

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



Volume 12  
Issue #7  
2022

## FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### CHINA

- 3 China To Reform Military Postgraduate Education
- 5 PLA Combining Battlefield and Classroom Education To Develop Quality Officers
- 7 PLA Using Cognitive Domain Operations To Achieve Political Aims
- 9 Taiwan's "All-Out Defense" in Context of Aggressive PLA Exercise

### RUSSIA

- 11 Russia Tests Palantin Electronic Warfare System in Ukraine
- 12 Russia's "Terminator" System in Ukraine To Inform Tactics
- 14 Russian Orthodox Church Strengthening Support for Ukraine Invasion
- 16 Russia Building Literal and Figurative Bridges to China
- 18 Russia Revising Marine Doctrine To Use Civilian Ships for Military Purposes

### IRAN

- 19 Iran Unveils New Drone-Fired Cruise Missile
- 20 Iran Opens New Drone Plant in Tajikistan
- 21 Iran Warns UAE Against Allowing Israel in the Persian Gulf

### TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

- 22 Murder of Paraguayan Prosecutor in Colombia Suggests Transnational Criminal Cooperation
- 23 Somalia: Behind Al-Shabaab's Success in Recruiting Children
- 24 Al-Qaeda's Sahel Affiliate Targets Togo
- 25 Indonesia Extends Counter-Drug Trafficking Cooperation to South America

### GLOBAL OE

- 27 Turkish Military Operation in Syria Risks Clash with Iran
- 30 Central Asian Forces Boosting UAV Capabilities
- 32 Azerbaijan Balances Security Cooperation Between Turkey and Russia
- 34 Algeria Inches Closer to Russia Amid Frosty Relations with Morocco and Spain
- 36 UAV Technologies Proliferating in Yemen and Saudi Arabia
- 38 Regional Coalitions Supersede the AU's African Standby Force
- 40 Venezuela's Mystery Plane Shows Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America

The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is part of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-2, whose mission is to Understand, Describe, Deliver, and Assess the conditions of the Operational Environment. For over 30 years, FMSO has conducted open source research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues, emphasizing those topics that are understudied or unconsidered.

Operational Environment Watch provides 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.

The views expressed in each article are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US Government. Release of this information does not imply any commitment or intent on the part of the US Government to provide any additional information on any topic presented herein.

The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the US Army of the referenced site or the information, products, or services contained therein. Users should exercise caution in accessing hyperlinks.

The Operational Environment Watch is archived and available at: <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso>.

# OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Volume 12 | Issue 7

2022

## Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Chuck Bartles

Ryan Berg

Robert Feldman

Ray Finch

Ihsan Gunduz

Kevin McCauley

Michael Rubin

Matthew Stein

Lucas Winter

Peter Wood

Jacob Zenn

## Editors

Karen Kaya

Tom Wilhelm

Dodge Billingsley

## Creative Director

Susan Littleton

## Publisher / Layout

Thomas Tolare

## ON THE COVER:

*Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT)*

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/Rehearsal-in-Alabino-17-April-2019/fi-chgNPrQ/0/5070c462/X2/Rehearsal17April2019-0071-X2.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



## China To Reform Military Postgraduate Education

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

China's Central Military Commission recently issued a document revealing that it will reshape military postgraduate education to make its armed forces "smarter." The new curriculum will include joint combat command, new type combat forces, high-level scientific and technological innovation, and high-level strategic management. The accompanying article excerpts from Chinese sources provide some insight into this development. China's largest and most influential media source, *Xinhua*, reports that the document proposes creating a team of trainers with combat experience and improving standards to evaluate the quality of postgraduate education. The document also emphasizes the importance of military postgraduate education in cultivating high-level military personnel, innovating military theory and national defense science and technology, and increasing combat effectiveness.

*South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's most prominent online English daily, notes that the PLA expects

the total number of students to remain steady. However, the number of students enrolled in traditional military courses will decline while the number of students enrolled in new types of combat capability will increase. Military recruitment will target students and graduates of science, engineering, and other skills necessary to prepare for war. The article notes that the new emphasis on fostering military personnel with advanced technology backgrounds is part of China's ongoing reforms intended to turn the People's Liberation Army into a modern military force by 2027. The article cites an earlier *Xinhua* report that said the enrollment of military postgraduates this year is intended to "closely meet the needs for war preparation and the development of new-type combat force talent."

**C**hina is reshaping its military postgraduate system to make its armed forces "smarter," including cultivating more technological talents...

**Source:** "中央军委办公厅印发《关于加快军队研究生教育发展的意见》(Opinions on Accelerating the Reform and Development of Military Postgraduate Education)," *Xinhua* (China's largest and most influential media source), 23 May 2022. <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2022/05-23/9761542.shtml>

*The (document) focuses on training talent in joint combat command, new-type combat forces, high-level scientific and technological innovation, and high-level strategic management. It proposes reforms, such as strengthening the creation of a team of tutors who are knowledgeable in actual combat, and improving the standards of evaluating the quality of postgraduate education.*

*The (document) emphasizes (the idea) that military postgraduate education plays an important role in cultivating high-level military personnel, innovating military theory and national defense science and technology, and serving the combat effectiveness of the troops.*

**Source:** Amber Wang, "China Pushes for Smarter Armed Forces with Education Shake Up On Path to Modern Military," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong Chinese daily, once considered independent but now suspect of promoting China soft power abroad), 28 May 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3179428/china-pushes-smarter-armed-forces-education-shake-path-modern>

*Enrollment numbers would remain stable but would include more students of new types of combat and plans to train personnel in military intelligence and aerospace.*

*China is reshaping its military postgraduate system to make its armed forces "smarter," including cultivating more technological talents, a newly issued document shows.*

*continue on 4*

## Continued: China To Reform Military Postgraduate Education

**Source:** Amber Wang, “China Pushes for Smarter Armed Forces with Education Shake Up On Path to Modern Military,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong Chinese daily, once considered independent but now suspect of promoting China soft power abroad), 28 May 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3179428/china-pushes-smarter-armed-forces-education-shake-path-modern>

*The new talent development plan, which focuses on fostering military personnel with advanced technology backgrounds and combat skills, is part of the massive ongoing reforms intended to turn the People’s Liberation Army into a modern military force by 2027.*

*An earlier Xinhua report said the plan for enrolling military postgraduates this year would “closely meet the needs for war preparation and the development of new-type combat force talent.”*

*Besides the postgraduate sector reform, the overall military recruitment this year will give priority to university students and graduates majoring in science and engineering, and those with the skills needed for war preparedness, according to a teleconference on conscription in January.*



## 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.

## PLA Combining Battlefield and Classroom Education To Develop Quality Officers



PLA National Defense University Seal

Source: Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:National\\_Defence\\_University\\_Seal.png#/media/File:National\\_Defence\\_University\\_Seal.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:National_Defence_University_Seal.png#/media/File:National_Defence_University_Seal.png) Attribution: Fair Use

By Kevin McCauley

OE Watch Commentary OE Watch Commentary

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is engaged in a long-term effort to reform military education and training. As the accompanying articles from the official *PLA Daily* newspaper demonstrate, it seeks to combine the classroom and the training battlefield to cultivate talent, as well as improve faculty and courses. As the first accompanying article discusses, the Army Armored Force College conducted a graduation exercise in May at the Zhurihe Combined Arms Tactical Training Center. The exercise entailed a student unit confronting the Blue Force Brigade from the training center. The combined arms training included armor, infantry, artillery, army aviation, reconnaissance, and electronic warfare and provided the graduates with a realistic combat experience they could not gain in the classroom. Students were exposed to problems of coordination

of arms and support during operations. The exercise also employed unmanned combat equipment. According to the article, students began the training relying on what they had learned in the classroom but quickly realized the need for flexibility and innovation when executing operations. Instructors assessed that the exercise provided a valuable experience compared to just book learning.

As the second and third articles demonstrate, the PLA's National Defense University (NDU) is also bringing the battlefield to the classroom. A recent wargame lasted a month with hundreds of officers, students, instructors, and researchers participating. The game employed innovations in traditional combat methods and the use of new type operational forces. Officers from the Central Military Commission, theater commands, and military units have also lectured at NDU to provide expert experience and broaden the students' knowledge. Additionally, NDU arranged over 40 lectures by outside experts since March to broaden and enhance courses.

Collectively, these articles highlight important aspects of the PLA's professional military education reforms to integrate the battlefield and active duty units into the classroom to provide realistic operational experience for students. This includes military universities and colleges conducting field training and simulations to provide combat-related education, as well as recruiting active duty officers to teach classes in an effort to develop operationally oriented officers.

**T**his game is a microcosm of our promotion of teaching and educating people to accurately meet the needs of the army and the battlefield.

**Source:** "朱日和：我的“最后一课” (Zhurihe: My "Final Lesson")," *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 7 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content\\_317194.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content_317194.htm)

*At the end of May, Zhurihe sharpened his sword in the battlefield, this group of cadets ushered in the graduation drill of their military academy career. A hot-blooded contest is about to take place, and their opponent is the famous "Blue Army Brigade".*

*.... The two sides in the exercise are the simulation company where the students at the Army Armored Force College are located and the reinforced company composed of officers and soldiers of the "Blue Army Brigade". On the basis of conventional infantry-tank coordination, they can use artillery, helicopters and other supporting forces.*

*continue on 6*

## Continued: PLA Combining Battlefield and Classroom Education To Develop Quality Officers

**Source** Continued: "朱日和：我的“最后一课”(Zhurihe: My "Final Lesson")," *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 7 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content\\_317194.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content_317194.htm)

*...During the exercise planning stage, Cai Xiaobin applied the knowledge he had learned for combat as much as possible, but he did not expect the "first battle" to usher in a defeat—*

*The "sabotage raid warfare" carefully designed by him [to attack important targets in the enemy rear area] was turned into a "counter-sabotage raid" by Blue Force.*

*My plan was to coordinate the ground and aviation forces to attack important targets of the 'enemy' in order to delay the 'enemy' offensive action. Unexpectedly, the opponent's attack speed far exceeded expectations..." Cai Xiaobin said angrily."*

**Source:** "国防大学牢固立起为战育人鲜明导向 – 课堂对接战场 教学紧贴实战(The National Defense University Firmly Establishes Clear Guidance for War Education – The Classroom Connecting to Battlefield teaching that Approaches Actual Combat)," *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 9 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/09/content\\_317320.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/09/content_317320.htm)

*"This game is a microcosm of our promotion of teaching and educating people to accurately meet the needs of the armed forces and the battlefield." The leaders of the university's Education and Training Department stated that they resolutely implemented the spirit of the Central Military Commission's Talent Work Conference, and paid close attention to changes in science and technology, changes in war, and opponents. The changes have reshaped and designed important shift courses such as strategic command and joint combat command, and concentrated on launching a batch of urgently needed textbooks to prepare for combat in war, firmly establishing a clear orientation for war education.*

**Source:** "探索军事教育高质量发展之路 (Exploring the Road to High Quality Development of Military Education)," *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 14 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/14/content\\_317697.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/14/content_317697.htm)

*At present, we are deeply implementing the strategy of building a strong military with talents in the new era, promoting the comprehensive transformation and upgrading of military personnel's competence, structure, development and management, and forging a high-quality army with both political integrity, ability, and professional new-type military personnel, we must unrelentingly use Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, especially Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the Army, to cast the soul and educate people. We should deepen reform, solve problems in reform, and solve contradictions with innovative development, we will take effective measures to promote the development of military education in the direction of high quality.*

*... Prioritize the development of education in military academies. Strengthening the military first strengthens schools, and college education plays a fundamental, leading and overall important role in the construction of the military.*

*It is necessary to carry forward the fine tradition of running schools and educating people in our military, aiming at the goal of building first-class military academies and cultivating first-class military talents, strengthening colleges and universities to cultivate talents and reserve talents, innovate theory and develop technology, lead the transformation of war training and test combat capabilities, etc.*



## PLA Using Cognitive Domain Operations To Achieve Political Aims

By Kevin McCauley  
OE Watch Commentary

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) newspaper *PLA Daily* recently published an article from the Academy of Military Science analyzing the concept of cognitive domain operations (CDO) in hybrid warfare. As the Academy of Military Science is responsible for PLA doctrine, the article may provide insight into China's doctrine on CDO. The author proposes a new perspective of CDO in the hybrid domain. The editor's note prefacing the article explains that CDO is an extension of information operations, similar to how hybrid warfare is an extension of physical domain operations or traditional warfare.

According to the article, militaries conduct CDO on three levels. The first is "cognitive deterrence," which entails deterring the enemy by demonstrating absolute military strength, paralyzing an enemy's financial systems, conducting economic blockades, and imposing sanctions to deliver a psychological shock to the enemy. The second is "cognitive shaping operations," which entail altering the enemy's values, political attitudes, religious beliefs, and mental state to conform to one's objectives or cause confusion. Finally, "cognitive deception" entails using public opinion propaganda, network attacks, and transmission of false information to influence the enemy's decision-making in a desired direction.

The author posits that CDO can ultimately determine victory or defeat by seizing the initiative. The author believes that CDO employing multiple means and methods—military, non-military, and specialized—can achieve decisive goals. The author views CDO as part of the non-military methods to achieve maximum goals with minimum resources and risk. The key components of CDO are continuous operations during peacetime and war, influencing the opponent's cognition and disrupting its decision-making process. The author views CDO as a full-spectrum offense and defense employing political, economic, military, diplomatic, public opinion, and other means in multiple domains during both peacetime and wartime. While broader in scope, aspects of the PLA's concept of cognitive warfare resemble the more focused Russian concept of reflexive control developed during the Soviet era. Reflexive control seeks to insert targeted messaging into an opponent's collection, analysis, and decision-making process to shape the enemy's cognition and cause them to act in a desired manner.

**Source:** “混合战争视野下的认知域作战 (Cognitive Domain Operations from the Perspective of Hybrid Warfare),” *PLA Daily* (newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 6 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content\\_317171.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content_317171.htm)

### Editor's note

*Through the practice of several local wars in recent years, it has been found that hybrid warfare can be regarded as an extension of traditional physical domain operations to a certain extent, while cognitive domain operations can be regarded as a further extension of previous information domain operations. In other words, both hybrid warfare and cognitive domain operations were born out of yesterday's traditional warfare, and the two are closely related and have different emphases. How to grasp the new characteristics and new laws of cognitive domain operations from the perspective of hybrid warfare is a new perspective for advancing the research on cognitive domain operations.*

*“On the surface, current cognitive domain operations mainly act on people's perception, feeling, emotion, morale, thinking, judgment, spirit, belief, and other areas. However, at the practical level, cognitive domain operations are often a full-scale attack and defense in the multi-dimensional field by using political, economic, military, diplomatic, public opinion, and other comprehensive means. If the physical domain operation is the premise and foundation to eliminate the enemy's effective forces, and the information domain operation is the means and support to win victory in war, then the cognitive domain operation is the key to ultimately determine the victory or defeat of the war, force the enemy to yield, and achieve the war's objective.*

*...Cognitive domain operations in the perspective of hybrid war start from the conscious level as the principal part of war to act directly on people's will, belief, thinking, and psychology, etc., and [aim to] achieve the intended goals such as psychological attack, value shaping, cognitive influence, and mental control by maintaining one's own cognitive advantages and attacking the enemy's cognitive*

*continue on 8*

## Continued: PLA Using Cognitive Domain Operations To Achieve Political Aims

**Source Continued:** “混合战争视野下的认知域作战 (Cognitive Domain Operations from the Perspective of Hybrid Warfare),” *PLA Daily* (newspaper of the People’s Liberation Army), 6 June 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content\\_317171.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-06/07/content_317171.htm)

*disadvantages. Specifically, it can destroy the fighting will of the enemy’s officers and soldiers through cognitive attacks on them; Through the cognitive control of the enemy’s leadership, the purpose of influencing the decision-making and judgment of the enemy’s leaders can be achieved. Through the cognitive shaping of the enemy people, we can achieve the purpose of interfering with the enemy people’s recognition of the value of the country and the government, and finally achieve the political purpose of “subduing soldiers without war” or “fight less but win all”.*

### ***Cognitive domain warfare methods and means are mixed and diverse***

*Cognitive domain operations from the perspective of hybrid warfare, the multi-dimensionality of the space domain and the diversity of participating forces have spawned innovative improvements and enriched development of cognitive domain combat tactics.*

*In recent local wars, some foreign military combat methods and means in the cognitive domain have also shown a new trend of mixing and diversifying.*

*One is cognitive deterrence. By demonstrating absolute military strength, paralyzing the financial system, carrying out economic blockades, and imposing trade sanctions, the enemy is given psychological and spiritual shock and deterrence, so as to achieve the combat purpose of making the enemy cowardly, yield and retreat. Another example is to broadcast to the enemy a video of its advanced weapons and equipment accurately destroying the enemy’s important targets, causing it to have a psychological shadow, so as to actively give up resistance, etc.*

*The second is cognitive shaping operations. Through the induction and agitation of the enemy’s values, political attitudes, religious beliefs, mental states and other ideological fields, gradually make them abandon or form a new specific concept, cause value confusion, shake their will to fight, and thus affect their war. Attitude, etc.*

*The third is cognitive deception. Through public opinion propaganda, network attacks, thinking induction and other means, false information is transmitted to the enemy, thereby affecting its decision-making and judgment. For example, virtual reality and intelligent audio-visual synthesis technology are used to simulate the commander’s order, making it difficult to distinguish the true and false of the enemy, thereby causing confusion in the enemy’s command, disorder in actions, and failure of combat operations.”*



## Taiwan's "All-Out Defense" in Context of Aggressive PLA Exercise

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

Over the past year, Taiwan took several measures based on its "All-out Defense" strategy to improve its military readiness, including by integrating reserve forces and bolstering its ability to mobilize society. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command's recent joint combat exercises, aggressively conducted near Taiwan, highlighted the urgency.

In late July, shortly before the PLA exercises began, Taiwan concluded its largest annual military exercise, known as Han Kuang [漢光]. According to *Central New Agency* (CNA), a government-controlled news agency in Taiwan, described it as focusing on a combination of preserving combat power in the face of a simulated missile attack, and then counter attacking. Taiwan reportedly dispatched naval forces east of the island and mobile missile units were dispersed across the island. Later components of the exercise involved simulated amphibious landings to retake occupied offshore islands.

In addition to the standing force, Taiwan maintains a large reserve component which is vital to the survival of the island if war broke out and a population that supports it all. In December of last year, a new agency, the All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency [全民防衛動員署] was established. In its 2021 Report on National Defense, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense (MND) described the agency as intended to "integrate reserve and regular forces, combine reserve force with mobilization resources, and promote interagency

cooperation, improving the strength of our reserve force in terms of its organization, force scale, career management, training, and equipping." In March, the MND adopted a new 14-day call-up system for reservists to improve skill retention for the force, and in April it issued a handbook for citizens modeled on those used by Sweden, Japan,

**...the** *structure of the manual was inspired by the examples of similar manuals used by Sweden, Japan and other countries, and integrates information from various government ministries, county and city governments, and experts and scholars.*

and others. The handbook provides explanations of how to respond in a number of scenarios including air raids, power outages, earthquakes, as well as invasion. From Taiwan's perspective, maintaining a credible deterrent will necessarily require a regime of training and doctrine for the standing force to prepare for combat operations with a quickly mobilized reserve component and supportive citizenry: an "All-out Defense."

**Source:** "漢光38號演習登場 海陸空戰力防護保存台東亮相"(Hanguang No. 38 exercise debuts, sea, land and air combat power protection and preservation Taitung debut), *Central News Agency* (Taiwanese state media), 25 July 2022. <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aip/202207250071.aspx>

*[Taiwan's] Armed Forces' 38th Han Guang military exercise debuted today. The main focus of the first day of the exercise was "protecting and preserving combat power."*

*According to the military, the Taitung region air force will practice combat power preservation, while a second region will carry out a counterattack operation. The Taitung Army regional command (Taiping Camp area) will send armored vehicles to Chihpen Beach to counterattack [against a landing].*

*This morning, bases on Western Taiwan simulated a missile strike. The Air Force IDF Chingguo (FC-K1) and F-16V fighter jets sortied six times respectively. The fighter planes were loaded with weapons and landed at the Taitung Zhihang Base and entered the hardened air shelters to preserve their combat power.*

## Continued: Taiwan's "All-Out Defense" in Context of Aggressive PLA Exercise

**Source:** Yu Kaixiang, “全民國防手冊範本出爐 教你如何在戰場生存”(The National Defense Handbook is a template to teach you how to survive on the battlefield), CNA (Taiwan State News Agency), 12 April 2022. <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aip/202204120102.aspx>

*The Ministry of National Defense announced today the "Model National Defense Manual", which provides emergency response information when the people face military crises and possible disasters. Other information included in the manual is intended to help people prepare for public safety emergencies.*

*The Ministry of National Defense started compiling the "National Defense Manual" last year in order to strengthen the overall resilience of the population during wartime, and this morning held an online press conference to announce publication of the manual.*

*Liu Taiyi pointed out that the purpose of compiling the manual is to provide the public with relevant emergency response information when faced with military crises and possible disasters, so as to facilitate safety preparations and self-help for survival. For reference of the people of the age group, and design wartime scenario Q&A to guide into the live scene, separate the responsibilities of the central and local governments and the village head, and combine the actual situation of the region to allow the public to inquire about evacuation, medical care and material information.*

*According to Liu Taiyi, Director of the Material Mobilization Department of the All-Out Defense Mobilization Agency, the structure of the manual was inspired by the examples of similar manuals used by Sweden, Japan and other countries, and integrates information from various government ministries, county and city governments, and experts and scholars.*

**Source:** “全民國防手冊,” National Defense Handbook, Taiwan Ministry of Defense, 12 April 2022.

## 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.

## Russia Tests Palantin Electronic Warfare System in Ukraine

By Charles Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russia's official government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, describes some of the capabilities of the Palantin electronic warfare (EW) system and how it has been employed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine—the first reported use of the system in combat. According to the article, its most important advantage “lies in the ability to combine the electronic warfare systems such as [of] the “Moskva,” “Zhitel,” and “Judoist” into a “single working network.” The Russian military personnel featured in the article claim that the Palantin EW system “disables reconnaissance drones of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” and “jams cellular communication and Internet sources at Ukrainian command posts,” but other, more objective open sources have not confirmed how effective the system has proven on the Ukrainian battlefield.

The Russian Ground Forces have a three-tiered system for EW. At the maneuver brigade and division level, each has an EW company that focuses on tactical tasks. At the combined arms Army level, each has an EW battalion that focuses on operational-tactical tasks. At the Military District level, each has an EW brigade that focuses on strategic level tasks. At the tactical level, the **Borisoglebsk-2** EW system is the primary and latest EW system for maneuver brigade/division level EW companies, while the Palantin EW system is the primary and latest system for combined arms Army level EW battalions.



**Palantin Electronic Warfare System**

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12221217@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12221217@egNews), Attribution: CC BY 4.0

**Source:** Yuri Gavrilov, “Видео: Как работает в боевой обстановке комплекс РЭБ “Палантин” (Video: How the Palantin electronic warfare system works in a combat situation),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (official Russian government newspaper), 4 June 2022. <https://rg.ru/2022/06/04/video-kak-rabotaet-v-boevoj-obstanovke-kompleks-reb-palantin.html>

*The Palantin electronic warfare system disables reconnaissance drones of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, jams cellular communication and Internet sources at Ukrainian command posts, without disturbing the civilian communications infrastructure...The electronic warfare system independently detects enemy drones, intercepts their control signal, and interferes with them. As a result, the UAV loses contact with the operator on the ground.*

*The commander of the jamming company, Sergei, says that the specialists of his unit have mastered modern radio-electronic equipment without any problems. “Palantin” is the newest system, it is extremely easy to operate and maintain. The electronic warfare system provides automatic detection and suppression of radio communication lines...*

*A few words about what the Palantin-K electronic warfare system consists of. It is mounted on four-axle KamAZ vehicles, and is designed to suppress existing and future radio communication systems, as well as to conduct signals intelligence. The capabilities of the system make it possible to “dazzle” enemy electronic systems in the ultrashort-wave [very high frequency (VHF)] and short-wave [high frequency (HF)] bands.*

*In addition, the “Palantin” can interfere with navigation systems and disable an air defense radars or a command and control systems...this system can deprive the enemy of cellular and trunking communications. Its most important advantage lies in the ability to combine the electronic warfare systems such as the “Moskva”, “Zhitel” and “Judoist” into a single working network... Experts say that “Palantin” is 2-3 times superior to Russian EW systems of the previous generation and currently has no analogues in combat capabilities in any army of leading foreign states.*



## Russia's "Terminator" System in Ukraine To Inform Tactics

By Charles Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russian government newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta describes the capabilities of Russia's Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT) and how it has been employed during Russia's 2022 invasion of the Ukraine. Also known as the 'Terminator' for its intent to destroy infantryman wielding antitank weapons, the BMPT concept has been in development since Soviet times. Despite Russia's reportedly successful use of the system during the Syrian campaign and the fact that a few foreign militaries (Kazakhstan and Algeria) have adopted it, there is currently only one BMPT company in the Russian Ground Forces. According to the article, there is a debate about possibly rebranding the system by changing the name from 'Tank Support Combat Vehicle' to 'Fire Support Combat Vehicle' because the system can also support mounted and dismounted infantry formations. The perceived success or failure of the BMPT in the Donbas will likely cause Russia to more widely field the BMPT, or abandon the program entirely. If successful, the



**Tank Support Combat Vehicle (BMPT)**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/Rehearsal-in-Alabino-17-April-2019/i-MHbnq66/0/ce5af375/X2/Rehearsal17April2019-0072-X2.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

heavy combat conditions that BMPT is encountering will allow Russian tacticians and planners to determine the best tactics and force structure for the BMPTs integration with the Russian Ground Forces.

**In terms of firepower, according to experts, one "Terminator", armed with cannons, rockets and machine guns, surpasses two motorized rifle platoons.**

**Source:** Sergey Ptichkin, "ВС РФ впервые применили в ходе спецоперации БМПТ 'Терминатор' (The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation used the BMPT 'Terminator' for the first time during the special operation)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (official Russian government newspaper), 18 May 2022. <https://rg.ru/2022/05/18/vs-rf-vperve-primenili-v-hode-specoperacii-bmpt-terminator.html>

*...BMPTs, together with tank platoons, are involved in the destruction of Ukrainian positions, armored vehicles, and crews of anti-tank missile systems. It is also said that the participation of the BMPT in the course of the special operation will make it possible to finally form the tactics for the use of these vehicles and determine their place in the armored groups...*

*In terms of firepower, according to experts, one "Terminator", armed with cannons, rockets and machine guns, surpasses two motorized rifle platoons. Based on the Afghan experience, the first BMPT was developed, which received the name "Terminator" at the beginning of the 21st century. It was actively promoted by the head of the Main Armored Directorate, Colonel General Sergei Maev. But even his authority was not enough for the accelerated delivery of a machine to the troops, which really has no analogues in the world.*

*Perhaps the situation will now change, and the BMPT will go into mass production. By the way, an idea to slightly change the name of the system was put forward, to designate the "Terminators" as fire support combat vehicles. Because the "Terminator" is capable of supporting not only tanks, but also infantry, especially those fighting in cities.*

*continue on 13*

## Continued: Russia's "Terminator" System in Ukraine To Inform Tactics

**Source Continued:** Sergey Ptichkin, "BC РФ впервые применили в ходе спецоперации БМПТ 'Терминатор' (The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation used the BMPT 'Terminator' for the first time during the special operation)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (official Russian government newspaper), 18 May 2022. <https://rg.ru/2022/05/18/vs-rf-vpervye-primenili-v-hode-specoperacii-bmpt-terminator.html>

*Here are just the main features and benefits of this machine. Since the BMPT was created on the basis of the T-72, it has a tank's armored protection — it is difficult to knock it out. It has optical, television and thermal imaging sites for observation and aiming. It sees at night as well as during the day...The BMPT is armed with two quick-firing 30 mm 2A42 cannons and four Ataka missiles. The 45-degree elevation angle of the missile armament and cannons makes it possible to conduct effective combat operations in mountainous terrain and in urban areas...*



## 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.



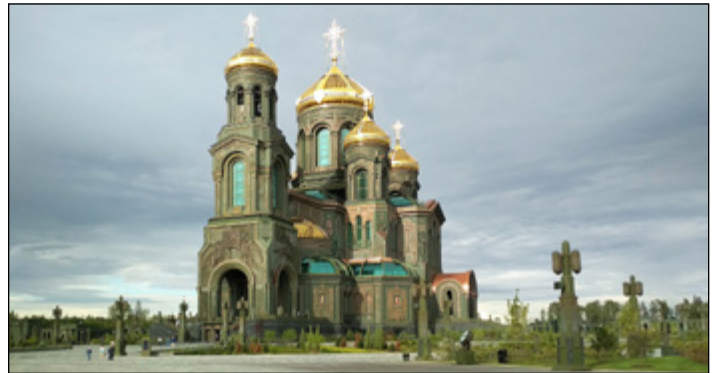
Geoff Demarest's *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.' In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: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

## Russian Orthodox Church Strengthening Support for Ukraine Invasion

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Given its close alignment with the Kremlin, it is not surprising that the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has adopted a “you are either with us or against us” philosophy and has openly endorsed the so-called “special military operation” (SMO) in Ukraine. (see “Russian Orthodox Church Blesses ‘Special Military Operation’ in Ukraine,” *OE Watch*, Issue #5, 2022). The accompanying excerpt from the semi-independent Russian *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* describes some recent changes in the ROC’s hierarchy and organization, which reflects its growing militancy. The article begins by recounting the recent transfer of high-level ROC cleric Metropolitan Hilarion, who had spoken out against the conflict in Ukraine. Drawing an analogy to the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Hilarion reminded his flock about “Rasputin [who] was an ardent opponent of Russia’s entry into the war. He warned the tsar that if Russia entered the war, it would threaten the whole country with catastrophic consequences.”

The article also provides an update regarding Orthodox believers in Ukraine who, up until last month, pledged allegiance to the Russian patriarch. They now have announced their intention to split from the ROC, which has caused consternation in Moscow. In the past, the clerics of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchy (UOC-MP) enjoyed some level of independence from the church leadership in Moscow, but they will now fall under the “direct canonical and administrative subordination to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.” The article also discusses the restoration “of protopresbyter of the military and naval



**Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces**  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Cathedral\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Armed\\_Forces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Cathedral_of_the_Russian_Armed_Forces) Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

**...it** is worth recalling that shortly before the start of the special military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, Hilarion said: “I am personally afraid of war. And I think that we must do everything to ensure that there is no war, no big war, no small war, no world war, no local war.”

clergy,” who will serve as the chief liaison between the ROC and the military. In the past, “this chief military priest was equated with a general.”

The growing proximity of the ROC and the military, according to the excerpt, “is not surprising. After the start of the invasion of Ukraine, the patriarch visited the main military church in Kubinka several times and delivered sermons there on the importance of military service.” These religious developments, whereby the ROC is losing influence in Ukraine, may provide additional incentives for the Kremlin to gain control over the entire country.

**Source:** Andrei Melnikov, “РПЦ переходит на военное положение (The Russian Orthodox Church moves into martial law),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent Russian media outlet), 7 June 2022. [https://www.ng.ru/faith/2022-06-07/1\\_8455\\_general.html](https://www.ng.ru/faith/2022-06-07/1_8455_general.html)

*...The synod of the Russian Orthodox Church at a meeting on Tuesday put an end to the ambiguous position of the church against the backdrop of a military special operation in Ukraine. No longer bound by obligations to its Ukrainian believers, the Moscow Patriarchate is bringing its own configuration into line with the limits of influence of the Russian state. The synodals made revolutionary decisions: they removed Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeev), who was responsible for “pacifism” in the Russian Orthodox Church, from the post of chairman of the*

*continue on 15*



## Continued: Russian Orthodox Church Strengthening Support for Ukraine Invasion

**Source Continued:** Andrei Melnikov, “РПЦ переходит на военное положение (The Russian Orthodox Church moves into martial law),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent Russian media outlet), 7 June 2022. [https://www.ng.ru/faith/2022-06-07/1\\_8455\\_general.html](https://www.ng.ru/faith/2022-06-07/1_8455_general.html)

*Department for External Church Relations (DECOR), and at the same time strengthened the spiritual and patriotic component of church policy....*

*...It is worth recalling that shortly before the start of the special military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, Hilarion said: “I am personally afraid of war. And I think that we must do everything to ensure that there is no war, no big war, no small war, no world war, no local war. There are a lot of forces that want to drag us into some kind of war, and they are not only outside our country, but also inside it. There are those who want to rattle weapons, who say: they say, we are invincible, invincible, we will repulse any enemy. In March, he suddenly began to justify Grigory Rasputin. “Rasputin was an ardent opponent of Russia’s entry into the war. And he warned the tsar that if Russia entered the war, it would threaten the whole country with catastrophic consequences....”*

*The rejection of soft church power was also reflected in other decisions of the Synod of June 7. The ROC responded in a peculiar way to the recent declaration of independence by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – mainly with the votes of those participants in the Council of the UOC on May 27, who are located on the territory of the country controlled by the Kyiv authorities. For a long time, starting from the Russian spring of 2014, the Moscow Patriarchate maintained demonstrative independence from the political situation and left the three eparchies of Crimea under the jurisdiction of the UOC. ...into direct canonical and administrative subordination to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, - says in synodal journals....*

*...Finally, the Synod, in a sense, turned history back: it restored the position of protopresbyter of the military and naval clergy, which had been abolished in 1918.... The chief military priest was equated with a general. ....*

*The attention of the Synod to the military theme is not surprising. After the start of the special operation in Ukraine, the patriarch visited the main military church in Kubinka several times and delivered sermons there on the importance of military service. It was these sermons that became the basis for calls for sanctions against the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, because he allegedly “blessed” the special operation in Ukraine.*

## Russia Building Literal and Figurative Bridges to China

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Ever since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and subsequent Western censure, the pro-Kremlin media has reassured its audience that Russia could not be isolated, and that the country would find other trading partners. China is often cited as an example of an alternate, trustworthy trading partner with which Russia can expand commerce. The first excerpt from the pro-business source *Kommersant* describes the recent construction of two bridges in the Far East that will link China and Russia and facilitate trade.

According to the article this was “the first road bridge opened between Russia and China,” linking Blagoveshchensk (Russia) to Heihe (China) across the Amur River. Construction began in 2016, and although it was completed two years ago, “the opening had to be postponed due to the pandemic.” The article also points that back in April, “the first cross-border railway bridge across the Amur River from the Russian village of Nizhneleninskoye to China's Tongjiang was opened.” Citing a logistics' expert, the article also reinforces the notion “that we [Russia] are experiencing

a global drop in foreign trade volumes with the European Union, [so] we need any options for the delivery of goods from the Middle Kingdom in order to somehow compensate for the drop in import flows.”

The second article from the pro-Kremlin source *National News Service* describes additional economic measures intended to further strengthen Russia-China trade. It cites a Russian economist who asserts that “China can increase the volume of trade and investment cooperation. Secondly, it is necessary to develop cross-border cooperation, electronic commerce, scientific and technical cooperation.” To increase trade opportunities, the expert recommends “that it is necessary to move away from dollars in relations with China in the interbank sphere – to the ruble-yuan regime.” The article concludes by quoting the Chinese Ambassador to Russia who recently said, “that the world is now at an important turning point, promising that the Russian-Chinese relationship will only get stronger regardless of changes in the international situation.”

**Source:** Sabina Adleiba, “Россия и Китай навели мосты (Russia and China build bridges),” *Kommersant* (pro-business site), 10 June 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5405772>

*...The first road bridge was opened between Russia and China.... Russia and China signed an agreement on the construction of the bridge back in 2015, work on it began in 2016. For three years, it was erected in parallel from two banks. The facility was ready two and a half years ago, but the opening had to be postponed due to the pandemic.*

*...The new bridge is two-lane, its length is about a kilometer, plus access roads – 6 km in China, twice as much in Russia. It is expected that more than 600 trucks, about 160 buses and about 70 cars will be able to pass on the new road every day.*

*In addition, at the end of April, the first cross-border railway bridge from the village of Nizhneleninskoye to China's Tongjiang was opened. It also passes over the Amur River. The new route can significantly change this situation, Georgy Vlastopulo, director of Optimal Logistics, believes.... “Taking into account the fact that we are experiencing a global drop in foreign trade volumes with the European Union, we need any options for the delivery of goods from the Middle Kingdom in order to somehow compensate for the drop in import flows.”*

## Continued: Russia Building Literal and Figurative Bridges to China

**Source:** Evgenia Zheludkova, “Военные маневры и уход от доллара: Как Китай поддержит Россию в обход санкций (Military maneuvers and the withdrawal from the dollar: How China will support Russia bypassing sanctions),” *National News Service* (pro-Kremlin site), 3 June 2022. <https://nsn.fm/policy/voennye-manevry-i-uhod-ot-dollara-kak-kitai-podderzhit-rossiu-v-obhod-sanktsii>

*...China will significantly help Russia in economic terms if it decides to switch to rubles and yuan, said Andrey Ostrovsky, head of the Center for Economic and Social Research of China at the Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences...*

*“It will be more difficult to provide proper economic support, but there are a number of areas in which cooperation can be further developed,” he added.... “Here, firstly, China can increase the volume of trade and investment cooperation. Secondly, it is necessary to develop cross-border cooperation, electronic commerce, scientific and technical cooperation, there are many points here...”*

*“The most important problem today is that it is necessary to move away from dollars in relations with China in the interbank sphere – to the ruble-yuan regime....”*

*...The day before, Chinese Ambassador to Moscow Zhang Hanhui said that “the world is now at an important turning point, promising that the Russian-Chinese relationship will only get stronger regardless of changes in the international situation.”*

## 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.



## Russia Revising Marine Doctrine To Use Civilian Ships for Military Purposes

By Les Grau  
OE Watch Commentary

According to an article from Norway-based *The Barents Observer*, Russia is revising its marine doctrine to easily integrate civilian ships for military tasks when necessary. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov noted that the revisions are necessary in the current “geopolitical and military-strategical world situation.” Borisov blames the “hybrid war of the Collective West” for unprecedented

actions against Russia and considers the Russian navy and an update to the marine doctrine as essential for Russia’s survival.

According to the revisions, the navy will include civilian ships and crews and provide functionality of maritime infrastructure in times of war. As the article points out, the use of civilian ships during war is not unusual or unique to Russia, although Russia has a long history of calling civilian ships into military service when necessary. The current revisions will make it easier for Russia’s navy to appropriate Russia’s civilian nuclear powered icebreakers, likely giving the Russian navy an advantage in Arctic waters.

**T**he country’s revised Marine Doctrine includes a high stress on use of civilian ships and infrastructure for military purposes.

**Source:** Atle Staalesen, “Russia outlines militarization of fishing fleet and icebreakers,” *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia, 24 May 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/05/russia-militarizes-its-fishing-fleet-and-icebreakers>

*The country’s revised Marine Doctrine includes a high stress on use of civilian ships and infrastructure for military purposes. “The revisions of the Marine Doctrine take into account changes in the geopolitical and military-strategical world situation,” Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov underlined in a meeting in the government Marine Board late May. The update of the strategic planning document comes in the wake of Russia’s war against Ukraine and its unprecedented isolation in international affairs.*

*According to Borisov, the Navy is now becoming even more important for Russia. “Considering the total hybrid war of the Collective West against our country, the unprecedented sanctions and the special operation in Ukraine, the strengthening of national security is relevant as never before,” the Deputy Prime Minister stated as he opened the meeting. The body includes top government officials from several ministries and federal agencies, as well as military representatives.*

*According to the high-ranking government official with special responsibilities for the military-industrial complex, the new and updated document “to the full extent meets current challenges and threats. It is aimed not on confrontation, but on enhanced national security in the area of maritime operations [and] a significantly reduced dependency on external influence and markets in all fields of maritime activities.” Among the revisions highlighted in the updated doctrine is a higher level of engagement of civilian ships in military activities. According to the government, several “principally new aspects of the doctrine concerns mobilization preparations and preparedness. This will allow for the inclusion in the Navy of civilian ships and crews and provide functionality of maritime infrastructure in times of war.”*

*It is hardly a new phenomenon that civilian ships have a role in national security preparedness, as well as military conflicts, and Russia has a long experience in applying non-military ships for military purposes. But the new federal document clearly prepares the ground for a more systematic approach. Potentially, Russia can choose to apply a large number of trawlers and fishing vessels for military purposes. Many of them are active in international waters, including along the Norwegian coast. Russia can also choose to militarize its powerful nuclear-powered icebreakers, the vessels that autonomously are capable of breaking through the thickest sea-ice of the Arctic. Ultimately, it could also designate a stronger military role to its research vessels. That could include also the brand new “Severnny Polyus,” the ship that is designed for autonomous drifting in Arctic sea-ice for up to two years.*

*Russia’s current Marine Doctrine was adopted in 2017 and covers the period until 2030. The document highlights the need for a technological modernization of Russian ships and development of transport corridors like the Northern Sea Route. According to Yuri Borisov, the Russian Navy will in the course of 2022 get a total of 20 new military ships, as well as five motorboats and 21 support vessels.*

## Iran Unveils New Drone-Fired Cruise Missile



**A Haider-1 missile mounted on an Iranian helicopter**

Source: Mashreghnews.ir <https://cdn.mashreghnews.ir/d/2019/04/28/4/2504823.jpg>

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

The Iranian military recently invited Iranian journalists into the 313 Strategic Unmanned Aerial Vehicle base buried under the Zagros Mountains, which run along the majority of the Iran–Iraq border and reach heights of up to 14,000 feet. While Western reporting tends to focus on the underground nature of the base, the majority of the Iranian press, including the official *Holy Defense News Agency* from which the accompanying translation is excerpted, focuses on the Haider-1 missile and the Haider-2 drone.

The Haider-1 missile has a reported range of around 120 miles and can strike targets at speeds of up to 600 miles

per hour. According to Iranian press reports, the country's **Fotros** and Kaman-22 drones can launch the missile. While the missile's range itself may not be impressive, the Fotros drone reportedly has an operational range of approximately 1,250 miles, a flight endurance of approximately 30 hours, and a ceiling of 25,000 feet. This would place the entirety of the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman within its range. The Iran Aviation Industries Organization designed and produced the Fotros drone as an air-to-surface missile platform. The regular Army's Air Force uses the Kaman-22, which is a multi-purpose platform with a 620-mile operating radius and a flight endurance of approximately 10 hours. It can be fitted for offensive, surveillance, or electronic warfare missions. Iran first unveiled the Haider-1 missile attached to some of its helicopters in 2019. At the time Iranian military spokesman said it would be drone-launched as well, and so this current announcement seems to follow through on this claim.

The nature of the Haider-2 "cruise drone" is less clear, but it appears to be an upgraded kamikaze drone. The line between cruise missiles and kamikaze drones is sometimes blurry. Iran points and shoots cruise missiles to target shipping and stationary targets and seeks advantage from a cruise missile's faster speed. Kamikaze drones are also guided onto the target but are a multi-use platform as opposed to the single-use cruise missile.

**Source:** "Vizhgiha-ye Moshak 'Haider-1' va Pehpad-e Kruz 'Haider-2' (Characteristics of Haider-1 Missile and Haider-2 Cruise Drone)," *Holy Defense News Agency* (Iran state run media outlet), 30 May 2022. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/525883>

*...Brigadier General Shahin Taghikhani, the army's deputy minister for Public Relations, expressed his condolences over the death of a number of compatriots in the Abadan metropolitan area, and said, "The military has significantly upgraded its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capabilities in both quantity and quality, and has for a long time launched the production line of some UAVs." He called the design, production and equipping of UAVs a move based on knowledge and technology and added, "We presented some of these achievements at the 313 Strategic Drone Base, and apart from reconnaissance, combat and destruction drones, we revealed various types of new Iranian ammunition.*

*...The Army spokesman said: "The Army Ground Force's Haidar-1 missile is carried by large drones and can strike from a distance of 120 miles." Taghikhani continued, "The Haider-2 Drone, designed by the Army Ground Forces, is a 'cruise' drone with a range of several hundred miles...*

*Emphasizing that Iran has a collection of bombs, missiles, rockets and other equipment installed on UAVs, he said, "These achievements are the product of the creative minds of the youth in the army, the Ministry of Defense and the hi-tech companies, and they collectively warn the enemy against any unwise action against the Islamic Republic.*

## Iran Opens New Drone Plant in Tajikistan

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

The excerpted article from one of Iran's major economic newspapers, *Eghtesad News*, illustrates how Iran uses drones to secure diplomatic objectives. The article discusses Iran's Army Chief of Staff General Mohammed Bagheri's recent visit to Tajikistan, where he attended the inauguration of the **Ababil-2** drone plant in Dushanbe. In meetings with Tajik officials, Bagheri also discussed common defense of the border against the Taliban. Tehran appears not to have offered Tajikistan the rights to manufacture the Ababil-3 presumably to maintain its own qualitative military edge among regional states and because of Tajikistan's continued warm relationship with the United States. The Ababil-3 is larger, has a reported flight endurance of eight hours, and a maximum ceiling of 15,000 feet.

While some countries, such as Turkey, export drones to cement partnerships with countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, Iranian strategy differs as Iran authorizes the manufacture of its drones abroad. In addition to providing drones to allies, this strategy also gives Iran plausible deniability in the case of nonstate actors like Lebanon's Hezbollah or Yemen's Houthis using Iranian-made drones. It also creates international clients for ongoing military equipment and hardware sales.



**Tajik Minister of Defense Shir Ali Mirza with Mohammed Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces**

Source: Eghtesad News; <https://shorturl.at/hoFNW> NO ATTRIBUTION

Iran may have turned to drone diplomacy with Tajikistan for several reasons. Iran has long considered Tajikistan within its own cultural circle because of the common language—Tajik is a dialect of Persian (Farsi), the official language of Iran. However, Iran-Tajikistan relations have not always been smooth. Emomali Rahmon, who has dominated Tajikistan since 1994, resented Iran's backing of the Islamic opposition during the civil war that dominated the first decade of Tajik independence. For its part, Tajikistan has buried its frustration with Iran and other regional states to make common cause against the Taliban in recent years.

**God willing, in the future we will see more cooperation and interaction from all levels of military defense between Iran and Tajikistan.**

**Source:** “Eftetah-e Karkhaneh Tavalid-e Pehpad-e Irani Ababil-2 dar Tajikistan (Inauguration of the Iranian Ababil-2 UAV plant in Tajikistan), *Eghtesad News* (major Iranian economic newspaper), 17 May 2022. <https://www.eghtesadnews.com/ناتسکیجات-ردل-یبابا-یناری-اداپ-پدی-لوت-من-اخر-اک-حاتتفا-57/495755-یسیسی-رابخ-اشخب>

### *Inauguration of Ababil-2 UAV Plant in Tajikistan*

*In order to strengthen and develop joint defense and military cooperation between the two countries and with the efforts of defense industry experts of the Ministry of Defense and the support of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Ababil-2 UAV plant was inaugurated in Dushanbe in the presence of General Bagheri and Minister of Defense Shir Ali Mirza and a high-ranking group of commanders in the Tajikistan capital of Dushanbe.*

*General Bagheri pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran, with the efforts of its committed specialists and scientists and using its internal capabilities, has been able to have a significant growth in all military and defense dimensions, especially drones. “Today we are in a position where we can export military equipment to allied and friendly countries in addition to meeting domestic needs in order to increase security and lasting peace,” he said. The Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces described the opening of the Ababil-2 plant in Tajikistan as a turning point in military cooperation between the two countries, adding: “God willing, in the future we will see more cooperation and interaction from all levels of military defense between Iran and Tajikistan.”*



## Iran Warns UAE Against Allowing Israel in the Persian Gulf

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

The excerpted article from Iran's official diplomatic news website, *IranDiplomacy*, suggests that Iranian officials worry about the implication of Israeli ties to Gulf Cooperation Council states, which lay less than 200 miles across the Persian Gulf from Iran's coast. As Israel develops diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, Iranian officials grow increasingly concerned that these states could provide Israel with a military foothold less than a half hour flying time from Iran's southern border.

It is within this context that the visit of the chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Navy (IRGC-N), Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, to Greater Tonb Island is important. In 1970, two years after the British government announced its impending withdrawal from areas east of the Suez Canal, the Iranian Navy launched an assault on Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tonb Islands, each of which are internationally recognized as belonging to the UAE. The islands are strategically important because they dominate the waters

**K**homeini was satisfied, which is the best medal of honor for us.



Admiral Tangsiri reviews Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces during a June 2022 visit to Greater Tonb Island

Source: Sharvand Online, <https://shahrvandonline.ir/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ی.ری.س.گ.ن.ت.jpg>

as ships move from the Strait of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf. The IRGC has long fortified these islands. During his visit, Tangsiri condemned rapprochement with Israel, essentially threatening Abu Dhabi that any cooperation with Jerusalem will risk Emirati security. Bahrain hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet and will also understand the implied threat given previous Iranian efforts to incite Bahrain's majority Shi'ite population against the Sunni monarchy. The discussion of the IRGC-N and fortifications on Greater Tonb Islands more broadly can pose a threat to international shipping. Indeed, Tangsiri speaks effusively about the IRGC-N's seizure of Greek tankers in the Persian Gulf on 27 May.

**Source:** "Sardar Tangsiri dar Bazdid az Jazireh-e Tonb-e Bozorg: Emruz Amniyat-e Motalubi ba Hamkari Keshvarha-ye Hamsayeh dar Hawzeh-e Khaliji Fars Vujud Darad (Admiral Tangsiri visiting Greater Tonb Island: Today there is good security with the cooperation of neighboring Persian Gulf countries)," *IranDiplomacy.ir* (Iran's official diplomatic news website), 11 June 2022. <http://irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/2012448>

*Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps- Navy [IRGC-N], visited units stationed on Greater Tonb Island to check the condition of fortifications and engineering structures, passive defense and to assess combat readiness...*

*Admiral Tangsiri, referring to the recent order of the Supreme Leader and his appreciation and satisfaction for the performance of the Marines, which raised national pride and fulfilled Iranian zeal, said: By seizing the offending Greek tankers, the deputy of the Mahdi, Grand Ayatollah Imam Khomeini was satisfied, which is the best medal of honor for us.*

*The commander of IRCG-Navy said, "Today, there is good security with the cooperation and synergy of neighboring countries in the geographical area of the Persian Gulf. If anyone opens the door to this region of the miserable regime, the child-killing regime and the number one enemy, that is Zionism, for any reason, he will cause insecurity, disorder and instability to the region."*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Murder of Paraguayan Prosecutor in Colombia Suggests Transnational Criminal Cooperation

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Paraguayan prosecutor Marcelo Pecci was recently murdered on the Island of Barú while on honeymoon with his wife. The young prosecutor, who specialized in organized crime, had a reputation for pursuing cases related to transnational criminal organizations and money laundering. His brutal murder, far from Paraguay, shocked the nation and hinted at a highly organized and motivated set of criminal organizations operating in conjunction. Five suspects, one Venezuelan and four Colombians, have been arrested and prosecuted for the crime, according to reporting in Spain's top newspaper *El País*. The BBC's Spanish-language news service *BBC Español* further reports that the hit was likely organized by the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), Brazil's largest and most sophisticated criminal organization. The PCC uses Paraguay's relatively ungoverned tri-border area as a hub for smuggling and money laundering. Pecci was conducting one of the largest

**The prosecutor was leading one of the largest anti-mafia operations in the history of Paraguay, a key country in the region's drug trafficking network.**



**Brazilian Police have faced stiff resistance in the face of a sophisticated and expanding PCC**

Source: Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\_group\\_of\\_police\\_officers\\_at\\_2004\\_Brazilian\\_Grand\\_Prix.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_group_of_police_officers_at_2004_Brazilian_Grand_Prix.JPG) Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.5

investigations into criminal organizations in Paraguay's history. The cross-continent operation displays a remarkable level of criminal coordination and sophistication. It also shows the extent to which Paraguay risks becoming a state held hostage by criminal interests operating in its much larger neighbor. Finally, Pecci's assassination highlights the persistent inability of Latin America's governments to protect prosecutors, police, and politicians pursuing anti-corruption agendas.

**Source:** "Capturan a los presuntos asesinos del fiscal Marcelo Pecci (The capture of alleged murderers of prosecutor Marcelo Pecci)," *El País* (Spain's top newspaper with comprehensive coverage of Latin America), 3 June 2022. <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2022-06-03/capturan-a-los-presuntos-asesinos-del-fiscal-marcelo-pecci.html>

*Pecci was a specialized prosecutor against organized crime in Paraguay and was in charge of several of the most important drug trafficking and money laundering cases in that country...Without committing to a hypothesis, the director of the Colombian Police, General Jorge Vargas, said that 'two of the main investigations carried out by prosecutor Pecci in Latin America were against the Primeiro Comando da Capital—the most powerful group of organized crime in Brazil and South America—and the structure known as Point 50, in the south of the continent.'*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Somalia: Behind Al-Shabaab's Success in Recruiting Children

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Somalia's newly elected president, is facing many problems in his country, including a drought that threatens millions with famine, political divisions hampering unity, and a rise in attacks by al-Shabaab despite years of combatting the terrorist group. As the accompanying excerpted article from the pan-African independent news platform *African Arguments* explains, much of al-Shabaab's strength owes to its ability to recruit children. The group uses boys as logistics operatives, combatants, and suicide bombers, while girls are used as cleaners, cooks, and "wives" of the fighters. The group uses both boys and girls as spies, with their young age helping to lessen suspicion of their activities.

According to the article, al-Shabaab finds it easy to recruit youth due to a variety of factors. Work in a country with a devastatingly high unemployment rate such as Somalia is a huge draw. Power, marriage, and for those seeking one, a religious education, albeit quite radical, are other reasons for joining al-Shabaab. There is also widespread discontent with the government, which people perceive

as being deeply corrupt. Abuse at the hands of security forces drives young people to the terrorist organization. Additionally, impoverished parents who receive money from the organization sometimes force their young children to join the group.

There have been programs to persuade young recruits to leave al-Shabaab as well as dissuade those who have not yet joined from doing so. However, as the article notes, these attempts usually have little impact because they focus on the evils of al-Shabaab as opposed to the actual needs of the children. Meanwhile, Western powers, the African Union, and the Somali military are finding it quite difficult to eliminate al-Shabaab because even when they eliminate large numbers of its fighters, new ones soon appear. Until the factors that draw young people into the terrorist group are significantly mitigated, the pipeline of recruits ready to take up arms will very likely remain quite full.

**O**ver the past decade or so, Somali's federal government has attempted to combat al-Shabaab's child recruitment in a variety of, ultimately ineffective, ways.

**Source:** Liban Osiye and Liban A. Hussien, "To counter al-Shabaab, Somalia's new govt must do something for the kids," *African Arguments* (pan-African independent news platform), 24 May 2022. <https://africanarguments.org/2022/05/to-counter-al-shabaab-somalias-new-govt-must-do-something-for-the-kids/>

*Tackling this war crime head on will be critical to saving thousands of children from myriad forms of abuse and, in some instances, death. But it will also be essential to combating the al-Shabaab threat as a whole. In almost all the groups' acts of terrorism, young people are involved in some capacity.*

*Over the past decade or so, Somali's federal government has attempted to combat al-Shabaab's child recruitment in a variety of, ultimately ineffective, ways.*

*Unless President Mohamud's administration honestly examines the reasons that many young people and their families see joining al-Shabaab as an attractive or necessary option, the Islamist militants will keep winning the radicalisation war. To truly tackle child recruitment, his new government will have to recognise that al-Shabaab's greatest tools in turning Somalia's future generations against its present leadership are issues such as endemic poverty, social exclusion, lack of basic public services, endemic corruption, paralysed politics, and poor governance. An effective military strategy is also essential to combatting al-Shabaab – insecurity allows militants to use brute force, torture and abductions to recruit many child soldiers – but not sufficient.*

*Most of al-Shabaab's child recruits are from areas the group holds or has a significant presence in. But it is notable that its level of recruitment in big cities like the capital Mogadishu is reportedly increasing.*

*And it has been found to use girls as cooks, cleaners, and "wives" as well as to spy or move weaponry.*



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Al-Qaeda's Sahel Affiliate Targets Togo

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

On 11 May, the al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for Supporters of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) attacked a Togolese military checkpoint. The attack, which claimed eight Togolese soldiers, was JNIM's first known attack in Togo and may indicate further attacks to come. The excerpted article from the political affairs-oriented French-language *journalde lafrique.com* notes that the attack reflects JNIM's longtime plans to expand into Togo. It also claims that Togo's military preparations to secure its borders with Burkina Faso made the Togolese soldiers a target for JNIM. The article cites previous JNIM attacks in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin as examples of JNIM's intention to strike Togo.

The *journalde lafrique.com* article also suggests that military pressure from Mali is pressing JNIM in the tri-border

area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, forcing JNIM to move southward. The article notes that JNIM reconnaissance teams had previously been arrested in northern Togo but were released due to a legal loophole. The article concludes that the attack in Togo had ample warnings. However, the article does not blame the army but instead focuses its disdain on Togo's intelligence apparatus, who it claims should have noticed the 60 JNIM fighters entering Togolese territory and alerted the military that JNIM or other terrorist groups had infiltrated the country.

**F**or a little more than two years, Togo had been preparing for the expansion of Sahelian terrorist groups on its territory.

**Source:** "Is Togo up to this new terrorist challenge?" *journalde lafrique.com* (political affairs oriented French-language news source), 12 May 2022. <https://lejournaldelafrique.com/le-togo-est-il-a-la-hauteur-de-ce-nouveau-terroriste/>

*The terrorist attack on May 11 against the checkpoint of Kpekpakandi (Togo-Burkina border) is the work of the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims. The toll of this murderous operation was 8 dead and 13 wounded on the side of the defense and security forces of Togo.... This attack is also the first deadly one that Togo has experienced since the terrorist threat has raged in the West African sub-region.*

**Source:** "GSIM claims responsibility for the Kpékpakandi terrorist attack," *togobreakingnews.info* (French language news website), 7 June 2022. <https://togobreakingnews.info/togo-gsim-revendique-lattaque-terroriste/>

*An attack caused the deaths of eight Togolese soldiers. The attack took place in Kpinkankandi, where the Togolese army is conducting its Kondjouaré operation, which aims to secure the borders with Burkina Faso.*

*For a little more than two years, Togo had been preparing for the expansion of Sahelian terrorist groups on its territory.... The latter [JNIM] have seen their influence in the "Tri-Border" area dwindle under the offensive of the Malian army in recent months.... Meanwhile, Côte d'Ivoire had suffered several attacks targeting soldiers on the borders with Burkina Faso. More recently, Benin also had to deal with three deadly attacks at the end of 2021.*

*In Togo, the security authorities had to expect a terrorist attack. It remained to be seen when it would take place. Several members of armed group reconnaissance cells had previously been apprehended in northern Togo, and then were released after interrogation due to a legal loophole.... But the response seems to have been slow on the part of the intelligence services which will, it seems, have great difficulty in curbing the terrorist threat in the short term.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Indonesia Extends Counter-Drug Trafficking Cooperation to South America

By Jacob Zenn  
OE Watch Commentary

According to the excerpted article from centrist Indonesian-language website *tvonenews.com*, Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency (BNN) is now cooperating with South American countries to prevent the entry of cocaine and other narcotics into Indonesia. In the article, BNN head Petrus Golose discusses his recent working visit to South America. Although he notes that narcotics trafficking in South America has not yet directly affected Indonesia, it is necessary to address because Indonesia has seen an increase in domestic drug use and could become a destination country for illicit South American drugs.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry's website, *kemlu.co.id*, discusses the BNN delegation's visit to Panama in particular. Indonesia is concerned about Panama's role as a drug trafficking hub, albeit not a producer. Indonesia intends to share best practices with Panama in terms of law enforcement strategies to counter drug trafficking. A memorandum of understanding between the two countries was signed,



**National Narcotics Agency (BNN) logo**  
Source: Kampung Jawa, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logo\\_BNN.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logo_BNN.svg), Attribution: CC x 2.0

marking the first time Panama has ever cooperated with an Asian country to combat drug trafficking.

Indonesian-language media outlet *databoks.com* reports that there had been a surge in narcotics arrests in Indonesia, peaking in 2018, and decreasing since then. According to the data, North Sumatra is the most affected region. Marijuana is the most seized drug followed by methamphetamine and ecstasy. Given that cocaine dominates narcotics traf-

ficking from South America, these facts indicate that Indonesian counter-narcotics initiatives with South American countries is a longer-term preventative measure.

**I have just carried out a working visit as Chair of the Indonesian Delegation to several countries in South America in order to anticipate the entry of cocaine and other trafficked narcotics into Indonesia...**

**Source:** "BNN Jalin Kerja Sama dengan Negara-Negara di Amerika Selatan Cegah Masuknya Kokain dan Peredaran Narkotika Lain (BNN Cooperates with Countries in South America to Prevent the Entry of Cocaine and Other Narcotics from Circulating)," *tvonenews.com* (considered neutral Indonesian language media source), 9 June 2022. <https://www.tvonenews.com/berita/nasional/45935-bnn-jalin-kerja-sama-dengan-negara-negara-di-amerika-selatan-cegah-masuknya-kokain-dan-peredaran-narkotika-lain>

*Head of the National Narcotics Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (BNN RI) Petrus Reinhard Golose said that his team was cooperating with a number of countries in South America to prevent the entry of cocaine and other trafficked narcotics into Indonesia. Golose explained that the cooperation that BNN has established with countries in South America targets areas around the Andes Mountains. The head of the NNA confirmed that although the circulation of cocaine took place in the Americas, it was possible for Indonesia to become one of the destination countries for the circulation.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Indonesia Extends Counter-Drug Trafficking Cooperation to South America

**Source:** “Panama – Indonesia untuk Pertama Kalinya akan Melakukan Kerja Sama Penanggulangan Narkoba (Panama – Indonesia for the First Time to Conduct Drug Countermeasures Cooperation), *kemlu.go.id* (website of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 25 May 2022. <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/3631/berita/panama-indonesia-untuk-pertama-kalinya-akan-melakukan-kerja-sama-penanggulangan-narkoba>

*With the support of the Indonesian Embassy in Panama City, the Head of the National Narcotics Agency and his team held a meeting with ministerial-level officials.... Panama itself is not a drug-producing country, but is a hub area for drug dealers in Latin America who come from surrounding drug-producing countries.... In this case, Panama and Indonesia can share experiences both in handling and tackling the use and distribution of drugs, as well as proper law enforcement techniques for dealing with drug issues.*

**Source:** “Jumlah Tersangka Narkoba Menurun dalam 3 Tahun Terakhir (Number of Drug Suspects Decreased in the Last 3 Years),” *databoks.katadata.co.id* (web-based Indonesian language media outlet), 29 May 2022. <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/05/26/jumlah-tersangka-narkoba-menurun-dalam-3-tahun-terakhir>

*According to a report by the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), the number of suspects in narcotics and illegal drugs or narcotics cases in Indonesia has decreased over the past three years. However, if one looks at the trend, since 2009 the number of narcotics suspects has tended to increase, with a record high of 1,545 people in 2018.*

### 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.





## Turkish Military Operation in Syria Risks Clash with Iran



**Turkish Soldiers in Syria**

Source: Voice of America, via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T%C3%BCrk\\_Asker\\_Suriye%27de.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T%C3%BCrk_Asker_Suriye%27de.jpg) Attribution: CC-PD-Mark | PD VOA

By Ihsan Gunduz  
OE Watch Commentary

The Turkish Government's plan to launch a fifth military operation into Syria is back on the table. The stated goal is to create a 20-mile "safe zone" along Turkey's border with Syria by targeting areas held by the mostly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). A Turkish operation into this region and its related repercussions might jeopardize the security of U.S. troops remaining in the region to support and advise the SDF fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Turkish President Erdoğan announced he intends to start the operation in Tel Rifaat and Manbij and gradually extend to other areas, some of which include Kurdish groups, Iranian-backed militias, Syrian regime forces, and Russian control of the airspace. The accompanying articles analyze the complexity and risks for Turkey, including that of a face-off with Iran.

According to the first excerpted article from pro-government Turkish daily *Hürriyet*, the critical issue for Turkey is access to Syrian airspace, so it will need permission from Russia and the Syrian regime. Moreover, especially in Manbij, Russia and Syrian regime forces currently control the areas north of the M-4 highway, while Kurdish groups control the area south of the highway. In any ground operation against Kurdish groups, Turkey would find itself facing Russian and Syrian regime forces first in this area. Since Turkey is unlikely to risk fighting Russia, it will seek Russian consent first.

The other critical issue is Iranian opposition and the presence of Iran-backed Shia militias in the area. The second excerpted article from security focused *al-Monitor* states that Iran will resist Turkey's operation both militarily and politically, and an operation might lead to a clash between them. Iran perceives the Turkish military presence in Syria as a threat to its interests and has taken several steps to dissuade Turkey from launching a military operation. First, Iranian high-level officials publicly warned Turkey not to launch the military operation. Second, Iran is bolstering its posture by deploying militias to areas with Shiite settlements, including Zahra and Nubl. Third, Iran and the Syrian regime are mobilizing support for the Kurdish People's Protection Units that Turkey vowed to clear from the area.

**Driven apart by clashing regional interests, Turkey and Iran appear headed for a face-off in Syria, with Tehran explicitly opposing Ankara's plan for a fresh military operation against Kurdish-held areas, wary of risks to its own posture in the region.**

Fourth, Iran-backed Shiite militias tried to deploy Grad missiles to Turkey's potential area of operations, but Russia stopped them for now. Iran's increased presence because of a potential Turkish operation may also impact U.S. forces in the region.

## Continued: Turkish Military Operation in Syria Risks Clash with Iran

**Source:** Sedat Ergin, “Tel Rifat ve Münbiç’te Rusya ve İran faktörleri ne? (What are the Russian and Iranian factors in Tel Rifat and Manbij?),” *Hürriyet* (a pro-government Turkish daily), 3 June 2022. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/tel-rifat-ve-munbicte-rusya-ve-iran-faktorleri-ne-olacak-42076420>

*“We are entering a new phase of our decision to create a 30-kilometer-deep safe zone along our southern borders,” [President Erdoğan] said, adding: “We are clearing Tel Rifat and Manbij from terrorists. Then we will gradually do the same in other regions.”*

*...if the operation area is to be limited to Tel Rifat and Manbij, we must take into account that Turkey’s primary interlocutor on the ground will be Russia...*

*But there are other players as well. The importance of Tel Rifaat is that it is a multi-actor geography in which Russia, Iran, the Assad regime, and the YPG/PYD... have military presence...*

*A very critical issue to consider in a possible operation is that Russia controls Syria’s airspace west of the Euphrates. Its airspace east of the Euphrates is under the control of the USA. If [a Turkish Armed Forces operation] happens, the airspace will have to be kept open so that the radars of the Russian/Syrian air defense systems do not lock onto Turkish warplanes and unmanned aerial vehicles during the operation of the TAF [Turkish Armed Forces]...*

*Tel Rifaat is also a region where Shiite militia groups, which are directly under the control of Iran, also exist. This means that Turkey should also take into account the Iranian factor in any operation to be carried out in Tel Rifaat.*

**Source:** Fehim Taştekin, “Iran, Turkey brace for face-off in Syria,” *al-Monitor* (globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 10 June 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/iran-turkey-brace-face-syria>

*Driven apart by clashing regional interests, Turkey and Iran appear headed for a face-off in Syria, with Tehran explicitly opposing Ankara’s plan for a fresh military operation against Kurdish-held areas, wary of risks to its own posture in the region.*

*Turkey has failed to get a green light from the United States to press ahead with the plan, while Russia appears to be stalling. The Iranians, meanwhile, have sent militia reinforcements to two Shiite settlements northwest of Aleppo, not far from a key area in Ankara’s crosshairs, while trying to talk Turkey out from making the move — apparently with little success thus far...*

*The notion of rivalry has become an understatement in defining Turkish-Iranian ties. The rifts between the two neighbors have deepened amid an array of issues concerning Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, coupled with frictions over the sharing of transboundary waters and a seemingly uncontrolled stream of Afghan refugees to Turkey from Iran...*

*...the Iranian Foreign Ministry slammed Turkey’s intervention plan, warning that it would only exacerbate tensions and humanitarian suffering in Syria.*

*...Iranian media outlets have described Turkey’s presence as an “invasion” and referred to the Syrian National Army (SNA), Turkey’s rebel allies, as “Turkish-backed terrorists.” They have accused Turkey of pushing demographic changes to the detriment of the Kurds, expanding the space of “terrorists” under the guise of safe zones, seeking gains to use against Damascus in future talks or laying the ground for annexing Syrian territory.*

*continue on 29*

## Continued: Turkish Military Operation in Syria Risks Clash with Iran

**Source Continued:** Fehim Taştekin, “Iran, Turkey brace for face-off in Syria,” *al-Monitor* (globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 10 June 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/iran-turkey-brace-face-syria>

...“The Syrian regime and its Iranian militias have mobilized and [are] sending reinforcement to the YPG”—a reference to the Kurdish People’s Protection Units, which Ankara has vowed to oust from Tel Rifaat.

Turkey’s state-run Anadolu news agency, meanwhile, reported that Iranian-backed Shiite militia attempted to deploy Grad missiles to the area May 30, but were stopped by Russian forces...

Could Iran go even further now at the risk of a showdown with Turkey? According to the Iranian journalist, Turkey is “well aware” that Iran will defend Zahra and Nubl, even though Iran has avoided directly confronting Turkey in Syria thus far, except for Iranian participation in a 2020 offensive in Idlib that resulted in Damascus recapturing the crucial M5 highway.

Though Ankara has not mentioned Zahra and Nubl as targets, they would fall within Turkey’s range should it take control of Tel Rifaat. The two settlements and Tel Rifaat are seen as a barrier shielding Aleppo...

Today, Kurdish and government control in Tel Rifaat and its environs prevents rebels in Idlib from crossing to the Turkish-controlled Euphrates Shield pocket and accessing Aleppo. The importance of the area feeds suspicions that Ankara’s aims may go beyond weakening the Kurds.

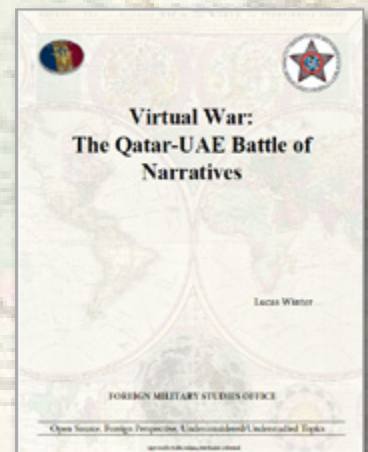
According to various sources, local groups trained and equipped by Hezbollah, Iranian-sponsored Shiite groups such as Fatemiyoun, Hashemiyoun and Zainabiyoun and the Syrian government’s militia the National Defense Forces are all present in Zahra and Nubl. They are reportedly coordinated by the IRGC, which has a headquarters in the area.

## VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

May 2020

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





## Central Asian Forces Boosting UAV Capabilities



TAI Anka at Teknofest 2019

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAI\\_Anka\\_Teknofest2019\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAI_Anka_Teknofest2019_(1).jpg) Attribution: CC BY-NC 4.0

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

In March 2022, Kyrgyzstan's Border Guards carried out an exercise with their recently acquired Turkish Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Shortly after that, Tajikistan's defense minister visited Turkey and met with representatives from Baykar, the makers of the Bayraktar TB2 being used in Ukraine with much fanfare. The meeting triggered speculation that Tajikistan is planning to acquire the Bayraktar TB2, but Tajik officials did not confirm this. The accompanying excerpted articles report on drone-related developments in Central Asia and provide insight into the role they could play in the region over the next several years.

The excerpted article from independent Tajik news website *Asia Plus* reports on the establishment of an enterprise in Tajikistan for the production of Iranian Ababil-2 UAVs. The article provides no additional details about the production capacity of the facility, but notes that the Ababil is used mostly for reconnaissance and that it can be equipped as a loitering munition. The article also quotes U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan as recently saying that the United States "would provide Puma reconnaissance UAVs to the Tajik border guards."

The excerpted article from independent news website *Fergana Agency* reports that a new joint Turkish-Kazakh enterprise will produce Turkish Aerospace Industries' ANKA UAVs in Kazakhstan. The article notes how Kazakhstan "will become the first foreign country to establish the production of ANKA attack drones" and that the Kazakh government bought three of the UAVs last year. The early variants of the

ANKA were only for reconnaissance, but recent variants can be equipped with a munition and it appears Kazakhstan will use one of these systems.

Neither article states whether Tajikistan or Kazakhstan will put their jointly produced UAVs into service with their respective ministries or another security force. The governments of Central Asia have always put a high priority on border security forces and if Kyrgyzstan serves as an example, the border guards of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan could be the recipients of the new UAVs. Regardless, the announcements of two new UAV production facilities shows how much of a priority governments in the region are putting on UAV capabilities.

**M**aintenance and repairs of the UAV will be carried out at a joint venture in Kazakhstan.

**Source:** "В Таджикистане открылось предприятие по производству иранских беспилотников (An enterprise for the production of Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles opened in Tajikistan)," *Asia Plus* (an independent news website in Tajikistan), 17 May 2022. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20220517/v-tadzhikistane-otkrilos-iranskoe-predpriyatie-po-proizvodstvu-bespilotnikov>

*...an enterprise for the production of Iranian Ababil-2 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has opened in Tajikistan. Tajik Defense Minister Sherali Mirzo and Chief of the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Mohammad Bokiri attended the opening...*

*IRNA reports that the enterprise was built "in order to strengthen and expand joint defense and military cooperation between the two countries thanks to the efforts and assistance of specialists from the Ministry of Defense and support of the Iranian Armed Forces."...Details about the production capacity of the facility were not reported...*

*The Ababil is designed primarily for reconnaissance missions... The system can also be equipped with up to 40 kg of explosives, turning it into a loitering munition...*

*continue on 31*

## Continued: Central Asian Forces Boosting UAV Capabilities

**Source Continued:** “В Таджикистане открылось предприятие по производству иранских беспилотников (An enterprise for the production of Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles opened in Tajikistan),” *Asia Plus* (an independent news website in Tajikistan), 17 May 2022. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20220517/v-tadzhikistane-otkrilos-iranskoe-predpriyatie-po-proizvodstvu-bespilotnikov>

*Previously, the U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan, John Mark Pommersheim, stated at a press conference that the U.S. would provide Puma reconnaissance UAVs to the Tajik border guards...*

**Source:** “В Казахстане налажат производство турецких беспилотников ANKA (Production of the Turkish unmanned aerial vehicle ANKA is being set up in Kazakhstan),” *Fergana Agency* (an independent news website focusing on Central Asia), 11 May 2022. <https://fergana.agency/news/126095/>

*The Turkish ANKA unmanned aerial vehicle will be produced in Kazakhstan. This was reported by Andolu Agency, referring to the producer of the drones – Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS)...*

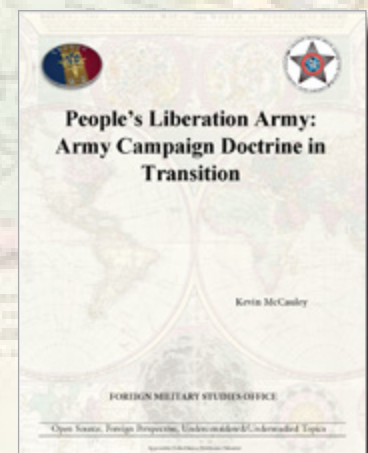
*Maintenance and repairs of the UAV will be carried out at a joint venture in Kazakhstan. Thus, it will become the first foreign country to establish the production of ANKA attack drones...*

*Last year, a contract was signed with the Kazakh side for the supply of ANKA UAVs to the republic. It was reported that Turkey, under this agreement, sold three systems to Kazakhstan...*

## 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.





Unmanned combat aerial vehicle Akinci of Bayraktar at Teknofest 2019

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BayraktarAk%C4%B1nc%C4%B1\\_Teknofest2019\\_\(3\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BayraktarAk%C4%B1nc%C4%B1_Teknofest2019_(3).jpg) Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

## Azerbaijan Balances Security Cooperation Between Turkey and Russia

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

**W**ithin its framework, it is planned to sign a number of agreements, and also announced the intention to establish the production of Bayraktar-Akinchi heavy drones in Azerbaijan.

The accompanying excerpted article from the independent Russian-language website *Kavkazskiy Uzel* provides a regional analysis of how Azerbaijan balances its security cooperation with Turkey and Russia. It also discusses Azerbaijan's recent purchase of the Turkish-made Akinci drone. The article reports on Teknofest being hosted in Azerbaijan, noting that this was the first time the festival took place outside of Turkey. It points out that Turkey and Azerbaijan signed a number of agreements there. It also notes the delivery of the Bayraktar Akinci drone to Azerbaijan and that Turkey "will transfer production technologies" to Azerbaijan. The Akinci has better capabilities than the Bayraktar TB2, which Azerbaijan currently has in its inventory.

The comments from analysts in the region provide more context for what Azerbaijan is looking for from Russia versus Turkey. Regional security analyst Shair Ramaldanov notes that security cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia is mostly for the "repair of military equipment of Soviet and Russian production" and that "spare parts for this are supplied from Russia." Political scientist Ilgar Velizade points

out one key difference in Azerbaijan's security cooperation with Turkey and Russia, specifically "in relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan aims at the joint production of new weapons; [whereas] in relations with Russia, Baku buys arms in the Russian Federation." Political scientist Arastun Orujlu noted another difference between Turkey and Russia: that "Turkey does not yet produce tanks and military aircraft, so Baku will purchase this equipment from the Russian Federation. But in the field of high-tech, missile, helicopter weapons, Turkey is ahead of the Russian Federation."

Overall, the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan have had various systems serviced by Russia in the past, even if relations between the two had been strained. While the article does not mention this, the war in Ukraine is having an impact on logistics for the Russian defense industry. Azerbaijan's acquisition of the Bayraktar Akinci shows what it continues to look for in its security partnership with Turkey, which gave the country a specific capability that Russia could not.

**Source:** "Аналитики сравнили военно-техническое сотрудничество Баку с Анкарой и Москвой (Analysts compared military-technical cooperation of Baku with Ankara and Moscow)," *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (independent Russian-language website with news from the Caucasus), 28 May 2022. <https://kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/377597/>

*Azerbaijan is hosting the Teknofest aviation, cosmonautics and technology festival, which is held outside of Turkey for the first time. Within its framework, it is planned to sign a number of agreements, and also announced the intention to establish the production of Bayraktar-Akinchi heavy drones in Azerbaijan. Military cooperation between Baku and Ankara is unlikely to interfere with cooperation with Moscow, since it is about the supply of various types of weapons, analysts interviewed by the "Kavkazskiy Uzel" noted...*

*continue on 33*



## Continued: Azerbaijan Balances Security Cooperation Between Turkey and Russia

**Source Continued:** “Аналитики сравнили военно-техническое сотрудничество Баку с Анкарой и Москвой (Analysts compared military-technical cooperation of Baku with Ankara and Moscow),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (independent Russian-language website with news from the Caucasus), 28 May 2022. <https://kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/377597/>

*The organizers of the festival are the Turkish Technology Team Foundation (T3), the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Industry and Technology of Turkey...Within the framework of the festival, Turkey and Azerbaijan are planning to sign a number of agreements, Turkish Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank told the Anadolu Agency.*

*The most significant achievement of the festival in Baku is the flight of the new Turkish heavy strike-reconnaissance U“V "Bayraktar-Akin”hi" from Turkey through the airspace of Georgia to Baku without an intermediate landing. The UAV covered 3200 km. This aircraft is much larger, better armed, flies longer and higher, and is capable of carrying more weapons than its predecessor, Bayraktar-TB2, which Azerbaijan used in the 2020 Autumn War...Ankara will transfer production technologies to the Azerbaijani side.*

*...On February 22, 2022, the Declaration on Allied Cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation was signed in Moscow. The document says that the parties are developing bilateral military-political cooperation that meets national interests and is not directed against third countries...They cooperate on issues of equipping with modern weapons and military equipment, as well as in other areas in this area of mutual interest...Military expert Shair Ramaldanov told t“e "Caucasian K”ot" correspondent that the military-technical cooperation between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation did not stop. It consists, according to him, primarily in the repair of military equipment of Soviet and Russian production and the restoration of weapons damaged during the hostilities. Spare parts for this are supplied from Russia...*

*...Political scientist Ilgar Velizade told t“e "Caucasian K”ot" correspondent that the Azerbaijani-Turkish and Azerbaijani-Russian military-technical cooperation differs in at least one fundamental poin“. "If in relations with Turkey, Azerbaijan aims at the joint production of new weapons, then in relations with Russia, Baku buys arms in the Russian Federati”n," he said.*

*...Political scientist Arastun Orujlu compared the expected arms supplies to Azerbaijan from Turkey and Russi“. "Turkey does not yet produce tanks and military aircraft, so Baku will purchase this equipment from the Russian Federation. But in the field of high-tech, missile, helicopter weapons, Turkey is ahead of the Russian Federation, he told t“e "Caucasian K”ot" correspondent...*

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.



## Algeria Inches Closer to Russia Amid Frosty Relations with Morocco and Spain

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

In need of allies and with deteriorating relations with neighbors, Algeria's relations with Russia are firm and potentially deepening following multiple military-diplomatic visits from Russia. Russia–Algeria links “are reaching a new level,” according to statements Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently made to the Russian media outlet *RT Arabic*. A new strategic cooperation document is being drafted to replace the 2001 agreement that currently guides bilateral relations. According to the excerpted article from influential Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Algeria plans to hold joint military exercises with Russia in November. In early June, the new director of Algeria's Advanced Warfighting School led a group of officers on a tour of General Staff colleges in Russia. Deepening Russian–Algerian relations may reflect an emerging strategic alignment that could turn the western Mediterranean into a new flashpoint in the brewing conflict between Russia and NATO.

This is all against the backdrop of Algeria's perceived threats from Morocco and Spain. Both Algeria and Morocco have taken steps to reinforce military presence along their shared border in recent months. Earlier this year, the Moroccan military established a new “eastern military zone” along its border with Algeria. More recently, as reported in the Qatari-aligned *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the Algerian military conducted nighttime joint maneuvers and set up a new base near the oasis town of Tindouf, where the borders of Algeria, Morocco and the disputed Western Sahara converge. Tindouf is home to the largest concentration of Western Saharan (Sahrawi) refugees, and a key center of gravity for the Polisario Front, Western Sahara's pro-independence movement.



Ville de Tindouf فودنت قن يدم

Source: Photo by Habib kaki via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tindouf\\_%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%81.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tindouf_%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%81.jpg)  
Attribution: CC 1.0., <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

In early June, Algeria downgraded its political relations with Spain in response to Spanish recognition of Moroccan claims on the Western Sahara earlier this year. The Algerian government is threatening a near-total trade embargo with Spain, from which only natural gas exports would be excepted. It has also threatened to shut off the remaining pipeline that carries Algerian gas to Spain. Stopping the flow of Algerian gas to Spain would leave Italy as the only European country with pipelines bringing in Algerian natural gas. Algeria's diplomatic rupture with Spain also includes suspending cooperation on migration. Given the Ukraine-related pressures on the EU's eastern borders, increased immigration and decreased gas flows along Europe's southern borders would undoubtedly put substantial strain on the European Union's social and political order.

**R**ussian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that relations between Russia and Algeria are reaching a new level...

### Source:

(Lavrov: Our relations with Algeria have reached a new level),” *RT Arabic* (Russian Arabic-language news site), 26 May 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/228xnr4b>

لافروف: علاقتنا مع الجزائر تصل إلى مستوى جديد

*Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that relations between Russia and Algeria are reaching a new level. He also emphasized the need to formalize them in a new document, the preparation of which is underway.*

## Continued: Algeria Inches Closer to Russia Amid Frosty Relations with Morocco and Spain

### Source:

الجيش الجزائري ينفذ مناورات تحاكي قتالاً ليلياً قرب الحدود مع المغرب

(The Algerian army carries out maneuvers simulating night combat near the border with Morocco)," *al-Araby al-Jadid* (Qatari-aligned daily), 7 June 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2cukk683>

*The Algerian army conduct nighttime military maneuvers with live ammunition. The exercises included various units and weapons, and the intensive use of missiles, rocket launchers and aircraft. They took place in the Tindouf region, which lies directly on the border with Morocco, not far from the disputed Sahara region between Rabat and the "Polisario Front," and coincided with the opening of a military base in the area.*

### Source:

مسؤول روسي رفيع يبحث بالجزائر التعاون العسكري

(High-level Russian official discusses military cooperation in Algeri)," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 17 May 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2s3jt5ms>

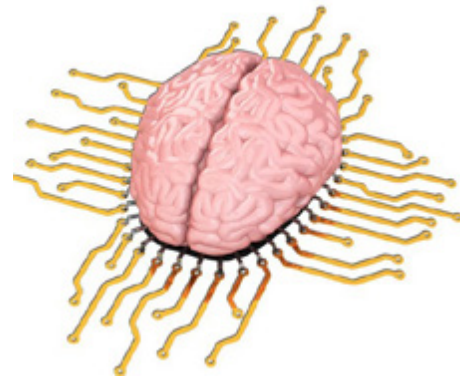
*A senior official in the Russian Federation Council held discussion with Algerian officials yesterday regarding the ongoing war in Ukraine, the development of military cooperation between the two countries, and the previously announced joint military exercises, scheduled for next November in the Algerian desert.*

**Source:** "'Students of Algerian Armed Forces Advanced Warfighting School visit Defence University," *Republic of Serbia Ministry of Defense*, 6 June 2022. <https://www.mod.gov.rs/eng/18878/poseta-polaznika-visoke-ratne-skole-oruzanih-snaga-alzira-univerzitetu-odbrane-18878>

*Students attending the Algerian People's National Armed Forces Advanced Warfighting School have visited the Defence University in Belgrade today, thus starting their study tour of the Republic of Serbia which will last for several days.*

## THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

**Mad Scientist Laboratory engages global innovators to report on the Operational Environment (OE), emergent disruptive technologies and their convergent impacts, and the changing character of warfare.**



<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil>



## UAV Technologies Proliferating in Yemen and Saudi Arabia

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and counter-UAV technologies appear poised to continue proliferating and evolving in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The accompanying articles shed light on their use in this corner of the Arabian Peninsula. In a span of four days in late May, Yemeni military sources claimed Houthi-led military forces in Yemen used “locally made” surface-to-air missiles to shoot down three UAVs belonging to the Saudi military. The three UAVs were a [Vestel Karayel](#) surveillance drone, a CAIG [Wing Loong II](#) UCAV, and a CASC [Rainbow CH-4](#) UCAV. The claims appear credible, although the only evidence presented were wreckage videos. Yemeni forces did not specify how the drones were shot down beyond speaking vaguely of domestically manufactured systems. Yemeni forces possess Russian/Soviet air-to-air missiles that they inherited from the Yemeni military stockpiles and modified to function as surface-to-air missiles. They also operate Iranian air defense missiles smuggled into Yemen, most notably the “358” loitering air defense missile.

Saudi Arabia is seeking to produce UAVs and other advanced military equipment domestically and has signed co-production agreements with the makers of Turkish Karayels and Chinese CH-4s. Saudi Arabia has also recently entered into a joint venture with the China Electronics Technology Group to develop



**Wing Loong II side view, Dubai Air Show 2017**

Source: Photo by Mztourist via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wing\\_Loong\\_II\\_side\\_view.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wing_Loong_II_side_view.jpg)  
Attribution: CC 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>)

drones and counter-drone systems. The latest incidents add to a growing list of over two dozen UAVs that Saudi Arabia has lost on the Yemeni battlefield, including over a dozen CH-4s and a handful of Karayels. According to the accompanying excerpt from the Turkish daily Hurriyet, Saudi Arabia is thought to be in the process of purchasing Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs, perhaps in response to the underperformance of these other platforms.

**The plane belonged to the Saudi Air Force and was violating the armistice and carrying out hostile acts in the airspace of the capital, Sana’a...**

**Source:** @army21ye (Yemeni military spokesman Twitter account), 21 May 2022. <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1527936740874498049>

*By God's grace, this morning our air defenses were able to shoot down an armed spy plane, of the Turkish-made Karayel type, belonging to the Saudi Air Force. The plane was violating the armistice and carrying out hostile missions in the airspace of the Hiran region of Hajjah governorate. It was targeted by a homemade surface-to-air missile, which has not been made public yet.*

**Source:** @army21ye (Yemeni military spokesman Twitter account), 23 May 2022. <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1528799226255253510>

*Moments ago, our air defenses were able, thanks to God, to shoot down a Chinese-made armed CH4 spy plane using a locally made surface-to-air missile. The plane belonged to the Saudi Air Force and was violating the armistice and carrying out hostile acts in the airspace of the capital, Sana'a.*

## Continued: UAV Technologies Proliferating in Yemen and Saudi Arabia

**Source:** @army21ye (Yemeni military spokesman Twitter account), 24 May 2022, <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1529119242221649922>

*The armed spy plane shot down by our air defenses at dawn today on the border front was a Chinese-made Wing Loong 2. It was targeted while violating the armistice and carrying out hostile actions in the skies of the Kitaf Directorate, along the border.*

**Source:** "Saudi Arabia to buy Bayraktar drones: Report," *Hurriyet* (Turkish daily), 23 May 2022. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/saudi-arabia-to-buy-bayraktar-drones-report-174012>

*"The Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) has expressed interest in Turkish drones and is ready for talks with the producing company, Baykar," Lebanon-based Tactical Report wrote on May 22.*

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)**

To request equipment be added to the WEG, email the TRADOC G-2 Operational Environment Integration at [odin\\_feedback@army.mil](mailto:odin_feedback@army.mil)

Equipment highlighted in *OE Watch* articles are [hyperlinked](#) to the Worldwide Equipment Guide (WEG).



## Regional Coalitions Supersede the AU's African Standby Force

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

It has been nearly two decades since the African Union (AU) created the African Standby Force (ASF), a proposed multinational and multidisciplinary peacekeeping military organization. However, despite numerous conflicts across the continent, the ASF has yet to respond. Instead, as the accompanying excerpted article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies* explains, various African regions have created their own ad hoc coalitions of troops to deal with security issues in their associated territories. For example, seven East African Community countries established a regional military force in April 2022 that helped restore stability in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where militia groups were conducting violent attacks. Likewise, in 2021 Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community sent forces to northern Mozambique to fight Islamic militants.

These regional coalitions of militaries have not followed the ASF's concepts regarding how and when forces should be deployed and have called into question the ASF's relevance. The coalitions believe they are doing the work the ASF was designed to do but has not done. According to the article, there are several reasons why the ASF has failed to launch. First, there have been numerous political problems in addition to security concerns between African nations. There have also been difficulties between the AU and the five regional economic blocs that are supposed to coordinate the ASF. Some African countries have been slow to commit necessary resources to the ASF. However, as the article notes, the ASFs biggest problem is that violent extremism was not originally addressed in the organization's framework, forcing regional coalitions to fill this gap.

Efforts are underway to resolve some of the issues constraining the ASF. These include forming mechanisms to improve decision-making, facilitating a better understanding of when to deploy the ASF, and expediting the



***Should the African Standby Force become fully operational, soldiers such as these from Burundi would play a key role in peacekeeping for the organization***

Source: U.S. Army Africa/Wikimedia Commons/Flickr, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burundi\\_peacekeepers\\_prepare\\_for\\_next\\_rotation\\_to\\_Somalia,\\_Bjumbura,\\_Burundi\\_012210\\_%284324781393%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burundi_peacekeepers_prepare_for_next_rotation_to_Somalia,_Bjumbura,_Burundi_012210_%284324781393%29.jpg), Attribution: CC BY 2.0

formation of an ASF counterterrorism unit. While these may sound promising, this is not the first time that the ASF has seen such attempts. This inability of the AU to have a large, ready, and unified force means Western powers seeking to support peacekeeping operations must deal with several different regional forces instead of one. Meanwhile, with regional coalitions providing forces to deal with their regional problems, the pressure is off a bit for the AU to stand up the ASF quickly. However, the inability of the AU to do so reflects the many difficulties it faces trying to unite Africa even in the face of conflicts and terrorism.

***The ASF has never seen action, with ad hoc troop coalitions instead becoming the norm in Africa.***



## Continued: Regional Coalitions Supersede the AU's African Standby Force

**Source:** Meressa K. Dessu and Dawit Yohannes, “Can the African Standby Force Match Up to Current Security Threats?” *Institute for Security Studies* (South African think tank), 2 June 2022. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/can-the-african-standby-force-match-up-to-current-security-threats>

*The ASF has never seen action, with ad hoc troop coalitions instead becoming the norm in Africa.*

*The ASF originated in 2003 as a multidisciplinary standby mechanism comprising soldiers, civilians and police in their countries of origin. It is coordinated by the five regional economic communities with the aim of being ready for rapid deployment at short notice. The intention is to help the AU Peace and Security Council discharge its responsibilities relating to peace support missions.*

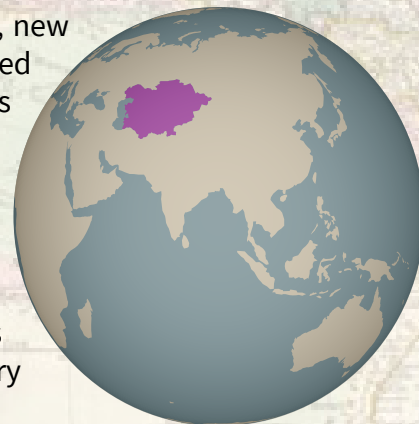
*Analysts attribute this problem to the power that regional blocs have over peace and security decisions due to a lack of clarity on the subsidiarity principle between regions and the AU. This ambiguity of roles and responsibilities enables countries to opt for ad hoc security arrangements over the ASF.*

*Some analysts believe these ad hoc security coalitions complement the ASF and are best suited to tackling Africa's deadliest transnational armed groups. The coalitions are seen as filling a gap in the AU's peace and security arsenal by providing immediate responses to violent extremism and other complex threats – which the ASF's framework doesn't address.*

## 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>

## Venezuela's Mystery Plane Shows Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

On 8 June, a large Boeing 747 of suspicious origin was grounded in Buenos Aires, where Argentine authorities seized the crew's passports. The plane belongs to Venezuela's state-owned Emtrasur Cargo airline, a subsidiary of Conviasa, which Iran's sanctioned Mahan Air sold to Venezuela one year ago. The mystery surrounding the cargo plane hints at Iran's strategic penetration of Latin America through a mix of commercial and military activities. According to one of Argentina's leading media outlets *Infobae*, the aircraft stopped in Mexico to load auto parts, then made several trips throughout South America, including Venezuela, Paraguay, and eventually Argentina before authorities grounded it. Cordoba's leading newspaper, *Diario Cordoba*, posits that the passenger manifest, which was exceptionally large, holds clues as to the plane's true purpose. The paperwork shows that the pilot of the plane was a known member of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, Captain Gholamreza Ghasemi. Further, speculation is rife that at least one passenger departed the plane before it arrived in Argentina, when the plane was forced to make an emergency landing in Cordoba after bad weather in Buenos Aires caused it to avert its landing there. If Iran is ferrying

security operatives and sanctioned individuals from its elite security forces to Latin America by cargo and civilian airliners, posing as either passengers or crew members, this represents a grave security threat. In 1992 and 1994, Argentina suffered devastating terrorist attacks on a Jewish community center and the Israeli Embassy. In Argentina, it has been suspected for years that Iran and Hezbollah have a connection to these attacks.

**A**rgentina's Justice Ministry is trying to establish why Iranians came among the crew of the Venezuelan airline that was officially supposed to transport auto parts from Mexico to Argentina, and to see if there are elements that support the hypothesis that the Iranian pilot is indeed linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard.



*A Venezuelan plane from the state-owned airline Conviasa at Simón Bolívar Airport in Caracas.*

Source: Wilfredor via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conviasa\\_plane\\_in\\_Maiquetia\\_Airport.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conviasa_plane_in_Maiquetia_Airport.jpg)

Attribution: Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

## Continued: Venezuela's Mystery Plane Shows Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America

**Source:** “El avión con tripulantes iraníes encendió las alarmas de toda la región hace cuatro semanas (The plane with Iranian crew set off alarms throughout the region four weeks ago),” *Diario Cordoba* (Cordoba's leading daily newspaper), 14 June 2022. <https://titulares.ar/el-avion-con-tripulantes-iranies-encendio-las-alarmas-de-toda-la-region-hace-cuatro-semanas/>

*The international alarms over the flights of a plane manned by Iranians and Venezuelans in the Southern Cone began to ignite four weeks ago throughout the region...[Argentina] received a notice that it is a company and therefore an aircraft that was sanctioned by the United States Department of the Treasury and that its crew members were members of the Al-Quds Force, the revolutionary force of Iran, whom the United States has been on a terrorism list.*

**Source:** “EMTRASUR: la empresa fantasma venezolana que vuela con un solo avión bajo la sombra iraní (EMTRASUR: the Venezuelan ghost company that flies with a single plane under the Iranian shadow),” *Infobae* (one of Argentina's leading outlets, generally viewed as center-left politically), 19 June 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2022/06/19/emtrasur-la-empresa-fantasma-venezolana-que-vuela-con-un-solo-avion-bajo-la-sombra-irani/>

*Paraguayan Intelligence Minister Esteban Aquino assured this Friday that Gholamreza Ghasemi, the pilot of the plane held in Buenos Aires, has ties to the Quds Force. Argentina's Justice Ministry is trying to establish why Iranians came among the crew of the Venezuelan airline that was officially supposed to transport auto parts from Mexico to Argentina, and to see if there are elements that support the hypothesis that the Iranian pilot is indeed linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard.*



### 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.