

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



Volume 12  
Issue #6  
2022

## FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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# OEWATCH

*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

Volume 12 | Issue 6

2022

## Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Chuck Bartles  
Ryan Berg  
Dodge Billingsley  
Robert Feldman  
Ray Finch  
Ihsan Gunduz  
Karen Kaya  
Michael Rubin  
Matthew Stein  
Lucas Winter  
Peter Wood  
Jacob Zenn

**Editor-in-Chief**

Karen Kaya

**Editor**

Dodge Billingsley

Tom Wilhelm

**Creative Director**

Susan Littleton

**Publisher / Layout**

Thomas Tolare

## ON THE COVER:

*Kazakhstan Republican Guard*

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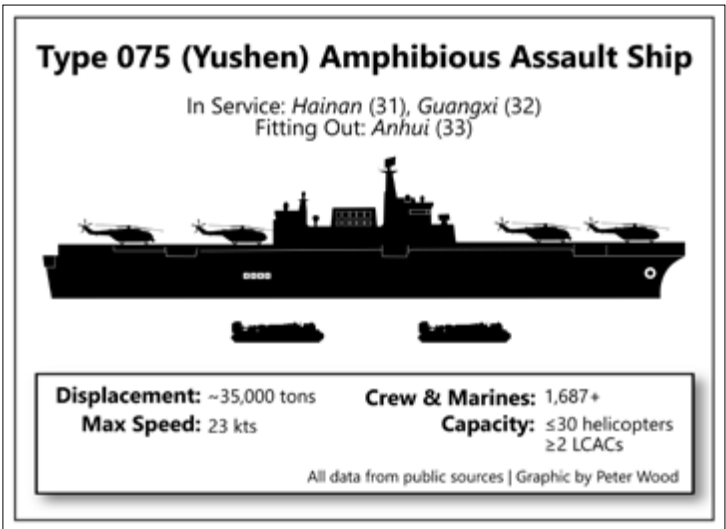


## China Expands Naval Expeditionary Capability With New Ship and Helicopter Variants

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

China's state-run television CCTV7 recently showed the *Guangxi*, China's second **Type 075 (Yushen) Amphibious Assault Ship**, or a landing helicopter dock (LHD) in U.S. parlance, participating in workup exercises. The second of its class, the *Guangxi* incorporates refinements learned from the development of the *Hainan*, China's first Type 075. Per China's ship naming conventions, the amphibious ship is named after a Chinese province. As noted by Captain Xu in state-run media outlet *The Paper*, the ship's crew was able to quickly bring new systems online and begin training. The Type 075 class LHDs can carry 1,687 troops and 30 helicopters, as well as two **Type 726 air-cushion landing craft** (see: "China: Type 075 Amphibious Assault Ship Launched," *OE Watch*, November 2019). The Type 075 class LHDs also have a defensive suite that includes HHQ-10 missile launchers, similar to the U.S. SeaRAM system; two 30mm H/PJ-11 CIWS; as well as jammers, chaff, and decoy launchers.

China is building multiple additional Type 075s, with the goal of fielding an extensive expeditionary force capable of executing "three-dimensional operations" involving power projection through air, sea, and amphibious land from multiple directions. The growing force will complement the Chinese Navy's rapidly expanding Marine Corps, which has grown from two divisions less than a decade ago to six operational brigades according to public reporting.



**Type 075 (Yushen) Amphibious Assault Ship**  
Source: Peter Wood, Attribution: Creator, Peter Wood, grants permission to use

In a related development, according to Chinese blog and media outlet *Sina*, the **Z-20**, a medium multi-role helicopter derived from the S-70 Blackhawk has entered service with the Chinese Navy. The helicopter, which has superior capabilities compared to China's indigenous **Z-8** and **Z-9** helicopters, has already entered widespread use in China's ground force, but the apparent induction of navalized variants for anti-submarine warfare and other roles is a significant development, particularly for China's naval expeditionary force.

**T**he [Guangxi's] complement of amphibious vehicles, tanks and helicopters is more complete and efficient in ship-to-shore movement.

–Captain Xu Ce [许策] - Captain of the *Guangxi*

**Source:** Nan Boyi, [南博一], '两栖攻击舰 广西舰' 首次公开亮相, 进一步提升海军两栖战力 (Amphibious assault ship "Guangxi Ship" made its first public appearance, further enhancing the naval amphibious combat capability)," *The Paper* (state affiliated media outlet), 21 April 2022. [hxxps://j.eastday.com/p/1650522083043935](https://j.eastday.com/p/1650522083043935)

*Recently, the Guangxi, a newly commissioned amphibious assault ship began basic training exercises, focusing on the requirements of future amphibious operations and expeditionary operations, while continuing to test the crew on essential tasks such as navigation, damage control and other subjects.*

*From its appearance, it can be seen that the Guangxi (hull number 32) is the same class as the Hainan, China's first Type 075 amphibious assault ship (LHD).*

*continue on 4*

## Continued: China Expands Naval Expeditionary Capability With New Ship and Helicopter Variants

**Source Continued:** Nan Boyi, [南博一], ‘两栖攻击舰 广西舰’ 首次公开亮相, 进一步提升海军两栖战力 (Amphibious assault ship "Guangxi Ship" made its first public appearance, further enhancing the naval amphibious combat capability)," *The Paper* (state affiliated media outlet), 21 April 2022. [hxxps://j.eastday.com/p/1650522083043935](https://j.eastday.com/p/1650522083043935)

*According to a previous report by Xinhua News Agency, the Hainan (hull number 31) was launched in Shanghai on September 25, 2019.*

*According to previous CCTV reports, China's first indigenously developed [class of LHDs] can carry amphibious armored vehicles, multi-role helicopters, hovercraft and tanks, and is equipped with missiles, naval guns, electronic warfare and other weapon systems.*

**Source:** "国防军事早报 (Morning Report on Defense)," CCTV 7 (state TV military channel), 22 April 2022

*On April 22, CCTV Channel 7's "Military Report" program displayed a images of an anti-submarine variant of the Z-20 helicopter taking off and landing on a Type 055 destroyer....The Z-20 is a new generation of 10-ton tactical general-purpose transport helicopters independently developed by China. It made its public debut at the 70th National Day military parade in 2019.*

**Source:** “直-20反潜直升机首次公开, 将进一步提升海军反潜能力 (Z-20 ASW Aircraft Publicly Shown for the First Time, Advancing the PLA Navy's Anti-Submarine Capability)," Sina (Chinese blog and news outlet), 23 April 2022. [hxxps://news.sina.com.cn/c/2022-04-23/doc-imcwipii5939966.shtml](https://news.sina.com.cn/c/2022-04-23/doc-imcwipii5939966.shtml)



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The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's World Wide Equipment guide was developed to support the U.S. Army training and doctrine, including the Opposing Force (OPFOR) portrayal in training simulations (constructive, virtual, live, and gaming).

The equipment in this WEG represents military systems, variants, and upgrades that U.S. forces may encounter now and in the foreseeable future. The authors continually analyze real-world developments, capabilities, and trends to guarantee that the OPFOR remains relevant.

[HTTPS://ODIN.TRADOC.ARMY.MIL/WEG](https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/weg)

## Two Retired Chinese Officials Offer Conflicting Perspectives on Russia's Prospects in Ukraine

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese experts have taken to a number of domestic platforms to offer a more nuanced view of Russia's war in Ukraine. While mainstream Chinese media has closely adhered to talking points established in the first weeks of the conflict, the accompanying excerpted articles by two retired Chinese officials suggest alternative narratives of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Retired officials often have the greatest capacity to speak truth to power in the Chinese system as they have no risk of damaging their careers or have sufficiently powerful friends to shield them from the worst consequences. While some may hold with the standard party line, their perspectives may provide some insights into the real conversations happening behind closed doors and signal whether the Party is continuing a particular effort or open to change. In this case, the authors, a career military officer and diplomat respectively, offer contradictory views on Russia's success in the conflict and likely outcomes.

In the excerpted article posted on *Red Culture Net*, career military officer Peng Guangqian portrays the war as simply an extension of Russian-U.S. competition, with Ukraine simply an unfortunate proxy being used, as he says, as "cannon fodder. He goes on to repeat the conspiracy theory that the United States was operating biowarfare labs in Ukraine and concludes by praising Russia's efforts and predicting a Russian victory. Peng's military background, generation, and the fora used to publish this article suggest that he represents a more conservative thread in Chinese Communist Party thinking. His almost blind acceptance of Russia's position should not be taken as indicative of broader Chinese support for Russia. His attitudes may be more due to his generation (for comparison Peng is 78, while President Xi Jinping is 68). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the broader Chinese public is more jaded and

acknowledges Russia's high losses, even when they accept Chinese government media narratives.

In the second excerpted article from *Phoenix News*, veteran diplomat Gao Yusheng examines the broader implications of the conflict. Censors quickly deleted the post, but his opinions are likely representative of a much more realistic group of retired and senior leaders. In a stark contrast with Peng's commentary, Gao argues that Russia's "coming defeat is increasingly clear." He acknowledges that Putin has been trying to re-establish the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and "has never really recognized the indepen-

**T**he United States is the real planner, instigator, organizer, commander and financier of the war in Ukraine.

dence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other former Soviet states." He notes "Russia has frequently violated their territoriality and sovereignty" and concludes that "Russia's political, economic, military and diplomatic power will be significantly weakened and isolated. Russia will be... punished. Russia's power will weaken even more."

China further formalized its increasing alignment with Russia shortly before the war broke out (see "China-Russia Pledges of Deeper Cooperation Show Tangible Results," *OE Watch*, #3 2022). The outbreak of war raised fierce internal debates about Russia's chances for victory in Ukraine and the ultimate consequences of the war for China. The continuing promotion of pro-Russia narratives, and suppression of even moderate views like Ambassador Gao's, along with other diplomatic actions, point toward a decision to stand firmly, albeit rhetorically, with Russia.

**Source:** "Peng Guangqian, "谁是乌克兰战场的胜利者和失败者? (Who are the Winners and Losers on the Ukrainian Battlefield?)" *Red Culture Net* (PRC State-approved NGO), 16 May 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220518222056/https://www.hsw.org.cn/wzzx/xxhq/oz/2022-05-15/75413.html>

*The United States is the real planner, instigator, organizer, commander and financier of the war in Ukraine. Although the United States tried its best to urgently send people, money, and guns, it failed to turn the tide of the war. U.S. military weapons have become the spoils of the Russian army, and the military advisers sent by*  
*continue on 6*

## Continued: Two Retired Chinese Officials Offer Conflicting Perspectives on Russia's Prospects in Ukraine

**Source Continued:** "Peng Guangqian, "谁是乌克兰战场的胜利者和失败者? (Who are the Winners and Losers on the Ukrainian Battlefield?)" *Red Culture Net* (PRC State-approved NGO), 16 May 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220518222056/https://www.hswb.org.cn/wzzx/xxhq/oz/2022-05-15/75413.html>

*the United States became the prisoners of the Russian army. The severe economic crisis in the United States has made things worse, and the domestic contradictions and infighting of the ruling clique have become more acute.*

*What makes the United States especially desperate and fearful is that the Russian army successfully conquered the biological laboratory hidden in Ukraine with the purpose of exterminating human beings, and has a large amount of ironclad evidence that the United States has long denied the secret development of biological weapons.*

...

*Russia's just actions against [NATO] expansion, encirclement, and hegemony have been supported by all peace-loving forces. To measure the outcome of a war, it is not just a simple comparison of offensive and defensive situations, casualties, and positional gains and losses, but more importantly, the political underpinnings and goals of combat operations. In this contest, Russia represented the interests of the majority of the people and did not hesitate to sacrifice its nation. It not only safeguarded Russia's own national security and strategic frontiers, but also destroyed the nest of the U.S. biological laboratories in Ukraine, exposing the evil face of the U.S. against humanity. This is a victory for Russia and a great victory for the cause of contemporary world peace and human progress. No matter what tests will be faced in the future, Russia's brilliant achievements will be glorified in the annals of history.*

**Source:** "中国驻乌克兰前大使高玉生：俄乌战争的走势和对国际秩序的影响 (Former PRC Ambassador to Ukraine Gao Yusheng: The Dynamics of the Russian-Ukrainian War and the Implications for the International Order)," *Phoenix News* (PRC State affiliated media), 10 May 2022. <https://archive.ph/20220510105105/https://news.ifeng.com/c/8Fu9YlXw7qR>

*The Russo-Ukrainian War is the most important international event of the post-Cold War period. It marks the end of the post-Cold War period and the beginning of a new international order. First, Russia has lost the initiative in the Russo-Ukrainian war and this failure is already apparent.*

*The main reasons why Russia is now heading towards defeat are:*

*First, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia has always been in a historical process of continuous decline. This decline is first and foremost a continuation of the decline of the Soviet Union before the disintegration, and is also related to the mistakes of the Russian ruling clique in domestic and foreign policies. Western sanctions have intensified this process. The proposition of a so-called revival or revitalization of Russia under Putin's leadership is totally false, and the decline of Russia has manifested in its economy, military, science and technology, politics, society and other fields, with serious negative consequences for the Russian military and its combat power.*

*Second, the failure of the Russian blitzkrieg and the failure to achieve a quick victory signaled the beginning of the Russian defeat. The Russian military's economic and financial strength, which are not commensurate with its status as a so-called military superpower, could not support a high-tech war costing hundreds of millions of dollars a day. The embarrassing defeat of the Russian army due to its poverty was evident everywhere on the battlefield. Every day that the war continues represents a heavy burden for Russia.*

*continue on 7*



## Continued: Two Retired Chinese Officials Offer Conflicting Perspectives on Russia's Prospects in Ukraine

**Source Continued:** “中国驻乌克兰前大使高玉生：俄乌战争的走势和对国际秩序的影响 (Former PRC Ambassador to Ukraine Gao Yusheng: The Dynamics of the Russian-Ukrainian War and the Implications for the International Order),” *Phoenix News* (PRC State affiliated media), 10 May 2022. <https://archive.ph/20220510105105/https://news.ifeng.com/c/8Fu9YIXw7qR>

*Third, Russian military and economic advantages over Ukraine have been offset by the resilience of Ukraine and the huge, sustained and effective aid provided to Ukraine. The generational differences between Russia and the U.S. and other NATO countries in terms of weapons and technology, military concepts, and modes of warfare make the advantages and disadvantages of both sides even more pronounced.*

*Fourth, modern wars are necessarily hybrid wars, which encompass military, economic, political, diplomatic, public opinion, propaganda, intelligence, and information fields. Russia is not only in a passive position on the battlefield, but has also lost in other areas. This means that it is only a matter of time before Russia is finally. It is only a matter of time before Russia is finally defeated.*

*Fifth, Russia is no longer in a position to determine when and how the war will end. Russia has already failed to end the war as soon as possible to preserve its gains. In this sense, Russia has lost its strategic leading position and the initiative.*

### 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.

## Chinese Military Scholars Call out Russia for Invading Ukraine

By Dodge Billingsley  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying article in the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP), a Hong Kong-based, ostensibly-independent newspaper, notes a growing list of Chinese intellectuals who have publicly questioned Russia's justification for invading Ukraine. This suggests that Chinese thinkers do not widely approve of China's support for Russia's actions in Ukraine despite the "no limits" relationship between the two countries that Chinese authorities stated prior to the Winter Olympics.

The focus of the SCMP article is an article by a recently retired Chinese military scholar published on Chinese social media site *WeChat*. That article disappeared shortly after it was posted but, according to the accompanying SCMP publication, the author of the article, Gong Fangbin questioned Moscow's assertion that Ukraine was on the brink of invading Russia, instead suggesting that the real reason Russia invaded Ukraine was that "Russian leaders have taken the wrong path for rejuvenation." The author suggested that Russia's obsession with land as an indicator of strength was misguided and obsolete in the 21st century.

According to the SCMP article, another Chinese intellectual, Yan Xuetong, dean of the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University, recently said that Russia would pay "a huge price" for its invasion of Ukraine. Finally, Hu Wei, a political scientist affiliated with China's State Council called on Beijing "to distance itself from Russia as soon as possible over its war on Ukraine." Finally, the intellectuals suggest multiple negative repercussions for China.

The SCMP article also notes that although China has said it supports Ukraine's territorial integrity and denied suggestions that it might offer military assistance to Russia, it has not outright condemned Russia's invasion, has not conducted a head of state visit with Ukrainian President Zelensky, and has criticized U.S.-led sanctions imposed on Russia.

**I**n the age of liberalization of global trade, countries don't have to gain power through... grabbing land. This can be done through technology and capital... but Russia is still obsessed with owning land.

**Source:** Jun Mai, "Russia's war on Ukraine based on flawed logic, Chinese military scholar wrote in article scrubbed from the web," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong based Chinese media), 21 May 2022. [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178631/russias-war-ukraine-based-flawed-logic-chinese-military?module=lead\\_hero\\_story&pgtype=homepage](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178631/russias-war-ukraine-based-flawed-logic-chinese-military?module=lead_hero_story&pgtype=homepage)

*Russia's security rationale for attacking Ukraine was flawed and the aftermath underlines the importance of diplomatic flexibility, a Chinese scholar formerly with Beijing's top military academy has said.*

*"I still don't see how any country would have dared to invade the world's No 2 military power," Gong Fangbin, a retired professor of the People's Liberation Army National Defence University, wrote in a recent online article.*

*"Russia has shown the world time and again that no one dares touch an inch of its land," he said, countering Moscow's argument that it was cornered by the West and NATO into invading Ukraine.*

*"What's the real reason [for Moscow] to attack Ukraine? I think it's because the Russian leaders have taken the wrong path for rejuvenation."*

*Gong argued that the rationale to attack Ukraine over so-called security concerns was flawed. And the dilemma faced by Russia as it took heavy losses on the ground was the result of having chosen a path "long forsaken by human civilisation", he wrote in his article posted on WeChat last Tuesday.*

*The article, however, has since disappeared from the social media platform.*

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## Continued: Chinese Military Scholars Call out Russia for Invading Ukraine

**Source Continued:** Jun Mai, “Russia’s war on Ukraine based on flawed logic, Chinese military scholar wrote in article scrubbed from the web,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong based Chinese media), 21 May 2022. [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178631/russias-war-ukraine-based-flawed-logic-chinese-military?module=lead\\_hero\\_story&pgtype=homepage](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178631/russias-war-ukraine-based-flawed-logic-chinese-military?module=lead_hero_story&pgtype=homepage)

*Gong confirmed to the Post that he wrote the article but declined a request for an interview.*

*Gong, a military veteran who fought in the China-Vietnam war of 1979, is among a small but growing number of Chinese intellectuals voicing scepticism about Moscow’s rationale for its military aggression against Kyiv, despite heavy censorship of the sharing of such views.*

*“In the age of liberalisation of global trade, countries don’t have to gain power through ... grabbing land. This can be done through technology and capital,” Gong wrote. “But Russia is still obsessed with owning land.”*

*At a Beijing seminar in April, China’s ambassador to Ukraine between 2005 and 2007, Gao Yusheng, argued that Russia had shown signs of having lost the war and its global status was set to decline. A summary of his remarks, first published by news outlet ifeng.com in mid-May, was quickly censored.*

*But there are others making their opinions known. Yan Xuetong, dean of the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University, said earlier this month that China had not benefited from the war and Russia was set to pay “a huge price”.*

*And in March, Hu Wei, a political scientist affiliated with the State Council – China’s cabinet – called on Beijing to distance itself from Russia as soon as possible over its war on Ukraine.*

*As the war enters its third month, Beijing still refuses to condemn Russia’s act of aggression, despite mounting pressure from the US and its allies. It has also sought to rally international support to criticise the sweeping sanctions imposed on Russia, citing disruption to the global economy.*

*Since Russia launched its military assault on February 24, China has repeatedly said it respects Ukraine’s sovereignty. However President Xi Jinping is among the very few world leaders yet to hold direct talks with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.*

*Meanwhile, Chinese diplomats have sought to contain damage from the country’s close, “no limits” relationship with Moscow, as declared in a joint statement issued after Russian President Vladimir Putin met Xi in Beijing ahead of the Winter Olympics.*

*The diplomatic damage control has involved firmly denying suggestions that China might offer military assistance to Russia, and trying to isolate the Ukraine issue from Beijing’s relations with Europe.*

*Military scholar Gong had argued in another article earlier this month that the Ukraine war underlined how foreign policy flexibility might suffer if it was too closely tied to domestic politics.*

*This came after he had referenced the situation in yet another article in March, where he argued that countries only made decisions based on their own interests, and hence it was wrong to consider any country as a “strategic buffer”, as Russia says it had hoped Ukraine would be.*

*Failure to understand this, Gong argued, would lead one to also believe in the narrative that China’s economic development in the last 50 years owed much to Russia’s confrontation with the United States.*

*“If a country is full of convictions related to strategic barriers and buffer zones, it will tie itself to the vehicles of others and thus lose autonomy, consistency and necessary flexibility,” he warned.*

## Russia Shifting Wounded Servicemen to Recruitment Duties

By Charles Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russia's army newspaper *Red Star* discusses Russian plans to have severely wounded servicemen continue their military service in military commissariats. In the Russian military system, military commissariats are primarily responsible for the biannual draft but also deal with voluntary enlisted accessions, reserve accessions, and certain aspects of national mobilization. Therefore, military commissariat offices are located throughout the Russian Federation, much as U.S. military recruitment offices are scattered across the United States. This move appears to reverse a reform made under previous Russian Defense Minister Anatoli Serdyukov, whereby billets in military commissariats that uniformed servicemen once manned became civil service positions. Placing severely wounded soldiers in commissariats is noteworthy because it acknowledges the horrors of war, the numbers of wounded servicemen, and implies that the Russian government is not concerned about the public seeing these severely wounded servicemen. To the contrary, some Russian commentators have proposed that these servicemen will raise the prestige of the work of the military commissariats.

...**[T]**he first rehabilitation and educational center has been created in the Russian Ministry of Defense, which will allow the wounded to continue their military service. The new center enables military personnel to prepare for a new type of service activity in military commissariats, military units, institutions and organizations...

**Source:** Anton Alekseev, "Для раненых открываются новые перспективы (New opportunities for the wounded)," *Red Star*, (weekly newspaper of the Russian Army), 13 April 2022. <http://redstar.ru/dlya-ranenyh-otkryvayutsya-novye-perspektivy/>

*...The Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, General of the Army Sergei Shoigu, decided to ensure the possibility of further military service for military personnel who were injured during a special military operation. To this end, a rehabilitation and educational center has been created on the basis of a military hospital, where, along with medical rehabilitation and prosthetics, those who wish can learn new military specialties. At the opening ceremony of the center, State Secretary - Deputy Minister of Defense Nikolai Pankov spoke with parting words and presented state awards to wounded servicemen who distinguished themselves during the special operation.*

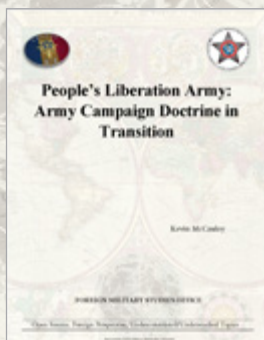
*Currently, servicemen who were injured while performing combat missions of a special military operation, which led to restrictions on further military service for health reasons, are being treated in military hospitals of the Russian Ministry of Defense. Now the first rehabilitation and educational center has been created in the Russian Ministry of Defense, which will allow the wounded to continue their military service. The new center enables military personnel to prepare for a new type of service activity in military commissariats, military units, institutions and organizations of the Russian Ministry of Defense even at the stage of medical rehabilitation...*

*"First of all, I would like to fulfill the instructions of the Minister of Defense and convey to you words of gratitude for courage, bravery and bravery in the performance of military duty during a special military operation, wish you a speedy recovery and return to duty," the Deputy Minister addressed the servicemen. - Army General Sergei Shoigu decided to ensure the possibility of further military*  
*continue on 11*

## 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.



## Continued: Russia Shifting Wounded Servicemen to Recruitment Duties

**Source Continued:** Anton Alekseev, “Для раненых открываются новые перспективы (New opportunities for the wounded),” *Red Star*, (weekly newspaper of the Russian Army), 13 April 2022. <http://redstar.ru/dlya-ranenyh-otkryvayutsya-novye-perspektivy/>

*service for all servicemen who were injured during the special operation. For each of you, a military position is being introduced in military commissariats, military units, institutions and organizations of the Russian Ministry of Defense...*

*Thus, the servicemen, after complete recovery and completion of qualification courses, will be sent for further service in military positions. After the end of the ceremony, the first groups of servicemen who expressed a desire to learn a new military specialty went to classes...*

*The training programs include, firstly, the basic part, which provides for the study of federal legislation and regulatory legal documents in the field of state defense and mobilization work, as well as the activities of military commissariats. The content of another important segment of training - the variable part - is aimed at training in the performance of duties for the position to which the serviceman is directly assigned. At the end of the training, students will have a final assessment, which will take place in the form of an interview. Upon completion of the training, those who successfully mastered the program will be issued the relevant documents - certificates...*





**R-441LM 'Liven' satellite communications vehicle**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-3zvPTCM/0/0/i-3zvPTCM.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



**R-441LM 'Liven' satellite communications vehicle**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-8dhCKdD/0/X3/i-8dhCKdD-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Russia Tests R-441 Liven Satellite Communication in Ukraine

By Charles Bartles

OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian military-themed website *Armeyskiy Standart* and weekly Russian newspaper website *Argumenty i Fakty* describe the capabilities of the R-441 Liven satellite communication system. Both articles clarify that the R-441 had its first use in combat conditions during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, or as they call it the "special military operation." The R-441 is designed to provide SHF (S/C-band) satellite communications capabilities for the strategic- and operational-level headquarters of the Ground Forces and Aerospace Forces. The first version of the R-441 was fielded in 1997 to replace the R-440 Kristall satellite communication system, which provided a similar capability. Variants of the R-441 are located in the headquarters of Air and Air Defense Armies, Combined Arms Armies, and Military Districts. The articles purport that the system has performed well, although they provide few details.

**A**n analysis of the various nuances of the special military operation are yet to come, but experts are already noting that, along with other means, the Liven system has confirmed its relevance and effectiveness.

**Source:** Petr Nikolaev "Связующие нити «Ливня»: Система связи окружного и армейского звена управления получила станцию нового технического уровня (The Binding Threads of "Liven": Military district and combined arms army command-level receive a communications system of a new technical level)," *Armeyskiy Standart* (Russian military themed website), 4 May 2022. <https://armystandard.ru/news/20224271046-kIXen.html>

*...What are the main advantages of this station [Liven]? Firstly, versatility, it provides stable communications with any digital or analog radio relay stations and unified command and control vehicles. Liven's navigation system automatically aims the satellite dish (diameter 1.8 meters)...*

*Secondly, it is more secure, and can operate in environments with electromagnetic interference...*

*...The R-441 crew (full manned-16 personnel, partially manned – 11 personnel) is able to deploy in 20-30 minutes in any climatic conditions. In addition, difficult terrain is not an obstacle for the system, which is especially important in the mountains...*

*continue on 13*

## Continued: Russia Tests R-441 Liven Satellite Communication in Ukraine

**Source Continued:** Petr Nikolaev “Связующие нити «Ливня»: Система связи окружного и армейского звена управления получила станцию нового технического уровня (The Binding Threads of "Liven": Military district and combined arms army command-level receive a communications system of a new technical level),” *Armeyskiy Standart* (Russian military themed website), 4 May 2022. <https://armystandard.ru/news/20224271046-kIXen.html>

*A number of modifications of the R-441 "Liven-VM" complex have been created. Among them are R-441-LM (linear automobile station "Liven-LM"); R-441-OV (terminal automobile station "Liven-OV"); R-441-OZh (terminal railway station "Liven-OZh"); R-441-OK (terminal container station "Liven-OK"); and R-441-U (nodal automobile station "Liven -U").*

*...It is powerful communication center that works autonomously in the field. Just like the stationary communication nodes at the strategic and operational levels, "Liven" provides mobile long-range multi-channel radio communications. The use of repeaters on artificial satellites makes it possible to cover vast distances without problems. For example, at a recent training session in the Amur Region, R-441 crews created a high-quality digital communication network spanning more than 400 kilometers.*

*...An analysis of the various nuances of the special military operation are yet to come, but experts are already noting that, along with other means, the Liven system has confirmed its relevance and effectiveness. In general, the modern communications systems that have recently entered service significantly increase the throughput [bandwidth] and quality of communication channels, allowing commanders of various levels to successfully solve command and control tasks.*

### **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 WWII Veteran Benefits Lag Behind Those in Central Asia

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

As the brief excerpted article in the semi-independent *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* indicates, Kremlin rhetoric regarding the debt owed to World War II (WWII) veterans far outweighs the reality of the low pay they receive. Russia's annual Victory Day commemoration on 9 May has become the apotheosis and driving force behind current Kremlin ideology. The Soviet Union's triumph over Nazi Germany in the what the Russians know as the "Great Patriotic War" now serves as the bellicose prism through which the Kremlin view themselves and the world. Just as the Soviet Union saved the world from fascism in the early 1940s, so today, according to Kremlin propaganda, brave Russian soldiers are fighting Nazism in Ukraine. Given the central importance of this holiday and the current conflict, one might assume that the Kremlin would understand the importance of demonstrating its gratitude to those few surviving Russian veterans.

It is noteworthy that one-time payments to Russian veterans are many times less than similar assistance to their fellow soldiers living in the Asian republics of the former USSR....

However, the article showed an unflattering comparison between the annual benefits provided to surviving WWII veterans in Russia and four Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. For instance, in 2022, "10 thousand rubles [\$154] were transferred to the 20,320 [remaining WWII] veterans in the Russian Federation." Although the Central Asian economies are much smaller than Russia's, they provided a significantly larger veteran benefit. Uzbekistan provided \$1,339; Kyrgyzstan paid \$1,209; Kazakhstan paid \$2,400; and Tajikistan provided \$234 to its veterans. Given the Kremlin's increasingly heavy-handed regulation of Russia's media environment, this issue bears further monitoring to see if it gains traction among the Russian public and may provide some opening to combat the Kremlin's domestic misinformation campaign.

**Source:** Mikhail Sergeev, "Участники ВОВ в России получают в 9 раз меньше, чем в Узбекистане и Киргизии (Participants of the Second World War in Russia will receive 9 times less than in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent), 4 May 2022. [https://www.ng.ru/economics/2022-05-04/100\\_e04052022\\_1.html](https://www.ng.ru/economics/2022-05-04/100_e04052022_1.html)

*Comparison of veterans' payments for Victory Day...On the anniversary of the Victory, participants in the Great Patriotic War living in the Donetsk People's Republic, the Lugansk People's Republic and the liberated territories of Ukraine will receive a one-time payment of 10,000 Russian rubles by decree of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The same amount will be received by veterans living in the territory of the Russian Federation. Annual payments for Victory Day in the amount of 10 thousand rubles were transferred to 20,320 veterans in the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Labor reported...*

*It is noteworthy that one-time payments to Russian veterans are many times less than similar assistance to their fellow soldiers living in the Asian republics of the former USSR.... In Uzbekistan, for example, war veterans, concentration camp prisoners and Leningrad blockade survivors will each receive 15 million soums (equivalent to 1,339 US dollars or more than 93,000 Russian rubles).... In Kyrgyzstan, the veterans' payment for Victory Day will amount to 100,000 soms (\$1,209 or almost 85,000 Russian rubles)....*

*In Kazakhstan, the size of veterans' payments for Victory Day varies depending on the region of residence and the special status of the recipient. Thus, veterans of the Great Patriotic War living in Nur-Sultan and Almaty will receive 1 million tenge (156 thousand Russian rubles) each, and in Aktobe - 2 million tenge (312 thousand Russian rubles).*

*So the difference in the amount of veterans' payments even increased this year. Last year, NG wrote that "soldiers living in Kazakhstan will receive 17 times more than their Russian fellow soldiers." And today you can name another difference - 31 times more than in the Russian Federation....*



## Russian Media Source Blames United States for Russian “Brain Drain”

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Over the past several years, as the Kremlin’s domestic policies have become more repressive, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of Russians who have emigrated. These self-exiled Russians often represent the country’s best and brightest. Moving abroad, they believe they can better realize their potential in countries with a more transparent political system, better legal guarantees, and greater opportunities to exercise personal freedom. This “brain drain” has become an even more acute problem for the Kremlin since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. According to the opposition media source *Meduza*, nearly 150 thousand people have emigrated from Russia since 24 February.

Rather than examining the domestic reasons for leaving Russia, some pro-Kremlin media blame the U.S. for this exodus. Citing a recent Chinese article, the second excerpt

from the semi-independent site *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* claims that the U.S. has “created a brain drain trend using it as a tool to weaken Russia.” According to the author, “Washington is trying to facilitate the transfer to the United States of the best Russian specialists with experience in semiconductors, space technology, cybersecurity, nuclear engineering, artificial intelligence, space technology and other specialized scientific fields.” Given this trend, the Kremlin may soon develop policies to restrict its most qualified citizens from leaving Russia.

**W**ill the United States be able to weaken Russia by poaching its best specialists?

**Source:** Kristina Safonova, “Сколько людей уехало из России из-за войны? (How many people left Russia because of the war?),” *Meduza* (opposition news source), 7 May 2022. <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/05/07/skolko-lyudey-uehalo-iz-rossii-iz-za-voyny-oni-uzhe-nikogda-ne-vernutsya-mozhno-li-eto-schitat-ocherednoy-volnoy-emigratsii>

*Is it possible to estimate how many people left Russia after February 24?*

*Julia Florinskaya: I don't have any estimates - neither accurate nor inaccurate. It's more of an order of numbers. My order of numbers is about 150 thousand people.*

**Source:** Tatyana Popova, “Организация «утечки мозгов» как новое глобальное оружие США (Organization of brain drain as a new global weapon of the United States),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent), 5 May 2022. [https://www.ng.ru/world/2022-05-05/100\\_usa050522.html](https://www.ng.ru/world/2022-05-05/100_usa050522.html)

*Will the United States be able to weaken Russia by poaching its best specialists?*

*The United States of America intends to prevent the development of high technologies in Russia and in parallel to improve its economy, using special tactics, say the authors of the Chinese daily newspaper Global Times. ... Washington is trying to facilitate the transfer to the United States of the best Russian specialists with experience in semiconductors, space technology, cybersecurity, nuclear engineering, artificial intelligence, space technology and other specialized scientific fields....*

*...According to the newspaper, the statement that the United States “wants to see Russia weakened” reveals the true intentions of the United States.... The US creates a brain drain trend using it as a tool to weaken Russia. The consequences of the mass exodus of specialists (scientists and engineers) from the country are obvious - this process undermines the foundation of national economic and military development. ...However, it is clear that the US is determined to weaken Russia.*

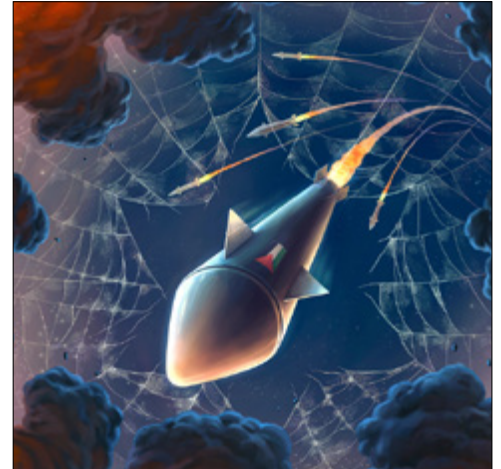
## Khamenei Speaks on Necessity of Palestinian “Resistance”

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

During his annual Qods Day speech, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei doubled down on the necessity to support regional “resistance” against not only Israel but also the United States and its allies. The Iranian government labels terrorist actions as “resistance” and in recent years, in addition to Palestinian “resistance,” other regional groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and the Yemeni Houthis have also taken center stage on Qods Day. In his televised address, excerpted here from his official webpage, *Khamenei.ir*, Khamenei argues that most Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel proper, i.e., “the 1948... lands,” support Palestinian attacks. This directly contradicts core assumptions shaping Western policymaking, but suggests that Iran claims it has popular approval to support and sponsor attacks against Israel, such as the sharp increase in stabbing attacks in Israeli towns and cities in recent months within the 1949 armistice lines. Khamenei also contextualized Iranian support for Palestinian “resistance” within the greater fight for control in Lebanon, the battle against the Islamic State in Syria, and the fight against Americans in Iraq. Khamenei is claiming wide victory for Iranian policy, a fact that he will probably use to double down on further rejectionism of Israel and an active U.S. role in the Middle East in coming years.

**T**he Resistance fights against international terrorism.

Any hope that Western diplomacy might lead to a change in Iranian behavior seems doubtful so long as Khamenei remains at Iran’s helm.



Poster from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s webpage celebrating Palestinian “resistance” against Israel

Source: Khamenei.ir <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-album?id=50134> Attribution: none

**Source:** “Sokhanrani Televisiyon beh Monisabat Roz-e Jihani Qods (Televised Speech on the Occasion of World Qods Day),” *Khamenei.ir* (Khamenei’s official website), 29 April 2022. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=50116>

### *Resistance has been the Most Blessed Phenomenon*

*Polls show that almost 70 percent of the Palestinians in the 1948 and 1967 lands and in the surrounding camps encourage the Palestinian leaders to carry out attacks on the Zionist regime. This is an important phenomenon because it signifies the complete preparedness of the Palestinians to confront the usurping regime and it provides the mujahid organizations with the freedom to take military action whenever they deem necessary.*

*The jihadi moves of the people of Palestine in the two northern and southern parts of the 1948 lands, and at the same time, the massive rallies in Jordan and Eastern Quds, the brave defense of the Al-Aqsa Mosque by Palestinian youth, and the military maneuvers in Gaza indicate that all of Palestine has turned into an arena of resistance. At present, the people of Palestine are unanimous about continuing this struggle on the path of God....*

*The formation of the Resistance in West Asia has been the most blessed phenomenon in this region in recent decades. It was the magnificence of the Resistance that was able to cleanse the occupied territories of Lebanon of the pollution of the Zionists, pull Iraq out from the clutches of the Americans, save Iraq from the maliciousness of the Islamic State, and assist Syrian defenders in the face of the U.S. schemes. The Resistance fights against international terrorism, helps the resistant people of Yemen in the war that has been imposed on them, wrestles with the Zionist usurpers in Palestine and will bring them to their knees with God’s grace....*

*The Islamic Republic of Iran advocates and supports the camp of Resistance. It advocates and supports the Palestinian Resistance. We have always said this, we have always acted on this, and we have stood by it.*



**The Iranian government is seeking to clarify rumors surrounding bread price increases**

Source: Jam-e Jam Online, [https://jamejamonline.ir/files/fa/news/1401/2/16/599366\\_453.jpg](https://jamejamonline.ir/files/fa/news/1401/2/16/599366_453.jpg) Attribution: none

## Iran Initiates and Defends New Bread Subsidies Amid Deteriorating Economy

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

Official Iranian media is trying to justify new domestic subsidies put in place to counter Iran's worsening economy. Iran is very sensitive to bread prices and like many other countries in the Middle East, is highly dependent on wheat and grain imports. Even before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Iranian officials had said that wheat imports were on the rise. On 7 May, the head of Iran's Flour Producers Association said that Iran needed to import 20 million tons of wheat and that its reliance on the foreign grain supply, especially Russia's, had never been so great. While the Iranian government blames the domestic grain production shortfall on

drought, Iranians say a greater responsibility may be the result of corruption and watershed mismanagement as the economic wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps wins contracts to build unnecessary dams regardless of whether such diversions prevent water flow to agricultural land.

The excerpted article from Iranian new outlet *Fars News Agency* seeks to correct misinformation circulating online and explain new subsidy policies. While Iranians worry that bread rations are on the horizon, the article suggests that new requirements equip the bakeries to accept bank debit cards. These, in turn, will automatically apply government subsidy payments based on income level. As suggested in the article, the government designed the scheme to counter illegal profiteering among bakeries.

While Iranian subsidy schemes aim to ameliorate the risks of social unrest, their expense to government coffers often involves trade-offs. Shifting funding to grain subsidies has led to a decrease of support for chicken feed that in turn has led to greater expense and scarcity of chicken and eggs. The impact of this was apparent during Iranian Nowruz (New Year) festivities. As households were unable to accommodate the hospitality toward guests traditional during the period, Iranians explained that many residents of Tehran and other major cities decided instead to travel to the countryside where they might be relieved of the expense of feeding guests. Iranians recognize the erosion of Nowruz hospitality as an unwanted sacrifice that illustrates just how dire their economic situation has become.

**T**he needy and low-income groups of the society can get the full advantage of these subsidies.

**Source:** "Az Shaye'ah ta Vaghe'yat Yaraneh-e Nan (Bread Subsidy Cards: From Rumor to Reality)," *Fars News Agency* (official media outlet closely associated with Iran's military and security services), 7 May 2022. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010217000044>

### ***Bread Subsidy Cards: From Rumor to Reality***

*From rumor to reality: The 13th government [the Raisi administration] has undertaken what the Rouhani administration should have done years ago, and out on the agenda removal of 4,200 toman [subsidy]. The government intends to implement key economy reforms for the sake of justice and to eliminate the profits of certain people. Government officials have said they are ready to sacrifice their own reputations for this. One of the important issues in this regard is price liberalization and the direct payment of bread subsidies to the people. In this regard, some people published a photoshopped and false images of a "bread subsidy card." The Central*

*continue on 18*



## Continued: Iran Initiates and Defends New Bread Subsidies Amid Deteriorating Economy

**Source Continued:** “Az Shaye’ah ta Vaghe’yat Yaraneh-e Nan (Bread Subsidy Cards: From Rumor to Reality),” *Fars News Agency* (official media outlet closely associated with Iran’s military and security services), 7 May 2022. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010217000044>

*Bank’s deputy for New Technologies said in this regard: “The infrastructure is designed so that people can claim their subsidy at the same time by using a card while buying basic goods. In this way, the purchase cost is deducted from both the individual subsidy and the bank account.” This will subsidize only the flour used by the people, not all the flour of the bakeries. There is no need for a new card as purchases are made with the current bankcard of individuals. The price and manner of buying bread does not change....*

*For other basic goods, a monthly amount is provided to compensate for the increase in prices. The higher income groups pay a part of the cost of providing these goods, but the needy and low-income groups of the society can get the full advantage of these subsidies....*

## 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.

## Iran Seeks To Counter Misinformation Circulating on Social Media

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

Iranians are avid consumers of social media. However, the popular embrace of social media is a double-edged sword. The excerpted article from government media outlet *Fars News Agency* highlights Iranian efforts to counter misinformation circulating on social media.

Many Iranians, especially those who approach state-run television and news agencies with cynicism, get their news from social media. Telegram is popular. While the Iranian government discourages use of Facebook and Twitter, even Iranian officials use such platforms. During the 2018-19 unrest, security forces even circulated photos of protestors on Twitter to crowdsource their identification. Specifically, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) denounce the legitimacy of two clips that Iranians said depicted the misbehavior and corruption of a senior IRGC officer, but actually show German-born, Greek-Iranian actor Vassilis Koukalani.

That Iranians so readily believed that Koukalani's clips depicted IRGC corruption, however, reflects the cynicism with which ordinary Iranians view the institution and the hypocrisy that they expect from public figures. While Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei seeks to imbue revolutionary values in the next generation, it appears that multi-million dollar corruption scandals and human trafficking rings involving clerics have eroded public trust more broadly.

The Iranian public's readiness to believe 'fake news' regarding their leaders could also become a security issue for



**Clip of a video circulating on Iranian social media in which Iranians misidentify German-born Greek-Iranian actor Vassilis Koukalani as a Revolutionary Guards officer.**

Source: *Fars News Agency*, [https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Image/s/1401/02/17/14010217000003\\_Test\\_NewPhotoFree.jpg](https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Image/s/1401/02/17/14010217000003_Test_NewPhotoFree.jpg) Attribution: none

the regime. In 2001, an Iranian diaspora television channel broadcasting from California sparked nationwide riots when it claimed that Iranian authorities had ordered the national soccer team to throw an important World Cup qualifier to prevent men and women from celebrating together. Ironically, the excerpted *Fars News Agency* article will only exacerbate the regime's credibility problem as Iranians could interpret the failure to correct future questionable social media stories as tacit admission that other videos and clips are real.

**A** clip entitled, 'IRGC Commander having fun with women abroad' was released.

**Source:** "Dorough-e Digar Aliyeh Sepah (Another Lie against the Revolutionary Guards)," *Fars News Agency* (official media outlet close to Iran's security forces), 7 May 2022. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010217000011>

### *Another Lie against the Revolutionary Guards*

*Recently, a clip entitled "IRGC Commander having fun with women abroad" or "IRGC Commander and his daughter dancing and singing in the car" has been released. The clip identified the person in the clip as a Revolutionary Guards commander.*

*But the fact is that the person in the clip is a German-born mixed heritage actor, and his photo in an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps uniform is related to his role in one of the Zionist, anti-Iranian films in which he has starred.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## A Complex Link Between Coups and Jihadism in West Africa

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the non-profit scholarly publication *The Conversation: Africa* examines the possible connections between coups and the presence of Islamic terrorists in African states. There have been three coups in West Africa's Sahel Region in since 2021: Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso, as well as a fourth failed attempt in Guinea-Bissau. The author found the link between coups and jihad to be complex, with jihadism not necessarily a direct precursor.

The author notes jihadism and coups are precipitated by similar factors such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, ignorance, political instability, and the inability of governments to meet these challenges. These conditions serve as excellent recruiting tools for jihadist groups looking to increase their ranks with jobless, angry youth. These conditions also encourage soldiers, sometimes with a disgruntled populace backing them, to overthrow a corrupt government that is unable to provide for its citizens. Finally, the military is more likely to attempt a coup when the government appears unable to defeat terrorist organizations. This was the case in Burkina Faso, where the military

overthrew President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré in January 2022, after feeling their forces were not being adequately supplied to defeat the jihadists and becoming disenchanted as the number of casualties within their ranks grew.

Coup leaders often adopt a very militaristic approach to defeating jihadists. Instead of attacking the root causes of discontent, such as high unemployment and lack of essential services, they implement forceful measures that tend to drive the poor into the arms of jihadist recruiters. As such, their harsh measures lead to more jihadist recruits, leading to harsher crackdown measures, and so on. Ultimately, the outcome of the coup-jihadism relationship becomes increased instability. Meanwhile, the African Union and Western nations, see their efforts at democratization and counterterrorism in the Sahel undermined.

**A**nalysts say that while there is no mutually beneficial relationship between jihadist groups and coup plotters, there is a linkage between the increase of jihadism and the protracted insecurity across the region.



**Colonels Ismaël Wagué and Malick Diaw of Mali's ruling junta**

Source: Kassim Traoré / VOA/Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Comit%C3%A9\\_national\\_pour\\_le\\_salut\\_du\\_Peuple\\_-\\_2020\\_Malian\\_coup\\_d%27Etat\\_2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Comit%C3%A9_national_pour_le_salut_du_Peuple_-_2020_Malian_coup_d%27Etat_2.jpg) Attribution: Public Domain



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: A Complex Link Between Coups and Jihadism in West Africa

**Source:** Folahanmi Aina, “Jihadism and coups in West Africa’s Sahel region: a complex relationship,” *The Conversation: Africa* (non-profit scholarly publication), 17 February 2022. <https://theconversation.com/jihadism-and-coups-in-west-africas-sahel-region-a-complex-relationship-176988>

*Most of these groups are affiliated with global jihadist groups such Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.*

*This has led to repeated tensions in relations between the state and society, which the jihadist groups have exploited in intensifying their recruitment drive.*

*On the other hand, the activities of these jihadist groups have also mounted additional pressure on the fragile democratic systems across the region.*

*This encourages state capture by the military, who see themselves as “guardians of the state” and the “last hope” of the common citizen.*

*The continued emergence of coups is likely to be capitalised upon by jihadists as reflecting efforts which are finally yielding desired results – the forced displacement of democratic systems of government. The jihadists could use this as a tactic to get more fighters to join them.*

*The military juntas now in power must urgently seek to establish mutuality with the societies they now rule. It’s a tall order, given that they don’t prioritise the relationship between state and society. Doing so would require giving voice to the concerns and grievances of citizens they rule over.*



## OEWATCH

Check out **back issues** of FMSO’s **Operational Environment Watch** dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Boko Haram Train Attack Raises Frustration with Nigeria's Counterterrorism Strategy

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

The Nigerian government has been unable to curb Boko Haram attacks. The excerpted article from Nigeria based *vanguardngr.com* expresses frustration over the government's incompetence following an attack on a train in Kaduna State in late April. According to the article, this is only the latest of many failures in Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy dating back to the notorious Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping of 2014. The train attack is particularly notable because it occurred outside of Boko Haram's main area of operations in northeastern Nigeria and came just two years after another Boko Haram faction loyal to al-Qaeda shot and almost downed a military helicopter in 2020.

*Vanguardngr.com* has previously been critical of the federal government led by northerner Muslim President Muhammadu Buhari, suggesting that the dire economic situation in Nigeria and lack of a government mandate over certain rural areas in Kaduna have facilitated Boko Haram's spread in the country. The article asserts the government is mismanaging the security situation in the country and failing to learn from previous mistakes in countering Boko Haram. Unless the negative security trend lines are reversed, the article indicates the Buhari administration will have a legacy of empty promises. Ultimately, the article demands the government prioritize



81 Division NA - Camp Zairo, 2017

Source: Hussaina Muhammad (VOA) [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:81\\_Division\\_NA\\_-\\_Camp\\_Zairo,\\_2017.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:81_Division_NA_-_Camp_Zairo,_2017.png) Attribution: CC x 2.0

defending communities against Boko Haram and warns that unless this is done, the group will continue to expand its operations and conduct devastating attacks like this one that erode the government's legitimacy.

**W**e failed to learn from our Boko Haram experiences, thus validating the dictum that those who fail to learn from their experiences are doomed to repeat them.

**Source:** "Failure to learn from our Boko Haram experience," *vanguardngr.com* (Nigerian media outlet), 19 April 2022. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/04/failure-to-learn-from-our-boko-haram-experience/>

*The train attack was obviously staged to embarrass and blackmail the Federal Government. They downed a military jet and attacked the Kaduna Airport twice. The steady massacres and attacks of defenceless communities in Southern Kaduna as well as Plateau and Benue states by herdsmen terrorists have gone largely ignored by the Buhari government. The parlous economic situation and near anarchy due to the failure of the Federal Government to protect innocent and defenceless people have continued to put a question mark on the positive legacy this regime has recorded. We failed to learn from our Boko Haram experiences, thus validating the dictum that those who fail to learn from their experiences are doomed to repeat them. We hope the next regime will review the actions of major actors of this administration in mismanaging our security.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## National Armed Strike in Colombia Demonstrates Strength of Gulf Clan

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

In November 2021, Colombian security forces arrested Dairo Antonio Úsuga, otherwise known as “Otoniel,” the leader of the Gulf Clan and the most wanted drug trafficker in the country. Colombian President Iván Duque declared at the time that this was “the most important blow of this century against drug trafficking in Colombia” (see: “Colombia Celebrates the Arrest of Major Drug Trafficker ‘Otoniel,’” *OE Watch*, December 2021). However, in early May, the Gulf Clan shut down wide swathes of northern Colombia, declaring an “armed strike,” according to Colombia’s leading weekly magazine *Semana*. The strike, which lasted four days, was a direct response to the Colombian government’s decision to extradite Otoniel. The government was slow to react, but eventually sent several thousand troops and police to intervene and lift the strike. According to Colombia’s left-leaning daily *El Espectador*, the strike resulted in 24 homicides and hundreds of burned cars used to block highways. It also exacerbated Colombia’s supply chain challenges. Finally, the strike demonstrated the enduring power of cartels in Colombia and had an immediate ripple effect on Colombia’s presiden-



**The Colombian Police capture high-level figures in the Gulf Clan**

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/policiacolombia/8616989338/in/photostream/> Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.0

tial election. Leftist presidential candidate, Gustavo Petro, blamed the security policies of past presidents, while the leading right-wing candidate, Fico Gutierrez, affirmed his support for the policy of extradition and a close security partnership with the United States. Petro won the election, ushering a new era of what will likely be more limited cooperation with a formerly reliable U.S. partner in the region.

**T**he illegal armed group carried out an armed strike between May 5 and May 9, 2022. It is estimated that 24 homicides occurred, in addition to the incineration of nearly 200 vehicles to block roads.

**Source:** “Clan del Golfo: qué hubo detrás del paro armado? (Clan del Golfo: what was behind the armed strike?),” *El Espectador* (one of Colombia’s left-leaning daily newspapers), 12 May 2022. <https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/clan-del-golfo-que-hubo-detras-del-paro-armado/>

*The illegal armed group carried out an armed strike between May 5 and May 9, 2022. It is estimated that 24 homicides occurred, in addition to the incineration of nearly 200 vehicles to block roads. El Espectador spoke with several leaders of the affected areas and the general picture they gave us was that, despite the military deployment, the absence of the state was felt for five days. Business was closed, people could not leave their homes, children could not go to school, threats to leaders were constant and they could not travel on the country’s highways.*

**Source:** “Terror en Antioquia: Clan del Golfo ha quemado 10 vehículos en medio de su ‘paro armado’ (Terror in Antioquia: Clan del Golfo has burned 10 vehicles in the midst of its ‘armed strike’),” *Semana* (Colombia’s leading weekly magazine), 5 May 2022. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/medellin/articulo/terror-en-antioquia-clan-del-golfo-ha-quemado-10-vehiculos-en-medio-de-su-paro-armado/20221/>

*Cargo and food transport vehicles have been incinerated, but there are also buses for the mobilization of people and even taxis. Around 3,000 cargo operations have been stopped...In a pamphlet released by Gulf Clan, they assure that the ‘armed strike’ will be carried out for five days, during which time social, economic, educational and cultural activities will be entirely suspended.*



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Mexican Cartels Buying Land on Colombia-Venezuela Border

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Mexican criminal organizations have ambitions to transform much of South America's drug trade through a robust physical presence in Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Previously, emissaries of Mexican criminal organizations had arrived at the Colombia-Venezuela border in an attempt to mediate disputes between local drug gangs (see "Colombian Military Continues to Forcefully Dismantle FARC Dissident Structures," *OE Watch*, #4, 2022). However, according to one of Argentina's leading news sites, *Infobae*, the presence of Mexican cartels extends well beyond mediation. Under the guise of oil exploration, *Infobae* reports how Mexican criminal organizations are driving a real estate frenzy on the Colombia-Venezuela border. Farmland with a landing strip is especially valued, since it gives drug flights the ability to land and take off near production and storage facilities. Large farms with landing strips are common because the roads are blocked during the rainy season and prevent farmers



*A coca plantation of the kind found on the Colombia-Venezuela border*  
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ciat/4387014624> Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.0

from getting their harvest to market. Another *Infobae* report indicates that Mexican cartels in the borderland have started to transform Colombia's drug production as well. Specifically, Mexican cartels have introduced coca plants that yield greater harvests while requiring fewer hectares under cultivation. Mexican cartels that used to work with local criminal organizations are becoming more globally minded in an effort to cut out middlemen and other major players.

**T**he first thing the cartels ask is if the farm has a landing strip because that gives the property a very high price.

**Source:** "Alarma por el crecimiento de la compra y venta de ganado del narcotráfico y la guerrilla en Venezuela con participación de militares y políticos (Alarm over the growth of the purchase and sale of property from drug trafficking in Venezuela with the participation of the military and politicians)," *Infobae* (one of Argentina's leading news sites), 28 April 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2022/04/28/alarma-por-el-crecimiento-de-la-compra-y-venta-de-ganado-del-narcotrafico-y-la-guerrilla-en-venezuela-con-participacion-de-militares-y-politicos/>

*There is a boom in the acquisition of properties by...Mexicans in the states of Apure, Guárico, Anzoátegui and Bolívar, with money of unknown origin...The first thing the cartels ask is if the farm has a landing strip because that gives the property a very high price. The presence of Mexicans...has the excuse that they are interested in oil exploitation...For years, farmers have had airplanes mainly because in the rainy season, the roads are obstructed... Now, there are landing strips everywhere and aircraft landing and taking off at any time.*

**Source:** "Cómo el Cártel de Sinaloa y el CJNG han innovado la producción de cocaína en Colombia (How the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG have innovated cocaine production in Colombia)," *Infobae* (one of Argentina's leading news sites), 11 May 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2022/05/11/como-el-cartel-de-sinaloa-y-el-cjng-han-innovado-la-produccion-de-cocaina-en-colombia/>

*As if they were administrators of legal companies, the Mexican drug traffickers participate directly in the cultivation of the coca leaf with the introduction of adapted seeds...Lieutenants sent to the South American country not only supervise the planting, but also coordinate the shipment that guarantees the quality of the drug exported via Central America and its passage through Mexico to the streets of the United States, where the product increases its value exponentially...Despite the limited planting area, they have also implemented strategies to increase the crop yields of plantations.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Algeria Sees Threat from Morocco as Western Sahara Conflict Threatens To Reignite

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

The long-frozen dispute over the Western Sahara, in which Morocco claims sovereignty over the territory and Algeria supports the Polisario Front's independence aspirations, continues to thaw amidst sporadic military activity. The latest incident occurred in early April, when a Moroccan UAV purportedly struck a convoy near the border between Mauritania and the Western Sahara. There are conflicting reports of what happened. The Algerian government, through its foreign affairs ministry, called it “a targeted assassination” carried out by Morocco outside of its internationally recognized borders. The Qatari-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadid* cites a source which claimed a Moroccan drone had fired “eight missiles” at two Algerian trucks that had delivered their commercial cargo in Mauritania and were returning to the Algerian city of Tindouf. The Moroccan government did not comment on the matter, but according to the Facebook page of the quasi-official Moroccan military chat forum *FAR Maroc*, Moroccan authorities had conveyed to the UN that 10 trucks transporting weapons and ammunition were struck within territory that the Western Sahara independence movement Polisario Front controls. It added that Polisario had prevented UN forces from accessing the site for 72 hours, during which they altered the scene to make it appear as if a civilian convoy had been struck.

The Algerian military's main articulated concern vis-à-vis Morocco are not UAVs, but rather the broader threat of “new generation warfare.” In a speech immediately following the incident described above, Saïd Chengriha, Chief of Staff of the Algerian military, emphasized the importance of maintaining national cohesion



Morocco from space

Source: NASA, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/751371/morocco-image-day> Attribution: Public Domain

amidst external attempts to sow discord through misinformation and influence campaigns. The septuagenarian Chengriha has stated on more than one occasion that the key battle for Algeria's youth is a battle of conscience, “in which new and unconventional weapons are used, and which uses virtual space as its theater of operations, in an attempt to manipulate opinions, especially young people...” The Algerian military's views on hybrid warfare are informed in part by its historical linkages with Russia; because of this, events in Ukraine may become a new factor influencing Algeria's strategic outlook toward Morocco.

**A**lgeria strongly condemns the targeted assassinations by the Kingdom of Morocco using advanced military weapons outside of its internationally recognized borders...

Source: Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Twitter account, @Algeria\_MFA, 12 April 2022. [https://twitter.com/Algeria\\_MFA/status/1513918713086492676](https://twitter.com/Algeria_MFA/status/1513918713086492676)

*Algeria strongly condemns the targeted assassinations by the Kingdom of Morocco using advanced military weapons outside of its internationally recognized borders against innocent civilians from three countries of the region.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Algeria Sees Threat from Morocco as Western Sahara Conflict Threatens To Reignite

### Source:

(New attack on Algerian trucks in the Sahara near the Mauritanian border)," *al-Araby al-Jadid* (Qatari-aligned daily), 10 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/ydf7uemn>

*Local sources told al-Araby al-Jadid that Moroccan drones fired eight missiles at two Algerian trucks, which caused their destruction and the injury of more than two people. They added that the two trucks had unloaded their cargo in Mauritania and were on their way back to the city of Tindouf, in southern Algeria.*

Source: FAR Maroc (quasi-official Moroccan military news forum), Facebook page (Arabic), 21 April 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/1529080437316937/posts/3255921981299432>

*Regarding the Bir Lahlu operation on April 10, the [UN] mission confirmed that Morocco had informed that it targeted, in a specific operation, about 10 trucks and vehicles loaded with ammunition and weapons targeting the security of Morocco. However, the Polisario prevented members of the mission from inspecting the site for 72 hours, after which they found only two trucks and a vehicle. It also monitored the presence of another operation near the location of the two trucks, confirming that Polisario had manipulated the scene to prove its allegation that Morocco had targeted civilians.*

Source: "Les nouveaux défis exigent la consolidation du front interne," *Algeria Press Service* (Algerian official news agency), 8 May 2022. <https://www.aps.dz/algerie/139409-les-nouveaux-defis-exigent-la-consolidation-du-front-interne-et-une-confiance-totale-dans-les-institutions-de-l-etat>

*According to El Djeich, "the various challenges which Algeria is currently facing, and which it will have to take up in the future, have led the High Command of the People's National Army (ANP)... to carry out a vast program of modernization and capacity-renewal of the ANP battle corps and its implementation on the ground, in order to achieve a high level of competence at all levels and therefore operational availability"*

*... "The real battle that our young people must win today is essentially a battle of conscience, Lieutenant General Saïd Chengriha has said on numerous occasions," per the Editorial. "It is a battle in which new and unconventional weapons are used, and which uses virtual space as its theater of operations, in an attempt to manipulate opinions, especially young people..."*

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.





# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Degrading Environmental Conditions in Iraq Providing Cover for Terrorism

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Over a three-week span in April and May, the Iraqi news agency *Shafaq News* reported at least three separate attacks in which ISIS fighters took advantage of dust storms to attack Iraqi positions. The attacks themselves are not novel, as ISIS and other rebel groups have used dust storms and sandstorms to conceal their movements during attacks in both Syria and Iraq for years. Nor were the attacks particularly impactful, relegated to brief reports in local media. The frequency and breadth of this year's dust storms, however, have drawn substantial media attention. As detailed in the accompanying excerpt from the influential Qatari outlet *al-Jazeera*, the number of annual "dusty days" is expected to reach 300 by the year 2050, up from 243 at the start of the millennium and 272 at present. A major reason for this is Iraq's accumulating environmental problems, which include ongoing drought, expanding desertification, extreme summer heat, and decreased water flows in the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Iraq's dysfunctional political parties are unlikely to muster sustainable responses to these challenges, allowing the spiraling cycle to continue. Those frustrated at the negative social impacts caused by environmental degradation are likely to channel this against authorities, giving ISIS and other insurgent groups an opening to continue recruiting among the increasingly disaffected population.



U.S. Soldiers walk from the dining facility during a sandstorm at Forward Operating Base Warhorse, Iraq, July 4 (2009)

Source: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/186799/sandstorm> Attribution: Public Domain

**T**he number of dusty days increased from 243 days to 272 days per year over the past two decades, and is expected to reach 300 dusty days per year in 2050.

### Source:

(ISIS attacks the army in Mosul during dust storm, as PMF goes on alert),” *Shafaq News* (Iraqi news agency), 6 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yck9dbmy>

بالتزامن مع عاصفة ترابية.. داعش يهاجم الجيش في الموصل والحشد يدخل الإنذار

*On Wednesday, ISIS militants attacked Iraqi army units in the city of Mosul, the center of Nineveh Governorate. A statement of the 44th Brigade in the Popular Mobilization (Ansar al-Marja'iya) stated that... “a very dense dust storm hit the city of Mosul at the time of the attack by ISIS.”*

### Source:

(Injuries in ISIS attack in Anbar taking advantage of dust storm in the province),” *Shafaq News* (Iraqi news agency), 19 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8wz9xa>

جرى بهجوم لداعش في الانبار مستغلا عاصفة ترابية تضرب المحافظة

*Imad Al-Dulaimi, the mayor of Al-Rutba district, western Iraq, revealed on Tuesday that six soldiers and civilians were wounded by ISIS militants who took advantage of a dust storm that hit the area.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Degrading Environmental Conditions in Iraq Providing Cover for Terrorism

### Source:

مسؤول حكومي: هجوم "البو طراز" خارج حدود ديالى وداعش استغل العاصفة

(Government official: Albu Tiraz attack outside of Diyala's borders, as ISIS takes advantage of storm)," *Shafaq News* (Iraqi news agency), 2 May 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yndch5bj>

*Eyewitnesses in the village of Albu Tiraz revealed that ISIS militants took advantage of the dust storm and lack of vision to carry out the attack, as visibility did not exceed 10 meters.*

### Source:

جرى بهجوم لداعش في الانبار مستغلا عاصفة ترابية تضرب المحافظة

(Injuries in ISIS attack in Anbar taking advantage of dust storm in the province)," *Shafaq News* (Iraqi news agency), 19 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8wz9xa>

*Imad Al-Dulaimi, the mayor of Al-Rutba district, western Iraq, revealed on Tuesday that six soldiers and civilians were wounded by ISIS militants who took advantage of a dust storm that hit the area.*

### Source:

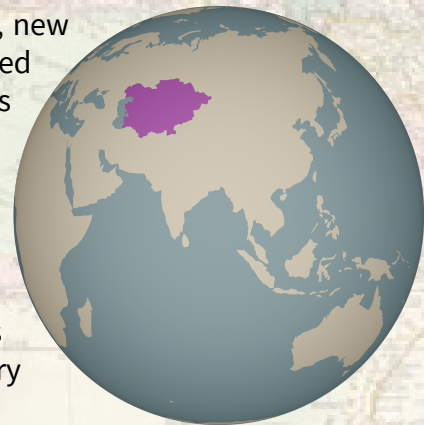
العواصف الترابية تضرب مدن وقرى العراق طوال السنة.. تعرف على الأسباب

(Reasons why dust storms hit Iraqi cities and villages throughout the year)," *al-Jazeera* (influential Qatari news outlet), 19 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/p793253f>

*...according to the statistics recorded by the General Meteorological Authority, the number of dusty days increased from 243 days to 272 days per year over the past two decades, and is expected to reach 300 dusty days per year in 2050. About 70% of agricultural land in Iraq is degraded or threatened with deterioration, as a result of climate change and the loss of vegetation cover, which is the main factor for soil stabilization...*

## 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>

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



2021-12-03 T4 Delivery 005

Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2021-12-03\\_T4\\_Delivery\\_005.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2021-12-03_T4_Delivery_005.jpg) Attribution: CC x 2.0

## The Philippines Gaining Upper Hand Against Abu Sayyaf

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

According to the accompanying excerpted articles, the Philippines government may be weakening Abu Sayyaf across the region. According to Philippine daily *sunstar.com*, there was concern that Abu Sayyaf would seek to disrupt the elections after Philippine forces killed the group's leader in Basilan only weeks earlier. The military's strategy to protect the elections from Abu Sayyaf involved closing off access points to the group's main area of operations in Basilan and ordering troops to avoid political partisanship. In addition, the army boosted its coordination with the Philippine National Police, the Commission on Elections, and other agencies to secure the elections. Ultimately, the army deployed 69,000 soldiers to protect the elections, which were held successfully on 9 May.

A separate article in the Philippines' largest English language newspaper *Manila Bulletin* pointed to the surrender of an Abu Sayyaf bomb-maker as evidence that Abu Sayyaf's ranks were being further depleted through the Philippines' rehabilitation program for former Abu Sayyaf members. The program allows local governments to work with surrendered repentant militants to reintegrate them into society and has seen some success since the Philippines stepped up the program in recent years.

**T**he terror groups may try to disrupt the peace and order during the election period but our preparedness will assure that they will not succeed...

Elsewhere, according to a recent Indonesian-language article in Hong Kong based *suara.com*, a number of hostages escaped Abu Sayyaf in Indonesia in April. Collectively, the articles imply that Abu Sayyaf's military capabilities and negative impact appears to be waning in the face of determined government effort.

**Source:** "Troops told to ready for poll worst-case scenario," *sunstar.com* (Philippine daily), 20 April 2022. <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1926909/zamboanga/local-news/troops-told-to-ready-for-poll-worst-case-scenario>

*Lieutenant General Alfredo Rosario Jr., commander of the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom), has ordered the troops in Basilan province to prepare for the worst-case scenario on election day. "The terror groups may try to disrupt the peace and order during the election period but our preparedness will assure that they will not succeed," Rosario said. On March 25, Radzmil Jannatul alias Abu Khubayb, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan province, was killed in a clash with government troops in Sitio Center, Baiwas village, Sumisip, Basilan.*

*"Let us also sustain our good coordination with our partners from the Philippine National Police, the Commission on Elections, and other agencies to ensure an honest, orderly, and peaceful elections," Rosario added. He reminded the JTF-Basilan troops to remain non-partisan at all times.*



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: The Philippines Gaining Upper Hand Against Abu Sayyaf

**Source:** “Sayyaf bomber surrenders in Zamboanga,” *mb.com.ph* (Philippines largest English language newspaper), 23 March 2022. <https://mb.com.ph/2022/03/23/sayyaf-bomber-surrenders-in-zamboanga/>

*A suspected Abu Sayyaf member linked to several bombing and kidnapping incidents in Zamboanga and Basilan surrendered to authorities on Tuesday. Mursidin Husin, 39, a resident of Sitio Buahayan, Dita, Zamboanga City, surrendered to the police at PNP Camp General Eduardo Batalla, RT Lim Boulevard. Husin also turned over his .38 caliber revolver with ammunition. Husin, a follower of Jamiul Nasalun, an Abu Sayyaf sub-leader based in Zamboanga City, was allegedly involved in the 2013 bombing of a passenger bus in Zamboanga City and two other explosions in a Sangali cafeteria and in Basilan.*

**Source:** “Kisah WNI 427 Hari jadi Tahanan Abu Sayyaf: Jarang Makan dan Takut Kena Bom (Story of Indonesian Citizen 427 Anniversary of Abu Sayyaf Prisoner: Rarely Eat and Fear of Bombs), *suara.com* (Hong Kong based Indonesian language bi-monthly newspaper), 5 April 2022. <https://www.suara.com/news/2021/04/05/132923/kisah-wni-427-hari-jadi-tahanan-abu-sayyaf-jarang-makan-dan-takut-kena-bom>

*Arizal Caste Miran, one of the four victims of the Abu Sayyaf group hostage-takers in the Philippines, is now able to reunite with his family. Before returning to his family's arms, Arizal and three other people were desperate to escape. They heard from a member of the Abu Sayyaf group that the hostages would be transferred to Tawi Island. While on their way in the morning, the ship they were traveling on capsized because from the waves. Instantly the four Indonesian citizens went to save themselves.*



### 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.

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Turkey Tightens Grip on Black Sea amid War in Ukraine

By Ihsan Gunduz  
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey has seized on Russia's invasion of Ukraine to increase its control of the Black Sea by closing it to foreign warships, stepping up natural gas exploration efforts, and holding naval exercises. The three accompanying articles from Turkish sources discuss Turkey's actions regarding the Black Sea in these areas.

First, Turkey has closed off the Black Sea to Ukrainian and Russian warships by invoking the Montreux Convention of 1936, which gives Turkey the right to prevent warships of warring sides (other than those returning to their bases) from using the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits during war. Accordingly, after Ukrainian forces in mid-April sunk the *Moskva*, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, Russia was unable to sail its two other ships of the same class into the Black Sea to replace it. As noted in the first excerpted article from pro-government Turkish publication *Hürriyet*, in addition to blocking Russia and Ukraine from bringing warships into the Black Sea, Turkey has also warned its NATO Allies not to enter the Black Sea during the war in Ukraine to prevent the conflict from expanding. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar noted that this would mitigate the possibility of any rivalry and maintain the peaceful status quo in the Black Sea.

According to the excerpted article from Turkey's *Daily Sabah*, as of April 2022, Turkey had dispatched its three drilling ships to the Sakarya gas field in the Black Sea to harness 540 billion cubic meters of natural gas it discovered



**TCG Yavuz, the lead ship of Yavuz-class frigate of the Turkish Navy**

Source: Nevit Dilmen, Own Work, via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul\\_1000146\\_Nevit.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istanbul_1000146_Nevit.jpg) Attribution: CC-BY-SA-3.0 | GFDL | Self-published work

in 2020. Russia supplies about 45 percent of Turkey's natural gas imports, so this effort would reduce Turkey's reliance on Russian natural gas by about a quarter when it reaches peak production. Turkey plans to start pumping gas from this field in 2023 and to increase production in the five years after that. However, this will depend on Turkey first building an offshore pipeline network and processing facilities. Turkish officials have regarded natural gas discovery in the Black Sea as an important step toward Turkey's energy independence.

In April, Turkey also showcased its naval power during the "Blue Homeland" exercises in the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas. The article quotes President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's televised address the last day of exercises saying, "We will continue to work until we become the strongest army in the region with our ships, submarines and weapon systems."

**W**e want the balance [in the Black Sea] not to be disturbed... If the balance is disturbed here, the probability of events getting out of control is very high.

–Hulusi Akar, Turkish Defense Minister

**Source:** Sedat Ergin, "Savunma Bakanı Akar'dan NATO'ya hassas Karadeniz mesajları: "Karadeniz'in dışında kalınırsa isabet olur" (Sensitive Black Sea messages from Defense Minister Akar to NATO: "It will be better to stay out of the Black Sea")," *Hürriyet* (a pro-government Turkish daily), 25 Nisan 2022. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/savunma-bakani-akardan-natoya-hassas-karadeniz-mesajlari-karadenizin-disinda-kalinirsa-isabet-olur-42050416>

*[Defense Minister Hulusi Akar] reveals that Turkey made a series of suggestions to its NATO allies not to enter the Black Sea with warships during the war [in Ukraine]. The Minister does not hide the fact that Turkey's expectation was conveyed to the NATO allies... and says:*

*...We want the balance [in the Black Sea] not to be disturbed... If the balance is disturbed here, the probability of events getting out of control is very high. Let's not turn the Black Sea into a competitive environment..*

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: Turkey Tightens Grip on Black Sea amid War in Ukraine

**Source:** “Turkey to extend incentives for \$10B Black Sea gas field development),” *Daily Sabah* (a pro-government Turkish daily), 20 April 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/energy/turkey-to-extend-incentives-for-10b-black-sea-gas-field-development>

*Turkey will be extending government support for the massive project to develop the natural gas field it discovered in the Black Sea...*

*Turkey is building an industrial complex that will process the gas the country discovered in the Sakarya gas field, located some 150 kilometers (93 miles) off the coast of Turkey in the Black Sea. The facility is expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2023.*

*The country's first drilling vessel, Fatih, has discovered 540 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas in the Sakarya gas field since August 2020.*

*Turkey is fully dependent on gas imports, mainly from Russia, but the Sakarya field is expected to reduce those imports by about a quarter once it reaches peak production.*

*Ankara plans to begin pumping gas from the southwest Black Sea field in 2023 but must first build an offshore pipeline network and processing facilities.*

*...Expansion of the project over the next 10 years is expected to eventually lift annual production capacity to 14 bcm.*

*...The gas extracted from the gas field will be brought onshore through a pipeline that will be laid beneath the Black Sea.*

*...Scheduled to be constructed this year, the 170-kilometer pipeline will connect the wells in the region to the main grid.*

*The first phase of construction of the Western Black Sea Natural Gas Pipeline section will be carried out in two stages...*

**Source:** “Mavi Vatan 2022 tatbikatı tamamlandı (Blue Homeland 2022 exercises completed),” *NTV* (a pro-government Turkish news channel), 21 April 2022. <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/mavi-vatan-2022-tatbikati-tamamlandi,9-YP3y3e4EWPSIU1jcnlng>

*...Participating in the Blue Homeland exercises through a live broadcast, President Erdoğan said: "We will continue to work until we become the strongest army in the region with our ships, submarines and weapon systems."*

*Blue Homeland exercises... in coordination with the personnel in the Black Sea, Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, concluded successfully. Airplanes, ships and our personnel have shown that they are always ready for the exercise.*

*It is imperative for Turkey to have a strong naval force. We attach special importance to developing our naval forces in terms of equipment and personnel and to make the highest contribution to the defense of the homeland.*

*We will continue to work until we become the strongest army in the region with our ships, submarines and weapon systems.*



# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



**Bayraktar TB2**

Source: Bayhaluk via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar\\_TB2\\_Runway.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Runway.jpg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

## Turkish-Made Bayraktar TB2 Drones Play Important Role in Ukraine

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

Turkish-made **Bayraktar TB2** drones are playing a force multiplier role for Ukraine in its war with Russia. According to several Turkish defense experts, the way Ukrainian forces have used these drones in the current conflict are marking new chapters in the use of drones in naval warfare and possibly in anti-submarine warfare. While it is too early to tell if TB2s are changing the trajectory of the conflict, they have given Ukrainian forces a significant advantage and have had at least a psychological effect on both sides so far.

Turkey's TB2 drones came under the spotlight early in the conflict when the Ukrainian military released video footage of them destroying Russian tanks. More recently, the TB2 emerged as a key tool in the sinking of the Russian cruiser Moskva, although it is not exactly clear what role it played. As the first accompanying passage from Nikkei Asia notes, one theory claims that Ukraine used TB2s to distract the Moskva when it launched anti-ship missiles. Another theory claims Ukraine used TB2s to pinpoint the exact location of the cruiser in the Black Sea, enabling precision strikes against it.

In early May, the Ukrainian Air Force staged a raid on the Russian force occupying Ukraine's strategic Snake

Island. TB2 drones played an important role by waging a defense-suppression campaign over the island, knocking out at least three air defense systems, two Russian patrol boats, and a landing craft along the shore. As the second passage by Turkish naval expert Tayfun Özberk notes, the attack on Russian patrol boats and a landing craft marked the first successful neutralization of naval vessels by an uncrewed system. Özberk claims this is the start of a new era in the use of drones in naval warfare.

During this same raid, the TB2 drones also destroyed a Russian Mi-8 helicopter. As the final passage from an interview with Turkish defense expert Özgür Ekşi notes, this may also suggest a new chapter in military doctrine. Ekşi claims that if the **Mi-8** helicopter was hovering in the air when it was hit, this would indicate that the TB2 drone can also calculate the height/altitude of targets, adding a third dimension to its usage. He also claimed this would be a game changer in anti-submarine warfare, since anti-submarine helicopters working to detect and track submarines would be at risk of an attack by a smart munition from a drone while hovering in air.

**T**he achievements of the TB2 drones are the first signs of the impact of unmanned systems in naval warfare... drone warfare will be an integral part of naval warfare in the near future.

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: Turkish-Made Bayraktar TB2 Drones Play Important Role in Ukraine

**Source:** Sinan Tavşan, “Turkish-made drones likely involved in Moskva sinking,” *Nikkei Asia*, 18 April 2022. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Ukraine-war/Turkish-made-drones-likely-involved-in-Moskva-sinking>

*"Reports that Turkish TB2 drones were involved in the attack either as a distraction for Moskva or as location spotter of Moskva are both quite possible," said Can Kasapoglu, director of the security and defense studies program at the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), Turkish think tank.*

**Source:** Tayfun Özberk, “Russian Serna-Class LCU Becomes the New Victim of TB2 Drone,” *Naval News*, 8 May 2022. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/05/russian-serna-class-lcu-becomes-the-new-victim-of-tb2-drone/>

*TB2s' recent attack on the Raptor-class patrol boats on 02 May 2022 marked the first successful neutralization of naval vessels by an uncrewed system. The assault on the Serna class landing craft marks the second one. In both attacks, TB2s used MAM-L smart munitions manufactured by the Turkish Roketsan company.*

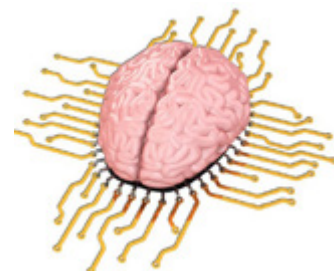
*The achievements of the TB2 drones are the first signs of the impact of unmanned systems in naval warfare. Unmanned systems that provide not only ISR support but also strike operations will provide tactical flexibility to decision-makers on the naval battlefield. Because such systems can conduct missions without risking human lives, and thanks to their capabilities that are growing daily, drones will become a suitable replacement for manned systems. As a result, drone warfare will be an integral part of naval warfare in the near future.*

**Source:** Tolga Özbek chats with Özgür Ekşi, “TB2 Ukrayna’da gemi ve helikopter vurdu, sırada ne var? (TB2 struck ship and helicopter in Ukraine, what next?),” *TolgaOzbek.com* via YouTube, 9 May 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qo-eKSL0A7A&list=WL&index=39&t=12s>

*On 8 May, images appeared on the internet of a Ukrainian Bayraktar TB2 Drone blowing up a Russian Mi-8 helicopter as troops landed on Snake Island... If this helicopter was in the hovering position, [this means that] a TB2 hit a flying platform, which is a success and a new page in military doctrine... This means that these drones can also calculate the height of targets. Until now, we talked about two dimensions, land and water. But now, it can calculate height/altitude, which means it can also hit a flying target. This is a new thing for air platforms.*

## THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

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# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



**Kazakhstan Republican Guard**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan\\_Republican\\_Guard.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan_Republican_Guard.JPG) Attribution: Public Domain

## Kazakhstan Cancels Soviet-Era Parade To Focus on Combat Readiness

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

Like Russia, Kazakhstan commemorates the Soviet Union's victory over Germany in World War II. A few weeks before 9 May, the Kazakh government announced that it planned to cancel its Victory Day military parade for the third year in a row. The government also cancelled the parade in 2020 and 2021 because of the global pandemic. While some Russian media speculated that the Kazakh government's decision was a sign that it wanted to move away from Russian influence because of the war in Ukraine, the

accompanying excerpted articles provide insight into the real reasons behind the Kazakh government's decision.

The article from the news website *Tengri News* reports that the government cancelled the parade "because of the budget as well as the need to resolve other issues," which included "combat readiness" and "the execution of tasks to ensure security and defense of the state and military facilities." The article from Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense website *Sarbaz* reports on how Kazakhstan's Armed Forces carried out the "Brave Resistance – 2022" exercise in the city of Almaty as part of its combat readiness effort. The article notes that the exercise involved a battalion tactical group with multiple support units as well as other agencies in an urban operation.

The article from the semi-independent newspaper *Vremya* and the second article from *Tengri News* report that the exercise took place in multiple regions and involved similar circumstances. While the government of Kazakhstan has stated that it would not recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, it has stayed neutral in the war in Ukraine. As Kazakhstan faces a difficult economic outlook this year, it likely looked to cut costs where possible while not sacrificing the readiness of its armed forces.

**U**nits of the Air Assault Forces worked out tactical methods of combat operation in urban areas during the main stage of the complex, interdepartmental strategic command and staff exercise 'Brave Resistance – 2022'

**Source:** Meirim Smayl, "Почему не будет военного парада, ответили в Минобороны (The Ministry of Defense answered why there will not be a military parade)," *Tengri News* (news website in Kazakhstan), 13 April 2022. [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/pochemu-ne-budet-voennogo-parada-otvetili-v-minoboronyi-466522/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/pochemu-ne-budet-voennogo-parada-otvetili-v-minoboronyi-466522/)

*... "There are no plans to hold a military parade in Kazakhstan in 2022 because of the budget as well as the need to resolve other issues. In particular, the priority to have the required level of combat readiness and mobility of the Armed Forces, and the execution of task to ensure security and defense of the state and military facilities," said the ministry's press service...*

*Last year, because of the epidemiological situation in the country, the military parade in honor of Defender of the Fatherland Day and Victory Day was also cancelled.*



# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: Kazakhstan Cancels Soviet-Era Parade To Focus on Combat Readiness

**Source:** “Активная фаза учения «Батыл Тойтарыс – 2022» прошла в Алматинской области (The active phase of the exercise “Brave Resistance – 2022” has started in the Almaty Oblast),” *Sarbaz* (news website of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Defense), 15 April 2022. <https://sarbaz.kz/army/aktivnaya-faza-ucheniya-batyl-toytarys-%E2%80%93-2022-proshla-v-almatinskoy-oblasti-221041839/>

*Units of the Air Assault Forces worked out tactical methods of combat operation in urban areas during the main stage of the complex, interdepartmental strategic command and staff exercise “Brave Resistance – 2022”...*

*According to the exercise plan, a battalion tactical group made up of an air assault battalion, reinforced by reconnaissance, artillery, engineering and sapper units, and UAV crews, in coordination with personnel from Special Operations Forces and the National Guard, carried out the task of freeing an area captured by a group of bandits...*

**Source:** Langa Chereshkayte, “Сложные условия (Difficult conditions),” *Vremya* (semi-independent Russian-language newspaper in Kazakhstan), 18 April 2022. <https://time.kz/articles/reporter/2022/04/18/slozhnye-usloviya>

*The exercise “Brave Resistance – 2022” with live firing took place at the Oymash training facility of the Aqtau garrison. According to the plan of the exercise, naval infantry was tasked with freeing a settlement from an armed group...*

*Additionally, during the tactical portion of the exercise, units of the border guards and the armed forces carried out combat training to strengthen the state border in order to prevent reserves from penetrating...*

**Source:** “Военные учения прошли в Жамбылской области (A military exercise took place in the Zhambyl Oblast),” *Tengri News* (news website in Kazakhstan), 15 April 2022. [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/voennyye-ucheniya-proshli-v-jambylskoy-oblasti-466547/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/voennyye-ucheniya-proshli-v-jambylskoy-oblasti-466547/)

*...It is noted that during the exercise of soldiers in the Matybulak training facility in the Zhambyl region, the situation was simulated to take in account the experience of modern armed conflicts, in which illegally armed groups deployed in mountainous border areas...*

*...motorized rifle and tank units eliminated the enemy, while National Guard personnel cleared out the area...*

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## India Cancels Plans To Purchase Russian Equipment

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

The Make in India initiative initially encouraged the Indian Armed Forces to gradually purchase domestic weapons or equipment whenever possible, before establishing import ban lists in the past year (see: “India Orders More Domestically Produced Self-Propelled Artillery System,” *OE Watch*, #3 2022). However, as the accompanying excerpted articles report, Russia’s war in Ukraine is forcing the Indian government to reexamine certain acquisitions and upgrades for the armed forces that could further boost the Make in India initiative. The article from the independent English-language newspaper *The Hindu* reports Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh’s comments in early May 2022 after the government cancelled plans to acquire and upgrade two systems from Russia. He mentions that the government is drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine to become more self-sufficient and acknowledges that there will be short-term economic issues while becoming less dependent on imports. The article from the English-language independent news magazine *India Today* reports that India’s Air Force cancelled a purchase of 48 *Mi-17* V5 helicopters from Russia in support of the Make in India initiative. Government officials claimed that “the decision to withdraw the tender for the 48 helicopters was taken long before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and that the Indian Air Force is now going to support an Indian effort for a helicopter.



**SU-30MKI India**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SU-30MKI\\_India.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SU-30MKI_India.jpg)  
Attribution: Public Domain

The article from the English-language daily *Live Mint* reports on the Indian government’s decision to cancel a plan to upgrade a number of its *Su-30* fighters just days after cancelling the purchase of *Mi-17*s. The article notes that the government made the decision because of the war in Ukraine and the Make in India initiative. It also notes that the Indian Air Force had planned to upgrade 85 *Su-30*s with better radar and electronic warfare capabilities. The article mentions that there are delays for spare parts for the fighters and that, while India has stocked up on enough for now, “it is expected that the supply of these spares and other equipment may become an issue in near future.” Overall, India did not say that it would stop looking to Russia to acquire or upgrade systems, but the war in Ukraine is causing India to reassess how much it will depend on the Russian defense industry.

**T**he ongoing conflict in Russia and Ukraine has also resulted in delays in the supply of spares for the fighter aircraft fleet.

**Source:** “Self-reliance vital to protect nation’s sovereignty: Rajnath Singh,” *The Hindu* (independent English-language newspaper), 5 May 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/self-reliance-vital-to-protect-nations-sovereignty-rajnath-singh/article65385058.ece>

*...Self-reliance in defence is essential not only for building domestic capacity but also safeguarding the sovereignty of the country, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday...*

*...Talking of ‘Aatmanirbharta’ in defence, Mr. Singh said our past experiences had taught us that India could not depend on imports for its security. “Recent conflicts, especially the situation in Ukraine, have told us that not just defence supplies, but commercial contracts are also prone to be affected when it comes to national interests,” he stated.*

*In such a situation, self-reliance was necessary not only for building domestic capacity, but also for maintaining our independence, Mr. Singh said...“We may not even find it economical in the beginning. But we are very clear about this, that in the middle and long-term, it will help in building the foundation of a robust industrial base not only in the defence sector, but in every sphere of the industry,” he asserted...*

# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Continued: India Cancels Plans To Purchase Russian Equipment

**Source:** Manjeet Negi, “To boost Make in India, IAF cancels plans to buy 48 Mi-17 choppers from Russia,” *India Today* (English-language independent news magazine), 16 April 2022. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/make-in-india-iaf-mi-17-choppers-russia-1938341-2022-04-16>

*Aiming to support the Make in India initiative in the Defence programme of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian Air Force has decided to cancel plans to buy 48 more Mi-17 V5 helicopters from Russia.*

*Top government sources told India Today that the decision to withdraw the tender for the 48 helicopters that was taken much before the conflict between Russia and Ukraine broke out and has nothing to do with the global scenario.*

*“The tender for 48 Mi-17V5 helicopters has been withdrawn in view of the push for indigenisation. The IAF would now be supporting an indigenous programme for helicopters,” the sources said.*

**Source:** “India shelves ₹35,000 cr plan to upgrade Su-30 fighter fleet amid Russia-Ukraine war,” *Live Mint* (online version of the financial English-language daily newspaper), 8 May 2022. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-shelves-rs-35-000-cr-plan-to-upgrade-su-30-fighter-fleet-amid-russia-ukraine-war-11652006926134.html>

*Several factors have shelved the Indian Air Force's plan to upgrade its Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft fleet. The factors include the war between Russia and Ukraine and current policy of Make-in-India of the Indian government.*

*IAF had planned to equip the Su-30 aircraft with more powerful radars and the latest electronic warfare capabilities to make it more powerful as per the latest standards.*

*IAF was planning to upgrade 85 of their planes up to the latest standards in collaboration with the Russians and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. The plan has been put on the backburner for now in view of the present situation...*

*The ongoing conflict in Russia and Ukraine has also resulted in delays in the supply of spares for the fighter aircraft fleet...*

*Sources said even though the spares situation is manageable at the moment and expected to remain so in the near future as India had stocked them up in a considerable amount post the Uri surgical strikes and the ongoing China conflict. However, it is expected that the supply of these spares and other equipment may become an issue in near future...*

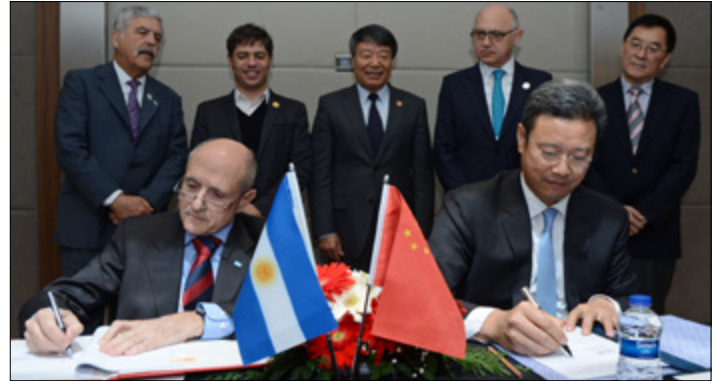


# GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

## Argentina Gets Closer to China-Led Economic and Multilateral Institutions

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying passages suggest that Argentina's political leadership would like to move the country away from Western economic and multilateral institutions, which often demand strenuous and politically challenging macro-economic reforms and structural adjustments. Meanwhile, China has presented the most obvious alternative for Argentina given that the two countries have shared a robust economic relationship for many years. The leading edge of that relationship was always development-oriented in nature. Now, Argentina has displayed a willingness to embed itself in economic and multilateral institutions with a major Chinese presence. Argentina will participate as a special guest at future BRICS Summit gatherings. It will also apply to join the organization's New Development Bank, according to Argentina's left-leaning financial newspaper *Ámbito Financiero*. The country has stated its desire to permanently join the BRICS grouping in the future, for which Beijing has expressed initial support. Other events have also signaled a rapidly changing strategic environment in Argentina, such as the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding



**Argentina and China sign agreements to construct critical infrastructure such as nuclear power plants**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Argentina\\_y\\_China\\_firman\\_contratos\\_para\\_construcci%C3%B3n\\_de\\_cuarta\\_y\\_quinta\\_central\\_nuclear\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Argentina_y_China_firman_contratos_para_construcci%C3%B3n_de_cuarta_y_quinta_central_nuclear_01.jpg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.0

to join China's Belt and Road Initiative, says leading Spanish-language wire service *Agencia EFE*. Argentina's successful application to the Asian Infrastructure Bank in March 2021; China's financing of nuclear power plants in Argentina; and Argentina's desire to purchase the **JF-17** Chinese-built fighter jet are just a few other recent examples that show China's burgeoning influence in the country.

**T**he ambassador in Beijing assured that they will help Argentina get closer to the objective of its 'formal entry' into the BRICS.

**Source:** "Argentina participará en la próxima cumbre del grupo de los BRICS (Argentina will participate in the next summit of the BRICS group)," *Ámbito Financiero* (Argentina's left-leaning financial newspaper), 7 May 2022. <https://www.ambito.com/argentina/participara-la-proxima-cumbre-del-grupo-los-brics-n5434293>

*Xi Jinping's invitation... is extremely important, especially because of Argentina's interest in joining the forum that has brought together Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa... the ambassador in Beijing assured that they will help Argentina get closer to the objective of its 'formal entry' into the BRICS.*

**Source:** "Argentina formaliza la adhesión a la iniciativa china de las nuevas rutas de la seda (Argentina formalizes adherence to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative)," *Agencia EFE* (the leading Spanish-language wire service), 11 May 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2022/05/11/como-el-cartel-de-sinaloa-y-el-cjng-han-innovado-la-produccion-de-cocaina-en-colombia/>

*Argentina formalized... the Memorandum of Understanding that it signed with China in February, which seals the adherence of the South American country to the Belt and Road Initiative.... The document foresees cooperation projects in connectivity infrastructure, such as routes, railways, bridges, civil aviation, ports, energy and telecommunications.... The agreement will have a term of three years and will be automatically renewed for equal periods of three years, unless one of the parties gives notice that it terminates it at least three months in advance.*