



OEWATCH

Issue 1
2023

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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China Likely To Boost Nuclear Triad

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

The following article, published in *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, anticipates that China is going to upgrade its air-, ground-, and sea-based nuclear delivery platforms to fulfill President Xi Jinping's recent call for a "strong system of strategic deterrence." *SCMP*, Hong Kong's most prominent online English daily, based its information on interviews with various Chinese defense analysts. Zhou Chenming, a researcher with the Yuan Wang military science and technology think tank in Beijing, said that deterrence through conventional weapons during the Russia-Ukraine conflict revealed weakness on the battlefield, with both sides locked in endless fights and neither one able to use aircraft and tanks to overwhelm the other.¹ In contrast, according to Song Zhongping, a defense commentator and former instructor for the People's Liberation Army Rocket Forces, "Russia's powerful nuclear triad" had "deterred the U.S. and NATO from direct combat with the Russian military." Therefore, analysts see further boosting China's nuclear triad as a wise option.

To do so, Zhou Chenming argued that developing the Xian H-20 supersonic stealth bomber will help to further boost China's nuclear triad. While Chinese authorities

over the past years have remained tight-lipped about its capabilities and progress in development, Chinese experts expect it to have good stealth characteristics to provide defense penetration capabilities; a range of about 10,000 km, extendable through aerial refueling; both nuclear and conventional capability; and a fully advanced electronic warfare capability.² According to the *SCMP* excerpt, the H-20 is expected to double China's nuclear strike range. Zhou Bo, a senior fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, explained that China's nuclear arsenal has always been smaller than that of the United States and Russia.³ Therefore, China "must modernize its capabilities" and increase its nuclear arsenal to become more effective. In contrast, according to Zhou Chenming, because of China's "no first use" policy, the country does not need to expand its nuclear arsenal because China's second-strike capability is "powerful enough to destroy the globe."

China's second-strike capability is powerful enough to destroy the globe.

Source: Minnie Chan, "Upgrades for China's Nuclear Triad as Xi Jinping Pushes for Stronger Strategic Deterrence: Analysts," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong Chinese daily, once considered independent but now suspect of promoting China soft power abroad), 29 October 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3197705/upgrades-chinas-nuclear-triad-xi-jinping-pushes-stronger-strategic-deterrence-analysts>

Defence experts say China is expected to upgrade its air, ground and sea-based nuclear delivery systems – or nuclear triad – following President Xi Jinping's call for a "strong system of strategic deterrence."

Defence analysts said the Ukraine war and an increasingly uncertain global order had reminded Beijing that conventional weapons were not enough for real "strategic deterrence."

"Deterrence with conventional weapons revealed their weakness on the battlefield of the Ukraine war, which has seen the Russian military and Ukraine's NATO-aided forces locked in endless fights, as neither could use aircraft and tanks to overwhelm each other," said Zhou Chenming, a researcher with the Yuan Wang military science and technology think tank in Beijing.

China's strategic deterrence will be significantly upgraded once the H-20 is put into service...

Chinese military magazines and social media suggested the H-20's maiden flight could happen this year, but Beijing has been reluctant to announce any progress on the bomber.

continue on 4

Continued: China Likely To Boost Nuclear Triad

Source Continued: Minnie Chan, “Upgrades for China’s Nuclear Triad as Xi Jinping Pushes for Stronger Strategic Deterrence: Analysts,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong Chinese daily, once considered independent but now suspect of promoting China soft power abroad), 29 October 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3197705/upgrades-chinas-nuclear-triad-xi-jinping-pushes-stronger-strategic-deterrence-analysts>

Zhou Chenming of the Yuan Wang think tank said that Beijing's best option was to raise the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, rather than expand its nuclear arsenal and trigger an arms race.

"Since Beijing has promised to maintain its 'no first use' policy, China doesn't need to expand its nuclear arsenal, as its nuclear technology is now on a par with the US and Russia, meaning China's second-strike capability is also powerful enough to destroy the globe," Zhou said.

Notes:

[1] The “Yuan Wang military science and technology think tank” can also be referred to as “Beijing Yuanwang Military Technology Think Tank” [北京远望军事科技智库] or simply “Yuan Wang Think Tank.” It appears to be an independent Chinese think tank that focuses on cutting-edge technology and highlights aspects of defense.

[2] See Zhang Lijun and Li Wei, “中国新一代远程轰炸机拥有五大突出特点 (The Five Outstanding Features of China’s New Generation of Long-range Bombers),” *China Youth Daily* (newspaper of the Communist Youth League of China), 16 February 2017. http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2017-02/16/nw.D110000zgqnb_20170216_1-12.htm

[3] China is estimated to have 200 to 300 nuclear warheads.

New Chinese Small Arms at Weapons Expo

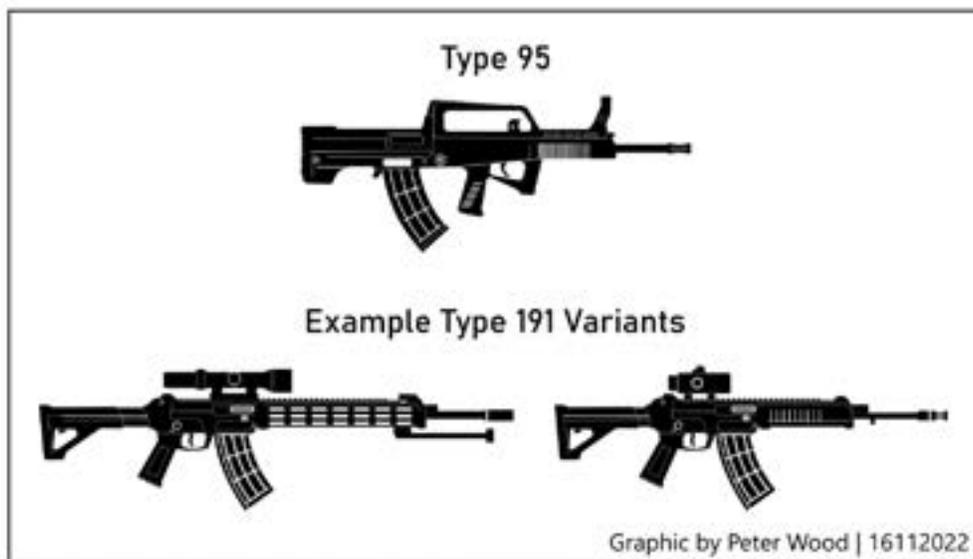
By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

Several examples of China's new series of small arms were recently shown at the Zhuhai airshow. Formally known as the China International Aviation & Aerospace Exhibition, the event is held every two years and includes displays of a wide range of new equipment. While most weapons are meant primarily for export, the expo also showcases equipment that has been adopted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The following excerpt from Chinese state media describes a new series of small arms developed by China Ordnance Equipment Group Corporation¹ known as the "Type 20 New Weapon Series."²

In 2019, China showed troops equipped with a new battle rifle, the Type 191,³ during the military parade that was part of celebrations of the 70th founding of the People's Republic of China. New camouflage uniforms were also shown for the first time.⁴ Since then, Chinese media reporting has shown more units being equipped with the new rifles and wearing the new camouflage. As highlighted by Zhang Lu in the excerpt, the Type 20 weapons feature improvements in their lifespan and reliability. The rifles use M-LOK and Picatinny rail systems to allow easy modification and use

of accessories, including grips, lasers, and optics. When the Type 191 was initially introduced, it appeared with an optic using a loop of fiberoptic to provide illumination of the reticle without the need for batteries. Since then, numerous other optics have appeared in use, and images from the expo showed a wide variety of thermal and low-light optics. Other weapons belonging to the Type 20 series have appeared in other Chinese media reporting, including new dedicated marksman rifles, sniper rifles, and the Type 201 5.8mm Squad Machine Gun, a replacement for the Type 95-derived squad support weapon (QBB-95).⁵ This new machine gun gives up the bull-pup design and drum magazine of the QBB-95 for a traditional belt-fed design. Other parts of the Type 20 series include a 9mm submachine gun with an extendable stock and holographic sight and a new handgun. While the new weapons will take some time to be fielded across the force, these minor improvements are important to increasing the combat power of Chinese military units and will help make them more effective in a variety of scenarios.

Compared to the previous Type-95 series of rifles, the Type-20 series are lightweight and more portable. A major technological breakthrough for the new rifles is improvements in reliability and service life.



Chinese Small Arms

Source: Created by Author, Attribution: Image by Peter Wood

Continued: New Chinese Small Arms at Weapons Expo

Source: “‘硬核’的中国制造！20式新枪族‘组团’亮相（“Hard core” made in China! The parts of the Type-20 series of weapons have appeared),” China Central Television [央视网] (PRC State Media), 8 November 2022. <http://news.jstv.com/a/20221108/1667855745474.shtml>

The 14th China Air Show began on 8 November. The new Type 20 series of firearms which was independently developed by China, made a “Group” appearance.

According to Zhang Lu [张路], Assistant to the General Manager of Chongqing Construction Industry [重庆建设工业] (a subsidiary of China Ordnance Equipment Group Corporation, developer of the weapons), “The Type 20 series have high reliability, and easy adaptability to the needs of global combat environments.”

Compared to the previous Type-95 series of rifles, the Type-20 series are lightweight and more portable. A major technological breakthrough for the new rifles is improvements in reliability and service life. In the past, a gun could only fire 5,000-10,000 rounds. The Type 20 series doubles this service life.

The largest group within the Type 20 series is the new generation of 5.8mm rifles which include standard battle rifles, carbines, and three precision variants.

Compared with the Type-95 series and the Type 20 series various optics can be used making them suitable for different combat requirements. The series also adopts a transparent magazine for rifles to make it clearer how many rounds remain.

Notes:

[1] China Ordnance Equipment Group Corporation [中国兵器装备集团有限公司].

[2] Type 20 New Weapon Series [20式新枪族].

[3] For greater detail regarding the new rifle see: Peter Wood, “China Introduces New Battle Rifle for the PLA,” *OE Watch*, December 2019. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/342827>

[4] For more details regarding the camouflage types see: Peter Wood, “PLA Adopts New Digital Camouflage for All Services,” *OE Watch*, May 2020. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/360519>

[5] For background regarding China’s previous squad support weapons see: Peter Wood, “Why the PLA Adopted the Type 95 Light Support Weapon,” *OE Watch*, May 2020. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/362528>

China Addresses Food Security at Home, Uses “Food Diplomacy” Abroad

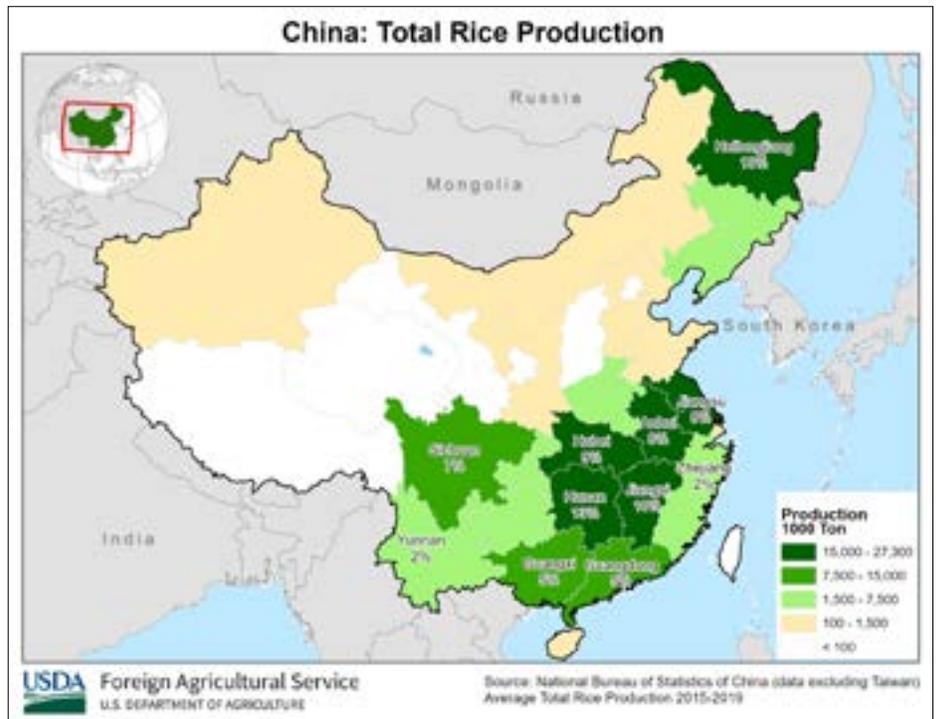
By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

The combination of COVID-19 and the outbreak of war in Ukraine have demonstrated the vulnerability of the global food supply through prevalence of price shocks leading to increasing hunger. For its part, China is taking threats caused by food insecurity seriously. China’s leader, Xi Jinping, included food security in his 2014 articulation of a “Holistic National Security Concept.”¹ As illustrated in the following excerpts, food security remains a driving force for Chinese policy, including efforts to improve its self-reliance and insulate itself from global food market shocks, while at the same time advancing relations with strategically important trade partners and diversifying its trade partners to reduce impacts from market fluctuations.

In March 2021, China issued its latest five-year plan, which will guide policy through 2025. The excerpted portion of the plan below lays out some of the core elements of China’s domestic initiatives to improve food security. These include efforts to better use mechanization and bring small agricultural plots together for greater efficiency. The plan also called for increasing soil restoration projects to return arable land that had been polluted. In January 2022, the State Council commissioned a national soil survey to systematically study the level of pollution, which previous surveys had found to be significant.² In his speech at the 20th Party Congress in October 2022, Xi reinforced many of these themes, calling for greater efforts to ensure that China’s target of arable land is protected, existing land is used more efficiently, and better seed technologies are incorporated.

China is actively committed to promoting international food security cooperation.

Xi also sees food security as central to his foreign policy. Xi’s Global Development Initiative,³ introduced in an address to the UN General Assembly in September 2021 as a complement to China’s Belt and Road, makes food



China: Total Rice Production (2015-2019)

Source: US Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/rssiws/al/crop_production_maps/China/China_Total_Rice.jpg, Attribution: USG/Public Domain

security and “food diplomacy” an important plank.⁴ The excerpted article by Zhang Lubiao, Director of China’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs’ Foreign Economic Cooperation Center in *People’s Daily*, the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee, lays out some examples of China’s food diplomacy. Zhang cites China’s historical commitment to the export of these technologies and the training of thousands of technical personnel since 1979. Notably, the article highlighted how China had helped several countries, including Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, improve yields and the variety of key staples, leading Nigeria to become a major rice-producing country itself. Going forward, food security—and China’s sprint to reduce its exposure to global markets—are likely to remain a major theme of both its foreign and domestic policies.

Continued: China Addresses Food Security at Home, Uses “Food Diplomacy” Abroad

Source: “中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十四个五年规划和2035年远景目标纲要 (Outline of the People’s Republic of China 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives for 2035),” *Xinhua* (PRC State Media), 13 March 2021. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-03/13/content_5592681.htm

We will consolidate the foundation of grain production capacity and ensure the supply of important agricultural products... We will enforce the strictest possible system for protecting farmland, strengthen the protection of the quantity of available farmland and enhance its quality to ensure that the total area of China’s farmland remains above the red line of 120 million hectares [十八亿亩耕地红线] (~296.5 million acres⁵), prevent the use of farmland for non-agricultural and non-grain purposes... Focusing on functional zones for grain production and protected areas for the production of major agricultural products, we will build a ‘national food security industrial belt’, implement high-quality farmland development projects, and build contiguous high-quality farmland of more than 71.67 million hectares.

It is essential to improve the systems to guarantee the supply of major agricultural products and to the production, purchase, storage, marketing, and sale of grain, to ensure absolute security of staples, basic self-sufficiency of grain, and adequate supply of major agricultural products and byproducts products. Efforts will continue to develop grain production, further implement the strategy of sustainable farmland use and innovative application of agricultural technology for national food security, carry out research to overcome the technological bottleneck of superior seed sources, and improve self-reliance and control⁶ of seed types.

Source: Zhang Lubiao, “中国杂交水稻技术助力维护全球粮食安全 (Hybrid Rice Technology is a Hallmark of China’s International Agricultural Cooperation),” *People’s Daily* (Official Newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee), 13 November 2022. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2022-11/13/nw.D110000renmrb_20221113_7-03.htm

While simultaneously addressing the problem of domestic self-sufficiency, China is actively committed to promoting international food security cooperation and working with all parties to enhance global sustainable agricultural production capacity.... China has also trained more than 14,000 hybrid rice professionals from more than 80 developing countries through international training courses.

In order to promote hybrid rice technology, China has sent a large number of agricultural technical experts. According to incomplete statistics, by the end of 2021, under the framework of China-FAO South-South Cooperation alone, China has sent nearly 1,100 agricultural experts and technicians to more than 40 countries and regions, accounting for nearly 60% of the total number of dispatched experts.

...

Cooperative hybrid rice projects involving China, Nigeria, Uganda and other countries have also achieved remarkable results. China has helped Nigeria make great progress in the field of rice planting by sending experts, promoting improved crop varieties, and providing technical support, and has become one of the major rice-producing countries in Africa.

Continued: China Addresses Food Security at Home, Uses “Food Diplomacy” Abroad

Notes:

[1] “Holistic National Security Concept” [总体国家安全观].

[2] “The State Council Notice on the Third National Soil Survey” [国务院关于开展第三次全国土壤普查的通知], PRC State Council (Chinese Government), 29 January 2022. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2022-02/16/content_5673906.htm

[3] Global Development Initiative (GDI) [全球发展倡议].

[4] Food security was mentioned second after poverty alleviation in a list of specific measures in a section discussing development. See: Xi Jinping, “Speech by Xi Jinping at the General Debate of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (full text),” [习近平在第七十六届联合国大会一般性辩论上的讲话(全文)], Xinhua, 22 September 2021. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-09/22/content_5638597.htm

[5] The original phrase is 1.8 billion “mu,” a Chinese unit of measure. For comparison, in 2021 the U.S. had 895 million acres of farmland. While China is slightly larger than the U.S. in size, much of its land is mountainous, plateaus, or desert areas unsuitable for farming. See: “Farms and Land in Farms 2021 Summary,” USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, February 2022. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/fnlo0222.pdf

[6] Here, control is referring to rights including patents. China still relies heavily on seed types that are patented by foreign countries.

Beijing's Vision for Global Cyberspace Governance

By Thomas Shrimpton
OE Watch Commentary

China identifies the Internet and cyberspace as a critical domain for ensuring national security, economic and social stability, and ultimately, the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Recently, Beijing presented its vision for international cooperation in cyberspace via a white paper from the State Council Information Office. The white paper reflects Beijing's tightening grip on information flows and fundamental freedoms, its growing concerns over Western digital advantages in its operational environment, and its expanding efforts to export digital authoritarianism to the developing world.

For Beijing to realize its global superpower aspirations and compete with the United States as a cyber superpower, it must present a vision for an equitable and inclusive global community. The 2022 white paper lays out Beijing's vision for such a community through "extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits in global governance, and promot[ion of] a multilateral, democratic, and transparent international internet governance system." The document further highlights Beijing's achievements in internet development (e.g. expansion of its internet penetration, digital economy, and tech sector) and cyberspace governance (e.g. the Cybersecurity Law, Data Security Law, Personal Information Protection Law, and Cybersecurity Review Measures)¹ while advocating for the rights of all countries to formulate their own national cybersecurity strategies. However, these seemingly liberal themes are trumped by Beijing's emphasis on cyber sovereignty as its core guiding principle in international cyberspace governance.

Cyber sovereignty is the notion that individual countries should maintain the exclusive right to govern their own territory's cyberspace, superseding any supposed rights for the mutual interest of a future shared community in cyberspace. As such, reliance on the principle

of cyber sovereignty serves to justify the CCP's long-term strategic control over information flows available to Chinese internet users and to facilitate Beijing's digital security apparatus' ability to enforce social stability to buttress CCP legitimacy.

Problems with the internet such as unbalanced development, unsound regulation, and unreasonable order are becoming more prominent. Cyber-hegemonism poses a new threat to world peace and development.

Simultaneously, China looks to promote this version of internet governance abroad. This conception of cyberspace governance diverges from the principles of an "open, free, global, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet" advocated for by the United States and 61 partner nation signatories of the "Declaration for the Future of the Internet."² Indeed, Beijing's white paper presents China's achievements and vision of shared internet development and cyberspace governance in stark contrast to its vision of Western "cyber hegemonism," the idea that "certain countries are exploiting the internet and information technology as a tool to seek hegemony, interfere in other countries internal affairs, and engage in large-scale cyber theft and surveillance." Despite the liberal rhetoric framing a "community with a shared future in cyberspace," the more Beijing can affiliate cyber sovereignty with equitable and inclusive participation in cyberspace governance to developing countries, the wider its brand of digital authoritarianism will spread.

Continued: Beijing's Vision for Global Cyberspace Governance

Source: “携手构建网络空间命运共同体 (Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace),” *State Council Information Office*, 7 November 2022. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/32832/Document/1732898/1732898.htm> (Chinese) http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2022-11/07/content_78505694.htm (English).

Problems with the internet such as unbalanced development, unsound regulation, and unreasonable order are becoming more prominent. Cyber-hegemonism poses a new threat to world peace and development.

Certain countries are exploiting the internet and information technology as a tool to seek hegemony, interfere in other countries' internal affairs, and engage in large-scale cyber theft and surveillance, raising the risk of conflict in cyberspace.

Some countries attempt to decouple with others, and create schism and confrontation in cyberspace. The increasingly complex cybersecurity situation calls for more just, reasonable and effective cyberspace governance. Global threats and challenges in cyberspace necessitate strong global responses.

All countries have the right to formulate public policies, laws, and regulations on cyberspace in the context of their national conditions and international experience. No country should seek cyber hegemony; use the internet to interfere in other countries' internal affairs; engage in, incite, or support cyber activities that endanger other countries' national security, or infringe on other countries' key information infrastructure.

Notes:

[1] For more on the PRC's evolving cyberspace and data governance legislation see: “China's Evolving Data Governance Regime,” U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 26 July 2022. https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/Chinas_Evolving_Data_Governance_Regime.pdf

[2] For more on the Biden administration's articulation of the United States' vision for cyberspace governance see: “A Declaration for the Future of the Internet,” *The White House*, 28 April 2022. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Declaration-for-the-Future-for-the-Internet_Launch-Event-Signing-Version_FINAL.pdf

Russia Conducts Nuclear-Delivery Tests in the Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

In late October, Russia carried out a nuclear weapons exercise in the Arctic. According to the excerpted article from Norway-based *The Barents Observer*, it is the second major nuclear-delivery test of Russia's sea-land-air Triad in 2022. The previous exercise was conducted in February, prior to the current Russian incursion into Ukraine. President Putin oversaw the exercise, which

included submarine, land, and bomber missile firings. The intended message is that Russia is a competent nuclear power in the Arctic. As the threat of the use of nuclear weapons circulates in the context of the Ukraine war, Russia's nuclear delivery tests in the Arctic serve as a stark reminder to the world of its capabilities.

Ballistic missiles were launched both from a nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea and from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in Arkhangelsk region towards the Kura range on Kamchatka. Cruise missiles were launched toward targets in the Komi Republic from strategic bombers.

Source: Thomas Nielsen, "Russia tested all legs of nuclear triad over the Arctic," *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian news site in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 26 October 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/10/russia-tested-all-legs-nuclear-triad-over-arctic>

Ballistic missiles were launched both from a nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea and from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in Arkhangelsk region towards the Kura range on Kamchatka. Cruise missiles were launched toward targets in the Komi Republic from strategic bombers.

For the second time this year, President Vladimir Putin ordered a massive nuclear weapons exercise. Last time was a few days before the invasion of Ukraine in late February.

The October 26 strategic drill included all three legs of Russia's nuclear triad; submarine, land-based missiles and long-range bomber planes.

"During the event, the level of preparedness of military command and control structures, and the skills of the leadership and operation staff in the troops were checked," the Kremlin said in a statement.

The President's office added that all tasks were fulfilled, all missiles reached their targets.

While Putin oversaw the exercise, his Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov, gave the orders to the involved strategic nuclear forces.

Russia May Extend Conscription Period to Two Years

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin daily newspaper, *Izvestiya*, discusses the possibility of Russia extending the mandatory military conscription period from one to two years.¹ This change, in conjunction with the Russian military's absorption of the separatist forces from Luhansk and Donetsk, will likely result in the Russian military adding more than 300,000 personnel to its ranks. In addition, a two-year conscription period will also likely lead to an overall qualitative improvement in Russian military capabilities because,

according to Russian commanders, a one-year term of service for conscripts is too short for them to become fully combat capable. For this reason, Russia employs conscript-manned battalions and contract-manned battalions that have abbreviated training schedules for the conscript units.² A change to a two-year conscription model will likely allow conscript units to be trained on the same schedule as their contract brethren.

Against the backdrop of a special military operation (SMO), State Duma deputies have raised the issue of increasing military service to two years.



Conscripts being inducted for military service

Source: <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=46577@cmsPhotoGallery> Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

Continued: Russia May Extend Conscription Period to Two Years

Source: Maria Shaipova, “Два против одного: в России обсуждают увеличение срока службы в армии (Two Against One: In Russia They Are Discussing an Increase to The Length of Military Service),” *Izvestiya* (Pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 3 November 2022. <https://iz.ru/1420571/mariia-shaipova/dva-protiv-odnogo-v-rossii-obsuzhdaiut-uvvelichenie-sroka-sluzhby-v-armii>

Against the backdrop of a special military operation (SMO), State Duma deputies have raised the issue of increasing military service to two years. The Kremlin says that these issues should be resolved in the Ministry of Defense. What will be the term of service in the army in 2023, as well as how the conditions for recruits have changed?

Yury Shvytkin, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Defense, announced on November 3 that he would return to two-year service against the backdrop of the SMO. According to him, this is due to the need to securely consolidate the knowledge the conscripts gain during military training. The idea was supported by State Duma deputy from Crimea, Mikhail Sheremet. He did not rule out that the corresponding initiative could be submitted for consideration by the deputies of the State Duma.

However, the Federation Council questioned the need to return to the two-year system. According to Andrey Klishas, the head of the Federation Council committee on constitutional legislation and state building, the number of contract servicemen affects the combat capability of the army. And an increase in conscription service is unlikely to significantly affect the quality of the troops. Both the senators and the press secretary of the President of Russia Dmitry Peskov said that the opinion of the head of the Ministry of Defense will be decisive in regard to the term of service in 2023...

Currently, the term of service in the army is 12 months for all branches of service. The call is held twice a year: from April 1 to July 15 and from October 1 to December 31...As emphasized by the Ministry of Defense, the recruits of the autumn draft-2022 will not be sent to the SMO zone or serve in the newly annexed territories... The term of service in the Russian army was reduced from two to one year in 2008, in parallel with this, the troops were reoriented to the contract method of manning. A transitional period was established, and some of the conscripts served 18 months from 2007 to 2008...During the period of military reform in the country, the total size of the army was reduced to 1 million people, while the proportion of conscripts decreased, and the number of contract soldiers increased.

The transition to a voluntary (contract) principle of manning the Russian army has been discussed since the early 1990s. In 1992, it was supported by the Supreme Council and the President of the Russian Federation, but the Ministry of Defense insisted on maintaining the conscription service. As a result, in 2003, it was decided to equip individual units and branches of the Armed Forces, as well as Border Troops, also with contract troops. For the Internal Troops (MVD-VV), it was decided to maintain conscription, but to reduce the term of service.

Notes:

[1] Russian military conscription dates to Peter the Great (1672-1725), when the selected individuals served for life. From 1874, the entire male population of the country over the age of 21 was subject to conscription with a term of 15 years, six on active duty and nine years in the reserve. By the beginning of the 1900s, the term of service in the Ground Forces was reduced to three or four years, while in the Navy, it was five years. During World War Two (Great Patriotic War), the entire Russian population was considered “mobilized.” In 1967, conscripts began to serve two years in the Ground Forces and three years in the Navy. In 1993, the term of service was reduced to one-and-a-half years but raised to two years in 1996 amid the first Chechen War. Since 2008, Russia has practiced a one-year conscription period.

[2] By regulation, most Russian Ground Forces maneuver (motorized rifle or tank) units (regiments or brigades) are required to maintain two battalion tactical groups that are fully manned with contract soldiers. Since motorized rifle units have three motorized rifle battalions and one tank battalion, the third motorized rifle battalion is manned with conscript soldiers and is sometimes colloquially referred to as a “reserve” battalion.

Russia To Reintroduce Military Training Into High Schools

By Charles Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the official Russian Government daily newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, discusses Russian plans to reintroduce a "basic military training" course into high schoolers' educational curriculum. In Soviet times, rudimentary military skills (small arms familiarization, first aid, close order drill, etc.) were taught to all students, with differing training regimens for male and female students. These courses were supplemented by the Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF), a paramilitary organization that sponsors after-school activities involving militarily useful

skills associated with sports, weapons, automobiles, and aviation.¹ Although military training was removed from the high school curriculum in the 1990s, DOSAAF has remained in continuous operation. Undoubtedly, the reintroduction of military training into high school curriculums is directly related to ongoing events in Ukraine, continuing the trend of the growing militarization of Russian civil society.

The course of basic military training (NVP) will again appear in schools from next year.



Personnel receiving instruction

Source: <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=46577@cmsPhotoGallery> Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

Continued: Russia To Reintroduce Military Training Into High Schools

Source: Maria Agranovich, “Курс начальной военной подготовки вернется в школьную программу в 2023 году (The course of basic military training will return to school curriculums in 2023),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (official Russian Government daily newspaper), 9 November 2022. <https://rg.ru/2022/11/10/klass-na-marshe.html>

The course of basic military training (NVP) will again appear in schools from next year.²

This was announced by the Minister of Education of Russia Sergey Kravtsov. "We will prepare such a course before January 1, 2023, then it will be tested, and schools will be able to use it from the next academic year," Kravtsov said.

Recall that the "basic military training" course was removed from school curriculums in the 1990s, and discussion of its return started this spring. Now the Ministry of Education plans to integrate this knowledge into the Federal Basic Educational Program for students in 10-11 grade, the draft of which is posted on the Internet for public discussion. This training will not be taught as a separate subject, but as modules within the course "Fundamentals of Life Safety" (OBZh).

In the draft educational program for high school students in the course "OBZh" there are two options for program, one of which is basic and contains the usual sections about safety at home, in transport, in society and in natural conditions, as well as basic knowledge of state security, defense and the basics of military service. In the second version there is a separate module "Elements of initial military training." In this version there is training on close order drill, military greetings, and small arms. Pupils in grades 10-11 will learn how to provide first aid and get acquainted with personal protective equipment...

Notes:

[1] Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF) [Добровольное общество содействия армии, авиации и флоту (ДОСААФ)].

[2] Basic military training (NVP) [начальной военной подготовки (НВП)].



Personnel inspecting tank

Source: <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=46577@cmsPhotoGalleryAttribution:CC-BY-SA4.0>

Russian Military Experiencing Pay Problems

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

The Kremlin continues to wrestle with manpower issues related to its so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine. What was envisioned as a quick operation with minimal forces has become a difficult slog requiring ever-more military personnel. The accompanying excerpt from an article in the semi-independent *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* highlights that after Russia’s September 2022 “partial mobilization,” which added 318,000 new soldiers, there are now questions regarding how to pay for this additional manpower, as well as growing pay disparities within the ranks of the Russian military.

The article reminds readers that the Russian Defense Ministry reported “that the minimum amount that military personnel called up as part of partial mobilization will receive will be 195,000 rubles (USD \$3,145) per month.” After calculating personnel costs for the entire military, the author asserts that now at least 30 percent of defense spending will go to manpower. Traditionally, personnel costs have hovered around 15 percent of the defense budget. The author complains that “defense of the Fatherland is a constitutional duty of a citizen of the Russian Federation,” and that therefore, “he should fulfill it without powerful material incentives.” Mere patriotic rhetoric, however, has

proven inadequate in motivating Russian soldiers.

Of note, the article also discusses the pay differential among those Russians who were recently mobilized and contract soldiers already serving in the military.¹ The article cites a retired general officer who claims that some of the recently mobilized are getting paid more than the officers who are training them. He warns that “social injustice in the payment of military labor can become a prerequisite for the disintegration of the army.” Another excerpt talks about “the danger of the material stratification of military personnel,” wherein certain soldiers are getting paid more than others doing similar work merely because they were mobilized. The article concludes by looking at some of the problems family members of mobilized soldiers have had in gaining access to their pay. In addition to causing morale problems in the Russian ranks, such high levels of manpower expenditures are likely to slow Russia’s investments in rearmament in the latter phases of the war and perhaps long after it ends.

Social injustice in the payment of military labor can become a prerequisite for the disintegration of the army.

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Монетизация СВО способна привести к разложению армии (Monetization of the SVO can lead to the decomposition of the army),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent news source), 8 November 2022. https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-11-08/1_8584_monetization.html

Vladimir Mukhin, “Монетизация СВО способна привести к разложению армии (Monetization of the SVO can lead to the decomposition of the army),” Nezavisimaya Gazeta (semi-independent news source), 8 November 2022. https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-11-08/1_8584_monetization.html

The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation reported that “the minimum amount that military personnel called up as part of partial mobilization will receive will be 195 thousand rubles.” A simple calculation shows that at least 62 billion rubles (\$1bn) a month will be spent on paying for the military labor of 318,000 mobilized people participating in a special military operation (SMO). And if we take into account similar expenses for more than a million military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, then at least 1.5 trillion rubles will be spent on the payment of monetary allowances per year, that is, almost every third ruble planned in the expenditure side of the budget for national defense in 2023.... In any case, the conflict with Ukraine turned out to be costly for the Russian budget....

Attention is drawn to the fact that the lion's share of the planned defense spending - at least 30% - will be directed to the material motivation of the military to serve. Russia has never foreseen such expenses in its recent

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Continued: Russian Military Experiencing Pay Problems

Source Continued: Vladimir Mukhin, “Монетизация СВО способна привести к разложению армии (Monetization of the SVO can lead to the decomposition of the army),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (semi-independent news source), 8 November 2022. https://www.ng.ru/armies/2022-11-08/1_8584_monetization.html

history. Previously, the share of spending on military salaries in the defense budget was no more than 12-15%. But the defense of the Fatherland is a constitutional duty of a citizen of the Russian Federation, and ideally, he should fulfill it without powerful material incentives....

...Military expert, retired lieutenant general Yuri Netkachev believes that the state has correctly taken care of the material problems of the mobilized citizens and it is good that the families of the country's defenders will receive financial support. “But why does this process apply only to the mobilized? There is a large stratum of servicemen in the Armed Forces who also participate in the SMO. But they do not have such material incentives as those announced by the Ministry of Defense for the mobilized,” General Netkachev told NG. “Social injustice in the payment of military labor can become a prerequisite for the disintegration of the army. In all my military service, I have never seen ordinary soldiers get more than the officers who command them. Right now, mobilized servicemen are being trained by officers of training platoons and companies. They are regular military men who, as a rule, have extensive combat experience. But it turns out that these experienced warriors, who train “green soldiers” called up from the civilians, to whom the state has already pocketed 200,000 rubles, receive several times less.”

Andrey Poleshchuk, chairman of the All-Russian Trade Union of Military Personnel (OPSV), also speaks about the danger of the material stratification of military personnel. He believes that “the financial decisions of the president, taken at the suggestion of the leadership of the Ministry of Defense, cannot but raise questions.” “We understand that it is necessary to materially interest the mobilized, to stimulate them to successfully solve combat missions, to reduce the intensity of passions in society,” he says. - But how to explain the situation to the officers who command these mobilized in the combat area, and they are not subject to the instructions of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation on additional monetary surcharges. It turns out that they, professionals, should receive less or, at best, commensurate with the monetary allowance of their subordinates.”

...According to the representative of the Ministry of Defense Sergey Mikischenko, at the request of a soldier, his family will be able to receive monetary allowance: “The monetary allowance of a serviceman is credited to his current account, which the serviceman submitted. At the request of a serviceman, monetary allowance can be transferred to his relatives; for this, the serviceman must issue a power of attorney.... Andrey Poleshchuk draws attention to the organizational problem associated with this: “We are faced with the fact that not everyone managed to issue powers of attorney for relatives to receive funds. Now they don't have that option. Perhaps it makes sense to consider the issue of transferring notarial powers to the commanders of military units. A similar practice existed in the USSR.”

Notes:

[1] For additional background on pay for Russian contract soldiers, see: Ray Finch, “Increase in Pay and Benefits for Contract Soldiers,” *OE Watch*, September 2019. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/oe-watch-articles-singular-format/323757>

Russia Further Bolstering Iran Relations Following Ukraine Invasion

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary



Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patrushev_NP.jpg Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

A major tenet of the Kremlin's current ideology revolves around transforming what it perceives as a U.S.-led global security sphere into a multipolar world order where Russia occupies one of the key poles. The Kremlin promotes this ideology globally, especially to countries that have had a troubled relationship with the United States, and Russia has increased these efforts since its invasion of Ukraine began. The accompanying excerpt from the pro-business site *Kommersant* describes the recent visit of Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev to Tehran on 9 November, where he claimed, "Russia and Iran today are at the forefront of the struggle for the establishment of a multipolar world order." During Patrushev's visit, the two sides "discussed all aspects of bilateral cooperation, from the economy to security," in light of improving bilateral relations over the past decade.¹ The author suggests that the two countries traded notes regarding "the survival of the economy under sanctions, cybersecurity, terrorism, as well as the interference of external forces in the internal affairs of Russia and Iran." The latter point was emphasized by Patrushev, who "noted the key role that Western intelligence services have played in organizing mass riots in Iran and the subsequent dissemination of disinformation about the situation in the country."

The Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation also stressed that 'Russia and Iran today are at the forefront of the struggle for the establishment of a multipolar world order.'

Since the Kremlin officially denies receiving military assistance from Iran, the article carefully cites foreign reports on "the supply of Iranian drones to Russia for use in hostilities in Ukraine." For the Kremlin and the wider Russian audience, admitting the need for Iranian military technology would be regarded as humiliating. Not that long ago, it was

Iran who requested Russian military assistance, and now the tables have turned.² The article concludes by asserting that increased Western pressure on Iran will likely result in "closer cooperation between Russia and Iran."

Source: Marianna Belenkaya, "Совбезы РФ и Ирана поговорили на одном языке (Security Councils of Russia and Iran spoke the same language)," *Kommersant* (pro-business news outlet), 9 November 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/amp/5653639>

Russia and Iran held interdepartmental consultations on security issues in Tehran on Wednesday (9 Nov). The Russian delegation was led by Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev. In the Iranian capital, he was received by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. According to official reports, the meeting discussed various issues of Russian-Iranian cooperation in the field of security, as well as a number of international problems....

The two countries have accumulated a lot of common themes, or rather, common problems. Among them are the survival of the economy under sanctions, cybersecurity, terrorism, as well as the interference of external forces in the internal affairs of Russia and Iran.

Iranian politicians do not need to explain anything to their Russian colleagues. They understand everything
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Continued: Russia Further Bolstering Iran Relations Following Ukraine Invasion

Source Continued: Marianna Belenkaya, “Совбезы РФ и Ирана поговорили на одном языке (Security Councils of Russia and Iran spoke the same language),” *Kommersant* (pro-business news outlet), 9 November 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/amp/5653639>

themselves, moreover, they speak the same language. Thus, at a meeting with an Iranian colleague, Nikolai Patrushev noted “the key role of Western intelligence services in organizing mass riots in Iran and the subsequent dissemination of disinformation about the situation in the country based on the Persian-language Western media controlled by them.” ...The Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation also stressed that “Russia and Iran today are at the forefront of the struggle for the establishment of a multipolar world order” and this “is confirmed by the unprecedented pressure on our countries from Washington and its satellites.”

...From the very beginning of hostilities in Ukraine, Tehran stated that they understood Russian security concerns and believed that the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv was provoked by NATO... The atmosphere in Iranian-Ukrainian relations escalated after the media reported on the supply of Iranian drones to Russia for use in hostilities in Ukraine....

... Against this background, experts believe that the stronger the pressure of the West on Iran, including in the form of strengthening the sanctions regime, and the more elusive the chance to restore the “nuclear deal” becomes, the closer cooperation between Russia and Iran will become.

Notes:

[1] For additional background on Russian-Iran relations, see Ray Finch, “Russian Views of Iran,” Review of Persidskij bastion (Persian Bastion) in NATO Defense Review, edited by R. N. Pukhov and Yu. Yu. Lyamin, Moscow, CAST, 2019, 320pp. <https://www.ndc.nato.int/research/research.php?icode=668>

[2] For additional background on Russian arms sales to Iran, see Ray Finch, “Russian Arms Sales to Iran,” OE Watch, July 2020. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/365980>

Rationales for Russia's Return to the Black Sea Grain Deal

By Karen Kaya
OE Watch Commentary

Russian resumption of its participation in the Black Sea Grain Agreement, following Turkey's facilitation and mediation, helped to alleviate some concerns of a global food crisis.¹ However, it was not clear what benefits Russia received for returning to the deal. The accompanying passages by Turkish experts offer some such rationales.

In the first accompanying passage from the regionally focused independent news site *al Monitor*, journalist Amberin Zaman writes that Russia wants to export more grain and fertilizer through the Black Sea corridor at Ukraine's expense. Zaman also writes that Russia wants to resume ammonia exports via Ukraine. She notes that following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kiev shut down a pipeline carrying Russian ammonia—a key ingredient in the production of nitrate fertilizers—to the Black Sea port of Odessa.

In the second accompanying passage from the Turkish independent news platform *Dördüncü Boyut via YouTube*, Turkish foreign affairs commentator Fehim Tastekin claims that Russia likely received some written guarantees that the grain corridor would not be used for military purposes.² He notes Russia's claim that the explosives used to destroy the Kerch Bridge had been brought from Odessa on a ship using that grain corridor. As such, he claims that Russia's main benefit would be to spotlight this attack approach.



The four participants to the negotiations in Istanbul of the Black Sea Grain Initiative: Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the United Nations, July 2022.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IMO_welcomes_maritime_humanitarian_corridor_in_Black_Sea_\(52233881214\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IMO_welcomes_maritime_humanitarian_corridor_in_Black_Sea_(52233881214).jpg) Attribution: CC BY 2.0

He also claimed that Russia returned to the deal to avoid the perception that it was the cause of a global food and hunger crisis. Both of these views would support Russian narratives as part of their information operations.

Russia's goal is to wrest more concessions... Russia wants to increase the volume of grains and fertilizers it's exporting through the corridor at Ukraine's expense.

Source: Amberin Zaman, "Turkey seeks to coax Russia back into Ukraine grain deal," *al-Monitor* (independent news platform with local reporting from the Middle East), 1 November 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/11/turkey-seeks-coax-russia-back-ukraine-grain-deal#ixzz7k8s1EXZp>

Analysts say Russia's goal is to wrest more concessions. "They want better terms for themselves via Turkey," said Yevgeniya Gaber, a former Ukrainian diplomat... Gaber believes that Russia wants to increase the volume of grains and fertilizers it's exporting through the corridor at Ukraine's expense.

Russia also wants a resumption of ammonia exports via Ukraine. A pipeline carrying Russian ammonia, a key ingredient in the production of nitrate fertilizers, to the Black Sea port of Odessa ceased to function following Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine. The United Nations has been pressing the sides to reach an agreement.

Russia likely also wants Ukraine to halt its offensive to retake Kherson, a critical port city in the country's south, a demand that Ukraine will almost certainly spurn as it seeks to consolidate its recent battlefield gains.

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Continued: Rationales for Russia's Return to the Black Sea Grain Deal

Source Continued: Amberin Zaman, "Turkey seeks to coax Russia back into Ukraine grain deal," *al-Monitor* (independent news platform with local reporting from the Middle East), 1 November 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/11/turkey-seeks-coax-russia-back-ukraine-grain-deal#ixzz7k8s1EXZp>

Fehim Tastekin, "Arap Birliği'nin Türkiye'yi kınama iddiası ne anlama geliyor? (What does the Arab Union's condemnation of Turkey mean?)," Dördüncü Boyut via YouTube (independent Turkish news and analysis platform on YouTube), 2 November 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruZyRUhjuE8&t=510s>

Russia likely received some written guarantees that the grain corridor would not be used for military purposes. An important detail that has been missed in the Turkish media is Russia's claim that the explosives used to destroy the Kerch Bridge had been brought from Odessa on a ship using the grain corridor. So the most important concession that Russia received is likely a halting of attacks on its ships in the Black Sea, to move the conflict inland. Russia also wants to avoid the perception that it is the cause of a global food and hunger crisis.

Notes:

[1] For a background on Turkey's control over access to the Black Sea and the Montreux Treaty, see: Karen Kaya, "Turkey Views Treaty as Important to Limiting U.S. Naval Activity in Black Sea," *OE Watch*, May 2021.

[2] This video was later unavailable as Turkey suspended *YouTube* on 13 November 2022.

OEWATCH

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Russian-Led Military Alliance in Central Asia Weakening Amid Quagmire in Ukraine

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

The excerpted article from the Moscow-based, Russian-language newspaper *Kommersant* discusses deepening fissures within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance in Central Asia. First, the ongoing border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan resulted in Kyrgyzstan withdrawing from the CSTO's upcoming exercises in Tajikistan, which have a collective defense scenario.¹ Moreover, according to the article, Kyrgyzstan postponed the exercises that are scheduled to take place in Kyrgyzstan next year, arguing that not taking part is within its rights as a CSTO member-state. However, the article notes that Russia appreciated that Kyrgyzstan requested that Russia mediate its conflict with Tajikistan because it preserved Russia's central role in the CSTO and Central Asian affairs generally. The article emphasizes how this role is especially important for Russia because the war in Ukraine has placed it in a difficult situation geopolitically and the CSTO remains Russia's Central Asian security linchpin considering growing competition in the region over the past two decades from the United States, Turkey, and China.²

Finally, the article asserts that countries like Tajikistan can now take advantage of Russia's vulnerable position resulting from the war in Ukraine. For example, in a recent speech at the Russia-Central Asia Summit, Tajikistani President Emomali Rahmon placed subtle demands on Russia



Main Cathedral CSTO Summit 02.

Source: Mil.ru https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Main_Cathedral_CSTO_Summit_02.jpg Attribution: CC BY 4.0

to support Tajikistan. Tajikistan could, like Kyrgyzstan, decrease engagement with the CSTO and seek closer ties with China or other countries.

In particular, it directly hits the unity within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), as a result of which the Indestructible Brotherhood exercises in Kyrgyzstan were canceled...

Source: Кыргызия и Таджикистан громко ссорятся (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Fight Loudly), *kommersant.ru* (Moscow-based Russian-language daily focusing on business and politics), 17 October 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5619937>

The conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which developed for many years, but previously concerned only the residents of the border regions of the two countries, became an important factor for the entire post-Soviet space. In particular, it directly effects the unity in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which resulted in the Indestructible Brotherhood exercises in Kyrgyzstan being canceled, and the Frontier-2022 maneuvers that began today in Tajikistan taking place without the Kyrgyz military. In this context, the statement of the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon that Moscow allegedly does not respect its partners in the region sounded as strong as possible.

The Kyrgyz side formally stated that it would not participate in the [exercises], which is completely within its rights. As for the exercises that were supposed to take place in Kyrgyzstan, it was requested in Bishkek for them

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Continued: Rationales for Russia's Return to the Black Sea Grain Deal

Source Continued: Киргизия и Таджикистан громко ссорятся (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Fight Loudly),” *kommersant.ru* (Moscow-based Russian-language daily focusing on business and politics), 17 October 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5619937>

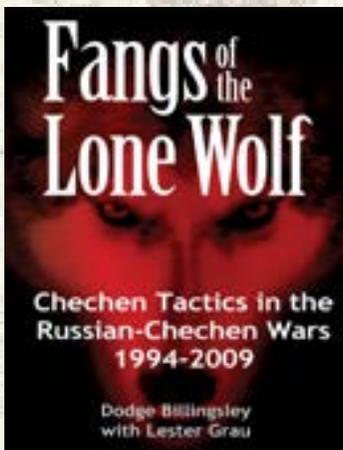
to be postponed to the next year.... Moscow liked that Bishkek was ready to see it as a mediator in resolving the conflict, while Dushanbe strongly demanded on a bilateral format.

According to a Kyrgyz source of Kommersant, the President of Tajikistan made a somewhat harsh speech at the “Russia-Central Asia Summit....” He recalled that the Russian language is being studied in the republic “from kindergarten” and a Russian military base is located there.

Notes:

[1] Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have had several intermittent clashes related to each country's territorial exclaves within the other's borders, creating competition regarding issues such as boundary demarcation and water and electricity use. Although these clashes often begin with local villagers using improvised weapons, in recent years the national armies have become involved, raising the risk that one of these localized clashes will eventually spiral into a national-level conflict. For more, see Matthew Stein, “Resolution to Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Problems?,” *OE Watch*, Issue 3, March 2019. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/353586>

[2] Turkey's assistance to Azerbaijan during its 2020 military victory against Armenia over disputed territories in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as its military performance in Syria and Libya in the years prior, has resulted in Central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, seeking Turkish support for their military modernization programs, especially related to unmanned aerial vehicles.



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.

Iran Asks Tajikistan Not To Use Iranian Drones in Dispute With Kyrgyzstan

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

In September 2022, fighting erupted along the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border for the fifth in less than a year between the two Central Asian states. Several dozen soldiers and civilians were killed on each side. While both states have pulled forces from the un-demarcated border, tensions remain high and neither state is prepared to renounce its claims.

The excerpted article from popular, reform-leaning Iranian news source *Entekhab.ir*, highlights another angle to the conflict—Iranian drones. Iran has long sought to

The drones should not be used in conflicts between the two countries...

cultivate allies across Central Asia, a region with which Iran has traditionally had deep ties. In recent months, this has paid dividends with Kyrgyzstan, who voted in favor of Iran joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. However, the good relationship between Kyrgyzstan and Iran could be under pressure given Bishkek's accusations, according to the *Entekhab.ir* article, that Tajikistan has used Iranian **Ababil-2** drones along the disputed border. In an October 2022 statement released via Telegram, Kyrgyzstan's State Committee for National Security said there were at least 10 instances of Tajik drones violating its airspace along the border since in recent weeks.¹ Tajikistan, meanwhile, has accused Kyrgyzstan of using **Turkish Bayraktar TB2** drones against Tajik forces and civilian targets.

Iran has become a drone-exporting power in recent years.² and is unique compared to other drone exporters—



The Ababil-2 drone which the Islamic Republic of Iran exported to Tajikistan

Source: <https://img9.irna.ir/d/r/2/2022/05/17/4/169684358.jpg?ts=1652774226121>
Attribution: Islamic Republic News Agency

principally Israel, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates—in that it allows client countries to manufacture its drones under license.³ Such outsourcing affords Iran a modicum of plausible deniability in case there is blowback regarding their use by Iranian proxies or others. In this case, however, the use of drones by one Iranian ally against another country to which Iran seeks close ties has escalated into a diplomatic headache. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, the Iranian Army Chief of Staff, sought to allay Kyrgyzistani concerns by saying the Ababil-2 was merely a surveillance drone, and it is unclear whether the drone might have broader functions, such as suicide operations. Forfeiting operational control might have once been an attractive tactic for Iran, but client autonomy can have a cost when its target holds Iran, rather than the client, accountable for the use of Iranian drones.

Source: “Sarlashkar Bagheri: Pehpadha-ye Ababil-2-e Iran dar Dargiri Morzi Tajikistan va Qirgizstan Istifadeh Namishavad (Major General Bagheri: Iranian Ababil-2 Drones are not Used in Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan Border Dispute),” *Entekhab.ir* (popular reform-leaning Iranian website), 8 November 2022. <https://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/702471>

Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Armed Forces, spoke by phone with Kyrgyz Defense Minister Gen. Baktybek Bekbolotov about important issues in the region.... The Chairman of the General Staff of the Armed Forces said, "Given the border disputes and conflicts between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in September [2022], the Islamic Republic of Iran has always stated its readiness for any assistance

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Continued: Iran Asks Tajikistan Not To Use Iranian Drones in Dispute With Kyrgyzstan

Source Continued: “Sarlashkar Bagheri: Pehpadha-ye Ababil-2-e Iran dar Dargiri Morzi Tajikistan va Qirgizstan Istifadeh Namishavad (Major General Bagheri: Iranian Ababil-2 Drones are not Used in Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan Border Dispute),” *Entekhab.ir* (popular reform-leaning Iranian website), 8 November 2022. <https://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/702471>

in order to resolve peacefully and prevent any conflict. Referring to the issue of sending Iranian drones to Tajikistan, Maj. Gen. Bagheri noted, "The Ababil-2 drones are only capable of reconnaissance, and such drones are not equipped with weapons and offensive equipment. In the border conflict between the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the Iranian armed forces have always emphasized to the Tajik armed forces that the drones should not be used in conflicts between the two countries.

Notes:

[1] The Telegram statement can be found here: <https://t.me/s/pogrankg/416>.

[2] For background on the Iranian drone program and its exports, see: Michael Rubin, “A Short History of the Iranian Drone Program,” *American Enterprise Institute*, August 2020. <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-short-history-of-the-iranian-drone-program.pdf?x91208>

[3] For background, see: Michael Rubin, “Iran Opens New Drone Plant in Tajikistan,” *OE Watch*, July 2022. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/420285>

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.



Iran Claim of Hypersonic Missile Capability Probably Exaggerated

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

The Iranian government takes great pride in its domestic military industry, particularly a robust drone fleet and ballistic missile capability courtesy of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Indeed, many Iranian politicians argue that heavy investment in indigenous industry is a silver lining to international sanctions applied to Iran. However, Iranian leaders are also prone to exaggeration, which appears to be the case in the following article excerpted from *Tasnim News*, an outlet close to Iran's security services. In the article, General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, announced that Iran had developed hypersonic missiles capable of evading and destroying enemy air defense systems. He provided no detail and offered no ability for the Iranian press to photograph the alleged platform.

That said, such Iranian statements, even when seemingly exaggerated, often signal the direction of ongoing Iranian research. As Russia and China develop such capabilities, it is natural for Iran to try to follow suit given their diplomatic and military ties. While Iranian scientists and engineers probably cannot yet develop such systems, Iran would be likely to achieve the capability more quickly should either Moscow or Beijing assist. Hajizadeh's statement may prove to be a potential starting point for a new Middle Eastern



Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, claimed Iran had successfully developed a hypersonic ballistic missile.

Source: *Tasnim News* <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1399/10/27/1399102712313941922032824.jpg> Attribution: Public Domain

arms race given Iran's willingness to directly, or indirectly by proxy, attack targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with drones or cruise missiles.

“The missile... represents a generational leap.”

Source: “Hajizadeh: Iran Mushak-e Ballistik-e Hipersonik Sokht (Hajizadeh: Iran Builds a Hypersonic Ballistic Missile),” *Tasnim News* (media outlet with close ties to Iranian security apparatus), 10 November 2022. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/08/19/2801922>

General Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force, told reporters this morning about the construction of an advanced hypersonic ballistic missile is capable of passing through advanced air defense systems to target them. He added, “The missile has a high speed and can maneuver in the atmosphere and out of the atmosphere. This new missile passes through all missile shield systems, and I don't think there will be any technology to counter it for several decades,” Hajizadeh said. The missile targets enemy anti-missile systems and represents a generational leap in the missile field.

Colombia's Congress Authorizes "Total Peace" Negotiation With Guerrilla and Criminal Groups

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Colombia's new president, Gustavo Petro, came to power promising to negotiate a peace deal with the country's notorious guerrilla groups and sundry criminal organizations. As with the 2016 Peace Accords, which ended the decades-long conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Petro's plan for what he calls "Total Peace" has become controversial. Broadly speaking, Petro plans to offer a blanket immunity in exchange for the demobilization of guerrilla groups, the disarming of criminal organizations, and the cessation of drug trafficking.¹ In the first excerpted article from *CNN en Español*, the Spanish-language affiliate of the popular U.S. outlet, the authors report that Colombia's Congress approved enabling legislation permitting Petro to embark on peace negotiations with nearly all armed groups in the country. The article also notes that the legislation would set aside money to ensure development investment in demobilized areas. The second article, from Colombia's generally left-leaning *El Espectador*, notes that rather than experiencing a decline, violence has instead surged under Petro, confounding the expectations of peace negotiations.

The law...empowers the president to initiate peace negotiations with groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), a faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) who rejected a 2016 agreement and returned to the armed struggle, and another group that never signed the pact.

Petro's plans for "Total Peace" will face increasing challenges as negotiations take off in earnest. First, the Colombian government's dialogue with leaders of the Marxist National Liberation Army (ELN) is a gamble. It is unclear how much control the leadership, exiled in Cuba for years, still has over the guerrillas operating in Colombia's bor-



Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos signs the Peace Accords with the FARC in 2016.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jefa_de_Estado_participa_en_ceremonia_de_la_Firma_de_la_Paz_entre_el_Gobierno_de_Colombia_y_las_FARC_E.P._\(29953487045\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jefa_de_Estado_participa_en_ceremonia_de_la_Firma_de_la_Paz_entre_el_Gobierno_de_Colombia_y_las_FARC_E.P._(29953487045).jpg) Attribution: Wikimedia, CC-BY-2.0

derland area with Venezuela. During previous negotiations with the FARC, the Colombian government quickly realized the autonomy that some FARC groups had from its central leadership structure, meaning an inability to impose the terms of agreement on individual groups. Second, the Colombian government may find it difficult to commit to concessions and simultaneously entice guerrilla groups to lay down their arms. During previous negotiations with the FARC, vacuums created by the demobilized guerrillas quickly were filled by other criminal groups, suggesting at least some Colombian criminal organizations will not commit to this latest peace process so they can take advantage of the lack of law enforcement pressure to increase territory and revenues from illicit economies.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: Colombia's Congress Authorizes "Total Peace" Negotiation With Guerrilla and Criminal Groups

Source: "Congreso de Colombia aprueba ley para negociar la paz con grupos armados como el ELN, facciones de las FARC y otros (Colombian Congress approves law to negotiate peace with armed groups such as the ELN, FARC factions and others)," *CNN en Español* (the Spanish-language affiliate of the popular U.S. outlet), 27 October 2022. <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2022/10/27/congreso-colombia-aprueba-ley-negociar-paz-reuters-reux/>

The law approved by the plenary session of the House of Representatives and previously by that of the Senate, empowers the president to initiate peace negotiations with groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), a faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) who rejected a 2016 agreement and returned to the armed struggle, and another group that never signed the pact.

The legislation also authorizes the president to initiate dialogues with criminal gangs involved in drug trafficking and illegal mining such as the Clan del Golfo, whose leaders and members may receive benefits such as reduced sentences and non-extradition in exchange for the disclosure of routes to export cocaine and the delivery part of the fortunes obtained illegally.

Source: "Violencia contra población civil: uno de los desafíos para alcanzar la Paz total (Violence against the civilian population: one of the challenges to achieve Total Peace)," *El Espectador* (Colombia's oldest daily that generally leans left), 15 November 2022. <https://www.elespectador.com/politica/violencia-contra-poblacion-civil-uno-de-los-principales-desafios-para-alcanzar-la-paz-total/>

During the first 100 days of the current government, the highest peak of massacres of the year occurred. The number of victims of acts of massacre and forced displacement in the country also increased. The number of cases and victims of forced confinement...increased and was concentrated in three departments, specifically in territories inhabited by indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.

Notes:

[1] For greater context into Petro's campaign promise and the outlines of his negotiation strategy, see: Ryan C. Berg, "Colombia's Leftist President Seeks to Resume Negotiations with National Liberation Army," *OE Watch*, Issue 9, 2022. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/425694>

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

South Africa Spotlighted for Links to Funding Islamic State in Africa

By Jason Warner
OE Watch Commentary

South African reactions to the newest round of U.S. counterterrorism sanctions on its citizens underscore systemic policing challenges in the field of counterterrorism. In November 2022, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned four South Africans and eight South African businesses for offering material support to the Islamic State (IS),¹ namely, its newest branches in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique.² This follows similar sanctions of four South Africans, also listed for supporting the IS, in March 2022.³ Commentaries from two noted South African geopolitical commentators shed light on how South Africans understand the degree of threat that the IS poses to their country and just why it has become a target for U.S. sanctions.

In the first of the two excerpted articles from the noted centrist pan-African think tank *The Institute for Security Studies*, South African foreign policy analyst Peter Fabricius questions whether the threat of IS in South Africa is overblown. On the one hand, since the warnings of IS within South Africa are coming from external entities—namely the United States—some citizens perceive the threat as minimal and sanctions as simply being an extension of Western “obsession” with terrorism. On the other, he notes that there may well be an air of legitimacy to such sanctions, given that assessments by international monitoring entities have underscored South Africa’s lackluster counterthreat finance efforts.



Flag of the Islamic State.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/121483302@N02/14690988398>
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In the excerpted article from *The Conversation Africa*, noted South Africa terrorism scholar Hussein Solomon articulates his lack of surprise that South Africa has emerged as a relative hotspot for terrorism threat financing. At the source of its institutional insufficiency in counterthreat financing, Solomon notes South African “corruption, general lawlessness, and a security apparatus focused on party factional battles.” Long regarded as a bastion of security in a continent recently beset by terrorism, cracks are beginning to show in South Africa as well.

The impression created by recent events is that Washington rather than Pretoria is steering counter-terrorism operations in South Africa.

Source: Peter Fabricius, “Are red flags about the Islamic State in South Africa alarmist?” *Institute for Security Studies* (centrist pan-African think tank), 11 November 2022. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/are-red-flags-about-islamic-state-in-south-africa-alarmist>

Alarm bells about the threat of terrorism in South Africa have recently been sounding more stridently and more often. Are these false alarms or is the danger growing?

This question is complicated by the fact that the warnings are largely from foreigners, especially the United States (US). To many, this indicates alarmism or even outside interference. To others, panic buttons are being pressed because South Africa’s law enforcement, intelligence and prosecution services aren’t doing their jobs

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TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: South Africa Spotlighted for Links to Funding Islamic State in Africa

Source Continued: Peter Fabricius, “Are red flags about the Islamic State in South Africa alarmist?” *Institute for Security Studies* (centrist pan-African think tank), 11 November 2022. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/are-red-flags-about-islamic-state-in-south-africa-alarmist>

well enough.

South Africa’s failure to deal effectively with IS and terrorist financing has a host of causes. These include problems in the intelligence, detection and prosecution services still recovering from the ravages of state capture during Jacob Zuma’s presidency...These issues are aggravated by political factors such as an ideological disposition to underestimate the terror threat and see it as an obsession of the West....

The impression created by recent events is that Washington rather than Pretoria is steering counter-terrorism operations in South Africa. That obviously can’t be good.

Source: Hussein Solomon, “South Africa Provides Fertile Ground for Funders of Terrorism. Here’s Why,” *The Conversation Africa* (centrist pan-African editorial site), 10 November 2022. <https://theconversation.com/south-africa-provides-fertile-ground-for-funders-of-terrorism-heres-why-194282>

There is a long history of concerns about [South Africa’s] deficiencies in dealing with terrorism financing activities within its borders...

The latest US action comes as South Africa is rushing to avert “greylisting”: being placed on the list of countries subject to increased monitoring by the Financial Action Task Force. The inter-governmental task force has identified deficiencies in the country’s policies and efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing...

In its last evaluation, published in October 2021, the task force said South Africa had a strong legal framework against money laundering and terrorism financing. But its implementation had significant shortcomings, including a failure to prosecute criminal cases....

Since 2007, the South African government has not done much to ensure that the country does not become a terrorist haven. Corruption, general lawlessness, and a security apparatus focused on party factional battles all account for why terrorist financiers thrive in the country.

Notes:

[1] For the official statement from the November 2022 sanctions, see: “Treasury Designates Members of ISIS Cell in South Africa,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, 7 November 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0616>

[2] For an extensive overview of the emergence and evolution of the Islamic State in Africa, see: Jason Warner et al., *The Islamic State in Africa: Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield*, (Hurst/Oxford University Press), 2022.

[3] For the official statement from the November 2022 sanctions, see: “Treasury Sanctions South Africa-based ISIS Organizers and Financial Facilitators,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, 1 March 2022. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0616>

Marawi Reflections Reveal Urban Warfare Challenges for Philippine Army

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

The Filipino publication *mindanews.com* recently published the excerpted article featuring portions from a book by Filipino author Gail Ilagan about the 2017 occupation of Marawi, Mindanao by up to 2,000 militants loyal to the Islamic State (IS) and the military's recapture of the city. The article recounts details of the occupation, noting that the trigger of the occupation was the Philippine army's attempt to capture the militants' leader, Isnon Hapilon. Unbeknownst to the army, the militants had already established sleeper cells in Marawi that they activated once the operation to capture Hapilon began, including attacking a prison to release group members, bombing a church, and sending fighters to control university campuses.¹

Marawi showed all potential enemies the advantages of urban warfare [for insurgents].

The article points to missteps by the army, including interpreting the militants to be local fighters when, in fact,

they not only had inspiration from IS, but also had invited foreign IS supporters to Mindanao and employed IS tactics. In addition, Philippine security forces overlooked earlier bombings at night markets near universities and occupations of smaller towns in Mindanao, which had displaced residents and should have been seen as a harbinger of the future occupation of the much larger city of Marawi. Ultimately, the article claims the military's unpreparedness resulted in more soldiers' lives lost than necessary. Military equipment, such as tanks, were unsuitable for maneuvering Marawi's narrow alleyways, while the insurgents' hijacking of fire trucks and other public vehicles made it difficult for soldiers to identify their adversaries in the urban combat environment. However, the article concludes that hard lessons were learned from the siege of Marawi that make a similar insurgent takeover unlikely in the near term.² The military has changed its organizational structure, acquired new equipment, and improved training methods to prepare for urban warfare.



Bombing on Marawi City.

Source: Mark Jhomel https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bombing_on_Marawi_City.jpg Attribution: CC BY 4.0

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: Marawi Reflections Reveal Urban Warfare Challenges for Philippine Army

Source: “Local Frontlines of Globalized Islamic States Network: The Emerging War Arena for the Filipino Soldier,” *mindanews.com* (regional newspapers focusing on Mindanao), 16 October 2022. <https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2022/10/local-frontlines-of-globalized-islamic-states-network-the-emerging-war-arena-for-the-philipino-soldier/>

Violent extremists are rare among Muslim Filipinos. However, it does not take a lot of them to cause a scale of destruction such as was seen in the aftermath of the 2017 Marawi Siege.

Among its choices, the region of Mindanao seemed to be most appealing [to ISIS] because of its porous maritime boundaries and the safe haven that local extremist groups could provide. One such local extremist group was the Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) that had pledged allegiance to ISIS and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in June 2014. In 2016, al-Baghdadi accepted the Abu Sayyaf’s pledge and appointed ASG commander Isnilon Hapilon as the ISIS’ emir in Southeast Asia. Hapilon and his soldiers traveled soon after to Marawi where they were embraced by the Maute Group, as well as other local terrorist groups that shared the ISIS’ aspiration.

The Marawi Crisis was ignited in the early afternoon of 23 May 2017 when security forces tried to arrest Hapilon in Barangay Basak Malutlut in Marawi City. It was two days before the Muslim holiday of Eid’l Fitr. Intelligence sources would later reveal that the ISIS-inspired groups intended to mark Eid’l Fitr by taking over the only Islamic city in the Philippines and declaring it ISIS territory. At the time when the security team was sent to Marawi with the warrant of arrest, they were unaware that Hapilon’s forces were positioned in the adjoining buildings, ready to defend their leader. The arresting team immediately came under heavy fire as soon as they entered the narrow street where Hapilon’s quarters were located.

It would take five long months for the government to neutralize the extremists and rid Marawi of them.

Notes:

[1] In mid-2014, the longtime Abu Sayyaf commander Isnong Hapilon and around a dozen other militants released a video pledging allegiance to IS leader Umar al-Baghdadi. Hapilon noted in the video that these militants and other factions had made pledges separately but were now coming together, which signaled the unification of Abu Sayyaf factions and set the stage for the group’s eventual attack on Marawi under the leadership of the Maute Brothers and Hapilon, all of whom were killed during the battle. See: Jacob Zenn, “The Islamic State’s Provinces on the Peripheries: Juxtaposing the Pledges from Boko Haram in Nigeria and Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group in the Philippines.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, pp. 87–104.

[2] The restoration of critical infrastructure in Marawi and the return of the city’s inhabitants to their original homes, which were destroyed during the battle in 2017, has been slow. This has also raised concerns that grievances of the local population regarding their treatment in post-conflict Marawi could result in their supporting antigovernment militant groups in the future or their remaining alienated from the government, which was one of the reasons why Abu Sayyaf was initially able to gain some traction from among the youths in Marawi. See: Jacob Zenn, “Marawi Rehabilitation Progress Slows in the Philippines,” *OE Watch*, July 2018. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-singular-format/277112>

India Moves To Compete With China in Africa

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

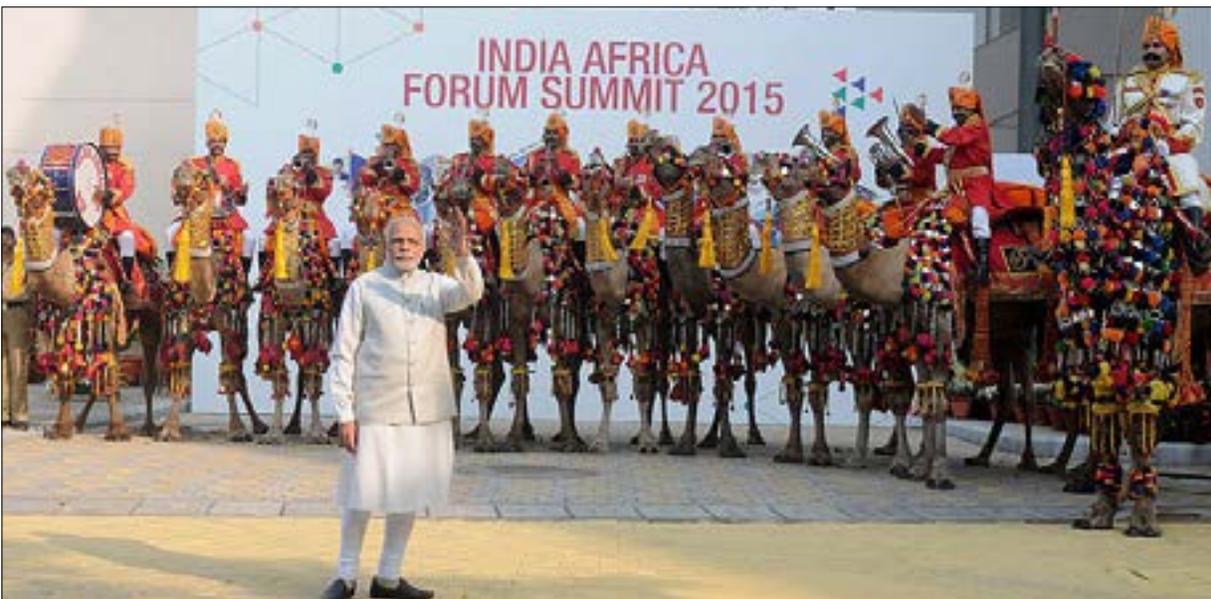
India has taken various steps to counter China since a series of border clashes took place along the Line of Actual Control in 2017 and 2020.¹ While most of these initiatives involved developing operational and tactical capabilities in the Indian Army, the Indian government has also taken a few strategic-level measures to strengthen its position in the Indo-Pacific region against China.² However, a new playing field for Indian and Chinese competition is showing itself: the accompanying excerpted articles report on recent Indian efforts to sell weapon systems to governments in Africa, offering insights into Indian efforts to counter China at the strategic level.

The excerpted article from India's independent think-tank *Center for Land Warfare Studies* examines Chinese exports of weapons in Africa. The author notes how China has been increasing arms exports to the Middle East and North Africa in recent years and that this has been taking place alongside the use of ports in the region. The author also points out how China is in a position to continue sales of weapons in Africa as the war in Ukraine could reduce Russia's share of the arms market in the region. While India's defense industry has yet to export significant numbers of weapon systems

in the way that China can, a second article provides insight into Indian plans to change this status quo.

This excerpted article from India's independent English-language news website, *The Print*, reports on the India-Africa Defense Dialogue, held in October in India alongside the most recent iteration of the country's defense exposition. The article states that a number of participants from Africa attended and that India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh wanted to explore new areas of security cooperation between India and African states, "including capacity-building, training, cybersecurity, maritime security, and counter-terrorism." Singh also stated that India and Africa are "important stakeholders in ensuring a safe and secure maritime environment, especially in the Indian Ocean region." He further commented that India will partner with any African country on the "basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect." Lastly, the article references an extensive list of weapons that might be of interest to African militaries, which could give India another opportunity to counter China if New Delhi is able to supply these systems as part of a different partnership than Beijing offers.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remarks during the India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD), held on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 here in Gujarat, are being seen as a counter to China's growing influence in Africa.



3rd India-Africa Forum Summit.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3rd_India-Africa_Forum_Summit_4.jpg Attribution: Government Open Data License - India (GODL)

Continued: India Moves To Compete With China in Africa

Source: Dr. Manjari Singh, “China’s Increasing Arms Supply to the Middle East and Beyond: Another Dimension to the New Silk Road?,” *Center for Land Warfare Studies* (independent think-tank in India), 28 October 2022, No. 367. <https://www.claws.in/publication/chinas-increasing-arms-supply-to-the-middle-east-and-beyond-another-dimension-to-the-new-silk-road/>

China has been expanding its arms export beyond Asia and for the last half a decade, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have become its favourite destinations. From the region’s side, China is emerging as the second-best choice for arms imports after the US. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has added a new dimension to the existing global arms industry with an anticipated boost to China’s overall arms diplomacy particularly in the Middle East...

China has been exporting armed drones to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan since 2020...This change in position is also reflective of the East Asian economy’s

increasing weapon’s platform outreach—from 40 countries to 53, over a span of one decade from 2010 to 2019...

It is noteworthy that between 2015 and 2022, China has leased ownership of as many as

10 ports. Apart from these ports, China has been building seven more ports which are strategically significant, and serves as economic and political outposts for its expansionist approach. The Karachi Deepwater Port in Pakistan, Sokhna port in Egypt, CICT Terminal in Sri Lanka, Chittagong and Payra Ports in Bangladesh, CSP Terminal, Khalifa Port in the UAE, Sudan Port, Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam Ports in Tanzania, and Lamu & Mombasa ports in Kenya, are some of the other ports developed by Chinese firms...

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is likely to dent Russian economy and the former’s aggression will presumably lead to its diplomatic isolation, both of which are likely to provide a favourable environment to Chinese arms market. Additionally, maritime connectivity and building of Chinese ports in the Western Indian Ocean will further facilitate China’s arms sale...

Source: Snehash Alex Philip, “To counter China’s influence, India seeks to boost defence cooperation with African countries,” *The Print* (independent English-language news website from India), 18 October 2022. <https://theprint.in/defence/to-counter-chinas-influence-india-seeks-to-boost-defence-cooperation-with-african-countries/1173223/>

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s remarks during the India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD), held on the sidelines of DefExpo 2022 here in Gujarat, are being seen as a counter to China’s growing influence in Africa.

Fifty African countries participated in the India-Africa Defence Dialogue initiated during the last DefExpo held in Lucknow in 2020. Among the attendees were defence ministers of 20 African countries...

During his address Tuesday, the Defence Minister stressed the need to explore new areas of convergence for defence engagements between India and Africa, including capacity-building, training, cybersecurity, maritime security and counterterrorism. He added that India and African countries are important stakeholders in ensuring a safe and secure maritime environment, especially in the Indian Ocean region.

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Continued: India Moves To Compete With China in Africa

Source Continued: Snehesh Alex Philip, “To counter China’s influence, India seeks to boost defence cooperation with African countries,” *The Print* (independent English-language news website from India), 18 October 2022. <https://theprint.in/defence/to-counter-chinas-influence-india-seeks-to-boost-defence-cooperation-with-african-countries/1173223/>

“We do not believe in making or becoming a client or satellite state, and so, when we partner with any country, it is on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect...” he said.

Sources in the defence establishment also said equipment of interest to Africa includes light combat helicopters, patrol vessels, small arms, shoulder-fired rockets, Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers, and surveillance drones, among others...

Notes:

[1] For more background on the clashes, see: Christopher Clary and Vipin Narang, “India’s Pangong Pickle: New Delhi’s Options After Its Clash with China,” *War on the Rocks*, 2 July 2022. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/07/indias-pangong-pickle-new-delhis-options-after-its-clash-with-china/>

[2] The government of India increased its security cooperation with Vietnam in 2022 as one strategic-level measure to counter China. For more see: Matthew Stein, “India Strengthens Security Cooperation with Vietnam,” *OE Watch*, Issue #8, 2022. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/422297>

China Deepening Cooperation in Latin America's Sizeable Lithium Sector



Lithium mines in Jujuy Province, Argentina.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/earthworks/47617675391> Attribution: CC BY-NC 2.0

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

The price of lithium, a key ingredient in battery technology, has skyrocketed amid the rush for critical minerals. Lithium can be found in abundance throughout South America's so-called "Lithium Triangle," which comprises Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile and contains approximately 55 percent of the world's known lithium deposits.¹ Mexico also has known lithium deposits. Collectively, Latin America's lithium reserves has attracted global attention, especially from China. According to the first excerpted article

from China's state-run *Global Times*, Chile's Consul General in Chengdu vowed to increase the country's cooperation with China to stabilize the global supply and price of lithium. In Mexico's case, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has sought to nationalize the metal known as "white gold." According to the second excerpted article from privately held popular media outlet *Radio Fórmula*, a new state company called Lithium for Mexico will control the metal in Mexico, demanding foreign partners to enter joint ventures and junior partnerships. The article reports that only one company has received a unique exception to this rule—China's Ganfeng Lithium. Mexico's government justifies this exception on the basis

that Ganfeng had an existing agreement to control lithium at the Bacanora site before the mineral's nationalization. These developments demonstrate China's advances in Latin America with respect to its critical minerals strategy, as well as the success of its economic diplomacy in achieving carveouts for its companies.

China's consumption of lithium accounted for 65 percent in the global lithium market, driven partly by the fast-developing new-energy vehicle sector and the energy storage industry, along with the country's carbon emissions reduction goals.

Source: "Chile vows to enhance cooperation with China in lithium sector," *Global Times* (state-owned media outlet under the auspices of the People's Daily), 9 November 2022. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202211/1279134.shtml>

Chile's consul general in Chengdu...Gustavo Díaz Hidalgo, on Wednesday vowed to further enhance cooperation with China in the lithium sector, in a bid to stabilize the global supply of the vital mineral for making batteries...Díaz predicted that the global demand for lithium each year would surpass 1 million tons by 2025, crossing 2.5 million tons by 2030.

The consul general said that China's consumption of lithium accounted for 65 percent in the global lithium market, driven partly by the fast-developing new-energy vehicle sector and the energy storage industry, along with the country's carbon emissions reduction goals.

Continued: China Deepening Cooperation in Latin America's Sizeable Lithium Sector

Source: "Litio para México: Empresa estatal lo explotará en exclusiva...salvo una excepción china (Lithium for Mexico: State company will exploit it exclusively...with one Chinese exception)," *Radio Fórmula* (a popular outlet owned by the large media conglomerate Grupo Fórmula), 24 August 2022. <https://www.radioformula.com.mx/economia/2022/8/24/litio-para-mexico-empresa-estatal-lo-explotara-en-exclusiva-salvo-una-excepcion-china-728919.html>

The Secretary of Energy, Rocío Nahle, explained that the current concession for exploration and exploitation of lithium at the hands of a private company will be maintained... Although concessions will no longer be granted to explore and exploit the mineral...the only one in force for exploitation before the reform to the Mining Law, in the hands of an Asian company, will remain in force.

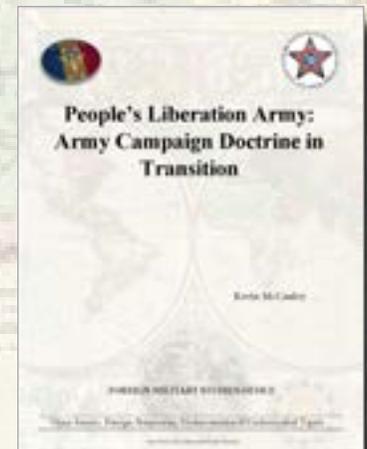
Notes:

[1] For more information on U.S. opportunities in the Lithium Triangle and how the United States might effectively compete, see: Ryan C. Berg and T. Andrew Sady-Kennedy, "South America's Lithium Triangle: Opportunities for the Biden administration," 17 August 2021. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/south-americas-lithium-triangle-opportunities-biden-administration>

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.



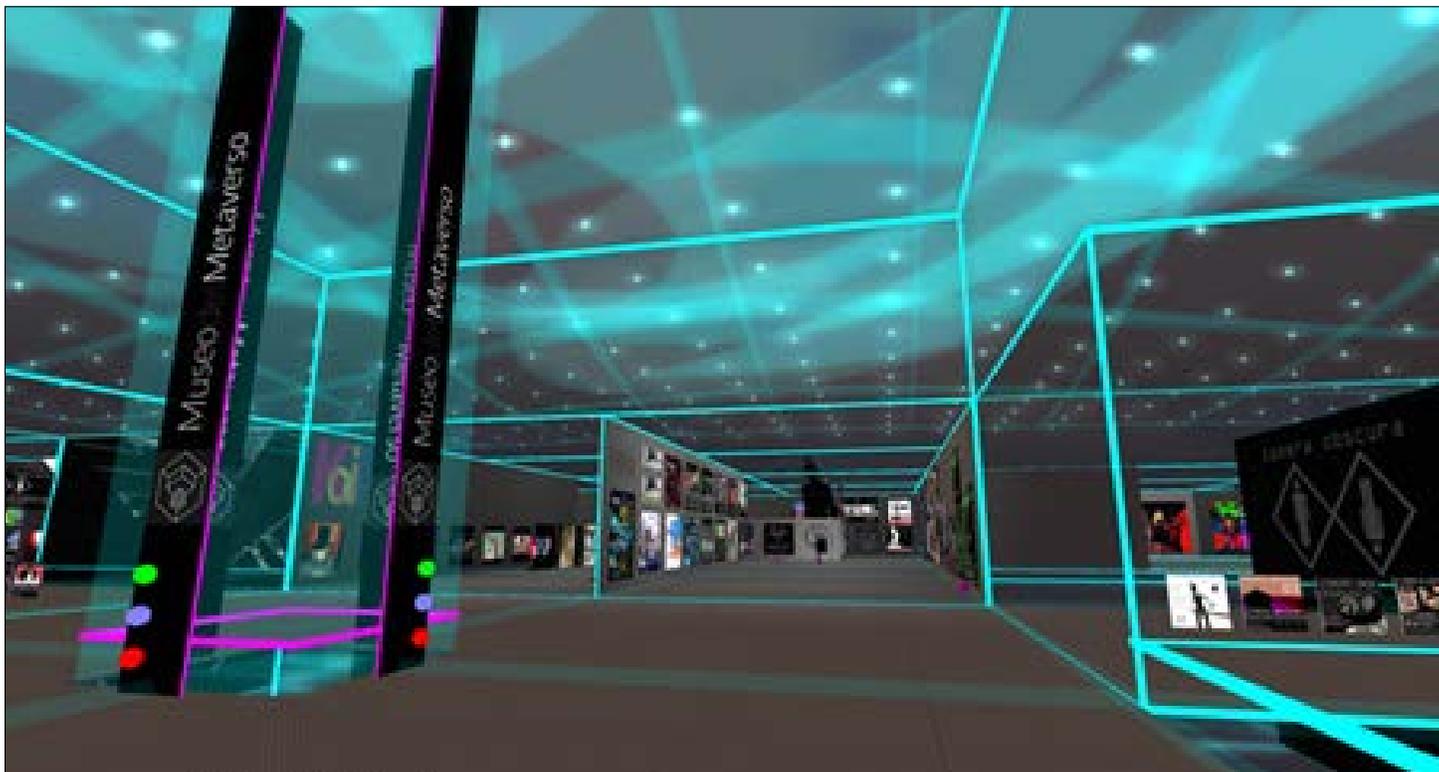
Israeli Embassy in South Korea Opens in the Metaverse

By Karen Kaya
OE Watch Commentary

The metaverse is a digital world that computers and smartphones can access on the internet, where users can interact with other users in a virtual environment. While initially seen as an entertainment tool, the metaverse is now becoming a tool of public diplomacy. According to the excerpted article from the oldest English-language daily in South Korea, *The Korea Times*, the Embassy of Israel became the first diplomatic mission in South Korea to gain a presence in the metaverse and one of the first embassies in the metaverse globally.¹ This likely represents the way forward for digital diplomacy, but it also carries the risk of becoming the next domain for cyber warfare to include security and privacy breaches, hacks, identity theft, ransomware, and deepfake videos.

I'm quite sure this is the way forward... I think the embassy metaverse will become the essential standard just as websites became the essential standard about 20 years ago.

The Korea Times article also reports that the Israel-Korea Metaverse is available for download via the Google Play and Apple App Stores. It was launched to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Israel and South Korea and provides a virtual reality immersive experience that offers information about Israel and promotes exchanges between the two countries. As the passage reports, the Israeli Ambassador to South Korea said during the opening in Seoul that this is the “way forward” and that the “embassy metaverse” will become mainstream just as websites became mainstream 20 years ago. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website notes that the project comes amid flourishing relations between the two countries. This includes a recently ratified free trade agreement, expanded defense cooperation, arms trade, and rising cooperation in the health sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Metaverse Museum.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_building_of_the_Metavers_Museum.png Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

Continued: Israeli Embassy in South Korea Opens in the Metaverse

Source: “Israeli embassy opens in metaverse,” *The Korea Times* (the oldest English-language daily newspaper in South Korea), 27 September 2022. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/09/120_336705.html

The Embassy of Israel in Korea opened in the metaverse, becoming the first diplomatic mission in the country to gain a presence in the virtual world.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Korea and Israel, the Israeli Embassy opened a pavilion in the metaverse to offer information about Israel and promote exchanges between the two countries.

"The Israel-Korea Metaverse is a truly unique platform for sharing a virtual reality immersive experience, the history of Israel-Korea relations and also for carrying out all kinds of interesting interactions between Israelis and Koreans. Even though they are 8,000 kilometers apart, yet in the metaverse, they are right next to each other," Israeli ambassador to Korea Akiva Tor said during a launching event at a hotel in Seoul, Sept. 20... The embassy developed this with a Korean company called Vrillar.

"I'm quite sure that this is the way forward. It won't be the only tool of public diplomacy and, of course, we will always want to bring real people to Korea and to hold in-person conferences and in-person cultural performances. But I think the embassy metaverse will become the essential standard just as websites became the essential standard about 20 years ago and SNS channels are now," the ambassador said.

"I'm thinking of a metaverse with Hebrew and Korean language clubs, an Israel Film Festival, virtual meetings of the student clubs of Israel and Korea, a hangout for lovers of K-pop and the Hebrew Bible, a place for talk and debate about archaeology and the future of autonomous vehicles."... The Israel-Korea Metaverse can be downloaded at Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

Source: “Israel MFA initiates first diplomatic mission on Metaverse platform,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 26 October 2022. <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/first-diplomatic-mission-on-the-metaverse-platform>

The current project initiated by the Israeli mission in South Korea comes on the background of flourishing relations between the countries. It is expected that Korean Air will renew direct flights between Israel and Korea at the end of the year; The new recently ratified trade agreement between the two countries—the first of its kind for Israel in Asia and the first for South Korea in the Middle East—will benefit the Israeli consumer.

Notes:

[1] Other political presence in the metaverse include the metaverse office of the city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the UAE's Ministry of Economy. In October 2022, INTERPOL became the world's first law enforcement metaverse platform, allowing visitors to virtually tour its General Secretariat headquarters in France. Barbados has also recently announced plans to launch an embassy in the metaverse

Kazakhstan's Military Doctrine Raises Questions for Russia

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

When Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the government of Kazakhstan immediately stated that it would remain neutral in the conflict. While the Kazakhstani government has stuck to this neutrality since the war began, it has also taken certain measures to distance itself from Russia's militarism, including canceling its Victory Day Parade in May 2022 and suspending defense exports (including to Russia) in August 2022.¹ Thus, when Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev approved a new military doctrine in October 2022, it drew attention to how Kazakhstan perceives various threats, with some speculation that Russia would be considered a threat without being named.

Building up the radar field and increasing the potential and capabilities of the troops in conducting air and missile defense of the state... (and, the) development of the Unified Regional Air Defense System of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

The accompanying excerpted article from Kazakhstan's Russian-language independent newspaper *Vremya* reports on the changes in the doctrine since it was last published

in 2017. The article reports that Kazakhstan has increased the combat potential of its units in "strategic directions," and that it has created new units to combat disinformation. Although the article notes that a border conflict will be handled by the country's border guards and the armed forces, it is unclear in the doctrine how a border conflict would differ from other types of conflicts, such as an attack from another state. Another change in the doctrine is the development of special operations forces and an articulation on how they will cooperate with specialized units in other government agencies.

The new doctrine further notes that Kazakhstan will build capabilities in air defense, including in radar and missile defense. The doctrine references the "development of the Unified Regional Air Defense System of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation," which is the only time that Russia is mentioned, suggesting Kazakhstan still sees Russia as a useful partner or at least does not wish to openly label it a threat. Other notable changes include equipping the border guards with modern systems as well as expanding production of basic types of ammunition for the armed forces. The Kazakh government established ammunition production as one of the early efforts to build the country's defense industry, and this expansion of it could help Kazakhstan rely less on defense imports.



Flag of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan_Armed_Forces_Flag.svg Attribution: Public domain

Continued: Kazakhstan's Military Doctrine Raises Questions for Russia

Source: “Токаев изменил военную доктрину Казахстана (Tokayev changed the military doctrine of Kazakhstan),” *Vremya* (a semi-independent Russian-language newspaper in Kazakhstan), 15 October 2022. <https://time.kz/news/politics/2022/10/15/tokayev-izmenil-voennuyu-doktrinu-kazahstana>

“Токаев изменил военную доктрину Казахстана (Tokayev changed the military doctrine of Kazakhstan),” Vremya (a semi-independent Russian-language newspaper in Kazakhstan), 15 October 2022.

<https://time.kz/news/politics/2022/10/15/tokayev-izmenil-voennuyu-doktrinu-kazahstana>

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev changed the military doctrine of Kazakhstan...

Some of the changes are aimed at replacing the word "heading" with "section", as indicated in the quote, but the bulk of the changes have affected the fundamental formulations of the doctrine. The document contains exceptions to the old doctrine and additions to it...The further text of the changes approved by Tokayev, in addition to those already indicated in the quote are provided in full:

"Chapter 3. The current state of the military security of the Republic of Kazakhstan"; Paragraphs 18 and 19 shall be stated as follows:

The combat potential of the land, air force and naval component of the military organization of the state has been increased by creating the necessary set of troops (forces), weapons, military equipment and supplies in strategic directions.

Subdivisions have been created in the Armed Forces to organize counteraction to information-psychological and software-technical (cyber) influences in the troops. Work is underway to increase their potential and capabilities...

"Section 3. Basic Provisions";

"Chapter 5. Vision in the field of military security and defense of the Republic of Kazakhstan";

Paragraph 39 shall be amended as follows:

39. The resolution of a border armed conflict in the border space of the Republic of Kazakhstan is carried out by the Border Service together with the Aviation Service, the Border Academy of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, other national security bodies in cooperation with the authorities, formations and military units of the Armed Forces and the National Guard of the Republic of Kazakhstan, if necessary, forces can be used and funds of other central state and local executive bodies.”...

"Chapter 6. Approaches to ensuring the military security of the Republic of Kazakhstan";

Heading “3.3.1. Maintenance of combat readiness of the Armed Forces, other troops and military formations of the Republic of Kazakhstan” shall be stated as follows:

In paragraph 54: supplement with subparagraph 2-1) of the following content:

"2-1) the development of the Special Operations Forces for effective operations in peacetime and wartime in cooperation with special forces units of other state bodies."

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Continued: Kazakhstan's Military Doctrine Raises Questions for Russia

Source Continued: “Токаев изменил военную доктрину Казахстана (Tokayev changed the military doctrine of Kazakhstan),” *Vremya* (a semi-independent Russian-language newspaper in Kazakhstan), 15 October 2022. <https://time.kz/news/politics/2022/10/15/tokayev-izmenil-voennuyu-doktrinu-kazahstana>

Subparagraph 4) shall be stated in the following wording: "4) building up the radar field and increasing the potential and capabilities of the troops in conducting air and missile defense of the state..."

Paragraph 57 shall be stated as follows: "1) development of the Unified Regional Air Defense System of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation..."

Paragraph 61: subparagraphs 3), 4) and 5) shall be stated as follows: "3) equipping the Border and Aviation Services of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan with modern weapons and military equipment, technical means of border protection; 4) bringing the infrastructure of the State Border in line with its categorization and modern requirements; 5) increasing the efficiency of interaction between the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan with central state, local executive bodies and the population of border areas in matters of protecting the State Border, including in the underwater environment of the Kazakh sector of the Caspian Sea"..."

In paragraph 68: subparagraph 6) shall be stated in the following wording: "6) ensuring sustainability and expanding the production of basic types of ammunition for the Armed Forces, other troops and military formations"..."

Notes:

[1] For more on the Kazakhstani government's decision not to hold a Victory Day parade commemorating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in May, angering some in Russia, see: Matthew Stein, "Kazakhstan Cancels Soviet-Era Parade To Focus on Combat Readiness," *OE Watch*, June 2022. For more on Kazakhstan's suspension of defense exports for one year starting in August 2022, leaving Russia with one fewer supplier of weapons and equipment that closely matches its own armed forces, see: Matthew Stein, "Kazakhstan Suspends Defense Exports, Denying Russia Purchases," *OE Watch*, October 2022. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/427937>

Russia Laying Groundwork Ahead of July 2023 Russia-Africa Summit

By Jason Warner
OE Watch Commentary

As Russia prepares to host the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg in the summer of 2023, commentators from across the African continent are offering insights as to how they perceive Russia trying to making inroads. In the first excerpted article from central African news aggregator *L'Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale*, writer Noël Ndong articulates the widely held perception that Russia seeks to expand its reach beyond its foothold of partners in Mali, the Central Africa Republic, and possibly Burkina Faso—most notably in other francophone African states. Ndong highlights former French stalwart ally Chad, as well as Morocco and Cameroon, noting Moscow's rhetoric about aiding African states in their quests for energy independence.

Increasingly isolated by the West because of its special operation in Ukraine, Russia is actively turning to Africa, which it seeks to seduce

The second excerpted article from Malian newspaper *Le Journal de l'économie Malienne* confirms the leader of Mali's junta government, Assimi Goïta, recently received his invitation to the July 2023 meeting. The amity between two international pariahs should be unsurprising given that



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa during a plenary session at the Russia-Africa Summit held in Sochi, Russia in October 2019.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/governmentza/48951692933> Attribution: CC BY-ND 2.0

Goïta's government relies on Russian Wagner mercenaries to stave off its spiraling jihadist insurgency, reportedly paying Wagner \$10 million a month. A noted commentator on African geopolitical affairs, Gustavo de Carvalho, argues in the South Africa's *The Daily Maverick* that in advance of the 2023 Russia-Africa Summit, the African Union needs to lead African efforts to have a unified front. While noting that in 2021, Russia was the largest arms supplier in Africa—supplying 44 percent of major arms to the continent—he also urges caution about what Moscow's aggressive new posture means: "Given the continent's relatively weak global position... Africa urgently needs a Russia strategy."

Source: Noël Ndong, "Coopération: la Russie à l'assaut de l'Afrique (Cooperation: Russia on the assault in Africa)," *L'Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale* (Central Africa news aggregator), 18 October 2022. <https://www.adi-ac-congo.com/content/cooperation-la-russie-lassaut-de-lafrique-142170>

After Central African Republic, Mali, and Burkina Faso, Moscow is now on the hunt to conquer Morocco, Chad, and Cameroon...

With Morocco, Russia has approved a cooperation agreement in the field of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.... The agreement stipulates that Moscow will assist Rabat in the creation and improvement of nuclear energy infrastructure, the design and construction of nuclear reactors, as well as water desalination plants and particle accelerators. The agreement also consists of the provision of services in Morocco in the field of the fuel cycle, spent and radioactive nuclear fuel and waste management.

Continued: Russia Laying Groundwork Ahead of July 2023 Russia-Africa Summit

Source Continued: Noël Ndong, “Coopération: la Russie à l’assaut de l’Afrique (Cooperation: Russia on the assault in Africa),” *L’Agence d’Information d’Afrique Centrale* (Central Africa news aggregator), 18 October 2022. <https://www.adiac-congo.com/content/cooperation-la-russie-lassaut-de-lafrique-142170>

Increasingly isolated by the West because of its special operation in Ukraine, Russia is actively turning to Africa, which it seeks to seduce. Ambassador Extraordinary Oleg Ozerov, Head of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum Secretariat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: “We see that African countries currently want to ensure an industrial transition of their economies. It will nevertheless be impossible to solve the problem of industrialization without having solved the problems of energy, without having granted access to electricity to the population and to the companies which must create industry and production.”

The second summit of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum is scheduled for the summer of 2023. It aims to give new impetus to Russian-African political, trade, economic, investment, scientific, technical and humanitarian cooperation.

Source: Aboubacar Traoré, “Mali: Le colonel Assimi Goïta invité au Sommet Russie-Afrique (Mali: Colonel Assimi Goïta invited to the Russia-Africa Summit),” *Le Journal de l’économie Malienne* (online Malian news source), 14 November 2022. https://www.lejecom.com/Mali-Le-colonel-Assimi-Goita-invite-au-Sommet-Russie-afrique_a6505.html

According to the diplomatic source, the Russian ambassador had come to officially deliver to Minister [of Foreign Affairs, Abdoulaye] Diop the letter by which the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, invites his Malian counterpart, Colonel Assimi Goïta, to participate in the Russia-Africa Summit scheduled for July 2023 in St. Petersburg.

Also, the Russian diplomat took this opportunity to inform the Malian authorities of the upcoming visit to Africa, including to Mali, of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Source: Gustavo de Carvalho, “Africa needs to forge a unified approach to Russia before 2023 Russia-Africa Summit,” *The Daily Maverick* (centrist South African newspaper), 3 August 2022. <https://saiia.org.za/research/africa-needs-to-forge-a-unified-approach-to-russia-before-2023-russia-africa-summit/>

For five days in July 2022, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov traveled to four African nations to signal Russia’s push into the continent. The visit to Egypt, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Ethiopia symbolises the Russian offensive to gain and reinforce international support...

While the July 2022 engagements in Africa yielded few tangible outcomes, Lavrov reinforced the criticism of Western policies in Africa, with a complementing narrative of the independent stance Africa has taken....

Russia has been ramping up its military relationships with several African countries for at least a decade. Its approach is often influenced by close ties between Russia’s arms industry and its infamous private security contractor, the Wagner Group. According to Sipri, a Swedish think tank, Russia was the largest arms supplier to Africa in 2021, accounting for 44% of continental imports of major arms. In total, Russia has signed military agreements with more than 20 African countries...

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Continued: Russia Laying Groundwork Ahead of July 2023 Russia-Africa Summit

Source Continued: Gustavo de Carvalho, “Africa needs to forge a unified approach to Russia before 2023 Russia-Africa Summit,” *The Daily Maverick* (centrist South African newspaper), 3 August 2022. <https://saiaa.org.za/research/africa-needs-to-forge-a-unified-approach-to-russia-before-2023-russia-africa-summit/>

Given the continent’s relatively weak global position...Africa urgently needs a Russia strategy. To that end, the AU can — and should — engage with its members in a more structured manner and help them put together joint positions on critical issues related to Russia and other partners, like the US, China, Europe and others...



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Russia's Ukraine Narratives Find Appeal in Arab Countries

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

The "Arab street" has largely supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine several polls indicating that Arabs are more likely to blame the conflict on Ukraine or the West than on Russia.¹ Russian influence campaigns have almost certainly played a role given ample evidence that Russia's Arabic-language outlets have deliberately sought to shape perceptions vis-à-vis Ukraine. There is also data showing that Russian Arabic-language media outlets *RT* and *Sputnik Arabic* are more popular than their Western counterparts, such as *BBC Arabic* or the U.S.-funded *al-Hurra*.² Several national news agencies in the Middle East have signed content sharing agreements with these Russian outlets. However, focusing primarily on Russian influence operations misses the important social contexts in which these pro-Russian opinions are being formed.

The war saved everyone from the Corona virus, which was prepared in Ukrainian laboratories. President Putin struck those laboratories and ended the virus. If this had not happened, the virus would not have ended, because America wants to reduce the global population ...

The first accompanying excerpt, from the Arabic-language news website of the German media outlet *Deutsche Welle*, cites an Egyptian media expert who highlights the extent to which Arabs are registering "protest support" for Russia, based on opposition to Western policies that are seen as biased against Arabs and Muslims. Russian influence campaigns, he argues, need not be particularly strong, as "the audience is more susceptible and obedient to Russian counter-propaganda, without this meaning that the propaganda is good or effective." The second accompany-



RT Arabic Logo.

Source: Twitter, <https://twitter.com/RTarabic/>
photo Attribution: Fair Use

ing excerpt, from the Arabic-language news website *al-Bawaba*, illustrates the extent to which Russian misinformation has spread to new segments of the Arab public. The excerpt is from an interview with an archbishop in Egypt's Coptic Church. When asked about the impact of the Ukraine conflict on Egypt, he claims that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has ended COVID-19, which was purportedly created by the United States in Ukrainian laboratories to trim the global population to 2 billion people.

According to the third accompanying excerpt, an opinion piece published in the Qatar-aligned English-language news website *The New Arab*, the current global environment has "opened a floodgate of misinformation tainted with apocalyptic thinking and metaphysical explanations." The author notes how the combined effects of COVID-19, extreme weather events, and war in Ukraine have led many in the region to seek answers in scripture. Arab skepticism toward the U.S. role in Ukraine is neither novel nor surprising, since narratives portraying the United States as a latent source of regional conflict and instability are pervasive. What is new, however, is that fanciful, apocalyptic-tinted anti-U.S. narratives—made popular last decade by Islamic State ideologues—may be pushing their way into the region's Christian minority populations with a little help from Russian media outlets.

Continued: Russia's Ukraine Narratives Find Appeal in Arab Countries

Source:

(Ukraine invasion... did Russia win the information war in the Middle East?)," *Deutsche Welle Arabic* (German media outlet), 25 August 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/49783hk2>

غزو أوكرانيا.. هل ربحت روسيا حرب المعلومات في الشرق الأوسط؟"

Yasser Abdel Aziz, an international lecturer and Egyptian media expert... says: "I believe that this support is 'protest support' because there are large segments of the Arab public who feel that the Western media is biased and that the West in general is biased against Arab and Islamic issues. There is historical and other bitterness, and because of this the audience is more susceptible and obedient to Russian counter-propaganda, without this meaning that this propaganda is good or effective... Abdel Aziz added, "The West has the right to feel resentment in light of this situation, because its effective and successful communication tools and its prestigious and venerable media outlets are sometimes unconvincing, while the 'miserable' Russian media tools, or others that do not have the same luster or capabilities, find popularity at times.

Source:

(Anba Benjamin, Bishop of Monofia: Marriage is martyrdom without blood...)." *al-Bawaba* (Arabic-language news website), 20 October 2022. <https://www.albawabhnews.com/4674878>

..الأبنا بنيامين مطران المنوفية: الزواج استشهاد دون سفك دماء"

Q: The Ukrainian-Russian crisis. How do you see its impact on the world and Egypt in particular?

A: The war saved everyone from the Coronavirus, which was prepared in Ukrainian laboratories. President Putin struck those laboratories and ended the virus. If this had not happened, the virus would not have ended, because America wants to reduce the global population, there are 7.5 billion people and they want to reduce it to 2 billion.

Source: Emad Mousa. "MENA's misguided climate change schadenfreude towards Europe," *The New Arab* (Qatari-aligned English-language news website), 19 October 2022. <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/menas-misguided-climate-change-schadenfreude-towards-europe>

Because the unusual weather conditions came shortly after a global pandemic and coincided with the Ukraine war and a global economic meltdown, it opened a floodgate of misinformation tainted with apocalyptic thinking and metaphysical explanations - similar to the height of the Covid-19 global emergency. During the pandemic, Egyptians reportedly ranked highest in Google searches for whether the coronavirus was a sign of the end of time. Scripture was used to confirm these speculations.

Notes:

[1] Per the May 2022 ArabNews/YouGov poll on who is responsible for the Ukraine conflict (https://www.arabnews.com/sites/default/files/anyg_rusukr_report_web_compressed.pdf), 24 percent of respondents hold NATO responsible; 13 percent hold the current U.S. President responsible; 16 percent hold Russia responsible; six percent hold Ukraine responsible; and 42 percent do not know or are unsure who is responsible. Per the September 2022 Arab Youth Survey on who is responsible for the Ukraine conflict (<https://arabyouthsurvey.com/en/findings/#my-global-citizenship-10>), 31 percent of respondents hold the United States/NATO responsible; 18 percent hold Russia responsible; 15 percent hold Ukraine responsible; and 37 percent do not know or cannot say who is responsible.

[2] According to a 2015 Nielsen study, RT's Arabic-language news channel had higher daily audiences than *BBC Arabic*, *Sky News Arabia*, *al-Hurra* and China's CCTV in Arabic in Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, UAE and Iraq. (<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/rt-arabic-is-among-top-3-most-watched-news-channels-in-6-arabic-countries-300039119.html>)

See also: Norman Cigar, "COVID-19 and the Arab World: Opportunity for Russian Anti-American Disinformation?" *MES Insights*, Volume 11, Issue 2, The Krulak Center at Marine Corps University, April 2020. <https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/MES/Insights/MES%20Insights%20Volume%2011%20Issue%202%20April%202020.pdf?ver=2020-05-01-133622-630>

Little Evidence That Algeria Is Shifting From Russian to Chinese Arms Imports Amid Ukraine Conflict

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

The Algerian government recently announced a substantial increase to its 2023 defense budget, thanks largely to windfall profits from high global energy prices. The announcement has led to various rumors about the weapons systems that Algeria may seek to purchase from abroad. For years, the preponderance of Algerian advanced weaponry has been sourced from Russia. Russian weapons sales, however, are expected to decline as international sanctions and Ukraine-related domestic needs cut into export production. This had led to speculation that Chinese manufacturers will compete for market share in traditional Russian markets, including Algeria.

The Russian official's visit coincided with media reports about Algeria allocating a huge budget for armaments in the coming years ...

Belying speculation of declines in Russian arms exports to Algeria, the English-language news website *Africa Intelligence* recently published an unverified claim that Algeria will soon ink a 10-year "mega-contract" for Russian equipment, worth more than \$10 billion dollars.¹ The report, which is behind a paywall, was picked up and amplified by prominent Arabic-language news outlets. As reported in the first accompanying excerpt, from the Russian news website *RT Arabic*, the deal would likely include submarines, advanced Sukhoi aircraft, and long-range air defense systems. The rumored deal received some indirect support with the early November visit to Algiers by Dmitry Shugaev, director of Russia's Federal Service of Military-Technical Cooperation.

As reported in the second accompanying excerpt, from the Arabic-language website of the Turkish *Anadolu News Agency*, Shugaev heads a Russian state institution that oversees arms deals and foreign military cooperation. Some days prior, an Algeria-focused military observer who goes by the Twitter handle *@fares4302* circulated a photograph of an Algerian-Chinese meeting purportedly discussing the Chinese *SY-400* platform, which can be configured as a Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) or Short-Range Ballistic Missile System (SRBM).² The same user had earlier circulated a photograph that showed what appeared to be a model SY-400 in the headquarters of the Algerian



SR-5 Chinese 220mm Multiple Rocket Launcher (MRL).

Source: TRADOC Worldwide Equipment Guide, https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/mediawiki/images/1/1a/SR-5_Chines_Guided_%28D%29.jpg Attribution: Public Domain

Land Forces.³ The timing of the tweets suggested a link between Algerian interest in these systems and the current context, specifically the expected attrition of Russian SRBM exports due to the Ukraine conflict. However, the photograph of Chinese-Algerian SY-400 discussions turned out to be from Abu Dhabi's biannual IDEX weapons expo, which last occurred in February 2021—a full year before the Ukraine invasion. The photo displaying a model SY-400 in the headquarters of the Algerian Land Forces, furthermore, was from 2020 and may well depict a visually similar system possessed by Algerian forces, such as the Chinese *SR-5 MLRS*, which Algeria acquired in 2017. In sum, while China may indeed be moving to compete with Russia in certain market segments, there is of yet no hard evidence that it is doing so in response to a Ukraine-related decline in Russian exports, at least insofar as Algeria is concerned.

In mid-November, the Algerian president's office issued a decree forbidding government officials from talking to the media about defense issues without permission from the Defense Ministry. As reported in the third accompanying excerpt, from the Qatar-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadeed*, it is unclear whether the measure applies to media-friendly Army Chief of Staff Said Chengriha. The measure may well be related to the various rumors surrounding Algerian arms purchases, but it should also be considered in the context of an ongoing and highly opaque power struggle between competing factions in the Algerian military.

Continued: Little Evidence That Algeria Is Shifting From Russian to Chinese Arms Imports Amid Ukraine Conflict

Source:

مصدر إعلامي: الجزائر تتجه لتوقيع صفقة أسلحة ضخمة مع روسيا

(Media source: Algeria plans to sign huge weapons deal with Russia)," *RT Arabic* (Russian Arabic-language media outlet), 31 October 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/4s6f8c74>

"Africa Intelligence" reported that negotiations are underway to conclude an agreement on Russian military supplies to Algeria over the next ten years. The deal will occur within the framework of Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's official visit to Moscow next December. The Algerian military leadership is particularly interested in acquiring submarines, aircraft including the Su-57, Su-34 and Su-30, and new air defense systems such as the S-400, Viking (Buk-M3) and Antey-4000.

Source:

إيران والمغرب: تشيخ وصواريخ ودرونز

(Algerian military leader discusses military cooperation with Russian official)," *Anadolu News Agency*, 10 November 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/4tfdc5m5>

"The Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation is a state institution that reports to the presidency in Moscow and oversees all arms deals and foreign military cooperation. The Russian official's visit coincided with media reports about Algeria allocating a huge budget for armaments in the coming years, amounting to about \$10 billion, though the Algerian authorities have not confirmed this information."

Source:

الرئيس الجزائري يقرر منع الحديث في مسائل الدفاع إلا بترخيص منه

(Algerian president forbids talking about defense matters without his permission)," *al-Araby al-Jadeed* (Qatari-aligned daily), 14 November 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p8m36te>

On Monday, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune issued a decree banning military and government officials from speaking to the press about information about military issues without permission from the Minister of Defense... It is not known whether this decision also includes the statements of the Army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Said Chengriha, who constantly appears in speeches on state television during army-related activities.

Notes:

[1] The paywalled article can be found at: <https://www.africaintelligence.com/north-africa/2022/10/31/armaments-algiers-to-sign-new-dollars12bn-mega-contract-with-moscow,109839871-art>

[2] The tweet reads: "An Algerian military delegation in China is probably receiving explanations about the Sy-400 missile system." A comment below notes that the picture is from IDEX. <https://twitter.com/fares4302/status/1588516913541705729>

[3] The tweet reads: "From the headquarters of the Algerian Land Forces a mock-up of a surface-to-surface missile system appears, apparently the Chinese system SY-400." <https://twitter.com/fares4302/status/1583753579399036928>