

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



Volume 9
Issue #10
October 2019

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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ON THE COVER:

A docked Russian Soyuz spacecraft

Source: NASA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Expedition_27_Soyuz_TMA-20_spacecraft.jpg, Public Domain

OEWATCH

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 9 | Issue 10

October | 2019

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Sinking the Armata?

OE Watch Commentary: When the Kremlin first included its new T-14 Armata tank in the Victory Day parade in 2015, many observers expressed dismay at the country's seeming facility in transforming a technological concept into actual production. They suggested that the Kremlin's ability to concentrate resources on developing hi-tech military armaments could significantly alter any future balance of forces. Over the past couple years, however, some of these concerns have dissipated. While the original plan called for the production of 2,300 next generation, Armata-class systems (T-14 tank, T-15 BMP and T-16 armored recovery vehicle), these figures have been scaled down to 132 Armata-class vehicles by 2021. Yet even this reduced target may now be out of reach. As the brief excerpt from the weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (VPK) points out, production problems have further delayed hitting the planned production target (44 vehicles) in 2019.



T-14 Armata at rehearsal of parade in Moscow 2018.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-14_Armata_\(41072270525\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-14_Armata_(41072270525).jpg) CC-BY-2.0

The article begins by describing a recent visit by Defense Minister Shoigu and the ministry's finance experts to the plant where the Armata series are being produced. They discovered that instead of the 44 planned for completion, "the plant will supply only 16 vehicles, by the end of 2019." The stated reasons for the delay in production are manifold. There has been an extremely high rate of personnel turnover, particularly within senior management, with the article pointing out that "according to some reports, this was due to financial abuse." Design flaws have also hampered production. As the article describes, the crew capsule on the T-14 does not rotate with the turret, which places great "emphasis on optical means and electronics, which can fail in battle." Financial constraints have also limited production. The article states that "the full development of the factory is hindered by a large number of debts, including to commercial banks." These debts preclude any capital investment into the production facilities to accelerate production. The article suggests that the Ministry of Defense (MoD) is unable to provide additional funding because of "unforeseen expenses arising in Syria and in connection with the US withdrawing from the INF Treaty."

The article concludes by pointing out that the MoD plans on conducting "complex military tests [on the Armata series] before deciding on bulk purchases," and that "there is still a rather long way before this system is fielded." If nothing else, the problems associated with the production and fielding of the Armata series of armed vehicles suggests that there is often a gap between the Kremlin's bellicose rhetoric and reality. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...There is still a rather long way before this system [Armata] is fielded..."

Source: Oleg, Falichev, "Армату ждет долгая дорога (Armata is waiting on a long road)," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (Military Industrial Courier), 20 August 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/52041>

On 12 August, Sergei Shoigu made a working trip to the troops of the Central Military District, where he visited defense industry enterprises, in particular Uralvagonzavod. The Minister checked the progress of the state defense order, listened to the reports of the heads of enterprises, the command of the Central Military District....

...The Minister's personal visit is always connected with resolving serious issues. Including those that require urgent organizational or financial measures. Judging by the fact that he was accompanied by Deputy Minister of Defense Tatyana Shevtsova, who was in charge of the monetary support of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, we can conclude that the issue concerned not only the timing of the defense order, but also the payment of already concluded contracts, which could be in jeopardy....

...The Minister's trip to one of the leading defense enterprises in the country is an occasion to talk about the situation with the supply of armored vehicles to the troops, and primarily created on the Armata platform... It concludes contracts for the supply of at least battalion sets. The case in point is T-14 (Armata tank), T-15 (BMP on the same platform) and T-16 (BREM - armored maintenance vehicle). There could be problems.

In accordance with the contract concluded with Uralvagonzavod, 132 Armata tanks should be delivered to the Armed Forces in three years. This is a contract for an experimental military batch of vehicles on the promised heavy tracked platform Armata, signed by the Russian Defense Ministry with JSC Uralvagonzavod Scientific Industrial Corporation at the end of 2015. In 2018, at the Army-2018 forum, it was prolonged and involves deliveries, we will repeat, of a total of 132 pieces of equipment, including T-14, BMP T-15 and BREM T-16 vehicles, which were supposed to start from the end of last year....

...We divide 132 into three and come to the conclusion that the plant should supply 44 vehicles annually. But as it became known to the Military Industrial Courier, by the end of 2019, the plant will supply only 16 vehicles, four of which are BREM.... But even taking into account this shipment, the shortage will be 28 vehicles. To produce them for the time remaining until the end of 2019 is unrealistic. There is a clear lag behind the schedule....

...In general, over the past two years, the Uralvagonzavod NPK has gone through several stages of updating the management team.... The reasons were not named, but according to some reports, this was due to financial abuse.

...In addition, a number of Armata weapons systems, as we have already said, require further testing and trial operation in the troops.... There are questions about the control of the crew in the armored capsule over the combat situation around the tank. It is not possible to turn the capsule like the turret, so the emphasis on optical means and electronics, which can fail in battle....

...Unfortunately, the full development of the plant is hindered by a large number of debts, including to commercial banks. "In fact, all the profitability that we have goes to servicing the loan portfolio," said Oleg Sienko, the former CEO, back in 2016.

As the head of the MoD, one cannot stop the modernization of our Armed Forces.... On the other hand, it was forced to save money as much as possible due to unforeseen expenses arising in Syria and in connection with the US withdrawing from the INF Treaty....

If the Armata tank will withstand all the perturbations, as prescribed by the end of 2019, then the Ministry of Defense, we repeat, will conduct complex military tests before deciding on bulk purchases. This was said by Yuri Borisov.... So before serial production of the "Armata" there is still a rather long way before this system is fielded.



Where is Strelkov Aiming?

OE Watch Commentary: Five years ago, the name Igor Strelkov (aka Igor Girkin) was prominent within the Russian information space. As one of the key Russian “volunteers” who had helped to spark a wider conflict in the Donbass region, Strelkov was portrayed as the patriotic Russian officer who was willing to use military force to defend ethnic Russians in SE Ukraine. While he soon earned the title of “Minister of Defense of the Donetsk People’s Republic,” after the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in mid-July 2014, Strelkov’s star quickly faded, and he was recalled to Moscow where he was relegated back to the conservative fringe. (For more details on Strelkov, see the FMSO Monograph, “Russia’s Man in New Type War-Igor Girkin” at <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/216622>) The centrist news source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* recently interviewed Strelkov, where he shared some provocative observations regarding the ongoing conflict in SE Ukraine and Russia’s military readiness.



Igor Strelkov at a press conference in 2015.

Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Igor_Ivanovich_Strelkov_Yekaterinburg5.JPG, CCA-SA 4.0

After reminding readers of his exploits in the Donbass region in 2014, Strelkov warns that “if today, should Ukrainian troops go on the offensive, the front will be broken through by the first onslaught,” since “in my opinion, the two corps of the Donbass [separatist] security forces are good only on paper.” He suggests that these pro-Russian forces are riddled with corruption, and that in his opinion, “the combat effectiveness of militia units is at zero, while their “military commanders ride around in Mercedes.” To prevent a possible Ukrainian attack against the separatist forces, Strelkov argues that “Moscow needs to make a simple and difficult decision - recognize the republics, send troops to the Donbass and strengthen the line of contact between the Ukrainian forces and the militia of the LDNR [separatist republics].”

Strelkov goes on to question the “combat readiness of the Russian troops,” where “huge amounts of money are being spent on the Army games, the development of the Patriot park network, and other non-core activities for the armed forces.” He goes on to complain that “there were flaws in the planning and organization of combat operations in the Syrian theater of operations,” and that “the Russian military leadership is not ready for the unexpected,” especially in Ukraine.

Five years ago, the Kremlin unleashed a variety of hybrid forces (like Strelkov) to destabilize the situation in neighboring Ukraine. While successful, the costs behind this strategy have proven high, and as Strelkov’s comments suggest, the final reckoning may prove to be even more costly. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...If today, should Ukrainian troops go on the offensive, the front will be broken through by the first onslaught.”

Source: Alexander Sharkovsky, “Донбасс надеется на сильную руку Москвы (Donbass hopes for a strong hand in Moscow),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 August 2019. http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-08-23/16_1058_interview.html

Former Minister of Defense of the DPR Igor Strelkov agreed to answer questions from the editor-in-chief of the Independent Military Review weekly journal Alexander Sharkovsky regarding military construction in Ukraine and the unrecognized republics of Donbass. In addition, the possibility of an open war between Russia and Ukraine was discussed. And in particular, it was about the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and their ability to withstand the Russian army on the battlefield....

- How is the operational situation at the Donbass theater of operations now?

- ...If today, should Ukrainian troops go on the offensive, the front will be broken through by the first onslaught. In my opinion, the two corps of the Donbass police are good only on paper. According to official reports, the troops are 90–95% complete. In fact, there is not a single company in the infantry that reaches full-time strength. I know that there are 35 in the company’s positions, 40 on the strength, the rest are only on the lists, and commanders receive monetary allowance for them. A sort of remake of Dead Souls. In my opinion, the combat effectiveness of militia units is at zero. And the military commanders ride the Mercedes. The training of militia personnel, according to my most optimistic estimates, can be recognized as very weak....

...Now that the opportunities have been missed, Russia can save the Donbass, but with much more blood (both literally and figuratively)... Moscow needs to make a simple and difficult decision - recognize the republics, send troops to the Donbass and strengthen the line of contact between the Ukrainian forces and the militia of the LDNR....

...I believe that the command of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation was carried away by self-PR and toys, instead of painstakingly, thoughtfully and progressively engaging in military construction. In my opinion, huge amounts of money are being spent on the Army games, the development of the Patriot park network and other non-core activities for the armed forces.... Therefore, I have doubts about the high combat readiness of the Russian troops....

...Now the most combat-ready strike aircraft of the Russian aerospace forces are in Syria. It is hard to say how quickly it will be possible to scrape up forces for military operations against Ukraine or transfer an aviation group from Syria to a new theater. By the way, I want to note that there were flaws in the planning and organization of combat operations in the Syrian theater of operations. In my opinion, shortcomings in the work of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff are also evident in Russia. In my opinion, the Russian military leadership is not ready for the unexpected. And this will play a cruel joke with our troops if you can’t avoid a war with Ukraine.



Northern and Eastern Military Districts Get S-300V4 Air Defense Systems

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses Russian plans to field a new air defense brigade equipped with S-300V4s in the Eastern Military District and a unit S-300V4 unit division in the Northern Fleet (Military District). Although the size and command relationship of the new unit in the Northern Fleet is not mentioned, it may be an Aerospace Forces' battalion or regiment.

The term 'S-300' can refer to a wide variety of surface-to-air missile systems in three distinct families. The S-300P (C-300II) family refers to the strategic air defense systems that are typically found in the Aerospace Forces. The S-300 is a long-range surface-to-air missile system, and can engage aircraft, cruise missiles and theater ballistic missiles. A typical S-300PM2 battalion has a command post, radar, and up to six batteries. The batteries usually consist of an engagement radar, an acquisition radar, and up to eight transporter erector launchers (TEL) with four launch tubes, with all vehicles on wheeled chassis.



S-300V 9S32 engagement radar.
Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net>, CC BY 4.0

The S-400 and S-500 can be considered members of the S-300 family, and will replace older systems. The S-300F (C-300Ф) is the naval variant of the S-300 family that has been installed on the Kara, Slava, and Kirov class battlecruisers. The S-300V (C-300B) is the Ground Forces variant that was designed specifically for theater-level missile defense to defend command posts and other vital assets from medium range ballistic missiles. Due to differing requirements, the system is on a tracked chassis, and each TEL is equipped with a narrow-band radar to facilitate targeting.

The first S-300V model was accepted into the Soviet Army inventory in 1988, with one of its primary missions being to defend against American Pershing ballistic missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles. Since the system is intended to defend against ballistic missiles as well as aircraft, it is equipped with two different launchers. The 9A83M2 launcher can fire four 9M83M missiles and has a range of around 150km. The S-300V4 is the newest iteration of the S-300V system, that was first fielded in 2014. The 9A84-2 launcher can fire two "heavy" 9M82M missiles with a 400km range. Although the TELs are equipped with radars, there are other supporting radars that are typically in the S-300V4 battalions, these radars can include the 9S15M2 all-round surveillance radar, 9S19M2 sector-surveillance radar, and the 9S32M multi-channel missile guidance radar. In addition the S-300V4 can be integrated into existing air defense networks, and other air defense systems can be integrated into the S-300V4 battalion to include the short-range Tor-M2 and the Pantsir-SM close-range air defense systems.

Although the S-300V was designed for use in the Ground Forces, some systems are found in the regiments of the Russian Aerospace Forces. S-300V4s in the Ground Forces are located in one of three air defense brigades: The 202nd Air Defense Brigade (в/ч 43034) in the Western Military District (2 battalions, with 36 S-300V4 launchers); the 77th Air Defense Brigade (в/ч 33742) in the Southern Military District (2 battalions, with 36 S-300V4 launchers); and the 28th Air Defense Brigade (в/ч 71316) in the Central Military District (2 battalions, with 36 S-300V4 launchers). **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The S-300V4 is regarded as a cutting-edge system of defense against any type of air attack. Its capabilities enable it to provide cover against airstrikes over an area two-to-three times greater than that covered by the classic S-300.”

-Lt. Gen. Aleksandr Gorkov, former Commander of Surface-to-Air Missile Troops



Continued: Northern and Eastern Military Districts Get S-300V4 Air Defense Systems

Source: Alexey Kozachenko and Alexey Ramm, “Северное влияние: в Арктике развернут сверхдальнобойные С-300В4 (Northern Influence: Ultra-Long-Range S-300V4 Being Deployed in Arctic),” *Izvestia Online*, 21 August 2019, <https://iz.ru/904692/aleksei-kozachenko-aleksei-ramm/severnoe-vliianie-v-arktike-razvernuto-sverkhdalnoboinye-s-300v4>

Northern Influence: Ultra-Long-Range S-300V4 Being Deployed in Arctic

The Defense Ministry has taken the decision in principle to deploy new air defense units and formations to provide cover for the Arctic and Far Eastern Strategic Sectors, Izvestiya has learned from sources at the military department. A SAM brigade armed with the S-400V4 system will be activated before the end of the year and will be placed at the disposal of the Eastern Military District Command. In addition, a new military unit is to be deployed within the structure of the Northern Fleet Operational-Strategic Command. The deployment locations of the formations are not yet known...

“Units and formations armed with the S-300V4 are already deployed in a number of regions. The first brigade made its appearance in Krasnodarskiy Krai in 2014. Similar formations have been activated in the Central Military District -- outside Samara and in the Moscow region. A SAM system has been deployed in the Kaliningrad Special Region. It is planned to rearm several other brigades with the S-300V4 in the near future.”...

“An air defense brigade represents a so-called frontline complement,” Lt. Gen. Aleksandr Gorkov, former Commander of Surface-to-Air Missile Troops, explained to Izvestiya. “A formation such as this is directly subordinate to a joint-strategic command [military district] or the commander of a front and is intended to provide cover for the main troop groupings.

“The S-300V4 is regarded as a cutting-edge system of defense against any type of air attack. Its capabilities enable it to provide cover against airstrikes over an area two-to-three times greater than that covered by the classic S-300. This significantly pushes back the SAM envelope for airborne targets. The new systems facilitate the guaranteed interception of the warhead sections of intermediate-range missiles. The SAM system incorporates special narrow-beam radars and launchers with the capability to hit ballistic missiles.”...

The Ground Force air defense troops acquired the S-300V4 modification in 2014. The upgraded version is fully digitalized. It is capable of the simultaneous engagement and guaranteed destruction of 24 aerodynamic targets, including small objects such as stealth aircraft, or 16 ballistic missiles traveling at up to 4,500 meters per second. It has an engagement range of 400 kilometers. Today this is the longest-range system in its class. It has great modernization potential built in. In the longer term new capabilities will enable it to engage hypersonic air vehicles also. The S-300V4 is currently undergoing testing in a combat environment...



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S-300V 9A82 TEL.

Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net>, CC BY 4.0



Russian Ground Forces' Air Defense: A Look At Russia's Threat-Based Military

OE Watch Commentary: The 2S6 (2K22) Tunguska (SA-19 Grison) is a tracked, short-range missile-gun, light armored, anti-aircraft system that was designed to protect assets from air attack in the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA), fielded to replace the ZSU-23-4 Shilka in the early 1980s. The Tunguska went through its first major upgrade in the 1990s (2K22M Tunguska-M), and in 2003, Russia began fielding the current (most modernized) version, the 2S6M1 (2K22M1) Tunguska-M1. The Tunguska-M1 has twin 2A38M (30mm) guns with a firing rate of up to 5,000 rounds per minute that are capable of destroying flying targets at distances from 200 to 4,000 meters at an altitude of up to 3,000m. The Tunguska's guns are useful for engaging extremely close targets, where the expenditure of a missile would be uneconomical (such as a small UAV), targets that have EW protection capabilities (that missiles cannot engage), and, when necessary, ground targets. The Tunguska also has eight 9M311-M1 short-range missiles designed to engage low-flying aircraft and cruise missiles at a range of from 200 to 10,000 meters and at altitudes from 15 to 6,000 meters.

Historically, the Russian Ground Forces' decision to transition from the Shilka, to the Tunguska, to the Tunguska-M, to the Tunguska-M1 is directly related to the US's fielding of attack helicopters, namely the Bell AH-1 Cobra and the Boeing AH-64 Apache. In the Vietnam era, the AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter, with long-range antitank guided missiles (ATGMs), first started appearing in the US arsenal. On the receipt of targeting information, the AH-1 Cobra would "jump up" from behind a terrain feature (hill, valley, etc.) fire a rocket, and withdraw into hiding. The firing cycle for such an attack would only be 40-50 seconds, insufficient time for older Soviet Shilkas and Strela-2Ms to respond. After one major exercise, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces, and Hero of the Soviet Union, General Ivan Pavlovsky (1909–1999), assessed the level of threat of attack helicopters to armored vehicles on the modern battlefield by saying: "It is better to have ten tanks that are reliably covered from the air than one hundred with no protective cover." His statement proved prophetic during the Arab-Israeli conflicts, as Israeli Cobras were reportedly destroying from six to eight unprotected armored vehicles (tanks, BTRs, BMPs, etc) each sortie. As the US has fielded more modern attack helicopters, the Soviet Union, and later Russia, has fielded more modern Tunguskas to destroy them. Modernizing capabilities in direct response to adversary capabilities can be seen in many other Russian development programs, demonstrating how the Russian military is very much a "threat-based" military, as opposed to Western militaries which are more "capability-based."

The accompanying excerpted article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses another modernization of the Tunguska, the addition of passive sensors that can provide targeting data so the Tunguska does not need to emit as much radiation. This capability would increase the Tunguska's survivability on the modern battlefield, and although not mentioned in the article, could be one way of mitigating proposed new US attack helicopter-launched anti-tank guided missiles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Postwar portrait photo of Soviet Army General Ivan Grigorevich Pavlovsky (1909-1999). 328th Rifle Division (Soviet Union). Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces from 1967-1979. Source: Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Soviet_Army_General_Ivan_Grigorevich_Pavlovsky.jpg, Public Domain

“Thanks to the introduction of television and thermal-imaging channels with the automated target tracker, the “Tunguska-M1” has obtained the capability “to see” at any time of day and to destroy the enemy in stealth mode, without revealing itself.”

Source: Aleksey Brusilov, “Скрытное уничтожение: новый прицел сделал “Тунгуску” еще более грозной (Secret Destruction: The New Sight Has Made the ‘Tunguska’ Even More Formidable),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 4 September 2019. <https://rg.ru/2019/09/04/skrytnoe-unichtozhenie-novyj-pricel-sdelal-tungusku-eshche-bolee-groznoj.html>

Secret Destruction: The New Sight Has Made the ‘Tunguska’ Even More Formidable

The “Tunguska” air defense missile-gun complexes are one of the main weapon systems of the Air Defense Troops of the Russian Ground Forces (PVO). They are considered to be a formidable adversary for hostile combat aircraft, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles.

These vehicles are being constantly being improved. One could have caught sight of the modernized variant of the 2S6M1 with the new sight at the recent Southern Military District opposing-force tactical exercises near Volgograd...

Thanks to the introduction of television and thermal-imaging channels with the automated target tracker, the “Tunguska-M1” has obtained the capability “to see” at any time of day and to destroy the enemy in stealth mode, without revealing itself...



The Modernization of Russian Coastal Defense Missiles

OE Watch Commentary: The first accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* explains how Russia is retiring its Soviet-era 4K51 Rubezh and SPU-35V Redut mobile coastal missile systems. The 4K51 Rubezh [4K51 «Рубеж»] (NATO: SSC-3 Styx) transporter erector launcher can launch two P-15 Termit [П-15 «Термит»] (NATO: SS-N-2 Styx) anti-ship missiles with an approximately 80km range. The SPU-35V Redut [СПУ-35В «Редут»] (NATO: SSC-1 Sepal) transporter erector launcher can launch one P-5 Pyatyorka [П-5 «Пятёрка»] (NATO: SS-N-3C Shaddock) anti-ship missile with an approximately 750-kilometer range.

In the mid-1990s, the Russian Coastal Defense Artillery started fielding the 3K60 Bal [3K60 «Бал»] (NATO: SSC-6 Sennight) transporter erector launcher to replace the 4K51 Rubezh. The Bal can launch eight Kh-35 [X-35] (NATO: AS-20 Kayak) missiles with approximately a 130km range (260km with



Transporter erector launcher of Redut coastal missile system.

Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Park-Patriot/i-rWjJfjdf>, CC BY 4.0

the new Kh-35U missile). A typical Bal complex (battalion) consists of 2 command vehicles, 4 TELs, 4 transport-loader vehicles, 2 Monolit-B coastal and air reconnaissance radars, and 1 support vehicle. In 2016 the Coastal Defense Artillery fielded the first K-300P Bastion-P [К300П «Бастиян-П»] (NATO: SSC-5 Stoge) transporter erector launcher, that can launch two P-800 Oniks [П-800 «Оникс»] (NATO: SS-N-26 Strobile) missiles with a 300km range. A typical Bastion-P complex (battalion) consists of 1 K380P command vehicle, 4 K-300P TELs, 4 K342P transport-loader vehicles, 2 Monolit-B coastal and air reconnaissance radars, and 1 support vehicle. According to *Izvestia*, by 2021 each Coastal Defense Artillery brigade will now have 3-5 Bastion and 1-2 Bal battalions. *Izvestia* mentioned another interesting capability of the Bastion-P, the capability to also engage ‘limited mobility’ ground targets such as command and control facilities, radar stations, airfields, helicopter landing areas, and artillery batteries. This mention is in reference to Russia’s reported use of Bastion-P to attack ground targets in Syria in November 2016.

The second accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* explains how the Forpost UAV will support coastal defense operations by providing targeting data to Bal and Bastion battalions, as well as naval vessels equipped with anti-ship missiles. The Forpost is a day/night all-weather reconnaissance UAV based upon the Israeli Searcher II UAV. It can operate up to 250km from its ground station (future variants will reportedly have an additional 100km range), can remain aloft for up to 17 hours, reaching an altitude of up to 5000m. The use of UAVs to provide persistent reconnaissance data is viewed by the Russians as being more effective, costing significantly less, and being far more sustainable than manned aviation solutions for this purpose.

As can be seen by ranges of these missiles, Russian capability development is not focused on simply increasing the range of its coastal defense missiles. (The soon to be retired P-5 Pyatyorka has the longest range of these missiles, with a 750km range.) Instead, Russia appears to be emphasizing the reconnaissance/targeting aspect, and choosing to employ many shorter range missiles, instead of fewer long range missiles.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

“The ‘Forpost’ has everything necessary in order to accomplish the forward air controller function for cruise or anti-ship missiles. The drone’s dimensions and cargo capacity permit it to carry powerful optical-electronic equipment. The ‘Forpost’ can easily be used to detect large targets – first and foremost the probable enemy’s surface ships...”



Continued: The Modernization of Russian Coastal Defense

Source: Aleksey Ramm, Aleksey Kozacheno, and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Отряд не заметят: Арктику защитят маневренные группы с «Бастиями» (Detachment Will Remain Unseen: Arctic Will Be Defended by Maneuver Elements with ‘Bastions’),” *Izvestia Online*, 12 August 2019, <https://iz.ru/908520/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/otriad-ne-zametiat-arktiku-zashchitiat-manevrennye-gruppy-s-bastionami>

Detachment Will Remain Unseen: Arctic Will Be Defended by Maneuver Elements with ‘Bastions’

*Maneuver detachments comprising Bastion coastal defense missile systems and naval infantry are being created in the Arctic. These elements are able to patrol unpopulated northern territories surreptitiously, in autonomous mode, for several months at a time. The technical capabilities of these long-range systems enable hundreds of kilometers of seacoast to be securely protected against an assault landing by an adversary. They can be deployed in a matter of minutes. The first detachments have already been constituted within the Pacific Fleet’s coastal defense troops, the *Izvestiya* newspaper has been told by Defense Ministry sources. The formations have also incorporated naval infantry and supply subunits in addition to the coastal defense missile systems.*

Admiral Valentin Selivanov, Chief of the Navy Main Staff, believes that the experience and operational tactics of Strategic Rocket Forces (RVSN) mobile systems can be utilized during the employment of the Bastion systems... “The positions of the Bastion coastal defense missile systems need to remain secret in order for them to be utilized to the maximum effect and to avoid incurring losses,” the expert stated. “In today’s circumstances this is quite a difficult thing to achieve because the developed countries now have powerful technical intelligence and reconnaissance assets at their disposal. A package of space-based, radiotechnical, and radio communications intelligence along with spy planes and unmanned air vehicles are employed in preparing for a landing operation.

“Diverse technical means of concealment and camouflage must be utilized to prevent an adversary destroying the missile launchers. Electronic warfare assets along with air defense systems and aircraft that deny the adversary’s aircraft the chance to approach the coastal defense systems will help to preserve undetectability... The Bastions and their covering group must move around actively but undetected, constantly changing their fire positions. This needs to be done particularly rapidly following operational missile launches. This tactic will enable the Bastions to operate successfully and without incurring losses,” the specialist noted...

The coastal defense missile batteries have always been regarded as the “backbone” of coastal defense. In the process of repulsing an amphibious assault landing they are to inflict a decisive strike on enemy combatants and craft headed for the shore. The coastal defense missile and artillery troops are now discarding their obsolete Redut and Rubezh coastal missile systems. By 2021 the navy is to be fully equipped with the state-of-the-art Bastion and Bal missile systems...

It is planned for each upgraded and rearmed brigade to possess three to five Bastion and one to two Bal battalions...

As and when necessary the Bal coastal defense missile systems will be able to support the long-range Bastions in close-in combat. These systems are designed for the control of littoral zones, straits, and the waters around naval bases. The missiles it employs can hit targets at up to 260 kilometers... the Syrian experience has shown that the Bastions operate well against stationary and “limited mobility” ground targets -- command and control facilities, radar stations, airfields, helicopter landing areas, and artillery batteries...

According to the military expert Vladislav Shurygin, it is essential in the Arctic to organize a highly mobile defense. “It is impossible to establish large groupings in the northern latitudes because of the climatic and natural conditions,” the expert announced. “You won’t deploy tank armies or other large combined troop formations here. One of the primary threats in this sector is that posed by combatant ships that can approach the Arctic coast to deliver strikes. And the constantly shifting Bastion mobile antiship systems will be the very weapon to deter an adversary and make him keep his distance...

Source: Aleksey Kozachenko, Roman Kretsul, and Aleksey Ramm, “Присмотрят свысока: Крым укрепят эскадрилей БПЛА «Форпост» (Look From Above: They Will Reinforce the Crimea with a Squadron of ‘Forpost’ UAVs),” *Izvestia Online*, 14 August 2019. <https://iz.ru/909392/aleksei-kozachenko-roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/prismotriat-svysoka-krym-ukrepiat-eskadrilei-bpla-forpost>

Look From Above: They Will Reinforce the Crimea with a Squadron of ‘Forpost’ UAVs

The Ministry of Defense has strengthened the Black Sea Fleet with new unmanned aerial vehicles. A separate squadron of “Forpost” Long-Range UAVs has become part of 318th Composite Aviation Regiment, which is based near Sevastopol. They can conduct reconnaissance and provide target designations to the missile systems of ships, “Bastion” coastal complexes, and artillery. In the experts’ opinion, Black Sea Fleet forces will more rapidly detect and destroy targets with those unmanned aerial vehicles.

*A separate squadron of “Forpost” long-range unmanned aerial vehicles became part of 318th Composite Aviation Regiment during the spring of this year, a Navy Main Staff spokesman told *Izvestiya*. The effectiveness of the new subunit was verified during recent fleet exercises. The experience of the employment of the drones was acknowledged to be successful. In the future, the “Forpost-M” modernized version of the unmanned aerial vehicle will enter the Black Sea Fleet inventory, a Department spokesman added.*

The “Forpost” UAV will be able to take under observation a significant portion of the water area of the Black Sea. They are designed for reconnaissance and target designation for Kh-35 and “Kalibr” subsonic low-altitude anti-ship missiles and for ship and coastal artillery and missile complexes. The “Forpost” has everything necessary in order to accomplish the forward air controller function for cruise or anti-ship missiles. The drone’s dimensions and cargo capacity permit it to carry powerful optical-electronic equipment. The “Forpost” can easily be used to detect large targets – first and foremost the probable enemy’s surface ships...

*In the future, the drones will become a mandatory reconnaissance and target designation tool for the majority of Russian surface ships and strike systems, which will significantly expand their combat capabilities, Admiral Valentin Selivanov, the former Navy Main Staff Chief, reported to *Izvestiya*... The “Forpost’s” electronic filling is constantly being improved. In the near future, they will install new modular optical-electronic systems to identify objects and radars (RLS) on certain modifications of the unmanned aerial vehicles. Because of this, the drones, while located in a patrol area, will be able to independently accomplish a series of new combat missions. The state-of-the-art radar will help to detect potential targets for attack and the optical system will take aim and identify the object...*



Mines Seen as Key Capabilities for Russian Naval and Coastal Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The Beriev Be-12 ‘Chayka’ is the oldest aircraft in the Russian Navy’s inventory, conducting its first flight in 1960. It was the largest series production amphibious aircraft in the world by the end of its production in 1973. Its distinctive cambered V-shaped wings resembles a seagull in flight, giving the aircraft its name (‘chayka’ is Russian for ‘seagull’). The aircraft was designed for antisubmarine warfare, and was renowned for being simple and reliable. The Be-12 can reach speeds of up to 550 kph, but usually maintains a speed of 320 kph while patrolling. The aircraft has a payload of 1.5-3 tons, can loiter in its patrol zone for more than three hours at a distance of 600km from base, and is crewed by four personnel– the aircraft commander, assistant, navigator, and radio operator.



Admiral Valentin Selivanov, former Chief of the Main Naval Staff.

Source: Svklmkin via Wikimedia, https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Селиванов,_Валентин_Егорович#/media/Файл:Адмирал_Валентин_Егорович_Селиванов_2018.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Modernized versions of the Be-12 can hunt the latest nuclear submarines due to upgraded acoustic and magnetic sensors, and improved depth charges and torpedoes. According to Russian estimates, what area takes an antisubmarine ship 2-3 days to search, takes a Be-12 only 2-3 hours, with the Be-12 being most effective for use in the Baltic, Barents, Black Sea, and the Sea of Japan. Its arsenal consists of enemy submarine detection buoys, and also the PLAB-250-120, and PLAB-50 depth charges, which are dropped onto a detected submarine from an altitude of 50 meters to 8 kilometers. (SK-1 ‘Skalp’ nuclear depth charges may also be employed.) The primary weapon system is the AT-1 and AT-1M homing torpedoes, which are capable of finding a target at 1.5 kilometers from entrance into the water.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses the use of the Be-12 ‘Chayka’ amphibious aircraft as naval mine delivery platform for a new type of ‘smart mine’ with some sort of Artificial Intelligence capability. The excerpted article from Suvorovskiy Natisk discusses the use of land mines by the Russian Ground Forces for coastal defense purposes. Of particular interest, the Russians not only use GMZ Tracked Mine Dispensers to lay mines, but also PTS Tracked Amphibious Carriers. Although these mines are very different from the type mentioned in the *Izvestia* article, both articles demonstrate the importance of mines in Russian defense planning. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Mines are being constantly improved and modified with consideration of state-of-the-art technologies.” -Admiral Valentin Selivanov, former Chief of the Main Naval Staff



Be-12 Amphibious Plane.

Source: Dmitriy Pichugin via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_Navy_Beriev_Be-12.jpg, GFDL 1.2



Continued: Mines Seen as Key Capabilities for Russian Naval and Coastal Defense

Source: Aleksey Kozachenko and Aleksey Ramm, “«Чайка»-носитель: самолеты Бе-12 вооружат умными минными комплексами (The ‘Chayka’-Carrier: Be-12 Aircraft Will Be Armed With Smart Mines),” *Izvestia Online*, 7 September 2019. <https://iz.ru/917299/aleksei-kozachenko-aleksei-ramm/chaika-nositel-samolety-be-12-vooruzhat-umnymi-minnymi-kompleksami>

The ‘Chayka’-Platform: Be-12 Aircraft Will Be Armed With Smart Mines

Modernized Be-12 Chayka amphibious aircraft will become a delivery platform for unique system of self-learning minefields. The flying boat will be able to lay them in any part of the sea, and then a control unit equipped with elements of artificial intelligence will organize a minefield. These high-tech munitions possess capabilities of identifying ships, submarines, and even low-flying helicopters from the sound, the magnetic field, and the magnetoacoustic “portrait,” sources in the Main Naval Command told *Izvestiya*. The new mine complex will increase Russian Navy capabilities significantly...

The self-learning minefield complex is a completely new Russian development. It includes robot mines and a special command control unit. Practically all classes of combatant ships and submarines as well as naval, tactical, and strategic aviation will be able to act as mine platforms after a small modification.

After being dropped, mines will “line up in battle formation” in an automatic mode. In an alert-duty mode they will react to certain characteristics of magnetic and acoustic fields of ships and submarines. For this the mine is equipped with special transmitters and sensors, and its hardware has a special self-learning algorithm. With its help the mines will be able to determine the class of vessel and distinguish friendly from foreign ships. The acoustic portraits of friendly ships and ships of the probable enemy are loaded into software for target identification. These unique “passports” permit identifying with a high degree of likelihood what kind of ship or submarine is in the kill zone. The upshot is that a friendly ship will travel across the minefield in complete safety, but an enemy ship will be destroyed.

Mines can operate both in a group as well as separately from each other. An intelligent minefield will be able to reorganize independently for new combat missions. For example, in a group attack they will ignore minesweepers and blow up larger ships...Mines are being constantly improved and modified with consideration of state-of-the-art technologies, so to this day it remains very dangerous to ships, *Izvestiya* was told by Admiral Valentin Selivanov, former Chief of the Main Naval Staff.

“Today the Russian Navy is greatly limited in minelaying equipment, and the Be-12 is a good option for performing this mission; it has many advantages. It is capable of flying slowly, which is important for accurate minelaying. Aviation alone is capable of laying them. If a ship puts out, it is quickly fixed by the enemy,” the expert says. “Refitting of the aircraft essentially will not be required. Its arsenal includes buoys for detecting enemy submarines that are dropped by parachute; they are comparable with mines in weight. This aircraft is capable of flying covertly up to a designated area and laying minefields precisely. This will permit mining a channel or an enemy ship and submarine deployment area...”

Source: Maria German, “Неприступный остров (Impregnable Island),” *Suvorovskiy Natisk Online*, 9 August 2019. <http://ric.mil.ru/upload/site173/pLyhPkImJL.pdf>

Impregnable Island

Eastern Military District motorized rifle troops repulsed an amphibious landing force’s attack on

Sakhalin...In July, a major-scale tactical exercise with an Eastern Military District (EMD) separate motorized rifle formation took place simultaneously on two Sakhalin Island proving grounds under the leadership of Lieutenant General Gennadiy Zhidko, the EMD troop commander; around 3,000 military personnel participated in it and some 700 items of arms and military equipment were activated. According to reconnaissance information, the “adversary” had prepared a landing by an amphibious assault force. The EMD motorized rifle troops had been placed on alert. The soldiers’ mission: To prepare amphibious landing defense and make the Sakhalin shoreline impregnable.

For starters, the engineer subunits established several rows of nonexplosive obstacles. Tracked Amphibious Carriers (PTS) formed a mobile marine obstacle detachment. The amphibious transporters withdrew to a distance of up to 100 meters from the shore and laid anti-assault landing mines every 15 meters. Each one had several dozen mines on board. Simultaneously, the Tracked Mine Dispensers (GMZ) laid antitank mines on the shore. A smokescreen was created to conceal the tracked mine dispensers. The military vehicles moved in echelon formation. A kind of “chessboard” of mines was formed in the water and on the land.

Lt. Nikolay Atrokhov, the obstacle platoon commander, monitored the observance of spacing. “According to the scenario, our notional adversary is attacking from the sea. In order to impede that landing force’s debarkation, an obstacle is first set up in the sea. If they overcome it and emerge ashore, obstacles await the landing force there, too. If the ‘adversary’ makes it through this as well, he faces nonexplosive obstacles. And then, the soldiers will destroy the ‘enemy’ equipment with firepower. This is multilevel defense, which does not allow penetration into a protected asset or onto our territory,” Lt. Nikolay Atrokhov recounted. “The details are being refined during combat training through the year. Each soldier studies theory beforehand, he knows how a mine is constructed, how to lay it, and how to decide with what spacing it is to be laid. In our case, for the particular type of mine, it is 10-15 meters. Accordingly, various mines can be laid in the sea: a PDM-2, a PDM-3A, and so forth; the spacing is greater there, because these mines’ radius of effect is greater.”

Sakhalin, although it is located on the fringe of Russia, is nevertheless the country’s biggest island. Here, and on the two Kuril Ridge islands -- Iturup and Kunashir -- is where the motorized rifle formations that belong to the EMD Army Corps are deployed. Their chief mission is readiness for conducting amphibious landing defense on the coast...



Russia Developing On-Orbit Fueling Technologies

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from Izvestia discusses Russian plans to deploy a satellite refueling capability on-orbit. According to *Izvestia*, Russia has two parallel lines of effort to achieve this. One line of effort is being conducted through the A.F. Mozhaysky Military-Space Academy and the other through the quasi-state RSC Energia (РКК «Энергия») corporation. Reportedly, this on-orbit refueling capability will be accomplished by satellite ‘refuelers’ transmitting energy to satellites via radio waves. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“An “orbital gas station” is being developed in Russia. By design, it will consist of a constellation of satellites that will recharge satellites in orbit. The recharging robots will convert solar energy and accumulate light reflected by the Earth’s surface. In addition, they will be able to receive electricity from Earth via radio channels.”



A docked Russian Soyuz spacecraft.

Source: NASA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Expedition_27_Soyuz_TMA-20_spacecraft.jpg, Public Domain

Source: Dmitry Litovkin, “Заправка в космос: в России создают проект подзарядки спутников на орбите (Fueling in Orbit: Russia is Developing a Project for Refueling Satellites in Orbit),” *Izvestia* Online, 6 August 2019, <https://iz.ru/906509/dmitrii-litovkin/zapravka-v-kosmos-v-rossii-sozdaiut-proekt-podzariadki-sputnikov-na-orbite>

Fueling in Orbit: Russia is Developing a Project for Refueling Satellites in Orbit

An “orbital gas station” is being developed in Russia. By design, it will consist of a constellation of satellites that will recharge satellites in orbit. The recharging robots will convert solar energy and accumulate light reflected by the Earth’s surface. In addition, they will be able to receive electricity from Earth via radio channels. Izvestia learned this information from the A.F. Mozhaysky Military-Space Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation...

The “Orbital Gas Station” project was developed by a group of scientists from the A.F. Mozhaysky Military-Space Academy. The academy is one of the largest technical schools of higher education under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense, as Izvestia learned at the academy. The system is necessary to ensure continuous operation of small COSPAS-SARSAT [Space System for the Search of Vessels in Distress (Космическая Система Поиска Аварийных Судов) -Search And Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking] satellites of the The International COSPAS-SARSAT Programme; and relay satellites supporting the Internet, video, and radio communication. To achieve this goal, the developers are planning to deploy a constellation of dozens of resupply robots in orbit...

The head of the Onboard Electrical Equipment and Energy Systems department at the A.F. Mozhaysky Military-Space Academy, Colonel Dmitry Kargu, told Izvestia that this project was submitted to the Military Scientific Committee of the Armed Forces for approval. “Our idea increases energy capacity of satellites during the part of the orbit that the satellite is in the shadow [of the earth], and in situations when available power is not sufficient for performing the necessary tasks. Essentially, it will help avoid losing a spacecraft. In this situation, anyone would be happy to receive even 100W of additional power.”

Until recently, efficiency of such systems, counting losses during conversion of light and power transmission, was no more than 10 to 20%. Currently, due to utilization of infrared lasers and energy efficient gallium arsenide solar panels, efficiency of power transmission has reached 70%...

RSC Energia (РКК «Энергия»), is currently working on developing “orbital gas stations” as well. They conducted a practical experiment transmitting power in the atmosphere. ...NASA [and] SpaceX, are also developing a similar technology...

Based on current prices, launching 1 kilogram of payload into orbit costs approximately 50 thousand USD. One kilogram of satellite costs the same amount of money. Small satellites weigh between 100 and 500 kilograms. Therefore, we can calculate the cost of launching this object into orbit. According to Izvestia, it can reach \$25 million. Satellites usually last between 5 and 7 years. “If we are able to retain a satellite or extend its active service life in orbit, it becomes obvious that we can save significant sums of money. Estimated savings as a result of a saved satellite could reach 3 billion rubles [\$45 million],”...

Experts from the A.F. Mozhaysky Military-Space Academy are saying that in addition to extending the service life of satellites, the new design could lead to modifying the entire concept of spacecraft design. If resupply satellites will be available in orbit, the area of solar panels could be decreased from several meters to one meter, and no extra batteries would be needed. This will lower the weight of satellites and make room for additional payloads. “Development of autonomous power sources is a key task for the exploration of deep space,” said Andrei Ionin, a member-correspondent of the Tsiolkovsky Academy to Izvestia.



Public Protests and “Hybrid War”

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several months there have been sporadic public protests throughout a number of Russian cities. While the protests have been directed at various issues (e.g. a proposed building of a church, construction of a new waste landfill, complaints over election restrictions and a subsequent heavy-handed police response) they have all demonstrated that some Russians believe that their elected officials are not necessarily representing the public’s best interests.

Concomitant with this growing protest movement, Russia’s security agencies have been updating their threat doctrine, where they have included the danger of “color revolution” in their list of hybrid war threats. This menace allegedly revolves around massive public protests (sparked and funded by the West), combined with other more conventional pressure, which might lead to regime change.

Proponents of this theory point to what occurred in Ukraine in late 2013, early 2014, or in other countries where public protests led to political change. Perhaps reflecting upon the protests in some Russian cities, in the brief excerpt from *Military Industrial Courier*, prolific Russian military analyst, Alexander Bartosh describes how the “growing scale of the hybrid war against Russia makes this type of confrontation one of the most acute threats to national security.”

Bartosh claims that with its “global system of combat control and communications,” the US continuously conducts subversive operations against Russia, interacting “with senior members of the ‘fifth column’ within the country,” in order to “undermine the country’s image and its leadership in the world.” According to Bartosh, this nefarious strategy “is not new,” as it was employed against “the highest echelons of power... in shattering the weakened USSR.” (For Bartosh and many Russians today, the collapse of the USSR had less to do with a flawed political and economic model than with Western connivance.) Today’s aggressive information strategy against Russia, according to Bartosh, is combined with “several suffocating ‘anaconda loops’ of hybrid war [which] are being formed in the near and far zones” (e.g. in Ukraine or Venezuela). To combat these manifold hybrid threats, the Russian leadership must focus on “intelligence activities... to timely reveal the enemy’s preparations for unleashing hybrid aggression....”

In defining any sort of ‘public protest’ as a Western scheme to undermine the government, Russian security officials may inadvertently exacerbate social tensions. More importantly, they may react against these social protests not only with a heavy hand against the domestic “fifth column,” but may target and apply similar strategies against the alleged source of this instability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...The growing scale of the hybrid war against Russia makes this type of confrontation one of the most acute threats to national security....”

Source: Alexander Bartosh, “Петля для анаконды; Задачи разведки в гибридной войне (Anaconda loop; Intelligence tasks in a hybrid warfare),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (Military Industrial Courier), 3 September 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/52242>

...In hybrid war (HW) and “color revolution,” the strategy of the collapse of the state and its transfer to external control is based on the use of a complex of apparently insignificant subversive measures, on the invisibility of destroying the enemy in new type of conflicts.

...In the information war as a component of HW, “soft” power along with bribery, blackmail and intimidation are used as important means of influencing the “fifth column.”

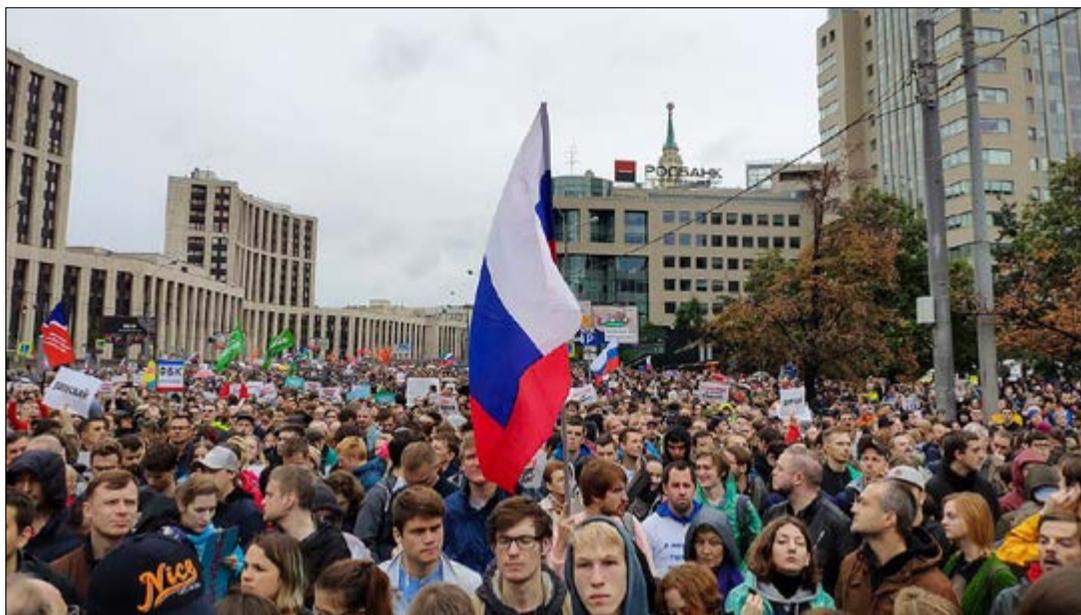
... Interaction with senior members of the “fifth column” from the country - the object of aggression is also being built, their use provides the most important strategic intelligence that allows you to reveal the weaknesses of the state, to build operations to undermine the country’s image and its leadership in the world.

...The technology is not new. It was at the highest echelons of power that the main efforts of the United States in shattering the weakened USSR were aimed.

...Along with carrying out subversive operations inside Russia, several suffocating “anaconda loops” of hybrid war are being formed in the near and far zones.

...The growing scale of the hybrid war against Russia makes this type of confrontation one of the most acute threats to national security....

...Hence, intelligence activities are of particular importance. The main task is to timely reveal the enemy’s preparations for unleashing hybrid aggression, deploying a complex of threats that are planned to be used to undermine the country’s security.



Rally for right to vote in Moscow, 10 August 2019.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rally_for_right_to_vote_in_Moscow_\(2019-08-10\)_144610.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rally_for_right_to_vote_in_Moscow_(2019-08-10)_144610.jpg), CCA 4.0



Serving in the Presidential Regiment

OE Watch Commentary: For visitors to Moscow, one of the more impressive sights is the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, located in the Alexander Garden adjacent to the Kremlin. Like honor guards in other countries, these uniformed sentries stand a silent watch over the memorial to those who paid the ultimate price in defending their country. In a recent interview in Russia's main government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the new commander of the Presidential Kremlin Regiment, Major General Andrei Filyakin, describes the selection process, social background, and career prospects for soldiers assigned to this unit.

The new commander points out that conscripts make up overwhelming majority of the servicemen in this regiment, and that they draw their new members from all over Russia. This regiment, however, is not a part of the Ministry of Defense, but belongs to the Federal Protective Service (FSO) [Федеральная служба охраны] which has the responsibility of guarding the Kremlin and several high-ranking officials. After describing the four-month training process to transform a conscript into "a ceremonial guard" capable of participating in a ceremony, the commander reviews the selection criteria. "Six months before the draft, a candidate for our regiment, undergoes the necessary verification and interviews with the FSO, FSB [Federal Security Service] and officers of the regiment." Prospective members must come from a stable family, be in excellent physical health, a solid academic record, and have no record of disciplinary problems.

The commander goes on to describe the social background of most of the guards, pointing out that they draw their "soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers..." He comments that despite the prestige of the Kremlin Regiment, "we have no children of ministers and deputies," although he does point out that "the number of draftees with higher education sharply increased." He concludes by touching upon the career prospects for those conscripts who complete their year serving in this ceremonial unit. For those who don't yet have a college degree, after six months of service, they can apply to become a contract soldier with the unit. For those conscripts who already have a college degree, the commander asserts that they can become contract officers in the regiment.

Over the past several years, the image and prestige of those wearing a Russian military uniform has risen significantly. Aware that they represent Russia, those serving in the elite Kremlin Presidential Guard Regiment, continue to set the highest ceremonial standard. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Basically, our soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers...”



Honor Guard at the Eternal Flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow.

Source: ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пост_№_1#/media/Файл:Почетный караул у Вечного огня на могиле Неизвестного солдата в Москве.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: Igor Yelkov, "Кремлевский шаг (Kremlin step)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 3 September 2019. rg.ru/2019/09/03/general-major-andrej-filiakin-rasskazal-kak-stat-komandiro-m-prezidentskogo-polka.html

Andrei Filyakin has already been in office for a year and a half, has grown to the rank of Major General, but has not yet given a single interview. More precisely, until today...

...Among those we saw today, were there many guys drafted last fall?

Andrei Filyakin: *Of the 67 servicemen from the regiment present on Red Square, 13 are contract soldiers, to include three officers, and the rest are conscripts. The entire formation handling the carbines is comprised of conscripts; in December 2018, they took the oath. In January, we began their training as a ceremonial guard. Until April, drill training took place, then they began to participate in the posting of foot and horse guards on Cathedral Square. In early May, they entered into service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: post number 1 in the Alexander Garden.*

...Back to your soldiers. Where are they from, from which regions?

Andrei Filyakin: *In our regiment, service is carried out both on contract and on conscription. I always say: the draftee-soldier in our regiment is the main soldier. We conscript from different regions.... In total, we have conscripts from 46 different cities. Six months before the draft, a candidate for our regiment, undergoes the necessary verification and interviews with the FSO, FSB [Federal Security Service] and officers of the regiment...."*

Are the requirements very stringent?

Andrei Filyakin: *They are tough. We kept all the requirements for the draftee that were in the Kremlin regiment. Of course, a young man must be completely healthy. Everything is important: external data, from which family, where and how he studied, what lifestyle he led prior to being drafted. If you did not study or work, then questions will immediately arise....*

And the social composition? Now the army is very popular, parents are literally trying to push their children in. Probably, those of the elite push very persistently.

Andrei Filyakin: *Basically, our soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers... We have no children of ministers and deputies. There are some from the families of military and other law enforcement agencies, but every year there are fewer. On the contrary, the number of draftees with higher education sharply increased...*

...After the dismissal, a soldier has a chance to enter a university, and this is also an incentive. And what is the incentive for a soldier with higher education?

Andrei Filyakin: *Many of them sign up as contract soldiers. Having higher education, he can count on an officer post. And experience has shown that contract soldiers must be taken from the soldiers who served in our regiment. Having served in the Presidential Regiment, a person can objectively assess their capabilities and requirements. We are in the structure of the Federal Security Service, we have our own specifics. It happens like this. After six months of service, a conscript soldier may write a request for contract service. If the command considers him worthy, then he passes the test. In all aspects, only tougher than when he was a draftee. If everything is fine, then we conclude the first contract for three years....*



Center 2019: More than a Military Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: Every autumn, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stages a major strategic military exercise in one of its four military districts. As the brief excerpt from the military news source *Voennoye Obozreniye* discusses, this year's exercise will encompass and be staged within the Central Military District. The author asserts that this event proves to be much more than a mere training exercise, but serves a number of other important geo-political, diplomatic and economic objectives, "demonstrating to the West that it [Russia] has great military power."

The author begins by pointing out that "in addition to Russian units and formations, the armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, as well as non-CIS countries, China, India and Pakistan will take part in the Center-2019 command and staff exercises." He points out that "up to 128 thousand people will take part," and will take place at a number of different training grounds within "the Central Military District and in the Arctic." The author claims that "these exercises do not in any way threaten foreign states," but are designed to "work out the actions of the Russian troops to ensure security and combat the terrorist threat in Central Asia."



Russian military districts; central in green.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_districts_of_Russia#/media/File:Military_districts_of_Russia_2016.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0

After listing all the countries, maneuver areas, and equipment involved, the author asserts that with such an exercise, "Russia shows that Kazakhstan and Pakistan, India and China are ready to act together. This is a kind of warning to the West - in the East, full-fledged military cooperation is also possible, and they really want to cooperate with Russia there." He also adds that these "exercises provide wonderful opportunities for the presentation of Russian military equipment," and might induce "the armies of the countries participating in the exercises," to purchase Russian armaments. He also claims that "the exercises will open a new page in the cooperation of our countries in the field of military education: for example, cadets from India, Pakistan and China will go to Russia to receive military specialties." He concludes by stressing "the diplomatic significance of the exercises," and that, for instance, instead of stoking foreign conflict, "at the Center-2019 exercises, the Indian and Pakistani military will act as partners in joint training."

Having been somewhat isolated in the West by its alleged ongoing aggression against Ukraine, the Kremlin has actively sought to expand its connections in other regions. Given the high priority which the Kremlin has placed on restoring and modernizing the country's armed forces, it is not surprising that the military has been out front in creating these new non-western connections. While it's too early to gauge the strength of the military ties formed during the week-long Center 2019 exercise, this article suggests that attempts to isolate Russia have failed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...Through joint exercises, Russia shows that Kazakhstan and Pakistan, India and China are ready to act together."

Source: Ilya Polonsky, "Российские военные учения «Центр-2019» заставят Запад задуматься (Russian military exercises Center-2019 will make the West think)," *Voennoye Obozreniye*, 22 August 2019. topwar.ru/161549-rossijskie-voennye-uchenija-centr-2019-zastavjat-zapad-zadumatsja.html

Russia is preparing for the large-scale military exercises Center-2019. The maneuvers scheduled for mid-September 2019 will bring together not only Russian troops, but also soldiers and officers from a number of Asian countries.... in addition to Russian units and formations, the armed forces of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, as well as non-CIS countries, China, India and Pakistan will take part in the Center-2019 command and staff exercises....

...The Russian leadership claims that the main purpose of the exercises is to test the combat readiness of units and formations of the Russian army, and these exercises do not in any way threaten foreign states. Interestingly, the exercises will be held in the Central Military District and in the Arctic. Moscow expects to work out the actions of the Russian troops to ensure security and combat the terrorist threat in Central Asia....

Up to 128 thousand people will take part in the exercises. ...It is also planned to participate in approximately 250 tanks, 450 armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles, up to 200 artillery and multiple launch rocket systems, 15 ships and auxiliary vessels, 600 aircraft, various auxiliary equipment....

...Russia is demonstrating to the West that it has great military power and is capable of conducting grandiose operations involving a wide variety of military branches.... In addition, the foundation is laid for joint action with the armed forces of other states. This is very important, for example, for practicing actions against terrorist groups....

...But it is worth noting that military exercises for modern Russia are not only applied, but also symbolic. Moscow is just as interested in demonstrating to the West not only its power capabilities, but also established relations with the three nuclear powers of Asia.

Through joint exercises, Russia shows that Kazakhstan and Pakistan, India and China are ready to act together. This is a kind of warning to the West - in the East, full-fledged military cooperation is also possible, and they really want to cooperate with Russia there.

Finally, military exercises provide wonderful opportunities for the presentation of Russian military equipment. The command of the armies of the countries participating in the exercises is given the opportunity to observe the new Russian military equipment, to study its real advantages. It is possible that after such exercises, in the foreseeable future, Russia will conclude some kind of arms supply agreements...

...It is likely that the exercises will open a new page in the cooperation of our countries in the field of military education: for example, cadets from India, Pakistan and China will go to Russia to receive military specialties.

Finally, do not forget about the diplomatic significance of the exercises. ...But at the Center-2019 exercises, the Indian and Pakistani military will act as partners in joint training. And this opportunity provides them with Russia, interested in peaceful and good relations with both India and Pakistan.



Land Ho! Discovery of New Lands in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: Who says the age of exploration and discovery of new lands is so 17th-19th Century? As the accompanying passage from *Ria Novosti* reports, Russia's Northern Fleet continues to find previously unknown, uncharted islands. Part of this is apparently due to Arctic ice melt. These are not new islands pushed to the surface by volcanic activity or tectonic plate shifts. They've been there a long time, just covered by a glacier. The world has been running low on available mountains, lakes and islands to name after heads of state, explorers and other notables. Russia has naming rights to 35 islands. There must be a ruble in this somewhere. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The discovery was confirmed by a hydrographic group operating as part of a combined expedition to the Franz Josef Land archipelago.”

Source: “Северный флот РФ открыл пять новых островов в Арктике (Russia's Northern Fleet says that it has discovered five new islands in the Kara Sea, north of Siberia),” *RIA Novosti*, 27 August 2019. <https://riafan.ru/1207062-severnyi-flot-rf-otkryl-pyat-novykh-ostrovov-v-arktike>

Russia's Northern Fleet says that it has discovered five new islands in the Kara Sea, north of Siberia

The Northern Fleet press service stated that “The area of the sites vary from 900 to 54,500 square meters. A topographic survey was carried out on the new islands, they have been described in detail and photographed.” The islands' location is described as being in the bay of Vize, west of Severny Island in the region of the Vylki Glacier. *RIA Novosti* said that islands were first spotted in 2016 upon analysis of satellite images and that is assumed they were previously hidden by a glacier.

Between 2015 and 2018, Northern Fleet hydrographers helped to discover more than 30 islands, capes and bays in the region of Novaya Zemlya and the Franz Josef Land archipelago, according to the report.

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Pacific Fleet Strategic Nuclear Augmentation

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying passage from *Izvestia* reports, the Borei class (also called the Dolgorukii class) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine is replacing the Typhoon and Delta class submarines of the Russian Navy. Significantly, Russia is moving to balance their naval nuclear strike force between the Northern and Pacific Fleet. The underpopulated Eastern Military District has fewer combat forces than those to the West. This move is part of Russia's gradual reinforcement of the eastern periphery as well as providing a higher degree of survivability for its naval nuclear strike force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russia is building up its strategic nuclear forces in the east. The shipbuilders will soon be handing over the Project 955A Borei-class missile submarine cruiser Knyaz Oleg [Prince Oleg] to the Pacific Fleet. The new boat will be based in Kamchatka.”

Source: Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoy, “«Князь» моря сего: новый подводный крейсер пополнит Тихоокеанский флот (Prince of This Sea: Submarine Cruiser Will Augment Pacific Fleet),” *Izvestia*, 3 September 2019. <https://iz.ru/914852/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/kniaz-moria-sego-novyi-podvodnyi-kreiser-popolnit-tikhookeanskii-flot>

Prince of This Sea: Submarine Cruiser Will Augment Pacific Fleet

It was originally destined for the Northern Fleet, but there was a change to the Defense Ministry's plans. A Pacific Fleet crew for the submarine has already been raised, and this has been dispatched to Severodvinsk to take over the boat from the shipbuilders....

The series of fourth-generation Borei- and Borei-A-class missile platforms will provide the basis of Russia's sea-based Strategic Nuclear Forces. In line with the State Armaments Program, there are plans to build 10 of these submarines for the navy. Three of them -- the Yuriy Dolgorukii, Aleksandr Nevskii, and Vladimir Monomakh -- have already been commissioned in the navy. The first submarine cruiser was assigned to the Northern Fleet, while the other two were assigned to the Pacific Fleet. It is anticipated that the fourth submarine -- the Knyaz Vladimir -- will join the Northern Fleet this year. Under the terms of the contract, the submarine Knyaz Oleg is to be handed over to the fleet in 2020. Consequently, the Pacific Fleet will possess three of the newest Boreis and the Project 667BDR Kalmar-class missile cruiser Ryazan, which was redeployed from the Northern Fleet in 2008.

Military expert Dmitriy Boltanov believes that the two fleets will each acquire five of the latest submarine missile cruisers. “The Borei-class boats are the most modern strategic submarine cruisers in the Russian navy. We are ahead of America in the construction of fourth-generation submarines. The Columbia-class (the USS Columbia) nuclear submarines are now only being developed. They are not expected to enter service with the US Navy for several years.”

Inevitable Retaliation

Captain 1st Rank (Reserve) Igor Kurdin, Chairman of the Submariners' Club of Saint Petersburg, believes that the Boreis will be able to operate successfully in both the Northern and Pacific theaters. “The USSR attempted to divide the strategic nuclear missile platforms equally between the Northern and Pacific Fleets. They were responsible for delivering a retaliatory strike in the event of an attack on our country...The situation changed following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Northern Fleet retained its strategic missile submarine cruiser grouping in the 1990s, with some losses, while the Pacific Fleet was left with only one such cruiser -- the Georgiy Pobedonosets, built back in the 1980s. Since then the Pacific Fleet has lagged behind the Northern Fleet in numbers of submarine cruisers. So the reinforcement of the Strategic Nuclear Forces in the country's east is long overdue.”

“It is strategically important to maintain a formidable ‘missile strike force’ in the Pacific. The nuclear submarine base in the Kamchatka city of Vilyuchinsk has always been valued by submariners for its geographic location. On leaving the base, a submarine immediately finds itself in the ocean, which enables it to move to its alert site or combat patrol area undetected and in safety. Northern Fleet submarines exiting the bases at Gadzhiyevo or Severodvinsk are faced with a lengthy passage through the Barents Sea, which restricts their maneuver and makes them more predictable and vulnerable.”

“It is importance that the missile flying time to a potential adversary from the Kamchatka area is considerably less than for those launched from the Barents Sea. These characteristics make a retaliatory strike mounted by a Pacific Fleet ship more dangerous for the enemy.”

The Boreis carry on board up to 16 R-30 Bulava-30 solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missiles with an operating radius of over 9,000 kilometers. Each of these is fitted with 150-kiloton warhead-armed reentry vehicles. Thus, a single full salvo delivered by a Borei-A submarine can wipe several dozen important targets from the face of the Earth -- from military or naval bases to entire cities....

The Ministry of Defense is now actively strengthening the defense of the Arctic and the Far East. Particular attention is being paid to Kamchatka, where the main base of the strategic missile platforms, Vilyuchinsk, is located. The Northern Sea Route will soon be patrolled by modern Su-34 bombers. Their inventory includes Kh-35U anti-ship missiles, which can send a large enemy combatant to the bottom. Preparations are underway on Kamchatka to deploy MiG-31 interceptors to provide cover for the Northern Strategic Sector.

Maneuver detachments of Bastion coastal defense missile systems are being established in the Arctic. These groups, reinforced with naval infantry, can conduct autonomous patrols of uninhabited northern territories for several months at a stretch. The Bastion's technical capabilities enable it to securely defend a stretch of coastline hundreds of kilometers long against an enemy landing force. Anti-ship missiles can be deployed in a matter of minutes. The first such detachments have already been constituted within the Pacific Fleet coastal defense troops.



Tactical Shooting: Integral Part Of Russian Combat Training

OE Watch Commentary: The Kalashnikov assault rifle family of small arms was never particularly accurate, nor was it designed to be. It was designed to provide automatic, suppressive fire out to 300 meters that would keep the enemy's head down while the Soviet tanks and infantry penetrated their defensive positions and finished them off. Longer-range effective fire was provided by designated marksmen ("snipers" with longer-range weapons) and machine guns. A new approach to small arms combat is emerging in the Russian Army. As the accompanying passage from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses, the Russian Army is now introducing tactical shooting, developing the reflexes and muscle memory for close-in, accurate, rapid infantry fire fights commonly found in urban terrain and dense forest.

Tactical shooting is time and ammunition intensive; the Russian Army previously restricted tactical shooting training to elite direct-action forces. Now, according to the accompanying article, the Russian Army is considering this training as part of regular unit training for all its small-arms infantry. Fitting this into the regular training year will be a challenge, but, if successful, will produce very effective squads and platoons. It will also be a powerful recruiting tool. Soldiers enlist for the infantry expecting this type of training, but rarely get it. Tactical shooting training for all the infantry is a lofty, perhaps unattainable, goal. And that training must be repeated regularly. Most likely, the elite forces will get it first. This will not be part of conscript soldier training due to all the other things that must be accomplished in a short period of service. The good news is that, tactical shooting and the Kalashnikov assault rifle go hand-in-glove. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Army tactical shooting is becoming an integral part of combat training. Orders issued by the Russian defense minister to introduce exercises with elements of practical shooting to the weapon training of troops already are being implemented.” -Lt. Gen. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov

Source: Aleksandr Pinchuk, “Решено ввести в войска новую военно-прикладную дисциплину (It Has Been Decided To Introduce a New Applied Military Discipline to the Troops),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 August 2019. <http://redstar.ru/resheno-vvesti-v-vojska-novuyu-voenno-prikladnuyu-distsiplinu/>

It Has Been Decided To Introduce a New Applied Military Discipline to the Troops

A session of the organizing committee for establishing the Federation of Army Tactical Shooting and introducing this form to the weapon training program was held in the Patriot Park Multifunctional Fire Center under the direction of Lieutenant General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, deputy defense minister of the Russian Federation. Participating in the session were Colonel General Ivan Buvaltsev, Chief of Russian Federation Armed Forces Main Combat Training Directorate and representatives of RF Armed Forces branches and combat arms, of RF Defense Ministry central military command and control entities, and of the Russian Federation of Practical Shooting. Before the session began the deputy head of the military department familiarized himself with the infrastructure of Russia's largest shooting center, which permits practical shooting on its site of any kind of small arm and competitions not only on an all-army scale, but also of a world level.

Conclusions on the need for such an introduction were drawn on results of the first Armed Forces Practical Shooting Championship in 2018 for purposes of improving servicemen's weapon proficiency level and their effective use of organic small arms. The deputy defense minister noted that training sessions and competitions had been organized in the Armed Forces from the end of last year with the rehearsal of army tactical shooting exercises, taking into account the specifics of missions being performed by servicemen.

“Based on results of training sessions and competitions in army tactical shooting conducted in the winter training period of the 2019 training year, the defense minister decided to establish the Federation of Army Tactical Shooting,” Lt Gen Yevkurov stated.

Based on session results, the deputy head of the military department charged members of the organizing committee with preparing and submitting to the RF Armed Forces Main Combat Training Directorate within prescribed time periods proposals on the composition, structure, goals, missions, and procedure for establishing the Federation of Army Tactical Shooting.

Lt Gen Yevkurov charged representatives of RF Armed Forces branches and combat arms and of central military command and control entities with submitting proposals to the Airborne Troops command element for upgrading the weapon proficiency of personnel for purposes of organizing scientific research to develop a methodology for training Armed Forces servicemen in army small arms tactical shooting. Servicemen of the VDV [Airborne Troops] 45th Separate Spetsnaz Guards Brigade and Western Military District 1st Tank Army's 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Division gave a practical demonstration of army tactical shooting exercises with pistol and assault rifle in Multifunctional Fire Center galleries.



The Biggest-Yet Arctic Riverine Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: For the third time in four years, the Northern Fleet has conducted a riverine exercise on the mighty north-flowing Yenisei River to provide experience in quickly deploying to the major economic center of Norilsk. As the accompanying articles discuss, troops from the 70th Independent Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade, the 61st Naval Infantry Brigade and airborne forces conducted an assault landing and then moved inland toward Norilsk. Norilsk sits on top of the planet's largest known deposits of nickel, copper and palladium and has significant deposits of cobalt, platinum, arsenic, cadmium, lead, selenium, zinc and coal as well. The Norilsk mines produce 17% of the world's nickel and 41% of the world's palladium. Production of Norilsk nickel alone provides 2% of Russia's GDP. Norilsk smelters turn the ores into metals before shipment from the river port of Dudinka. Of interest is the participation of the ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Emergency Services and the Federal Penitentiary Service. The city of Norilsk was built on the bones of thousands of political prisoners and criminals from the infamous *Norgulag* forced labor camp which worked tens of thousands as miners from 1935-1956. The *Marine Corps Gazette* will run an article on the first two riverine exercises in its November issue. (For earlier Arctic Riverine articles, see: *OE Watch*, September 2015 and November 2017) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Exercise briefing board.

Source: Mil.ru, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12249434@egNews, CC BY 4.0

“Air Force units and ground forces from two military districts ...engaged in large-scale anti-terrorist combat near the strategically important industrial plants of Norilsk Nickel on the Taymyr Peninsula.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Arctic troops stage large exercise on tundra near Russia’s biggest nickel plant,” *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 27 August 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/08/arctic-troops-stage-large-drills-around-remote-industrial-plant>

Arctic troops stage large exercise on tundra near Russia’s biggest nickel plant

The training area is located along the great river Yenisei, near the river port of Dudinka. The rich mines of the Norilsk Nickel company are located nearby. It is the third time that Russia has dispatched major forces to the Taymyr Peninsula, located in the far end of northern Siberia. This year, the magnitude of the exercise exceeded the previous exercises. Central to the exercise were Northern Fleet troops that last week disembarked from landing ships *Kondopoga* and *Aleksandr Otrakovsky*. In addition, there were airborne forces from the Central Military District and aircraft and helicopters from the Russian Air Force. A total of five helicopters and four Su-24 supersonic attack aircraft took part. The latter are based in one of the country’s Arctic air bases and flew more than 1,000 km as part of the exercise. In-the-air re-fueling was conducted with two Il-78 tanker aircraft.

On the ground, a total of 85 combat vehicles, including T-80BVM tanks, 2S1 Gvozdika howitzers and various armored vehicles, engaged in combat. The training scenario included protection of a key industrial site against terrorist attacks and also included units from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Emergency Situations, as well as the Federal Penitentiary Service. Commander of the Northern Fleet, Aleksandr Moiseev, stated that the drills demonstrated these troops’ readiness to protect Russian economic interests in the Arctic. “In the course of the exercise, valuable experience was gained in multi-service interaction, and this will be applied when preparing special units for the Arctic.”

Source: “Mock Battle at the Edge of the Continent,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 August 2019. redstar.ru

Mock Battle at the Edge of the Continent

A force grouping of more than one component service has been operating in the north of Krasnoyarskiy Kray. A tactical exercise on the Taymyr Peninsula trained for combat during an amphibious assault landing onto an austere bank of the Yenisei River in the vicinity of Dudinka. Northern Fleet ship crews, naval infantrymen, and Arctic motorized rifle troops, as well as Airborne Troops subunits, took part in the exercise.

According to the scenario, the Northern Fleet’s amalgamated force grouping, supported by aviation and Airborne Troops subunits, needed to recapture a beachhead that hypothetical terrorists had seized and to support an amphibious assault landing of vehicles to mount an offensive into the interior of the peninsula to defend an important industrial facility in the Arctic zone. The mock battle commenced with an air strike on the hypothetical terrorists’ positions and the infiltration of Spetsnaz teams into the militants’ rear area for the purpose of adjusting artillery fire from the ships. On receiving target designations, the AK-100 battery crews of the large ASW ship *Vice-Admiral Kulakov* opened fire on the covered shoreline positions, crushing the notional adversary’s weapon positions. The ship’s crew, which was taking part in such an exercise on the Yenisei River for the first time, coped successfully with the assigned mission.

Next, Ka-27PS helicopters delivered teams of military engineers onto the bank, where they demined the approaches to the bank and prepared the area for vehicle landing and marked it out with blue signal lights. The engineers’ operations were protected by the naval infantrymen, who had disembarked from aboard the large ASW ship *Vice-Admiral Kulakov* into high-speed boats.

Once the position for the amphibious assault vehicle landing onto the shoreline had been prepared, the large amphibious warfare ships *Kondopoga* and *Aleksandr Otrakovskiy* approached, one behind the other. From the ships’ ‘tweendecks, more than 20 wheeled and tracked vehicles of the naval infantry, the Arctic brigade, and the Airborne Troops formation disembarked directly onto the shore: BTR-82A, BMD-3, MT-LBV, SAU 2s1 Gvozdika, and TTM-4902PS-10.



China's Growing Interest in Ukraine: A Window of Opportunity or a Point of Concern?

by Alla Hurska

Republished and edited for OE Watch in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 16, Issue 120, dated 6 September 2019.

For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-growing-interest-in-ukraine-a-window-of-opportunity-or-a-point-of-concern/>

OE Watch Commentary: The Chinese company Beijing Skyrizon Aviation recently renewed its effort to gain a controlling stake in Ukraine's Motor Sich—one of the world's largest manufacturers of advanced engines for civil and military airplanes and helicopters. This has prompted warnings that such a decision would be a strategic mistake by potentially luring Ukraine into a Chinese “debt trap” as well as posing a national security threat given China's proclivity to steal cutting-edge technology. In response, the Chinese ambassador has said that Beijing does not interfere in private commercial deals like the one involving Motor Sich.

These warnings have been echoed by Ihor Smeshko, the former head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU). Writing for *Gordonua.com*, Smeshko contends that selling Motor Sich to the Chinese might pose an immediate threat to the defense and national security of Ukraine and would be tantamount to a “national betrayal.” According to the editor-in-chief of the online investigative platform *Censor.NET*, Yuri Butusov, China actively seeks to attract Ukrainian scientists, especially those with a Soviet technical background; however, China has so far not been able to master the entire technological cycle of various Soviet-legacy military products. Thus, the potential purchase of an entire Ukrainian plant would allow Beijing to overcome this weakness and, arguably, achieve a qualitative leap toward becoming the world's leading producer of helicopters, for example.

Chinese interest in the Ukrainian defense industry and its inexpensive products dates back decades. In 1998, the Chinese Chong Lot Travel Agency, Ltd. purchased the aging Ukrainian heavy aircraft carrier cruiser *Varyag* for only \$20 million—purportedly for “tourism” purposes. But once in Chinese hands, the vessel was modernized and refitted into Beijing's first active aircraft carrier—the *Liaoning*. And the aforementioned Beijing Skyrizon Aviation, which is now interested in acquiring Motor Sich, purchased technology from heavy airplane manufacturer Antonov State Company back in 2012.

In 2015, China's Xinwei Group indicated the first serious signs of interest in the Motor Sich company—initially at the level of proposed joint projects. A year later, some stakes in Motor Sich were sold to several foreign companies controlled by a Chinese citizen, and the Ukrainian company received concessional loans in the amount of \$100 million. But in 2017, the Ukrainian SSU opened a criminal case related to the sales, reportedly investigating “sabotage” and “preparation of a crime.” Subsequently, the Shevchenko District Court in Kyiv issued an injunction to block the deal and arrested 41 percent of Motor Sich's stakes, owned by five offshore companies. The episode revealed that Beijing Skyrizon Aviation had attempted to use subsidiary companies registered in the British Virgin Islands and Panama to acquire a majority stake in Motor Sich.

The Chinese firm renewed its efforts to buy Motor Sich in July 2019. On 25 August, Anatoliy Malysh, Motor Sich's PR director, confirmed that a deal had been reached between the Ukrainian plant and Skyrizon Aircraft Holding (British Virgin Islands) as well as Xinwei Technology Group. To date, the contract is awaiting final approval from the Ukrainian state's Antimonopoly Committee. The two Chinese companies reportedly offered a “loan” of \$100 million to the Ukrainian aviation industry to help “move things along.” Ukraine's state-owned military industrial corporation Ukroboronprom (which, following the sale, will retain only a 25 percent stake in Motor Sich) has apparently reached an agreement with Chinese firms Skyrizon Aircraft and Xinwei Technology Group to jointly control the Ukrainian aviation engine producer.

Apart from its interest in Ukraine's defense manufacturers, China is also trying to strengthen its influence and presence in other sectors of the Ukrainian economy. Notably, Beijing's trans-continental Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had originally sought to boost China's presence in Crimea. But following Russia's annexation of the peninsula in March 2014, China redirected its focus on the ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv, which could be used as major hubs for transporting grain and raw minerals.

Another area attracting Chinese attention is Ukraine's nuclear industry. Cooperation in this sector might be especially important for Beijing given Chinese plans to build up to 30 nuclear reactors by 2030 in countries involved in the BRI project. This summer, during Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's meeting with Chinese investors in Kyiv, it was reported that up to \$10 billion could be invested in Ukraine.

Despite this optimistic façade, the reality is much less rosy. Namely, the majority of Chinese projects in Ukraine are today either frozen or only in an initial stage of development, thereby exemplifying China's so-called “debt-trap diplomacy.” One of the best examples is the Air Express project—a planned railway between Kyiv and Boryspil airport. Despite initial enthusiasm, in 2017, the progress on the project slowed down due to a lack of funds. Ultimately, the renamed Kyiv Boryspil Express had to be fully financed by Ukrainian Railways (Ukrzaliznytsia) despite initial hopes vested in the Chinese investors.

As an economic giant with global ambitions, China is naturally interested in certain strategically crucial branches of the Ukrainian economy, such as Motor Sich. And China's determination to establish a new transcontinental “Silk Road” to Europe (via BRI) is likely to increasingly involve Ukraine's maritime infrastructure. Undoubtedly, aware of Ukraine's internal economic woes and, importantly, the country's problems with rampant corruption, Beijing is likely to use this situation to its advantage. Consequently, any ill-calculated actions/decisions by Kyiv in the realm of strategic industries will increasingly jeopardize the country's national security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurska)**



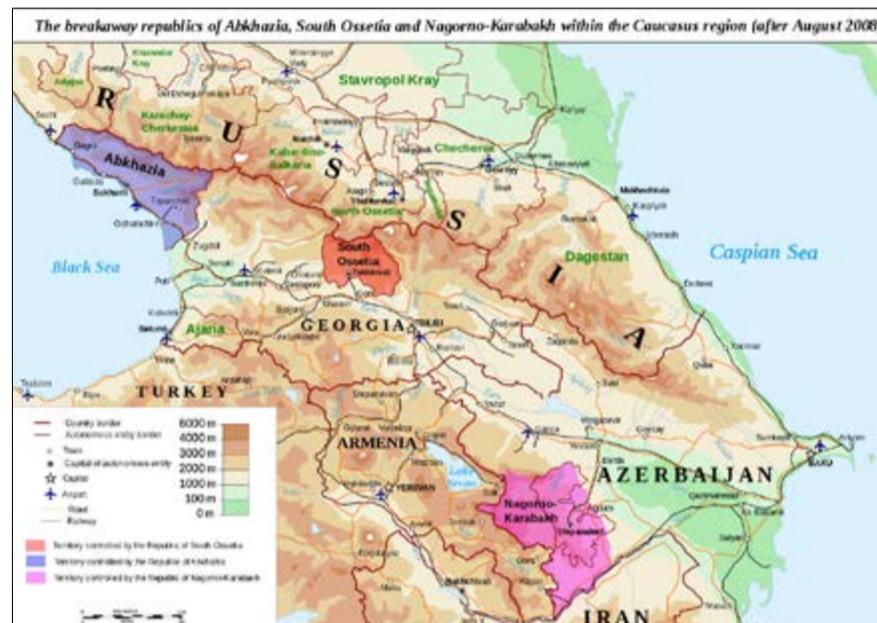
A Change in Georgia's Response to Russia's "Borderization"?

OE Watch Commentary: There have been a number of reports over the past several years of Russian border guards erecting fences along the border between Georgia and the occupied region of South Ossetia in ways that further infringe upon Georgian territory. This has been referred to as "borderization," described in the accompanying passage as the "construction of ...physical obstacles by the Russian occupation forces and Tskhinvali's Russia-backed authorities to physically mark the 'border.'" The Georgian media has criticized the government for not taking action in response to these incidents, but as the accompanying excerpted article reports, Georgian police recently established a checkpoint near the border, possibly signaling a change in how the Georgian government responds to such incidents going forward.

The article, from the English-language Georgia news website of *Civil Georgia*, notes an incident on 15 August "in the village of Gugutiantkari" which forced "Georgian citizens to drag all of their possessions on the right side of the fence overnight." The Georgian police checkpoint was reportedly set up on 24 August, in an area west of the village of Gugutiantkari. One of the experts quoted in the article believes that "the current (Georgian) administration made a mistake by dismantling the police checkpoints alongside the occupation line in a failed bid to repair relations with Russia" over the past several years, while another expert considers the checkpoint a "new, more assertive tactic" by the Georgian government.

The article also discusses how the checkpoint appears to be about the "protection of local population rather than an offensive posture" and that the "government showed itself capable of resistance without sacrificing much diplomatically and shoring up its shaken prestige domestically." Lastly, the article poses the question of whether or not establishing a police checkpoint is "becoming a part of new strategy" and notes that while police will be able to provide security for people along the border, "they will still be facing the Russian military on the other side." **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“It is now, however, time for the Georgian government to consider, whether this temporary tactic is fit for becoming a part of new strategy...”



Caucasus breakaway regions 2008.

Source: Andrei nacu at English Wikipedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Caucasus_breakaway_regions_2008.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: "Chorchana Checkpoint Escalation: an Incident or a Trend?" *Civil.ge*, 1 September 2019. <https://civil.ge/archives/318406>

Tensions over the construction of the Georgian police checkpoint in Chorchana village of Tbilisi-controlled Khashuri municipality, near the occupied village of Tselisi seems to have subsided somewhat. However, the flareup of tensions caught the media and observers off guard.

The "checkpoint crisis" has marked the departure from the familiar pattern. Recently, the tensions in Tskhinvali region were mostly linked to so called "borderization" process – construction of the physical obstacles by the Russian occupation forces and Tskhinvali's Russia-backed authorities to physically mark the "border". The latest such incident, in the village of Gugutiantkari, has left several houses stranded on the other side, forcing Georgian citizens to drag all of their possessions on the right side of the fence overnight.

...Vano Abramashvili, Executive Director of the Caucasian House, a think-tank and cultural research association, tells Civil Georgia that "perception of government's inaction is prevalent in the society" concerning the incidents on the occupation line.

Shota Utiashvili, senior fellow at the Rondeli Institute, a think-tank, who also led the Ministry of Interior's information and analytical department in 2004-2012 agrees. He told Civil Georgia that the current administration made a mistake by dismantling the police checkpoints alongside the occupation line in a failed bid to repair relations with Russia. Instead of leading to detente, Utiashvili says, Russia now aims to seize the opportunity of "Georgia having a particularly weak government"...

Could it be that Tbilisi has finally snapped?

Abramishvili thinks so: for him, the Chorchana/Tselisi incident points to Tbilisi's new, more assertive tactic...

...Tbilisi demonstrates that Georgia's moves are about protection of local population rather than an offensive posture. In this light, for official Tbilisi the Chorchana/Tselisi story seems like a quick and important victory. The government showed itself capable of resistance without sacrificing much diplomatically and shoring up its shaken prestige domestically.

It is now, however, time for Georgian government to consider, whether this temporary tactic is fit for becoming a part of new strategy...

If construction of the police stations continues, the police officers will have to transit from being observers, mainly concerned with early warning, to becoming the leading security providers to the population in the area. They will have take an active posture on mundane matters such as harvesting the crops and the lost cattle that crossed the line, as well as more serious matter of numerous detentions for "violation of the border". All of that, while they will still be facing the Russian military on the other side...



Bilateral Security Cooperation in Central Asia

OE Watch Commentary: When the militaries of Central Asian states participate in joint exercises, it is often through the auspices of an organization like the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent joint exercise of the special forces units of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, providing a look at how governments in the region are carrying out bilateral security cooperation, outside of the influence of any organization.

The article comes from *Kaktus*, a Russian-language news website based in Kyrgyzstan, and it reports on “Anyrakai-2019, the joint special-tactical exercise of the special forces of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.” The scenario of the exercise, an operation against a terrorist group, is similar to most exercises that the CSTO or SCO carry out on a regular basis.

However, it is worth noting how the exercise “took place according to the bilateral cooperation plan between the defense ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan” and that the previous iteration of Anyrakai “took place in Kazakhstan” last year. It is only within the past few years that bilateral security cooperation between Central Asian governments became more active, with joint exercises like this starting to take place annually. Ultimately, the armed forces of Central Asian states will continue to participate within the CSTO and SCO, but the article shows how bilateral security cooperation between Central Asian governments continues to take shape. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Kazakhstan - Kyrgyzstan Locator.

Source: Mangostar, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan_Kyrgyzstan_Locator.png, CC BY-SA 3.0

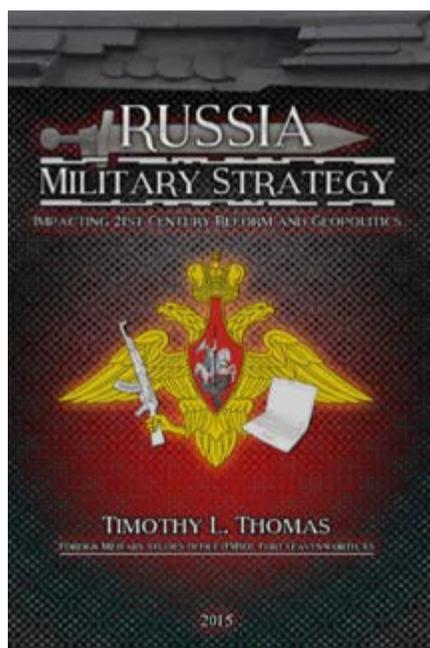
“The exercise Anyrakai took place according to the bilateral cooperation plan between the defense ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.”

Source: “Как прошли совместные учения спецназа Кыргызстана и Казахстана (How the special forces of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan carried out a joint exercise),” *Kaktus*, 7 September 2019. https://kaktus.media/doc/397467_kak_proshli_sovmestnye_ycheniia_specnaza_kyrgyzstana_i_kazahstana_fotoreportaj.html

Anyrakai-2019, the joint special-tactical exercise of the special forces of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, finished on 6 September at the Edelweiss training center...According to the training plan, the special forces units conducted a reconnaissance operation in the Chon-Kemin gorge, during which they identified the base of an illegally armed group...

The main goal of the exercise was to check the readiness and work out the coordination of the special forces units during joint operations.

The exercise Anyrakai took place according to the bilateral cooperation plan between the defense ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan... in 2018 the exercise took place in Kazakhstan.



RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

Russian military’s main tasks are to maintain the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and to ensure the Russian Federation’s defensive capability. Russia’s military heritage will assist this process tremendously. Combat readiness includes updated strategic thought, new equipment revelations, and future-war projections. Defensive capability includes not just protecting Russia’s territory, but also the security of the nation’s national interests and conduct of geopolitics. Capturing the essence of these developments is the goal of this book. In the process a few templates for understanding Russian military thought and actions are offered for further consideration and use.

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China and Pakistan Hold 8th “Shaheen” Joint Air Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: China recently held the eighth of its “Shaheen” joint air exercises with Pakistan. The exercises are named after the Shaheen falcon native to South Asia.

The exercises included Pakistan Air Force Mirages, Chinese-built J-7s, and JF-17 fighters. Chinese Air Force (PLAAF) and PLA Naval Aviation aircraft including J-11s, J-10Cs and J-7A fighter-bombers participated. This was the J-10C’s first appearance. An upgraded version of the J-10 multi-role fighter that joined the PLAAF in 2006, the “C” variant includes important upgrades to avionics and defensive systems, making it a much more effective fighter.

While few details of the particulars of the training are available, the inclusion of elements from PLA Naval Aviation is noteworthy, as joint PLAAF-Navy exercises are relatively rare.

Dissimilar air-to-air training is relatively new for Chinese pilots, and the PLAAF has only conducted joint training with a small number of countries, mostly after 2014. Since 2015, the PLAAF has participated in “Falcon Strike” joint exercises with the Royal Thai Air Force. The other major exercise, held with Russia, is called “Aviadarts.”

The Chinese military refers to these “named exercises” as brands [品牌] and according to the article, considers Shaheen to be similar to its own domestic series of combined air training. Most prominent of these are the “four key training brands” (四大品牌): The “Golden Helmet” air-to-air competition, “Golden Dart” [金飞镖] air-to-ground attack competition, “Blue Shield” [蓝盾] air-defense exercise and Red Sword [红剑] system-of-systems confrontation exercise.

These exercises give Chinese pilots the ability to test their aircraft against modern Western aircraft similar to those fielded by China’s likely adversaries in a future conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The Shaheen series has become a real combat training brand of the PLAAF, effectively deepening and promoting the cooperation and exchanges between the two air forces.”



"Shaheen - 8" Patch

Graphic by Peter Wood.

Source: “中巴空军在中国边境举行联合训练 (China and Pakistan Conduct Joint Training in a Border Area),” PLAAF Weixin account (kj81cn), 23 August 2019 http://www.guancha.cn/military-affairs/2019_08_23_514966.shtml

According to the PLA Air Force’s Public WeChat account “Air Force News” (ID: kj81cn) on August 23, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and Pakistan Air Force began a joint training exercise in northwest China. This is the 8th time that the Chinese and Pakistani air forces have held the “Shaheen” [雄鹰] joint training exercise. The exercise between the China and Pakistan Air Force is an annual routine training and is not directed against third parties.

The Chinese Air Force sent multiple types of aircraft such as the J-10C, J-16, the J-7A and Early Warning Aircraft. Ground units such as surface-to-air missiles, radars, airborne and communications also participated. PLA Naval Aviation units also participated. The Pakistani Air Force also sent multiple types of aircraft including JF-17 and Mirage fighters as well as their own Early Warning Aircraft to participate in the training. and the Chinese Navy Air Force sent aircraft to participate in the joint training of the China-Pakistan Air Force.

For this 8th joint training, the air forces of China and Pakistan have taken the entire process of back-to-back systems confrontation, highlighting operational command, systems operations, and research on other difficult issues, included larger numbers of troops and additional elements aimed at mutual learning to enhance the two countries’ level of realistic air force combat training level ability to use air power to achieve victory.

China and Pakistan are connected by mountains and rivers and have developed into “all-weather” friendly neighbors since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1951, and the two peoples enjoy a profound traditional friendship. The air forces of China and Pakistan have maintained friendly and cooperative relations and have carried out a series of practical exchanges and cooperation in recent years. The two countries conducted the first Shaheen joint exercise in March 2011 and have since organized eight exercises so far. The Shaheen series has become a real combat training brand of the PLAAF, effectively deepening and promoting the cooperation and exchanges between the two air forces.



Tank Biathlons Help PLA Make Improvements to Type 96-Series MBTs

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article is an interview with Zhang Peng [张鹏], Executive Deputy Chief Designer of the Type 96B main battle tank (MBT) and deputy director of a scientific research institute at the Inner Mongolia First Machinery Group Corporation [内蒙古一机集团]. The First Machinery Group Corporation is part of Chinese defense conglomerate NORINCO, and primary developer of tanks for the Chinese military.

The Type 96B is the latest upgrade of the Type 96, which was first fielded in 1997. Compared to China's most advanced MBT, the Type 99, the Type 96B is roughly 10 tons lighter. As of 2019, the PLA is reported to field some 2,500 Type 96 MBTs and less than 900 of the Type 99s, likely due to lower production and maintenance costs. Some parts of China's extensive coastal and mountainous terrain is also less suited for heavier tanks.

The bulk of the interview is regarding China's use of the Type 96 series tank participation in annual tank biathlon competitions held in Russia. China first joined the competitions in 2014. China fielded the Type 96A in previous competitions but began bringing the Type 96B to competitions in 2016, partly informed by their experience in the biathlons. In the latest competition, held in August of this year, the Type 96Bs performed well during a series of tests such as firing while moving, and the Chinese team emerged as victors for the group competition.

According to the article, the tank biathlons have proven to be a useful testing ground for PLA crews and the design team, allowing them to more rapidly identify and address a wide range of issues from serious design flaws to crew comfort issues.

According to Zhang, Cao Fuhui [曹福辉], the lead designer of the Type 96B, was very conscientious about making small improvements to the design to better accommodate the crew's needs, such as optimizing the seat height for the drivers or improvements to controls. The Type 96A, for example, used a traditional lever system to control direction, but the Type 96B adopted civilian car-like steering wheel and controls. This appears to be part of a larger shift in the PLA's vehicle design philosophy as seen in the Type 15 MBT's adoption of similar controls. The article notes that these improvements have been popular with the tank crews who appreciate the increases in ease of use and reliability. (Also see: "China: Type-15 MBT Export Variant Shows Off Enhanced Protection and Mobility," *OE Watch*, September 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Type 96B MBT.

Source: Vitaly V. Kuzmin via Wikimedia, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f8/TankBiathlon2016Final-09.jpg>, CC BY-SA 3.0

“The 96B tanks have given solid performances and achieved second place.”

Source: “追求极致之路—96B坦克常务副总师张鹏:访谈录 (Pursuit of the ultimate path – Interview with 96B Tank Executive Deputy Chief Designer Zhang Peng),” *Ordnance Knowledge* [兵器知识], Issue 4 (April) 2019.

Zhang Peng is deputy director of a scientific research institute of the Inner Mongolia First Machinery Group Corporation, and deputy chief of the Type 96B tank development project. He has a long career in tank and armored vehicle development and has participated in main battle tank powerplant system and defensive system research and a wheeled armored vehicle's brake system development. In recent years, he has published several papers in relevant forums on weapons and equipment, such as “An Overall Solution to Improve the effectiveness of Active Protection Systems” and “Performance Analysis and Optimization of High-Pressure Intake System Filtering Elements.”

Reporter: Chief, first of all, please briefly discuss the Type 96 series MBTs' participation in tank competitions.

Zhang Peng (hereinafter referred to as “Zhang”): The 2018 competition was already the Type 96 series' fifth appearance at a tank competition. The first year the Type 96A participated, so it was the unimproved version. For the next year, we fielded the Type 96A1, a slightly improved version. Beginning in the third year of the competition we began fielding the Type 96B, and so far it has participated three times. The 96B tanks have given solid performances and achieved second place.

Reporter: These competitions have had a big impact on the tank, especially the road wheel accident right? [referring to an accident where 96Bs at their first tank biathlon threw a road wheel, which keeps the tank tread aligned]

Zhang: The road wheel incident happened in 2016, right after the 96B upgrade was, and the preparation time is relatively short. The first upgraded Type 96B tank came off the assembly line by the spring festival of 2016 [early February] and was delivered to the PLA to begin training at the end of April. In two months it is difficult to resolve all reliability issues. The tanks arrived in Xinjiang for training and two months later were sent to Russia for the competition. In the later stages of training, suspension system fatigue related issues like the wheels increased, and despite a series of emergency measures and further optimization and improvement of the key components, the new structural spare parts did not have time for a full cycle of reprocessing and manufacturing. From a technical point of view alone to analyze this problem, the root cause of the issue is that the demands of the competition exceeded the design's limitations for fatigue.

Zhang: The 96B tank has been a great help for our design philosophy. For example, in terms of reliability, equipment used really hard to be able to design appropriately, but also training must be realistic or close to the harsh environment of actual combat, that is to say, during the development and assessment process we cannot hesitate to push equipment to its limits in order to truly test the reliability of equipment. After all, equipment is being developed for the stress of combat and even if the performance requirements are very high, once on the battlefield, there is no time to go back and make improvements...

Reporter: How did the 96B tank perform when it was first used in PLA training?

Zhang: The 2016 tank biathlon team was resistant at first to use the 96B, despite its significantly enhanced performance compared to the 96A tank. The controls of the 96B are different from the 96A in all aspects. For example, the 96A uses the traditional lever steering while the 96B has a steering wheel. The troops were concerned that they were only familiar with the operation and support of the other equipment. Coupled with the short training time, adopting the new equipment meant that the soldier's time to learn the new equipment and become physically and mentally accustomed with it was compressed. But by the end of the training period, the 96B tank was widely accepted by the troops as they became more proficient with it.



China Debuts New Stealth Target Drone at Russian Defense Exhibition

OE Watch Commentary: At the 2019 International Aviation and Space Salon (MAKS) held outside Moscow, a stealth target drone jointly produced by China’s Northwestern Polytechnical University (NWPU) and CCKW (Xi’an Kewei) [西安科为公司] was unveiled for the first time.

The new drone has been lauded as a major step for improving training for Chinese air defense or fighter units. Other Chinese analyses have suggested that the drones could operate as loyal wingman [忠诚僚机], UAVs working in concert with manned aircraft to carry out strikes and increasing the number of available missiles or bombs.

Northwestern Polytechnical University is a major powerhouse of China’s aviation industry, with its graduates populating the labs and boardrooms of top companies. CCKW (Xi’an Kewei) [西安科为公司] is a Xi’an based group founded in 2003, which works closely with NWPU on unmanned systems. It appears to resemble another NWPU-affiliated company, Aisheng Technology Group Co., [西安爱生技术集团公司], which appears to have spun off from previous NWPU projects and is sometimes even referred to as the NWPU UAV Research Institute. Aisheng is a major primary producer of UAVs for the PLA, including the ASN-209 series.

While other Chinese target drones are designated CK- for Changkong [长空], the new system uses LJ, derived from the characters Lijian [砺剑] (meaning “sharpening sword,” not to be confused with the Lijian [利剑] “sharp sword,” a stealth UAV.) In 2016, an earlier stealth target drone, the CK-20 was displayed. Though images appear to indicate that NWPU was also involved in its development, it is unclear if the two programs are connected. China’s UAV programs owe a debt to both Soviet-designed Lavochkin-17 and recovered US Firefly and Lighting Bug reconnaissance drones, themselves a further development of the Ryan Firebee target drones. Work on its first high-altitude target drone, the CK-1, began in April 1968.

With the advent of stealth and much longer engagement ranges for surface-to-air missiles or air-to-air missiles, the requirements for useful target drones have increased significantly.

According to materials at MAKS, the “LJ-I Tactical Target is a high subsonic target drone jointly developed by CCKW and NWPU featuring high-G, long endurance, stealth, and recoverability. It is capable of simulating the maneuverability under sustained overload and long endurance (HALE) of third- and fourth-generation fighters. Inspired by the idea of modular design, the flexibly controllable and cost-effective target drone is designed to use thrust augmented engine to meet the requirements for maneuverability of different flight profiles and support a variety of payloads to enable RCS simulation and electronic countermeasures (ECM).”

Additional materials from the exhibition note the system uses a “zero-length launch” system, typically a rocket booster that allows the drone to be launched from a stationary trailer or other vehicle. Other noteworthy characteristics include high maneuverability, likely meant to help test air-to-air missiles’ effectiveness against an evading enemy aircraft. These capabilities are also in line with new training guidelines that emphasize improved realism in training exercises.

The accompanying article also highlights the new systems’ modularity and configurability for testing different types of tactical situations. As China focuses on developing the capability to fight more advanced foes it needs to be able to more realistically simulate air-to-air and surface-to-air confrontations both for pilot and system operator training but also to more accurately test new systems. The exhibition also featured Chinese navy ships under simulated attack from multiple vectors, a realistic scenario that would be difficult to simulate using piloted aircraft. As rather humorously noted by the unnamed analyst in the article “you can’t really shoot an actual J-20 down in a target practice.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

LJ-1 Stealth Target Drone
"砺剑-1" 无人靶机



LJ1 Specifications	
Length	4.74m
Wingspan	2.5m
Height	.67m
Mission Altitudes	100-10,000m
Endurance	60 minutes
Cruising speed	Mach 0.6 – 0.8
Instantaneous-G	9G
Sustained G	6G for 30 seconds
Radar Cross-Section	<0.02m ² (X-band)
Payload	40kg
Jamming Modes	Infrared Decoys, Radar Jammer, Radar Chaff, Interference Missile
Control Modes	Autonomous Navigation or Command Guidance
Launch Mode	Zero-Length Launch
Recovery Mode	Parachute

Data via materials from MAKS 2019 Graphic by Peter Wood

Graphic by Peter Wood.

“The LJ-I is stealth-capable, can fly for an extended period, has high maneuverability and is equipped with electronic countermeasures and jamming capabilities...”



Continued: China Debuts New Stealth Target Drone at Russian Defense Exhibition

Source: “Stealth Target Drone to Prepare China for F-35 Threats: Experts,” *China Military Online*, 30 August 2019, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-08/30/content_9607129.htm

A model of the LJ-I tactical target was displayed at the 2019 International Aviation and Space Salon (MAKS) in Zhukovsky, Russia, on August 27, 2019.

The stealth drone target China recently showcased will provide the Chinese military with experience encountering stealth fighter jets like the F-35, as the US and its allies in the Asia-Pacific region are deploying more of such jets, Chinese military experts said on Friday.

Exhibited at the Northwestern Polytechnical University booth at the ongoing 2019 Russian International Aviation and Space Salon (MAKS) in Zhukovsky, near Moscow, the LJ-I is a high-subsonic target drone that is capable of simulating a fourth-generation - or fifth-generation according to another commonly used classification - fighter jet.

*The LJ-I is stealth-capable, can fly for an extended period, has high maneuverability and is equipped with electronic countermeasures and jamming capabilities, according to a statement the university sent to the *Global Times* at MAKS 2019.*

The 4.7-meter long, 2.5-meter wide drone is also cost-efficient, the statement said, noting that multiple LJ-Is can also build a formation to simulate real combat.

*These features enable the target drone to do its intended job: act as a target, but an advanced one that could simulate the world’s latest stealth warplanes like the F-35, an anonymous military expert told the *Global Times* on Friday.*

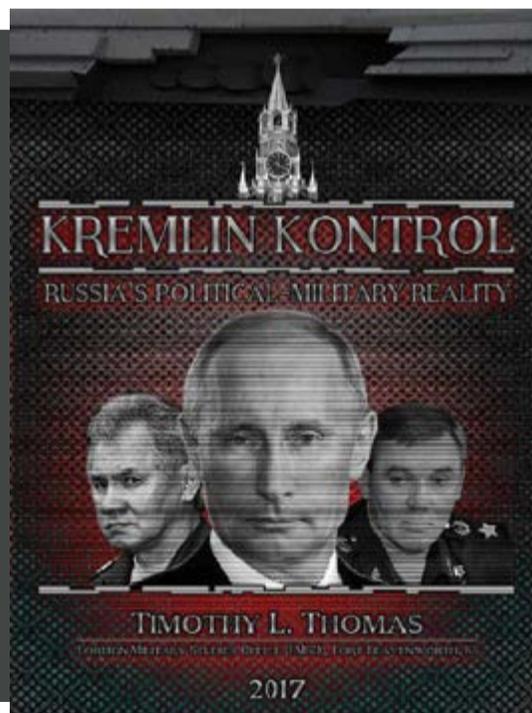
The US has been selling the F-35 to its allies in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, South Korea and Australia, with the US itself also deploying the fighter jet on aircraft carriers and amphibious assault ships.

Military analysts said that the US is trying to form an “F-35 friends circle” in the region, which could become a threat to China’s national defense.

By having the stealth target drone, China could practice techniques and tactics, and develop new weapons based on training results; the People’s Liberation Army could gain experience encountering a stealth fighter jet, the expert said, noting that China will be prepared for a potential clash with hostile stealth fighters.

In an animated video played at MAKS 2019, an H-6K bomber released several LJ-I target drones, which flew in formation and took different routes to attack a Type 052D destroyer. The destroyer was able to detect the drones with its radar system despite them being stealthy, launched missiles to destroy those that came from above, and fired a close-in gun to shoot down one skimming over the surface of the sea.

China has its own stealth fighter jet, the J-20, “But you can’t really shoot an actual J-20 down in a target practice,” the expert said.



In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country’s security forces and reestablished the nation’s military prowess. This study, *Kremlin Kontrol*, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>



PLA Air Force Pilots Cross-Train as Infantry Platoon Leaders

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article details a recent push to cross-train some PLA Air Force pilots as infantry commanders to give them a greater understanding of the operations, tactics and methods of other services and branches. (In the PLA, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Rocket Forces are services [军种] and branches [兵种] are their component arms, such as Aviation, Air Defense, etc.) The fourteen pilots are assigned to an unidentified infantry battalion under the PLA's 83rd Group Army located in central China.

China's military aspires to be fully capable of combined and joint operations. However, despite the rapid adoption of new equipment, and reorganization of units at all levels, some basic functions such as air support continue to lag behind. As noted in the article, part of the motivation for the initiative came from experience in exercises, where pilots demonstrated poor timing of attack runs due to lack of understanding of the situation on the ground.

While the Chinese military has practiced air support missions (and until recently fielded large numbers of a dedicated ground-attack aircraft, the Q-5), close air support and airstrike directions appear to be carried out somewhat differently than the United States. Rather than forward air controllers, target guidance groups [目标引导组] are in charge of carrying out airstrike support [空军火力支], distinct from close air support [近距离空中支援] in US terminology.

According to Chinese military press, the use of laser guidance systems for artillery and airstrikes appears to be more common than before. Inter-service and inter-branch communication continues to be a major point of emphasis. While air to ground strikes appears to have become a routine part of training for pilots of multi-role fighters such as the J-10, and the PLAAF has held the "Golden Dart" [金飞镖] air competition focused on air-to-ground attack since 2014, working together under realistic conditions is more difficult. To gain additional experience in this skillset, China has also begun practicing air support in previous iterations of the joint China-Pakistan "Shaheen" air exercise and the "Aviadarts" competition held with Russia. (See "China and Pakistan Hold 8th "Shaheen" Joint Air Exercise" in this issue of *OE Watch*.)

These skills will become even more important as the number of strike platforms continues to increase. The PLAAF, PLA Naval aviation, and PLA Army Aviation units will all be expected to communicate clearly among themselves as well as with PLA ground force or PLA Navy Marines.

The cross-training program, which is apparently in its second year, is another step forward for the PLA to bridge the substantial service and branch-level divides it faces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The brigade realized that if the pilots are not familiar enough with the characteristics of ground assault forces, group training methods and operational modes, it will become difficult for the pilots to carry out the full range of missions such as ground attack, seizing and controlling after landing, calling in airstrikes, etc.”



The emblem of People's Liberation Army Air Force.
Source: 解放的高加索 via Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/76/Emblem_of_People%27s_Liberation_Army_Air_Force.svg, Public Domain.

Source: "14 pilots serve as acting infantry platoon leaders," *China Military Online*, 20 August 2019. eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2019-08/20/content_4848588.htm

In mid-August, a batch of special "platoon leaders" was ushered into the infantry battalion of a brigade under the PLA 83rd Group Army. Fourteen pilots will be trained as the acting platoon leaders together with the officers and soldiers of the infantry battalion. Inter-disciplinary service and multi-post training, such a cadre's growth planning have become a beneficial attempt for the brigade to explore the cultivation of compound talents.

During military training and war preparation, the brigade considered the deep integration of air and ground combat professionals to be the key to the improvement of combat capacity. In an air-ground coordinated training, a pilot missed the best fire coverage period due to his unfamiliarity with the tactics of the infantry commander during assault, resulting in the failure of the entire operation. The brigade realized that if the pilots are not familiar enough with the characteristics of ground assault forces, group training methods and operational modes, it will become difficult for the pilots to carry out the full range of missions such as ground attack, seizing and controlling after landing, calling in airstrikes etc.

In this regard, the brigade has arranged pilots below the battalion level to take on duty during the infantry battalions training in the past two years. In taking advantage of field training and large-scale exercises and training tasks, it has trained the combat skills of acting cadres in alternate appointment, and strived to create a group of pilots featuring "fine flight skills, having expertise in assault, good combat coordination and commanding ability."

Wang Haiyang, a pilot who has previously served as the deputy battalion commander of an infantry battalion, is the first combined battalion-level commander trained in the brigade. At the beginning, it was hard for him to transfer from flight specialty to ground position, but with increased practice in the ground post, the effect of integration training became more and more evident. Today, he can both fly a jet fighter and organize a ground assault detachment charge.



New Chinese Aircraft Carrier to Carry 50 Percent More Fighters

OE Watch Commentary: According to interviews with Chinese naval experts, China’s new carrier, the Type 001A, will be able to carry 36 J-15 fighter aircraft. The new aircraft carrier was launched in 2017 and is undergoing sea trials.

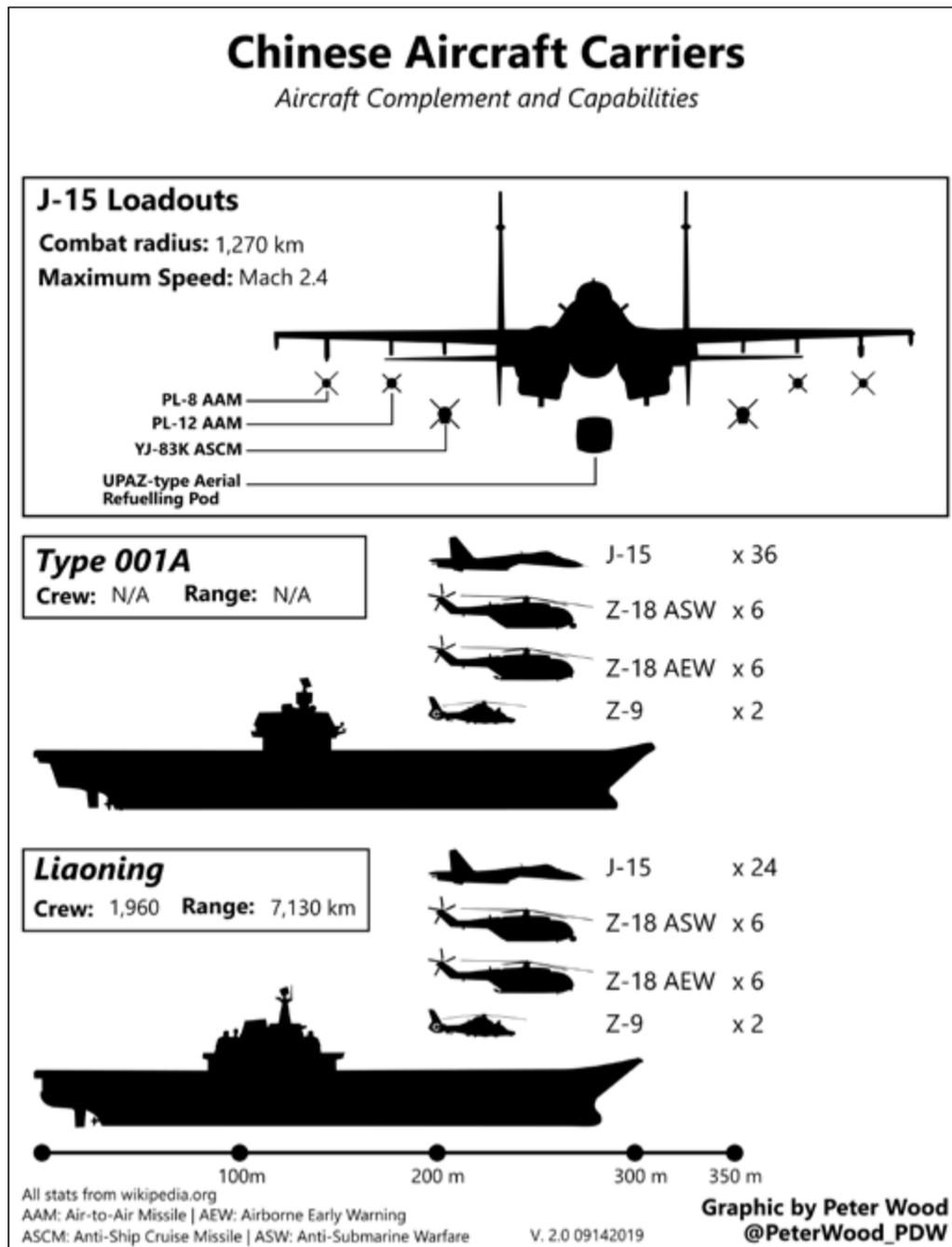
The Liaoning, China’s first aircraft carrier, is a refurbished Soviet Riga/Varyag-class aircraft cruiser built at Mykolaiv shipyard in Ukraine. In the mid-80s, the Chinese military purchased the former Royal Australian Navy HMAS Melbourne, a light aircraft carrier, which it later scrapped. China then purchased two other ex-Soviet heavy aircraft cruisers, the Kiev and Minsk, both since converted to theme parks.

In addition to 24 J-15 fighters, the Liaoning carries some 14 helicopters, including a mix of Z-18 medium transport and early warning helicopters (the latter equipped with an extendable radar array) and lighter Z-9 helicopters (see chart for comparison).

In the article, naval expert Li Jie notes that the Type 001A’s larger hanger space comes at the cost of reduced missile storage area. One of the major limitations of conventionally-propelled carriers compared to nuclear carriers is magazine depth—the amount of ordnance for shipborne aircraft that can be carried. The need for large fuel tanks compared to a nuclear drive system reduces space for other features. A larger hanger deck could therefore indicate significantly smaller magazine or otherwise reduced fuel stores. It is possible that the Type 901 fast axillary vessel [901型综合补给舰; Type 901 comprehensive supply vessel in the PLA’s parlance] developed for the carriers are meant to help address this deficiency. Two of the ships have entered service with the PLA Navy.

The J-15 itself is significantly limited in its armaments due to both carriers’ use of a ski-jump ramp to launch the fighters, rather than a steam or electromagnetic catapult (EMALS), and its relatively under-powered engines. Early indications appear to point to the adoption of catapult technologies for subsequent carriers. This will be even more important due to China’s desire for more powerful airborne early warning aircraft, such as the KJ-600.

While larger hangers may help the new Type 001A accommodate additional fighters, it is at best an intermediate step toward a more powerful carrier fleet. It is clear that China intends to build additional aircraft carriers, with various reports claiming that they will be equipped with stealth fighters. As noted in the article, China’s shipbuilding industry has gained a tremendous amount of experience in recent years both from the two carriers but also from construction of a large number of other modern surface combatants. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Graphic by Peter Wood.

“China now has a mature development and construction team, and the average age of team members is only 36...Whatever type of aircraft carrier our country wants to develop in the future, we can make it on our own...” — Hu Wenming [胡问鸣], Chairman of China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC) and leader of China’s aircraft carrier program.



Continued: New Chinese Aircraft Carrier to Carry 50 Percent More Fighters

Source: “Second aircraft carrier can carry 36 J-15 fighters,” *Global Times*, 16 August 2019. english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-08/14/content_9589268.htm

China’s second aircraft carrier can carry at least 36 domestically developed J-15 fighter jets, some 50 percent more than the country’s first, China’s state broadcaster reported on Tuesday. China’s first aircraft carrier the Liaoning can carry 24 J-15 fighter jets, China Central Television (CCTV) reported, noting the new ship’s increased number of jets will add to its capability.

Although the second carrier known as the Type 001A is similar to the Liaoning, it has an optimized flight deck, reduced weapon areas and a smaller superstructure with added deck areas, Li Jie, a Beijing naval expert, told the *Global Times* on Tuesday. Li noted that it also has an enlarged hangar, but reduced space for missile storage compared to the Liaoning. These extra areas allow the new carrier to carry 50 percent more J-15 fighter jets, Li said.

The 24 J-15s of the Liaoning could be a limiting factor as regional combat might require about 40 aircraft to seize air supremacy, Li said. The 36 jets on the Type 001A would expand its combat capability, he said.

In addition to the 36 J-15 fighter jets, the Type 001A can carry other types of aircraft including helicopters, Chinese analysts said.

The United States operates much larger aircraft carriers, including the Nimitz class which can carry about 60 aircraft, while the country’s latest Ford class can carry about 75. Hu Wenming, chairman of China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation and head of China’s aircraft carrier program, said “China now has a mature development and construction team, and the average age of team members is only 36,” CCTV reported. “Whatever type of aircraft carrier our country wants to develop in the future, we can make it on our own,” Hu said.

Given its expertise the team can build any other type of warship, Hu noted. It took 26 months to build and launch the Type 001A, which is China’s first domestically developed aircraft carrier, CCTV reported, or almost half the time of a foreign aircraft carrier of similar type to finish construction.

The Type 001A was launched in April 2017 and has undertaken six sea trials since May 2018.

It is reportedly conducting its seventh, after setting sail on August 1. There were no signs the ship had returned to its dock as of press time. Li said the latest, lengthy sea trial could be in preparation for its final delivery to the Chinese navy.

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China and Kazakhstan Upgrade Ties

OE Watch Commentary: In August, China and Kazakhstan announced they were upgrading their bilateral relations to Permanent Comprehensive Strategic Partnership [永久全面战略伙伴关系]. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, visiting Beijing, noted that the two countries look forward to expanding relations in the areas of trade, cultural exchanges, and scientific development. President Tokayev and the Chinese press have connected Kazakhstan’s \$9 billion “Nurly Zhol” (Bright Path) domestic stimulus plan with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The routes paralleling the Tianshan Mountains from Urumqi in China’s Xinjiang province to Almaty, Kazakhstan are a primary connection between China and Central Asia. Khorgos (the Kazakh side of the border) a land port, aspires to be a key link in the trans-Asian land route for BRI. According to the Chinese foreign ministry, bilateral trade between the two countries reached \$18 billion in 2017 and has seen double-digit growth in recent years. Other economic projects include a joint crude oil pipeline and three natural gas pipelines. The two countries also have a security relationship under the umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.



Chinese and Kazakh Flags.
Graphic by Peter Wood

China and the newly independent Kazakhstan established formal relations in January 1992. In 2002 they signed the “China-Kazakhstan Good Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” [中华人民共和国和哈萨克斯坦共和国睦邻友好合作条约]. In 2011 relations were upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership [全面战略伙伴关系]. The new agreement represents a significant expansion of existing agreements. The joint statement issued on 12 August emphasized their mutual support for each other’s sovereignty and resistance against other nations’ interference in their internal affairs. Kazakhstan also reiterated its support for China’s positions regarding the status of Taiwan and Tibet. Other specific focus areas include expanded cooperation in oil and gas exploration, financial and e-commerce cooperation and border infrastructure enhancement. The two countries also plan to accelerate international highway and rail infrastructure construction.

This appears to be part of China’s successive upgrading of relations with a large number of its trading partners connected to BRI. However, the relationship is not entirely without potholes. President Tokayev has faced internal pushback from Kazakhs less enthused with BRI and joint projects have seen major protests, which were met with government crackdowns. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Kazakhstan is looking forward to cementing high-level exchanges with China, and strengthening pragmatic cooperation in the areas of economy, trade, infrastructure, energy, 5G, science and technology, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges under the framework of the Belt and Road initiative.” – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev



Continued: China and Kazakhstan Upgrade Ties

Source: “China, Kazakhstan agree to develop permanent comprehensive strategic partnership,” *Xinhua*, 12 September 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/12/c_138384816.htm

China and Kazakhstan decided here Wednesday to develop a permanent comprehensive strategic partnership.

The decision came as Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with his Kazakh counterpart, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

When reviewing the achievements the People’s Republic of China has scored in the past 70 years since it was founded, Xi said such a process of moving forward has never been smooth, and stressed that no matter how the external situation changes, China will unswervingly take care of its own business regardless of outside factors.

Xi said China will comprehensively deepen reform, expand opening-up and promote higher-quality development. “We are fully capable of coping with various risks and challenges, and any difficulty or obstacle cannot stop us from moving forward,” Xi said. “A stable, open and prosperous China will always be an opportunity for the future development of the world,” he said.

On China-Kazakhstan ties, Xi said China is willing to deepen all-round cooperation with Kazakhstan, seek synergy between the Silk Road Economic Belt and Kazakhstan’s Bright Path new economic policy, and strengthen connectivity.

He also called on the two sides to boost cooperation in industrial capacity and science and technology innovation, increase people-to-people and cultural contacts, and facilitate exchanges at sub-national level.

China and Kazakhstan should take a clear-cut stand in upholding multilateralism and an open world economy, so as to contribute to promoting a fairer, more just and equitable global governance system, Xi said.

Xi also encouraged the two countries to strengthen security cooperation, and jointly fight against the “three evil forces” of terrorism, extremism and separatism.

It is necessary to promote the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to play a more active role in regional and international affairs, he added.

Tokayev, who is paying a state visit to China from Tuesday to Thursday, expressed congratulations on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

Tokayev said Kazakhstan is willing to take the decision of developing a permanent comprehensive strategic partnership with China as an opportunity to promote closer bilateral ties. China’s reform and opening-up has brought opportunities to various countries including Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan firmly supports the Chinese government and people in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, he said.

Tokayev said Kazakhstan is looking forward to cementing high-level exchanges with China, and strengthening pragmatic cooperation in the areas of economy, trade, infrastructure, energy, 5G, science and technology, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges under the framework of the Belt and Road initiative.

Tokayev said the two sides should closely communicate and coordinate within the frameworks of the SCO and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, jointly combat the “three evil forces,” and maintain regional security while opposing external interference.

The two heads of state signed a joint statement between China and Kazakhstan after their talks. They also attended a signing ceremony for a number of bilateral cooperation agreements.



China and Russia Sign Heavy Helicopter Deal

OE Watch Commentary: China and Russia have recently signed a deal to jointly develop an advanced heavy lift helicopter, in a deal that Rostec, a Russian state-owned conglomerate called “the contract of the century.” The accompanying passages offer some insight into the project, in which at least 200 helicopters are expected to be delivered by 2032.

The Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), which will be responsible for the design and production of the helicopters, is looking to Russia to serve as a technical partner. According to *China Military*, the two countries had formed a strategic partnership in 2001. Russia’s Mi-26 is reportedly the basis of the new Sino-Russian advanced heavy lift helicopter, which is expected to be a 40-ton class. The Mi-26, which was first produced in 1980, is a 56-ton category and can carry a payload of more than 44,000 pounds. Variations of it have been used to carry heavy military equipment, including mobile ballistic missiles and armored personnel carriers.

Russia’s strengths, according to *China Military*, are in transmission systems, something from which China intends to learn to “close the gap.” China might also contribute a new fatigue-resistant technology for the rotors. According to the second accompanying passage from *Global Times*, engineers at Changhe Aircraft Industry (Group), which falls under AVIC, have mastered “a new fatigue-resistant technology for helicopter rotors.” The technology is expected to improve a helicopter’s capability and time in service.

According to the sources, the new helicopter is expected to be in the 40-ton class, possessing a weight-lift capability of 15 tons, a range of 630 kilometers (391 miles), and a 300 kilometer (186 mile) per hour speed potential. *Asia Times* reports that the Chinese military needs bigger helicopters to be better prepared for military emergencies and major natural disasters. The heavy helicopter is ideal for transporting troops, armored vehicles, artillery and rockets and does not require an airfield to operate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“...the contract of the century.”

Source: Liu Xuanzun, “China, Russia Sign Heavy Helicopter Deal,” *Global Times*, 28 August 2019. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-08/28/content_9604665.htm

China, Russia Sign Heavy Helicopter Deal

The joint heavy helicopter Miao referred to is dubbed “Advanced Heavy Lift.” It is expected to be 40-ton class, with a weight-lift capability of 15 tons, a range of 630 kilometers and a top speed of 300 kilometers an hour, Russian news channel RT previously reported.

China is responsible for the helicopter’s design and production and Russia will be acting as a technical partner, [Victor] Kladov (a representative from Rostec) said.

The heavy helicopter is expected to be delivered by 2032, Wu Ximing, chief designer for the state-owned Aviation Industry Corp of China, told the Global Times in March.

“Russia is more experienced in the transmission system when it comes to 40-ton class helicopters, as Russia’s Mi-26 is of the 56-ton class. Our goal in the cooperation is to learn from Russia’s strong points and close the gap,” Wu said then.

For military use, a heavy helicopter can transport troops, armored vehicles, artillery and rockets. For civilian use, it can lift heavy engineering vehicles to sites where normal transportation routes could not reach in case of a natural disaster, military observers said...

In February, Russia’s Tass news agency reported that Russia’s state corporation Rostec was about to sign “the contract of the century” with China on the helicopter “in the coming two months” after four years’ talks, quoting Viktor Kladov, a Rostec representative.

Source: Liu Xuanzun, “China Masters Fatigue-Resistant Tech for Chopper,” *Global Times*, 16 July 2019. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1158062.shtml>

China Masters Fatigue-Resistant Tech for Chopper

China recently mastered a new fatigue-resistant technology for helicopter rotors, which could greatly expand the helicopters’ capability and service time, a development which military experts said on Tuesday could be of strategic value to China’s domestic helicopter industry as the technology could be used on China’s future heavy-lift transport helicopters and attack helicopters.



Continued: China and Russia Sign Heavy Helicopter Deal

Source: “China-Russia Heavy Helicopter Cooperation: Making the Rotocraft of the Future,” *China Military*, 10 April 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-04/10/content_9473073.htm

China-Russia Heavy Helicopter Cooperation: Making the Rotocraft of the Future

Back in 2001, China and Russia formed a strategic partnership, when their leaders at the time, Jiang Zemin and Vladimir Putin, signed a friendship treaty. Ever since, military and high-tech cooperation between the two countries has significantly increased.

The latest in a string of joint projects is the development of a new helicopter, known as the Advanced Heavy Lifter or the AHL. The aircraft will be manufactured in China, with the help of Russian companies.

“We have the world’s largest heavy-lift helicopter, Mi-26, which we periodically modernize. It can carry 20 tons and no helicopter in the world can compete with it. So, the Russian experience in creating that kind of helicopters is one of a kind in the world. That’s why the Chinese asked us for joint cooperation and we’ll develop the transmission technology for the new helicopter,” [Sergey]Ostapenko (advisor to the general director, Russian Helicopters) told CGTN.

Both Beijing and Moscow are counting on long-term partnerships in many areas.

Source: “China, Russia Developing Heavy-Lift Helicopter,” *Asia Times*, 11 March 2019. <https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/03/article/china-russia-developing-heavy-lift-helicopter/>

China, Russia Developing Heavy-Lift Helicopter

Russia’s technical expertise lies in helicopter power transmission systems, and the Mi-26, manufactured by Rostvertol, is one of the most powerful helicopters to have ever gone into series production. It belongs in the 56-ton category.

Heavy-lift helicopters like the Mi-26 lead a pivotal role in emergency response, like swiftly airlifting heavy cargo and vehicles including artillery and armored vehicles without the need of an airfield.

The Chinese military is in a dire need of more big choppers to give a lift to its preparedness in the event of a military emergency and major natural disasters. The People’s Liberation Army’s current helicopter squadrons comprise mainly medium-sized transporters like the Z-9, Z-20 and Mi-17.



Mi-26.

Source: Dmitry Terekhov from Odintsovo, Russian Federation via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mi-26_\(14531632732\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mi-26_(14531632732).jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0



China Reports the Launch of Unmanned 'Mini-Aegis-Class Destroyer'

OE Watch Commentary: In February, during the 14th International Defense Exhibition and Conference in Abu Dhabi, China displayed a new “unmanned Mini Aegis Ship with Vertical Launch Missile Cells,” garnering attention from military representatives. On 21 August, China launched the unmanned warship, as reported in the accompanying passages.

The passages describe the unmanned warship as a mere 15 meters long and having a displacement of 20 tons. The unmanned warship, which they refer to as the “JARI,” is reported to be equipped with a phased array radar, vertical launched missiles and torpedoes. The setup allows it to conduct air defense, anti-ship and anti-submarine missions.

It is unclear how the name was derived, but “JARI” or “Jerry Technology Group,” is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the state-owned China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation’s (CSIC) 716th research institute and, according to the first article, the unmanned warship was jointly developed by No. 716 and No. 702 research institutes, both of which fall under CSIC.

Perhaps most significant is the parallel experts are drawing between the “JARI”, which CSIC claims is now “combat ready,” and the Aegis-class destroyer. According to the second article, the unmanned warship is a mini-Aegis-class destroyer and “the most integrated naval drone in the world.” Its small size makes it stealthier and more mobile. It can be controlled manually via remote control or through artificial intelligence. If the data being reported is accurate, this could give China a significant advantage in patrolling the South China Sea and other areas. As the first article explains, the unmanned warship can either function “stealthily alone or form a swarm with others to become a formidable power.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)



The guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) (built around the Aegis Combat System) transits the Chesapeake Bay on its way back into port.
Source: Petty Officer 1st Class RJ Stratchko via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:130920-N-NX070-025_-_USS_Arleigh_Burke_\(DDG-51\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:130920-N-NX070-025_-_USS_Arleigh_Burke_(DDG-51).jpg), Public domain

“The drone ship could either work stealthily alone or form a swarm with others to become a formidable power.”

Source: “China Launches World-Leading Unmanned Warship,” *China Military*, 22 August 2019. eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-08/22/content_9598564.htm

China Launches World-Leading Unmanned Warship

China on Wednesday launched a world-leading unmanned warship, with its developer claiming the vessel is combat-ready.

Jointly developed by No. 716 and No. 702 research institutes under the state-owned China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC), the JARI multi-purpose unmanned combat vessel held its launch ceremony on Wednesday at an undisclosed location, according to a statement the No. 716 Research Institute of CSIC released on its WeChat account on Wednesday.

The launch indicates the world-leading combat drone ship has gained initial combat capability, the statement said.

The drone ship could either work stealthily alone or form a swarm with others to become a formidable power, analysts said.

Source: “China Displays Unmanned Mini Aegis Ship with Vertical Launch Missile Cells in Abu Dhabi,” *Global Times*, 20 February 2019. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-02/20/content_9431163.htm

China Displays Unmanned Mini Aegis Ship with Vertical Launch Missile Cells in Abu Dhabi

Developed by China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC,) the JARI unmanned surface vessel is equipped with a phased array radar, vertical-launched missiles and torpedoes despite its small size of 15 meters and low displacement of 20 tons, China Central Television reported on Tuesday.

These weapons are usually only seen on frigates and destroyers with displacement of thousands of tons, and their use on a ship as small as the JARI makes the vessel the most integrated naval drone in the world, CCTV reported.

“Given how small the ship is, this setup can be considered very powerful,” a Beijing-based military expert who asked not to be named told the Global Times on Wednesday, calling the ship a “mini Aegis-class destroyer.”

The ship can track naval targets within visual range, aerial targets 30 kilometers away and underwater targets seven kilometers away. It can then attack with missiles, torpedoes and guns, according to the report.

The JARI can be remotely controlled, but also uses artificial intelligence to autonomously navigate itself and undertake combat activities once it receives commands, the report said.



Contrasting Chinese and Foreign Media Accounts on Xinjiang

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese state media outlets are promoting People’s Liberation Army (PLA) efforts to “expand employment and promote increases in income” in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. One recent report published by the *People’s Liberation Army Daily* boasted improvements to farming infrastructure at Tithier, Kizil Township, in Xinjiang’s Baicheng County thanks to a locally stationed artillery regiment. The unnamed regiment “invited resident planting experts to carry out technical training for villagers in order to help the villagers expand the sales of agricultural products.” According to an article published by *Xinhua News Agency*, Hongxing Village, in Kashi County’s Yangdaman Township, “two years ago, was still a poor village. Under the coordination of the armed police officers and soldiers, it has now become a happy home for the local people to live and work in peace.” Chinese state media reports portray the PLA in Xinjiang as benevolent local leaders determined to solve issues related to village economies. Narratives of government aid and assistance are disseminated to Chinese readers illustrating the importance and necessity of PLA and police presence in Xinjiang.



Xinjiang Province.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Xinjiang#/media/File:China_Xinjiang.svg, By Joowwww - self-made; based on CIA. Public Domain

Official Chinese government reports indicate that some domestic companies plan to relocate their production centers to Xinjiang at vocational training schools, more commonly identified by other media as “labor camps.” An official report published by the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Development and Reform Commission on 5 December 2018, noted “with vocational skill education and training centers as carriers, (they) have attracted a large number of coastal enterprises from the mainland to invest and build factories, which will effectively expand employment and promote increases in income.” The *People’s Daily* recently claimed that the “relocation of (the) poor population from inhospitable areas achieves remarkable progress” in liberating Xinjiang residents from economic hardships. In the same article, a local party official is quoted as saying, “we must choose an appropriate relocation plan for the poverty-stricken households and develop the industries in resettlement areas so that these residents could actually be better off in the new places.”

Two foreign media outlets paint a different picture of recent efforts by Chinese government officials to relocate rural Uyghurs to these centers in Xinjiang. The Turkish state-run *Anadolu Agency*, citing an eye-witness account, noted on 23 August the detention centers not only subject Uyghurs to harsh conditions but also take advantage of them economically using extremely low wages. According to this article, Tahir Hamut, a Uyghur from Xinjiang, “...was forced into doing unpaid labor where he completed various tasks such as making bricks, shoveling gravel and picking cotton.” On 7 May *The Japan Times*, also utilizing an eye-witness account, reported that ethnic Kazakh, Gulzira Auelkhan “was paid only 320 yuan (\$48) for close to two months’ work before her time at the factory was curtailed in December, and she was allowed to return to her family in Kazakhstan.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartnett)**

“Hongxing Village, two years ago was still a poor village. Under the coordination of the armed police officers and soldiers, it has now become a happy home for the local people to live and work in peace.”



Continued: Contrasting Chinese and Foreign Media Accounts on Xinjiang

Source: Jiang Shan & Li Yanan, “China’s Xinjiang provides focused assistance to areas of extreme poverty,” *The People’s Daily*, 30 June 2019. en.people.cn/n3/2019/0630/c90000-9592941.html

Relocation of poor population from inhospitable areas achieves remarkable progress.

“Relocating the poor is an effective way to help those in poor natural conditions get rid of poverty. We must choose an appropriate relocation plan for the poverty-stricken households and develop the industries in resettlement areas so that these residents could actually be better off in the new places,” said Wang Fuyou, secretary of the party committee in Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County.

Source: Liu Xin & Zhang Yinbo, “There are many happy events in the Red Star Village - Xinjiang Armed Police Corps help the poverty-stricken villages in southern Xinjiang eliminate poverty,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 4 September 2019. www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-09/04/c_1124961324.htm

Hongxing Village, two years ago, was still a poor village. Under the coordination of the armed police officers and soldiers, it has now become a happy home for the local people to live and work in peace. “Thanks to the good policies of the party and the help of the children, we have lived on the good day of today...” Seeing the armed police officers and men who came to visit them, the 63-year-old Red Star Village old party member Aini Kadir took everyone to visit the newly renovated courtyard and gave a thumbs up.

Source: “The economic structure of the autonomous region is stable and has a good development,” *Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Development and Reform Commission*, 5 December 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20190520143306/http://www.xjdrcc.gov.cn/info/9923/23516.htm>

With vocational skill education and training centers as carriers, (they) have attracted a large number of coastal enterprises from the mainland to invest and build factories, which will effectively expand employment and promote increases in income.

Source: Wang Ge & Chen Tianjing, “An artillery regiment in the Xinjiang Military Region has taken measures to help ethnic minorities out of poverty,” *People’s Liberation Army Daily*, 31 August 2019. www.mod.gov.cn/power/2019-08/31/content_4849491.htm

In response to the characteristics of sufficient sunshine and large temperature differences between day and night, they encouraged villagers to plant grapes, hang apricots, watermelons, etc., and invited resident planting experts to carry out technical training for villagers in order to help the villagers to expand the sales of agricultural products. They actively contacted relevant enterprises in the field to guide the villagers to develop “order-based” planting, which greatly improved the income of the villagers.

Source: Umar Farooq, “China profiting off of forced labor in Xinjiang: report,” *Anadolu Agency*, 23 July 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/china-profiting-off-of-forced-labor-in-xinjiang-report/1562782>

Tahir Hamut, like other members of the Uighur Muslim ethnic minority growing up in Xinjiang, began working in a labor camp during elementary school at the command of the Chinese government. Since that time, Hamut was arrested and sent to a re-education camp, where again he was forced into doing unpaid labor where he completed various tasks such as making bricks, shoveling gravel and picking cotton. “Everyone is forced to do all types of hard labor or face punishment,” he said. “Anyone unable to complete their duties will be beaten.” Hamut eventually escaped to the U.S. with his family in 2017, but his brother was subsequently arrested by Chinese authorities.

Source: “From camps to factories: Muslim detainees say China using forced labor in Xinjiang,” *The Japan Times*, 7 May 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/05/07/asia-pacific/camps-factories-muslim-detainees-say-china-using-forced-labor/>

Auelkhan said she was paid only 320 yuan (\$48) for close to two months’ work before her time at the factory was curtailed in December and she was allowed to return to her family in Kazakhstan. Xinjiang’s average minimum wage ranges between 820 yuan and 1,460 yuan per month, according to official statistics. Beijing and officials in the region have fiercely denied any connection between the camps and underpaid labor.



Papuans Hope for Independence, but is it Possible?

OE Watch Commentary: Violent clashes broke out in August in the restive Papua region, which has been plagued with ongoing tension since the 1960s. These clashes were sparked after reported racial discrimination against Papuan students went viral. While protests and tension between the indigenous people and the Indonesians have been an ongoing problem, the latest protests, according to the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, are different because they are the largest ones held in the region in years and have drawn support from across Indonesia. Also, while previous protests had been spearheaded by exiled Papuan liberation leaders, the current protests have been erupting from within West Papua and then spreading to other provinces. During the first week alone, protests took place in some 30 cities, both inside and outside the region. The accompanying passages offer insights into the ongoing tension.

Papua was formally a Dutch colony, which declared its independence in the early 1960s before being incorporated into Indonesia in 1969. There are now over 1.8 million people calling for an independent referendum in West Papua. However, Indonesia is not close to giving up the territory. The *South China Morning Post* points out that “the region is of economic significance to Indonesia,” due to it being home to the world’s largest gold mine and its natural gas reserves.

The country had previously held a referendum in 1969 to allow West Papuans an opportunity to decide their future. The initiative did not pan out, with military coercion against “the small portion of the Papuan population who were allowed to vote” being blamed, according to the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. The former Dutch colony ended up being incorporated into Indonesia instead. The report does not indicate much optimism for a successful referendum today.

According to the *South China Morning Post*, over the past few years, demographics have changed as Indonesian settlers grew 10.8 percent and indigenous Papuan grew only 1.8 percent. This shifting population appears to have put the indigenous population at a disadvantage.

While the indigenous population is clearly at a disadvantage, they keep pressing forward. Three primary political groups, namely the Federal Republic of West Papua, the West Papua national Coalition for Liberation, and the National Parliament of West Papua, have joined forces to form the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). According to *China Post*, there are claims that the racism has escalated since the formation of ULMWP. Benny Wenda, who chairs the ULMWP has warned that a militia group has been recruited by Indonesian intelligence and that it is “already forming in Jayapura. Wenda has called for UN intervention to “avoid a ‘Santa Cruz-like massacre,’ in which 250 East Timorese pro-independence demonstrators were killed.”

There are differing accounts of what might be happening in the region. The article published in *Republika*, reports that Indonesian police “have determined that there is a terrorist group network, which is affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), building power” in the region and trying to recruit members. Meanwhile, another report, published by *Jakarta Globe*, reported that the security situation in the region has returned to normal. Regardless, the region is fragile and will likely remain so until a resolution is reached. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



West Papuan independence fighters in 2012 (Jenderal Goliath Tabuni).
Source: Tpnpb via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jenderal_Goliath_Tabuni.JPG, CC BY-SA 4.0

“Papuans have long faced discrimination in Indonesia – a factor which has driven some young people to join rebel causes.”



Continued: Papuans Hope for Independence, but is it Possible?

Source: “Tracey Shelton and Tasha Wibawa, “Why West Papua’s Latest Protests are Different from the Ones Before,” *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Net*, 4 September 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-04/west-papua-latest-protest-over-referendum-for-independence/11471016>

But these latest protests are not only the largest held in the region in years, but they have also drawn support from across Indonesia. While previous movements have been largely orchestrated by Papuan liberation leaders in exile, these recent protests have erupted from within West Papua and have since spread to other provinces. Mr Harsono said he counted protests in 30 cities both inside and outside of the region during the first week. “The spread of the protests indicates the deep frustration among indigenous Papuans against Indonesian rule,” Mr Harsono told the ABC.

Source: Amy Chew, “Explained: What has Led to the Violent Riots in Indonesia’s Papua?” *South China Morning Post*, 21 August 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/explained/article/3023640/explained-riots-indonesias-papua-region>

Explained: What has Led to the Violent Riots in Indonesia’s Papua?

Riots broke out on Monday in the restive Papua region, where a separatist movement has simmered since the 1960s. Indonesia’s resource-rich Papua region, home to the world’s largest gold mine, saw violent riots break out in several cities on August 19, following allegations of racist abuse and mistreatment of Papuan students on Java island. There have been three main political movements seeking independence for West Papua – the Federal Republic of West Papua, the West Papua National Coalition for Liberation and the National Parliament of West Papua. Since 2014, the groups have united to form a single umbrella organization called the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). According to Andreas Harsono, a researcher at Human Rights Watch (HRW) Indonesia, Papuans have long faced discrimination in Indonesia – a factor which has driven some young people to join rebel causes. Racism against Papuans appear to have escalated since the formation of ULMWP, according to Harsono.

Source: Bambang Noroyono, “Benarkah Ada ISIS dalam Kerusuhan di Papua dan Papua Barat? (Is There a Possible Connection Between ISIS and the Riots in Papua and West Papua?),” *Republika*, 7 September 2019. <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/politik/pxfp88385/benarkah-ada-isis-dalam-kerusuhan-di-papua-dan-papua-barat>

Is There a Possible Connection Between ISIS and the Riots in Papua and West Papua?

[Brigadier General Prasetyo]Dedi [Chief of Public Polri Headquarters] explained that the police have analyzed the track records and movements of some of the Jemaah Ansarut Daulah (JAD) members in Papua and West Papua in the last two years. So far, JAD has become a religious extremist group that pledges itself to the ISIS’ network. This past year, the activity of this group has increased,” explained Dedi. Some of the areas that have been identified as the group’s fields of recruitment are in Jayapura, Wamena, Manokwari, Fakfak, and Merauke. “There are indeed cells from this group, meaning that they recruit for control,” explained Dedi. However, he said, up to now, the police have not made a sufficient analysis to prove the involvement of a global terrorist knot and network in the country with the series of riots in the main cities of Papua and West Papua that have taken place since Monday (19 August). The accusation that ISIS “played” a part in the riots in Papua and West Papua was initially expressed by Minister of Defense Ryamizard Ryacudu on Thursday (5 September). He said an intelligence analysis showed that three groups intentionally created riots in the Land of the Birds of Paradise. The first one is an armed rebel group. The second one is a pro-independence political wing and a clandestine rebel network. However, outside the three groups, said the former Army Chief of Staff of 2002, there was another group affiliated with ISIS. “There is another group affiliated with ISIS, which has called for a jihad in the Land of Papua,” said Ryamizard at the House of People’s Representatives Building in Jakarta on Thursday (5 September). However, the chief of Polri, General Tito Karnavian, delivered a specific but different analysis.

Source: Telly Nathalia, “Indonesia Clarifies ‘Distorted Information’ about Papua to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,” *Jakarta Globe*, 9 September 2019. <https://jakartaglobe.id/context/indonesia-clarifies-distorted-information-about-papua-to-un-high-commissioner-for-human-rights>

Indonesia Clarifies ‘Distorted Information’ about Papua to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Meanwhile, Indonesia’s Chief Security Minister Wiranto said on Monday that security situation in the two provinces has returned to normal. According to the minister, markets, offices and schools have reopened after almost two weeks of violent demonstrations in which government buildings and public facilities were damaged. “We admit there are still threats. Some people have distributed pamphlets encouraging people to conduct more rallies and provoking anarchy,” Wiranto said.



Another Counter-Terrorism Operation in Palu, Indonesia

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article from *Media Indonesia* discusses a recent operation by the Indonesian counter-terrorism unit, Densus 88 (Detachment 88), which resulted in the breaking up of a terrorist cell in Palu, Indonesia. Palu is a town on Indonesia’s Sulawesi island and has been home to a number of terrorist cells uncovered by Densus 88 in the past year.

According to the article, two of three arrested terrorist suspects were working as construction workers and were believed to be members of Mujahidin Timur Indonesia (MIT), whose deceased leader previously pledged loyalty to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). However, more recently the group has been led by Ali Kalora who remains at large near Palu in Poso.

The operation generated controversy because, as the article discusses, Densus 88 operatives reportedly did not announce themselves when entering the house nor did they provide an arrest warrant, yet they seized goods belonging to the suspected terrorists. According to the Central Sulawesi Muslim Lawyers Team, these represent human rights violations. These allegations will now reportedly be brought to the attention of National Human Rights Commission of Central Sulawesi. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Sulawesi map.

Source: Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sulawesi_map.PNG, CC BY-SA 3.0

“Densus 88 was dressed in plain clothes and fully armed when breaking into the homes of two suspected terrorists without mentioning their identity.”

Source: “Densus 88 Tangkap Tiga Terduga Teroris Anggota MIT di Palu (Detachment 88 Arrests Three Suspected Terrorist MIT Members in Palu),” *Media Indonesia*, 4 September 2019, <https://mediaindonesia.com/read/detail/257375-densus-88-tangkap-tiga-terduga-teroris-anggota-mit-di-palu>

The Anti-Terror Detachment 88 Team at the National Police Headquarters arrested three suspected terrorists in Palu, Central Sulawesi. All three have been detained with the Central Sulawesi Regional Police. Arkam and Adi work as construction workers. Arkam and Adi were arrested based on the activities of Zainal who was first arrested by Densus 88.

They were arrested on suspicion of being linked to the armed group Mujahidin Timur Indonesia (MIT) led by Ali Kalora in Poso District. “What is certain is they are connected to acts of terrorism,” Central Sulawesi Regional Police Chief Brigadier General Lukman said. During the arrest, Densus 88 was able to obtain some pieces of evidence. Among them were machetes, knives, cellphones, motorbikes, televisions, sewing machines, and one shotgun.



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>

India to Create New Chief of Defence Staff Position

OE Watch Commentary: As the Indian government continues reforming its armed forces, the accompanying excerpted article reports on how one reform that has been under consideration for a number of years appears to finally be set to take place. The article from *India Today* examines the recent announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), a new position that, as the article notes, “would be the government’s single-point military advisor, and sharpen coordination between the forces.” The author provides significant background information on how the creation of the CDS position came about, and what changes could take place following its establishment.



Service Chiefs pay homage at Amar Jawan Jyoti, India Gate - Navy Day 2017.

Source: Indian Navy via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Service_Chiefs_pay_homage_at_Amar_Jawan_Jyoti_India_Gate_-_Navy_Day_2017_\(4\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Service_Chiefs_pay_homage_at_Amar_Jawan_Jyoti_India_Gate_-_Navy_Day_2017_(4).jpg), GODL India.

The author points out how “the post of CDS, one of the prime learnings from the Kargil War of 1999, was an unfinished agenda of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government” and that “India is the world’s last major democracy without a single-point military advisor like the CDS.” He also notes how the Kargil Review Committee, formed after the 1999 war to review the events that led to up the conflict and provide an assessment of the military, “was scathing in its indictment of the entire national security and apex decision-making apparatus, calling it a relic of the British Raj.” While there has been a lot of attention from Indian officials on how long it took for the committee’s recommendations (particularly the establishment of the CDS) to become policy, the author mentions how “the KRC had blamed India’s antiquated defence structure for loading the service chiefs with the twin tasks of being operational commanders who would fight wars and also national security planners responsible for training and equipping the services.” This highlights one of the significant changes that will take place following the creation of the CDS.

The author notes how the Andaman and Nicobar Command is currently the only tri-services command and that it “was to have been a test-bed for what a future tri-services command would look like,” though “in 2015, the navy, clearly unhappy with the experiment, reclaimed the command.” The author brings up another committee formed a couple of years ago, which recommended “doing away with the 17 different single-service commands” and having “three joint theatre commands; north, south and west each to be headed by a theatre commander, who would report directly to the CDS.” Lastly, the author mentions a few things that have yet to be worked out even as the government moves forward with establishing the post of CDS. He notes how “Army chief Rawat and the IAF’s Dhanoa are being seen as possible candidates for the post” and he believes that “integrating all the three services into one common war theatre is a process that is several years down the line.” Regardless, the position of CDS is now in the process of being established and marks one of the most significant reforms in the Indian Armed Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The Southern Command, which has all three services present in strength, could be the first to be theaterised.”



Continued: India to Create New Chief of Defence Staff Position

Source: Sandeep Unnithan, "Chief of Defence Staff: Can the new superchief call the shots?" *India Today*, 23 August 2019.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20190902-enter-the-superchief-1590316-2019-08-23>

The Red Fort is both a powerful metaphor for India's military might and a backdrop for change. The crenellated seat of two empires, Mughal and British, it was from this fort's ramparts that India announced to the world that it had made the transition into an independent republic. It was also from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's most significant defence reform in 72 years. Speaking at the Red Fort on the 72nd Independence Day, Modi announced the institution of the post of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

The CDS would be the government's single-point military advisor, and sharpen coordination between the forces making them even more effective, he said... Few within the mammoth ministry of defence, which has functioned almost without change since the days of the British Raj, saw it coming.

Even the armed forces were taken by surprise. Early last year, in a first across-the-board consensus, the three services agreed to appoint a permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC). The proposal sent to the PMO for approval was for a fourth four-star officer who would head the CoSC consisting of the three service chiefs (it is currently held by the seniormost service chief in rotation)...

The post of CDS, one of the prime learnings from the Kargil War of 1999, was an unfinished agenda of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. This was something Modi hinted at as he addressed the combined commanders' conference in December 2015...

The decision to appoint a superchief of the armed forces comes at an inflection point in India's national security imperatives. The real shift has been in the way the political leadership looks at the military as a coercive tool of hard power against nuclear-armed Pakistan. The governments of Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh were deterred by Pakistan's nuclear arsenal into not retaliating for the 2001 attack on Parliament and the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008. Modi has signalled space for military conflict even under a nuclear umbrella.

...The first draft of the national security strategy is to be submitted shortly to the government. Prepared by the Defence Planning Committee headed by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, the policy (which insiders call a white paper on defence) will address one of the fundamental arming without aiming' flaws in India's military modernisation individual services planning for wars separately and project hardware requirements delinked from budgetary realities.

The government has already signalled a cap in defence spending and is unlikely to spend more than 16.6 per cent of central government expenditure... Appointing a CDS to accelerate training and cooperation, and prioritise defence spending among the services, is even more key in times of modest budgets...

India is the world's last major democracy without a single-point military advisor like the CDS. It is also the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters are outside the apex government structure as attached offices' rather than integrated departments.

The defence ministry structure for three commanders-in-chief who would head their respective services, with a central committee for coordination, was only meant to be a temporary arrangement until one better suited to Indian conditions was evolved. But it has continued for over 70 years as a bizarre stovepipes system with each service doing its own force and war planning. There is little integration between the armed forces HQ and defence ministry. In this breach filled with fear and mistrust, the post of CDS has become a most contentious appointment, rife with the possibility of turf battles.

...A repeat of this chaos was witnessed during the Kargil War of 1999. The army alleged that the IAF entered the battle only after 20 days when it could have decisively changed the game if it had come in early. The air force said the army projected impossible requirements for helicopter gunships without knowing their limitations. In short, when it came to the crunch, neither service could operate seamlessly with the other.

This confusion was not lost on the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC), headed by strategic analyst K. Subrahmanyam. The KRC was scathing in its indictment of the entire national security and apex decision-making apparatus, calling it a relic of the British Raj. It recommended a thorough revamp and reorganisation of the entire national security apparatus. An objective assessment of the last 52 years will show that the country is lucky to have scraped through various national security threats without much damage, except in 1962,' the committee observed.

A group of ministers (GoM), set up in 2001 after the KRC submitted its report, undertook the most comprehensive national security reviews in post-independent India. One of the GoM's task forces on defence management headed by Arun Singh, an acolyte of the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi recommended the creation of the post of CDS...

The four-star CDS, according to him, would be a first among equals, and propel jointness' among the three services, administratively control the nuclear forces and supervise the progressive decentralisation of decision-making'. Delegation of powers to service headquarters was envisaged, with the latter becoming the integrated headquarters of the ministry of defence rather than attached offices. The CDS would also function as the principal military advisor to the defence minister.

...The KRC had blamed India's antiquated defence structure for loading the service chiefs with the twin tasks of being operational commanders who would fight wars and also national security planners responsible for training and equipping the services... In the past 17 years, there has been only one tri-services command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command, which has elements of all three. It was being commanded by a three-star officer from each of the three services in rotation and was to have been a test-bed for what a future tri-services command would look like. However, in 2015, the navy, clearly unhappy with the experiment, reclaimed the command.

The CDS appeared to have political backing in the Modi government's first term. Speaking at the 2015 India today conclave, then defence minister Manohar Parrikar said, Integration has to be there and the CDS is a must... In 2016, a Parrikar-appointed 11-member committee called the creation of a CDS the need of the hour. Headed by Lt Gen. D.B. Shekatkar, it also recommended doing away with the 17 different single-service commands. There would only be three joint theatre commands north, south and west each to be headed by a theatre commander, who would report directly to the CDS...

The August 15 CDS announcement will now set the government machinery moving... Army chief Rawat and the IAF's Dhanoa are being seen as possible candidates for the post. But more than the candidate, it will be his role and responsibilities that the military and civilian authorities alike will scrutinise closely.

The MoD will set up a committee to define the CDS's mandate before a formal government notification is issued. It will be important to see what financial powers the new CDS will have. If he controls budgets and resource allocation, then he will be significantly more powerful than just another service chief.

A critical and contentious aspect will be whether the CDS commands troops on the ground, the theatre commands as recommended by the Shekatkar Committee. These integrated commands are being opposed by the navy and air force who fear the army's dominance. But without theatre commands, the CDS runs the risk of becoming a glorified CISC.

A key recommendation of the 2001 GoM report was for the CDS to ensure jointness'. Besides integration of the three services, the CDS has to propel the integration of the armed forces with the civilian bureaucracy. Shekatkar says integration or bringing the armed forces HQ into the MoD should be a major priority... The CDS is not a magician with a wand. Acceptability and evolution of the post will take time, there will be a transition period, says Lt Gen. Vinod Bhatia, head of the MoD tri-service think-tank, Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS).

...But integrating all the three services into one common war theatre' is a process that is several years down the line. It will involve extensive changes to the current command structure. The Southern Command, which has all three services present in strength, could be the first to be theaterised.

This will involve the creation of a joint HQ with common intelligence, communication, surveillance and air defence systems. Service chiefs will become force creators' and force providers' in charge of planning, training and managing defence budgets. An empowered CDS could then be just the silver bullet India's dysfunctional defence apparatus needs.



Egypt's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy

OE Watch Commentary: In September, Egypt hosted the “First International Conference on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Modern Information Technologies in Building the Egyptian Knowledge and Innovation Society.” The conference, which according to the accompanying media report aimed largely at attracting foreign investments, is among a handful of signals conveying the Egyptian government’s interest in artificial intelligence (AI). As the country’s dominant economic player, the Egyptian military is likely to be deeply involved in the development and application of AI-powered technology.

The Egyptian government’s “AI Strategy” was formulated earlier in 2019 and has a time horizon of three to five years. According to the second accompanying news report, the strategy has a domestic component focused on training, education and innovation, and an international component focused on the “export of AI-based solutions.” Egypt’s ambitions of becoming an exporter of AI services and technology is noteworthy, as is the emphasis on Africa, where “digital transformation” is seen as “a great opportunity for business growth.”



Screenshot of NAC promotional video.
Source: Screenshot from <https://vimeo.com/180717384>, CC BY 3.0

Over the summer, the Egyptian government changed the name of several computer science departments in its university system to include the term “artificial intelligence.” It also established the first “Faculty of Artificial Intelligence,” a new department offering a bachelor’s degree in AI at the University of Kafr Sheikh, in the Nile Delta. The faculty opened its doors to new students in September. There are also plans to eventually establish “an Egyptian university for information technology,” which would be “the first of its kind in the Arab and Middle East and North Africa regions.”

The new university will be in Egypt’s New Administrative Capital (NAC), which will serve as a live laboratory for the application of AI-powered technologies. The NAC, which is being built from scratch in the desert 30 miles east of Cairo, is envisioned as a “smart city” that will eventually house government ministries, foreign missions and over five million people. Work began in 2015 and the project has already been plagued by unmet deadlines and financing issues. Still, by next summer, some Egyptian government functions are expected to begin relocating there. The NAC’s business district is being built by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC). Chinese company Huawei will provide the technology for a “digital city” within the NAC, which according to a local Huawei representative will be completed by 2023.

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

“...The strategy will be implemented over 3 to 5 years and is based on two main axes: training, capacity building, and production; and, export of AI-based solutions...”

Source: “Egyptian computer science students dispatched to study artificial intelligence abroad,” *Egypt Independent*, 9 September 2019. <https://egyptindependent.com/egyptian-computer-science-students-dispatched-to-study-artificial-intelligence-abroad/>

In his speech during the First International Conference on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Modern Information Technologies in Building the Egyptian Knowledge and Innovation Society, which was attended by the Ministers of Communications and Military Production, Abdel Ghaffar stressed that all state agencies must coordinate in the field of artificial intelligence...

The government is studying the establishment of an Egyptian university for information technology in the new administrative capital, the first of its kind in the Arab and Middle East and North Africa regions, Abdel Ghaffar said. He called for cooperation with the Ministry of Military Production in the field of software industry and various applied industries.

Source: *معلومات عن استراتيجية الذكاء الاصطناعي.. تعرف عليها 6*
“Six Facts to Get to Know the Artificial Intelligence Strategy,” *al-Yaum al-Sabaa*, 4 June 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y5uvtbla>

Al-Yaum al-Sabaa provides 6 key points on the AI Strategy:

- *The strategy will be implemented over 3 to 5 years and is based on two main axes: training, capacity building, and production; and, export of AI-based solutions.*
- *The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is working to promote investments in young minds and contribute to the implementation of the state’s strategy in building the Egyptian people and qualifying professional cadres.*
- *Creating an environment conducive to the growth of the business community of startups working in the field of artificial intelligence.*
- *Giving the opportunity for start-up companies to participate in projects with various state bodies in the field of artificial intelligence.*
- *Supporting the capacities of young people in the fields of data science and AI, and encouraging the private sector to work in the AI market.*
- *The Ministry of Communications is working with African countries on digital transformation projects, which represents a great opportunity for business growth.*

Source: *هواوي: العاصمة الإدارية الجديدة مدينة رقمية متصلة في 2023*
“Huawei: The New Administrative Capital Will be a Connected Digital City by 2023,” *al-Mal News*, 17 June 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y4aezfqc>

Osama El-Masalawy, a business representative at Huawei Egypt, said that the company has started to develop a new digital city in the under-construction new administrative capital, as an advanced model that proves Egypt’s ability to build smart cities according to its needs and supports its global image in this field.

He said this during a special session of the Builders of Egypt Forum, which was held under the auspices of President Abdel Fattah El Sisi on Sunday. Huawei has developed a specific smart city model in the new administrative capital, with the goal of building a digital and connected city by 2023.



Saudi Arabia Moves Forward on Artificial Intelligence

OE Watch Commentary: By royal decree, the “Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence” was established on 30 August 2019. Overseen by the prime minister’s office, the new authority will serve as the nerve center for Saudi efforts in the development and proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled technology. According to the first accompanying excerpt, a key driver behind the establishment of this new authority were “the digital threats posed by electronic warfare,” a field in which Saudi Arabia feels particularly vulnerable.

The Saudi government and population have embraced new technologies, and the rhetoric around AI is positive and confident. The author of the accompanying excerpt from *al-Arabiya*, for instance, notes how thanks to “an effective technical mobilization” over the past two years, Saudi society has quickly adapted to a new technological reality. A virtuous cycle has been created, the author believes,

as “families and schools encourage their children to pursue technical fields.” For its part the Saudi government has embarked on several large projects involving new technology, with none more ambitious than “Neom,” a futuristic city that is currently under construction on the Gulf of Aqaba coastline, in close proximity to Jordan, Israel and Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. The project’s website (<https://www.neom.com/>) describes it as “the world’s most ambitious project.”

One of the Saudi government’s most consequential uses of AI and related technologies is to manage the more than two million pilgrims who descend on Mecca annually for the Hajj pilgrimage. A major expansion of the Great Mosque in Mecca will have been completed by July 2020, when the Hajj happens next. So the government is counting on these new technologies to help accommodate the expected growth in the number of pilgrims. At this year’s Hajj, which took place in August, Saudi authorities launched several new initiatives, including the piloting of a “Smart Hajj Card” that “holds a pilgrim’s personal, medical and housing information” as well as a tracking device. The card can be used in lieu of a passport to enter Saudi Arabia during the Hajj, and is expected to become standard in the next few years. During the most recent Hajj, Saudi authorities also installed “six transmitting stations and 350 sensors” to complement an existing network of high-definition cameras, in order to “gather and analyze data about overcrowding and the movement of pilgrims.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



The Kaaba during Hajj.

Source: Adli Wahid via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Kaaba_during_Hajj.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

“These institutions are part of a wide-ranging effort in which the Saudi administration seeks to develop the process of electronic transformation of state institutions and public services, as well as enhancing digital security...”

Source:

Ziad Ahmed al-Fayfi. “Changes in Saudi Arabia Strengthen Digital Development and Encourage the Fight Against Corruption,” *Independent Arabia*, 31 August 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y69s5qcf>

تغييرات في السعودية تعزز التطور الرقمي وتشجع مكافحة الفساد

These institutions are part of a wide-ranging effort in which the Saudi administration seeks to develop the process of electronic transformation of state institutions and public services, as well as enhancing digital security in line with the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. “Independent Arabia” learned that the establishment of the authority was driven by the digital threats posed by electronic warfare. Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most vulnerable countries in the world according to international reports, which increased the need to deal with cybersecurity, including investment in cybersecurity and protection from drone attacks, and to get its work up and running.

Source:

“Why did Saudi Arabia Establish the Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence?” *al-Arabiya*, 1 September 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y6z9o9kf>

لماذا أنشأت السعودية هيئة للبيانات والذكاء الاصطناعي؟

An effective technical mobilization has been taking place in Saudi Arabia for more than two years. Among young people, discussing artificial intelligence, deep learning, “blockchain” or the “Internet of Things” is a living and tangible reality that calls for pride and admiration.

Furthermore, talk of “hackathons” and of exhibits, innovation workshops, and initiatives is no longer unusual. Families and schools encourage their children to pursue technical fields. The Saudi Programming Initiative, which concluded in February, provided a glimpse of the Saudis’ passion for technical know-how given that participants exceeded one million.

Source: “Ministers launch new and enhanced Hajj and Umrah services,” *Arab News*, 7 August 2019. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1536711/saudi-arabia>

[Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Mohammed Salih Bentin] highlighted the smart Hajj platform, which offers a range of advanced and enhanced services to help pilgrims, including an online electronic visa-application process that removes the need to visit an embassy. The platform also includes a “Smart Hajj” card that holds a pilgrim’s personal, medical and housing information, and can be quickly and easily read using electronic scanners. The card also uses near-field communication to provide assistance to pilgrims who are lost and control entry and exit to Hajj tents... In a first at the holy sites, Internet of Things technology has been implemented. It consists of six transmitting stations and 350 sensors places throughout Mina and at the Jamrat bridge. This network will gather and analyze data about overcrowding and the movement of pilgrims. Crowds and movement will also be monitored by a network of high-definition cameras. They data that is collected by these systems will be analyzed at a dedicated monitoring center.



Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia: Competition in the Virtual Domain



Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Source: IMF via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sheik_Mohammed_bin_Rashid_Al_Maktoum.jpg, Public Domain.

OE Watch Commentary: The virtual domain is as an arena of active competition in the Arabian Peninsula. In 2017, a low-intensity virtual conflict broke out between Qatar and the UAE. As noted in the accompanying *al-Jazeera English* report, both sides employed “a vast network of bots that tried to popularise [sic] certain hashtags, sent out fake news, and disseminated propaganda.” The effects of this competition have manifested physically as an embargo on Qatar, which remains in place. Both Qatar and the UAE are investing heavily in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that could be employed on social media and other platforms.

More recently, Saudi Arabia and the UAE experienced a virtual domain flare-up. The accompanying excerpt from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, a newspaper that revels in reporting on UAE setbacks, has been closely following and perhaps amplifying the Saudi-UAE Twitter War. In physical space, the conflict centers on control over the Yemeni port city of Aden. The Twitter War escalated rapidly, to the point that in early September and via Twitter, the ruler of Dubai publicly exhorted Emiratis to tone down their language. One has to wonder whether the bots are listening. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... A social media war broke out between Saudi and Emirati supporters over the weekend...”

Source: Yarno Ritzen. “The fake Twitter accounts influencing the Gulf crisis,” *al-Jazeera*, 21 July 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/fake-twitter-accounts-influencing-gulf-crisis-190717052607770.html>

An online propaganda battle, which started in the months before the GCC Crisis, continues to this day, Al Jazeera has found... [Marc Owen] Jones’ research on Twitter manipulation during the Gulf Crisis showed a vast network of bots that tried to popularise certain hashtags, sent out fake news, and disseminated propaganda before and shortly after the start of the blockade... as time progressed and the blockade was forgotten by the majority of the world, bots were still being created to increase the reach of political tweets... The extensive use of retweets by so-called influencers, popular Twitter users with a large number of followers, is one of the most important weapons these fake accounts have.

Source: “‘Aden coup’ sparks angry Twitter war between Saudi and UAE supporters,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 12 August 2019. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/8/12/aden-coup-sparks-twitter-war-between-saudi-and-uae>

A social media war broke out between Saudi and Emirati supporters over the weekend, exposing a major rift in the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen...

A Saudi writer called on his Twitter followers to resist the separatist movement in Aden on Monday, and offered practical steps to do so. Writer Suleiman al-Aqili accused the UAE of harbouring secret plans against Riyadh...

Dubai’s controversial deputy Chief of Police Dhahi Khalfan also attacked Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his internationally-recognised government. Khalfan... hurled abuse at Hadi in a series of tweets, stressing the need to remove his government if it did not officially apologise for accusing the UAE of treason...

Source: “UAE Minister, Emiratis react to Sheikh Mohammed’s warning on social media,” *Gulf News*, 1 September 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/uae-minister-emiratis-react-to-sheikh-mohammeds-warning-on-social-media-1.1567337722235>

As part of a six-point message titled “The Letter of the New Season” that was released on his official Twitter account, Sheikh Mohammed [Bin Rashid Al Maktoum] warned residents against spreading misinformation with the sole intention of gaining followers online... On Sunday, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, affirmed that all tweets and online comments posted by UAE citizens and residents play a role that ultimately reflects the country’s mission and reputation. “Tweeting for the sake of the country can help the country and is not a disadvantage. [But] do not destroy what has been built. Tweeting about the country is a noble mission and should be done with high morals and responsibility, which should be complemented with the sensibility that reflects our culture and civilization...”



Signs of Restructuring in the Turkish Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Turkish sources discuss signs that the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) may be moving toward a new command structure. They also provide insight into some of the discussions regarding a potential restructuring of the TAF.

The first two passages are by Fikret Bila, a journalist considered close to the Turkish military. Bila first discusses the 1 August meeting of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), which determined the promotions of generals and admirals. First, he points out that the structure of the SMC changed after the failed coup attempt in 2016. The Council went from having 15 army generals and admirals and being led by the Prime Minister to now being comprised of seven cabinet members (the President, Vice President, and Ministers of Justice, Defense, Treasury, Interior and Education) and four military members (the Chief of the General Staff and the Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force). The office of Prime Minister was abolished as a result of the 2017 constitutional referendum, after which Turkey moved to a presidential system, with a president and vice president.



Two Turkish soldiers salute.

Source: NATO Training Mission-AfghanistanMC2 (SW) Christopher Hall/NPASE East/NTM-A PAO via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Two_Turkish_soldiers_salute_\(4699895014\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Two_Turkish_soldiers_salute_(4699895014).jpg), Public domain

Bila points out that the number of army four-star generals and admirals within the TAF has gone from 15 to seven, due to retirements of some four-star generals. Meanwhile, he points out that no lieutenant general has been promoted to four-star general even if they reached the level of seniority. Bila suggests that this means “some of the army commands will be led by a lieutenant general.” He notes that, at the officer level, the promotions took place “mostly from brigadier general to major general, and from colonel to brigadier general.”

Bila also provides some insight into possible discussions taking place within the TAF. He suggests that the number of four-star generals may eventually be limited to three or four; and that army commands may be eliminated or transformed into planning and operation centers. Bila also claims that the TAF is considering reducing its number of command levels and bureaucracy, and restructuring itself based on army corps that can make faster decisions and be more agile. He suggests that the TAF may move towards a structure where army corps consist of brigades. He also reports discussions of moving towards a US model, “where active units are directly tied to force commands or to new force center commands that would be established.”

The third passage also makes a similar assessment. It reports that with the new promotions, lieutenant generals are now assigned to army commands previously led by four-star generals. Of note, only the First Army Command will be led by a four-star general. Similarly, it reports that “corp commands, which used to be led by a lieutenant general, are now being filled by major generals.” Taken together, all of these appear to signal changes to the Turkish Armed Forces. The Chief of the General Staff and the Commanders of the Army, Navy and Air Force all retained their positions, signaling continuity at the top. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Lieutenant generals are now assigned to army commands previously led by four-star generals.... Corp commands, which used to be led by lieutenant generals, are now being filled by major generals.”

“This points to a new approach in the TAF’s command structure.”



Continued: Signs of Restructuring in the Turkish Armed Forces

Source: Fikret Bila, “TSK’da yeniden yapılandırma sinyalleri (Signs of a restructuring within the Turkish Armed Forces),” *T24.com*, 28 August 2019. <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/tsk-da-yeniden-yapilandirma-sinyalleri,23573>

Following the 15 July coup attempt, a series of decisions involving the TAF were made. One of the most important ones was the change in the member structure of the Supreme Military Council (SMC). The structure, which included 15 Army Generals and Admirals led by the Prime Minister, was changed. Now, the number of Military members has gone down to four (The Chief of the General Staff and the Commanders of the three Forces), and the number of civilians has gone up to seven (President, Vice President, Justice Minister, Defense Minister, Treasury Minister, Interior Minister, and Education Minister).

Following the last SMC meeting, the reduction in the number of Army Generals and Admirals within the TAF from 15 to seven is being seen as a sign of a future restructuring of TAF. While the four-star Generals who’ve completed their time are being retired, the fact that none of the lieutenant generals who have reached the seniority level have not been promoted to four-star generals, has led to the question of whether the number of four-star generals will be decreased even further in the new restructuring.

It is being reported that the number of four-star generals may be limited to three or four, army headquarters may go away or changed into just planning-operation centers. Indeed, the appointments of lieutenant generals to army headquarters are being seen as a development that points to these changes.

It is also being discussed that the TAF may reduce its number of command levels and bureaucracy, and be restructured based on army corps who can make faster decisions and move faster..... and move towards a structure where army corps consist of brigades.

... It is also being said that the TAF may move towards a US model, where active units are directly tied to force commands or to new force center commands that would be established, similar to the US model.

... Of course the most widely discussed issue is that it would be a mistake to base the TAF structure, promotions and commander appointments on loyalty rather than the traditional method of seniority and merit.

Source: Fikret Bila, “YAŞ kararları: Orgeneral sayısı yarıya indi, hiçbir korgeneral terfi ettirilmedi, 15 Temmuz’dan sonra terfi ettirilen albaylar emekli edildi (Supreme Military Council Decisions: The number of Army Generals down to half, no lieutenant generals promoted, and colonels promoted after 15 July have been retired),” *T24.com*, 2 August 2019. <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/yas-kararlari-orgeneral-sayisi-yariya-indi-hicbir-korgeneral-terfi-ettirilmedi-15-temmuz-dan-sonra-terfi-ettirilen-albaylar-emekli-edildi,23307>

The fact that none of the lieutenant generals was promoted to four-star general is noteworthy. This means that some of the army headquarters will be led by a lieutenant general...

...

The promotions of officers took place mostly from brigadier general to major general, and from colonel to brigadier general. This picture points to the fact that the TAF will be run by these recently promoted officers in the next few years.

This points to a new approach in the TAF’s command structure. It is clear that this change is taking place with the approval of the Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, the Chief of the General Staff Yasar Guler, and of course the President Tayyip Erdogan. When taken together, the new conscription law and the decisions involving the TAF made after 15 July, all point to a restructuring within the military.

When looking at the Chief of the General Staff and Force Commands, there is no surprise. [Defense Minister and Former Chief of the General Staff] Hulusi Akar will continue to work together with the Chief of the General Staff Yasar Guler.... Both the Air Force Commander Gen. Hasan Kucukakyuz and the Navy Commander Admiral Adnan Ozbal’s appointments were extended, as expected. Both commanders had been promoted and appointed as commander following 15 July [2016].

Source: “Ordularda korgeneral dönemi (The era of Lieutenant Generals in the Armies),” *Hürriyet*, 23 August 2019. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/ordularda-korgeneral-donemi-41309662>

Three weeks after the Supreme Military Council, the new assignments within the Turkish Armed Forces, as signed by President Tayyip Erdogan, have been published in the Official Gazette.

...

With the appointment decisions, lieutenant generals are now assigned to army headquarters previously led by four-star generals. ... The only four-star general assigned to an army headquarters was Gen. Musa Avsever, assigned to the First Army Command.

...

Corp commands, which used to be led by a lieutenant general, are now being filled by major generals



Turkish Rhetoric On Acquiring Russian Fighter Jets



T-50 (Su-57).

Source: Dmitry Terekhov from Odintsovo, Russian Federation via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-50_\(Su-57\)_36349482491.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-50_(Su-57)_36349482491.jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0

OE Watch Commentary: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the opening of Russian MAKS-2019 international aviation and space fair that showcases the best of Russian aviation and security products. While the reason for the Turkish president's visit was to discuss the developing situation in the Syrian town of Idlib, Russian President Vladimir Putin chose a strategic location for the meeting. The Turkish and Russian Presidents watched the performance of Russian fighter jets and posed with the SU-57, Russia's fifth-generation fighter jet. According to reports, Erdoğan asked if the jet was available for sale and President Putin noted that Russia was ready to supply the SU-57 to Turkey and expressed Russia's willingness to jointly manufacture some weapons systems. The accompanying passages shed light on expanding Russian and Turkish security cooperation.

According to the first article, the two leaders' meeting on the sidelines of the Russian aviation and space fair, particularly as the second battery of the S-400s was being delivered to Turkey, "marks the joint devotion of two countries seeking more enhanced cooperation in the defense industry." The Turkish President noted the growing multi-dimensional relations with Russia, saying "I believe that the synergy we have with Russia regarding aviation and space sectors will deepen our bilateral relations." In addition, President Erdoğan reportedly suggested a partnership with Russia to develop an upgrade to S-400s. According to the author, the Turkish President's statements "could be regarded as a direct message to Washington" indicating that "Turkey is not without alternatives for finding" new defense weapons system suppliers. The author further notes that "[t]he fact that Putin has promoted the SU-57 to Erdoğan at the aviation fair makes the latter's message even stronger." While Turkey's purchase of the SU-57 is not certain, given the experience of acquiring S-400s, the author claims that Turkey may follow through in adding SU-57s to its military arsenal.

The second article discusses Turkey's talks with Russia to acquire the SU-57 (or possible SU-35) fighter jets, reporting that negotiations started on September 2nd. After Erdoğan's visit, the President of Turkey's Defense Industries İsmail Demir stayed in Russia to discuss undertaking joint projects and the possibility of purchasing these Russian fifth-generation fighter jets equipped with an advanced avionics system and a variety of high-precision weaponry. The most important announcement came from Dmitry Shugayev, the Director of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, who stated that officials from both countries were at the negotiating table for the sale of not only SU-57s, but also for the SU-35s. This seems to be a pattern; each time Turkish President Erdoğan engages with Russia because of an urgent development in Syria, Russian President Putin manages to draw Turkey's attention to another product from Russia's defense industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"I believe that the synergy we have with Russia regarding aviation and space sectors will deepen our bilateral relations..." -Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Source: Serkan Demirtaş, "Erdoğan's message to Washington from Moscow," *hurriyetdailynews.com*, 28 August 2019. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/erdogans-message-to-washington-from-moscow-146108>

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Russia yesterday on the sidelines of an important aviation and space fair in which the newest products of the Russian defense industry are being exhibited.

...the venue of their meeting was quite significant and spoke for itself. This marks the joint devotion of two countries seeking more enhanced cooperation in the defense industry.

The fact that Erdoğan has attended the opening ceremony of the defense industry fair along with Putin is symbolic devotion...

During his speech, Erdoğan hailed growing ties between the two nations in a multidimensional form that includes the defense industry. "I believe that the synergy we have with Russia regarding aviation and space sectors will deepen our bilateral relations," he stated.

The message [of Erdoğan] is clear: Turkey is not without alternatives in finding new suppliers if excluded from U.S.-led international projects and denied procuring American weapons. This can also include Russia's fifth-generation SU-57 aircraft...

The fact that Putin has promoted the SU-57 to Erdoğan at the aviation fair makes the latter's message even stronger. It's, of course, very premature to speculate whether Turkey would choose to buy SU-57s from Russia, but our experience concerning the purchase of the S-400 systems proves that this option may be on the table.

Source: "Erdoğan'la Putin üzerinde poz vermişti: Satış görüşmesi resmen başladı (Erdoğan and Putin posed on it: Sales negotiations officially started)," *ahvalnews.com*, 5 September 2019. <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/turkiye-rusya/erdoganla-putin-uzerinde-poz-vermistisatis-gorusmesi-resmen-basladi>

The negotiations over the sale of fighter jet SU-57 to Turkey has officially started...

The statement came from Shugayev, head of the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation. Shugayev said that negotiations are not only for sale of the SU-57, but also are for the sale of SU-35 fighter jets.

Speaking to Russian state television Rossiya-24, Shugayev said, "Erdoğan, who met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in MAKS-2019, expressed his interest in the SU-35 and SU-57 fighter jets. Then the first round of negotiations started, [but] experts need to work on many issues first," he said.

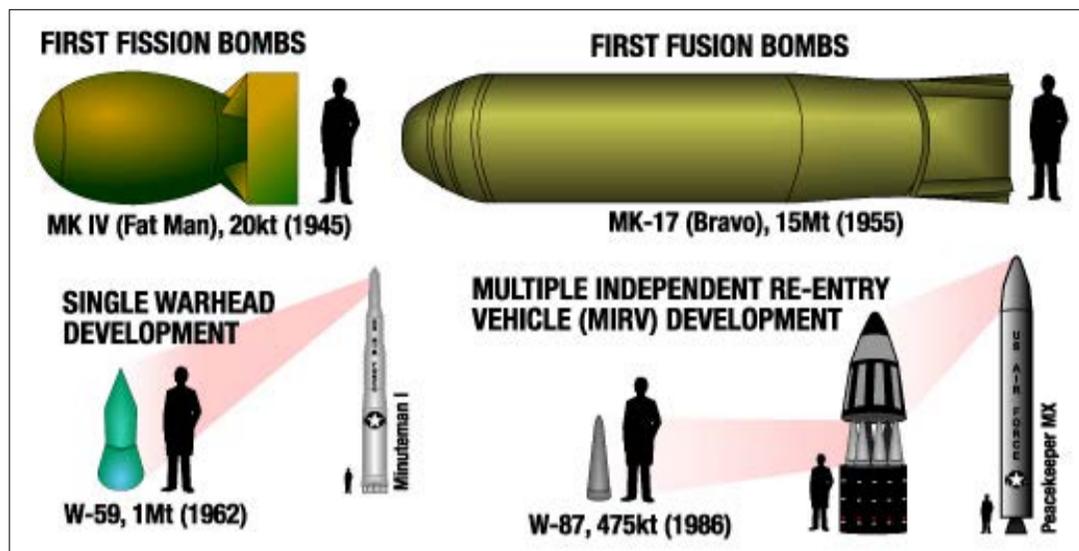


Turkish Rhetoric On Acquiring Nuclear Warheads

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking to Turkish business leaders at an economic forum, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan floated the idea of Turkey acquiring a nuclear warhead even though Turkey is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The accompanying excerpt from Erdoğan's speech and a Turkish article provide insight into this development.

In his speech, the Turkish president questioned nuclear arms-control agreements and asked why Turkey was not allowed to have missiles with nuclear warheads. “[S]ome countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept. There is almost no developed country in the world that does not have nuclear warheads.” He continued to say that “We are currently conducting our studies.”

The second excerpt from an article written by a veteran Turkish journalist pontificates on the issue and raises some questions. The author claims that Turkey might be sending a message to its western allies that it might develop nuclear weapons with Russia if Turkey's requests are not accepted. He points out the fact that Turkey signed a contract with Russia to build the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, and claims that this might lead to developing a nuclear warhead jointly with Russia. (The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant is a joint Russian-Turkish project and Turkey's first nuclear power plant constructed by Russian energy company Rosatom.) The author states that while there is the possibility of using Akkuyu as a site for nuclear weapon development, for Turkey to take on such a project depends on reactions from the international community. Furthermore, he notes that it is not clear whether these comments reflect a decision made at the National Security Council meeting on 30 July 2019, or a tactical move by the President himself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Nuclear Weapons Size Chart.

Source: Fastfission via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nuclear_weapon_size_chart.jpg, Public domain

“...Some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept.” -Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Source: The Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, “Orta Anadolu Ekonomi Forumu’nda Yaptıkları Konuşma (Speech at the Central Anatolian Economic Forum),” *The Website of the Turkish Presidency*, 4 September 2019. <https://tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/109521/orta-anadolu-ekonomi-forumu-nda-yaptiklari-konusma>

“It’s all fine and well, yet some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads, not just one or two. But I don’t have missiles with nuclear heads. This I cannot accept.” There is almost no developed country in the world that does not have nuclear warheads.” ... “Look at them. Look at what they are competing over. But when it comes to us, they say, ‘Don’t do it!’”...

“We are currently conducting our studies...”

Source: Fikret Bila, “Türkiye yalnız ülkeler arasına girmemeli (Turkey should not be among the lonely countries),” T24.com, 6 September 2019. <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/fikret-bila/turkiye-yalniz-ulkeler-arasina-girmemeli,23670>

President [Recep] Tayyip Erdoğan ... makes statements on defense and foreign policy issues that forms the agenda...

In an unexpected move, Erdogan said that Turkey should have nuclear weapons... “We have them next to us,” pointing at Israel.

Is it a Turkish pressure tactic [to say] “If you do not accept my request, I will develop a nuclear weapons project with Russia?”

...the question comes to mind considering Turkey is building a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu with Russia.

...

Does the statement of the President represent a strategic decision of the NSC [National Security Council] or a tactical move [by him]?

We will see this in the coming days.



Turkish and Qatari Military Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: In the past decade Turkey has tried to expand its military presence and strengthen its position in the Middle East. As part of this effort, Turkey has strengthened its relations with Qatar including military cooperation such as military hardware transactions, Qatar's investment in the Turkish defense industry and Turkey's establishment of a military base and military presence in Qatar. The accompanying article from *Al-Monitor*, a news website with analysts from the Middle East, highlights the magnitude of Turkey's military base in Qatar and discusses why Turkey is interested in establishing a durable military presence there.

As the article states, the "Qatar-Turkey Combined Joint Force Command has been active since October 2015." The upcoming expansion of the base will include air and naval elements and increase the number of Turkish military from 300 to 2,000. High level Turkish officials including the Turkish Minister of Defense and Vice President visited the base to inspect and oversee the "joint trainings and war games."

The author discusses several developments that indicate the depth of Qatari and Turkish military cooperation since last year. First, at the beginning of 2018 the Turkish frigate *Gökçeada* sailed to Qatar to inaugurate Qatari and Turkish joint naval training. In April 2018, "troops from both countries held live-fire field exercises" among other military activities. Second, this year, Qatari and Turkish special forces held counterterrorism drills and Turkish Gendarmerie Command officials trained Qatari internal security forces. As the author states, the ultimate objective of these exercises "prominently involving the naval and air forces and focusing on counterterrorism and internal security, is to enhance interoperability between the security forces of the two countries." Third, Turkey has become the major supplier of military hardware to Qatar as Qatari investment in Turkish defense industry companies has substantially increased. A major Turkish defense industry company, of which Qatar owns 49 percent, has engaged in joint ventures with the Qatari military. One of the products that has drawn attention was the production of Altay tank by BMC, "a joint venture between Turkish defense industry giants and the Qatari military" and 40 of them will be supplied to Qatar.

Several factors contributed to the expansion of cooperation between Turkey and Qatar. Turkey's cooperation with Qatar helps counterbalance its regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia. Qatar provides a market for Turkish defense industry products. For Qatar, cooperation with Turkey gives it assurances against the alliance of other Gulf countries supported by Saudi Arabia to isolate Qatar. (Also see: "Turkey Opens Military Base in Qatar," *OE Watch*, July 2016) **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"...the Turkish contingent [in Qatar] will grow into a brigade task force of about 2,000 soldiers, including army, air force, navy and special forces elements..."

Source: Metin Gürcan, "Turkey's military base in Qatar to expand with air, naval elements," *Al-monitor.com*, 23 August 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/turkey-qatar-military-cooperation-expand-with-air-naval.html>

The Qatar-Turkey Combined Joint Force Command has been active since October 2015 at the Tariq bin Ziyad military base outside Doha, comprising commando platoons, military engineering units, indirect fire support teams, and air force and naval liaison teams in what is basically a mechanized battalion battle group involving about 300 Turkish soldiers. From the outset, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani agreed on a rapid expansion of the base...

...the facility is on course to expand in October with the addition of an airbase and a military port. As a result, the Turkish contingent will grow into a brigade task force of about 2,000 soldiers, including army, air force, navy and special forces elements...

The Qatari base has been the focus of increased Turkish attention in recent months, as evidenced by a number of high-level visits, joint trainings and war games. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited the base in December, inspecting the facility. A visit by Vice President Fuat Oktay followed in March.

Cooperation between the Turkish and Qatari militaries has notably intensified since last year. In February 2018, Turkey's Gokceada frigate visited the Doha port as Turkish and Qatari naval forces conducted the first in a series of joint trainings. In a string of drills in April, all of them in Qatar, troops from the two countries held live-fire field exercises, commandos had small-unit action trainings as part of border security exercises, and the air forces conducted Falcon-21 drills, with three Turkish F-16 jets flying in Qatari skies for the first time.

...Turkish and Qatari special forces have held joint counterterror drills, and the Turkish Gendarmerie Command has offered training to Qatari security forces in the field of internal security.

The ultimate objective of those exercises, involving prominently the naval and air forces and focusing on counterterrorism and internal security, is to enhance interoperability between the security forces of the two countries.

The defense industry is another area of expanding cooperation, with Turkey growing into a major supplier of military equipment for Qatar...

"In late 2018, Turkey's Defense Industries Management and BMC signed a multibillion-dollar contract for the serial production of the Altay main battle tank. Initially, 250 tanks are to be produced for Turkey and 40 for Qatar, with an advanced version to follow."

BMC is a joint venture between Turkish defense industry giants and the Qatari military.



Main battle tank Altay of Otokar at the IDEF 2019 in Istanbul, Turkey.
Source: CeeGee via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TankAltayT1_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TankAltayT1_(1).jpg), CC BY-SA 4.



Potential Turkish, Russian and Chinese Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean



Known oil and gas fields in the Levant Basin, 2013.

Source: US Energy Information Administration via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Levant_Basin.png#/media/File:Levant_Basin.png, Public domain

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey's relations with China and Russia have been expanding. To remain relevant in Syria, Turkey heavily relies on Russia. As its economy takes a downturn, it has sought Chinese credit and investment. Now as power rivalries and tensions intensify in the Eastern Mediterranean over natural gas discovery, media reports and statements from Turkish and Russian officials indicate the possibility of an alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean between Turkey, Russia and China. The accompanying excerpted articles argue that this emerging alliance will tilt the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean in Turkey's favor.

According to the first article, state owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO), responsible for exploring and managing Turkey's natural gas and petroleum, has held talks with Chinese and Russian petroleum companies. The Russian Minister of Energy also signaled the possibility of Russian-Turkish cooperation in the region. The article claims that Turkish, Russian, and Chinese cooperation will probably increase for various reasons. Turkey needs the support of both countries against the anti-Turkey alliance loosely formed by littoral states such as the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Italy and Jordan. Russia intends to control any attempts to create alternatives to its

natural gas pipelines to European markets. For China, controlling the Eastern Mediterranean is important in terms of logistics, supply routes, security and energy security as its One Road One Belt Initiative involves routes cutting through this region to Europe. In the past, China and Russia held joint naval drills in the Mediterranean Sea to show the strength of Russian and Chinese rapprochement.

The second article also points out the Russian Minister of Energy Novak's statement regarding a Russian-Turkish alliance in the region and possible joint natural gas exploration between TPAO, Russian and Chinese companies. It states that an alliance with Russia and China provides leverage to Turkey over other players in this power competition. The article notes that while Russian state-owned Rosneft partnered with Egypt to engage in natural gas drilling in the Egypt Exclusive economic zone in the Mediterranean, it avoided a partnership with the Republic of Cyprus to avoid jeopardizing cooperation with Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“China and Russia are aware of the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean for their future.”

Source: Güray Alpar, “Doğu Akdeniz’deki Büyük Oyunda Dengeler Değişecek (Balances Will Change in the Great Game in the Eastern Mediterranean),” *Stratejik Düşünce Enstitüsü [Institute of Strategic Thinking, Turkey]*, 28 July 2019. <https://www.sde.org.tr/guray-alpar/genel/dogu-akdenizdeki-buyuk-oyunda-dengeler-degisecek-kose-yazisi-10642>

In recent years cooperation between Turkey, Russia and China has been gradually developing. Without a doubt, this includes energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is known that Turkish Petroleum has held talks with Chinese and Russian companies on this issue. In this respect, the Russian Minister of Energy’s statement signaling cooperation with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean is quite important.

... Russian Minister of Energy said... “From a trade perspective, if there are projects benefiting all parties, Russian companies will cooperate with Turkey.”

...

China and Russia are aware of the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean for their future.

Having control of this region, which also controls access to the Suez Canal and the Middle East, [could] restrict [activities of] China and Russia in the region. Access to the Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea will allow China to access long term energy resources, as well as create an alternative space to undermine Russia’s position in the energy equation... Therefore, this struggle, which we call the “Eastern Mediterranean Energy Challenge” will surely occupy the agenda for a longer time.

Source: Gökhan Güler, “Türkiye, AB ve Rusya’nın Son Süreçteki Doğu Akdeniz Politikası (Turkey, EU and Russia’s latest Eastern Mediterranean policy),” *Türkiye Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Stratejik Analizler Merkezi [Turkish Center for International Relations and Strategic Analysis]*, 15 August 2019. <http://turksam.org/turkiye-ab-ve-rusyanin-son-surecteki-dogu-akdeniz-politikasi>

The positive relations between Turkey, Russia and China are regarded as an alternative outlet for a blockaded Turkey. In this regard, the Russian Minister of Energy Novak signaling a cooperation with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean contains an extremely important and critical message for the future.

...

Russia is not in the Greek EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone], but it is in the Egyptian EEZ with the Russian state company Rosneft. It seems like Russia have not participated in the deals with the Greeks so as not to disturb Turkey. This is extremely important and cannot be ignored.

Egypt and Russia Deepening Military Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: Military cooperation between Russia and Egypt appears to be at its peak, “particularly concerning the air forces,” according to the accompanying reports from Middle East sources. The first two passages from Egyptian sources discuss a recent military exercise involving airborne forces from Russia, Egypt and Belarus. The final passage discusses Egypt’s plans to buy 50 MiG-35 warplanes from Russia.

The recent exercise entitled ‘Protectors of Friendship 4’ took place in Russia with the participation of airborne forces from Russia, Egypt and Belarus. As the first passage reports, over 1,000 military personnel participated in the exercise, “including 650 Russian paratroopers, 150+ Egyptian paratroopers and up to 250 military personnel from Belarus, in addition to more than 100 units of military equipment.”

The second passage from the website of the Egyptian Ministry of Defense points out that the training involved “joint missions including airdrops to regain control of a number of vital targets and clear them of all terrorist elements.”

According to the passage, the training also featured theoretical conferences, lectures and practical activities designed to achieve homogeneity and integration between the forces. There was also training on weapons and equipment, first aid, command and control mechanisms and field skills, in addition to special tactics.

The final passage discusses that the Egyptian Air Force is preparing to acquire 50 Russian-made MiG-35 fighter jets. According to the passage, this is “the largest deal of its kind between the two countries, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union.” The passage notes that the MiG-35 is an upgraded MiG-29 fighter jet, with a stronger multi-mission capability and enhanced use of high-precision air-to-air weapons. The deal is reportedly part of a comprehensive plan by Egypt’s political leadership to upgrade the Egyptian Armed Forces. The passage also features comments by Colonel Hatem Saber, former head of an Egyptian military counter-terrorism and special operations unit, who claims that “the MiG-35 will upgrade the Egyptian Air Forces in world ranking, which currently ranks 9th internationally and first in the Middle East.”

The passage claims that “military cooperation between Egypt and Russia witnessed unprecedented progress since the arrival of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to power in 2014.” In addition to military cooperation, in December 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Egypt, and agreed to build Egypt’s Al-Dabaa nuclear power plant. This followed another visit in February 2015, which saw the signing of several deals between the two countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Russian President Putin with President of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, 2015.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50181>, CC BY 4.0

“Military cooperation between the two countries reached its peak as military deals are on the rise, particularly concerning the air forces...”

Source: “Egypt, Russia and Belarus participate in joint military exercise in Moscow,” *Daily News Egypt*, 21 August 2019. <https://www.dailynewssegypt.com/2019/08/21/egypt-russia-and-belarus-participate-in-joint-military-exercise-in-moscow/>

Egypt’s army spokesperson Tamer El Refa’ai said on Tuesday that Egyptian a group of airborne forces left the country to partake in a joint military exercise that will take place in Russia on Tuesday, with the participation of military forces from Russia and Belarus.

According to a statement, the above mentioned military exercise will continue for 10 days, the exercise is entitled ‘Protectors of Friendship 4’. “Egypt hopes the training will help to enhance the skills of its forces, unify combat concepts and teamwork,” the statement added.

Since the arrival of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to power in 2014, bilateral relations between the Egypt and Russia witnessed unprecedented improvement as both countries adopt similar strategies and opinions in different files such as the Syrian crisis.... Also, the military cooperation between the two countries reached its peak as military deals are on the rise, particularly concerning the air forces, this made Russia as one of the important sources of arms to Egypt.

More than 1,000 military personnel will participate in “Protectors of Friendship exercise-19, including 650 Russian paratroopers, 150+ Egyptian paratrooper and up to 250 military personnel from Belarus In addition to more than 100 units of military equipment.



Continued: Egypt and Russia Deepening Military Cooperation

Source: “Intensive Egyptian-Russian Belarusian exercises in the joint training “Protectors of Friendship - 4” Egyptian Armed Forces Ministry of Defense, 25 August 2019. <https://www.mod.gov.eg/ModWebSite/NewsDetails.aspx?id=38927>

Within the framework of the joint training plan between the Egyptian armed forces and many fraternal and friendly countries, Egyptian paratroopers and Russian and Belarusian airborne forces will continue to participate in the joint training “ Protectors of Friendship - 4” to carry out the planned activities.

More than a thousand paratroopers from Egyptian Airborne, Russian and Belarusian airborne are taking part in the training to carry out joint training missions including airdrops to regain control of a number of vital targets and clear them of all terrorist elements.

The preparatory phase started with the completion of the arrival of all troops to the training zone in the Russian city of Ryazan...

The training also includes organizing many theoretical conferences and lectures and practical activities to achieve homogeneity and integration between the forces and to identify the technical and tactical characteristics of weapons and equipment, command and control mechanisms and training on first aid, and acquire field skills and special tactics used by the forces in implementing various tasks.

... “ Protectors of Friendship - 4” to combat terrorism was carried out for the first time in 2016 in the Arab Republic of Egypt and is carried out in exchange between the two countries annually, which contributes to the transfer and exchange of combat and field expertise and support joint efforts.

Source: “Egypt aims to enhance its Air Force’s capabilities by acquiring new Russian jets,” Middle East North Africa Financial Network, 2 September 2019. <https://menafn.com/1098955218/Egypt-aims-to-enhance-its-Air-Forces-capabilities-by-acquiring-new-Russian-jets>

The Egyptian Air Force is preparing to acquire 50 Russian-made MiG-35 fighter jets in the largest deal of its kind between the two countries, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union..

‘Egypt’s current policy is to have different sources of weaponry; the current political leadership is working on a comprehensive plan to upgrade the performance of the Egyptian Armed Forces and its branches including the Air Force,’ said Colonel Hatem Saber, former head of Force 777, an Egyptian military counter-terrorism and special operations unit.

Saber told Daily News Egypt that the Egyptian Air Force has acquired many Russian weapons, such as Ka-52 helicopters that are used in the two Egyptian aircraft carriers of Anwar El Sadat and Gamal Abdel Nassar.

‘Receiving MiG-35 from Russia will upgrade the Egyptian Air Forces in the world ranking, which currently ranks ninth internationally and the first in the Middle East,’ he added....

The MiG-35 is an upgraded MiG-29 fighter jet, with a stronger multi-mission capability and enhanced use of high-precision air-to-air weapons. The fighting capability of the jet has increased in a remarkable way due to the increase of the fuel tank.

The fighter has the ability to carry out air and ground attack missions. The aircraft has six solid points under its wings that can carry six air-to-air missiles or smart bombs. The speed of the fighter is 2,445 km/h. It also features a 30mm automatic cannon.

The military co-operation between Egypt and Russia witnessed unprecedented progress since the arrival of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to power in 2014. The new strategy of the political leadership is working on improving military relations with Russia as a step seen by number of political experts as a step toward reviving the 1960s relations between Egypt and the Russian (Soviet Union) at that time.



The SDF's Meeting on Security Assessment and Future of Syria



Flag of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Source: FugeeCamp via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Syrian_Democratic_Forces.svg#/media/File:Flag_of_Syrian_Democratic_Forces.svg, Public Domain.

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, or Hêzên Sûriya Demokratîk in Kurdish) played a significant role in ending the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)'s territorial control in Syria, including capturing ISIS's de-facto capital, the Syrian city of al-Raqqa. The SDF was established in 2015 and is a Kurdish-led group comprised of Kurdish and Arab forces under the command of Mazloum Abdi or Mazloum Kobanê. Despite the SDF's success in pushing back ISIS on the battlefield, remnants of ISIS still remain underground. As the accompanying article highlights, the SDF recently gathered its leadership to discuss the challenges it may face in Syria.

According to the article from Kurdish *Hawar News Agency*, an agency that closely monitors developments regarding Syrian Kurds, speaking at the meeting, Kobanê discussed several security related challenges. First, he stated that the meeting was held to "assess the military and political victories" of the SDF. Second, the meeting would lay the foundation for the establishment of a military force that will secure a free and united Syria. Third, while ISIS was defeated militarily, "ISIS remains strong" and

poses a threat to the region and to the SDF. The commander noted "it is widespread in the region" in the form of sleeper cells in especially populated areas, "so fighting ISIS is one of the most important topics of our meeting." He also called on the international community to keep supporting the SDF to ensure ISIS does not make a comeback. Fifth, he pointed out that Turkey's threats against the SDF negatively affect the SDF's ongoing campaign against ISIS. Sixth, he affirmed the SDF's willingness to find common ground with Turkey in establishing a security zone in northern Syria. Seventh, he called on Damascus to negotiate with the representatives of the self-proclaimed autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria and the SDF to find a resolution that recognizes the rights of the Kurds within Syria. Finally, he announced the restructuring of the SDF "by forming a general council that will unite all of the councils under one command structure." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"This meeting will be the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a unified free Syria."

Source: "Mezlûm Ebdî: Civîna me bingeha garantiya Sûriya yekgirtî ye (Mazloum Abdi: Our meeting is to guarantee a free [and] unified Syria)," *hawarnews.com*, 24 August 2019. <https://www.hawarnews.com/kr/haber/mezlm-ebd-civna-me-bingeha-garantiya-sriya-yekgirt-ye-h20733.html>

Mazloum Abdi indicated that they would assess the status of their forces and lay the foundations for their work during the next phase to build a military force that would guarantee a unified free Syria. He said that without Afrin there can be no peace in Syria, calling on Damascus to negotiate with the Autonomous Administration and SDF.

The meeting began with a speech by the Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces Mazloum Abdi.

Mazloum Abdi said at the beginning of his speech, "We hold today the annual meeting of our military councils after we achieved victory over ISIS by supporting the International Coalition, and we are holding this meeting to assess the military and political victories we have achieved, assess what our weak and strong sides are, and lay the foundations for our military action to protect our areas in the next phase, that is, after ISIS and to spread security and stability in all our regions and Syria in general."

Our meeting is the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a free and united Syria

"This meeting will be the basis for building a military force that will guarantee a unified free Syria. We face great military challenges that threaten the future of our country, especially ISIS. ISIS remains strong and ISIS still insists on destroying this homeland," he said. "It is widespread in the region and among populated areas through its sleeper cells, so fighting ISIS is one of the most important topics of our meeting."

"At the same time, we encourage the International Coalition to join in supporting our forces to achieve the final victory against ISIS," said Mazloum Abdi.

Turkey's attacks have negatively affected our forces' campaigns against ISIS

"We have previously confirmed that the Turkish attack on Afrin has negatively affected the SDF's campaign against ISIS, and Turkish threats to our forces are hampering the efforts of our forces and the International Coalition Forces to defeat ISIS," said Mazloum Abdi.

"We announce that we will exert all efforts to achieve compatibility with the Turkish state in coordination with the United States and there are preliminary agreements to establish security in the region through border points and we will be a positive party to this process," he said.

Without Afrin's return to its people, there will be no lasting peace in Syria

"We affirm that Afrin is an important step for the success of the peace process between us and Turkey," Mazloum Abdi said in his speech.

...

Through this platform, we ask Damascus to negotiate with representatives of the autonomous administration and the Syrian Democratic Forces, and to favor a political solution, on the principle of recognizing democratic self-administrations and recognizing the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people within Syria.

We have begun to restructure our troops

At the end of his speech, the commander of the SDF Mazloum Abdi touched on the restructuring of their forces. We have achieved great victories in this field and started to form military councils in all regions and formed specialized professional forces, "Through this meeting, we will begin the process of restructuring the SDF by forming a general council that will unite all the councils under our umbrella."



Israel: Iran's Military Entrenchment in Iraq Poses Threat

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages discuss Israeli perspectives on the growing Iranian presence in Iraq, which they assess is increasingly becoming a base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against Israel. They also provide Israeli assessments about Iran's regional goals.

The first passage from Israeli daily *Haaretz* points out that Iran started bolstering its presence in Iraq after Israel stepped up attacks on Iranian targets in Syria. According to the passage, Israel had been thwarting Iran's attempts to bring "sophisticated weaponry and air and naval forces" into Syria. Thus, Iran reverted to its old method of "relying on local militias," which the passage notes is harder for Israel to counter.

The passage discusses Israel's assessment that Iran is trying to "create regional hegemony for itself via alliances spreading from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon." Nevertheless, the assessment continues that "Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans." According to Israeli defense officials, Iran has now shifted the bulk of its deployment of missile systems to Iraq, which makes it harder for Israel to attack, compared to Syria.

The second passage also points out that Israeli officials have identified Iraq as a likely growing base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against the country. However, it notes that Israeli officials have so far neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for recent strikes against Iranian-backed forces in Iraq, despite reports of several such strikes by Israel. The final passage lists each of these five attacks, starting with one on 19 July at Amerli base, north of Baghdad, that struck a shipment of guided missiles bound for Syria. The passage notes that, if indeed carried out by Israel, "it would be the first such attack in Iraq since Israel's 1981 bombing of a nuclear reactor that was being built by then-president Saddam Hussein's government." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Raising flag of Iraq and Popular Mobilization Forces.

Source: Tasnim News Agency via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raising_flag_of_Iraq_and_Popular_Mobilization_Forces_after_defeating_DAEESH.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans.”

Source: Yaniv Kubovich, "With Missiles More Accurate Than Hezbollah's, Iran Entrenchment in Iraq Threatens Israel," *Haaretz*, 1 August 2019. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-iran-missiles-hezbollah-in-iraq-threaten-israel-1.7606916>

Iran's military entrenchment in Iraq poses a threat to Israel, defense officials say.

Iran began bolstering its presence in Iraq after Israel stepped up attacks on Iranian targets in Syria and Syrian President Bashar Assad regained control over most of his country. Israel's efforts to thwart Iran's attempts to bring sophisticated weaponry and air and naval forces into Syria led Tehran to revert to its old method of relying on local militias, which is harder for Israel to counter.

Israel's intelligence assessment for 2019 states that despite Iran's difficulties in entrenching itself militarily in Syria, it hasn't given up on its ambition "to create regional hegemony for itself via alliances spreading from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon." Nevertheless, the assessment continued: "Iran has been forced to recalculate the way it tries to realize its regional vision. This recalculation led Iran to realize that the domestic and international situation in Iraq created better opportunities for it to prepare its regional plans."

*Israeli defense officials say Iran has shifted the bulk of its deployment of missile systems outside the country to Iraq, which is harder for Israel to attack than Syria was. The latest airstrikes on Iraq, which the London-based paper *Asharq Al-Awsat* attributed to Israel on Tuesday, were aimed at such missile systems.*

Two weeks ago, the media reported a drone strike in Iraq that killed members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah. Foreign media reports said the target that time was a base where missiles destined for Iranian-backed militias in Iraq were being stored.



Continued: Israel: Iran's Military Entrenchment in Iraq Poses Threat

Source: Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu hints Israel behind strikes on Iraq, says Iran not immune anywhere," *Times of Israel*, 20 August 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-hints-israel-behind-strikes-on-iraq-says-iran-not-immune-anywhere/>

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday hinted that Israel was behind recent airstrikes on Iranian targets in Iraq, stressing that the Jewish state will continue to act militarily whenever and wherever there is a need to do so.

"Iran has no immunity, anywhere," he told reporters during a briefing in his Kyiv hotel, responding to a question about various recent attacks on military installations in Iraq, which are attributed to Israel.

....According to foreign reports, Israel has been increasingly active in carrying out airstrikes against Iran-backed militias in Iraq, shifting its focus after years of reported raids aimed at keeping Tehran from gaining a foothold in Syria.

Israeli officials have identified Iraq as a likely growing base of operations for Iran-backed efforts against the Jewish state. But Israeli officials have so far neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the strikes.

Source: Jacob Magid, "Alleged Israeli strikes in Iraq unlikely to threaten US presence, experts say," *Times of Israel*, 31 August 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/alleged-israeli-strikes-in-iraq-unlikely-to-threaten-us-presence-experts-say/>

Against this backdrop, the first of at least five attacks against the Shiite militias took place, striking a PMF weapons storage facility on July 19 at the Amerli base north of Baghdad and killing at least two commanders, according to various reports.

If indeed carried out by Jerusalem — which appeared to indicate on Friday that it is in fact acting in Iraq — it would be the first such attack in Iraq since Israel's 1981 bombing of a nuclear reactor that was being built by then-president Saddam Hussein's government.

Subsequent strikes targeting PMF officials and weapons depots took place at Camp Ashraf northeast of Baghdad on July 28; the Saqr military base in Baghdad on August 12; the Balad air base in the Salah ad Din Governate north of Baghdad on August 20; and the western Iraqi city of Qaim on August 25.

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>



Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Kashmir

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic of Iran often portrays itself not only as the leader of the world's Shi'ites, but also more broadly as leader of the Islamic world. As such, the Iranian leadership often advocates on behalf of Palestinians, Houthis, and Rohingya Muslims (See: "Iran to Assist Burmese Muslims," *OE Watch*, February 2013). However, the realities of diplomacy and Iran's national interests often mute its advocacy for certain Muslim communities. For example, Iranian authorities were largely silent in the face of Russian massacres of Chechens during the first and second Chechen Wars, and have also declined to criticize China for its mass incarceration of Uighur Muslims.

In the past, Iranian authorities have gently offered their diplomatic offices if not other support for Kashmiri Muslims upset with Indian rule (See: "Will Iran Interfere in Kashmir?" *OE Watch*, May 2018). India's August 2019 decision to revoke Article 370 of the Indian constitution and end Kashmir's special status within India was reportedly met with widespread dissent inside Kashmir, with



Police confront protestors in Indian Kashmir, 17 December 2018.

Source: Photo by Seyyed Sajed Hassan Razavi, Tasnim News Agency, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/df/Police_in_Kashmir_confronting_violent_protestors_December_2018.jpg

violence averted only by preemptive arrests, communication cuts, and the deployment of the Indian military and security forces into civilian areas within Kashmir. In the excerpted speech from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's website, the Iranian supreme leader seeks to walk the tightrope between advocating for Kashmiris while refraining from directly criticizing India, which remains a major Iranian trading partner and an outlet for Iranian students and tourists unable to get visas to either the United States or European countries. He does this by blaming the British.

Despite all the anti-US rhetoric among top Iranian officials and regular "Death to America" rallies, it is important to remember that historically Great Britain remains the chief boogey in the Iranian psyche, and the center of all conspiracies. Suspicion of the British remains rooted in their efforts to control Iran and exploit its resources during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, it was a desire to unravel British controls that led the Iranian government to first seek American advisors in the early twentieth century.

By suggesting that the latest Kashmir crisis is the direct result of a British conspiracy, Khamenei is threading a diplomatic needle: He is showing the Iranian public and the broader Muslim community that he stands in solidarity with Kashmir without actively antagonizing India. It is unlikely the Iranian government can continue this delicate balancing act, however, if Kashmir remains in the news. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“This is the work of evil England.”

Source: Bayn Setor-e Majera-ye Kashmir (Between the Lines of the Kashmir Story),” *Khamenei.ir*, 21 August 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/video-content?id=43398>

Kashmir is a Wound Left by the British

I am upset about the situation of Kashmir. The friends in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are not present here, but the Muslim people of Kashmir are really being oppressed. They are really being pressured. A fair policy should be adopted by the Indian government regarding these honorable people who live there. Of course, we have good relations with the Indian government, but we have this expectation of them.

I will tell you that this is the work of evil England. This is a wound that the English created in the Indian Subcontinent since 1947. When they were moving out of that area and when the subcontinent was divided into two parts, namely India and Pakistan. They inflicted that wound and they deliberately did not want it to be healed. They wished that the two countries of India and Pakistan would continue to have disputes and disagreements. Well, these pressures which are being exerted on the people are the consequences of that policy.



Iran: Armed Forces Ready to Take Over National Intranet Project



General Mohammed Bagheri, speaking to military elites at the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Ground Forces Martyr Modarres Primary Combat Training School.

Source: Fars News Agency, https://media.farsnews.com/Uploaded/Files/Images/1398/04/24/13980424000739_Test_PhotoN.jpg

News Agency, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Major General Mohammad Bagheri, chief-of-staff of the Armed Forces, suggests that Iran's military—presumably the IRGC from whose ranks Bagheri arose—could take charge of the project. His comments likely reflect frustration on the part of the IRGC and other hardline ideologues that the project to cut the Islamic Republic off from the World Wide Web remains delayed with no end date in sight. To advocate for such a position, he argues that foreign “control” of Iranian bandwidth is a danger to Iran, saying, “Foreigners control seventy per cent of the bandwidth in our country and we have just left the door open for them to come and influence public opinion and the youth here.”

Beyond the excerpts provided here, Bagheri's speech was wide-ranging. He addressed the state of the revolution, youth, and issues of culture, declaring “the military is one of the most crucial parts of the lives of our country's children.” As the article's title suggests, he argued that, after the 20 June 2019 Iranian shoot-down of an American RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone, the American President's stated decision not to retaliate was driven less by his stated desire to save Iranian lives and more because Iran's deterrent ability was so great that the US military advised him that they could not attack. This conforms to a common theme in Iranian military rhetoric that exaggerates Iran's deterrent ability and depicts adversaries as paper tigers. Bagheri also repeated the Iranian spin that it alone enabled Iraq to turn the tide against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), downplaying US contributions to the anti-ISIS coalition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Foreigners control 70 percent of our bandwidth.”

Source: “Sarlashgar Bagheri: Artesh-e Amrika Trump ra Baraye Jalugari az Hamleh beh Iran Tawjeyeh Kard (General Bagheri: The U.S. military stopped Trump's attack on Iran),” *Fars News Agency*, 4 September 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980613000253>

The Armed Forces Can Set Up National Internet

Responding to a question about the possibility of the armed forces involving itself in the network infrastructure field, he [Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, chief-of-staff of the Armed Forces], said, “The armed forces have no direct responsibility in this field, but given the knowledge that we have, we are certainly capable of setting up the national Internet and completing the National Information Network project. Foreigners control seventy per cent of the bandwidth in our country and we have just left the door open for them to come and influence public opinion and the youth here.”



Iran: Interior Ministry says Protest Frequency Declining

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking at the inauguration of the new governor of the Qazvin province (just northwest of Tehran province), Iran’s Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli, a veteran conservative politician, announced a decline in the frequency of protests and illegal rallies which Iran has experienced since December 2017. While Rahmani-Fazli says these have declined 38 percent in the first five months of the current Iranian year as compared to the same period in the past year, it is unclear whether this is accurate. Even at their height, the Iranian government sought to downplay the protests, which were the largest in Iran since the post-election unrest of 2009 and the broadest in terms of cities and towns impacted since the Islamic Revolution.



A photo distributed by the Tasnim News Agency on 3 January 2018 accompanying a message asking Iranians to identify protestors.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, https://twitter.com/Tasnimnews_Fa/status/948507708684161024

The Interior Minister’s speech, covered by the semi-independent but pro-government *Islamic Students’ News Agency* and excerpted here, suggests that the Iranian government remains concerned about the Islamic Republic’s internal stability

as Iran approaches its next round of parliamentary elections in February 2020. Economic grievances largely motivated the unrest which spread around Iran over the past year and a half, during which period sanctions have undercut Iran’s economy further. While the Iranian parliament’s power is limited and largely symbolic, disputes between more conservative politicians and the so-called reformists could also create sparks to motivate further protests, as they did when former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won a second term in a poll most Iranians believed marred by fraud.

Rahmani-Fazli once again suggested that the government would use voter participation rates to prove that the Iranian people still embrace the Islamic Republic and the legitimacy of its elections. While the government regularly suggests participation rates above 80 percent in Tehran and across the country, Iranians from more peripheral provinces and minority groups suggest that true participation in areas outside the capital and major cities where Iran bans foreign journalists are closer to ten percent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The enemies...want to use the election climate to sow discord.”

Source: “Vazir-e Dakhli: Tejam’at va ‘Etrazat dar Keshvar 38 dar sad Kahesh Yafteh Ast (Protests and Rallies in the Country have Fallen 38 Percent),” *Iranian Students’ News Agency*, 5 September 2019. <https://www.isna.ir/news/98061407551>

Protests and Gatherings Down 38 Percent this Year over Last

...He [Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli] added, “In this regard, because of the people’s awareness of our enemies, protests and gatherings in the first five months of this year [March – August 2019] have declined 38 percent as compared to the same period last year. While pressures and discontent have increased in some quarters in society, the people’s awareness, empathy, compassion and camaraderie have allowed for us to have a more relaxed atmosphere.

The interior minister explained: “The enemies of the Islamic Revolution, for their part, want to use the election climate to sow discord in society and to take advantage of these conditions. We have secret information that will allow us to transform these parliamentary elections into a show of strength and hold the election in a calm and legal climate with a high turnout.”

He emphasized, “It is the duty of Qazvin province to organize these things even though the elections are a few months away, but we must act with more depth and accuracy in Qazvin, and the new governor as the head of the province must make every effort and use all capacities.



Urban Deployment Reveals South African Military Deficiencies

OE Watch Commentary: There was great hope that the deployment of South African soldiers to gang-infested areas of Cape Town would result in a significant reduction of violence. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African website *The Conversation* notes, that hope is fading, and being replaced with the realization that not only is a quick fix to the longstanding violence improbable, but that the South African military, due to budget woes as well as problems with its force structure, is in a “sorry state.”

As the article notes, a very general rule of thumb is that military expenditures should be approximately 40% for personnel, 30% for operations, and the remaining 30% for capital expenditures. In South Africa this 40:30:30 ratio is skewed towards 80:5:15, making the military more like “a welfare [agency] rather than a warfare one.” Interestingly, while the high personnel cost translates into sufficient numbers of soldiers, it doesn’t translate into enough that are deployable. Adverse issues include retention of too many individuals unfit for duty, a large number of expensive general officers, and rank inflation.

The article discusses that there are presently 37,000 soldiers in the army, but less than half of these serve in infantry battalions. Peacekeeping operations are tying up one battalion. There are also 15 companies maintaining border security, which the article claims is a task more appropriate for 22 of them. The end result is that when it comes to performing their current responsibilities, the military is short approximately 8.5 infantry battalions.

This lack of spare infantry troops is apparently impacting the operation to quell the violence in Cape Town. While President Cyril Ramaphosa said there would be 1,320 soldiers assigned, less than 300 are actually on the streets at any one time and even these appear to be struggling to fulfill their mandate. As the article points out, this may be because the South Africa National Defense Force is structured and trained for its primary tasks, including defending its borders, not secondary ones such as assisting local police. (Also see: “South African Military Enters Cape Flats to Quell Violence,” *OE Watch*, September 2019). **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



“While training does continue, tight budgets and force structure problems have impacted the capabilities of the South African military.”

Source: US Army Africa/Flickr, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shared_Accord_2013.jpg, CC BY 2.0

“Using the military continuously in internal secondary roles has stretched it beyond capacity and contributed to its downward spiral of decline.”

Source: Lindy Heineken, “Soldiers won’t stem gang violence because South Africa’s army is in a sorry state,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 15 August 2019. <https://theconversation.com/soldiers-wont-stem-gang-violence-because-south-africas-army-is-in-a-sorry-state-121754>

In terms of the defence budget the ideal expenditure ratio is 40 % personnel, 30% operations and 30% capital expenditure. Some claim this is closer to 80:5:15 in reality, leading to the defence force being labeled a welfare, rather than a warfare agency. ...

The result is that people in the affected areas are fast realising that the army is not the solution. This echoes previous cases where soldiers were deployed to crime hot-spots in the country but failed to have a measurable impact.

The consequence is an ageing force with average troop age of 38 years and the Reserve Force age of around 40 years. The average age of an infantry soldier should be around 23-25 years.

The other factor affecting the capacity of the military is its force design. The South African National Defence Force is structured, funded and trained for its primary, not secondary tasks. Using the military continuously in internal secondary roles has stretched it beyond capacity and contributed to its downward spiral of decline.

There is a clear “disconnect between the defence mandate, government expectation and resource allocation.” If the government is serious about providing security for its citizens, it is crucial to fix the structure and design of the force, which have eroded its capacity to function optimally.



South Africa's Xenophobic Violence: Foreigners as Scapegoats for Failing Economy

OE Watch Commentary: The outbreaks of violence in the South African cities of Johannesburg, Tshwane, and Ekurhuleni have largely been directed against foreigners. However, as the excerpted accompanying article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* points out, this xenophobia is unwarranted. Many of the problems the people are angry about, especially the country's growing unemployment and inequality, are not caused by foreigners but are the results of government actions, or in many cases, inactions.

To be sure, there is a strained relationship with the people and the government. Many distrust the government, and especially the police, who are frequently seen as corrupt. However, it is the foreigners, not the government, who are presently bearing the brunt of the physical violence. The article claims that most South Africans are not xenophobic, but a sizable minority is, and they are finding foreigners an easy target. Aggravating the situation are politicians who are looking to distract from their own failures to find scapegoats in non-South Africans.

That xenophobic minority includes police officers, who turn a blind eye as foreigners are attacked. Taking advantage of the situation, criminals loot shops owned by foreigners, knowing that amidst the chaos and hatred they will likely go unpunished.

According to the article, the key to preventing this xenophobic violence is rebuilding the rule of law. The article makes five recommendations, beginning with ensuring the police and other security forces have the financial resources necessary to do their job. Second, corruption in the police department must be rooted out in order to restore public trust. Third, government officials, especially those in senior positions, must speak with one voice condemning xenophobia and explain that the country's economic hardship is not the fault of foreigners. Fourth, peace-building networks must be established. The final recommendation is that evidence-based violence prevention projects be implemented.

This is not the first time in recent years that wide-scale public violence has occurred. In 2008, it was so bad that the military had to be called up. South Africa is hoping to prevent a recurrence of that, but so far, as the article explains, the country is struggling to change direction. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



"While marches against xenophobia in South Africa have occurred, such as this one in 2015, lately there has been an uptick in violence against foreigners."

Source: Dyltong/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_March_Anti_Xenophobia.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

"The violence is driven by a toxic mix of increasing unemployment and inequality, deteriorating trust in government and especially the police, and growing desperation among the poor and jobless."

Source: Gareth Newham, "South Africa's Problems Are Not Caused by Foreigners," *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 5 September 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/south-africas-problems-are-not-caused-by-foreigners>

Levels of public violence in general are rising, and foreign nationals living in under-developed and crowded areas are particularly vulnerable when the poor face increasing hardship and frustration. In the medium to long term, prioritizing economic growth and fixing basic service delivery are key. In the meantime, government needs to act decisively to counter public violence, often directed at foreign nationals, by strengthening the rule of law.

The violence is driven by a toxic mix of increasing unemployment and inequality, deteriorating trust in government and especially the police, and growing desperation among the poor and jobless.

This situation is exacerbated by a decade of 'state capture' and high-level corruption during which law enforcement agencies were hollowed out to enable the large-scale theft of many hundreds of billions of rand meant for public upliftment. While attempts to rebuild parts of the intelligence service and criminal justice system are under way, the going is slow and inadequate resources are proving to be a major stumbling block.

Unscrupulous politicians, looking to distract from their failures, fuel xenophobic sentiments.



Somalia's Newest Military Commander Also Its Youngest

OE Watch Commentary: President Farmajo of Somalia has appointed a new commander of the Somali National Army. He is Odowaa Yusuf, and at 32, he is the youngest person to ever hold that key position, as reported in the accompanying excerpted article from the Somali website *Radio Dalsan*.

Born in the Aadan Yabaal District of the Middle Shabelle region, the new commander was only three when Siad Barre's regime fell and plunged the country into chaos, as no central government existed. The future commander completed his secondary studies in Mogadishu, joined the army, and then went to Uganda for a year of military training. In 2009 he continued his military training in Sudan. The following year he returned to Somalia as a one star general, which was followed by additional training in Turkey. Additional assignments and postings, including as commander of the division that protects the state house - a position that brought him into close proximity to the Somali presidency - eventually culminated in his recent appointment as commander of the Somali National Army.

Though the brief article covers the highlights of General Odowaa Yusuf's rise to his present position, it does not discuss the difficulties he faces. With questions regarding the capability of the Somali military to fill the void created by AMISOM's ongoing withdrawal; donor nations expressing hesitation to continue funding the Somali armed forces because of concerns regarding extensive corruption among the troops and politicians; and a terrorist group, al-Shabaab, that has often been described as diminished but yet still mounts deadly operations, the newly appointed young general has his work cut out for him. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Somali Army troops such as these will now be led by 32 year old General Odawaa Yusuf, the country's youngest ever military commander.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/7092788687/, Public Domain

“His appointment makes him (Odowaa Yusuf) the youngest ever commander in the military at just 32, having been born in 1987.”

Source: “Somalia National Army Get the Youngest Military Commander in History,” *Radio Dalsan (Somalia)*, 25 August 2019. <https://www.radiodalsan.com/en/2019/08/25/somalia-national-army-get-the-youngest-commander-in-history/>

President Farmajo has appointed a youthful Odowaa Yusuf as the commander of the Somalia National Army...His appointment makes him the youngest ever commander in the military at just 32, having been born in 1987.

In 2013, he was once again sent for training in Turkey in what was deemed to be the highest training in the military ranks. He returned to several promotions and postings. In 2014, he returned to the Turkish Army War College where he stayed till 2016.

He later became the deputy leader of the Villa Somalia Protection Unit later rising to be the leader of the unit. This close proximity to the presidency must have endeared him to the center of power.



African Union Raises Concerns Over Foreign Military Bases in Africa

OE Watch Commentary: Though the African Union Peace and Security Council has expressed concerns regarding the present number of foreign military bases, that number keeps rising. As the excerpted accompanying article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* website explains, the increase is largely due to bilateral agreements between individual African nations and foreign powers; despite the council calling on African Union (AU) member states in 2016 to be “circumspect” when considering entering into these foreign military base agreements.

There are 13 countries with a known military presence in Africa. The epicenter of this foreign presence is the Horn of Africa, due to its strategic proximity to the Middle East, Asia, and the extremely important maritime trade routes of the Red Sea, with approximately 11 foreign military bases in the region.

These foreign militaries in Africa focus on protecting their own interests, assisting friendly regimes, countering threats such as piracy and terrorism, and projecting their influence amidst growing competition among global powers. To an extent they are helping fill in security gaps because Africa has been unable to operationalize what is known as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), basically a plan for conflict prevention and management that includes the African Standby Force.

These foreign military bases, however, are not without controversy. One issue is the multiplicity and overlapping activities in the overcrowded security landscape with so many players, some with competing interests. This is especially true in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. An additional problem is that some of these players are using Africa as a proxy-turf for extra-regional competition, which appears to be happening in Djibouti. Still another concern is the foreign militaries conducting operations that might place their host country at risk.

Thus, there are several issues with regards to the presence of foreign military bases on African soil. However, with these foreign militaries filling security gaps, providing host nations with large economic benefits for hosting them, and having the foreign troops train their own militaries, there are powerful reasons foreign bases are still being welcomed by many African nations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Africa is host to a rising number of foreign military operations and bases, largely due to bilateral agreements between some African Union (AU) member states and foreign powers. This is despite the AU Peace and Security Council’s concerns about foreign military bases on the continent and the establishment of new ones.”

Source: Andrews Atta -Asamoah, “Proceed with caution: Africa’s growing foreign military presence,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 27 August 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/proceed-with-caution-africas-growing-foreign-military-presence>

Africa is host to a rising number of foreign military operations and bases, largely due to bilateral agreements between some African Union (AU) member states and foreign powers. This is despite the AU Peace and Security Council’s concerns about foreign military bases on the continent and the establishment of new ones.

Foreign military presence in Africa is also driven by AU member states leasing their territories to foreign powers for military bases, mainly for domestic economic gain. This is also sometimes driven by member states seeking external help in dealing with serious security challenges. Djibouti generates more than US\$300 million annually from the foreign military presence on its soil.

Other AU member states, such as former French colonies, have been hosting French military bases as a result of bilateral military agreements signed after independence. Ensuring regime security for the incumbent government and securing French economic interests in the host country and the region are the principal motives for such arrangements.

Apart from the risks associated with foreign military presence and the AU’s call for member states to be circumspect in their dealings, there is also no established continental consensus on the modalities for regulating bilateral initiatives that result in bases being established.



“An increase in foreign troops, such as this French soldier in Mali, and foreign bases has the African Union concerned about problems such as competing interests.”

Source: Fred Marie/Flickr, [OE Watch | October 2019](https://www.flickr.com/photos/148665880@N07/34888259682/in/photolist-V9Xs7E-haHid8-jFgayM-bzgZLV-VqP7Ec-V9XgDL-shY1LA-9fnCtQ-pJcPT8-s9TPh7-XexmhE-7Co1eQ-VNiRRj-d9U75X-djKkVH-7RuBUY-kYigBV-BWfmLT-2c5Zi7g-kb7gCp-pwSG9k-H4GeT-bzetHt-VBPXPn-rQ2xsD-dmaLq5-7JayRY-haENQG-iMWx8H-dQfL9g-7JZdxL-haENxC-V9XqCh-dM9edy-cpynty-VCKJFZ-7HM3Eb-7KcCKS-926j4c-gSpzw6-7JQTYX-6dhy2h-ndZNFx-dNkZnR-29v7U8D-bXLJqG-nsskMZ-7JuF34-7JynTC-243bxqs, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0</small></p>
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Regional Rivalries Heat Up as AMISOM Leaves Somalia

OE Watch Commentary: The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is withdrawing from Somalia, with the last troops scheduled to leave by December 2020. Much of the press coverage about their departure involves whether or not the Somali National Army (SNA) will be up to the task of filling that void. However, as the final deadline approaches, another problem has received far less attention. As the accompanying excerpted article from *The East African* notes, regional rivalries are heating up as the region prepares for a post-AMISOM Somalia.

When Ethiopia briefly went into Somalia in 2006 to rout the forerunner of al-Shabaab, the Islamic Courts Union, it triggered a regional race. Soon, Eritrea, which had a longstanding adversarial relationship with Ethiopia, and at one point even fought a war with it, entered the fray. Kenya also became involved, and later accused Eritrea of supplying weapons to al-Shabaab.

As the article points out, Kenya and Ethiopia should be on the same side as AMISOM withdraws. Both countries entered Somalia to prevent a regime linked to terrorism from taking hold. However, despite their common interest in keeping al-Shabaab contained, their interest in Somalia's resources as well as involvement in that country's local politics "has set them on a collision course."

Uganda and Burundi have also been involved in Somalia, with Uganda supplying the most AMISOM troops of any country followed by Burundi. While the article does not discuss their post-AMISOM plans regarding Somalia, the two countries have at times had markedly strained relations.

Of the many actors in Somalia, only one can potentially benefit from the rivalries and tense relations that abound: al-Shabaab. Though degraded from AMISOM's 12-year offensive, the terrorist organization could experience a resurgence if the countries that fought against it are unable to find common ground for a post-AMISOM Somalia. Should the SNA falter and need a rapid response force, it is not clear if these regional rivalries could be put aside to provide assistance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



"As AMISOM soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, permanently leave Somalia there is concern that regional rivalries will flare-up."

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/6440482901/, Public Domain

"Now, as Amisom packs its bags, these rivalries are back, quietly distracting from the primary objectives of the 12-year intervention. Hedging their bets, Kenya and Ethiopia are backing competing interests and have actively tried to influence the outcome of Somalia's regional elections."

Source: Post-Amisom vacuum in Somalia should be AU's priority," *The East African*, 25 August 2019. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/oped/editorial/Post-Amisom-vacuum-in-Somalia-should-be-AU-priority/434752-5248280-hc4rr7/index.html>

Now, as Amisom packs its bags, these rivalries are back, quietly distracting from the primary objectives of the 12-year intervention. Hedging their bets, Kenya and Ethiopia are backing competing interests and have actively tried to influence the outcome of Somalia's regional elections.

Also, Al-Shabaab has at one time invoked the latent territorial claims Somalia has made against [Kenya and Ethiopia] at different times in the past. But now, their involvement in local politics and interest in resources has set them on a collision course. The divergent interests are evident in the simmering diplomatic battles that have manifested in the race for a seat at the UN Security Council.

Although the 12-year offensive against it by the UN-backed Amisom has degraded its strength and pushed it out of major urban centres, Al-Shabaab's ability to mount deadly attacks in the region demonstrates that it remains the primary challenge to peace and security in Somalia and the wider Horn.



China's Investment in African Aviation

OE Watch Commentary: There is a long history of non-African airlines servicing the African continent. As the excerpted accompanying article from the South African website *The Conversation* reports, beginning in the 1920's, airlines from former European colonial powers were some of the first to travel the African route. Then, in the 1940's with flights to North Africa to support the war effort there, came the Americans. Later, during the Cold War, members of the Soviet Bloc also began flying to Africa. In the 1990's, the Persian Gulf States joined the list. Today, even though China has ascended to become Africa's largest trading partner, it is not following the same path as these other nations. Rather than emphasizing Chinese airlines flying to Africa or providing service within the continent itself, China is investing in the infrastructure that surrounds African aviation, particularly airports.



"Ethiopia's Bole International Airport is just one of many African airports that have received Chinese investments."

Source: Alan Wilson/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ajw1970/22213944916>, CC BY-SA 2.0

Interestingly, Air China, China Southern, and China Eastern – China's three biggest airlines – are not particularly prominent carriers in the African market. That distinction goes to African airline companies, though it should be noted that China has been investing in several of these. It is expected that such Chinese penetration of African aviation will continue through either Chinese partnerships with African airlines or through purchasing stock in them.

China has also started selling aircraft to some African countries, as well as spare parts. However, the main way that China has become a key player in African aviation is through investments in African airports. While it is difficult to give precise figures, rough estimates in US dollars for a few of these Chinese airport infrastructure investments include: \$3.8 billion in Angola, \$615 million in Mozambique, \$360 million in Zambia, and \$345 million in Ethiopia. While the Chinese investment model for these and other projects often involves loans and grants, there are also resources-for-infrastructure deals involving oils and minerals.

With such large funds involved, there are concerns over corruption, accountability, indebtedness, and environmental disruption. Despite these, China's investment in African aviation infrastructure, just like African aviation, is expected to substantially increase in the coming years. **End**

OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

“It is on the ground that China has been flexing its aviation muscles in Africa. This is consistent with China's 50-or-so years of infrastructure funding and construction on the continent.”

Source: Gordon Pirie, “China has taken a different route to involvement in African aviation,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 1 September 2019. <https://theconversation.com/china-has-taken-a-different-route-to-involvement-in-african-aviation-122522>

It is on the ground that China has been flexing its aviation muscles in Africa. This is consistent with China's 50-or-so years of infrastructure funding and construction on the continent. Energy, water, road and rail infrastructure projects have been the major spheres of Chinese offshore investment in Africa.

China's approach may change in the future. That's if it can neutralise the pivot of Persian Gulf airports at Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha. And if it can out-manoeuvre their airlines in global long-haul markets.

Some African countries are gearing airport capacity planning to a predicted 5% annual growth in continental passenger numbers by 2035. By that time Africa is expected to be home to eight of the world's 10 fastest-growing aviation markets. Most African countries don't have the capacity to prepare for this and will need overseas funds and engineering expertise.



International Connections to Guinea-Bissau Drug Trafficking

OE Watch Commentary: Guinea-Bissau is a Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) West African country that has not been commonly associated with either drug trafficking or terrorism as much as its neighbors. However, according to the accompanying passage from an article in *Africa21digital.com*, the country has seized an unprecedented amount of drugs being trafficked through its territory, in two recent operations. The article sheds light on the recent seizures and trafficking networks.

According to the article, in early September, 264 kilograms of cocaine, worth about 5.1 million dollars was seized as it was being trafficked in Guinea-Bissau. Eight individuals were arrested in the operation, including from Colombia, Mali, and Guinea, suggesting both regional and international links. This followed a March drug seizure, which was the largest in Guinea-Bissau's history, involving 789 kilograms. The nationalities involved in that operation included Nigeriens, Senegalese and a Guinean. One of the Nigeriens was reportedly a parliamentary advisor and connected to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).



Bissau seen from Rio Geba.

Source: Falia via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bissau_geba.png, Public domain

The article quotes a judicial police official who expresses determination to interdict any future drug shipments in the country and notes that the drugs arrived by sea in the latest operation and the networks involved in the two seizures were linked. Once the drugs arrived in Guinea-Bissau they were stored in a house. If they were not interdicted, the drugs probably would have continued to Europe. The judicial police official indicated the investigation was ongoing and there might be additional arrests. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“This was the second largest drug seizure by the Guinea-Bissau Judicial Police after seizing around 789 kilograms in March.”

Source: “Polícia da Guiné-Bissau apreende 264 quilos de cocaína no valor de 4,6 milhões de euros (Guinea-Bissau police seize 264 kilograms of cocaine worth 4.6 million euros),” *Africa21digital.com*, 2 September 2019. <https://africa21digital.com/2019/09/02/policia-da-guine-bissau-apreende-264-quilos-de-cocaina-no-valor-de-46-milhoes-de-euros/>

The Guinea-Bissau Judicial Police seized 264 kilograms of cocaine worth about 4.6 million euros and detained eight people. “At this moment, thanks to this operation we have detained three Colombians, one Malian and four Guineans, and the operation continues. The police once again express their determination to combat trafficking,” said the Guinean Judicial Police Deputy National Director. The Deputy National Director of the Judicial Police admitted that the drugs arrived in the country by sea and were found stored in a house. This was the second largest drug seizure by the Guinea-Bissau Judicial Police after seizing around 789 kilograms in March and detaining a Guinean, two Nigerien citizens, one of whom was a special advisor to that country’s parliamentary president and related to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and another from Senegal.



Borno Governor Criticizes New Military Strategy

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article by Nigeria's *The Cable*, governor of Nigeria's Borno State, Babagana Zulum, is critical of the Nigerian military's newest strategy to counter Boko Haram. According to the article, this strategy involves the establishment of "super camps" that will absorb many of the small rural bases into only a few large bases. While these large bases- or "super camps"- will be better protected, the problem, according to Zulum, is that there will no longer be a military presence in a number of locations in rural areas. Zulum claims that the resulting vacuum in rural areas will be filled by Boko Haram.

Indeed, the article notes the recent context whereby a faction within Boko Haram that is loyal to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took over the towns of Gubio and Magumeri and burned down government buildings in August. This occurred just as the military announced its move to "super camps." Zulum says these "super camps" had made it easy for the militants to operate without resistance. He notes that the anti-Boko Haram vigilante group called Civilian Joint Task Force was working hard and could attempt to fill the void, but they are not empowered with strong enough weapons to seriously combat Boko Haram.

While recognizing he is a layman with no combat experience, Zulum says the military strategy is unwise. He argues there must be a military presence throughout all of Borno. In addition, Zulum acknowledges that combatting Boko Haram involves more than a military approach. For example, he states that the high level of unemployment in Borno contributes to recruitment by Boko Haram, and is an issue that requires attention. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“We must ensure there is military presence in all the locations.”

Source: “Zulum: Military’s decision to set up super camps responsible for recent Boko Haram attacks,” *thecable.ng*, 25 August 2019. thecable.ng/zulum-military-decision-to-set-up-super-camps-responsible-for-recent-boko-haram-attacks

Babagana Zulum, governor of Borno state, says the decision of the military to establish “super camps” is responsible for last week’s attacks in Gubio and Magumeri local government areas of the state. Boko Haram insurgents had sacked residents of the town, setting their houses and government secretariat on fire. When he visited President Muhammadu Buhari at Aso Rock during the weekend, the governor said the idea of “super camps” had made it easy for the militants to operate without resistance. “In our thinking as laymen not as military personnel, we thought this decision is not wise. We must ensure there is military presence in all the locations.”

Zulum also commended the civilian joint task force but said they lacked required weapons because they are not constitutionally backed to do so. The governor also said the high level of unemployment has to be addressed, saying unemployed youth could be willing tools in the hands of insurgents.



Nigerian refugees in Maiduguri in August 2016.

Source: Voice of America via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Boko_Haram#/media/File:R%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9sMaiduguri2016C.jpg, Public Domain



Mali and Burkina Faso Consider Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 August, Burkina Faso experienced the largest terrorist attack against its soldiers in the country's history. Following this attack, neighboring Mali resolved to increase its coordination with Burkina Faso. The excerpted French-language article from *Le Monde* discusses this prospective Mali-Burkina Faso counter-terrorism cooperation.

As the passage notes, the Malian Defense Minister said that Mali wants to strengthen its military cooperation with Burkina Faso to “defeat terrorist groups.” In addition, the article quotes a Malian government official who states that it is Mali's duty to assist Burkina Faso because they share a border and claims they would both benefit from pooling resources. Nevertheless, the coordination is still in an evaluation phase. It is not clear whether there is broader consensus, desire and capacity among mid-level officials to increase coordination with Burkina Faso or what concrete will be taken towards greater coordination.

The attack in Burkina Faso had such a significant impact that the country issued a three-day mourning period. The attack occurred in Soum Province, which is in the east of Burkina Faso near the Malian and Niger borders where both al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) sub-groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal sub-group called Islamic State in Greater Sahara operate. According to the article, 500 people have been killed primarily in northern and eastern Burkina Faso since 2015. While the article acknowledges the jihadist groups have been ascendant since 2015, it also mentions that coordination between countries in West Africa been slow. As the article points out, five Sahel states (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad) have formed a multinational military force (the G5 Sahel) to fight against the many Islamist groups in the region, but “this force is struggling to gain momentum.” It therefore remains to be seen whether Mali-Burkina Faso military coordination will be effective or will remain primarily rhetorical. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



General Honore Traore (Burkina Faso).

Source: Zoumana Wologo (VOA) via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Honore_Traore_\(Burkina_Faso\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Honore_Traore_(Burkina_Faso).jpg), Public Domain.

“The government of Mali stands in solidarity with the brotherly people of Burkina Faso.”

Source: “Le Mali veut davantage coopérer avec le Burkina pour ‘venir à bout des groupes terroristes’ (Mali wants to cooperate more with Burkina to ‘overcome terrorist groups’),” *www.lemonde.fr*, 27 August 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/08/27/le-mali-veut-davantage-cooperer-avec-le-burkina-pour-venir-a-bout-des-groupes-terroristes_5503257_3212.html

Mali wants to strengthen its military cooperation with Burkina Faso to “defeat terrorist groups”, after the deadliest ever jihadist attack was conducted against the Burkinabe army, said the Malian Minister of Defense on August 26 in Ouagadougou. “The government of Mali stands in solidarity with the brotherly people of Burkina Faso, which was the victim of a cowardly attack that caused the loss of many of our comrades-in-arms,” said General Ibrahima Dembélé at an audience with the Burkinabe Prime Minister Christophe Dabiré.

He presented the condolences of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and the government of Mali to the government and people of Burkina Faso after the attack that killed twenty-four people in the ranks of the army of the neighboring country on August 19. Seven soldiers were also wounded in the assault on a military detachment in Koutougou in the north of the country.

General Dembélé “reaffirmed in Burkina Faso the support and commitment of Mali by his side to meet the challenge we all face. Currently, we have a field operation at the border that we are evaluating with my counterpart [Burkina Faso]. We will work together and see how to improve this operation and strengthen our capabilities, pool our resources to overcome terrorist groups,” said the Malian Minister.

Burkinabé President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré ordered a three-day national mourning in honor of the victims of the Koutougou attack in Soum province, bordering Mali. This West African country has been caught in a spiral of violence for four and a half years, attributed to a dozen groups, some affiliated with al-Qaida and others affiliated with the Islamic State. Since early 2015, jihadist attacks have become more and more frequent and deadly, especially in the north and east, and have killed more than 500 people.

...

Five Sahel states (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad) have formed a multinational military force, the G5 Sahel, to fight against the many Islamist groups that are raging in the region, but this force is struggling to gain momentum.



Bad Roads in Mali Lead to More Civil Unrest

OE Watch Commentary: To say that the logistic infrastructure in Mali is bad might be expected considering Mali's place on the economic index of Africa. But the conflict that has come to dominate the central and north of the country has only made Mali's road network and cross country travel worse. So bad in fact, that in recent weeks, demonstrations by locals in various parts of the country have closed what remaining road traffic exists in many parts of the country. Their stated claims are to get the government to fix and maintain the existing roads to increase security and make travel safe.



Aerial view of Wabaria Bridge on the RN-15 National Highway, near Gao, Mali.

Source: Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pont_de_Wabaria_Gao_Mali.jpg, CC BY 3.0

According to the press, the activists point to some significant problems; one is the total lack of road network in the north to begin with. According to the leader of one road blocking demonstration,

“The only asphalt present in the north, a large area twice the size of Sweden, is the RN 16, which connects Gao to Sévaré, in the center of the country.” According to official data, of the 21,681 km of roads recorded in 2018, only 7,156 km were paved.

The second threat is as real as the first. Criminality, a collapse of the rule of law and the insurgency have made many parts of the road network unsafe. *Xinhaunet* and other sources reported a recent IED strike on a public bus that killed as many as 20 passengers. The attack came during the period of demonstrations throughout the country for more security on the nation's highway.

In the city of Kayes, on the frontier with Senegal, demonstrators blocked the bridge on the main road in and out of Senegal for days before Prime Minister Boubou Cissé traveled to the point of blockade and promised the resumption of highway work and security. It is unlikely that he would have made the effort but the bridge is a chokepoint for a never ending stream of commercial trucks in and out of Senegal that play a large role in keeping Mali's economy running.

France has the largest foreign stake in Mali and has committed thousands of peacekeepers to the country. The most recent French government travel advisory also focused on the road network and transportation security in Mali as being one of the most pressing issues facing the country outside of the capital of Bamako. The French government's recent communiqué strongly suggests that north of Bamako, business trips by road must be in convoy, while an escort is desirable anywhere north of the Kayes-Koulikoro-Sikasso line. It is also recommended to prioritize travel by air and to stay in accommodations with security.

Notwithstanding Prime Minister Cissé's commitment to the demonstrators in Kayes, it is very difficult to see how the Malian government will be able to offer any immediate solution. Infrastructure development is one of the pillars of the rebuilding and reconciliation effort in the central and northern parts of the country, but time will tell if the government will be able to push forward with any real progress on rebuilding and prioritizing security on its vulnerable road network. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“The only asphalt present in the north, a large area twice the size of Sweden, is the RN 16, which connects Gao to Sévaré, in the center. This is the obstacle course, there is no vehicle that rolls more than 40 km/h, otherwise 20 km/h, with dust, heat and now insecurity...”



Continued: Bad Roads in Mali Lead to More Civil Unrest

Source: “Des routes, des routes, des routes! Le nord du Mali réclame la fin de l’isolement (Roads, roads, roads! Northern Mali calls for end of isolation),” *SlateAfrique*, 11 September 2019. <http://www.slateafrique.com/991065/des-routes-des-routes-des-routes-le-nord-du-mali-reclame-la-fin-de-lisolement>

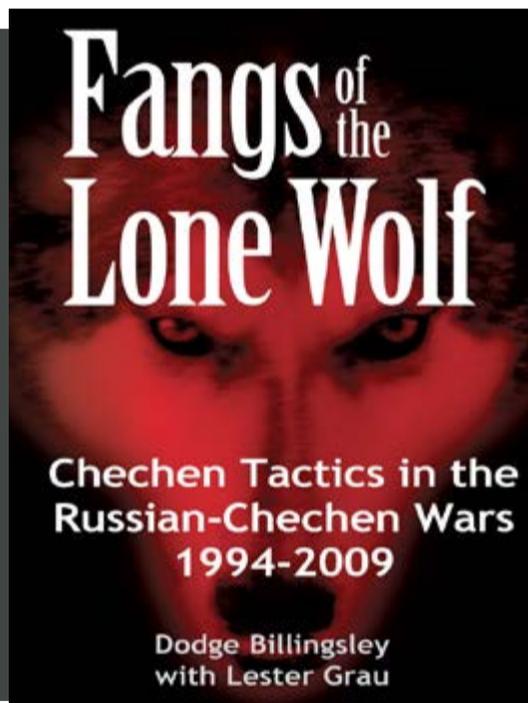
“The only asphalt present in the north, a large area twice the size of Sweden, is the RN 16, which connects Gao to Sévaré, in the center. This is the obstacle course, there is no vehicle that rolls more than 40 km/h, otherwise 20 km/h, with dust, heat and now insecurity...”

Source: “Mali : Au moins 20 morts dans l’explosion d’une mine au passage d’un car de transport, au centre du Mali (Mali: At least 20 dead in the explosion of a mine passing a bus in central Mali),” *Xinhuanet*, 5 September 2019. http://french.xinhuanet.com/2019-09/05/c_138365548.htm

Today, it takes at least five days to connect the cities of the north to [the capital] Bamako and the road is so spoiled that most people go through Burkina Faso and Niger, where you have to pay taxes in addition... Attacks by jihadists and bandits, damage caused by bad weather, the absence of state services and, according to many Malians, widespread corruption are the causes.

Source: “France Diplomatie, Mali, Sécurité (France Diplomacy, Mali, Security),” *The Website of the Government of France*. Last updated on 5 September 2019. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/mali/>

In the center and north of the country, the attacks primarily target the settlements and convoys of the Malian and international military forces. The possible presence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or mines, as well as frequent attacks on roads prohibits any traffic by road outside urban centers.



Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

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



Doctors Without Borders Closes Local Clinic in Southeastern Niger

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 August, the France-based aid organization Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) announced it would be forced to shut down its clinic in the town of Maïné-Soroa in southeastern Niger where Boko Haram is known to operate. The excerpted French-language article from *Afric Telegraph* provides the perspective of the aid organization regarding this decision.

Médecins sans Frontières claims security reasons were the primary cause of the office's closure. The organization specifically refers to a 26 April attack by armed men from Boko Haram's Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal faction. That faction had claimed an attack and stated it killed Médecins sans Frontières workers in Maïné-Soroa for spying. According to Médecins sans Frontières, however, no one was killed in the attack and only one person was injured and four vehicles were burned. Médecins sans Frontières took that attack as a warning message.

The director of Médecins sans Frontières in Maïné-Soroa notes the difficulty of his decision but also claims that the organization could not risk the lives of its staff. Moreover, the director indicates the suspension is temporary and therefore the clinic may open again in the future if the security situation improves. At the same time, the article notes Médecins sans Frontières still maintains offices in Diffa and N'guigmi, Niger, which are also in areas where Boko Haram operates. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Doctors without Borders.

Source: Galopax via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M%C3%A9dicos_Sin_Fronteras_-_MSF.png, CC BY-SA 4.0

“Analytical work has led us to see that the conditions are not yet suitable for Médecins sans Frontières to continue working in the area of Maïné-Soroa.”

Source: “MSF cesse ses activités dans la ville de Maïné-Soroa (MSF ceases its activities in the city of Maïné-Soroa),” *Afric Telegraph*, 10 August 2019, <https://africtelegraph.com/niger-msf-cesse-ses-activites-dans-la-ville-de-mainé-soroa/>

Médecins sans Frontières is withdrawing from Maïné-Soroa, a Nigerien city in the Diffa region near Nigeria. The humanitarian organization announced the closure of its activities in this city for security reasons. “Analytical work has led us to see that the conditions are not yet suitable for Médecins sans Frontières to continue working in the area of Maïné-Soroa,” says Abdoul-Aziz Mohammed, the head of mission of Médecins sans Frontières in Niger. On April 26, the Médecins sans Frontières office in Maïné-Soroa was attacked by armed men. One staff member was slightly injured, four vehicles were burned and the premises were damaged.

“The decision to close our program is not easy. (...) Unfortunately, we have no other choice. We cannot bring ourselves to endanger the lives of our teams so clearly,” says the chief of mission. The latter stated that Médecins sans Frontières will nevertheless continue its activities in the cities of Diffa and Nguigmi.



Combination of the Forms of Struggle

OE Watch Commentary: The first accompanying reference is emblematic of a body of current commentaries and analyses prompted by the phrase *combinación de todas las formas de lucha* (combination of all the forms of struggle). The theme is surging in the wake of an announcement by leaders of the FARC that they are returning to armed struggle. The expression comes forward etymologically at least from Leninist thinking, and in Colombian political lexicon appears in use by the Colombian Communist Party as early as the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the second reference is an interview by noted Chilean journalist and Marxist intellectual, Marta Harnecker (who passed away in June), of the late Gilberto Vieira who was general secretary of the Colombian Communist Party. In that interview, Vieira explains the combination of all forms of struggle. The 1988 interview, in light of the current public reemergence of the Colombian Communist Party and the regional communist and workers' parties umbrella group, the Forum of Sao Paulo, is highly relevant to the question of whether the FARC is splitting into two organizations, one military and one political, or, as many have it, that the FARC has always been and remains both. The third reference, from Spain, also typifies the attitude that the FARC has simply been practicing the combination of all forms of struggle all along. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...*The return to arms was more than anticipated...*”

Source: Margarita Restrepo, “Farc: Combinación de todas las formas de lucha (FARC: Combination of all forms of struggle),” *IFM Noticias*, 2 September 2019. <https://ifmnoticias.com/farc-combinacion-de-todas-las-formas-de-lucha/>

“The facts have demonstrated to us that the FARC delinquents are insatiable when it comes to demanding their impunity...the members of the FARC who keep politicking had better assume responsibility for what is going on...if they do not, it [will be] understood that one of the parties has expressed its intention to not comply [with the accord], meaning that what was signed is left with no value whatsoever. What is certain is that the agreement, by all appearances, is spurious. We cannot forget that the popular will was conclusive when the NO vote was given in the plebiscite of October 2016... From the Democratic Center we have always warned that bad agreements, those that have impunity in the first line, are generators of new violence. But we also warned that it is not acceptable that they leave open the door for what we are now confirming: a model of the combination of all forms of struggle. One part of the FARC, posing as a political party, enjoying the economic advantage and receiving rivers of money for its financing, and in parallel, another sector, controlling the trafficking of drugs and sustaining dangerous armed structures, with which to threaten the Colombian people.”

Source: Marta Harnecker, “Colombia: Combinación De Todas Las Formas De Lucha (Interview of Gilberto Vieira, General Secretary of the Colombian Communist Party about the origin of the guerrillas in that country and the relationship of the PC Colombia with the FARC),” Cuba: Popular Library, 1988, p. 32. <http://www.rebellion.org/docs/90193.pdf>

Q. [Harnaker]: I understand that the Colombian Communist Party sustains as a necessity the combination of all forms of struggle as a tactical question – but isn't this a general principle of Leninism and the real problem is knowing how to coordinate, sort and prioritize one form of struggle over others at a given juncture?

A. [Vieira]: 200. [The paragraphs of Vieira's answers are numbered in the document] When the armed struggle begins in Colombia, from '50 forward, the Party elaborated its orientation that we have called the combination of all forms of struggle: combination of tactical and strategic. No form of struggle is excluded, rather it is about combining all of them adequately...

Q. [Harnaker]: But isn't that a Leninist principle?

A. [Vieira]: 201. For us it is a Leninist principle applied to the Colombian reality.

Q. [Harnaker]: Ah! I had understood that the principle was being able to use all the forms of struggle, but that the simultaneous combination was a tactic of yours...

A. [Vieira]: 202. The tactic and the strategy. We don't make much of a difference between tactics and strategy...We consider that tactics leads to strategy... In any case it is our politic, or orientation. What does that mean, that politic, that orientation, in '50? Once the armed conflict had started, a series of comrades told us: Here the only road left is that of armed conflict: that is the only road... The party argued a great deal about that and proposed that armed struggle was good, that we were for it and in it, but that we would not abandon other forms of struggle, that we could not disregard mass struggle, that we had to get into the labor union struggle, however great the persecution... Therefore, the combination of all forms of struggle consists in accepting the inevitability of armed struggle, but, at the same time, participating in all the forms of struggle.

Source: Salud Hernández Mora, “Colombia: crónica de un fracaso anunciado (Colombia: Chronicle of a failure forewarned),” *El Mundo* (Madrid), 30 August 2019. <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/08/30/5d67f9e5fdddf611a8b4687.html>

The announcement is a supposed blow to whoever thought that Colombia could leave the armed conflict behind with a simple list of unviable promises. It only awaited confirmation. The return to arms was more than anticipated... On the political plane, this deepens even further the polarization between critics of the negotiation that Juan Manuel Santos led, and those who defend it to the limit. And it further distances the possibility that the current government will sit at the table with the ELN to seek an accord... The problem this time is that Márquez [FARC leader], in his pompous speech, raised again the flag of the 'combination of the forms of struggle' that the Communist Party promulgated in the past.



Bolivarian “Provocations”

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying references report out a newsworthy occurrence, but moreover, frame a disparity between Colombian public narrative and military reality. Nicolás Maduro (or someone in the Bolivarian hierarchy) ordered a number of mobile anti-aircraft missile sets to redeploy to the Colombian-Venezuelan border in Táchira state. The Colombian public narrative about these weapons appears to be as broadly accepted as it is disingenuous. The Colombian government response has been its standard for years -- to reassure the public that the armed forces of Colombia are excellent and perfectly capable of defending Colombia against a Venezuelan invasion; that the moves of the Maduro regime are provocations which will not work to bait the Colombians into an over-reaction; and that the Venezuelan weapons involved, defensive in nature, are unsuited to cross-border attack; and that the Colombians would, of course, not strike first. The anti-aircraft weapons are of Russian origin, and as the passage notes, “contain ground-to-air missiles with an average range of 30 kilometers and can reach an altitude of up to 15 thousand meters.”

As is clear from the interview of Armed Forces Commander General Fernando Navarro, Colombia has known for a long time that the Maduro regime (and that of Hugo Chávez before it) protects the ELN and the FARC. These organizations have been attacking Colombian government targets, Colombian economic infrastructure and even Colombian communities along smuggling routes – and they have been doing so for a long time. Part of the modus operandi of those guerrilla forces has been to raid across the border into Colombia, then retreat back into Venezuelan territory for sanctuary. The latest deployment of anti-aircraft missiles provides some deterrence against what might seem an option for the Colombian military – to conduct hot pursuit of fleeing guerrilla elements by hitting them from the air inside Venezuela. The notion that the Colombians would be shooting first, however, seems highly incongruous with the fact that the Bolivarians have been shooting at Colombian targets inside Colombia for years by way of their encouragement to the ELN and FARC. Recently, the cordial relationship between the Bolivarian hierarchy and the two Colombian-origin guerrilla groups has become more open and formalized. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...We all knew that Venezuela protected guerrillas of the FARC and ELN...”

Source: Editors, “El armamento que desplegó Maduro en la frontera con Colombia (The weaponry that Maduro deployed on the border with Colombia),” *El Tiempo*, 11 September 2019. <https://www.eltiempo.com/unidad-investigativa/el-armamento-que-desplego-maduro-en-la-frontera-con-colombia-411100>

“The Commander of the Armed Forces, General Luis Fernando Navarro, said in an interview with El Tiempo...that ‘Colombia will never shoot first’...

But what weaponry was it that the Nicolás Maduro regime deployed and what is its actual range? Reporters of this newspaper questioned various sources on both sides of the border zone and established that the arsenal is led by the air defense system S-125 or Pechora 2, which is of Russian origin...These in plain terms contain ground-to-air missiles with an average range of 30 kilometers and can reach an altitude of up to 15 thousand meters.

Source: María Isabel Rueda, “¿Lo dejan dormir los ejercicios misilísticos de Maduro?, Entrevista realizada por María Isabel Rueda (Will the Maduro’s missilistic exercises be left alone?, An interview by Isabel Rueda [of the Colombian Armed Forces Commander General Fernando Navarro],” *El Tiempo*, 10 September 2019. <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/lo-dejan-dormir-los-ejercicios-misilisticos-de-maduro-411050>

Q. [María Isabel Rueda]: “General Navarro, although we all knew that Venezuela protected guerrillas of the FARC and ELN, this is the first time that we are presented documents with the proof, like what Semana magazine just did in its last issue. Do those orders surprise you, or are they nothing new for you?”

A. General Luis Fernando Navarro]: The magazine’s source is a good source. We have been familiar this type of information since the government of Hugo Chávez. The Colombian guerrilla has considered Venezuela its rear guard area. But in this new stage, when the FARC is in the peace process with the Colombian State and is now demobilizing, turning in weapons, there remains a group of residuals that park themselves in Venezuela, where they are growing while protected in that territory. Maduro said it in the framework of the Forum of Sao Paulo: ‘Welcome ‘Santrich’ and welcome ‘Márquez’. But, obviously, they have been there since long ago. Iván Márquez has hailed from Venezuela since the year 2004, 2005.’”



Colombia's Gulf Clan

OE Watch Commentary: Reporting on the irregular war in northern South America (including here at *OE Watch*) has habitually noted the activities of Colombia's principle guerrilla groups, the FARC and ELN. The latter has apparently been in ascendance within the firmament of violent illegal armed groups, while the former, in the context of its power-sharing agreement with the Colombian administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos, has *perhaps* been in decline. Meanwhile, not reported sufficiently is the rise of what is now called the Clan del Golfo, a criminal enterprise whose leadership may have more control over more Colombian smuggling routes and more of the illegal drug flow than either the FARC or the ELN. It is also apparently directly and violently contesting the ELN and to a lesser degree the FARC for that control. The two accompanying references come from two distinct perspectives, the second stressing the political dimensions of the Clan's identity and history. While the Gulf Clan may have its roots in organizations that were variously labeled 'paramilitaries' and even less precisely, 'right wing' (having long opposed the leftist guerrillas), it, like other illegal groups including the ELN and FARC, ties far more of its behavior to dominating territory and smuggling than it does to politics. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...‘Otoniel’... created his own organization... by which he has become one of the most hunted men in Colombia.”

Source: Editors, “Capturaron en Colombia al jefe de finanzas y al hermano del máximo líder del Clan del Golfo (In Colombia they capture the chief of Finances and brother of the maximum leader of the Gulf Clan),” *Infobae*, 23 August 2019. <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2019/08/23/capturaron-en-colombia-al-jefe-de-finanzas-y-al-hermano-del-maximo-lider-del-clan-del-golfo/>

“AKA ‘Otoniel’ began his criminal career in the Maoist guerrilla Army of Popular Liberation (EPL), later passing to the AUC [Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, or United Self-Defenses of Colombia] and when these were demobilized he created his own organization initially called the Urabeños [after region of the Úraba Gulf], by which he has become one of the most hunted men in Colombia.”

Source: Editors, “Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) / Gulf Clan,” *Colombia Reports*, 22 August 2019. <https://colombiareports.com/agc-gulf-clan/>

Clashes between the AGC and the ELN, the last-active guerrilla group in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia and along the Pacific coast. Authorities again renamed the group, this time calling them the “Gulf Clain,” [sic] and have consistently avoided to acknowledge the group’s paramilitary origins and nature... In September 2017, Otoniel announced he and his group wanted to surrender to justice, but under the condition he would be shielded from extradition and guarantees that would prevent the formation of new guerrilla and paramilitary groups in regions under his control.

The prosecution subsequently said that the office was preparing the possible demobilization of 7,000 AGC members... The new government [of President Ivan Duque] contradicted previous claims about the group’s size and said in early 2019 that the group was no bigger than 1,500 members.”

Source: Salud Hernández Mora, “Colombia: crónica de un fracaso anunciado (Colombia: Chronicle of a failure forewarned),” *El Mundo* (Madrid), 30 August 2019. <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/08/30/5d67f9e5fdddf611a8b4687.html>

The announcement is a supposed blow to whoever thought that Colombia could leave the armed conflict behind with a simple list of unviable promises. It only awaited confirmation. The return to arms was more than anticipated... On the political plane, this deepens even further the polarization between critics of the negotiation that Juan Manuel Santos led, and those who defend it to the limit. And it further distances the possibility that the current government will sit at the table with the ELN to seek an accord... The problem this time is that Márquez [FARC leader], in his pompous speech, raised again the flag of the ‘combination of the forms of struggle’ that the Communist Party promulgated in the past.



ELN Update

OE Watch Commentary: The ELN continues to ascend as the most dangerous armed organizational threat to the Colombian state (and to US interests in the region generally) within the Bolivarian structure. The first accompanying passage is from a recent article from what many consider to be the leading weekly newsmagazine in Colombia, *Semana*. The article has had wide resonance, taken by some as a first major public revelation of the Bolivarian alliance against Colombia and of the leading role of the ELN and FARC within that alliance. The greater novelty in all this is not that the ELN is a Bolivarian ally but that *Semana* would be emphasizing it. Evidence to the fact of coordination and assistance among the ELN, FARC and the Bolivarians has been common for some time, as the other two references (from *La Silla Vacilla* and *France24*) attest. The *La Silla* piece reports on ELN/FARC smuggling coordination inside Venezuela, while the *France24* excerpt reports on the Colombian government wanting the Cubans to hand over the leaders of the ELN. The request appears to be only a way to highlight the obvious -- that the ELN enjoys sanctuary in Cuba. The probability that the Cuban regime will turn over the ELN leaders to the Colombian administration is zero. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...‘the ELN and FARC dissidents are the point of the spear...’”

Source: Editors, “Manguala contra Colombia: los secretos de la alianza entre el gobierno de Maduro, las disidencias y el ELN (Plot against Colombia: the secrets of the alliance between the government of Maduro, the dissidents [FARC] and the ELN),” *Semana*, 9 August 2019. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/los-secretos-de-la-alianza-entre-el-gobierno-de-maduro-las-disidencias-y-el-eln/630999>

“*Semana* reveals the secret Venezuelan intelligence documents that show how the ELN and FARC dissidents are the point of the spear for destabilizing Colombia. *Semana* had access to sensitive documents of the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and of the Operational Strategic Command of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB) that for the first time leave in evidence the considerable presence of Colombian guerrillas in this country—ELN and dissidents of the FARC.”

Source: Juanita Vélez and Ana León, “El ELN y las disidencias están coordinadas (The ELN and the Dissidents are coordinated),” *La Silla Vacilla*, 3 December 2019. <https://lasillavacia.com/el-eln-y-las-disidencias-estan-coordinadas-69119>

“*The ELN and dissidents of the FARC are acting in a coordinated fashion to take out cocaine of the dissidents by routes that the ELN controls on the border between Arauca and Venezuela. Also, they have a no aggression pact after a history of five years of war between farianos [persons of the FARC] and elenos [persons of the ELN] in that department... The accord has not only been made by way of meetings between operatives in Arauca, but by meetings of high level commanders in Venezuela... We know that it was in early October that senior commanders of the dissidents, who were leading a regrouping, were there...the meeting shows that the ELN gives the dissidents status of guerrilla, of a group risen in arms like themselves, but they ‘were not working together’...*”

Source: Mar Romero, “Colombia exige a Cuba que entregue a los jefes guerrilleros del ELN (Colombia insists that Cuba turn over the guerrilla chiefs of the ELN),” *France24*, 11 August 2019. <https://www.france24.com/es/20190911-colombia-cuba-denuncia-onu-eln>

“*Colombia demands the guerrilla chiefs of the Army of National Liberation (ELN) that are present in Cuba. In a diplomatic letter from the Colombian Ministry of Exterior to the Cuban government. The South American country notes that an Interpol red notice is weighing against the insurgents.*”



Argentina and Paraguay Designate Hamas and Hezbollah as Terrorist Organizations

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 August, the Paraguayan government officially designated Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations. The designation came a month after the Argentinian government had done the same, making Argentina and Paraguay the first and second Latin American governments to designate the two groups as terrorist organizations. The accompanying passages from local sources discuss the designations, Hamas's reaction to them and Israel's praise for the decisions.

As the accompanying passage from the official twitter account of the President of Paraguay points out, "The President of the Republic @MaritoAbdo, through Decree No, 2,307, recognized as an international terrorist organization, Hamas and Hezbollah." Similarly, as the second passage from Israeli nationalist newspaper *Arutz Sheva* reports, "The Argentine government's Financial Information Unit ordered the freezing of assets of members of Hezbollah and the organization." The passage discusses that the designation by the Argentinian government came on the 25th anniversary of a bombing on a Buenos Aires Jewish community center where 85 people died. The Argentinian government holds Hezbollah responsible for the bombing. Along with Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay joined together to form the "Triple Frontier Area" where Hezbollah is under suspicion of drug trafficking and money laundering. The Paraguayan Interior Minister Juan Ernesto Villamayor during a press conference on 19 August said, "all institutions have an important role in the prevention of terrorism," while also outlining the goal of the Paraguayan government to restrict financial resources going to terrorist organizations.

As the third passage from a Hamas press release shows, Hamas called on Paraguay to "immediately revoke the decision." The Hamas statement says, "The Movement affirms that such resolutions do not serve security and stability in the region and even harm the good relations between our two peoples. It also contravenes international laws, which have guaranteed the right of peoples to resist occupation and aggression by all means available, including the armed struggle, as affirmed by the United Nations in its resolution A/ RES/37/43."

On the other hand, as the passages from Israeli sources demonstrate, the designation received much praise from Israeli government officials such as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Israel Katz. The Foreign Minister offered praise by saying, "I welcome #Paraguay Pres @MaritoAbdo's important decision to designate Hezbollah & Hamas as terrorist orgs. This decision contributes to the global battle against these Iranian proxies. We will continue working to get more countries to designate these orgs as terrorist orgs." Meanwhile, Prime Minister Netanyahu tweeted, "I applaud the decision of Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez to define Hezbollah and Hamas as terrorist organizations." **End OE Watch Commentary (Fesen)**

“The President of the Republic @MaritoAbdo... recognized the appointment [of]... Hamas and Hezbollah... [as] international terrorist organization[s].”



Hezbollah fighters at a ceremony.

Source: Khamenei.ir, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hezzzbollah.jpg>, CC BY 4.0

Source: Presidencia Paraguay (Paraguayan Presidency) Twitter Feed, 19 August 2019. <https://twitter.com/PresidenciaPy/status/1163452950737502211>

The president of the Republic @MaritoAbdo, through Decree No. 2,307, recognized the appointment as a global terrorist organization, ISIS and Al Qaeda and as an international terrorist organization, Hamas and Hezbollah. It was announced by the minister of @minteriorpy.

Source: Elad Benari, "Argentina designates Hezbollah a terrorist organization," *Arutz Sheva*, 19 July 2019. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/266181>

Argentina on Thursday officially designated Hezbollah, which it blames for two attacks on its soil, a terrorist organization and ordered the freezing of its assets in the country, Reuters reports.

The Argentine government's Financial Information Unit ordered the freezing of assets of members of Hezbollah and the organization a day after the country created a new list for people and entities linked to terrorism.

The designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist group was the first by any Latin American country.

"At present, Hezbollah continues to represent a current threat to security and the integrity of the economic and financial order of the Argentine Republic," the unit said in a statement.

There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah on the move.



Continued: Argentina and Paraguay Designate Hamas and Hezbollah as Terrorist Organizations

Source: The Islamic Resistance Movement- Hamas, “Press release on President of Paraguay’s decisions to designate Hamas as terrorist organization,” *Hamas Press Release*, 22 August 2019. <https://hamas.ps/en/post/2268/>

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas condemns with the strongest terms the decision of the President of the Republic of Paraguay to designate the movement as an international terrorist group.

The Movement affirms that such resolutions do not serve security and stability in the region and even harm the good relations between our two peoples. It also contravenes international laws, which have guaranteed the right of peoples to resist occupation and aggression by all means available, including the armed struggle, as affirmed by the United Nations in its resolution A/ RES/37/43.

Therefore, we in Hamas demand Paraguay to immediately revoke this decision and take the necessary decisions and actions to support the struggle of our people for their freedom and independence. We call upon Paraguay to pursue the Israeli war criminals, given our people show respect and appreciation towards the Paraguay and its people.

Source: Michael Bachner, “Paraguay recognizes Hamas, Hezbollah as terror groups, drawing Israeli Praise,” *Times of Israel*, 20 August 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/paraguay-recognizes-hamas-hezbollah-as-terror-groups-drawing-israeli-praise/>

Paraguay on Monday said it had officially recognized the military wings of Palestinian group Hamas and Lebanon’s Hezbollah as terrorist organizations drawing praise from Israel’s prime minister and foreign minister.

Hezbollah runs much of its financial operations in South America. Villamayor said Paraguay would now be obliged to take action against the money flow to terror groups through local banks, Paraguayan media reported.

Israel has pushed for the international community to blacklist Hezbollah and Hamas. While many countries outlaw the movements’ armed wings, most have balked at also blacklisting their politburos.

Source: Israel Kats Twitter Feed, 19 August 2019 https://twitter.com/Israel_katz/status/1163480186773495809

I welcome #Paraguay Pres @Marito Abdo’s important decision to designate Hezbollah & Hamas as terrorist orgs.

This decision contributes to the global battle against these Iranian proxies.

We will continue working to get more countries to designate these orgs as terrorist orgs.

Source: Benjamin Netanyahu Twitter Feed, 19 August 2019. <https://twitter.com/netanyahu/status/1163511250229374976>

I applaud the decision of Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez to define Hezbollah and Hamas as terrorist organizations. We are working to ensure that other countries also take this important step.



Breeding Narco Pilots In Bolivia

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpts discuss the growing need for narco pilots in South America. They also shed light on the routes these pilots generally follow and the steps the Bolivian government is taking to thwart aerial drug shipments.

According to Bolivian news source *Los Tiempos*, there is a big need for narco pilots to transport shipments from Peru to other countries such as Paraguay and Brazil. The passage also points out that there is no shortage of young men who aspire to do this type of work, as they are paid “\$15,000-20,000 for each trip they successfully complete.” Furthermore, if one wishes to study at a flight school in Bolivia, dozens of private pilot training programs are ready to accept students.



Source: Kenneth Lu via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/toasty/31044365752/in/photostream/>, CC BY 2.0

Once in a program, aspiring narco pilots can complete their training in as little as three to four months given that they are flying small planes that do not require extensive training. While attending flight school may cost around \$4,200, a new pilot is able to make that money back by performing a single drug run. As the first passage discusses, other factors that facilitate the training of narco pilots is that little to no information about the student is required to apply to a program and the minimum age is 17.

According to Paraguayan news source *Exitó Noticias*, the link between Bolivian pilots transporting cocaine shipments from Peru to other countries in the region such as Paraguay and Brazil are apparent. A clear example of this phenomenon is the frequency with which Bolivian private pilots are arrested and convicted in these countries. Many of the planes that are caught flying in Brazil, Paraguay or Peru claim they are conducting agricultural activities.

In the final passage, Bolivian government minister Carlos Romero claims that the recruitment of young men to transfer drugs to neighboring countries is a new phenomenon but acknowledges that it is necessary for the Bolivian government to increase controls over their airspace. To do this, the Bolivian government tested 13 radar systems to detect planes in 2018. Then in July 2019, they approved a new law that will require all aircraft operating within the country to install flight identification devices (GPS) so that aircraft can be tracked by radar control systems. Additionally, the government is looking to install an interoperability platform to “have more control in detecting when aircraft deviate from their flight plants.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Many young men between the ages of 17 and 20 aspire to be narco pilots as they can earn \$15,000-20,000 for each trip they successfully complete. And in Bolivia, finding a flight school that offers short courses is easy. In Santa Cruz, Bolivia, there are more than 10 schools and in Beni, there are at least three.”

Source: “Pilotos cobran entre us \$15 mil y 20 mil por vuelo con carga de droga (Pilots Charge between \$15,000-20,000 to Fly Drug Laden Planes),” *Los Tiempos*, 8 July 2018. <https://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20180708/pilotos-cobran-us-15-mil-20-mil-vuelo-carga-droga>

Many young men between the ages of 17 and 20 aspire to be narco pilots as they can earn \$15,000-20,000 for each trip, they successfully complete. And in Bolivia, finding a flight school that offers short courses is easy. In Santa Cruz, Bolivia, there are more than 10 schools and in Beni, there are at least 3. Omar Durán, an aeronautical expert, asserts that 7 out of every 10 pilots trained at private aviation schools in Bolivia work for DTOs. This may be because requisites to enter into programs are quite basic and generally include the following: student must be 17 years of age or older, complete a criminal background and medical check, possess a high school degree and in some cases, schools may request approval from the Directorate of Civil Aeronautics (DGAC).

Source: “Aprehenden a un piloto boliviano y a 11 individuos por narcotráfico en Paraguay (Authorities Arrest Bolivian Pilot and Eleven Other Individuals for Drug Trafficking in Paraguay),” *Exitó Noticias*, 28 August 2019. <https://www.exitonoticias.com.bo/articulo/seguridad/aprehenden-piloto-boliviano-11-personas-transportar-droga/20190521132502027524.html>

A clear example that Bolivian pilots are flying cocaine shipments from Peru to countries such as Brazil and Paraguay are evident given the number of Bolivian pilots arrested in these countries with drug laden Cessna planes. In one recent case, intelligence gathered by Bolivian authorities led to the dismantling of a criminal organization operating out of Bolivia. This same group would then transfer 300kg shipments of cocaine to Brazil.

Source: “Corren 90 días de plazo para instalación de GPS en avionetas; comenzara control con radares (Government Allows 90 Day Window for Aircraft to Install GPS; Plans to Use Radars to Control Flights),” *La Razon*, 9 July 2019. http://www.la-razon.com/nacional/seguridad-nacional/Gobierno-instalacion-obligatoria-gps-avionetas-bolivia_0_3180881906.html

In July 2019, the Bolivian government approved a law which requires all aircraft operating in national airspace to use a GPS monitoring system. By doing this, the hope is that radar control systems within Bolivia will be able to track illicit flights. At this time, radar systems are active and running in airports located in La Paz, Santa Cruz and Tarija. In addition to radars and GPS systems, the Bolivian government is also looking to install an interoperability platform that would be run by entities to include the Air Force, the General Directorate of Civil Aeronautics (DGAC) and the Special Operations Force to Combat Drug Trafficking (FELCN). By installing the proposed platform, the entities will have more control in detecting when aircraft deviate from their flight plants. It will also allow them advanced monitoring capabilities if a situation of this nature arises.



Chinese Mafia Operating in Argentina

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpts from Argentinian sources discuss the growing presence of the Chinese mafia in Argentina. They shed light on the Chinese mafia's mode of operations in the country, and why authorities are finding it difficult to dismantle this organization.

Argentinian news source *La Nacion* reports that the Chinese mafia is not a new phenomenon in the country. However, as the passage discusses, while they would only target other Chinese businesses in the past, they are now targeting and extorting Argentinian business owners. This is apparent in the multiple attacks carried out by the Chinese mafia against Argentinian businesses in recent months. In some cases, the mafia simply leaves threatening notes, but in other cases, charges extortion and protection fees ranging from \$30,000-\$50,000 and even attacks store employees at gunpoint.

When Argentinian businesses first became targets, authorities believed attacks were carried out erroneously and that the Chinese mafia believed they were targeting Chinese businesses, but this idea was later discarded.

This article also points out that the mafia leaves messages written in Chinese or Mandarin at targeted businesses. Many times these notes even contain WeChat numbers (an application similar to WhatsApp) so that business owners can communicate with the mafia to pay extortion and protection fees. The first passage provides an example of a short message left by the Chinese mafia at one business.

The second accompanying passage from Argentinean news source *Urgente 24* further expounds on the presence of the Chinese mafia in the country. This source also indicates that apart from targeting businesses, the mafia is involved in illegal immigration and the trafficking of merchandise stolen from legitimate stores. Authorities assert that this group is difficult to dismantle because “Chinese mafia hitmen are highly skilled and are able to commit crimes without leaving any evidence behind.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Simbolo triada (Chinese Triad).

Source: Trabajonacho via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Triads_\(underground_society\)#/media/File:Simbolo_triada.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Triads_(underground_society)#/media/File:Simbolo_triada.jpg), CC by 3.0

“According to Carlos Adrover, the Director of Fraud and Extortion in Argentina, the Chinese mafia is an extremely organized and large group. It operates in a pyramid style that consists of family clans. Those individuals high up in the pyramid scheme are older brothers, fathers and any other relatives. Hitmen in the Chinese mafia are many times recruited from outside Argentina and are not Chinese.”

Source: “La mafia china sumó otro blanco y también amenazó a comerciantes argentinos (Chinese Mafia Finds New Targets and Threatens Argentinian Businesses),” *La Nacion*, 3 July 2019. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/seguridad/la-mafia-china-sumo-otro-blanco-y-tambien-amenazo-a-comerciantes-argentinosla-intimidacion-a-un-supermercado-nid2264022>

When the Chinese mafia began extorting, charging protection fees and attacking Argentinian businesses, authorities believed that the businesses may have been erroneously identified as Chinese businesses. They no longer believe this hypothesis is accurate. Instead, authorities believe that the Chinese mafia is looking to generate commotion and fear in an attempt to force Argentinian business owners to abandon their businesses. If the mafia is able to achieve this, authorities assume that they will take control of the businesses and run them as if they were their own. Notes left by the Chinese mafia at businesses being targeted are also straightforward. A recent example of a note left at a targeted business read as follows: “If you are not able to give us \$30,000 by the deadline, you will be shot or we will set your business on fire.”

Source: “La mafia china no para: degollaron a 3 comerciantes en su supermercado (The Chinese Mafia Remains Active: They Cut the Heads off of Three Supermarket Owners),” *Urgente 24*, 28 March 2019. <https://www.urgente24.com/actualidad/policiales/la-mafia-china-no-para-degollaron-3-comerciantes-en-su-supermercado>

The Chinese mafia established itself in Argentina years ago and operates in nearly all parts of Argentina. Furthermore, the group is involved in a multitude of criminal activities, but authorities claim that dismantling the mafia is not an easy task despite repeated efforts to thwart their activities. This is because Chinese mafia hitmen are highly skilled and are able to commit crimes without leaving any evidence behind. According to Carlos Adrover, the Director of Fraud and Extortion in Argentina, the Chinese mafia is “an extremely organized and large group. It operates in a pyramid style that consists of family clans. Those individuals high up in the pyramid scheme are older brothers, fathers and any other relatives. Hitmen in the Chinese mafia are many times recruited from outside Argentina and are not Chinese”.

China's Military Equipment Donations to Peru

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss military donations that China has provided to the Peruvian military in 2019.

According to *Defensa*, in January 2019, China donated over \$18 million worth of military equipment to Peru. The passage provides a detailed list of these items. China also pledged to work with the Peruvian Air Force to obtain a passive mobile detection and localization radar although no dates were mentioned. During the donation ceremony, Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra noted that China and Peru have had positive relationship for years.

In June 2019, Peruvian news source *El Economista America* announced that China would be donating another \$7 million worth of military equipment to Peru as part of a military assistance agreement between the two countries. This agreement was signed on 7 June by the Peruvian and Chinese Defense Ministers in Lima. The passage features comments by Lieutenant General Shao Yuanming of China, who said the donation was a testimony of friendship between the Peruvian and Chinese people. According to the third passage from *Infodefensa*, prior to the donation, the two countries agreed to analyze which sectors of Peruvian the military need new equipment most urgently. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Beiben 2628A.

Source: Fencer13 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Military_trucks_of_Peru#/media/File:Beiben_Truck_2628A.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

“According to the Lieutenant General Shao Yuanming of China, “we are at the crossroads of profound change in the world. We want to raise our flag in support of cooperation between Peru and China and these agreements are a testament to this friendship.”

Source: “La Republica Popular China dona material military a las Fuerzas del Peru (The Republic of China Donates Military Equipment to the Peruvian Military),” *Defensa*, 10 January 2019. <https://www.defensa.com/peru/republica-popular-china-dona-material-militar-fuerzas-armadas>

China donated the following items to separate entities of the Peruvian military in January 2019:

- 1 GQL111 lanzapuerta system measuring 75m
- 10 CJH002 ambulances
- 16 buses capable of transporting 45 individuals
- 16 Maxus MPV G10 vans
- 2 Steyr water trucks
- 52 GHS211s that can be utilized in rescue missions such as earthquakes
- 15 LTD-90B life detectors
- 30 BD2010 bomb deactivation suits
- 30 BDUC05 cable detectors
- 30 ALBPG frequency disruptors
- 30 GTL511 mine detectors
- 30 pieces of equipment to detect mines (specific type of equipment not reported)
- (4) 957Y patrol vessels
- 1 CJH002 ambulance



Continued: China's Military Equipment Donations to Peru

Source: “China donará material militar a Perú por 7 millones de dólares (China Will Donate \$7 Million Worth of Military Equipment to Peru),” *El Economista America*, 8 June 2019. <https://www.eleconomistaamerica.com/politica-eAm/noticias/9928685/06/19/China-donara-material-militar-a-Peru-por-7-millones-de-dolares.html>

The People's Republic of China will donate military equipment worth 7 million dollars to Peru, as part of a military assistance agreement, as reported by the Peruvian Ministry of Defense on Saturday.

The ministries of defense of Peru and China signed a military assistance agreement in Lima whereby the Chinese side offers Peruvians assistance in military materials valued at 50 million yuan (7 million dollars)..

The Deputy Chief of Staff of the Joint Command of the Central Military Commission of the People's Republic of China, Lieutenant General Shao Yuanming, said the agreement is a testimony of friendship between the Peruvian and Chinese people.

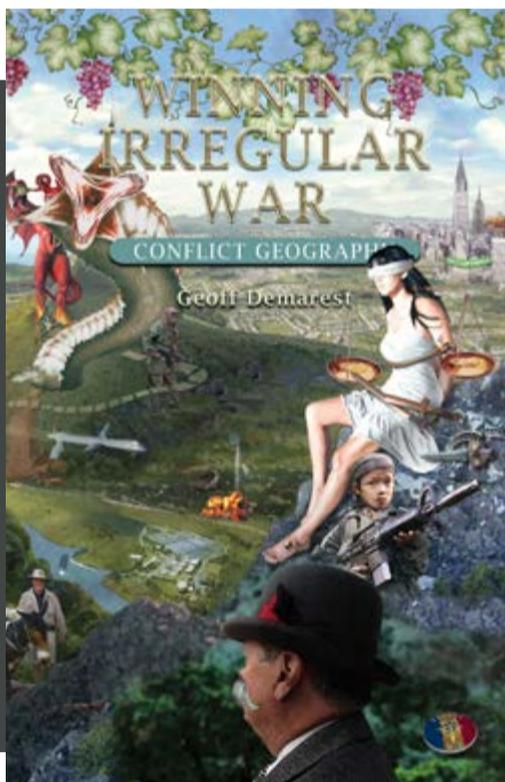
“We are in a moment of profound change in the world. Hopefully we will raise the flag of cooperation between Peru and China,” he added in the signing of the agreement held Friday at the Peruvian Army Headquarters.

In turn, Peruvian Defense Minister José Huerta recalled that the Chinese government made another donation of vehicles and military equipment, earlier this year, for \$ 17.5 million.

“With this new agreement, we have received contributions and capabilities to the Armed Forces,” Huerta said.

Source: “China dona a Peru equipos militares valorados en \$7,000,000 (China Donates \$7,000,0000 Worth of Military Equipment to Peru),” *Infodefensa*, 6 June 2019. <https://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2019/06/11/noticia-china-realiza-segunda-donacion.html>

On 7 June, Peruvian and Chinese Defense Ministers signed a new agreement in which China agrees to donate Peru \$7 million worth of unspecified military equipment. Prior to this donation, the two countries will analyze those military sectors that need new equipment most urgently.



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>



Honduran Military Discovers Coca Plantation with 40,000 Plants

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpts discuss the evolution of cocaine production in Honduras. Since 2017, authorities have discovered two separate cocaine plantations in the country. In 2017, it was assumed that the problem had been mitigated, but with the recent discovery of a new and even larger plantation, it appears that Honduras is now a cocaine production country even if it is growing significantly less than key production countries such as Colombia and Peru.

In mid-May 2019, Honduran news source *La Prensa* reported that authorities discovered a cocaine plantation and processing lab in the Limon community of Irióna (a coastal city located 454 kilometers from Tegucigalpa). The lab was discovered as a result of a joint operation between the Air Force, the Navy and the Xantruch Joint Task Force, as discussed in the passage. Following the discovery of this plantation, Honduran news source *Inter.hon* provided information regarding items seized from the laboratory, including “20 sacks of cocaine leaves ready for processing, 200 gallons of gasoline, 200 gallons of diesel and other chemical precursors needed to produce cocaine base.” The source also notes that authorities estimated about 30 individuals working at this plantation.



Coca Leaf Plant.

Source: Crista Castellanos via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Coca_leaf_hoja_colombia_crista_castellanos.JPG, CC BY-SA 4.0

The discovery of the new narco plantation/lab is significant because in April 2017, Honduran news source *El Heraldo* reported the discovery of the first ever coca plantation in the Olancho Department of Honduras. At that time, authorities believed traffickers were simply testing new growth sites as nothing like this had ever occurred in Honduras. Now, authorities are realizing that this is not the case.

As the fourth passage from *Estrategia y Negocios* discusses, these discoveries demonstrate that “drug cartels are looking for new growth sites. It also reveals how traffickers are re-thinking their operational schemes and evolving to grow cocaine plants in other countries.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“A joint operation conducted by Honduran Armed forces led to the discovery of the second cocaine plantation and narco lab to ever be found in Honduras.”

Source: “Honduras localiza cultivo de hoja de coca y un narcolaboratorio (Honduras Finds Cocaine Plantation and Narco Lab),” *La Prensa*, 17 May 2019. <https://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/1285195-410/honduras-localiza-cultivo-de-hoja-de-coca-y-un-narcolaboratorio>

A joint operation conducted by Honduran Armed forces led to the discovery of the second cocaine plantation and narco lab to ever be found in Honduras. The plantation had 40,000 plants. Following the discovery of this plantation and lab, soldiers searched areas around the lab to ensure there were no additional growth sites within the vicinity.

Source: “Encuentran Narcolaboratorio y 40 Mil Plantas de Coca en Colon (Authorities Discover Narco Lab and 40,000 Cocaine Plants in Colon, Honduras),” *Inter.hon*, 17 May 2019. <https://inter.hn/noticias/encuentran-narcolaboratorio-y-40-mil-plantas-de-coca-en-colon>

Authorities discovered a narco lab at the site. Items seized from the lab included 20 sacks of cocaine leaves ready for processing, 200 gallons of gasoline, 200 gallons of diesel and other chemical precursors needed to produce cocaine base. Authorities estimated that approximately 30 individuals worked at the lab.

Source: “Honduras: Incautan plantación clandestina de coca en Esquipulas del Norte (Clandestine Coca Plantation Seized in Esquipulas del Norte, Honduras),” *El Heraldo*, 27 April 2017. <https://www.elheraldo.hn/sucesos/1067087-466/honduras-incautan-plantaci%C3%B3n-clandestina-de-coca-en-esquipulas-del-norte>

Three months of surveillance and intelligence collection aided Honduran authorities in discovering the countries’ first ever coca plantation on 27 April 2017. The plantation itself was located on top of a mountain in the Palos Blancos village of Olancho. From this location, drug traffickers were growing more than 10,000 cocaine plants and 1,200 seedlings.

Source: “Honduras descubre plantación de coca (Cocaine Plantation Discovered in Honduras),” *Estrategia y Negocios*, 7 June 2017. <https://www.estrategiaynegocios.net/centroamericaymundo/1078918-330/honduras-descubre-plantaci%C3%B3n-de-coca>

Army intelligence agents believe that the discovery of the this cocaine plantation in Honduras demonstrates that drug cartels are looking for new growth sites. It also reveals how traffickers are re-thinking their operational schemes and evolving to grow cocaine plants in other countries. At the time authorities discovered the first plantation/lab, analysts indicated that this new phenomenon should put other countries on alert as the same thing could happen within their sovereign territory.