three strategic allies),” *El Colombiano*, 5 December 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/internacional/venezuela/cuales-son-los-paises-que-apoyan-a-venezuela-y-nicolas-maduro-GX9761448>

In September he visited China, where the government of Xi Jinping promised 5 billion dollars to combat the crisis.... Therefore, while the governments of the region attempt to corral the regime, the Organization of American States or the United States exercising pressure and some members of the European Union condemning the government, Maduro shows that he does have diplomatic relations, but with those countries that are outside the western sphere. But they are not new alliances...



Bolivarian Sabre Rattling?

OE Watch Commentary: Bolivarian Nicolás Maduro not only made the rounds to seek economic support from geopolitical allies, he heralded some conspicuous military displays. A clutch of Russian military planes recently landed at Maiquetía, including two Tu-160 strategic bombers. The first accompanying reference, from the *YouTube* channel of the Mexican news source *Mexico 24 Horas*, is representative of many reports from around Ibero-America suggesting that the region did indeed take note. In the second accompanying reference, from the Miami *Nuevo Herald*, Antonio María Delgado includes interview material from Venezuelan commentator Martín Rodil, who opines, among other things, that the Russians are sending a clear message of their invested interest in Venezuela. The Delgado article also notes the near simultaneous announcement from Iran, which is apparently sending a squadron of small warships to Venezuelan waters for the same reasons. There is speculation, evident from article titles if nothing else, that those in control of the government in Caracas fear the possibility of military action against them. More than one foreign power is apparently also concerned, lest they lose a considerable amount of financial investment that may depend on continuing control of Venezuelan territory by the current regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: “Bombarderos rusos arriban a Venezuela (Russian bombers arrive in Venezuela),” *Mexico 24 Horas* and *YouTube*, 11 December 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqdP1cTsRxs>

Five days after a meeting in Moscow between the presidents Nicolás Maduro and Vladimir Putin, four aircraft landed at the Maiquetía Airport, which serves Caracas, for joint maneuvers the duration of which was not specified. The Russian Army in Moscow informed that the subject is two bombers Tu-160, an An-124 transport plane and an Il-62 passenger plane...General Vladimir López [Venezuelan] assured that the military exercises sought to guarantee the defense of his country against external threats...

Source: Antonio María Delgado, “Bombarderos rusos y barcos de guerra iraníes. ¿Teme Maduro una intervención extranjera? (Russian bombers and Iranian war ships. Does Maduro fear an external invasion?),” *El Nuevo Herald*, 10 December 2018. https://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/venezuela-es/article222906150.html#storylink=latest_side

...the experts are implying that the presence of the Russian bombers in Venezuela could be seen as an intimidation piece for the United States. For Matíin Rodil, an expert on relations among Caracas, Teheran and Moscow, the presence of the bombers is just one signal that seeks to remind the world that Russia has interests in Venezuela...

“...one signal that seeks to remind the world that Russia has interests in Venezuela...”



Tu-160 and IL-78 tanker airing in time for a demonstration at the air show, Parade on Pobedata, May 9, 2016.
Source: Toshonenov [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tu-160_with_IL-78.jpg.



China Donates Four Coast Guard Patrol Vessels to Ecuador

OE Watch Commentary: In recent months and years, many countries in Central and South America have broken diplomatic ties with Taiwan; the most recent being El Salvador in August 2018. This severing of ties continues to concern Taiwan for two reasons. First, it leaves the Taiwanese government with only 12 remaining diplomatic partners in the region. Second, President Ing-wen of Taiwan claims that China is attempting to use “dollar diplomacy” in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to convince these countries to sever ties with the island nation in exchange for economic compensation, as noted in the accompanying excerpted article from the *BBC*.

Meanwhile, China continues to expand its influence in the region with the donation of four coastguard vessels to Ecuador to strengthen maritime security and protect the country’s exclusive economic zone from piracy and illegal fishing activities, as reported in the accompanying excerpt by *La Hora*. As the article discusses, the donation was made within the framework of the Xiangshan VIII Forum, which took place in the Chinese capital in October. Ecuadorian Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin attended the Forum as a partner of China and to accept the new coast guard vessels. Also discussed during the Forum is how China and Ecuador continue to work on a comprehensive defense strategic partnership. As part of this discussion, China vowed to elevate and increase technical-military cooperation for the benefit of common interests. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin thanked the Chinese government and pointed out the importance of this donation to support Ecuador’s fight against drug trafficking and organized transnational crime.”



Ecuadorian Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin (May 2018).

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/asambleanacional/42280117082/> [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gral_oswaldo_jarrin.jpg.

Source: “China dona a Ecuador cuatro lanchas guardacostas en foro de defensa (China Donates Four Coast Guard Vessels to Ecuador for Defense purposes),” *La Hora*, 25 October 2018. <https://lahora.com.ec/cotopaxi/noticia/1102196014/china-dona-a%C2%A0ecuador%C2%A0cuatro-lanchas-guardacostas-en-foro-de-defensa>

Source: “¿Diplomacia de chequera? Por qué quedan países en Centroamérica que no rompen relaciones con Taiwán a favor de China (Dollar Diplomacy? Why are there Still Countries in Central America that have not Broken Diplomatic Ties with Taiwan in Favor of China?),” *BBC*, 22 August 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-40264113>

Taiwan accused Beijing of pursuing “dollar diplomacy” to lure away its remaining diplomatic partners as it snagged El Salvador in August 2018... It also said mainland China’s repeated attempts to poach the island’s allies were no longer just between Taipei and Beijing, but had become an issue for the whole region. Taiwanese President Ing-wen China further indicated that China is trying to use increased suppression against Taiwan to showcase its influence and strength in the region (both in Asia and other regions of the world).

China donated four coast guard vessels to Ecuador for defense purposes during the 8th annual Xiangshan VIII Forum which was held in the Chinese capital in late October. In response, Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin thanked the Chinese government and pointed out the importance of this donation to support Ecuador’s fight against drug trafficking and organized transnational crime. The Defense Minister also indicated the importance of these vessels to help protect the South American countries Exclusive Economic Zone from piracy and illegal fishing activities...

...The Chinese defense minister stressed the nature of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries and pledged “to elevate and increase technical-military cooperation for the benefit of common interests.”

...Relations between China and Ecuador increased vastly during the government of Presidency of Rafael Correa (2007-2017), during which time China focused on creating a formal bilateral agenda that included cooperation in commerce, investments, development of infrastructure, science, technology, health, and education. Presently, the two countries are working together to increase cooperation related to defense issues.



New Colombian Military Leadership

OE Watch Commentary: Colombian President Iván Duque made changes to the country's senior military leadership, as indicated in the accompanying reference from *El Espectador*. Evidently, the changes are uncontroversial. President Duque offered a cordial appreciation to the outgoing commanders. He highlighted the operational experience of the new commanders and underlined their apolitical natures. With the announcements President Duque mentioned major operations that have been conducted since his inauguration, but apparently did not announce any new policies. Broadly experienced, the incoming Commanding General of the Military Forces, Luis Navarro, is 58 years old, as noted by the accompanying excerpt from *El Colombiano*. He graduated from Colombia's military academy in 1982. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Seal of the Colombian Armed Forces General Command.

Source: I, SajoR [CC BY-SA 2.5 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>)], https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escudo_Fuerzas_Militares_de_Colombia.svg.

“...The new commander of the Military Forces, General Luis Fernando Navarro...”

Source: Editors, Judicial Editors, “Iván Duque cambió toda la cúpula de las Fuerzas Militares (Iván Duque changed the entire senior leadership of the Military Forces),” *El Espectador*, 10 December 2018. <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/asi-quedo-la-nueva-cupula-de-las-fuerzas-militares-y-policia-articulo-828469>

-The new Commander of the Military Forces will be General Luis Fernando Navarro, who will replace General Alberto José Mejía.

-The new Commander of the National Army is General Nicacio Martínez, who will take the place of General Ricardo Gómez Nieto.

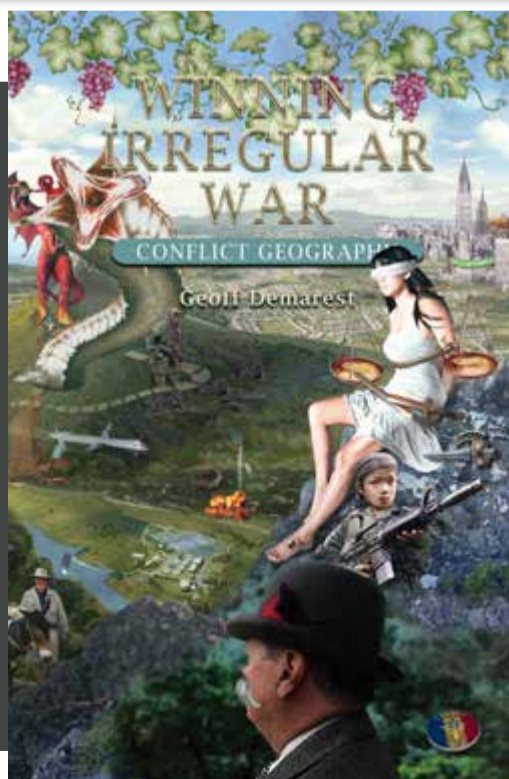
-Admiral Evelio Martínez will assume command of the National Navy, replacing Admiral Ernesto Durán González.

-Meanwhile, the new Commander of the Air Force is General Ramsés Rueda, who will succeed General Carlos Bueno.

-Finally, the new Director of Police is General Óscar Atehortúa, who will replace General Jorge Hernando Nieto.

Source: Colprensa, “Estos son los nuevos comandantes de la cúpula militar El Colombiano (These are the new commanders of the senior military leadership),” *El Colombiano*, 11 December 2018. <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/nueva-cupula-militar-del-gobierno-del-presidente-ivan-duque-CI9802051>

The new commander of the Military Forces, General Luis Fernando Navarro...was born in Chía, Cundinamarca on 4 November 1960, entered the Escuela Militar [national military academy] in 1980 and two years later obtained the rank of second lieutenant the Infantry branch....



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>



Illegal Slaughterhouses

OE Watch Commentary: To illegal mining, agriculture, and human trafficking, add illegal abattoirs. The area reported in the accompanying excerpted reference is a set of Venezuelan states bordering on Colombia. Subversive groups (not named in the article) have been taxing producers, apparently during movement of cattle. Rather than tax in Venezuelan currency, which is considered worthless, the rustlers take some of the cattle, which they butcher at secret locations, selling what they do not use for themselves. The sanitation consequences are obvious. Meanwhile, the Bolivarian government has announced that it will respond by occupying the legal slaughterhouses. The cattlemen interviewed by the article's author do not see this as solving the rustling problem, but do see it as a taking of property. They claim that while the rustling is a financial and health threat, the government response will soon result in more severe meat shortages, just as the case has been for other products. The majority of the clandestine butcheries are said to be near the Colombian border, suggesting either that they are proximate to guerrilla encampments or that meat is smuggled across the border, or both. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Eleonora Delgado, "Guerrilla cobra 10% de las reses a productores de Apure, Barinas y Táchira (Guerrilla charges cattle producers in Apure, Barinas and Táchira 10% of heads)," *El Nacional*, 5 December 2018. http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/sociedad/guerrilla-cobra-las-reses-productores-zonas-fronterizas_262186

Subversive groups that operate on the borders of Táchira, Barinas y Apure, charge meat cattle producers 10% of what they move in order to slaughter them at clandestine stakes or abattoirs... 'If you move 10 bulls, you have to give them two. They take those animals to shackling stakes where there are no sanitation measures, they are killed and the meat offered for sale.' ...There will come a moment when there won't be any meat anywhere. An occupation (of slaughterhouses) is not going to resolve the problem of national production.... There will come a moment when there won't be any meat anywhere...

"...There will come a moment when there won't be any meat anywhere..."



Venezuelan Plains, Apure State (2014).

Source: Neil J. villamizar [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Llanos_de_venezuela.JPG.