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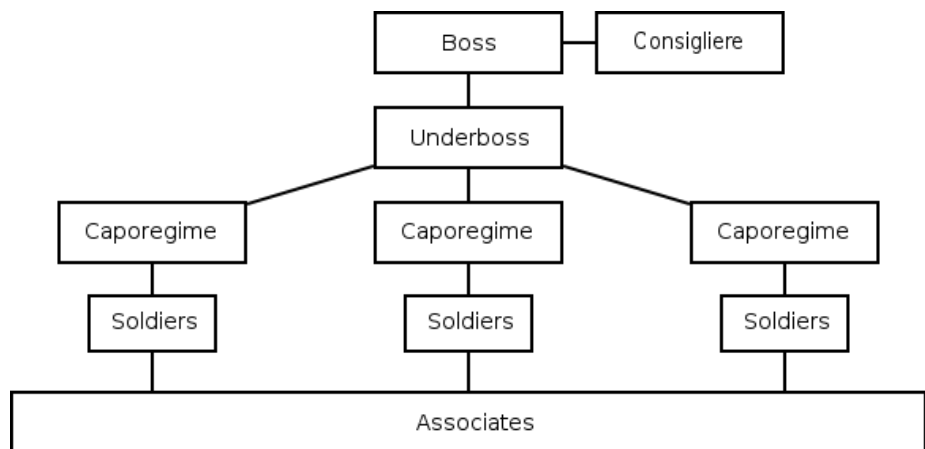


IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

By Marc Williams, Training-Education-Leader Development Team

Irregular warfare includes organized and unorganized crime as an element. Governments which are unable to suppress criminal activity will see an increase in internal violence and institutional failure, all of which can spread to cause regional instability. U.S. military units deploying to these regions will be forced to address and/or confront criminal organizations. Key to this will be identifying the network of people involved.

Network analysis is a critical tool in an intelligence operator's kitbag. It was critical in identifying and eliminating al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives in our recent wars, but dealing with a criminal network has a different set of challenges. Not all criminal organizations follow the hierarchical model used by the Sicilian Mafia "family" structure.



It is also important to remember that international borders represent only an obstacle to be overcome by a criminal organization. This article will look at domestic and international criminal organizations and their command structures. The domestic gangs will be those which have outgrown their community focus and developed international contacts and have a minimum of 10,000 members. >

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Gangs

[FBI's 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment](#)

(published 10/20/2011)

There are approximately 1.4 million active street, prison, and outlaw motorcycle gang (OMG) gang members comprising more than 33,000 gangs in the U.S. In 2011, gang membership increased most significantly in the Northeast and Southeast regions, although the West and Great Lakes regions boast the highest number of gang members.

Gangs are responsible for an average of 48 percent of violent crime in most jurisdictions and up to 90 percent in several others. Major cities and suburban areas experience the most gang-related violence. Local neighborhood-based gangs and drug crews continue to pose the most significant criminal threat in most communities.

Gangs are increasingly engaging in non-traditional gang-related crime, such as alien smuggling, human trafficking, and prostitution. Gangs are also engaging in white collar crime such as counterfeiting, identity theft, and mortgage fraud, primarily due to the high profitability and much lower visibility and risk of detection and punishment than drug and weapons trafficking.

U.S.-based gangs have established strong working relationships with Central American and Mexican drug trafficking organizations (MDTO) to perpetrate illicit cross-border activity, as well as with some organized crime groups in some regions of the U.S.

Gang infiltration of the military continues to pose a significant criminal threat, as members of at least 53 gangs have been identified on both domestic and international military installations. Gang members who learn advanced weaponry and combat techniques in the military are at risk of employing these skills on the street when they return to their communities.

Gangs are becoming increasingly adaptable and sophisticated, employing new and advanced technology to facilitate criminal activity discreetly, enhance their criminal operations, and connect with other gang members, criminal organizations, and potential recruits nationwide and even worldwide.

Specific Gangs

Ñeta. Ñeta members are secretive and will not freely admit membership. This group is much more challenging to identify and validate than other gangs.

Gender makeup: Male. 13,000 members in Puerto Rico, New York, Florida, Connecticut, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.

Racial makeup: Puerto Rican-American/ Hispanic.

Origin: An inmate established The Ñeta in 1970 in Rio Pedras Prison, Puerto Rico. It was formed to stop the violence between inmates housed in the Rio Pedras Prison.

Characteristics:

- They use the facade of a cultural organization.
- They are establishing ties to street gangs.
- Members are strongly patriotic and have associated themselves with a revolutionary Puerto Rican group called the Los Macheteros.
- Their philosophy is "independence for the island" or "Puerto Rico."
- They see themselves as oppressed people who are unwilling to be governed by the U.S.
- Members are required to procure 20 prospective recruits.
- Any disrespect shown to an individual Ñeta member is looked upon as disrespect to the group and is usually dealt with violently.
- Ñeta members come together in observance of their fallen members on the 30th of each month.

Identifiers/Symbols: Their colors are red, white, and blue. There is also evidence that black is sometimes substituted for blue. Members usually wear beads in these colors, but also will wear clothing such as bandannas, handkerchiefs sticking out of their pockets, white tops, black shorts, etc., in these colors. Probationary members wear all white beads until they are considered loyal; then, they can wear black beads among the white, plus one red one. Members usually display the Puerto Rican flag and are known to carry Ñeta identification cards. The Ñeta emblem is a heart pierced by two crossing Puerto Rican flags with a shackled right hand with the middle and index fingers crossed. Members salute each other by holding the crossed fingers of their right hand over their heart. This hand signal means togetherness and unity.

Enemies/Rivals: Latin Kings, Los Solidos, and MS-13. ➤

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Propensity for disruptive behavior:

- A classic Ñeta tactic is to keep a low profile while other Hispanic groups draw attention to themselves.
- They have quietly entrenched themselves in the drug trade and extortion, and have performed "hits" for other gangs.
- Ñeta is actively recruiting members in our correctional facilities.
- Ñeta's growth should be closely monitored in prisons and they should never be taken lightly. Ñeta is dangerous to staff and inmates. Drug activity, extortion, and gang-related violence are what they do and they do it violently.
- Ñeta members are not deterred by police and will not hesitate to attack or to kill one if they feel it is necessary. This violent gang is involved in high intensity drug dealing, fire arms and explosives trafficking, murder, and robbery.

Command structure: Ñeta is comprised of Chapter Presidents, Vice Presidents, Educators, Minister of Discipline, and Soldiers. However, control is maintained from Puerto Rico headed by "Number 1" and "Number 2," both of whom are unknown to law enforcement and most members. Only the Minister of Information is allowed to speak to the media.

Other gang command structures (ordered by number of members). The transnational criminal organizations (TCO) listed below have at least 10,000 members and are known or suspected to work in more than one country.

- **Gangster Disciples**, AKA Folk Nation. 50,000 members. The Gangster Disciples is a highly organized street and prison gang that operates under a paramilitary structure comprised of Boards of Directors, Governors, Regents, Coordinators, and foot soldiers. Known to work with the Sinaloa MDTO.
- **Crips**. 40,000 members. The Crips are a street gang in every sense of the word. This violent gang lacks organization and consists of hundreds of subgroups. The Crips ranks its members by age and refers to its original members as Triple O.G.'s, and its high ranking members as Double O.G.'s and Original Gangsters. The gang's youngest members are referred to as Baby Gangsters and Tiny Gangsters. In prison, the

different Crip groups fall under a "unity structure." Under the organization's rules, all Crip members were required to join forces in prison and assist each other in any conflict involving non-Crip gang members. Known to work with the Juarez MDTO.

- **Vice Lords**, AKA the Almighty Vice Lord Nation. 35,000 members. The violent Vice Lords gang is highly organized and operates under a paramilitary chain of command. The highest ranking ministers are referred to as the "Five Star Universal League," the gang's generals are known as the "Three Star League." The Leagues are authorized to order the gang's foot soldiers. The Vice Lords have known criminal associates in Mexico and Nigeria.
- **Bloods**, AKA Unified Blood Nation. 30,000 members. Paramilitary organization. Known to work with the Tijuana and Sinaloa MDTOs.
- **Aryan Brotherhood**. 30,000 members. The Aryan Brotherhood operates under a paramilitary structure of Presidents, Vice Presidents, Majors, Captains, and Lieutenants. The prison gang uses a committee of "council" members to govern branches across the nation. Known criminal associates in Thailand.
- **Latin Kings**. 27,000 members. The Latin Kings structure is run by an executive committee known as "The Crown." The Crown is headed by the gang's "Sun-King" and writes the laws for the entire Latin Kings organization. Next in line is the "Inca." Each Latin King chapter follows the orders of its Inca and the Inca in turn obeys the laws given to him by the Crown. Next in power is the Cacique (also known as the Casinca). The Cacique's are the enforcers and order the non-ranking members. Known to work with the Juarez, Sinaloa, and Gulf MDTOs.
- **Mara Salvatrucha**, AKA MS-13. 27,000 members in U.S., El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico. Paramilitary ranking structure.
- **Texas Mexican Mafia**, AKA Mexicanemi. 17,000 members. The structure of the >

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Mexikanemi has three components: the members, prospects, and associates. There are also descending levels of Lieutenants, Sergeants, and Soldiers in the organization. These are the backbone of the deadly organization that set up the Mesa's (the boards) which are controlling boards on the prison main lines. The board members are in charge of organizing Mexican Mafia activity. Known to work with the Gulf and Zetas MDTOs.

- **Tango Blast.** 17,000 members. Tango Blast lacks leadership, just as the gang's founding fathers intended, so members are not obligated to follow orders, other than protect each other during times of war. Unlike traditional prison gangs whose method of fighting involves a shank, the Tango Blast uses the power of numbers and infuses fear with brutal gang beatings against their enemies. Prospects must submit themselves to an initiation beating in order to gain full membership, and are required to tattoo a star, the gang's symbol, on either their head or side flank. Joining Tango Blast was never intended to be a life time commitment as is the case with traditional prison gangs. If a Tango Blast member ever decides to quit the gang all that is required is the same initiation they received when joining the gang. Known to work with the Gulf and Zetas MDTOs.
- **Texas Syndicate.** 14,000. Structure is a combination of paramilitary and business. The Texas Syndicate is controlled by a President and Vice President who are elected by the vote of the gang's majority. In the prison system level, the gang is ruled by a Chairman who orders the Vice Chairman, Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, and Soldiers. The Texas Syndicate also has a Board of Directors whose duty is to monitor the gang's funds, approve of new members, and authorize war. Known to work with the Gulf and Zetas MDTOs.
- **Volksfront.** 12,000 members in U.S., Canada, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Australia. Paramilitary organization.
- **Barrio Azteca.** 12,000 members, paramilitary chain structure of command of Captains, Lieutenants, Sergeant, and Soldiers. Known to work with the Juarez MDTO.
- **Indian Posse.** 12,000 in Canada and the U.S. The Indian Posse operates under a paramilitary structure of Chiefs, Warriors, and Strikers.

- **Border Brothers.** 10,000 members. The Border Brothers are comprised of two distinct branches, the prison gang and the street gang. The Border Brothers prison gang operates under a paramilitary structure of President, Vice President, Generals, Lieutenants, Sergeants and Soldiers, while the Border Brother street gang is loosely organized. Known criminal associations in Tijuana, Mexico.
- **Tiny Rascal Gangsters (TRG).** 10,000 members. Tiny Rascal Gangsters is one of the largest and most violent Asian street gang associations in the U.S. It is composed of at least 60 structured and unstructured gangs, commonly referred to as sets. Known criminal associations throughout Southeast Asia.

Organized crime

Japanese Yakuza. The Yakuza (also known as gokudō) organized crime clans trace their beginnings to at least the 17th Century. In Japanese legal terminology, Yakuza organizations are referred to as Bōryokudan, literally "violence groups." The FBI believes the richest criminal organization in the world is the Yamaguchi-gumi Yakuza clan, which actually mobilized resources to help the Kobe earthquake victims more quickly than the Japanese government.

Yakuza Clan structure (from "Okinawa Japan Virtual Ginza Your Door to Okinawa Japan"): The clan has been compared to the Sicilian mafias "family." The clan is structured much like a common family in traditional Japan with a hierarchical structure. The clan's head chief is called Oyabun, which means Father. Beneath him he has his children (Wakashu) and brothers (Kyodai). These are not his real children and brothers, only designations of rank and position they have within the clan. All the members in the clan obey the Oyabun and in return he protects them against all dangers. Oyabun is almighty within the clan and his word is the law. All obey him without hesitation or concern for their own life. Beneath him, Oyabun has an adviser that is called Saiko-komon and he has a staff of advocates, accountants, secretaries, and advisers. The children's (Wakashu) boss is called Waka gashira. He is number two in the clan after Oyabun, not in rank but in authority. He acts as a middleman to see that the Oyabun's orders are being accomplished.

The children lead their own (sub) gangs and over time can move up in the structure. In that way the clan becomes a ramification with several sub families. The >

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Oyabun's "brothers" (Kyodai) have a boss called Shatei gashira. Shatei gashira is of higher rank than Waka gashira but does not have more authority. The Brothers have their own "children" or "younger brothers" (Shatei). Shatei has its own sub gangs, and so on. Everyone obeys his gang leader, but it is always the Oyabun's word that counts.

Russian Organized Crime

Russian Organized Crime Groups in Russia

The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs reports that there are over 5,000 organized crime groups operating in Russia. These groups are comprised of an estimated 100,000 members with a leadership of 18,000. Although Russian authorities have currently identified over 5,000 criminal groups in that country, Russian officials believe that only approximately 300 of those have some identifiable structure. Organized crime groups in Russia are not nearly as structured as those in the U.S., such as the LCN.

Knowledgeable sources within the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) have provided one model of the structure of groups in Russia. The principle behind this structure is to minimize contact with other cells that could lead to the identification of the entire organization.

Each boss, called a "pakhan," controls four criminal cells through an intermediary called a "brigadier." The boss employs two spies that watch over the action of the brigadier to ensure loyalty and that he does not get too powerful. At the bottom of the structure are criminal cells specializing in various types of criminal activity or functions such as drugs, prostitution, political contacts, and "enforcers." A similar structure places an elite leadership on top which is buffered by support and security personnel from the street operators who are committing the crimes. Street operators are not privy to the identity of their leadership. Strategy and planning is done only at the top echelon in order to minimize the risk of detection.

According to law enforcement sources, those structures described above would fall into the old style of Soviet criminal enterprises. It is quite possible that as organized crime has changed in Russia, so has the structure of these groups.

Thieves' Code of Conduct

There is a traditional code of conduct within this old style of organized crime in Russia called "Vory v Zakone," or Thieves in Law. This group existed throughout the Soviet era and continues today throughout the republics of the

former Soviet Union. In this society, the Thieves in Law live and obey the "Vorovskoy Zakon," the Thieves' Code. The members are bound by 18 codes and if they are broken, the transgression is punishable by death.

A thief is bound by the Code to:

1. Forsake his relatives – mother, father, brothers, sisters.
2. Not have a family of his own – no wife, no children; this does not however, preclude him from having a lover.
3. Never, under any circumstances work, no matter how much difficulty this brings – live only on means gleaned from thievery.
4. Help other thieves – both by moral and material support, utilizing the commune of thieves.
5. Keep secret information about the whereabouts of accomplices (i.e. dens, districts, hideouts, safe apartments, etc.).
6. In unavoidable situations (if a thief is under investigation), take the blame for someone else's crime; this buys the other person time of freedom.
7. Demand convocation of inquiry for the purpose of resolving disputes in the event of a conflict between oneself and other thieves, or between thieves.
8. If necessary, participate in such inquiries.
9. Carry out the punishment of the offending thief as decided by the convocation.
10. Not resist carrying out the decision of punishing the offending thief who is found guilty, with punishment determined by the convocation.
11. Have good command of the thieves' jargon ("Fehnay").
12. Not gamble without being able to cover losses.
13. Teach the trade to young beginners.
14. Have, if possible, informants from the rank and file of thieves.
15. Not lose your reasoning ability when using alcohol.
16. Have nothing to do with the authorities (particularly with the ITU [Correctional Labor Authority]), not participate in public activities, nor join any community organizations.
17. Not take weapons from the hands of authorities; not serve in the military.
18. Make good on promises given to other thieves. >

IRREGULAR WARFARE: CRIMINAL NETWORK ANALYSIS *(continued)*

Russian Organized Crime Groups in the U.S.

The FBI reports that there are 15 organized crime groups in the U.S. with former Soviet ethnic origins. There is considerable debate in the law enforcement community as to the level of organization and structure of Russian organized crime groups in the U.S. Additionally, many of the Russian émigrés who are involved in criminal activity in this country may be career criminals specializing in crime areas having little or nothing to do with Russian organized crime groups.

Current information indicates that most Russian organized crime groups are loosely organized and do not have elaborate levels of structure. These groups are often influenced by their ethnic or regional backgrounds. They have formed networks that operate in situations of mutual interest and often shift alliances to meet particular needs. According to intelligence reports, members of criminal groups in Russia are sent to reinforce and consolidate links between groups in Russia and the U.S. Russian organized crime figures are also sent to this country to perform a service such as a gangland murder or extortion.

Conclusion

Criminal network analysis is not a simple overlay of a military structure onto a gang. Gangs have different titles for different levels of power. Some are rigidly structured, some operate on a paramilitary organization, and some seem be nearly anarchic with no command structure. In the examples of Crips, Border Brothers, and the Russian Mafia, there is one structure for street activities, but a different one for prison.

In the counter improvised explosive device (CIED) fight in Iraq, the military hired former police officers who specialized in gang investigations to form the law enforcement professional (LEP) program. LEPs accompanied units on patrol and assisted in both crime scene and network analysis. In a Hybrid Threat environment, a unit must be prepared to fight a conventional enemy and irregular forces simultaneously. However, expect the irregular forces to be involved with criminals and be prepared to address this threat. ♦

THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT OVER THE SPRATLY ISLANDS

By H. David Pendleton, OEA Team

In the Pacific Ocean, six countries have now been engaged in a dispute for well over 60 years about some pieces of land that measure no more than two square miles in total size—the Spratly Islands. Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam claim all or part of more than 400 islands, banks, reefs, shoals, atolls, and cays located in the South China Sea that compose the Spratly Islands. The TRISA Threat Report, [Spratly Islands Dispute](#), breaks down the South China Sea's importance, the history of the Spratly Islands, each of the six countries' claims to the islands, and the current effects on American foreign policy including the deployment of U.S. military forces to Australia.

The U.S. government deems the Spratly Islands important because of their strategic location in the South China Sea. About 25% of the world's ocean-going cargo passes through the area annually with 200 ships traversing the South China Sea daily. Hydrocarbon-rich Middle Eastern countries provide Japan with 75% of its

energy imports from ships that must travel the waters near the Spratly Islands. Additionally, the PRC, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand rely upon imports that also must cross the South China Sea. Underneath the blue waters, hydrocarbon resources abound. Some experts believe that the area beneath the Spratly Islands and the immediate vicinity contains anywhere between 28 and 213 billion barrels of oil, which is greater than Kuwait's known oil reserves. Experts also estimate that the South China Sea contains anywhere from 35 to 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, approximately the same as Qatar's proven gas reserves. Energy companies already operate four natural gas and 29 oil fields near the Spratly Islands. For good measure, the waters surrounding the Spratly islands remain one of the world's best fishing locations. Whatever country controls the Spratly Islands could not only disrupt the shipping that passes through the South China Sea, but ownership also legitimizes that country's claim to the hydrocarbon resources that lie beneath that part of the Pacific Ocean. >

THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT OVER THE SPRATLY ISLANDS *(continued)*

The Spratly Islands are scattered islets that cover an area 500 nautical miles from north to south and 400 nautical miles from east to west, approximately 400 nautical miles from the PRC's south coastline. The islands cover about 310,000 square miles of ocean or approximately 38% of the South China Sea. Only about 33 of the islands remain above sea level at all times, while the other islands are only sporadically visible. Only seven of the islands exceed 0.2 square miles in total area, while the islands' total land size amounts to less than two square miles. Most of the Spratly landforms contain no freshwater sources or any land-based resources, which forces the residents to receive all logistical support from the outside world.

All claimant countries except Brunei occupy at least one of the islands and station military troops on some of the islands they claim. Vietnam occupies the most islands, 27, with a total of 600 troops. The Philippines is next with 595 troops, down from a one-time high of 1,000 military personnel, on only eight islands. The PRC occupies seven of the islands with only 260 troops. Malaysia deploys approximately 70 troops on three islands. Taiwan garrisons only one island, the largest, with 112 military personnel, down from a high of almost 600 troops over a decade ago.

The history of the Spratly Islands dates back to their discovery by Chinese explorers in 200 BC and provides the present day PRC with one of its strongest arguments for control of all the islands. Since the 15th century, except for a time during World War II, a Chinese representative has controlled part of the Spratly Islands. After World War II, none of the other five countries that now claims all or part of the Spratly Islands objected when China took back control of the Spratly Islands from Japan. At the San Francisco Peace Treaty conference in 1951, Japan formally ceded its rights to the Spratly Island to China, who then supposedly owned the islands legally. In 1992, to further strengthen its claim, the PRC used the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to claim the Spratly Islands based upon the continental shelf clause where a country controls the ocean out to the end of its continental shelf. Since 1988, the PRC has continued to occupy seven islands with about 260 Chinese marines.

Taiwan also claims all of the Spratly Islands based primarily on its belief that the Taiwanese Kuomintang government is the legitimate Chinese government with all the same historical connections that the PRC claims

between China and the Spratly Islands. In 1947, Taiwan became the first country to occupy any of the Spratly islands when it placed settlers on the largest island, Itu Aba. Under international law, continuous and peaceful sovereignty of an area can be used as a legal basis to establish land ownership by a country. Since 1956, Taiwan has peacefully deployed troops to Itu Aba with unchallenged control from any country.

Vietnam claims all the Spratly Islands as well, but the country does not possess long-standing historical ties to the islands like the PRC and Taiwan. The Annam Empire, Vietnam's ancestor, explored the Spratly Islands in 1815 and published a map in 1834 that showed the islands as part of its empire. The map, however, did not differentiate between the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands, a group of islets farther to the north and closer to the PRC's coastline. In 1933, France claimed the Spratly Islands for Vietnam, its colony. At the aforementioned 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty conference, Vietnam claimed that the islands always belonged to its country and disputed China's claim to them. In 1975, the first Vietnamese map that occurred after the country's unification showed the Spratly Islands as part of Vietnam. This claim, however, renounced the previous North Vietnamese position dating back to 1938 that supported PRC ownership of the Spratly Islands. In 1975, Vietnam occupied 13 of the islands. Now, Vietnam has 600 military personnel scattered on 27 of the islands.

While the Philippines claims only 60 of the Spratly Island landmasses, their position is even more tenuous than that of Vietnam. In 1956, a Philippine explorer discovered and charted 53 islands and reefs in the South China Sea. The Philippines views the eastern islands in the Spratly archipelago as another island group, the Kalayaan Islands, not the Spratly Islands. The Philippine government claimed the islands due to their closeness to the main Philippine islands, their uninhabited status, and that no other country had claimed them, so there was no need *not* to place them under Philippine jurisdiction. In 1974, the Philippine government attempted to strengthen its claim as it labeled the Kalayaan Islands as strategically important to the country's defense. In 1978, the Philippines used the UNCLOS clause that gave a country that bordered the ocean a 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as another reason that the 60 eastern islands belonged to their country. >

THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT OVER THE SPRATLY ISLANDS *(continued)*

The UNCLOS continental shelf and EEZ clauses caused almost as many problems in the South China Sea as they solved, as Malaysia used both clauses to claim 12 of the Spratly Islands closest to its country. Malaysia now garrisons three of the largest islands it claims as its possession with 70 troops to bolster its ownership claims. Brunei also uses the UNCLOS continental shelf and EEZ clauses to claim the Louisa Reef, a submerged rock formation in the Spratly Archipelago, as part of its country.

Recent disputes over the Spratly Islands between the six countries date back to World War II, when Japan forced the French out of the islands so the Japanese navy could use them for submarine bases. In 1974, the PRC won a battle for the Paracel Islands, defeating a joint naval task force composed of South Vietnamese and American forces. Shortly after unification of the two Vietnams and response to the attack in 1974, Vietnam occupied 13 of the Spratly Islands. In March 1987, Chinese and Vietnamese naval forces battled each other, with each losing a single ship. The Vietnamese navy, however, saw 120 sailors drown during the naval encounter. Almost exactly a year later, PRC and Vietnamese forces once again clashed at Johnson Reef with the result that the PRC gained control of six additional islands while Vietnam seized control of 15 additional reefs. In March 1995, Philippine naval forces seized PRC fishing boats, detained 62 Chinese fishermen, and destroyed PRC sovereignty stone markers on a number of reefs and shoals in the Spratly Islands. In 1995, Chinese and Vietnamese forces again fought a naval battle, this time in the vicinity of Mischief Reef. Once again, Vietnam came out the loser with 50 sailors killed in action.

In the summer of 2011, the Spratly Islands again became a lightning rod for both military action and political diplomacy. Last May, Vietnam accused the PRC of using its surveillance ships to deliberately cut the exploration cables of one of Vietnam's ships surveying seismic activity within its own 200-mile long EEZ. Less than a month later, Vietnam claimed that the PRC cut another sonar cable belonging to one of PetroVietnam's boats. The PRC retaliated with the allegation that Vietnamese naval ships were chasing away Chinese fishing vessels that operated in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands. Later in June, the Vietnamese navy conducted live-fire drills 25 miles off its coast in disputed waters also claimed by the PRC. In the same month, the U.S. Ambassador told his Filipino luncheon audience that his country would support their position in

the Spratly Islands dispute. In late June, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution that condemned the use of force to decide territorial disputes in Southeast Asia to include the Spratly Islands. In early July, the PRC criticized the U.S. Senate for not understanding or appreciating the situation. On 19 November, the U.S. President met with Chinese officials with one of the topics being the South China Sea territorial disputes. These talks came only days after the president announced that the U.S. would permanently station a Marine Air-Ground Task Force in Australia.

The U.S. presence in Australia will begin with deployment of 200-250 Marines in early 2012 with the total number of military personnel, mainly Marines, rising to 2,500 troops by 2016. The U.S. military personnel will operate out of existing Australian sea and air bases. The most likely locations for the Marines to use as bases include the Royal Australian Navy Base HMAS (Her Majesty's Australian Ship) Connawarra

near Darwin; the Royal Australian Navy Base HMAS Stirling located south of Perth, and the Royal Australian Air Force Base Tindal 200 miles Southeast of Darwin. The U.S. Navy already makes port calls at both naval bases.

The U.S. government has a number of reasons why it is most likely deploying military personnel to Australia at this time. First, it counters the PRC's growing influence throughout the Pacific, as evidenced by the recent decision for a PRC forward base on the island of Seychelles in the Indian Ocean. Second, Australia is located near the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea, both strategic locations (see Threat Report [Global Chokepoints](#)). Third, it returns the U.S. to a more global posture after a decade of emphasis on the Middle East through the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fourth, forward basing of U.S. ships has its advantages in that it reduces travel time to and from home ports, generates less wear and tear on ships and equipment, and opens up the possible expansion use of crew rotations to increase deployment time. Fifth, the Australian military has the up-to-date infrastructure necessary to support a modern military. Sixth, the U.S. and Australia have enjoyed a great relationship since 1917, fighting as allies in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and now in Afghanistan. Lastly, this deployment possibly lays the foundation for future engagement with other Asian nations such as India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. >

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THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT OVER THE SPRATLY ISLANDS *(continued)*

The announcement of the Marines' future deployment to Australia has already achieved some positive effects vis-à-vis the PRC position on the Spratly Islands. Reporters immediately after the conference wrote that the Chinese were less bellicose in their statements about their position on the South China Sea territorial disputes. In a speech on 6 December 2011, however, the Chinese President Hu Jintao stated that the Chinese navy should make extended preparations for warfare and accelerate

its transformation and modernization in order to safeguard national security. The true meaning of Hu's words can probably never be truly determined, but the PRC's naval action will speak for itself. The PRC may believe that the deployment of U.S. Marines to Australia indicates America's willingness to do what is necessary to ensure the freedom of the seas in the South China Sea, and Hu's speech may be only rhetoric to placate his domestic audience. ♦

MARITIME CHOKEPOINTS—A KEY VULNERABILITY FOR U.S. ARMY OPERATIONS

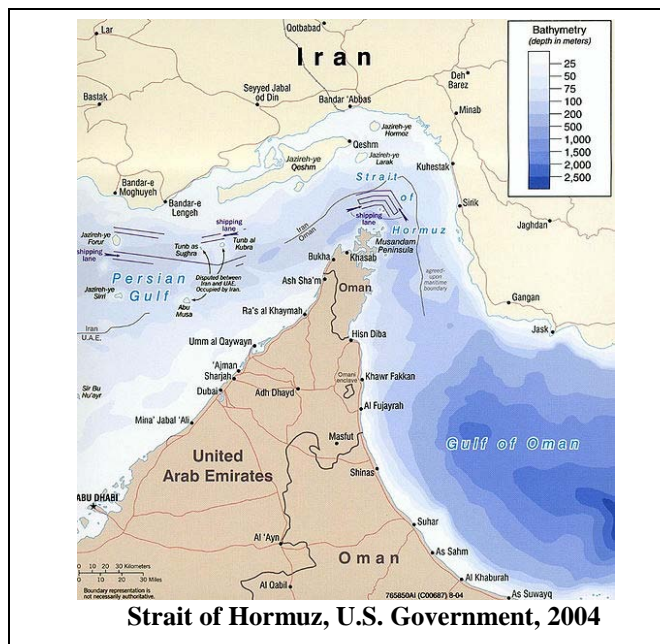
"A ship's a fool to fight a fort." – Lord Horatio Nelson, Royal Navy

By Justin Lawlor, OEA Team

Even in the age of sailing ships, the combat overmatch of shore facilities over floating ones was highly apparent to the greatest sailor of his age. In the 21st century, the power of shore-based defenses to channelize, deny, and defeat seaborne forces is accelerating, as more nations invest in anti-access/area denial (A2AD) weapons to defeat naval forces and restrict or stop merchant shipping. The best counter to these weapons remains what has been true for centuries, namely for ground forces to land and defeat shore-based defenses. The U.S. Army remains somewhat unique in both its vulnerability to shore-based interdiction of naval movement and its distinctive capability to address this threat. Army trainers must be cognizant of both likely strategies of maritime interdiction to fully predict likely operational environments (OEs) in which they will be called upon to operate. Nowhere is this confluence more apparent than in the world's [global maritime chokepoints](#).

Dr. Jean-Paul Rodrigue of Hofstra University defines choke points as areas where geographic conditions limit the movement of shipping and transit either cannot be bypassed, or can only be bypassed at considerable cost. Right now, the power of maritime chokepoints is most clearly seen in the context of petroleum shipping, most notably out of the Strait of Hormuz between Iran in the north and Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the south. Nearly all Middle Eastern petroleum products float out to global markets through the Strait of Hormuz. Not coincidentally, one of the primary likely Iranian courses of action during hostilities would be closure of the Strait to shipping by a combination of naval and shore forces. In the case of oil, much of the supply moves through the Strait of Hormuz, then flows through subsequent Red Sea chokepoints of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal to Europe. Currently, U.S. forces are deployed to Djibouti to stabilize the region around Bab-

el Mandeb, which comprises the southern opening of the Red Sea. The Suez Canal, one of world's oldest chokepoints, remains among its most important. The Suez is secured along its length by Egypt. Turmoil in the 1960s and 1970s, however, prompted brief closures of



the Canal, and freedom of passage remains a prime consideration of both the Egyptian and American governments.

Middle Eastern oil destined for Asia is often shipped through the Strait of Malacca. This Strait is located between Malaysia and Indonesia, and connects the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is part of a continuing international competition over the South China Sea that involves nearly all the nations in the region, and is a venue likely to see the introduction of advanced weapons. The Strait of Malacca, along with the Suez and ➤

MARITIME CHOKEPOINTS: A KEY VULNERABILITY FOR U.S. ARMY OPERATIONS *(continued)*

the Strait of Hormuz, is among the world's most economically important chokepoints. The Strait of Malacca is the passageway for nearly one-quarter of the world's economic goods, from Chinese consumer products to Indonesian agricultural harvests and Middle Eastern oil.



Multinational Participants in Panamax 2011 Exercise, U.S. Army South, 2011

U.S. Army forces are directly dependent on overseas logistics, primarily from America, for deployed forces transiting chokepoints in the Red Sea, as well as those in the western Mediterranean (Gibraltar Straits) and between the Mediterranean and Black Sea (the Bosphorus/Dardanelles, controlled by Turkey.) While closure by hostile nations is unlikely, both North Africa and the Horn of Africa are home to non-state actors like terrorists and pirates that have attempted to attack shipping in the last 10 years and remain a persistent threat. Such areas are prime potential locations for partnership-building efforts to reinforce host nation capability to secure coastlines and deny safe haven to non-state actors. The U.S. remains committed to the security of the Panama Canal through security partnerships with the Panamanian government and

support to development objectives within Panama.

Other chokepoints like the southern coasts of South America and Africa represent currently low zones of conflict but key terrain for future potential scenarios. The 1982 war between Argentina and the U.K. over the Falkland Islands, located near the southern tip of South America, illustrates how areas once considered strategic backwaters can take on military significance in a short period of time. Currently, the Antarctic is the subject of competing territorial claims between a number of nations.

Training for U.S. Army forces should help them prepare for operations along the spectrum of Army Decisive Action, and should include elements from stability operations for host nation partners to forced entry operations against near-peer opponents. With this in mind, traditional training events along with a variety of non-standard events like foreign weapons qualifications/familiarization, language, joint staff/planning, and mentorship exercises can provide added value for units potentially deploying to these areas. Additionally, these potential OEs represent a wide variety of terrain and climatic challenges, reinforcing the perennial need for U.S. forces to prepare for the widest range of topography and weather conditions.

Internationally, maritime chokepoints represent key centers of gravity for the global economic system and for logistics support to deployed U.S. forces. Maintaining their security and creating partner capacity to defend and protect these locations is likely to become a prime U.S. national defense consideration and mission for the U.S. Army for the near future. ♦

NORDINE AMRANI: ATTACK AT PLACE ST. LAMBERT IN BELGIUM

This article explores the means, method, and possible reasons behind 33 year old Amrani's attack and suicide.

By Raines Warford, OEA Team

The violence that has plagued many other European countries recently found its way to the normally low-keyed Belgium. On Tuesday, 13 December 2011, a man drove about five minutes from his apartment building to Place St. Lambert in Liege, Belgium. He walked onto a raised terrace walkway above a bus stop and threw three hand grenades toward an occupied bus shelter before opening fire on the crowd with a rifle. The mayhem

ended when the man shot himself in the head with a handgun.

Initially there was confusion as to what happened and who was involved. There were reports of up to three attackers, reports of an escape from the nearby courthouse, and reports that the attack was linked to an honor killing case. >

NORDINE AMRANI: ATTACK AT PLACE ST. LAMBERT IN BELGIUM *(continued)*

The attacker, identified as 33 year-old Nordine Amrani, was born in Belgium of Moroccan ancestry. After police revealed his identity, many internet bloggers quickly concluded Amrani was a Muslim terrorist motivated by religious extremism.



Nordine Amrani

According to Abdelhadi Amrani, an attorney who worked for the killer but is not related to him, “He did not feel at all Moroccan. He did not speak a word of Arabic, and was not Muslim.” Additionally, “He felt he had not had much luck in life and felt unfairly treated by the courts. This was the fed-up cry of a tormented soul – he was estranged from justice, and against society.”

The police knew Amrani as a petty criminal with numerous prior convictions. He was on parole for a conviction of the illegal possession of 10 firearms and 9,500 firearm parts. A photograph of items seized in an October 2007 raid on Amrani’s apartment showed two light anti-tank weapons. He was also convicted of growing 2,800 cannabis plants in a shed outside his apartment building. After the attack at Place St. Lambert, police discovered the body of a cleaning woman in that same shed, apparently shot in the head by Amrani prior to his rampage.

The morning of the attack, Amrani was scheduled to be interviewed by police as a suspect in the sexual molestation of a young woman. In 2003 he received a two-year suspended sentence for a rape conviction. If convicted again for a sex crime, he would have been required to serve that suspended sentence. Amrani also planned to marry his girlfriend and was apparently

worried about her reaction to the sexual molestation allegations.

Jean-Francois Dister, a defense attorney for Amrani, said, “He feared being returned to prison. He called me twice on Monday afternoon and on Tuesday morning about it. What worried him most was to be jailed again. According to my client it was a set-up by people who wanted to harm him. Mr. Amrani had a grudge against the law. He thought he had been wrongfully convicted.”

According to an *Agence France-Presse* report, Amrani regularly received psychological therapy. What psychological condition he was attending therapy for and whether or not he was taking any psychiatric medication(s) has not been revealed.

So far, no evidence suggests Nordine Amrani was motivated by religious extremism, but he may have been mentally ill. It seems he was simply a criminal who lashed out at innocent strangers in frustration over his legal troubles. A hand-written sign placed at the scene of the attacks asked simply “warum?” (Dutch for “why?”) and, doubtless, many will continue to ask this question.

Perhaps a more important question to answer is how Amrani obtained hand grenades, firearms, and ammunition in a country where private firearm and ammunition purchase and possession are heavily restricted. Belgian criminals mostly use weapons from Eastern Europe or the Balkans, according to Brice De Ruyver, professor of criminology at Ghent University. “The firearms come for instance from the conflicts in Yugoslavia or Chechnya,” he says.

Discussing Amrani’s weapons, Marches Van Alstein, a researcher at the Flemish Peace Institute in Brussels, explained that “if you also have the desire, that [sic] particular type of weapons are always very easy to come by in criminal circles.”

In the wake of Amrani’s murder spree, Belgian Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo announced that there is a new national security plan coming, with extra attention for illegal weapon possession and the financing of the weapon trade. In Belgium, private possession of handguns and semi-automatic rifles is permitted only with special authorization and only licensed owners may lawfully acquire, possess, or transfer a firearm or ammunition. An applicant for a firearm license must pass background checks that consider criminal and other personal records. A licensed firearm owner is only permitted to possess a limited quantity of ammunition. The private sale and transfer of firearms is prohibited. ➤

NORDINE AMRANI: ATTACK AT PLACE ST. LAMBERT IN BELGIUM *(continued)*

None of these laws prevented Nordine Amrani from acquiring the weapons he used on 13 December 2011.

A petty criminal found the means to acquire both firearms and hand grenades, despite a previous conviction for illegal weapons possession. If Nordine Amrani could obtain these weapons, certainly terrorists could obtain similar weapons through similar methods.

Video and photos taken immediately after the attack show police armed only with handguns. These police would be at great disadvantage against terrorists armed with rifles, grenades, and light anti-tank weapons – all of which Amrani possessed at one time. A small, well trained team of terrorists could inflict tremendous casualties on European civilians and police alike.

Many questions remain regarding the Place St. Lambert attack. One thing is clear however: the death toll could have been much higher. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- See the January 2012
TRISA Threat Report,
[Nordine Amrani.](#)

RUSSIAN SNIPER/MARKSMAN RIFLE SVD (SNAYPERSKAYA VINTOVKA DRAGUNOVA)

By Mr. Mike Spight, Training-Education-Leader Development Team and Mr. Kristin Lechowicz, OPFOR Doctrine Team

The SVD rifle design was developed by Evgeniy Fedorovich Dragunov in the late 1950s. The weapon is a gas operated, 7.62x54Rmm, semi-automatic rifle that has a 10 round magazine (see [WEG](#) sheet on page 14 for more details). The rifle was fielded to the Soviet military in 1963. The main purpose of the SVD rifle was to replace the aging Mosin Nagant M91/30 and SVT Tokarev “sniper rifles.” The unique operating system of the SVD changed the average marksman’s rifle from a bolt action rifle to a semi-automatic rifle.



Two Iraqi Soldiers with SVD Rifles
(Source: Wiki Commons)

The SVD has a number of variants, and the operating system is similar to that of the Kalashnikov, such as the Avtomat Kalashnikova ‘AK’ family of weapons. The major difference between the SVD and the AK operating systems is that the SVD uses a short-stroke piston design as opposed to the long stroke operating rod common with most AK systems. The SVD is used to leverage any standoff distance between the average soldier and targets at ranges typically greater than can be successfully engaged with an iron sighted AK/AKM and the relatively inaccurate 7.62x39mm or 5.45x39mm cartridges they are chambered for. It will enable a Russian rifle squad to engage targets at extended ranges with a much greater level of accuracy (dependent upon the marksman and prevailing conditions) and with a much more powerful rifle cartridge.

The Soviets developed the SVD as a true precision “sniper rifle” (perhaps the first attempt at designing and building a sniper rifle from the ground up). But as defined by U.S. Army sniper doctrine and current technology, it falls significantly short by today’s standards, primarily due to its relative inability to produce consistent, precision shot placement at longer ranges. The SVD, in capable hands, can produce 2 MOA groups at 100 yards (a two inch group) whereas modern U.S. sniper systems can consistently shoot sub MOA (less than one inch groups) at that range. In other words, the SVD does not possess the intrinsic accuracy of even the venerable U.S. M21 and other more modern systems. >

RUSSIAN SNIPER/MARKSMAN RIFLE SVD *(continued)*

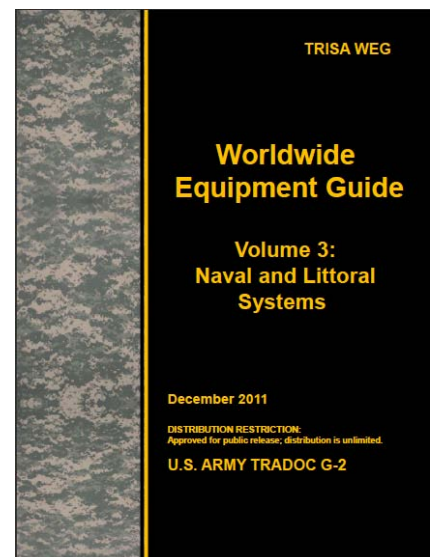
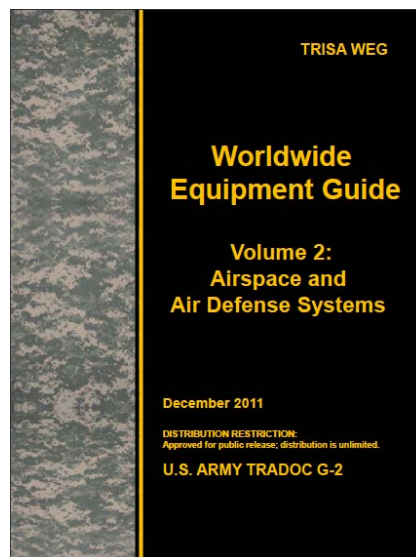
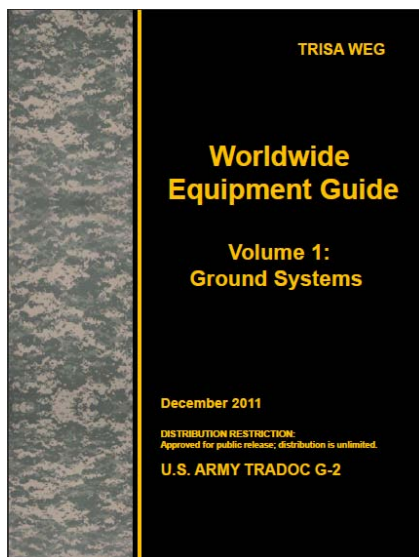
Bottom line, it is a 600 meter system; past that range, the shooter is hard pressed to obtain consistent accuracy with issue ammunition, particularly so during conditions of high cross winds, limited visibility, etc. Nonetheless, the SVD can be quite effective in urban settings as a sniper rifle, due to typically shorter standoff distances between shooter and the target, as has been demonstrated repeatedly in urban areas of Iraq when used by trained or semi-trained snipers/marksmen by AQ and/or other insurgent groups.

During WW2, the Red Army fielded both male and female Soldiers who were highly trained as true snipers and who were employed with great effect against the German Army and Waffen SS on the Eastern Front. After the war, the Soviets modified their sniper doctrine and today, the Russian Federation fields what would be more analogous to our Designated Marksman at small unit level. Those marksmen are typically equipped with the SVD. This is mostly due to the difference in Soviet/Russian doctrine—the use of “marksmen” versus

“snipers,” which is discussed in the article “OPFOR Sniper TTP in Complex Terrain.”

Of particular note is the capability of the optical scope that is standard equipment for the most common variant of the SVD. The PSO-1 telescopic sight is a 4X power optic with the capability to detect infrared illumination systems when used by the enemy. Note that during the Vietnam War, when setting ambushes for Viet Cong, there was no concern regarding infrared (IR) detection, and IR floodlights and goggles were often used at night to detect the enemy. However, if intelligence reports indicated that regular North Vietnamese Army units were operating in the area (and some were reported to have the SVD), then IR illumination systems were not used during night ambushes. Other, newer variants of the SVD also have night vision scopes available and rail interface systems (RIS) installed as well.


The SVD is a versatile and tough rifle that can be used in all types of hostile environments. The rifle has multiple variants that are proliferated world-wide, and the SVD is still also currently in the Russian inventory. ♦



WEG EQUIPMENT HIGHLIGHT: RUSSIAN 7.62-MM SNIPER/MARKSMAN RIFLE SVD

The Red Diamond will now include a monthly highlight of one datasheet from the [Worldwide Equipment Guide \(WEG\)](#). The WEG was developed to support OPFOR equipment portrayal across the training community. The WEG is not a product of the U.S. intelligence community. The WEG is a TRADOC G-2 approved document. Annual WEG updates are posted on the Army Knowledge Online (AKO).

Russian 7.62-mm Sniper/Marksman Rifle SVD

		Ammunition Types 7.62-mm cartridge Light Ball Heavy Ball Sniper Enhanced Penetration AP-I Tracer	Typical Combat Load 40
SYSTEM Alternative Designations: Dragunov Date of Introduction: 1967 Proliferation: Widespread Description: Weight (kg): Loaded (with magazine): 4.5 Empty (w/o magazine): 4.3 Length (mm): Overall: 1,230 With Bayonet: 1,370 Barrel: 620 Rate of Fire (rd/min): 30 Operation: Gas Feed: 10-rd detachable box magazine (15-rd available for the SVD-S) Fire Mode: Semi-automatic only SIGHTS Name: PSO-1 Type: Infrared detection capability for night firing Magnification: 4x Field of View (°): 6 Sighting Range (m): 1,300 Night Sights Available: Yes. NSPU-3. The NSPU-3 increases accuracy to 1,000 m at night or during poor visibility. VARIANTS SVD-S: Folding stock, 15-rd magazine SVU: Bullpup (trigger forward of magazine) OTs-03AS: SVU w/PSO-1 sight. 6V1: SVD with PSO-1 sight. 6V1-N3: SVD with NSPU-3 night sight.		AMMUNITION Name: Sniper (7N1) Caliber/length: 7.62x54R-mm rimmed Type: Steel core Range (m): Effective With Scope: 1,000 Effective Without Scope: 800 Armor Penetration: INA Muzzle Velocity (m/s): 823 Name: 7N13 Caliber/length: 7.62x54R-mm rimmed Type: Enhanced penetration (steel core) Range (m): Effective With Scope: 1,000 Effective Without Scope: 800 Armor Penetration (mm): Steel Plate: 6 mm @ 660 m Flak Vest: 800 m Muzzle Velocity (m/s): 828 Name: 7B2-3 Bullet: B-32 Caliber/length: 7.62x54R-mm rimmed Type: AP-I Range (m): Effective With Scope: 1,000 Effective Without Scope: 800 Armor Penetration: 10-mm armor plate @ 200 m Muzzle Velocity (m/s): 808 Name: 7T2m Bullet: T-46 Caliber/length: 7.62x54R-mm rimmed Type: Tracer Range (m): Effective With Scope: 1,000 Effective Without Scope: 800 Trace (m): 1,200 Time of Trace (sec): 3 Muzzle Velocity (m/s): 798	

NOTES

The bolt mechanism and gas recovery system of the SVD are similar to those of the AK and AKM. The 7.62x54-mm rimmed cartridge of the SVD is not interchangeable with the 7.62x39-mm rimless round of the AK-47/AKM. The SVD performs best when using target grade ammunition, however standard (PKM/PKT) 7.62x54-mm rimmed rounds may also be fired. Every OPFOR infantry squad has an SVD.

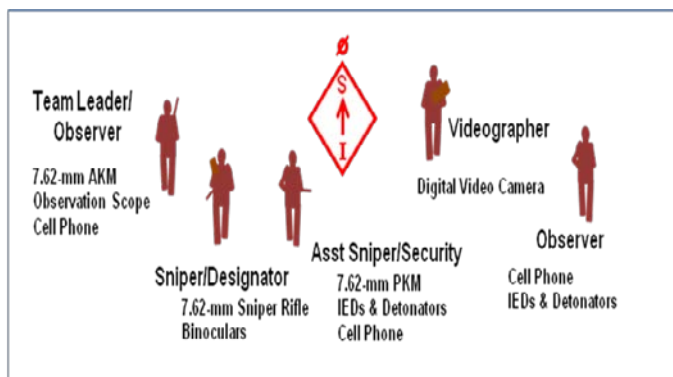
OPFOR SNIPER TTP IN COMPLEX TERRAIN

By Jon Moilanen, Threats Terrorism Team

The Opposing Force (OPFOR) uses snipers as a direct fire tactic in order to accomplish specified mission tasks that can include the following: create casualties, impede movement, cause anxiety, lower morale, and disrupt enemy tempo. This example of sniper tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) describes the actions of a five-member sniper team of a direct action cell in a local insurgent organization.

These OPFOR snipers have received advanced marksmanship training in precision long-range fires from a special-purpose force (SPF) team at a safe haven training site. Some missions of marksmen and snipers may overlap, but their roles and impact (psychological and physical) on the battlefield are different. This sniper team is highly skilled in field craft, stealth, stalking, concealment, and tactical movements in infiltration and exfiltration. They operate dressed in civilian clothing to blend into the local population. Sniper attacks are planned and conducted in a detailed and deliberate manner.

Five-Member Sniper Team



The OPFOR sniper team comprises one insurgent as team leader/observer, one insurgent as a sniper/designator, and one insurgent is an assistant sniper who also provides 360-degree security for the team while the sniper and team leader/observer focus on the target area. These three team members have responsibility for a specified security arc at their sniper location; however, the assistant sniper may also be responsible for caching ammunition, water, and equipment, and/or operating team communications. In this example, another insurgent acts as an observer near

the sniper location, and a videographer locates near the target site to video-record the sniper engagement for timely media exploitation in the OPFOR information warfare (INFOWAR) campaign.

TC 7-100.3 *Irregular Opposing Forces – Coming in 2012!*

Insurgents, Guerrillas, Criminal Organizations, and Other Considerations

Sniper TTP

The TTP used by the OPFOR sniper were not unique to the OPFOR, but the OPFOR was not hindered by traditional values and laws of warfare. For example, the OPFOR sniper might use civilian noncombatants as shields or for forward observation and surveillance. A sniper may cause civilian casualties to disrupt enemy responses and facilitate the sniper team's exfiltration.

Infiltration

Snipers used their detailed knowledge of a local urban neighborhood to cover and conceal their infiltration. Discrete reconnaissance of possible sniper locations identified a clear angle of fire from a three-story building about 350 meters from the target area. Weapons and equipment were cached in a hidden wall niche of the building.

Occupation



On the designated day, the sniper team occupied their site individually from different approaches as part of the daily flow of pedestrians. The assistant sniper was tasked to remain on the street outside the building as security and early warning. The videographer had visited

OPFOR SNIPER TTP IN COMPLEX TERRAIN *(continued)*

the park across the street from the traffic control post (TCP) several times during the previous week to establish a regular presence. He calmly sipped tea under a tree at the park.

Sniper Engagement

The sniper team had targeted an Army officer of an enemy coalition force. Surveillance confirmed that he checked a series of military TCPs on a regular schedule. One TCP was usually established at an intersection near the local marketplace. The team leader/observer used an observation scope to confirm the target as a vehicle arrived at the TCP. The sniper had rehearsed his direction and angle of fire and set a bench rest inside the third-story room and away from the window sill to create a steady firing platform. There was no need for a deflection setting. He identified the target and shot as the officer gave instructions to the sergeant in charge of the TCP. The videographer recorded the attack with his small video camera camouflaged inside a bundle.

Exfiltration

The team leader/observer used a cellular telephone and codeword to tell the observer near the target site that the attack was a success. This cued the observer to detonate a small IED in a nearby building to focus some of the attention of enemy reaction forces searching for the

position of the sniper. The team leader and sniper immediately secured their weapons and equipment in the cache, set the access panel with a pressure-plate IED, and dispersed into the crowd. The assistant sniper and observer had already departed the area.

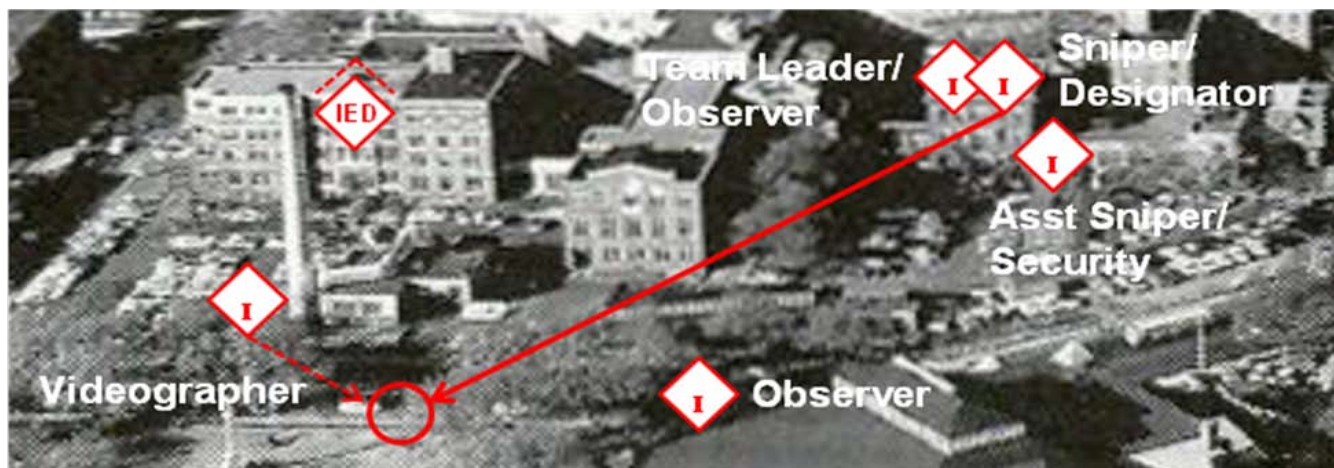
Media Distribution of Sniper Mission Results

The OPFOR videographer immediately passed the digital videorecording to the INFOWAR cell for media distribution. Although false, the story that accompanied the video release on the Internet praised the exceptional skills of a lone sniper who had sworn an oath to kill 25 of the invaders. The reaction on Internet blogs achieved the added psychological effect.

OPFOR References

For more information on OPFOR sniper operations, organization, and equipment, see:

- ◆ TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*, Chapter 16. (2011).
- ◆ FM 7-100.4, *Opposing Force Organization Guide*, Volume III, Paramilitary and Nonmilitary Orgs. (2007).
- ◆ TRADOC G2 Handbook No.1.07 C2, *A Soldiers Primer on Terrorism TTP*. (2009). ◆



SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN SYRIA

See also corresponding OEA Team Threat Report: [Suicide Bombings - Syria](#)

By Raines Warford, OEA Team

The conflict in Syria recently witnessed the use of suicide bombings. While there is no direct evidence that the Syrian government is responsible for the suicide bombings in Damascus and Aleppo, circumstantial evidence suggests this may be the case. No opposition or terrorist group claims responsibility for the attacks. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Syrian National Council, and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades not only deny involvement, but accuse President Bashar al-Assad's government of staging the attacks.

The uprising in Syria began in early 2011. This uprising was part of the Arab Spring, a wave of social upheaval in the Arab world with general goals of greater political freedom and an end to autocracy. Public demonstrations in Syria first took place on 26 January 2011 and continued sporadically until mass protests erupted in Daraa, capital city of Daraa Governorate, on 15 March 2011. The situation quickly developed into a full-scale uprising, with protesters demanding the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad and an end to the Baath (Renaissance) Party's control of the government. The uprising in Syria was inspired by the successful revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Syrian protesters' TTP include marches, hunger strikes, rioting, and vandalism.

The Syrian government responded to the uprising with military force. Some members of the military chose to join the protestors rather than fight them. The result was bloody fighting across the country. The fighting involved mostly conventional military tactics on the part of both the government and the rebels until the end of December 2011.

On 23 December, suicide bombers detonated two vehicles loaded with explosives near state security buildings in Damascus. At least 44 people were killed and more than 150 injured. The explosions occurred shortly after the arrival of Arab League observers in Damascus.

The government-controlled al-Ikhbariya al-Suriya television channel said the first vehicle exploded outside the offices of an unspecified security agency. When

guards at a nearby compound housing the General Security Directorate went to inspect the aftermath of the first blast, the driver of another vehicle rammed the main gates and detonated explosives in the vehicle.

Within minutes of the detonations, al-Ikhbariya al-Suriya announced that two suicide bombers driving vehicles packed with explosives attacked the General Security Directorate and another branch of the security services in the Kfar Sousa district, south-west of Damascus' city center. "Preliminary investigations showed al-Qaeda was responsible," the al-Ikhbariya al-Suriya broadcast stated. "We said it from the beginning, this is terrorism. They are killing the army and civilians," Syrian deputy foreign minister Faysal Mekdad told reporters outside the headquarters of the General Intelligence Agency. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks.

The Abdullah Azzam Brigades, an al-Qaeda affiliate that operates throughout the Middle East, released a statement on jihadist Web sites on 27 December denying responsibility for the suicide attacks. "The mujahideen, in all their groups, have no connection to these vicious bombings, and accusing them of it is falsehood and lies. The one truly responsible for them is he who is benefiting from them, and it is the regime of al-Assad and his intelligence agencies," the statement said.

The Syrian Revolution General Commission, a coalition of 40 opposition groups, accused the government of orchestrating the bombings. Omar Idilbi, a member of the opposition group the Syrian National Council (SNC), described the explosions as "very mysterious" because they happened in heavily guarded areas difficult to reach by car. There were unconfirmed reports of roads being closed before the blasts and a lack of reaction by security forces. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), an opposition group composed of military defectors and the main group actively fighting government forces, denied responsibility for the attacks.

On 06 January 2012, a suicide bomber detonated explosives near buses carrying policemen at a traffic light in the Midan area of south Damascus. The attack >

SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN SYRIA *(continued)*

killed 26 people and wounded 63 more. The government-controlled Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said a suicide bomber detonated explosives just before 1100 hours in a densely populated area near the Hassan al-Hakeem Basic Education School. The news agency posted photos of the aftermath showing victims, vehicles with shattered windows, and pools of blood. The bombing happened just days after the Free Syrian Army—the force of military defectors fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime—vowed to kick off "huge operations" against government targets.

As with the suicide bombings on 23 December, no group claimed responsibility for the attack. Once again, the Syrian government blamed the attack on al-Qaeda. A government spokesman added that Lebanon warned Damascus on 04 January of an al-Qaeda infiltration into Syria.

On 10 February 2012, two vehicles loaded with explosives detonated outside government buildings in Aleppo, Syria's most populous city, killing at least 25 people and wounding at least 175 others. The blasts struck the military intelligence directorate and a police headquarters.

State media claimed the bombings as proof that the government is opposed by terrorists, rather than a popular uprising. Capt. Ammar al-Wawi, a spokesman for the Free Syrian Army, said the FSA was not involved in the suicide attacks. He accused the Syrian government of staging the attacks to "distract the world's attention from the massacres in Homs".

Syrian officials say the December and January suicide bombings are the work of al-Qaeda-linked militants. President Bashar al-Assad blames the U.S., Israel, and al-Qaeda. No group claims responsibility for any of the bombings and the primary groups opposed to Assad, the

Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council, not only deny involvement but accuse Assad's government of staging the attacks. "The explosion in Damascus today is the work of the Syrian intelligence because they had information that a massive protest was planned in the al-Midan district," said Lt. Col. Mohamed Hamado of the Free Syrian Army. "The FSA does not conduct operations of that kind that may kill civilians, and we are in direct contact with Col. Riad al-Asaad, head of FSA, before executing any attack. We have confirmed information that the intelligence is funding and has formed units that perform terrorist operations under names of Islamic extremist groups and issue statements on the Internet, so that the government proves to the

West that Islamic extremists are a threat and may take over if the regime is toppled." Likewise, the SNC claimed it "had previously warned that the regime was planning to carry out bombing attacks in several areas in Syria. Today's bombings, in the area that has experienced the largest of the anti-regime demonstrations, clearly bear the regime's fingerprints." Further, Abdel Karim Rihawi, head of the Cairo-based activist group the Syrian Human Rights League,

stated, "The regime orchestrated the explosion in Damascus, as a fake message to the monitors that there are so-called terrorists conducting operations."

The Syrian government previously claimed anti-government protests, which began in March 2011, were the work of terrorists rather than a popular uprising. No terrorist groups claim involvement with the protests. The closest any terror group comes to involving itself in the Syrian protests is al-Qaeda's statement of endorsement. In July 2011, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri encouraged Syrian protestors while implying al-Qaeda was not involved with them, stating "God knows that if >

Relevant Actors

President Bashar al Assad: *his Alawite-dominated Baath (Renaissance) party government rules Syria.*

Free Syrian Army (FSA): *formed in July 2011 and composed of Syrian military defectors; this group coordinates armed opposition to Assad's government.*

Syrian National Council: *formed in October 2011, this group represents internal and external activists opposed to Assad's government. It is a coalition of earlier-formed opposition groups, including The Damascus Declaration, Local Coordination Committees in Syria, the Syrian Revolution General Commission, and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.*

Abdullah Azzam Brigades: *named after al-Qaeda's co-founder and Osama bin Laden's mentor, this Lebanese al-Qaeda affiliate claims to have conducted attacks in multiple countries. They deny involvement in the Syrian suicide bombings, despite not being accused of the bombings.*

SUICIDE BOMBINGS IN SYRIA *(continued)*

it were not for the raging war with the New Crusades in which we are engaged ... my brothers and I would be at your side today, in your midst defending you with our necks and chests.” Salafist cleric Sheikh Omar Bakri claimed. “If the Sunnis in Syria had called for Al Qaeda’s help, Al Qaeda would be everywhere in Syria.” Bakri was born to a wealthy Syrian family. In 1977 he left Syria, where he was wanted for being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and moved to Lebanon. Hezbollah, a long-time beneficiary of support from the Syrian government, also voiced support for the Assad regime. “This is a second step in the plan by evil American forces and those under its control in our region to punish Syria for its firm support of resistance forces against the Zionist enemy (Israel) and the West,” Hezbollah stated on its Web site, blaming the U.S. for the attack.

Andrew Tabler, a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, author of “In the Lion's Den: An Eyewitness Account of Washington's Battle with Syria,” and a man who knows Bashar al-Assad personally, offers valuable insight into the relationship between Sunni extremist groups and the Syrian government. “The Assad regime is a master at using such groups ruthlessly and even cynically to justify its grip on power and achieve its objectives in neighboring states. It’s one of the most overlooked parts of its foreign policy because backing such groups seems to clash with its basic Baathist secular tenets at home.” Tabler further explains: “The regime blasts on Al Qaeda, while the opposition blames the regime for staging the attack ... The truth is likely much more complicated: The Assad regime loses or loosens its control on such groups; they carry out suicide attacks in Syria. The regime has plausible deniability and they use the attacks to rally people around the regime.”

Martin Chulov, a journalist with *The Guardian*, disagrees. He stated in a report on 23 December 2011, “Not one defector I have spoken to in the past six months has seen or heard of any member of al-Qaida or a jihadi organisation inside Syria since the revolt began. To them, the regime's insistence of a foreign-backed insurgency manned by highly mobile jihad groups who

consistently outmanoeuvre the Syrian army is pure self-serving fantasy.”

According to a McClatchy Newspapers article, anonymous U.S. officials confirmed al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) carried out the suicide bombings in Damascus with authorization from Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda’s leader. The U.S. officials reportedly said that AQI and Zawahiri apparently see the Syrian conflict as an opportunity to reassert themselves. The United States has not officially stated who it believes to be responsible for any of the suicide bombings in Syria. It is certainly possible that an al-Qaeda group conducted one or more of the attacks but it is uncharacteristic of al-Qaeda to not claim responsibility.

Syrian state television announced within minutes of the 23 December suicide bombings that they were the work of al-Qaeda. The extremely fast reporting and

assignment of blame suggests that, at the least, guidance was given to the media to assign blame for any such attacks to al-Qaeda. It might, however, also indicate prior knowledge the attacks would occur.

It is also possible the suicide bombings were conducted by members of the Syrian opposition who intentionally made no claim of responsibility. Executing a suicide bombing against government forces

and subsequently accusing the Syrian government of perpetrating the attack would allow the opposition to utilize the tactic of suicide bombings while avoiding the stigma associated with it. To admit using suicide bombings risks negative responses and a possible decrease or loss of support from the public, media, and foreign governments.

Interestingly, the suicide bombings seem to have done little to further the cause of either the Assad regime or the opposition. Neither side appears to have benefited significantly, nor does either side appear to have been negatively impacted. The conflict continues, with no resolution in sight. Historically, once suicide bombings are utilized in a conflict, they tend to be used repeatedly. The conflict in Syria will likely involve more suicide bombings in the future. ♦



MONTHLY WRAP-UP OF CTID DAILY UPDATES

CTID analysts produce a daily [CTID Daily Update](#) to help our readers focus on key current events and developments across the Army training community. Available on AKO, each *Daily Update* is organized topically across the Combatant Commands (COCOMs). This list highlights key updates during February 2012. The *Daily Update* is a research tool, and an article's inclusion in the *Update* does not reflect an official U.S. Government position on the topic.



- 01 Feb—**Yemen:** [U.S. drone targets al-Qaeda hideouts in Abyan, Yemen, 13 killed](#)
- 02 Feb—**Nigeria:** [Suspected Boko Haram kill 6 in Maiduguri](#)
- 02 Feb—**India:** [India, China, and Japan coordinate anti-piracy patrols in Indian Ocean](#)
- 02 Feb—**Israel:** [Gaza militants fire eight rockets into southern Israel](#)
- 03 Feb—**Sudan:** [Sudan bombs U.S.-funded Bible school in South Kordofan, U.S. condemns](#)
- 03 Feb—**Colombia:** [Four dead, 15 hurt in Villa Rica car bomb attack](#)
- 06 Feb—**Mexico:** [Mexico nabs reputed cartel assassin wanted in U.S.](#)
- 06 Feb—**Egypt:** [Blast hits gas pipeline between Egypt, Jordan, Israel in northern Sinai](#)
- 07 Feb—**Mexico:** [Zeta Commandante killed in Nuevo Leon](#)
- 07 Feb—**Syria:** [Heavy shelling rocks protest city of Homs](#)
- 07 Feb—**Japan:** [Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force orders airborne laser mine detection systems](#)
- 08 Feb—**Kenya:** [Tens of thousands flee northern Kenya violence](#)
- 08 Feb—**China:** [PLA Navy's JH-7 warplanes extend operational range in South China Sea](#)
- 09 Feb—**Syria:** [Syrian military massing across Lebanese border from Wadi Khaled](#)
- 09 Feb—**UK:** [Nine British Islamists jailed for plotting terror attacks](#)
- 10 Feb—**Saudi Arabia:** [Saudi Arabia to buy nukes if Iran tests A-bomb](#)
- 10 Feb—**Turkey:** [Suspected woman suicide bomber dies in Istanbul](#)
- 13 Feb—**Mali:** [War comes to Mali: Al Qaeda advances under cover of tribal conflict](#)
- 13 Feb—**Georgia:** [Grenade found in Israeli ambassador's car](#)
- 14 Feb—**Israel:** [A fatal attack on Israelis abroad could spark war with Iran and Hizballah](#)
- 14 Feb—**Vietnam:** [Vietnam seen courting Western arms deals in growing arms race in Southeast Asia](#)
- 15 Feb—**Mexico:** [Drug maker for 'El Chapo' seized in Mexico](#)
- 15 Feb—**Colombia:** [Colombia Army kills FARC front commander](#)
- 17 Feb—**Turkey:** [Turkish court convicts 24 Hezbollah suspects on terror charges](#)
- 21 Feb—**Russia:** [Russia to field first Arctic brigade in 2015](#)
- 22 Feb—**North Korea:** [North Korea develops new long-range artillery](#)
- 23 Feb—**Iran:** [Iran tests anti-UAV radars](#)

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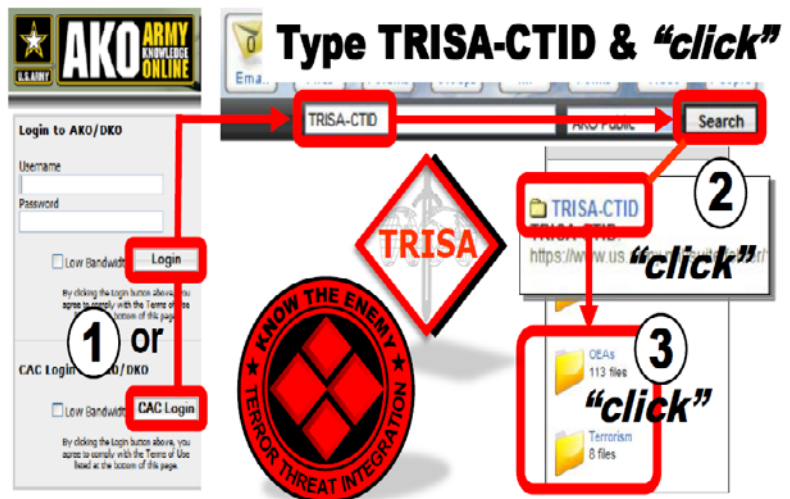
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