

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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**FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**



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# OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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## Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Chuck Bartles

Ryan Berg

Robert Feldman

Ray Finch

Les Grau

Cindy Hurst

Karen Kaya

Kevin McCauley

Michael Rubin

Matthew Stein

Lucas Winter

Jacob Zenn

**Editor-in-Chief**

Karen Kaya

**Editor**

Dodge Billingsley

**Creative Director**

Susan Littleton

**Publisher**

Thomas Tolare

### ON THE COVER:

*Ukrainian aviation unit in DR Congo.*

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrainian\\_aviation\\_unit\\_DR\\_Congo\\_\(26858301702\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrainian_aviation_unit_DR_Congo_(26858301702).jpg) Attribution: CC x 2.0

## Chinese Brigade Makes Improvements to Command Information System

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

A brigade in China's 71st Group Army reportedly has upgraded and perfected its command information system, improving speed and accuracy in firepower response time. The accompanying article, published in the official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army, *Jiefangjun Bao*, explains that the command-and-control software originally issued to the brigade was limited and inadequate. There were delays in coordination between detachments, which affected the firepower response time. According to the article, to improve the overall function of the command information system, leaders within the brigade assembled a team of key personnel with technical specialties. Experts from factories and scientific communities also participated. The new upgraded command information system allows real-time data sharing and precise air defense

and targeting. If the report is accurate, the effort demonstrates the effectiveness of President Xi Jinping's push to foster an environment of independent innovation at all levels. There is no mention in the article about whether the PLA will distribute the improved system to other brigades. However, according to a brigade commander mentioned in the article, they will continue to strengthen the development of infor-

“The battlefield situation changes constantly. ...The difference between victory or defeat can occur within a millisecond.”

mation systems, explore and innovate combat methods and training methods, and further strengthen the troops' expert capabilities in winning modern wars.

**Source:** Liu Renhao and Gao Junfeng, “数据共享提升体系作战能力第七十一集团军某旅升级完善指挥信息系统 (Brigade in 71st Group Army Upgrades, Perfects Command Information System, Data Sharing Boosts ‘Systems of Systems’ Operations Capability,” *Jiefangjun Bao* (PLA Daily, the official newspaper of the PLA), 14 February 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjmap/content/2022-02/14/content\\_309298.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjmap/content/2022-02/14/content_309298.htm)

*...By upgrading and improving the command information system, this brigade shortened the firepower response time, effectively enhancing the unit's combat power.*

*Previously, a command and control software was provided to the brigade. However, after several combat-realistic drills, troops found that, due to the limited capabilities of the command information system, delays appeared during information transmission, easily leading to situations where coordination between detachments was lacking and delays occurred with respect to firepower response.*

*"The battlefield situation changes constantly. In the blink of an eye, and the difference between victory or defeat can occur within a millisecond."*

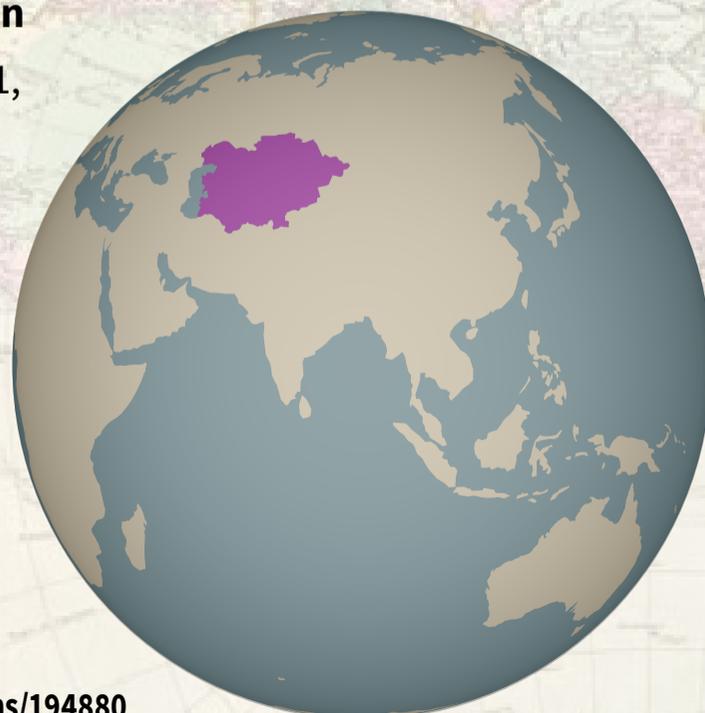
*"Real-time data sharing provides technical support for 'system of systems' operations and joint operations." The brigade's commander explained that in the next step, they will continue to strengthen the development of information systems, explore and innovate combat methods and training methods, and further temper the troops' expert capabilities in winning modern wars.*

## 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>



## China and Taiwan Explain Key Differences Between Cross-Strait Relations and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked widespread concern that China could similarly invade Taiwan, although not everyone agrees with this analogy. The accompanying passages from Chinese and Taiwanese sources consider the key differences between Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China-Taiwan relations.

Two days before Russian forces invaded Ukraine, China's *Central News Agency* released an article in which a high-level Taiwan national security official describes Taiwan as strategically located within the first island chain in East Asia, providing an important line of defense to keep communist forces "from crossing the first island chain and threatening the U.S. mainland." The article also argues that unlike Ukraine, which shares a common border with Russia, the Taiwan Strait offers a natural barrier between China and Taiwan, making it harder for communist forces to attack across the sea.

Finally, the article argues that Taiwan is critical to the development of automobiles, smart phones, wind power, and military equipment, which makes it more important than Ukraine to the international supply chain. The article also states that China sought to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), arguing that "triggering boycott or sanctions by the CPTPP member states, which are mostly in the Indo-Pacific region, will not be something that China wants to see." The CPTPP is a free trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand, Singapore, and Vietnam.

Four days after the invasion began, Taiwan's only English-language newspaper, *Taipei Times*, published an article describing further differences between the Ukraine and Taiwan issues. First, Taiwan "has the advantage of being a mountainous smattering of islands that have been building up defenses for decades." Next, the article opines that

sanctions against China would likely have "a far more acute sting" due to the country's economy heavy integration with the rest of the world.

Finally, like the first article, the author talks about the importance of Taiwan to the global supply chain. According to this article, "The world relies on Taiwan for semiconductors, meaning that a Chinese invasion would at best disrupt supply and at worst rewrite the technological and geopolitical world order." In comparing the two leaders, the article describes Russian President Vladimir Putin as a tyrant in charge, who fears his time is running out, and Chinese President Xi Jinping as more calculating and prudent and who believes he only has to wait. Despite these arguments, the second article warns, "no one can predict the calculations happening in the halls of power, and as the Ukraine crisis has shown, anything is possible." The article ends on a note for the people of Taiwan to be prepared.

Chinese sources, such as the third article, published by China's official English-language news outlet, *China Daily*, explain that the situation in Ukraine involves a dispute between two sovereign countries, whereas the question of Taiwan is a domestic matter. However, the article also warns that while Beijing will try to unify Taiwan with the mainland peacefully, the central government will never exclude taking military action as an option.

“We have seen that some people emphasize the principle of sovereignty on the Ukraine issue, but continue to undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity on the Taiwan question. This is a naked double standard.”

—Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

**Source:** Wen Kui-hsiang, “國安高層：台海與俄烏情勢三大不同 嚴防中國認知戰 (High-Level National Security Official: Three Major Differences Between Taiwan Strait Situation and the Russia-Ukraine Situation; Guarding Against China's Cognitive Warfare),” *Taipei Chung-yang T'ung-hsun-she* (The Republic of China's central news agency), 22 February 2022. <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aip/202202220333.aspx>

*First, in terms of geostrategy, Taiwan is in the first island chain in East Asia, which is extremely important for the United States to containing the expansion of China's communist forces and for maintaining the military, commercial and shipping security of the Indo-Pacific region. It is an important defense line to prevent the communist forces from crossing the first island chain and threatening the U.S. mainland.*

*Second, the geographical environment is very different, and the U.S. commitment to cross-Strait security is clear and firm. The senior national security officials said that unlike Ukraine, which is close to Russia, the natural barrier formed by the Taiwan Strait makes it far more difficult for the Communist forces to cross the sea and attack Taiwan than it is for Russia to invade Ukraine. Moreover, the United States is more interested in the Indo-Pacific region, having U.S. military deployed there, whereas the Russia-Ukraine conflict has a limited impact on U.S. military deployment.*

*Third, the importance to the international supply chain is very different. Taiwan holds a key position in the international supply chain for post-pandemic recovery. According to a senior national security official, Taiwan's economic strength and high-tech industries...are crucial to the development of global industries, such as automobiles, smartphones, wind power generation, and armaments. Even China cannot escape Taiwan's industrial impact.*

*...China is also seeking to join the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership). At this time, unilaterally triggering disputes, boycotts, or sanctions by the CPTPP member states, which are mostly located in the Indo-Pacific region, is not be something that China wants to see.*

## Continued: China and Taiwan Explain Key Differences Between Cross-Strait Relations and Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

**Source:** "Taiwan is Different from Ukraine," *Taipei Times* (Taiwan's only English-language newspaper and which aims to give Taiwan's perspective to the international community), 28 February 2022. <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2022/03/01/2003773950>

*First and most evident, Ukraine shares a long land border with its bellicose neighbor, while Taiwan has the advantage of being a mountainous smattering of islands that have been building up defenses for decades. Ukraine was caught off-guard when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and has been playing catch-up ever since. Most experts are confident that invading Taiwan would be immensely lengthy and costly for China, with no guarantee of success — especially with US involvement.*

*Sanctions against China would also likely have a far more acute sting, given its massive economy's integration with the rest of the world. Beijing will certainly be watching closely to see how far countries are willing to go in sanctioning Russia, and adjust its risk calculation accordingly.*

*Perhaps most importantly, Taiwan is of critical economic interest to the countries poised to take action in its defense. The world relies on Taiwan for semiconductors, meaning that a Chinese invasion would at best disrupt supply and at worst rewrite the technological and geopolitical world order.*

*As unfathomable as it might seem to ignore these immense risks, Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown the world that when a tyrant is in charge, the war room is always open. Yet Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) is not the same as Putin, and neither are their countries.*

**Source:** "Tsai Ing-wen's Empathy For Ukraine Ridiculous," *China Daily* (China's official English-language news), 24 February 2022. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202202/24/WS62177fafa310cdd39bc88c12.html>

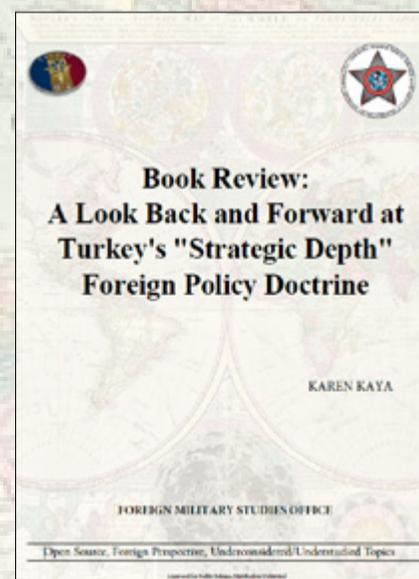
*What is happening between Ukraine and Russia is a dispute between two sovereign countries. The question of Taiwan is an internal affair of China...*

*The mainland will try whatever it can to seek the peaceful reunification of the island, which it believes is in the interest of the Chinese people across the Strait. But military action is always an option the central government will never exclude.*

## Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Foreign Policy Doctrine

Karen Kaya  
February 2020

"Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)" is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey's position in his book "Strategic Depth." From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/309386>

## New Development in PLA Close Air Support

By Kevin McCauley  
OE Watch Commentary

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force recognizes strikes close to maneuver units are difficult and is taking steps to improve their efficacy. The accompanying excerpt from a recent *PLA Daily* article discusses a new development to improve PLA combat effectiveness by training Army officers from reconnaissance units to provide guidance for air-to-ground strikes. The PLA Air Force defines "close air fire support" as air strikes in support of the Army or Navy against enemy forward and shallow targets, usually according to a predetermined plan. Strike targets are those that directly affect the maneuver unit. Key enemy targets for air strikes include tactical missiles, artillery, armor groupings, landing ships, fire support ships, command posts, communications facilities, and ammunition and oil depots. Target guidance groups identify the target, time, and other requirements, coordinating with Army maneuver and fire support units in the area. The target guidance group designates the target via radio communication using landmarks, smoke, and other means.

The PLA Air Force has sent these target guidance groups from bomber and air assault units to the Army and Navy to coordinate and guide air strikes against surface targets. The team leader is usually flight personnel with staff that includes combat pilot and communications personnel. They guide the aircraft to the target, providing parameters such as time and distance, as well as observe the strike effect and correct for subsequent strikes.

However, the PLA Air Force has too few target guidance groups to provide to the Army or Navy and is working to remedy this problem. The article describes a base in the Western Theater Command Air Force that is training Army officers from reconnaissance units to provide guidance for air-to-ground strikes. Reportedly hundreds of guidance personnel



**The J-10 multirole fighter can mount laser-guided bombs, anti-ship missiles and land attack missiles.**

Source: [https://eng.mil.ru/en/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12377819@egNews](https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12377819@egNews) Attribution: Wiki Commons

from different military branches including command, reconnaissance, and special operations officers and troops have been trained. In one training event, a guide designated a camouflaged enemy command post that an aircraft struck with precision munitions. At the same time, the article states that problems remained between the services in the integration of data standards, terminology, and tactical understanding. An example was a failed training event where aircraft could not strike the intended target due to poor communications signals and a misunderstanding in terminology despite advanced planning. Training of Army personnel to provide target guidance removes the burden from the Air Force and likely will increase the ability of ground maneuver units to call in close air support against targets that artillery cannot address. The article also states that this development will increase jointness across the PLA.

“In view of the issue of air combat support, they organized special training for command, reconnaissance and special operations officers and soldiers of the services and arms, compiled training materials, arranged specialized forces such as flight instructors and aviation engineers to give lectures, carried out inspection and training based on tactical live fire, and improved the joint quality of officers and soldiers in one move.”

**Source:** “A Base of the Western Theater Air Force Improves the Terminal Execution Capability of the Joint Operations System of Systems – Army Guides are Active at the Air Force Drill Grounds (西部战区空军某基地提升联合作战体系末端执行力 -- 陆军引导员活跃在空军演兵场)” *People's Liberation Army Daily*, 10 February 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-02/10/content\\_309058.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-02/10/content_309058.htm)

*Taking combat training and jointness as a guideline, we must implement the concept of joint training to all levels of strategy, campaign and tactics, and solve the problems existing in the training field to a certain extent, such as joint immobility, joint incompatibility and joint disjointedness and other problems. In particular, we should solve the chronic disease of "form and spirit are not connected" at the end of combat effectiveness, so as to lay a good foundation and gather strength for the gradual development of higher-stage joint training. A base of the air force in the Western Theater has promoted the front-line officers and soldiers of the services and arms to improve their joint literacy and joint combat skills, which is worthy of recognition.*

## Russian Public Approval of Military Likely To Decline over Use of Conscripts in Ukraine

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Alongside Russia’s improvement in combat readiness over the past decade, we have seen a significant improvement in Russian public attitudes toward the military. As reported earlier, (see: “Russian Patriotism and Values,” *OE Watch*, August 2020) polls suggest that Russians regard their military as one of the most trusted institutions, with the majority claiming that some form of military service should be mandatory for young Russian men. However, as the accompanying excerpt from the moderate source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* suggests, the ongoing conflict with Ukraine may change public attitudes toward the military.

The article reports that the official representative of Russia’s Ministry of Defense (MoD), Igor Konashenkov, admitted on 9 March that conscripts participated in the “special operation” in Ukraine. As the article points out, this admission took on added poignancy since the day prior, President Putin had congratulated women on International Women’s Day and asserted that only contract soldiers were partic-

ipating in the operation. As the article suggests, the Russian MoD only revealed this information after “the Ukrainian media distributed several videos showing young people who said they were captured Russian servicemen and not contract soldiers.” The article stresses that Putin had earlier instructed the MoD “to categorically exclude the involvement of conscripts for any tasks on the territory of Ukraine.” The article asserts that “the perpetrators of misinforming the president are planned to be identified and punished.” If such deception continues, public attitudes toward the military will likely decline.

“...the official representative of the RF Ministry of Defense, Igor Konashenkov, admitted that conscripts participated in the special operation...”

**Source:** Vladimir Mukhin, “Минобороны России признало участие срочников в спецоперации (The Russian Defense Ministry acknowledged the participation of conscripts in the special operation),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (moderate source), 9 March 2022. [https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-03-09/2\\_8386\\_president.html](https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-03-09/2_8386_president.html)

...Meanwhile, the official representative of the RF Ministry of Defense, Igor Konashenkov, admitted that conscripts participated in the special operation. Earlier, the Ukrainian media distributed several videos showing young people who say they are captured Russian servicemen and not contract soldiers. Russian officials denied this information until March 9, and President Vladimir Putin, congratulating women on International Women’s Day [8 March], confidently said that only contract soldiers were participating in the operation. “I would like to emphasize that soldiers who are serving in military service do not and will not participate in hostilities. There will be no additional call-up of reservists from the reserve,” the head of the Russian Federation said.

The position has now been corrected. “Unfortunately, several facts of the presence of conscripts in parts of the Russian armed forces involved in a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine were discovered,” Konashenkov said. - Almost all such servicemen have already been withdrawn to the territory of Russia. At the same time, a sabotage group of the national battalion attacked one of the units performing the tasks of logistical support. A number of servicemen, including conscripts, were captured.” According to Konashenkov, measures are now being taken to prevent conscripts from being sent to combat areas and to release captured soldiers.

Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Peskov said that Putin was informed that his instruction “to categorically exclude the involvement of conscripts for any tasks on the territory of Ukraine” was carried out. Now the perpetrators of misinforming the president are planned to be identified and punished....



**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.**

## Kremlin Pushing False Narrative About Ukraine to Russian School Children

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin has cleansed the Russian information space has been cleansed of almost every source daring to contradict the government-approved narrative. This unanimity of thinking has now spread to the Russian educational system. The first excerpt from the official news agency, TASS, describes a recently mandated school lesson developed by Russia's Ministry of Education "dedicated to the liberation mission in Ukraine [which] was watched by more than 5 million schoolchildren." Among other topics, the lesson "explained the danger NATO poses" to Russia, while stressing that "the Russian military does not strike at cities, but disables only the military infrastructure, so nothing threatens the civilian population."

The second excerpt comes from an article from Russian-run opposition news source *Novaya Gazeta*, which was forced to suspend operations in late March due to censorship pressure. The article recounts what happened to a 6th grader, when

during this history lesson, he "expressed his position on the 'special operation'" in Ukraine. The student objected to the teacher's claims that "Ukraine started [the war], and it will end when Ukraine capitulates," also "that Nazism is flourishing among Ukrainians." After this classroom incident, the teacher apparently reported the student's disturbance to the authorities. As the article points out, a few days later, police visited the apartment of the student's family, turning off the electricity and leaving a summons for an interrogation. The article concludes by quoting the 6th grade student, who said, "I think the teachers are wrong. We are told that the people of Ukraine were brainwashed, but it seems to me that we were brainwashed here."

“I think the teachers are wrong. We are told that the people of Ukraine were brainwashed, but it seems to me that we were brainwashed here.”

**Source:** "Открытый урок 'Защитники мира' посмотрели более 5 млн школьников (More than 5 million schoolchildren watched the open lesson 'Defenders of Peace')," TASS (official Russian news agency), 3 March 2022. <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/13956837>

*The All-Russian open lesson of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, dedicated to the liberation mission in Ukraine, was watched by more than 5 million schoolchildren, the press service of the Institute for the Study of Childhood, Family and Education of the Russian Academy of Education reports.*

*"More than 5 million schoolchildren watched the open lesson. During the lesson, the audience was told in detail the background to today's events and explained what danger NATO poses to our country. The lesson also helped to figure out how to distinguish truth from lies in the flow of information," the report says.... As noted in the text, a video was shown during the lesson, which told about the common history of Russia and Ukraine, traditions, common holidays and cultural heritage....*

*On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a special military operation in Ukraine in response to the appeal of the leaders of the Donbass republics for help. He stressed that Moscow's plans do not include the occupation of Ukrainian territories, the goal is the demilitarization and denazification of the country. As stated in the Russian Defense Ministry, the Russian military does not strike at cities, but disable only the military infrastructure, so nothing threatens the civilian population.*

**Source:** Irina Lukyanova, "Диссидент из 6-го 'А' (Dissident from the 6th A)," *Novaya Gazeta* (independent Russian opposition news source), 9 March 2022. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2022/03/07/dissident-iz-6-go-a>

*At a history lesson, a Moscow schoolboy expressed his position on the "special operation." After that, the police came to his house and turned off the electricity.*

*Kirill... is 12 years old, he studies in the 6th grade of a Moscow school. His mother Natalia says that the boy has Ukrainian roots, he attended the Ukrainian Cultural Center. What is happening now between Russia and Ukraine hurts him.*

*On Friday, March 4, sixth graders had their usual history lesson. Cyril himself tells about what happened:*

*—The teacher said: "Actually, this is not discussed with the sixth graders, but if you want to understand what is happening, then ask questions." And I started asking questions. I asked: "Why did Putin start a war?" To this the teacher replied that it was a "special operation." She said: "I don't know exactly where our troops are now, but if they had stopped halfway, the Ukrainian aggression would have continued." A small part of the class was on my side, they also asked questions....*

*After that, I asked the question, why did someone start this at all and when will it all end? She said that Ukraine started it, and it will end when Ukraine capitulates. She also told us that Nazism is flourishing among Ukrainians...*

*This opposition of the sixth graders did not go unnoticed....*

*The next day, Sunday, Kirill was at home alone. Mom left for work. At this time, two policemen began to knock on the apartment, but Kirill did not open it. They knocked for about half an hour, then turned off the electricity in the apartment, left a summons "to be called for an interrogation" under the door and left. The summons contains an illegibly written date of the interrogation and a threat to "subject to arrest" in case of non-appearance....*

*Kirill calmly explains his position: "I think the teachers are wrong. We are told that the people of Ukraine were brainwashed, but it seems to me that we were brainwashed here...."*

## Kremlin Recasting Ukraine Invasion as “Third Patriotic War”

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Stiff Ukrainian resistance and strong support from the West, including economic sanctions, military supplies, and humanitarian aid, have hampered the Kremlin’s plans. As the conflict drags on, the Kremlin’s strategic objectives in Ukraine could change, and along with them, the narrative surrounding the conflict. The accompanying excerpt from an article in the popular pro-Kremlin source *Vzglyad* reflects the start of such a transformation. It asserts that Russians now perceive the “special operation” in Ukraine as “a local episode of the war between Russia and the United States” or “as the third Patriotic war, but in a different format.”

As the second source from *Youtube* indicates the *Vzglyad* article is actually a synopsis of a video from a pro-Kremlin blogger that has gathered more than 3 million views since its release in early March. The author, Yuri Podolyaka, claims that the so-called “special operation” in

Ukraine has resulted in “an unprecedented patriotic upsurge” among Russians, and that “Russia is very well prepared for this war, including on the economic front.” He goes on to assert that “the imposition of sanctions suggests that the West does not understand the Russian mentality and how Russian society lives.” Russians are happy to see that the elite are being punished. The author concludes by repeating Kremlin claims that Russia invaded Ukraine “to protect people from bullying and genocide by the Kiev regime,” and that “Russia prevented the appearance of nuclear weapons at the disposal of the Kiev regime.” This global struggle, the author proclaims, will “result in a new world. The old familiar world will no longer exist.”

“It is noteworthy that Russia is very well prepared for this war, including on the economic front. . .”

**Source:** Rafael Fakhruddinov, “Юрий Подоляка: Россия подготовилась к войне с США за передел мира (Yuri Podolyaka: Russia prepared for war with the United States for the redivision of the world),” *Vzglyad* (popular, pro-Kremlin source), 10 March 2022. <https://vz.ru/news/2022/3/10/1147846.html>

*“Russians perceive the current Russian special operation in Ukraine as a local episode of the war between Russia and the United States, as the third Patriotic war, but in a different format,” said popular Ukrainian video blogger Yuriy Podolyaka, who is based in Sevastopol. “Events in the information and psychological war are no less important than what is happening now on the fronts in Ukraine.... But what I really see in Russia is an unprecedented patriotic upsurge.”*

*According to him, many Russians perceive the current special operation of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine as necessary - to liberate the Ukrainian state from the clique that unleashed the war in 2014. “Ukrainians preferred not to notice the massacre for eight years. And war tends to come to you if you don't notice it. However, what is happening in Ukraine is only a local moment of the war between Russia and the United States for the redivision of the world. And the main events are yet to come. They will occur after the end of the operation in Ukraine,” the expert is sure.*

*According to him, the world is waiting for a powerful economic crisis. “It is noteworthy that Russia is very well prepared for this war, including on the economic front.... That is why Russians are not afraid of either the dollar exchange rate or other factors. Yes, the Russians will live financially worse, like the rest of the world. But this is not the effect that the West was counting on,” the analyst emphasized.*

*The blogger noted: The West expected that the Russians, accustomed to living well, with a deterioration in their financial situation, would begin to fight with the authorities. “The imposition of sanctions suggests that the West does not understand the Russian mentality and how Russian society lives....*

*“I want all Ukrainians and Russians to understand that the Ukrainian operation is just an episode in the struggle, the result of which will be a new world. The old familiar world will no longer exist...” Podolyaka predicted.*

*“...Recall that Vladimir Putin, in his address on the morning of February 24, directly outlined one of the main goals of the special operation - to protect people from bullying and genocide by the Kiev regime. In addition, Russia prevented the appearance of nuclear weapons at the disposal of the Kiev regime. The Supreme Commander directly indicated that Moscow would not allow such a development of events.”*

**Source:** Yuri Podolyaka, “Война на Украине: а что в России – переворот, на который рассчитывают в Киеве, он будет или нет? (War in Ukraine: what about in Russia - a coup that Kyiv is counting on, will it happen or not?),” *YouTube*, 10 March 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWpPW77tvHg>

*...The Third World War began in 2014, and since then, Russia has been preparing to fight—particularly on the economic front....*

*...The fight today in Ukraine is not about Ukraine, but rather it's a fight with the US which will determine how the world is divided....*

*...Western experts made the fatal mistake of believing that economic sanctions, which will cause Russian people to live poorly, would somehow prompt a revolt against the authorities.... They simply don't understand the Russian mentality.... They are happy to see the oligarchs punished, happy to see Western companies leave the country... Western economic pressure has forced the Kremlin leadership to make fundamental economic reforms which the people have been clamoring for...*

*...The only thing Russians worry about are large personnel losses in Ukraine....*



General Dvornikov inspecting BARS servicemen.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12383975@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12383975@egNews), Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Reservists in training.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://function.mil.ru/images/upload/2019/rezerv\\_550.jpg](https://function.mil.ru/images/upload/2019/rezerv_550.jpg), Attribution: CC BY 4.0



BARS servicemen in training.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Static-part-3/i-GMsTdcM#>



BARS training site.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://function.mil.ru/images/upload/2019/UVO1\\_29.08.21\\_550.JPG](https://function.mil.ru/images/upload/2019/UVO1_29.08.21_550.JPG), Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Russia's BARS Reserve System Takes Shape

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles discuss Russia's latest effort to form a functional operational reserve system. Unlike past efforts, which Russia poorly resourced and quickly abandoned, the National Army Combat Reserve (BARS) system appears to have sufficient resources and is now taking shape (see "Developments in Russia's BARS Reserve System, *OE Watch*, #1, 2022) The official *Russian Federation Ministry of Defense* website describes how the military is implementing BARS in the Southern Military District and trained 30,000 personnel in 2021. The excerpted article from Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* notes that Russia is making large investments in BARS and plans to spend roughly \$209.6 million on its human mobilization reserve from 2022 to 2024. The article also mentions that the Southern Military District's total reserve end strength is envisaged to eventually be 38,000 personnel,

“As part of a three-day training session with BARS [National Army Combat Reserve] Southern Military District units, about 30 thousand reserve servicemen were trained in four months of 2021.

a number sufficient to man an Army Corps. A regional website called *Artemovskiy Yegorshinskiye Vesti* discusses the motivations of a soldier from the Sverdlovsk region for joining BARS, which include competitive pay and boredom from COVID restrictions. The *Artemovskiy Yegorshinskiye Vesti* piece is important because it confirms that BARS is being implemented in additional military districts, in this case the Central Military District.

**Source:** “В новом году в ЮВО продолжится подготовка резервистов на базе более 20 учебных объектов (In the New Year, the Southern Military District will continue training reservists at more than 20 educational facilities),” *Russian Federation Ministry of Defense* (official website of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense), 9 January 2022. [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12402489@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12402489@egNews)

*In the Southern Military District, on the basis of field camps, the practice of conducting training sessions for the territorial defense units of the National Army Combat Reserve (BARS) [Боевой Армейский Резерв Страны (БАРС)] will continue. "At 9 training grounds of the district, 23 training and material bases have been deployed, 240 officers and sergeants have been selected to conduct training sessions with reservists," General of the Army A. Dvornikov specified.*

*In addition, at the direction of General of the Army A. Dvornikov, the command of the territorial defense units of the Southern Military District will be involved in tactical exercises at various levels during the winter training period. "To involve the command staff of the reserve military units in bilateral regimental and battalion tactical exercises using the command-staff method,"...*

*For training in the field, the training and material base of the reserve military units has been equipped and weapons and military equipment have been prepared for use...As part of a three-day training session with BARS Southern Military District units, about 30 thousand reserve servicemen were trained in four months of 2021.*

## Continued: Russia's BARS Reserve System Takes Shape

“Formation of the MLR [human mobilization reserve] will continue for the next three years. [We plan to spend] 7.3 billion rubles [\$95.6 million] from the budget under the article "Mobilization and Civilian Environment Training" in 2021, with over 16 billion rubles [\$209.6 million] being spent for these purposes each year from 2022-2024.”

**Source:** “В России начали создавать новую мобилизационную систему: Вооруженные силы РФ укрепляют резервистами (New Mobilization System Began to Be Created in Russia: Russian Federation Armed Forces Are Being Strengthened with Reservists),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Russian newspaper), 24 December 2021. [https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-12-24/11\\_8335\\_army5.html](https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-12-24/11_8335_army5.html)

*The state seriously concerned itself with creating a reserve in case of a big war and technogenic disasters... This is happening in post-perestroika Russia for the first time. It is planned that the army combat reserve for each district will consist of several tens of thousands of persons...*

*The presidential edict on establishing a mobilization reserve was not published fully anywhere in open sources, because the activation and organization of activities of mobilization resources are classified subjects. Experts declared unanimously, though, that this is a very expensive project for Russia. There was no information in the unclassified part of the document as to how many people it was proposed to involve, in what time periods to develop the reserve, and how much money to spend on it. State Duma deputies presumed that in conducting an experiment of activating a human mobilization reserve (MLR) [мобилизационного людского резерва (МЛР)], as a minimum it can be a matter of a brigade numbering around 5,000 reservists, and its upkeep will cost the budget approximately 1.5 billion rubles per year [\$19.7 million]...*

*But the activation of reservist units and formations already had begun in the Armed Forces in August 2021. Colonel Konstantin Zapatotskiy, chief of Southern Military District Organization-Mobilization Directorate, announced that with conclusion of the first contract, a lump-sum payment will be made to the reservist: up to 66,000 rubles [\$865] for an officer and up to 39,000 rubles [\$511] for a private or sergeant...*

*In August 2021 the Southern Military District Organization-Mobilization Directorate had been assigned the task of bringing the numerical strength of reservists to 38,000. It will be possible to activate an entire army corps from them, and this considering the fact that three combined-arms armies are already deployed in the district. It is not known precisely how many managed to be recruited in reality, but it was reported that training sessions and exercises already were being held with reservists in the fall. Formation of the MLR will continue for the next three years. It is planned to spend 7.3 billion rubles [\$95.6 million] from the budget under the article "Mobilization and Civilian Environment Training" in 2021, with over 16 billion rubles [\$209.6 million] being spent for these purposes each year from 2022-2024.*

**Source:** Aleksey Moskvitin, “‘Партизаны’ вновь в строю. Резервист рассказывает о военных сборах ('Partisans' in Formation Again; A Reservist Describes Training Camp),” *Artemovskiy Yegorshinskiye Vesti* (regional website covering the Sverdlovsk Oblast), 10 January 2022. <https://vestart.ru/grand/6137-partizany-vnov-v-stroyu-rezervist-rasskazyvaet-o-voennykh-sborakh.html>

*One of the first in Artemovskiy to sign a contract to serve in the Russian Federation Armed Forces mobilization reserve has attended three weeks of training camp at the Yelan' garrison. Here, he shares his impressions. Not many in Artemovskiy are keen to serve as army reservists, but perhaps they should be. You get a decent uplift to your main salary, and a distraction from the day job. This is the story of 23-year-old reservist Vladislav Skutin, who signed a three-year contract with the Defense Ministry.*

*"What made you decide to do this?"—we asked him. "I probably wanted a break from the pandemic and QR codes. You can't go out anywhere so I decided to give it a go," is how Skutin, a service desk worker at Yandex Taxi, began the conversation. "I was bored of the same stuff day in day out, I saw a notice about the military reserve, and decided to try it out. I passed the examination at the military commissariat in mid-September, and I was accepted into the reserve."*

*Vladislav served his time as a conscripted soldier in Podmoskov'ye, in the town of Kashira. He spent a year in an HQ working as a radio and telephone operator, without getting to experience all the hardships and deprivations of army life. And he wanted to see what he had missed.*

*"I went to the camp in Yelan' as a signaler, in the rank of corporal," the "reservist" said. "For me the most unforgettable thing was living in November frosts in 50-bed army tents with iron stoves, bunks, and washbasins. Conscripts from the Yelan' garrison brought us firewood and warm water."...*

*"We were given the same uniform as National Guardsmen, but without the insignia. So we looked different from regular soldiers," he recalls. "Within the unit and outside it, we were called 'partisans.'" Vlad observed that "most reservists sign the contract and go to the training camps for the money." "But I went for a change of circumstances and new experiences." For three weeks of training, our interviewee received about 20,000 rubles [\$267] into his account plus monthly reservist payments of several thousand rubles, and the average wage for his main job. Enough to live on...*

## Russia Fields the “Zemledeliye” Engineering System for Remote Mining



**Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM).**

Source: <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Dress-rehearsal-of-2020-Moscow-Victory-Day-Parade/i-2SVLP7k/A>, Attribution: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

By Charles Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

Russian Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRSs)—such as the 120mm BM-21 Grad, 220mm BM-27 Uragan, and 300mm BM-30 Smerch—have rockets that can deploy scatterable mines considerable distances. Although Russian MLRSs can all employ these types of rockets, in practice they are typically only deployed by the BM-27 Uragan, whose 9M59 rocket can deploy 9 PTM-3 antitank mines, and BM-30 Smerch, whose 9M55K4 rocket can deploy 25 PTM-3 antitank mines. The BM-21 Grad, the only MLRS type at brigade/division level, is capable of firing the 9M22K2/9M28K scatterable mine rocket, but rarely does so because the 9M22K2/9M28K munition is only capable of deploying three PTM-3 antitank mines. Creating just a 1km minefield requires a minimum of 90 9M22K2/9M28K munitions. If the intent were to deter or slow a tank battalion, an entire battalion of BM-21s, 18 launchers, would be required.

“The installation of minefields with the help of the “Zemledeliye” ISDM [Engineering System for Remote Mining] has a number of advantages. In particular, the speed of laying minefields has been increased, especially in hard-to-reach areas. And the ability of mines to deactivate or self-destruct at a given time ensures safe and quick clearance after the cessation of hostilities.”

The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian newspaper *Izvestia* and Russian defense-related weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* discuss Russia’s recent fielding of the “Zemledeliye” Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM). The Zemledeliye ISDM is a dedicated system for deploying scatterable mines at a distance of up to 15km. The system consists of a launch vehicle with two pods of 25 rockets each, a transport-loading vehicle, and transport-launch containers with rockets equipped with various types of mines. The *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* article notes that the Zemledeliye ISDM will greatly increase the speed of mine laying, and that these mines have the capability to deactivate or self-destruct. According to the *Izvestiya* article, the military developed new tactics at the recent Zapad-2021 strategic exercises to take full advantage of Zemledeliye’s capabilities. These tactics consist of using the Zemledeliye in conjunction with a TOS-1A Solntsepek thermobaric rocket launcher to create a ‘fire field.’ *Izvestiya* also explains that the military is only fielding these systems in engineer brigades and engineer regiments.

**Source:** Oleg Falichev, “«Земледелие» в полосе наступления: Инженерные войска ЦВО впервые получают новую уникальную систему дистанционного минирования (‘Zemledeliye’ in the offensive zone: Engineering Troops of the Central Military District will receive a new unique remote mining system for the first time),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly newspaper focusing on military and defense industry issues), 8 February 2022. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/65708>

*Of course, the engineering troops of the Central Military District do not forget about solving the main tasks of combat training. It is especially gratifying to note in this regard that the process of re-equipment with new equipment is actively underway. In particular, today the units are receiving the ISDM [Engineering System for Remote Mining] “Zemledeliye” remote mining system. For the first time, she will come to a separate engineering brigade of the Central Military District, stationed in Bashkiria.*

*...The installation of minefields with the help of the “Zemledeliye” ISDM has a number of advantages. In particular, the speed of laying minefields has been increased, especially in hard-to-reach areas. And the ability of mines to deactivate or self-destruct at a given time ensures safe and quick clearance after the cessation of hostilities.*

*The engineering system includes a combat vehicle on a KamAZ cross-country chassis, a transport-loading vehicle and transport-launch containers with engineering ammunition equipped with mines of various types. All this is a serious factor in breaking through the fortified defenses of the enemy, making passages in minefields...*

**Source:** Roman Krestul and Bogdan Stepova, “Курс «Земледелия»: юг России усилят «реактивными» минными полями: Боевые системы способны в кратчайшие сроки остановить продвижение любого противника (Course ‘Zemledeliye’: The south of Russia will be strengthened by ‘reactive’ minefields),” *Izvestiya* (large circulation Russian newspaper), 15 February 2022. <https://iz.ru/1291330/roman-krestul-bogdan-stepovoi/kurs-zemledeliia-iug-rossii-usiliat-reaktivnymi-minnymi-poliami>

*...All engineering units of the Southern MD will soon be equipped with Zemledeliye remote mining systems. This decision was made in the Ministry of Defense, sources in the military department told *Izvestiya*...The interlocutors of *Izvestiya* reported that in the future, Zemledeliye should be received by the engineer regiments of the 8th, 49th and 58th combined arms armies, which are part of the Southern MD. Separate batteries equipped with these systems will be formed in them.*

*Izvestiya has already written that in 2022 the Zemledeliye systems will also be received by the troops of the Central MD. The head of the engineer troops of the Central MD, Colonel Andrey Gandzyuk, said in January of this year that the ISDM would be received by a separate engineering brigade stationed in Bashkiriya by the end of this year.*

*The appearance of Zemledeliye in the Southern MD is more than relevant, because these systems will be used where ground operations are highly likely, military expert Vladislav Shurygin told *Izvestiya*. “In maneuver war, they are very effective,” the*

*continue on 13*

## Continued: Russia Fields the “Zemledeliye” Engineering System for Remote Mining

“In maneuver war, they [Engineering Systems for Remote Mining] are very effective,” the expert explained. “They bind the enemy, by covering flanks and performing many other missions. On the southern axis, on the one hand, there is a high terrorist threat: Central Asia is nearby, and these systems will become an effective defense system. But if a situation arises related to the same Ukraine, then Zemledeliye can also be used against modern armies equipped with high-tech weapons...”

—Russian military expert Vladislav Shurygin

**Source Continued:** Roman Krestul and Bogdan Stepova, “Курс «Земледелия»: юг России усилят «реактивными» минными полями: Боевые системы способны в кратчайшие сроки остановить продвижение любого противника (Course ‘Zemledeliye’: The south of Russia will be strengthened by ‘reactive’ minefields),” *Izvestiya* (large circulation Russian newspaper), 15 February 2022. <https://iz.ru/1291330/roman-kretcul-bogdan-stepovoi/kurs-zemledeliia-iug-rossii-usiliat-reaktivnymi-minnymi-poliami>

*expert explained. “They bind the enemy, by covering flanks and performing many other missions. On the southern axis, on the one hand, there is a high terrorist threat: Central Asia is nearby, and these systems will become an effective defense system. But if a situation arises related to the same Ukraine, then Zemledeliye can also be used against modern armies equipped with high-tech weapons...”*

*Zemledeliye was adopted by the Russian army quite recently. Tests of this engineering system were successfully completed as part of the Kavkaz-2020 exercise. Zemledeliye was involved in the run-through of the final episode at the Kapustin Yar training ground in the presence of President Vladimir Putin and top military leaders. The minefield set up by fighting vehicles delayed the advance of the mock enemy’s reserves and limited their maneuverability.*

*Now the tactics of using ISDM on the battlefield are being worked out. At the Zapad-2021 exercise, the joint use of Zemledeliye and mobile groups of heavy flamethrower [thermobaric] systems TOS-1A Solntsepek was tested. In particular, such an element of influencing the enemy as a “fire field” was tested. The Zemledeliye set up a minefield, and while the enemy was bogged down on it, the heavy flamethrowers struck them with thermobaric rockets. Then all the mines were remotely detonated. The result was a zone of total destruction, where all living things dying from fragments, or the high temperature and sudden drop of pressure.*

### **KREMLIN KONTROL** RUSSIA'S POLITICAL MILITARY REALITY by Timothy L. Thomas

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



## Russian Railroad Troops' Trains Will Be Robotized

By Les Grau  
OE Watch Commentary

Railroads are the major means of material transport in Russia. The Russian Railroad Troops are an established branch of the Russian ground forces. Before the Second Chechen War, the railroad troops built a rail line into Dagestan that proved valuable to the successful Russian effort against Chechnya. Railroad Troops build rail lines, rail bridges, switching yards, and tunnels. They also operate armored trains that mount artillery, air defense systems, and other armaments. The pro-government newspaper *Izvestia* sent two of its premier military reporters to interview the Chief of

the Railroad Troops. In addition to providing background on the railroad troops and their mission, he discussed new technical plans and training developed to incorporate robotics into the railroad troops. In particular, he notes that military scholars are conducting research and development in the uses of robotic systems to support railroad troops. Although not stated explicitly, the accompanying excerpts of the interview imply that Russian trains manned by Railroad Troops may play a role in the Ukraine invasion delivering essential combat equipment to the area of conflict.

“In addition to the current armored trains in the railroad troops (there are two railroad battalions in the separate railroad brigade in the Southern Military District), we have restored the “Amur” armored trains for special missions in zones of military conflict and restored the “Baikal” military escort trains with their cranes and supply of construction material.”

**Source:** Roman Kretsul and Alexi Ramm, “Роботизированные Системы Скоро Наудт Применение в Железнодорожных Войсках (Robotic systems will soon be adapted by Railroad Troops), *Izvestia* (Pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 11 February 2022. <https://iz.ru/1289710/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/robotizirovannye-sistemy-skoro-naidut-primenenie-v-zheleznodorozhnykh-voiskakh>

*The railroad troops are overshadowed by other structures in the Ministry of Defense. However, the importance of their work is not underestimated. For example, in 2015, railroad troops built a bypass line around Ukraine. General-Lieutenant Oleg Kosenkov, Chief of the Railroad Troops Directorate in the Ministry of Defense sat for an *Izvestia* interview that covered their experience in the construction of the Baikal-Amur Magistral (BAM) railroad and discussed the new technical plans and training developed to incorporate robotics.*

***The public knows little about the specific details of the railroad troops. What are they for and what missions do they do?***

*Railroad troops are special troops designated for the restoration, blocking, mine removal, technical oversight and construction of railroad lines. They improve their stability and capacity, construct feeder lines for railroad bridges and junctures, operate and install floating railroad bridges and support the Armed forces of our country.*

***In recent years, the Army has undergone serious reforms. Did these have an impact on the railroad troops?***

*Under the direction of the Minister of Defense, Army General Sergei Shoigu, we reorganized the structure of the railroad troops on a different vector—from a massive, one might say overdone structure to a smaller, more manageable and optimized structure. We formed 13 support centers for mobilization deployment. Their primary mission is to accumulate, maintain and upgrade weapons, military and specialized technology and material items; support mobilization support bases; and to provide administrative points for the receipt of mobilization resources which conduct priority measures. During this period, we formed four bases for construction material.*

*In 2015, we undertook more significant measures for organizing construction. As a result, the separate railroad brigade (the primary railroad troop organization) gained the status of a formation consisting of separate military regiments. The railroad troops then consisted of 10 formations with 58 ready separate military regiments. At the end of 2015, the Ministry of Defense formed the scientific-technical committee for the railroad troops. Later, the railroad troop's scientific-technical testing center formed.*

***In 2015, the railroad troops built the Zhyravka-Millerovo stretch in southwest Russia. What experience did they receive from this construction?***

*The president gave the mission to the Ministry of Defense to build the railroad bypass around Ukraine. They built a dual-track electrified railroad section for the South-East and Northern Caucasus railroad using troops from the Southern, Western and Central Military Districts. The project involved some 1,700 personnel and 700 trucks, engineering and specialized equipment. In a short period, the railroad troops carried out a major project to build a permanent new railroad line....*

***Last year the railroad troops worked on the reconstruction of the Baikal-Amur Magistral (BAM). Did this present difficulties or was it routine and orderly?***

*In April 2021, the railroad troops began laying a section of double track from Ulak to the Fevralsk Station on the Far Eastern railroad and set about reconstructing their assigned section of the BAM. It turns out this was one of the most difficult sections.*

*At this time, five railroad troops' formations with their component of specialized military units and subunits are working to complete this project.*

*continue on 15*

## Continued: Russian Railroad Troops' Trains Will Be Robotized

**Source Continued:** Roman Kretsul and Alexi Ramm, “Роботизированные Системы Скоро Наудт Применение в Железнодорожных Войсках (Robotic systems will soon be adapted by Railroad Troops), *Izvestia* (Pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 11 February 2022. <https://iz.ru/1289710/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/robotizirovannye-sistemy-skoro-naidut-primenenie-v-zheleznodorozhnykh-voiskakh>

*They are quartered in small garrisons of contemporary modular housing in accordance with the established norms for food and housing. During the course of four seasons, we studied the influence of climate during the construction process. And you may believe that, having studied the experience of the earlier construction of the magistral, the forces have already finished a significant portion of the work. You may say that slowly we are beginning to master the harsh taiga....*

***We always hear how the Navy, Aviation, and the Aerospace Forces receive the newest military technology. Are the railroad troops also receiving new, breakthrough technology?***

*...Over the past several years, the railroad troops units have received technology for transporting swimming railroad bridges, for measuring ballast for railroad beds and independent movement. In the future, they plan to have new track and railroad tie layers and also improvements in wheeled technology for rail. Further, military scholars are conducting research and development in the uses of robotic systems to support railroad troops. I believe that they will soon be ours for use.*

***Are there any plans for the railroad troops to build new sections of track, bridges and tunnels?***

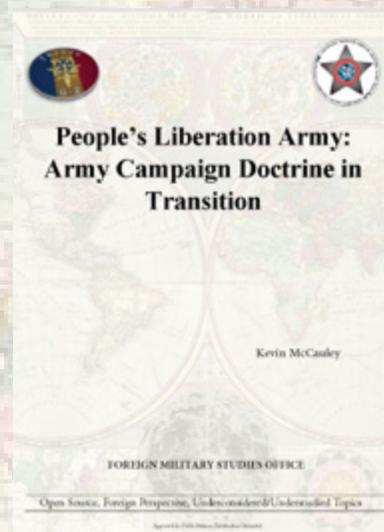
*Yes, we are working with the Russian Federation Ministry of Transport and the government-owned Joint Stock Company “Russian Railroads”. We are cooperating on using the railroad troops for new construction and reconstruction. Currently we are working on a section of track as part of the third stage of developing a rail line from the BAM to the Eastern Military Training area.*

***Will your forces receive new specialized trains or locomotives? Are you looking into developing a modern analog to the armored train or something similar?***

*In addition to the current armored trains in the railroad troops (there are two railroad battalions in the separate railroad brigade in the Southern Military District), we have restored the “Amur” armored train for special missions in zones of military conflict and restored the “Baikal” military escort train. Both can carry cranes and supplies of construction material. There is no analog to these specialized mobile trains. Running these trains on railroads provides technical reconnaissance, mine clearing and removal of damaged railroad debris, transportation for personnel and accompanying military echelons. These trains are always in the “hot” (ready -not damped) mode ready to act under any circumstance. Within an hour they must be ready to leave the station on the start of a long journey to a designated place.*

## People’s Liberation Army: Army Campaign Doctrine in Transition Kevin McCauley September 2020

This monograph examines current People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Army campaign doctrine, with a discussion of PLA theorists’ vision of the evolutionary development of warfare to provide context for current doctrine as well as potential future direction. The PLA develops doctrinal joint and service campaign scenarios for possible offensive and defensive operations. PLA campaigns represent the operational level of war between strategic operations and tactical combat. The PLA’s current focus on specific campaigns provides insight into Beijing’s perception of potential conflict scenarios. The campaign scenarios provide commanders and staff data on command and control, coordination, combat actions, support, and other critical campaign elements for specific operational environments. The description of each campaign’s operational environment and combat actions provides valuable support to operational planning and a context for staff and unit training for their specific operational mission. The Army campaigns are executed as components of a joint campaign, or as a primarily independent Army campaign with support from other services.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/351019>

## Azerbaijan and Russia Seek Improved Relations



Vladimir Putin and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made statements for the press following Russian-Azerbaijani talks.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Putin-Aliyev\\_joint\\_statements\\_\(2022-02-22\)\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Putin-Aliyev_joint_statements_(2022-02-22)_02.jpg), Attribution: CC 4.0

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

Azerbaijan has had a strained relationship with Russia for a number of years, but as the accompanying excerpted article from Azerbaijani semi-independent news agency *Trend* reports, President Aliyev and President Putin signed an agreement on 22 February 2022 to improve relations. Several points of the agreement are worth noting, particularly since Aliyev and Putin signed it two days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The article includes the text of the agreement, which has over 40 areas of cooperation. The first and second points state that both sides will respect each other's internal and foreign affairs, and refrain from interfering in them. Point number nine states that both governments will continue to make efforts to implement the agreements they signed with Armenia as part of the ceasefire agreement that ended the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War. Since then, Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian aid to Ukraine as the two sides have had a good bilateral relationship. Still, Azerbaijan has so far held a neutral position on the war.

Points 12 through 16 pertain to increasing security cooperation in various capacities, particularly numbers 14 and 15, which deal with working

together to develop new weapons and equipment. While it is unknown how much this security cooperation will develop, Russia will likely continue to provide Armenia with new weapons and equipment. This could be a continuation of previous policy where Russia provided both Armenia and Azerbaijan with equipment as part of an effort to maintain influence with each during their conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Lastly, point number 25 states that both sides "will refrain from carrying out any economic activity that causes direct or indirect damage to the interests of the other Party." The government of Azerbaijan has reportedly suspended flights of its national airline to Russia due to insurance issues, but it has so far not carried out any economic sanctions against Russia as part of its neutral position on the conflict. Considering the history of Azerbaijan's strained relations with Russia, it is difficult to determine how much this relationship will develop, but the agreement marks a step closer to better relations at a time when the Russian government faces sanctions and poor relations with a number of countries around the world.

“The parties, taking into account the high level of military-technical cooperation, interact on issues of equipping with modern weapons and military equipment, as well as in other areas in this area of mutual interest.”

**Source:** “Обнародован текст Декларации о союзническом взаимодействии между Россией и Азербайджаном (The published text of the Declaration on Allied Cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan),” *Trend* (semi-independent news agency in Azerbaijan), 22 February 2022. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3559098.html>

...As *Trend* reports on Tuesday with reference to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, the Declaration says: "President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, having comprehensively considered the state and prospects for the development of Russian-Azerbaijani relations...Noting the importance of building a multipolar world based on international law and the central role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, declare the following:

1. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan build their relations on the basis of allied interaction, mutual respect for independence, state sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the state borders of the two countries, as well as adherence to the principles of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force or threat of force.

continue on 17

## Continued: Azerbaijan and Russia Seek Improved Relations

**Source Continued:** “Обнародован текст Декларации о союзническом взаимодействии между Россией и Азербайджаном (The published text of the Declaration on Allied Cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan),” *Trend* (semi-independent news agency in Azerbaijan), 22 February 2022. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3559098.html>

*2. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan pursue an independent foreign policy aimed at protecting their national interests.*

...

*9. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan will continue to contribute in every possible way to efforts to implement the provisions of the statements of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and the President of the Russian Federation dated November 9/10, 2020, January 11, 2021 and November 26, 2021, which served as the basis for strengthening stability and security, unblocking all economic and transport ties in the region and for normalizing relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia.*

...

*12. The Parties shall develop bilateral military-political cooperation that meets national interests and is not directed against third countries.*

*13. The parties will deepen interaction between the armed forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan, including holding joint operational and combat training activities, as well as developing other areas of bilateral military cooperation.*

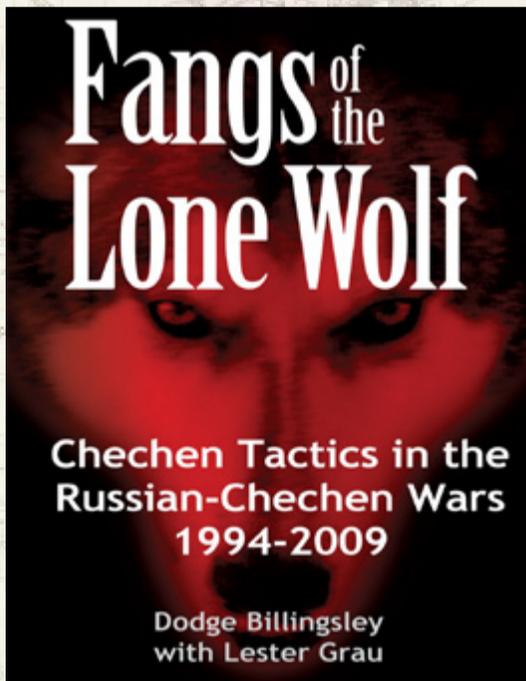
*14. The parties, taking into account the high level of military-technical cooperation, interact on issues of having modern weapons and military equipment, as well as in other areas in this area of mutual interest.*

*15. The Parties will intensify efforts to create service centers for maintenance, repair, modernization of weapons and military equipment, as well as to organize joint production of various types of military products.*

*16. In order to ensure security, maintain peace and stability, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan may consider the possibility of providing each other with military assistance on the basis of the UN Charter, separate international treaties and taking into account the existing international legal obligations of each of the Parties.*

...

*25. The Russian Federation and the Republic of Azerbaijan will refrain from carrying out any economic activity that causes direct or indirect damage to the interests of the other Party.*



### **FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF**

by Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

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.

## Invasion of Ukraine Spotlights Russia’s Information, Intelligence Operations in Latin America

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine brought new focus on Latin America, where Russia maintains influence, especially through the authoritarian regimes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Russia’s economic footprint may be relatively small compared to China’s, but it operates robust propaganda networks with wide dissemination in the region. Russia has also demonstrated an ability to interfere in the region’s elections, including in Colombia’s upcoming presidential election. The excerpted article from center-left Colombian daily *El Espectador* reports that social media experts have noted an uptick in Russian bots shaping the political narrative in Colombia and pushing domestic debate to the political fringes. Meanwhile, in Daniel Ortega’s Nicaragua, scrutiny remains focused on Russia’s highly capable intelligence-gathering satellites. The excerpted article from Argentine center-left news website *Infobae* reports that Russia installed these satellites under the guise of assisting Nicaragua in its counternarcotics operations. However, the site reports that Russia’s Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) has not participated in any known counternarcotics operations in its over five years of existence. Russia’s position in Nicaragua complements its four stations in Brazil, three in Antarctica, and one in South Africa. The country’s position in Latin America, bolstered by digital information operations and military hardware in countries such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, is extremely important as it contemplates potential measures against the United States for its punishing sanctions campaign.



A GLONASS or GPS personal device for satellite positioning.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GLONASS\\_or\\_GPS\\_personal\\_device\\_NPI-2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GLONASS_or_GPS_personal_device_NPI-2.jpg), Attribution: Wikimedia

“All installation work was carried out by Russian personnel and their access is restricted. A concrete wall topped with barbed wire blocks the way... there is no known anti-drug operation in which it has participated.”

**Source:** “Estación satelital o espionaje?: cómo es la más misteriosa base rusa en América Latina (Satellite station or espionage?: what is the most mysterious Russian base in Latin America),” *Infobae* (Argentine news outlet generally considered center-left politically), 17 March 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2022/03/17/estacion-satelital-o-espionaje-como-es-la-mas-misteriosa-base-rusa-en-america-latina/>

*From 2013 to date, Russia has installed nine ground satellite stations outside its borders, known as GLONASS (Global Navigation Satellite System, for its acronym in Russian). The last one was installed in Nicaragua five years ago, and it is receiving attention when the world takes stock of the resources that Russia has in the face of a possible global war... All installation work was carried out by Russian personnel and their access is restricted. A concrete wall topped with barbed wire blocks the way...there is no known anti-drug operation in which it has participated.*

**Source:** “La influencia rusa en América Latina, ¿un riesgo para Colombia? (Russian influence in Latin America—a risk for Colombia?),” *El Espectador* (Colombian daily generally considered center-left politically), 1 March 2022. <https://www.elespectador.com/mundo/america/la-influencia-rusa-en-america-latina-un-riesgo-para-colombia/>

*There is a lot of talk about disinformation that comes from abroad. Yes, that is a real threat. Not so much because of the penetration of vote counting systems in democratic countries, but because of the manipulation of the media, because of disinformation propaganda, because of the use of algorithms to send messages that confuse the voter and that create alarmist opinions.*



**Abbas Mohammad Hassani, the supreme leader's representative to the Iranian Army, at the Second Conference of Iranian Army Commanders, June 2019.**

Source: Tasnim News Agency <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1398/03/29/139803291237080217686354.jpg>, Attribution: Wikimedia

## Iran: Emphasizing Religiosity in Regular Army Promotions

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

Iran has two parallel and sometimes overlapping militaries: the regular army focused on territorial defense and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), whose founding statutes charge it with defense of the Revolution from both external and internal enemies. Traditionally, the IRGC have been the more elite force. They are better

“The general interests of the army should trump the interests of individuals.”

resourced, volunteer based, and more selective, whereas the Iranian government uses conscription to staff the army.

While millions of Iranians serve their two years in the army and then leave military service behind, some Iranians seek to make it a career. In the excerpted article from the regime's official defense-specialty news agency *Holy Defense News Agency*, Hojjat ol-Eslam Abbas Mohammad Hassani, the official representative of the Supreme Leader to the Army, speaks to commanders about how to appoint the correct individuals to fill higher-level positions. The fact that the cleric filling this role is one rank below ayatollah demonstrates the extent to which the clergy remain intertwined with the broader Iranian military; they do not limit their role to the IRGC. Hassani makes clear that religiosity must be a factor in determining appointments. Hassani cites a verse from the surah al-Saffat, chapter 37 of the Qur'an: "And stop them. They are to be questioned." The Prophet Mohammad received the al-Saffat in Mecca during a period in which many of the revelations focused on spirituality rather than governance. The context of the verse is calling to account idolaters on the Day of Judgment. That Hassani chose to make religion a criterion raises questions about whether the Supreme Leader believes the Army is a weak link in his efforts to ensure a universal embrace of the Islamic Republic's Shi'ite revolutionary values.

**Source:** "Gozinesh Nakhstin Sang-e Bona Yek Sazman Ast" (Selection is the Cornerstone of an Organization)," *Holy Defense News Agency* (Iran's official defense-specialty news agency), 28 February 2022, <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/509142>

...Hojjat ol-Eslam Abbas Mohammad Hassani, the head of the army's ideological-political organization, visited the Army's selection center in the presence of relevant commanders and officials and emphasized the importance and high position of selection in the army. The future of the army is based on these choices, because if the choices are correct, the future of the army is undoubtedly bright and promising. He described selection as a determination of destiny and added, "With correct selection of the relevant officials, in addition to the destiny of the organization, the path of a person's life will also be changed. Therefore, if, God forbid, we slip in determining these two destinies, in addition to misleading and distorting the person's way through life, we will also suffer from self-harm, because, according to verse 24 of Surah al-Saffat we must be responsible and will be accountable for our actions and deeds.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Hassani emphasized the importance of selection with argument and reason. "The rejection of the candidates for employment must be based on religious, legal and rational reasons, so one must be very careful not to accept or reject someone without a reason....

In the end, the representative of the supreme leader to the army pointed out that we should always build an army better than before, noting that in the selections, the general interests of the army should trump the interests of individuals....

## Iran Uses Online War Games To Teach Younger Generation of Officers

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary



**Inside the headquarters of Iran Cyber Defense Command.**

Source: Azad News Agency [https://media.ana.press/old/1398/02/09/636921442688936464\\_lg.jpg](https://media.ana.press/old/1398/02/09/636921442688936464_lg.jpg)

Iran's annual war games often make headlines, whether for their deliberate provocations of the United States, debuting new hardware, or accidents such as the friendly fire incident in May 2020, which killed 19 Iranian sailors. The excerpted article from the Iranian defense ministry's official news outlet, *Holy Defense News Agency*, discusses efforts

to make war games more widespread and accessible by conducting studies of enemy tactics online. A willingness to conduct online war games likely also reflects the comfort of a younger generation of Iranian soldiers with computers. While Iran might be diplomatically isolated, the internet has nevertheless permeated the country. Many younger officers grew up in an age when computers, the internet, and gaming were widespread. Perhaps in recognition of this fact, five years ago, the Iranian Army released a video game called "Battle in the Gulf of Aden 2" (see: "Iran: Army Unveils Video Game," *OE Watch*, September 2017).

Making online war games part of the military curriculum is the logical next step. Iranian military culture already encourages autonomy at the O-4, O-5, and O-6 levels, at least relative to the cultures of neighboring states. Online war games can contribute to more realistic and strategic thinking by allowing mid-level commanders to design tactics and strategies that take into account different configurations of enemy numbers and equipment. That said, as in the West, such games are hostage to the quality of the inputs. While tabletop war games replete with hot washes between rounds enable militaries to identify unknowns, software-based war games do not provide such opportunities and may therefore contribute to the ossification of false assumptions.

“We have designed... the war game process in the software space.”

**Source:** "Tarsim-e 'Bazi Jang' dar Feza-ye Narmafzari" (Creating Wargame Software)," *Holy Defense News Agency*, 2 March 2022. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/509305>

*Hossein Valivand-Zamani, commander of the Iranian Army Command and Staff College, on the sidelines of the 31st Defense Management Training Course and the 7th Joint and Combined Operations Course of the Army Command and Staff College, told reporters: "We recruit a large number of middle-ranking officers from the armed forces of the country and friendly and allied countries to pursue a master's degree in defense management." He added, "We also recruit each year a number of officers for the doctorate of war program."*

*The commander of the Army Command and Staff College continued. "We have basic grounding in tactics, and we also war game, as all armies in the world do, as part of training in order to deal with threats."*

*General Valivand continued, "The principle of the war game is calculated based on the number of forces, the amount of equipment, tools and capacities of the enemy and the enemy forces, and then, the war game is played for possible movements of the enemy...."*

*The commander of the Army War College added, "Today, based on the principles of war gaming, in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Davos Room, we have designed and programmed the war game process in the software space, which students use to increase their knowledge...."*

## Iran's Supreme Leader Condemns Alleged Corruption of the West

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is Iran's highest authority and single-handedly sets key social and security policies. It is in this context that the speech excerpted here from Khamenei's official website is important. Speaking on Eid al-Mab'ath, the anniversary of God choosing the Prophet Muhammad as his messenger and beginning the process of revealing the Qur'an to him, Khamenei draws parallels between Meccan society at the time and the United States today. Prior to the revelation of the Qur'an, Mecca wallowed in the "Age of Ignorance." Muhammad's subsequent struggles and battles were to end the "Age of Ignorance" and bring light to the world. Khamenei argues that today America represents the same ignorance and decadence that pre-Islamic, polytheistic Mecca did. He singles out homosexuality as a prime example of the social chaos and decay, speaks of the shame of discussing it, and laments that the United States systematically promotes the practice.

Khamenei also uses his speech to condemn capitalism. While many analysts describe factional differences inside Iran as being between so-called reformists and hardliners, there are also fissures that date back to the 1979 Revolution itself between proponents of a command economy and those who seek more free market reforms. The clerical establishment often shrouds itself in social justice rhetoric. Khamenei's castigation of capitalists falls into this context. An embrace of the role of the state in the economy also brings cover to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, whose role in manufacturing, construction, and the oil industry borders on monopolistic.

Khamenei's discussion of capitalism, however, is also meant to fuel anti-Americanism. Not only does he claim the United States represents ignorance, but its capitalism funds and promotes various evils and



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei speaks on 1 March 2022.  
Source: Khamenei.ir [https://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-album?id=49674#\[gallery\]/2/](https://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-album?id=49674#[gallery]/2/)

“One clear and complete example of modern ignorance is the United States.”

crises, according to Khamenei. He thus exaggerates and provides a paranoid twist to those who castigate the "military-industrial complex." To Khamenei, the capitalist cabal that shapes American policy explains not only the United States' creation of the Islamic State but also the crisis in Ukraine.

Khamenei also exposes some of his deeper concerns when he castigates America's capitalist cabal for helping spark revolutions and people power movements in various autocratic states. He has reason for concern given the increasing frequencies and breadth of Iran's protest movement. Certainly, Khamenei's address is not the first to voice his anti-Americanism. By reinforcing that now, Khamenei signals that whatever the outcome and course of diplomacy between the United States and Iran, the regime's anti-Americanism is likely to remain unchanged.

**Source:** "Biyanat dar Sokhanrani Televizioni beh Monasabat 'Eid Mab'ath (Statements in a Televised Speech on the Occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath)," *Khamenei.ir* (Khamenei's official website), 1 March 2022. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=49680>

*...The basis of life in western civilization is greed and avarice. Today, the basis of all western values is money. Everything is measured with money. The foundation of all western values rests on money at present.... The common policy among governments moves in the direction of discrimination and the fattening of companies and cartels....*

*Sometimes, one uses money to produce such and such a vaccine and medicine to save a number of people and sometimes, one uses it to build weapons of mass destruction and chemical and atomic weapons which kill a hundred-fold amount of people. This has already happened and it continues to happen in the world.*

*I can equally mention the plunder of weak countries, extreme moral decadence and chaos, homosexuality and the like that one is ashamed even mentioning them. Today, a strange sexual chaos exists in the world. These are things that existed in those days [of ignorance before the Prophet Muhammad] and in the present time. However, in those days, such things were limited in scope, but today, they are very large in scope and are done in a systematic way.*

*For many of these forms of corruption and vices, fake rationalizations have been fabricated. They have fabricated an intellectual basis and source of support for it and they present it to humanity. So, this modern ignorance is there in the world today. Therefore, if someone refers to today's western civilization as modern ignorance, as some people have already done, they are right because it is the same ignorance, but it is showing itself in a modern and modernized way.*

*So, what should we do? We should review the lessons of bi'tha [the sending to the Prophet Muhammad of the first verses of the Qur'an]. We should treat today's ignorance in the same way the Holy Prophet (God's greetings be upon him and his household) treated the ignorance of those past days. This is our responsibility. We should primarily strengthen faith....*

*Another responsibility is to strengthen the Islamic government. An Islamic government, with and under the flag of Islam, has been established in*  
*continue on 22*

## Continued: Iran's Supreme Leader Condemns Alleged Corruption of the West

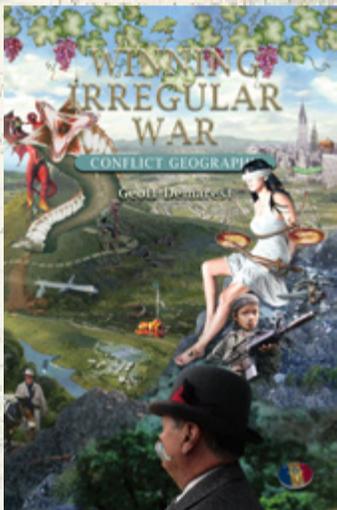
**Source Continued:** "Biyanat dar Sokhanrani Televizioni beh Monasabat 'Eid Mab'ath (Statements in a Televised Speech on the Occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath)," *Khamenei.ir* (Khamenei's official website), 1 March 2022. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=49680>

*the Islamic Republic by God's favor. Therefore, we must strengthen it, solidify its bases and expand its products as much as possible....*

*Of course, this modern ignorance is not the same everywhere in the world. In my opinion, one clear and complete example of modern ignorance is the United States. This form of ignorance is more serious and severe than anywhere else in the world. This is the case in the true sense of the word. America is a regime that promotes indecent conduct, in which discrimination is exacerbating on a daily basis and in which national wealth is increasingly flowing towards the wealthy and rich.... Today, the embodiment of modern ignorance, discrimination, oppression and generation of crisis in the world is America. Basically, the American regime is a crisis-making and crisis-feeding regime. It feeds off crises. It nourishes off the various crises that occur in the world....*

*There are networks of mafia power in the United States and these networks feed off and take advantage of the crises that occur throughout the world. The United States is basically a mafia regime. The United States is a mafia regime: political, economic and weapons-manufacturing mafia.... These mafia cartels and this mafia regime need crises to exist throughout the world. Therefore, they create centers of crisis. Notice how many crises they created in West Asia. The Americans even felt the need to give birth to a creature called the Islamic State that was their trained dog....*

*Today, in my opinion, Ukraine is a victim of this policy as well. Ukraine's situation at present stems from this American policy. It was the United States that dragged Ukraine to this point. Naturally, interfering in the domestic affairs of Ukraine, organizing rallies against governments, launching velvet revolutions and color coup d'etats, American senators being present in demonstrations, and replacing a government with another, leads to these crises.*

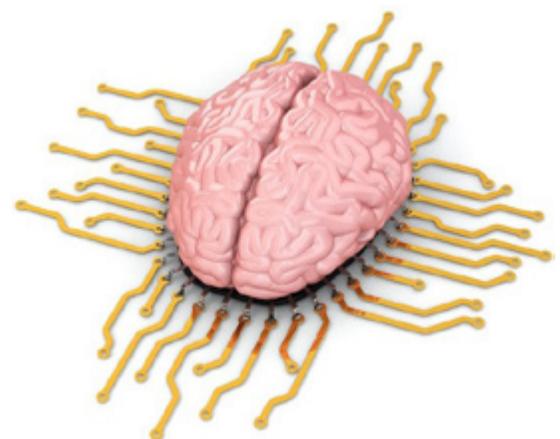


**Geoff Demarest's *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.' In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: "I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious."**

## THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

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## Iran Repositions Its Proxies in Syria as Russia Turns Focus to Ukraine



**Syrian Democratic Force soldiers conduct a patrol during a joint operation with U.S. Army Soldiers in Syria on May 8, 2021.**

Source: Spc. Isaiah J Scott, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/6705061/sdf-conducts-patrol-syria> Attribution: Public Domain

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Local media reports indicate that Iran is “repositioning” in Syria, perhaps seeking to take advantage of the Russian military’s focus on Ukraine. A late February report by Syria-focused Turkish think tank *Jusoor Center for Studies* speculates that Russia’s focus on Ukraine may detract from its involvement in Syria, “and Iran will not miss this opportunity to consolidate and expand its influence in various sectors.” The report mentions several signs of Iran’s repositioning in Syria, including increased activities and weapons transfers by Iran-backed militias in regime-controlled areas of the Syrian desert and the Middle Euphrates River Valley, near the border with Iraq. Tensions were rising between Russian and Iranian proxies in Deir Ezzor Province during the build up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, according to the accompanying excerpt from the Syrian opposition media source *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights*. Russian airstrikes on ISIS positions in the desert have declined substantially since the start of the war in Ukraine, even as the group

has ramped up its attacks in the Syrian desert, according to a report from the pro-Syrian opposition Lebanese news website *al-Modon*. The Quds Brigade, Russia’s key ally in anti-ISIS efforts in the Syrian desert, withdrew precipitously to Damascus. Meanwhile, local media reports claim several Iraqi militias have returned to Iraq and Iranian proxies in the Fatemiyoun Brigade have redeployed in the area. The logic behind these movements remains murky, but the accompanying excerpt from the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat* speculates that they

“...Iran will not miss this opportunity to consolidate and expand its influence in various sectors, taking advantage of the regime’s need for assistance and support...”

relate to strengthening supply lines and transit corridors between Iran’s proxies in Iraq and Syria.

### Source:

(The Emirati Impasse Deepens: A New Front... from Iraq),” *al-Akhbar* (pro-Iran influential Lebanese daily), 4 February 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/w7xb8a88>

(Six indicators that Iran is repositioning in Syria),” *Jusoor Center for Studies* (Turkey-based think tank focused on Syria), 4 March 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8tnvv4>

Since the beginning of 2022, Iran has begun to undertake a series of political, military, economic and security activities in coordination with the Syrian regime, which indicates its repositioning in Syria...

... the continuation of conflict in Ukraine may lead to a decline in Russia’s interest in Syria. Iran will not miss this opportunity to consolidate and expand its influence in various sectors, taking advantage of the regime’s need for assistance and support...

### Source:

(The Emirati Impasse Deepens: A New Front... from Iraq),” *al-Akhbar* (pro-Iran influential Lebanese daily), 4 February 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/w7xb8a88>

(Notable Escalation in the Cold War between Russia and Iran in an attempt to gain allegiance from the ‘Seven Villages’ east of the Euphrates),” *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights* (Syrian opposition media source), <https://tinyurl.com/2p85pm2x>, 16 February 2022.

Recently, the competition between Russia and Iran has escalated in the countryside of Deir Ezzor governorate, specifically in the so-called “seven villages” under the influence of the Iranians and the regime east of the Euphrates, and the corresponding areas on the western bank of the river...

## Continued: Iran Repositions Its Proxies in Syria as Russia Turns Focus to Ukraine

**Source:**

"إيران تتمدد في سوريا..إثر تراجع النشاط الروسي"

(Iran expands in Syria... following decline in Russian activities)," *al-Modon* (pro-Syrian Lebanese news website), 12 March 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8v8v9y>

*Russian military activities throughout the Syrian territory have declined as the Russian attack on Ukraine enters its third week. At the same time, Iranian militias are sending military reinforcements to the city of Palmyra and its surroundings.*

*...“the Russian aerial bombardment on the Syrian desert is half of what it was before the war on Ukraine”...*

*On Friday, the Palestinian “Quds Brigade” militia withdrew from the city of Palmyra, located in the eastern countryside of Homs. Militia members left the city heading towards the governorate of Damascus. The motives for this withdrawal remain unknown and it is unclear whether they will return later. According to the sources of the Syrian Observatory, the Quds Brigade’s withdrawal came without prior warning or coordination with the regime’s security services located in Palmyra and its surroundings.*

**Source:**

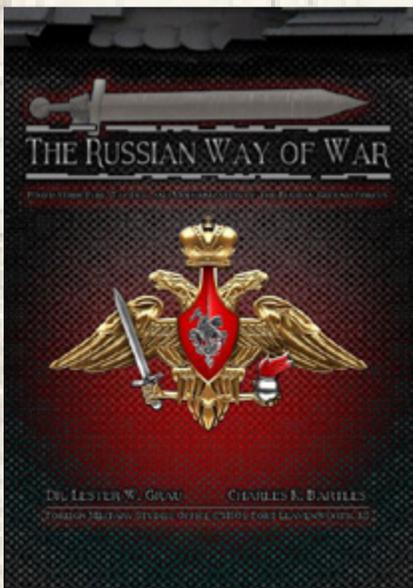
"مئات من ميليشيات إيران يغادرون سوريا إلى العراق"

(Hundreds of Iranian miliitas leave Syria for Iraq)," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 7 March 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/mrdd5r2m>

*Syrian activists reported that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard began withdrawing a large number of militia members of the Fatemiyoun Brigade (Afghani) and Iraqi (Shiite) militias from military sites in the areas of Palmyra and Sukhna, east of Homs, into Iraqi territory, through unauthorized crossings. Other fighters from the (Afghan Fatemiyoun) Brigade were deployed to new camps east of Palmyra. The sites in Homs countryside and a number of military vehicles and equipment were handed over to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. The development was described by activists in the region as “remarkable,” at a time when (ISIS) launched repeated attacks against regime forces and Iranian militias in the Homs desert and Deir Ezzor, incurring losses in life and equipment.*

### THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR

by Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles



At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

## Colombian Military Continues To Forcefully Dismantle FARC Dissident Structures

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

In 2016, the Colombian government signed a groundbreaking peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The agreement was intended to put an end to over 50 years of conflict. Colombia's military, however, continues to fight dissident members of the FARC who rejected the agreement and did not lay down their arms. Aided by the Nicolás Maduro regime in Venezuela, FARC remnants remain a deadly and powerful force in Colombia, especially in rural and border regions as they push to expand their control of lucrative drug trafficking routes. According to the excerpted article from the politically centrist Colombian daily *El Tiempo*, in recent months, Colombia's military has clashed with members of FARC dissident groups as it increases the pace of special military operations. The outlet reports that in one such operation in Arauca, the military killed 23 dissidents, including a top leader. The excerpted article from Colombia's most famous weekly magazine, *Semana*, tells the story of similar captures of important FARC dissidents in Tumaco state. FARC dissidents are not only reconstituting themselves with the safe haven provided by Venezuela, but also competing internally between various dissident factions for territorial control. Currently, the FARC is under heavy scrutiny in Colombia as the country is in the midst of a heated presidential campaign where security is, as always, an important topic.



A protest against the FARC and its activities.  
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kozumel/2245170100> Attribution: CC BY-ND 2.0

“According to the National Army, these offensive operations are carried out within the framework of security provided by the Armed Forces in the midst of the 2022 Democracy Plan, in which they seek to counteract ‘the terrorist actions of the criminal armed groups in this region of the country.’”

**Source:** “Mueren 23 disidentes en operación de ejército, entre ellos ‘Arturo’ (23 dissidents die in army operation, among them ‘Arturo’),” *El Tiempo* (one of Colombia's oldest dailies generally described as politically-centrist), 25 February 2022. <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/arauca-23-disidentes-murieron-tras-operacion-militar-653989>

*The newspaper established that for 20 days intelligence from the National Police had been monitoring the structure of ‘Arturo,’ who crossed the border from Venezuela with at least 35 of his men...It was established that after the intelligence group located the camp, a bombing operation was planned by the Colombian Air Force, and the Army Special Forces immediately entered and fought with part of the guerrilla. Then the Judicial Police entered and managed to recover 23 bodies, including Arturo's.*

**Source:** “Capturan a seis presuntos disidentes de las Farc en Tumaco (Six presumed dissidents of the Farc are captured in Tumaco),” *Semana* (Colombia's most famous weekly magazine), 12 March 2022. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/capturan-a-seis-presuntos-disidentes-de-las-farc-en-tumaco/202208/>

*According to the National Army, these offensive operations are carried out within the framework of security provided by the Armed Forces in the midst of the 2022 Democracy Plan, in which they seek to counteract ‘the terrorist actions of the criminal armed groups in this region of the country’...the Ombudsman's Office warned at the end of February of a rearrangement of criminal dynamics...that seek to control this strategic corridor and the access roads to the city of Bogotá through the use of violence.*

## Somalia: How Al Shabaab's Arsenal Grows



**Weapons captured by AMISOM forces from al Shabaab.**  
Source: Omar Abdisalan/AMISOM/flickr, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/au\\_unist-photostream/49590723103](https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unist-photostream/49590723103) Attribution: Public Domain

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

The Somali government and AMISOM have been unable to defeat al Shabaab in large part due to the terrorist group's ability to procure weapons. According to the accompanying excerpted report from a Somali organization that studies security issues, the *Hiraal Institute*, al Shabaab annually spends approximately \$24 million acquiring weapons through several sources. These sources include arms directly purchased by the group, including from corrupt government officials; those bought from dealers who frequently sell lethal wares from Yemen; and various small arms obtained in Somali black markets. Al Shabaab spends an additional \$1.8 million per year on its in-house explosives and weapons manu-

facturing activities, with much of that money used to obtain chemical precursors to explosives.

Though al Shabaab is sometimes depicted as having internal divisions and problems, acquisition of these weapons as described by the report hardly appears haphazard. Instead, consultative bodies and so-called ministries play a large role in properly arming the terrorist organization's members. Most important for regular arms procurement is the organization's defense ministry, which receives a substantial monthly allotment of funds.

Al Shabaab's security committee, which draws from both the military command and executive leadership, makes the decisions for acquiring large amounts of equipment in preparation for an increased operational tempo, or for purchasing very expensive individual items. Al Shabaab's finance ministry is responsible for acquiring the funds necessary for these weapons purchases mainly through illicit taxation. The report notes that the farmers, merchants, and others who are barely eking out a living are being extorted so that the terrorists can purchase more weapons which can be used to extort and hurt these people further. Though the finance ministry's methods can be quite brutal, they are also quite profitable, enabling continued weapons proliferation in a country already awash in arms from decades of inter-clan warfare. The ready availability of so many weapons, especially in the hands of al Shabaab, has made the pursuit of peace, security, and stability by the Somali National Army and AMISOM, and the Western powers backing such efforts, extremely difficult.

“The acquisition of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other lethal capacity remains a priority for [al Shabaab] but is poorly understood as a system essential to the effectiveness of the insurgency.”

**Source:** “Al Shabaab's Arsenal; From Taxes to Terror,” *Hiraal Institute* (Somali organization that studies security issues), February 2022. <https://hiraalinstitute.so/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Al-Shabaabs-Arsenal-From-Taxes-to-Terror-Web.pdf>

*The situation in Somalia is increasingly one of stalemate, with little prospect of either the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) with AMISOM and international support, or al Shabaab (AS) delivering a decisive military victory. However, AS remains adaptive and in control of large parts of Somalia, in particular in the south, with partial control over other areas. It is clear that AS has access to several sources to acquire weapons. The acquisition of weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other lethal capacity remains a priority for AS but is poorly understood as a system essential to the effectiveness of the insurgency. In October 2021, the Hiraal Institute undertook a four-month project to research the scope, scale, system, and use of AS resources to obtain lethal materiel, both in Somalia and from outside.*

*... It needs to be emphasised that all of AS's actions within the security field – including arms procurement, capability acquisition, and distribution – are enabled by the extensive finance operations that the group undertakes, notably its illicit taxation collection and revenue gathering. In essence, the money that AS gathers illegally from those it forces to pay tax in Somalia funds the ability of the group to purchase weapons, arms, and ammunition that it then uses in its operations and attacks in the country.*

*Within Somalia, AS operates a hierarchical financial administrative structure. A central Finance Maktab headquarters oversees a financial centre under which provincial financial centres (one per AS designated province) operate. Funds are moved through regular AS financial channels, utilising a number of methods and in a corresponding variety of forms – cash, bank accounts and mobile money transfer, and hawala – to channel funds to where they are intended.*

*While Somalia and Yemen are largely excluded from the international banking system, the use of banks for transfers of illicit payments within Somalia is commonplace; again, reporting states that transactions are made via accounts in the name of friendly legitimate businesses or individuals.*

## Nigerian Governor Assures Counterterrorism Success Against Boko Haram

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

Babaguna Zulum, the governor of northeastern Nigeria's Borno State, is assuring Nigerians that a multi-pronged counterterrorism approach is leading to success against Boko Haram. According to the excerpted 18 February article from Nigerian current events-focused *Vanguard News*, Zulum met with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and reported that 30,000 Boko Haram members had surrendered voluntarily to the Borno authorities. He further underscored that defections from Boko Haram substantiate that dialogue with the insurgents, including guarantees of assistance for insurgents who lay down their arms, must accompany the army's use of force.

Zulum noted that the heavy presence of Nigerian troops in southern Borno coincided with the defections and called for a similar deployment in northern Borno. This indicates that military pressure on the insurgents led to demoralization and caused some of the insurgents to surrender. Further, Zulum advised that once the government cleared insurgents from local areas, then it should immediately return displaced people to their homes with military protection.

“He reiterated that kinetic measures alone will not end the war and therefore advised that a political solution be applied.”

Zulum distinguished between those Boko Haram members who the government captured and those who surrendered, with only the latter



7 Div NA - Camp Zairo, 2017.

Source: Hussaina Muhammad, VOA [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:7\\_Div\\_NA\\_-\\_Camp\\_Zairo,\\_2017.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:7_Div_NA_-_Camp_Zairo,_2017.png) Attribution: CC x 2.0

granted a chance for rehabilitation. Given the success of such efforts, Zulum urged the Nigerian government to provide increased funding to repatriation, resettlement, and reconciliation programs. More broadly, Zulum claims that Boko Haram will not be defeated completely on the battlefield and, therefore, the government must seek some form of political settlement through negotiations.

**Source:** “Boko Haram insurgency’ll end by 2023 — Zulum,” *vanguardngr.com* (Nigerian news source), 18 February 2022. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/02/boko-haram-insurgencyll-end-by-2023-zulum/>

*The governor further said that the Borno state government does not offer any incentive to the fighters to come out of the forests; rather, they have done so voluntarily.*

*Zulum disclosed that he discussed the continuing surrender of the insurgents and the case of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with the president even as he said that the security situation in Borno state has improved considerably, hoping that things will continue in that direction. He reiterated that kinetic measures alone will not end the war and therefore advised that a political solution be applied.*

*“... I’m pleased to inform you that there was a very heavy military deployment into the southern Borno. And I hope such a deployment will also take place in northern Borno, with a view to clearing the ISWAP insurgents in the Lake Chad.”*

**Source:** “More than 8,000 Boko Haram terrorists have surrendered,” *premiumtimesng.com* (Nigerian news source), 21 September 2021. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/486107-more-than-8000-boko-haram-terrorists-have-surrendered-goc.html>

*The Acting General Officer Commanding (GOC), 7 Division, Abdulwahab Eytayo, says more than 8,000 Boko Haram terrorists have so far surrendered to troops.... He said the surrender by the repentant terrorists was a welcome development, adding that the overwhelming fire power of the troops was responsible.*

## Turkey Tries To Mitigate Economic Impact of Sanctions on Russia

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

The sanctions on Russia will cost the Turkish economy at least \$30-35 billion, according to Turkish economists quoted in the pro-government newspaper *Yenicag.com*. There will be a significant hit to Turkey's tourism industry, an increase in energy prices and agricultural products, as well as further decline in the Turkish lira. In an effort to mitigate this impact, Turkey appears to be trying to position itself as a safe haven from Russian sanctions.

As the accompanying passage from pro-government newspaper *Hürriyet* reports, in early March, Turkish President Erdoğan suggested to Putin, "Us three countries, Russia, China and Turkey can trade among ourselves with our national currencies; with the ruble, yuan, the Turkish lira and gold." Pro-government outlets interpreted Erdoğan's offer as a "historic hand [being extended] to Russia, whose ties with the international system are being cut and who is being isolated." Others criticized this as ridiculous, claiming that the world would not accept Turkey's effort to turn the Russian sanctions into an advantage while it endures the costs. Regardless of the reactions to the idea, business leaders said Turkey should actively work to develop a mechanism to facilitate trade with Russia in rubles, as the passage from pro-government *Daily Sabah* reports.

Economically, Russia is an important trading partner to Turkey, with over 3000 Turkish companies operating in Russia and a trading volume of over \$32.5 billion annually. Russia provides 34% of Turkey's natural gas, is building Turkey's first nuclear power plant, and sends the greatest number of tourists to Turkey. Russia and its banks' exclusion from the international payment system will create challenges in Russia making its payments to Turkish contractors in Russia and to Turkish travel agents that organize tours for Russian tourists to visit Turkey.

Politically, Turkey is a neighboring country to both Russia and Ukraine in the Black Sea and has good relations with both, including a developing partnership with Ukraine, whereby Turkey sells it armed drones. As such, Turkey has been trying to play a balancing act between Ukraine

and Russia regarding Russia's invasion. On the one hand, Turkey acted with its NATO allies and strongly condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, openly calls Russia's invasion a "war," and voted to condemn Russia in the United Nations. President Erdoğan said that Turkey would continue to sell armed drones to Ukraine. On the other hand, Turkey abstained from a vote to suspend Russia's membership rights within the European Council, and announced it was not planning to impose sanctions on Russia.

“Us three countries, Russia, China and Turkey can trade among ourselves with our national currencies; with the ruble, yuan, the Turkish lira and gold.”

—Turkish President Erdoğan



Erdoğan and Putin at the Kremlin, 23 September 2015.

Source: Kremlin.ru, via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Erdo%C4%9Fan\\_and\\_Putin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Erdo%C4%9Fan_and_Putin.jpg) Attribution: CC BY 4.0

**Source:** "Atilla Yeşilada Türk ekonomisine düşen bombayı duyurdu (Atilla Yeşilada explains the bomb that is about to explode on the Turkish economy)," *Yenicag.com.tr* (pro-government newspaper), 25 February 2022. <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/atilla-yesilada-rusyaukrayna-savasi-sonrasi-turk-ekonomisine-dusen-bombayi-acikladi-514360h.htm>

*Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association Chief Economist Gizem Öztok Altınışaç says that the geopolitical tension can have an initial cost to Turkey of about \$30-35 billion.*

**Source:** "Abdülkadir Selvi, "Erdoğan, Putin'e ne önerdi? (What did Erdoğan suggest to Putin?)," *Hürriyet.com* (pro-government newspaper), 8 March 2022. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/abdulkadir-selvi/erdogan-putine-ne-onerdi-42017962>

*At the AK Party Central Executive Council, President Erdoğan made important statements about the meeting he had with Putin. He said he suggested to Putin, that "Us three countries, Russia, China and Turkey can trade among ourselves with our national currencies; with the ruble, yuan, the Turkish lira and gold."*

*...With this suggestion, Erdoğan is extending a historic hand to Russia, whose ties with the international system are being cut and who is being isolated. At the same time, he is taking steps to turn the crisis into an opportunity for Turkey. Would Russia, who is being isolated in the world, consider the Turkey and China option? Why not?*

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: Turkey Tries To Mitigate Economic Impact of Sanctions on Russia

**Source:** “Uslu: İnsanlar ayçiçek yağı ile güçlü lider arasında tercih yapabilir (Uslu: People can decide between sunflower oil and a strong leader),” *Karar.com.tr* (independent Turkish newspaper), 8 March 2022. <https://www.karar.com/karar-tv/bikarar-ver-bugun-karar-tvde-12-1655020>

*Political communications expert İbrahim Uslu [said about Erdoğan’s offer to Putin]: “This is unbelievable, even if you convince Putin, once the world feels that you are intensely piercing their sanctions, they will sanction us... As the world imposes sanctions and endures significant economic costs, they will not look favorably upon Turkey’s attempt to turn this into an opportunity, attempt to feed the entire Russian market by itself and comfortably make money from this. Such suggestions can seem appealing trade-wise, but they should be reconsidered in light of political international relations and the alliances that Turkey belongs to.”*

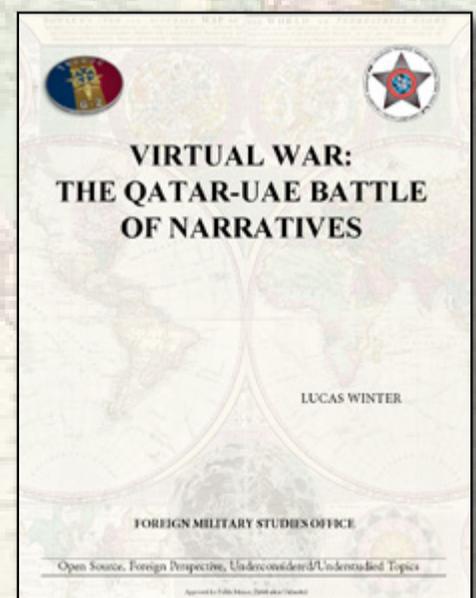
**Source:** “Turkish businesses expect progress on using rubles in trade with Russia,” *Daily Sabah* (pro-government newspaper), 11 March 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkish-businesses-expect-progress-on-using-rubles-in-trade-with-russia>

*Since the currency dispute with shipping companies is causing problems in the delivery of goods passing through customs, Turkey should actively work to develop a mechanism to facilitate trade with Russia in rubles, Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO) head Şekib Avdagiç said Friday.*

*Avdagiç stated that the companies working with Russia see the withdrawal of Western countries from Moscow as a new opportunity and emphasized that it is important to enable the use of the national currency of Russia.*

## VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES Lucas Winter May 2020

For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>



**Maulen Ashimbayev.**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maulen\\_Ashimbayev.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maulen_Ashimbayev.jpg) Attribution: CC 1.0

## CSTO Members Respond to Potential Involvement in Ukraine

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

In early January 2022, member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) demonstrated their willingness to carry out a joint peacekeeping operation when the organization deployed units from the Collective Operational Reaction Force to Kazakhstan. On 3 March 2022, President Vladimir Putin submitted a protocol to Russia's State Duma to amend

the CSTO's agreement of peacekeeping activities, causing speculation that the CSTO would deploy peacekeepers to Ukraine. The accompanying excerpted articles provide more context to the possibility of a CSTO peacekeeping mission in Ukraine, suggesting that CSTO is not likely get involved.

The accompanying excerpted article from semi-independent Russian daily *Kommersant* reports on Putin's submission of the protocol to amend the CSTO's peacekeeping activities. The article mentions that the change involves having a "coordinating state" to take "leadership of a peacekeeping operation if one is carried out." CSTO officials stated that the "change is not connected to the events in neighboring Ukraine," but is meant to integrate a CSTO peacekeeping force into the UN and deploy it outside the organization's area of responsibility. In the past, the Russian government has

tried and failed to obtain an official mandate from the UN to have its peacekeeping forces in the post-Soviet space.

The article from Kazakhstan government-run news agency *Kazinform* reports on a statement from Maulen Ashimbayev, the Chair of the Senate of Kazakhstan, in response to the possibility of Kazakh peacekeepers deploying to Ukraine. Ashimbayev states, "in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with other documents, Kazakhstan can send our peacekeepers outside the CSTO countries only in accordance with a UN mandate." This statement came out the day of Russia's invasion and prior to any speculation that came with Putin's proposed change to the amendment. The article from the Armenian state news agency *Armen Press* reports on a statement from Vahagn Aleksanyan, a member of Armenia's National Assembly, in response to Armenia's obligations to the CSTO. He notes, "the CSTO mechanisms are triggered in the event of an attack on one of the CSTO member states." In addition, he does not believe the conflict will spread to Russia, which would initiate a response of the CSTO's article on collective defense. He does not bring up a peacekeeping operation, but his comments still represent how another CSTO member is responding to potentially getting involved in the war in Ukraine. If the statements from Kazakh and Armenian officials are any indication, the CSTO is not likely get involved in Ukraine.

“The key change is the concept of a “coordinating state”: it must take over leadership of a peacekeeping operation if one is carried out.”

**Source:** Vladimir Solovyev, “Украина ни при чем (Ukraine has nothing to do with it),” *Kommersant* (semi-independent Russian daily newspaper), 4 March 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5240328>

...Russian President Vladimir Putin submitted a protocol on amending the “Agreement on the CSTO peacekeeping activities” to the State Duma for ratification. The key change is the concept of a “coordinating state”: it must take over leadership of a peacekeeping operation if one is carried out...The CSTO said the adoption of the change is not connected to the events in neighboring Ukraine...

...Changes to the “Agreement on peacekeeping activities” were adopted on September 16, 2021 at the CSTO Collective Security Council session in Dushanbe. They are necessary in order for the organization to be able to integrate its peacekeeping potential into the UN peacekeeping mechanism, so that it would be possible to use CSTO peacekeeping outside the organization's area of responsibility...

**Source:** Serik Sabekov, “Маулен Ашимбаев ответил на вопрос о направлении миротворцев из Казахстана в зону конфликта между РФ и Украиной (Maulen Ashimbayev answered the question about the deployment of peacekeepers from Kazakhstan to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine),” *Kazinform* (government-run news agency in Kazakhstan), 24 February 2022. [https://www.inform.kz/ru/maulen-ashimbaev-otvetil-na-vopros-o-napravlenii-mirotvorcev-iz-kazahstana-v-zonu-konflikta-mezhdu-rf-i-ukrainoy\\_a3903655](https://www.inform.kz/ru/maulen-ashimbaev-otvetil-na-vopros-o-napravlenii-mirotvorcev-iz-kazahstana-v-zonu-konflikta-mezhdu-rf-i-ukrainoy_a3903655)

The Chair of the Senate of the Republic of Kazakhstan Maulen Ashimbayev commented on the question of the possible deployment of Kazakh peacekeepers to take part in the conflict in Ukraine, *Kazinform* reports.

“In this situation, we must proceed from the following - Kazakhstan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization - the CSTO. In this regard, the question arises, is it possible to send Kazakh peacekeepers to the conflict?... In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with other documents, Kazakhstan can send our peacekeepers outside the CSTO countries only in accordance with a UN mandate,” Maulen Ashimbayev said...

The speaker noted that, in accordance with the CSTO charter, peacekeeping forces and troops of the organization's countries can only be used on the territory of the participating countries...

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: CSTO Members Respond to Potential Involvement in Ukraine

**Source:** “Депутаты коснулись вопроса возможности применения механизма ОДКБ в Украине (Deputies raised the issue of the possibility of using the mechanism of the CSTO in Ukraine),” *Armen Press* (Armenian state news agency), 7 March 2022. <https://armenpress.am/rus/news/1077269.html>

*The CSTO mechanisms work only in case of an attack on one of the CSTO member states. Vahagn Aleksanyan, a member of the "Civil Contract" faction of the National Assembly, said this, what would Armenia's position be if Russia, the CSTO partner, offered to implement the CSTO mechanisms...*

*“It should be noted that the CSTO mechanisms are triggered in the event of an attack on one of the CSTO member states, the transfer of hostilities to the territory of Russia, at least for the moment, I do not consider likely,” Aleksanyan said...*

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## Some Latin American Countries Responsive to Russian Entreaties To Remain Silent on Ukraine War

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Many countries in Latin America have been reticent to ruffle their relationship with Russia, instead opting to say little about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This relative silence reveals an important aspect of Russian grand strategy—courting Latin American countries and cultivating influence with particular leaders in order to counterbalance Western actions in what the Kremlin considers its “sphere of influence.” Center-left Argentine news outlet *Infobae* reports that Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov visited the region and met with Russia's most important allies in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. Borisov promised closer relations and greater “strategic depth” to Russia's security cooperation. In turn, the regimes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba have parroted Russian talking points about NATO and sanctions. Further, Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro and Argentina's president Alberto Fernández both visited Putin in Moscow shortly before the war, according to Spain's politically left leaning main daily *El País*. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov recently stated that Russia had the ability to deploy forces and equipment to Latin America through its security and cooperation agreements. Russia's behavior in Latin America, both leading up to its invasion of Ukraine and since the war started, reveal a pattern of leveraging Latin America as an operational theater to deliberately pose strategic threats to the West, thus creating more room to maneuver in its aggressive actions in Europe. Russia's pattern of strategically leveraging Latin America was present before Russia's invasion on 24 February 2022. Similar diplomatic and military visits presaged Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 (Dmitri Medvedev) and its invasion of Crimea in 2014 (Putin himself).



**Russian President Vladimir Putin and Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro.**  
Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_%26\\_Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro\\_in\\_Tehran,\\_24\\_November\\_2015.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_%26_Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro_in_Tehran,_24_November_2015.jpg) Attribution: CC BY 4.0

“Russia said in December that escalating tensions over Ukraine could lead to a repeat of the Cuban missile crisis, when the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war.”

**Source:** “Rusia continúa estrechando lazos con las dictaduras latinoamericanas (Russia continues to strengthen ties with Latin American dictatorships),” *Infobae* (Argentine news outlet generally seen as center-left politically), 19 February 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2022/02/19/rusia-continua-estrechando-lazos-con-las-dictaduras-latinoamericanas-el-viceprimer-ministro-de-putin-visito-cuba/>

*Borisov arrived on the island after visiting Nicaragua and Venezuela, Russia's key allies in Latin America, and said Russia would also deepen bilateral ties with the two countries...Russia said in December that escalating tensions over Ukraine could lead to a repeat of the Cuban missile crisis, when the world teetered on the brink of nuclear war...Cuban dictator Miguel Díaz-Canel discussed coordinating a 'strategic partnership' with Putin in January, as tensions began to rise in Ukraine.*

**Source:** “Ucrania, una guerra incómoda para Brasil y Argentina (Ukraine, an uncomfortable war for Brazil and Argentina),” *El País* (Spain's main daily generally considered politically-left), 1 March 2022. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-03-02/ucrania-una-guerra-incomoda-para-brasil-y-argentina.html>

*Bolsonaro's Brazil and Fernández's Argentina have been trying to remain neutral since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24. Only eight days had passed after the Brazilian president was received in Moscow by Vladimir Putin and twenty since a similar visit by the Argentine. Both Latin American presidents then highlighted the good relations they maintain with the Kremlin. But the war has turned everything upside down. The diplomatic tension leaves little room for the grays, and both Bolsonaro and Fernández, located at the ideological poles, face domestic problems due to their international positioning.*



**Putin with Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, whose nation has used Russia's Wagner Group on several occasions, including to prevent an overthrow of the government.**

Source: Mikhail Metzel/Kremlin Pool/Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_%26\\_Faustin\\_Touadera\\_-\\_2019.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_%26_Faustin_Touadera_-_2019.jpg), Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## African Leaders Take Cautious Approach to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

Many African leaders are choosing their words carefully when discussing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As the accompanying excerpted article from the *East African* explains, these leaders' cautious approach is based on the close relationships their countries have with Russia. This is especially evident in the area of arms sales. Many African nations purchase their military hardware from Russian arms dealers.

“African countries are treading carefully in the Russia-Ukraine war to protect their national interests even as they defend the rights of Africans trapped in war zones.”

For example, Ethiopia's entire fleet of jetfighters, 20 Sukhoi-27s and nine Mig-23s, are from Russia. Russia supplies three quarters of Uganda's combat helicopters. Across Africa it is not just aircraft, but rather a wide range of military materiel, including small arms such as the ubiquitous AK-47.

As the article explains, Russia has also fostered military alliances with Mali, the Sudan, Mozambique and other countries facing insurgencies or political instability, which has tempered still more African leaders' reactions to the Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Wagner Group, a Kremlin-linked paramilitary force, helped quash an attempt to overthrow the government in the Central African Republic. The appreciation for these Russian interventions, combined with a sense among many Africans that their nations should remain neutral with regard to European problems, contributes to the lack of enthusiasm some African leaders have for denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Reports of African students fleeing Ukraine only to be subjected to extreme racism in Europe may have exacerbated these concerns.

Some African leaders are not only refusing to condemn Russia but are actually praising it. The most prominent example of such behavior comes from LTG Kainerugaba, Commander of Ugandan Land Forces, who is also President Museveni's son. While Uganda abstained from a UN vote condemning Russian aggression, citing the African country's nonaligned status, Kainerugaba claimed Putin was right and that a majority of non-whites support Russia. Even Senegal, which has a long history of receiving military assistance from the West, abstained from the UN vote to condemn Russian aggression.

**Source:** Aggrey Mutambo, “National interests prevail as African leaders tread carefully on Ukraine crisis,” *The East African* (African-based media company), 6 March 2022. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/national-interests-african-leaders-careful-ukraine-crisis-3738398>

*African countries are treading carefully in the Russia-Ukraine war to protect their national interests even as they defend the rights of Africans trapped in war zones.*

*Senegalese President Macky Sall, chair of the African Union and the African Union Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat said they were “particularly disturbed” by reports that some Africans had been turned away at European borders while trying to leave the war-wracked country.*

*Save for Kenya, Eastern African states have stayed away from vigorously commenting on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but the racism in its wake has angered Africans.*

*The United Nations, which operates a huge fleet of Russian fixed-wing and helicopter transports, will not be spared the sanctions. Also, hard-hit will be a helicopter overhaul and maintenance repair facility that Uganda jointly owns with Russia's Pro-heli International Services, that was launched by President Museveni in late January. The facility was among others targeting the UN missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan's Darfur region, in which a substantial number of UN transport helicopters operate.*

*“Outside of the Central African Republic, which openly sympathises with Moscow, other countries have largely chosen a middle plan in this conflict, even as they share (Kenya's Permanent Representative to the UN, Dr Martin) Kimani's sentiments on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. They are, however, united on the plight of Africans in Ukraine,” he said.*

## Senegal and Algeria Opposed to Their Citizens Fighting in Ukraine

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

Ukrainian soldiers have taken part in peacekeeping operations in Africa in recent years, and now Ukraine is urging African nationals to travel to Ukraine to fight Russian. The excerpted French-language article in *tsa-algerie.dz*, which covers affairs in Francophone countries from an Algerian perspective, discussed the Algerian and Senegalese governments' negative reactions to the prospects of their citizens fighting in Ukraine. According to the article, the Ukrainian Embassies in Algeria and Senegal issued statements on Facebook calling on these countries' citizens to join the Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces to resist Russian aggression. In response, the Algerian government demanded that Ukraine remove the post on grounds that it violates the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Senegal relayed the same message to Ukraine, while acknowledging that 36 Senegalese citizens had registered to fight. Senegal is wary of foreign fighters given the experience of its nationals as foreign fighters with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). *France24.com*, for example, reported in the excerpted passage from 2016 that Senegalese had become influential in ISIS in both Libya and Syria. Although the circumstances and threats are different with the situation in Ukraine, Senegal, like Algeria, remains steadfastly against allowing the participation of its nationals in foreign conflicts.



**Ukrainian aviation unit. DR Congo.**

Source: Ministry of Defense of Ukraine [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrainian\\_aviation\\_unit\\_DR\\_Congo\\_\(26858301702\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ukrainian_aviation_unit_DR_Congo_(26858301702).jpg) Attribution: CC x 2.0

“Like their Algerian counterparts, the Senegalese authorities requested the Ukrainian embassy to immediately withdraw the call to recruitment without delay.”

**Source:** “Le grave dérapage de l’ambassade ukrainienne en Algérie (The serious mistake of the Ukrainian embassy in Algeria),” *tsa-algerie.dz*, 4 March 2022. <https://www.tsa-algerie.dz/le-grave-derapage-de-lambassade-ukrainienne-en-algerie/>

*To all foreigners “who wish to join the resistance to the Russian occupiers and protect world security,” Ukrainian leaders offer you “to come to our country and join the ranks of the Territorial Defense Forces...,” the appeal read. The message was taken down after the Algerian foreign ministry ordered the Ukrainian embassy to delete it.*

*This message was also relayed by the Ukrainian Embassy in Senegal. The Ukrainian ambassador in Dakar confirmed the existence of the call while confirming the registration of 36 volunteer candidates. Like their Algerian counterparts, the Senegalese authorities requested the Ukrainian embassy to immediately withdraw the call to recruitment without delay.*

**Source:** “Who are the Senegalese men joining the Islamic State group?,” *france24.com*, 1 February 2016. <https://observers.france24.com/en/20160201-senegal-jihadist-islamic-state>

*Senegal is on edge after jihadist attacks have swept West Africa in the past few months, striking Mali in December 2015 and previously quiet Burkina Faso in January 2015. Senegal is worried that it might be the jihadists’ next target. In a sweep aimed at cracking down on insecurity, Senegal arrested 900 people in the cities of Dakar and Thies last month. Although most of these arrests were not on terror-related suspicions, the police said that the raids were carried out because of the terrorist threat.*

## Saudi Arabia Turns to China for Low-Altitude Air Defense

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese weapons manufacturers were among the key winners at the World Defense Show 2022 (WDS 2022), Saudi Arabia's new and much-vaunted annual international weapons fair. The Saudi government meant for the show to serve as a catalyst for its Vision 2030 development plan, which aims to localize half of all defense spending by 2030. Riyadh also meant for the show to help fulfill Saudi Arabia's immediate military needs, which are currently dictated by the war in Yemen and are primarily focused on low-altitude air defense. In that regard, the Saudi Arabian government inked a deal with China's Poly Technologies to procure a laser air defense system, known as the "Silent Hunter." As described in the accompanying excerpt from the Arabic-language military news site and chat forum *defense-arabic.com*, the system uses lasers to target low-altitude UAVs of the type used by the Houthi-controlled military in Yemen. The report notes that China has now succeeded in penetrating the Saudi air defense market, something that Russian companies have unsuccessfully tried to do since 2007. Russian air defense offerings at WDS 2022 included the Tor-M2KM, a self-contained module version of the Tor short-range air defense platform. In a further sign that Chinese companies are making inroads where their Russian counterparts have failed, the other accompanying excerpt from *defense-arabic.com* highlights Saudi interest in obtaining the Chinese HQ-17AE system, which is based on the Russian Tor platform.



Автономный боевой модуль 9А331МК-1 ЗПК  
9К331МКМ Top-M2KM (9А331МК-1 Tor-M2KM).  
Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2021-Static-part-1/i-4ZccFz9/A>, Attribution: CC 4.0

“...With its technological development, China has been able to surpass Russia, which has unsuccessfully tried to market its equipment to Saudi Arabia since 2007...”

### Source:

(Saudi Arabia signs contract to acquire Chinese air defense systems),” *defense-arabic.com* (Arabic-language military news site and chat forum), 10 March 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yc77ktna>

“السعودية توقع عقد استحواذ على منظومات دفاع جوي صينية

*The Saudi version of the Silent Hunter system is different from other versions offered by Poly Technologies. The kingdom has been using Chinese weapons for a long time, so the purchase itself is not novel. What is novel is to include them in one of the Kingdom's most sensitive sectors, which is air defense. With its technological development, China has been able to surpass Russia, which has unsuccessfully tried to market its equipment to Saudi Arabia since 2007. Silent Hunter is an anti-drone laser weapon developed in China by Poly Technologies. It is an improved version of the 30 kW low-altitude defensive laser system, and is available in both fixed and mobile versions.*

### Source:

(Saudi Arabia seeks to obtain Chinese HQ-17AE air defense system),” *defense-arabic.com* (Arabic-language military news site and chat forum), 16 January 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/mrxrec6c>

“الصينية الصنع HQ-17AE السعودية تسعى للحصول على منظومة الدفاع الجوي

*After acquiring the Chinese 3D TWA radar system, the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces are seeking to acquire HQ-17AE air defense systems, according to press sources. China had announced that the HQ-17AE air defense missile system, dubbed the “Low-Altitude Aircraft Hunter,” is available for export.*