

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



Volume 10  
Issue #2  
February 2020

## FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



### EURASIA

- 3 Summing Up Russian Military Achievements in 2019
- 4 Some Changes Noted By the Russian Armed Forces in 2019
- 5 Russia's National Center for Defense Management Turns Five
- 6 The Ka-31: Russia's Airborne Early Warning Helicopter
- 8 Cyber Defense Centers to be Added to Military Districts
- 10 The Last Line of Air Defense: Russia's Verba MANPADS
- 12 Silenced Assault Rifle for Russian Special Troops
- 13 Russia: Increased Housing Benefits for Contract Soldiers
- 14 General Gareev's Legacy in Russian Military Science
- 15 Strengthening Russian Military Morale at the Small Unit Level: Return of the Military-Political Directorate
- 16 New Regulations for Foreign Applicants to the Russian Armed Forces
- 17 Russia's Security Assistance Balancing Act in the Caucasus
- 18 The Kazakh Defense Industry's Involvement in Air Defense
- 19 Pedro Sánchez Elected Spanish Prime Minister

### INDO-PACIFIC

- 20 Facing Up to China's Military Interests in the Arctic
- 22 China: The Evolution of Cyber-Electronic Warfare in the Information Age
- 23 China: Bolstering Training in Logistics and Equipment Support
- 24 China's Aircraft Carrier Program
- 26 China Commissions New Type 055 Destroyer into Service
- 27 Civil Air Defense Organizations in South China Sign Cooperative Agreement

- 28 China Modifies Military Conscription Cycle, Adopts Biannual Recruitment
- 29 China Issues Policy Adjusting High-Level Officer Promotions for PLA
- 30 China Railways to Add 4,000 km of New Track in 2020
- 32 New Bridge to Connect Russia's Far East with China's Northeast
- 33 Sri Lanka: Operations Begin on New Chinese-Funded Artificial Island
- 34 India and China Conduct Joint Military Exercise
- 35 Tibet's "Shigatse Army Division" to Receive All-Terrain Training
- 37 Maldivian Police Reveal Airline Terror Plot
- 38 Indonesia Introduces New Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
- 39 Vietnamese Officials Present National Defense White Paper in Algeria

### MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA

- 40 Israel, Greece, and Cyprus to Construct "East-Med" Natural Gas Pipeline
- 42 Russia's Increasing Presence in the Middle East
- 43 Assad Invites China to Invest in Syria's Reconstruction
- 45 Efforts to Unify Kurdish Parties in Syria
- 47 Transfer of Functions to Egypt's New Administrative Capital to Begin Mid-2020
- 49 Germany's Wintershall and Libya to Conduct Joint Oil Exploration
- 51 Houthi Military Spokesman: 2020 Will be a Year of Air Defense

- 52 Digital Riyals, Liras and Dinars: The Looming Dawn of the Cryptocurrency Era?
- 54 Saudi Arabian Military Inaugurates Women into Combat Positions
- 55 Turkish Aerospace Industries Opens Office in Pakistan
- 56 Turkey's Defense Industry Releases Strategic Plan for 2019-2023
- 58 Khamenei Warns Veterans of Declining Revolutionary Fervor
- 59 The Role of Nanotech in Iran's Future Economy
- 60 Iran to Send Astronaut into Space?

### AFRICA

- 61 France Seeks Validation for Operation Barkhane
- 62 Mali: Opposition to Foreign Troops Grows
- 63 Organized Crime Funds Terrorism at Mali's Borders
- 64 China Forges Ties With Ethiopian Space Agency
- 65 Niger: High Ranking Military Officers Sacked After Terrorist Attack
- 66 Nigerian Governor Seeks Peace Deal with Bandits
- 67 Cameroon Grants Special Status to Anglophone Regions

### LATIN AMERICA

- 68 Pro-Iranian Bolivarian Response to Targeted Soleimani Killing
- 69 ELN and Gulf Clan Landmines
- 70 Illegal Gold Mining in Colombia
- 71 Peru's Cyber Defense Law
- 72 The Proliferation of Drone Use by Drug Traffickers
- 73 Maduro Names New Parliamentary Leader in Unconstitutional Hearing

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

Operational Environment Watch provides translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

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

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

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

**ON THE COVER:**

*Young Iranians both volunteered or were pressed into service during the Iran-Iraq War*

Source: Masjed.ir, <http://www.masjed.ir/en/newsagency/32940>

# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 10 | Issue 2

February | 2020

### Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

#### Eurasia

Chuck Bartles  
Geoff Demarest  
Ray Finch  
Les Grau  
Matthew Stein

#### Indo-Pacific

Anne-Marie Brady  
Andrew Hartnett  
Cindy Hurst  
Matthew Stein  
Peter Wood  
Jacob Zenn

#### Middle East, North Africa

Zachary Fesen  
Ihsan Gündüz  
Karen Kaya  
Michael Rubin  
Lucas Winter

#### Africa

Dodge Billingsley  
Robert Feldman  
Jacob Zenn

#### Latin America

Geoff Demarest  
Brenda Fiegel

#### Editor-in-Chief

**Tom Wilhelm**

Editor

Karen Kaya

Design Editor

Thomas Tolare



## Summing Up Russian Military Achievements in 2019

**OE Watch Commentary:** In summarizing the military's accomplishments in 2019, Russia's primary military newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, published a detailed interview with First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov. As expected, most of his comments merely expressed praise for their achievements, yet there were a handful of observations which merit closer examination. After assuring readers that 2019 saw "the delivery of more than 6,500 new and modernized weapons to the troops," Tsalikov asserts that "the first missile regiment, which is armed with the 'Avangard' missile complex with the hypersonic gliding winged warhead, went on alert last Friday [20 December 2019]. The deployment of the 'Peresvet' laser mounts has been completed." Given that the two weapon systems were only first described by President Putin during a speech in February 2018, these are impressive accomplishments, if true.

Later in the interview, Tsalikov takes issue with various global ratings, where the Russian military is not considered the strongest, asserting, "we totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world." As proof of this claim, Tsalikov points to the annual results of the "International Army Games," where, over the past five years, Russia has won "the overwhelming majority of competitions." He goes on to suggest that it is erroneous to measure the strength of a military "exclusively using budget appropriations," insisting that "those who have the greater skill, mastery, and desire to work for the benefit of their cause are victorious."



First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov.  
Source: mil.ru, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsalikov\\_HR-gr.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsalikov_HR-gr.jpg), CCA 4.0

After describing the many improvements with military housing, medical care, and logistics, Tsalikov concludes the interview by describing how the military is defending against information attacks. He asserts that the Russian military has "adhered to honest and open work," though fails to mention that data regarding casualties is now considered classified. Stressing the defensive nature of Russia's military doctrine, he assures readers that if the military is attacked, it "will not remain without an adequate response." He goes on to enlist the support of "Russian mass media to be as a minimum allies, if not 'soldiers' in this information warfare." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***"... We totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world."***

**Source:** Aleksandr Aleksandrov, "Прорывные технологии на всех направлениях (Breakthrough Technologies in All Directions)," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 December 2019. <http://redstar.ru/proryvnye-tehnologii-na-vseh-napravleniyah/>

*...First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov discussed how the Armed Forces will best remember the outgoing year and how they managed to achieve the intended plans....*

*[Aleksandrov] While assessing the work that has been done, which key results did you manage to achieve in the outgoing year? Which events became significant for the Armed Forces?*

*[Tsalikov] During this year, the Ministry of Defense has done an enormous amount of work, which received the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's high rating and is being confirmed by Russian society's level of trust, which we are observing today....All the events, which were outlined by the 2019 Action Plan and the State Defense Order, were completely accomplished, as the Defense Minister mentioned in his briefing at the Final Collegium. The highest indicators of weapons and equipment deliveries in the last four years were achieved. We are talking about the delivery of more than 6,500 new and modernized weapons to the troops, which permitted us to bring the percentage of state-of-the-art models to 68.2 percent.... The highest percentage of state-of-the-art weapons totals 82 percent in the Nuclear Triad. The first missile regiment, which is armed with the "Avangard" missile complex with the hypersonic gliding winged warhead, went on alert last Friday. The deployment of the "Peresvet" laser mounts has been completed....*

*[Aleksandrov] How did you manage to emerge at those rates of military force structure? Does this give us the right to consider [our Army] to be one of the world's leading armies, which the leading positions in the international ratings are confirming today?*

*[Tsalikov] I will say more, many of these ratings are inclined to understate Russia's positions. Why should we trust foreign ratings, while naively believing that we have the second army and not the first? In fact, world championships among armies are not conducted.... For example, we totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world. For those people, who claim this status, we conduct the International Army Games (ArMI), where the leading countries' armies compete in honest and peaceful competition. As it was this year when a record number of participants – 39 states from all the world's regions – participated in ArMI....*

*We have the capabilities, which have been set forth in the budget. But it would be absolutely incorrect to assess the results of this work exclusively using budget appropriations. Those who have the greater skill, mastery, and desire to work for the benefit of their cause are victorious in any sphere....*

*[Aleksandrov] This is actually impressive, and we are seeing this. In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has taken a strict course to open, objective, and accessible public information about the life and activity of the Armed Forces to the maximum possible extent. What is the transparency policy and what kind of results has it yielded?*

*[Tsalikov] Based upon the results of recent public opinion polls, approximately 90 percent of the citizens approve and support the activities of the Armed Forces.... We have prioritized transparency not for publicity or PR....*

*...We need to acknowledge that the information pressure, which is directed at discrediting all that enormous work, which is being conducted to strengthen the Russian Army, has been increasing in recent years.... We have adhered to honest and open work. But those people, who will use the dirty methods of information warfare against us should know that their operations will not remain without an adequate response. And we would like for the representatives of the media industry and the Russian mass media to be as a minimum allies if not "soldiers" in this information warfare. In the current state, far from everyone likes the Russian Armed Forces. And we are not striving for that. However, there are schemes and plans for discrediting the Russian Army, which we will never permit. And we need to combat this only through transparency.*





## Some Changes Noted By the Russian Armed Forces in 2019

**OE Watch Commentary:** At the end each year, the Russian Minister of Defense, Deputy Ministers, Military District Commanders and Fleet Commanders grant interviews to the press. These are always “feel-good” interviews talking about successful exercises, new equipment and improvements in military service life. *Izvestia* ran a recap of some of the changes in the Russian Armed Forces in 2019. *OE Watch* covered many of these but *Izvestia*’s recap is still useful. It shows that certainties of Russian service life are changing. Russian generals will no longer look like Russian generals. The heavily-festooned parade uniform of multiple medals and awards is changing to a less austentatious, more professional appearance. And officers will not be overworked: end of working day meetings, work on off-duty and leave days will be frowned upon. The Russian Navy, which is primarily a brown and green littoral navy, i.e. close to Russian shores, is preparing to become more of a blue water expeditionary navy. Consequently, more Russian Naval Infantry officers will go to language and humanitarian studies schools to prepare for an expanded role in military-diplomatic affairs abroad. For all servicemen, “The rules for working with classified information continued to be tightened during the year... In part, this is a return to Soviet-era practice.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“Naval infantry officers are now being prepared for service abroad. They are undergoing in-depth language instruction and [are] studying humanitarian disciplines. In the longer term, Russia’s naval infantry will be diplomats, peacekeepers, and protectors of Russian citizens abroad, and a backup for Moscow’s policy in unstable regions.”***

**Source:** Roman Kretsul, Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoi, and Anton Lavrov, “Without Medals but in a Beret: How the Armed Forces Changed During the Year,” *Izvestia*, 31 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/957467/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi-anton-lavrov/bez-ordenov-no-v-berete-kak-izmenilis-vooruzhennye-sily-za-god>

### ***Without Medals but in a Beret: How the Armed Forces Changed During the Year***

*In 2019, the Armed Forces started taking a stricter line on parade uniform and more actively preparing for assignments abroad. For example, airborne and naval infantry troops are forming special expeditionary forces that will be able to deploy to military bases anywhere in the world to perform humanitarian [missions] or, if need be, military-political missions. Separate teams of cyber-attack and computer-virus fighters appeared in the Army, as well. Also in the outgoing year, the Defense Ministry tidied up the rules for wearing medals and working with state secrets, and tackled the problem of service personnel being overworked.*

#### ***Helicopters First***

*The process of creating airmobile units began at the Airborne Troops. For the paratroopers, the arrival of their own helicopters was, in its own way, a revolution, because now they could be used without protracted negotiations. Experimental airmobile subunits have already been successfully tried out, in the Center-2019 exercise. In the longer term, the Airborne Troops will get their own army aviation brigade.*

*The actual purpose of the “winged infantry” has also changed. Previously they trained to take part in large-scale military conflicts, but now they are becoming all-purpose soldiers. The Airborne Troops are receiving equipment for every possible eventuality — from quad bikes and armored cars to tanks. If necessary, the “blue berets” can be deployed anywhere in the world and operate there with complete autonomy.*

#### ***Also on the Shore***

*Naval infantry units were reformatted in 2019 into expeditionary forces. The decision to do this was influenced by experience gained in Syria: The “black berets” successfully organized security and defense for the port of Tartus. Naval infantry brigades received tanks and drones, and a substantial increase in numbers.*

*Naval infantry officers are now being prepared for service abroad. They are undergoing in-depth language instruction and studying humanitarian disciplines. In the longer term, Russia’s naval infantry will be diplomats, peacekeepers, and protectors of Russian citizens abroad, and a backup for Moscow’s policy in unstable regions.*

#### ***Invisible Front***

*Special subunits for countering cyber-attacks began forming in the forces. Companies for containing network threats have already assumed duty, and special centers for countering cyber-attacks will be formed in the [military] districts next year. Their mission will be to protect against viruses and also to prevent unauthorized access to networks and incidents that [have] impact on the information infrastructure. The centers will oversee both open and secure military lines of communication.*

*In the longer term, the cyber centers will be amalgamated into a global information protection system that will handle the security of all Defense Ministry traffic.*

#### ***Don’t Wear More Than Two***

*There was a significant change in May to the rules for wearing parade uniforms. Only two rows of five medals each can now be worn. That is, service personnel can pin no more than 10 medals, awards, and departmental heraldic badges onto two boards on the left side of the tunic. Civilian awards and badges of public organizations are banned from parade uniform. Previously some officers’ uniforms had entire “iconostases,” as they were humorously known by the troops. And this flippant attitude toward decorations did not help raise the authority of officers and prestige of the Armed Forces.*

*A personal example was shown by the chief of the military, who in his years in senior roles has received dozens of awards. Minister of Defense Shoigu attended the 9 May parade in a uniform that bore just two rows of five each of his most significant awards...*

#### ***Secret of Defense***

*The rules for working with classified information continued to be tightened during the year. Legislation proposes to bring back the concept of “defense secret.” This would include information about weaponry, manning and recruitment, location of forces, and also mobilization plans. In part, this is a return to Soviet-era practice: Until the 1990s, there were separate concepts of state and defense secrets.*

*The Defense Ministry has already drawn up amendments to the instructions for access to state secrets by service and civilian personnel. These bring in additional restrictions — for example, for the majority of officers in the army and security agencies and also for employees of civilian organizations (some parts of Russian Railways, ships and enterprises in the defense sector, and others), the loss of access automatically means removal from their roles. And if an army officer remains without access and cannot find a role in which the work does not involve secret information, he faces dismissal.*

#### ***Get Your Coat, Go Home***

*In the summer, the military tackled the issue of officers being overworked. After numerous complaints, checks were carried out and confirmed that commanders were regularly holding meetings after the end of the working day and forcing subordinates to work on off-duty days and even when on leave. As a result, the Defense Minister banned making personnel work during off-duty time without good reason.*

*So that these demands do not remain mere words, monitoring groups are being set up at district headquarters charged with checking up on commanders at all levels. Using secure communication channels (the military equivalent of Skype), they will be able to contact any commander and make sure he is not holding late meetings. Any commander who does not take the call risks a reprimand for repeatedly doing so, and even removal from his post.*





## Russia's National Center for Defense Management Turns Five

**OE Watch Commentary:** Prior to becoming Russia's Defense Minister in 2012, Sergey Shoigu led the country's Emergency Services Ministry (MChS) for more than two decades. One of his major accomplishments in this role was the creation of a rapid response center which allowed the ministry to quickly react to any emergency. Shortly after being appointed as Russia's top military official, Shoigu proposed creating a similar command and control model for the Defense Ministry. Construction was completed in December 2014, and on its 5th anniversary of operation, the pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestia* described some of the inner workings of "the National Center for Defense Management (NTSUO)" [also referenced by analysts as the National Defense Management Center].

The article begins by describing the wide scope of the NTSUO, where an official claims, "We see everything. From a rocket taking off in the United States to whether soldiers in Khabarovsk have breakfast on time." NTSUO does not stop at just monitoring a situation; personnel working in the center "have all the necessary tools in their hands to instantly and adequately respond to any emergency or emergency situations," according to the article. The article goes on to stress that there are actually "three control centers" located within this complex: a "strategic nuclear forces control center [which] is designed to control the use of weapons, primarily nuclear weapons"; a center which "provides control over the use of not only the Armed Forces, but also other troops, military units, bodies and special units of federal executive bodies;" and a "center [which] monitors the daily life of the troops and the work of the military-industrial complex."

The center monitors all types of information and media (to include social media). For instance, the article asserts that the center employs a wide variety of experts, to include "financiers... [who can] in real time monitor the movement of funds on accounts, including the payment of cash allowances." Personnel selected to work within the NTSUO must pass through a rigorous screening and selection process. According to the excerpt, training for some positions "takes more than one year," and that "each NTSUO officer undergoes psychological testing and polygraph testing several times a year." Shifts run for 24 hours and to prevent "burn out...", the national center has a special center for psychological unloading and a whole sports complex." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



President Putin and CSTO heads of state visit the NTSUO in December 2014.  
Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/by-date/23.12.2014>, CCA 4.0 Intl

**“...In their hands is the national security of the country...”**

**Source:** Alexey Ramm, Anton Lavrov, “В Центре шторма: как офицеры-операторы охраняют безопасность страны (At the Storm Center: how operator officers guard the country's security),” *Izvestia*, 30 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/959129/aleksei-ramm-anton-lavrov/v-tcentre-shtorma-kak-ofitcery-operatoriy-okhraniayut-bezopasnost-strany>

*In December of this year, five years passed by one of the most closed structures of the military department - the National Center for Defense Management (NTSUO). Every day, at 10 a.m., hundreds of specialists-operators of the NTSUO take up combat duty. In their hands is the national security of the country. For the first time, Izvestia managed to get into this center and see from the inside how its specialists provide Russian defense.*

*“Our center is a special management mechanism,” Colonel-General Mikhail Mizintsev, head of the National Center for the Protection of Information Technologies, tells Izvestia. - With a sharp aggravation of the situation, the center, on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the monitoring results, using mathematical modeling methods, develops proposals to the country's leadership for decision-making in the shortest possible time. And in exceptional cases, we can also issue authorized instructions for the implementation of priority, urgent actions. And we are talking here not only about the direct use of weapons and troops, but also about issues of comprehensive support.*

*In real time, the operators of the NTSUO monitor what is happening in the world, in Russia, and most importantly, in the Armed Forces and the military-industrial complex. As they say in the center, “we see everything. From a rocket taking off in the United States to whether soldiers in Khabarovsk have breakfast on time.” But experts do not just monitor the situation. They have all the necessary tools in their hands to instantly and adequately respond to any emergency or emergency situations. Or, as they say in the center, on “extreme deviations.”*

*The National Defense Management Center is located in the center of Moscow. These are several buildings in the vast complex of buildings of the Ministry of Defense on the Frunze Embankment, hidden from the view of strangers.... The security regime in the NTSUO is not just strict, but severe. Before you get there, one must go through several points of protection. And then turn in phones, computers, tablets, smart watches and even fitness bracelets.*

*...The construction of the NTSUO buildings began on January 20, 2014 at the initiative of the Minister of Defense Sergey Shoigu and under the direct supervision of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army General Valery Gerasimov... The center's official birthday is considered December 19, 2014 - the day of interception on combat duty....*

*...The basis of NTSUO is the three control centers (TsU). At the same time, each has its own unique purpose. “The strategic nuclear forces control center is designed to control the use of weapons, primarily nuclear weapons,” says Mikhail Mizintsev.... According to the head of NTSUO, the center's specialists provide control over the use of not only the Armed Forces, but also other troops, military units, bodies and special units of federal executive bodies. Specialists of the third center monitor the daily life of the troops and the work of the military-industrial complex....*

*...The current news feed of both Russian and foreign mass media is displayed on it. As the specialists of the NTSUO explain to us, if the need arises, the center will also be able to quickly monitor social networks and even Telegram channels. A variety of specialists are included in the duty shift of the central office for everyday life. For example, financiers. They in real time monitor the movement of funds on accounts, including the payment of cash allowances.*

*The duty of the operator NTSUO lasts exactly one day.... During the daily duty on the officer a very high load. He has to process a large amount of secret and top secret data in real time and make decisions quickly. Moreover, each operator is a unique specialist, the preparation of which takes more than one year.... So, each NTSUO officer several times a year undergoes psychological testing and polygraph testing. If there is any suspicion, he will immediately be removed from duty and taken under control. In order for the operators not to burn out in the service, the national center has a special center for psychological unloading and a whole sports complex.*



## The Ka-31: Russia's Airborne Early Warning Helicopter

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia's Ka-31 reconnaissance helicopter is designed to detect surface and aerial targets, including missiles. It reportedly has a detection range of approximately 200 km, and is designed to automatically transmit aerial and surface adversary location data to ground-based command and control posts, ships, and automated air defense command and control systems. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* notes, "the heart of the helicopter is its ultra-powerful radar" that is slung under the fuselage, and appears to be an air-based version of Russia's 'Nebo' series radars. The E801 Oko radar was designed by the NIIRT Scientific Research Institute of Radio Engineering of Nizhniy Novgorod. When parked or in transit, the 1 x 6 meter antenna is towed flat against the underside of the fuselage, but during operation the antenna is lowered and rotates 360-degrees about its axis. As noted in the article, the Ka-31 is now entering service with the Black Sea Fleet's 318th Composite Aviation Regiment, and a variant has been tested in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

### Ka-31 Radar Performance Specifications

**Operating band:** Decimetric

**Coverage:**

Range: 7 - 250 km  
Altitude: 5 - 3,500 m  
Azimuth: 0 - 360°

**Detection range:**

A fighter-type target over sea and land: 120-210 km  
A launch-type target on sea surface at sea state up to 5: 250 km

**Resolution:**

Range: 500 m (worst case)

**Number of simultaneously tracked targets:** Up to 400

**Update rate:** 10s

**Antenna rotation rate:** 6 rpm

**Turn-on time:** 5 min

**Antenna deploy-retract time:** 80s

***“The Ka-31R reconnaissance helicopter was designed from the outset to detect surface and aerial targets, including Harpoon missiles. It can also automatically transmit data on the aerial and surface environment to ground-based command and control posts, ships, and automated air defense command and control systems.”***



Ka-31.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/MAKS-2007/i-MTKRJSj/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0





## Continued: The Ka-31: Russia's Airborne Early Warning Helicopter



© Vitaly V. Kuzmin

Model of a Ka-31.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/IMDS-2011/I-2K8qc9g/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Anton Lavrov, “Сильное звено: новейшие вертолеты закрыли Черное море от кораблей НАТО (The Strongest Link: Advanced Helicopters Protect the Black Sea Against NATO Ships),” *Izvestia Online*, 12 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/953338/anton-lavrov-aleksei-ramm/silnoe-zveno-noveishie-vertolety-zakryli-chernoe-more-ot-korablei-nato>

### ***The Strongest Link: Advanced Helicopters Protect the Black Sea Against NATO Ships***

*The first Ka-31R reconnaissance helicopter has already entered service with the Black Sea Fleet's 318th Composite Aviation Regiment, Izvestia sources in the military reported. The Navy's commander, Nikolay Yevmenov, announced earlier that naval aviation crews have already begun familiarizing themselves with the new equipment. The plan is to deploy a flight of these long-range radar surveillance helicopters in Crimea next year. The Ka-31R reconnaissance helicopter was designed from the outset to detect surface and aerial targets, including Harpoon missiles. It can also automatically transmit data on the aerial and surface environment to ground-based command and control posts, ships, and automated air defense command and control systems. The heart of the helicopter is its ultra-powerful radar, the exact specifications of which have not been disclosed. All we know is that the picture quality from the radar is as good as Ultra HD. And it can operate round the clock in any weather.*

*Another function will be to issue target guidance for Russian anti-ship missiles. It can home Kalibr and Onyx missiles to their targets in real time and the hypersonic Tsirkon has been recently added to its arsenal. Target guidance assisted by a helicopter with long-range radar makes for greater likelihood of a direct hit and increases the lethality of a salvo...*

*The first naval Ka-31R was handed over in 2012 to the Russian Navy Warfare and Flight Personnel Training Center in Yeysk. The Ka-31SV ground-based version, designed for the Aerospace Forces and carrying a ground target detection radar, was tested in actual combat conditions in 2016. Syrian aircraft spotters published photographs of it flying in the area of Latakia. At least one naval Ka-31R, with the side number 90 in red, was seen aboard the aircraft-carrying cruiser Admiral Kuznetsov during its voyage to the Syrian coast in 2016-2017. Having been baptized in combat, the helicopter was shown to the general public for the time in 2018, during the airborne part of the naval parade in Saint Petersburg...*





## Cyber Defense Centers to be Added to Military Districts

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted articles from *Izvestia* discuss Russian efforts to increase cybersecurity. According to the first *Izvestia* article, in the future, Russia's "cyber centers in military districts are expected to be unified to form a global information protection system... They will take under their protection Defense Ministry traffic coming from both civilian operator networks and from 'the military Internet'." The second article from *Izvestia* discusses a new nodal wireless technology for secure communications. Both articles mention how these developments support the Closed Data Transfer Segment (ZSPD) [закрытого сегмента передачи данных (ЗСПД)] of the communications system, a key enabler of Russia's Automated System for Command and Control (ASU), which is Russia's implementation of a network-centric warfare concept. This also corresponds to an upcoming presidential decree that features the Russian General Staff in a central role in all-Russia defense planning (also see "Russia's General Staff to Supervise All-Russia Defense Planning," *OE Watch*, January 2020). **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“In wartime, the ZSPD [Closed Data Transfer Segment] will ensure the operation of the Automated System for Command and Control of Troops (ASU), which allows [for] combat operations based on the rules of network-centric warfare.”***

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, "Команда уничтожит: в военных округах появятся центры киберзащиты (The Team that Will Destroy: Cyber Defense Centers Will Appear in Military Districts)," *Izvestia Online*, 18 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/950558/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/komanda-unichtozhit-v-voennykh-okrugakh-poiaviatsia-tcentry-kiberzashchity>

### ***The Team that Will Destroy: Cyber Defense Centers Will Appear in Military Districts***

*In the future, all cyber centers in military districts are expected to be unified to form a global information protection system, sources in the defense department told Izvestia. They will take under their protection the Defense Ministry traffic coming both from civilian operator networks and from "the military Internet" -- the Closed Data Transfer Segment (ZSPD) [закрытого сегмента передачи данных (ЗСПД)]. This channel allows transmission of messages, files, and multimedia information. Data exchange takes place via optic fiber networks and via radio and satellite communications channels...There are currently more than 180,000 ZSPD users in the Armed Forces. A unique territorial distribution data processing center has been created for information support of the Army and the Navy, whose services are daily used by more than 23,000 servicemen.*

*As Colonel General Aleksandr Zhuravlev, Western Military District commander, stated earlier, ensuring protection from cyber attacks is one of the main tasks of the cyber centers. Elements of the departmental segment of the detection and warning system have been deployed and are working in the district for rapid response. And the district's system for the protection of state secrets has detected and suppressed more than 3,000 violations, which prevented the leakage of secret information...*

*Servicemen will be monitoring the networks 24/7. Officers with degrees in information security acquired in military institutions of higher learning will be responsible for maintaining order in virtual space. In the event of an emergency situation the duty shift will have to localize the threat immediately. Special software that will ensure a multilevel protection system has been developed for the protection of the military infrastructure. A "software" barrier -- a firewall -- will be the first obstacle faced by a hacker. It compares incoming traffic characteristics with benchmark templates and decides whether messages or files should be allowed into the network or should be blocked...If a virus penetrates the network it can be traced by special programs which can also identify the location in which this happened. In the event of disruption or blockage of a transmission channel, the equipment will send an automated danger warning to operators.*

*A module for the registration of alert messages is one of the main components of the system. It is used for the distribution of tasks to restore connectivity. In addition to this, officers maintaining the circuit will be able to monitor traffic and the operation of the networks in real time. They will also work in close contact with communications specialists in the armies, divisions, and brigades.*

*The ZSPD, which is not connected to the worldwide web, was put in operation in 2016. It has its own electronic messaging service which allows transmission of secret information including documents marked as "Top Secret." The main resource of the network is available at mil.zs. The military sites can be accessed via computers certified by the service for the protection of state secrets.*

*In wartime, the ZSPD will ensure the operation of the Automated System for Command and Control of Troops (ASU), which allows for combat operations based on the rules of network-centric warfare. The ASU collects in real time highly accurate information about its own armed forces and the enemy.*



## Continued: Russia Increases Cyber Defenses to Enhance Network-Centric Warfare

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Безопасные связи: военных обеспечат интернетом, который не взломать (Secure Communications: They Will Provide Military Personnel with the Internet, Which Cannot Be Hacked),” *Izvestia Online*, 12 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/948923/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/bezopasnye-sviasi-voennykh-obespechat-internetom-kotoryi-ne-vzломat>

### ***Secure Communications: They Will Provide Military Personnel with the Internet, Which Cannot Be Hacked***

*They will begin to form so-called cellular, or mesh-networks, for the “military internet” in the Russian Army next year. This type of information system is practically impossible to suppress. Those networks can cover an area of thousands of kilometers. But then again, they can be adequately rapidly adjusted. Right now, the Military Department is preparing special protocols and software for their development. According to the experts, it is impossible for the troops to count on success without reliable and uninterrupted communications on the battlefield...*

*The technology permits the transmission of data to long distances through the division of the long route into a series of short transitions among the nodes. That network does not require a cable connection, which, for example, a traditional network needs, it uses radio channels for data transmission. In mesh-networks, the signal is transmitted using wireless stations, from which the “cells” are formed. But then again, their coverage zones partially overlap for reliability.*

*It is critically important for the Armed Forces to not lose communications because this can have a very serious impact on the outcome of an engagement. Thanks to the “cellular” architecture, it is impossible to hack, suppress, or disrupt the new lines. That effect is largely achieved due to the absence of a main transmitter or cable, which could be damaged...*

*The addition of more high-capacity stations makes the network more stable. Furthermore, it is not difficult to expand, having covered undeveloped areas with wireless lines. To do this, it is sufficient to switch on new “cells”...If necessary, new networks will easily provide access to civilian cellular and cable communications, or to the main “military internet” – a secure data transmission segment (ZSPD), via which the Ministry of Defense sends classified messages.*

*They support the exchange of information with troop Automated Command and Control System (ASU) via the ZSPD – this is a special software complex, which one can employ at all levels: from tactical to strategic. It permits the accumulation of all of the needed information at the RF National Defense Command and Control Center in real time. For example, intelligence information about the enemy, the state of our own troops and losses, weather conditions, the quantity of munitions, POL, and materiel, and the morale and psychological state of the personnel...*



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>





## The Last Line of Air Defense: Russia's Verba MANPADS

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses Russian plans to defend radar sites with the new 9K333 Verba (SA-25) Man-Portable Air-Defense System (MANPADS), which is replacing the 9K338 Igla-S (SA-24 Grinch) MANPADS. According to *Izvestia*, the Verba will not only be the last line of defense for Ground Forces' maneuver brigades and divisions, but also for more strategically oriented assets such as Electronic Warfare brigades and the large radars operated by the Aerospace Forces and Ground Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



9K333 Verba MANPADS.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Exhibition-pavilions/i-prGjGh/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

*“The Verba-armed units are the final line of air defense. Their job is to destroy targets that have penetrated past the long-range S-300 and S-400s and also medium-range and close-quarters missile systems like the Buk and Tor...”*



© Vitaly V. Kuzmin

Verba Missile.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Exhibition-pavilions/i-nXrbftn/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0





## Continued: The Last Line of Air Defense: Russia's Verba MANPADS



9K333 Verba MANPADS.

© Vitaly V. Kuzmin

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2019-Exhibition-pavilions/I-M7DcD5h/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovo, “Радар под прикрытием: зенитные комплексы «Верба» защитят РЛС (Radar Under Cover: Verba SAM Systems to Protect Radar Stations),” *Izvestia Online*, 6 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/951143/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/radar-pod-prikytiem-zenitnye-kompleksy-verba-zashchitiat-rls>

### ***Radar Under Cover: Verba SAM Systems to Protect Radar Stations***

*Verba portable SAM teams are to take over the protection of long-range radar stations. Their mission will be to shoot down cruise missiles and drones. Combat operations in Syria showed that the greatest threat to radar stations is posed by drones. The enemy uses them to attempt to destroy the stations and deprive anti-aircraft missile systems of their eyes. Radar station defenses have been inadequate until recently and the new portable SAM systems, say experts, will help to beef them up.*

*The first Verba portable SAM systems have already entered service with electronic warfare brigades and regiments. Not only that, but during the Tsenter-2019 exercise, there was a successful practice of coordination between the crews of radar stations and portable SAMs, and also of a tactic for repulsing drone and cruise missile attacks, Izvestiya was told at the Defense Ministry. The radar stations maintain a constant field along the perimeter of Russia's borders, Lieutenant General Aytech Bizhev, former Air Force deputy commander for the CIS joint air defense system, said to Izvestiya.*

*“These radars are the eyes and ears of the air defense forces and fighter aviation,” he commented. “They are the first to detect border intruders and forward the information to the air defense troops and aircraft. In the event of hostilities breaking out, radars will immediately come under attack so reinforcing them with anti-aircraft assets is a timely and justified measure.” Cover was previously provided by the crews of DShK heavy machine guns, but they cannot shoot down modern means of attack. Only new-generation anti-aircraft assets can counter a massed attack by drones or cruise missiles. The Verba-armed units are the final line of air defense. Their job is to destroy targets that have penetrated past the long-range S-300 and S-400s and also medium-range and close-quarters missile systems like the Buk and Tor...*

*In the first instance, Verbas will be sent to units that have the Niobium-SV radar in their inventory and also the latest radars, which the troops have dubbed ground-based “AWACS'es” by virtue of their capabilities. The latter are designed for long-range detection of aerial targets and to guide their own side's aircraft and air defense systems to them. They can also automatically track several dozen enemy aerial assets, to a high degree of accuracy determine the motion coordinates and parameters of aircraft and missiles, and identify any type of military hardware. In the future, these radars will become the principal element of an air defense automated command and control system and will be integrated into the troop command and control system, so that in the event of enemy attack, the entire gamut of anti-aircraft weaponry in various branches of the armed forces can be brought to bear...*



## Silenced Assault Rifle for Russian Special Troops

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Soviets, and now Russians, design and produce a wide variety of special purpose firearms. They are now testing an upgraded version of the Val silenced assault rifle. The Val has a rate of fire of 800-900 rounds per minute, but comes with a 10 or 20 round magazine. It has a maximum effective range of 460 meters. It fires the 9 x 39mm subsonic round. Presumably the same round will be used with the new silenced assault rifle. Apparently it will be called the *Автомат специальный модернизированный АСМ Вал 6П30М* (Modernized assault rifle ASM Val 6P30M). According to the accompanying article from *Izvestia*, the first batch of the newest ASM assault rifles will be delivered to the 24th Brigade in Novosibirsk. The article notes that an ASM is “virtually unheard when firing, even when only meters away. And its bullet can pierce any bulletproof vest.” According to experts, the “noiseless death” will be indispensable during special operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**“Special-purpose troops will be equipped with ‘noiseless death.’”**

**Source:** Aleksei Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoi, “The silent soldier: Spetsnaz are equipped with new silenced assault rifle,” *Izvestia*, 16 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/954133/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/molchanie-soldat-spetcnaz-vooruzhat-novymi-besshumnymi-avtomatami>

### *The silent soldier: Spetsnaz are equipped with new silenced assault rifle*

*Before the Armed Forces are supplied with the new weapon, it will be fully tested in the 24th Special-Purpose Brigade, sources from the Defense Ministry told Izvestiya. Earlier, Central Military District sources stated that reconnaissance groups will be equipped with the modern generation of the Val silenced assault rifle — the upgraded ASM. The product has a differently shaped receiver. The weapon’s performance and capabilities have been improved. The on-hand ammunition can now be easily monitored through the translucent plastic magazine.*

*Colonel Valeriy Yuryev, deputy chairman of the Russian Union of Airborne Troopers, pointed out that special-purpose subunits have the most need for noiseless assault rifles. “The new assault rifles will be used by professionals... Any silenced weapon, when compared to conventional firearms, has an increased firing pattern and a decreased range and bullet velocity. While firing it, one has to pay great attention to such factors as lateral winds to make sure that a bullet is not blown off course. They are irreplaceable in missions behind enemy lines when it is necessary to act silently. For instance, guards can be eliminated with such weapons during an attack on facilities or positions without revealing oneself to the enemy prematurely.”*

*The development of noiseless weapons started in the 1970s. It became clear, back then, that special reconnaissance and sabotage operations in enemy territory played a substantial role in contemporary wars and local conflicts. They required firearms which could ensure higher secrecy of actions by special-purpose subunits. The VSS Vintorez [Screwcutter] silenced sniper rifle was the first one developed in the USSR. It entered into service with the Army and other security agencies in the late 1980s.*

*The Tula weapon makers created the first domestic noiseless assault rifle, Val [Rampart] based on the Vintorez. It was widely used in local military conflicts in the former USSR’s territory. The ASM, which uses a 9-mm cartridge, is a fully upgraded version of the AS [Automatic Special-purpose] Val.*

*Not much is known about the ASM at this point: It differs from its predecessor by an increased capability of its barrel, high-capacity magazines (30 rounds), and interfaces such as the Picatinny rail are used to install sights and other accessories.*

*The Picatinny rail is a universal mount which allows for quick replacement of scopes without technical modifications, depending on tasks being performed by special-purpose troops. The Russian Army uses night as well as day and collimator [optical sight with illuminated aiming point] sights — the latter project the aiming point into infinity. They ensure rapid aiming— two to three times faster than traditional “iron” sights. To fire an accurate shot, a soldier has to align two points only — the illuminated aiming point visible through the sight and the target itself.*

*In addition to this, the ASM will be equipped with new experimental magazines made of translucent plastic, which enables visual monitoring of the ammunition quantity. The assault rifle also has a new bipod for high precision fire from static positions.*

*New firearms have started arriving in the Armed Forces. In particular, the Defense Ministry decided in October to put into service the Udav [Boa Constrictor] pistol. The first batch has already been delivered to troops. The self-loading Udav is a completely Russian-made model. It has a range of 50 meters and a magazine capacity of 18 rounds. Special ammunition has been designed for the pistol. It is expected to replace, in due time, the Makarov pistol, which has been used by the Army since the 1950s.*





## Russia: Increased Housing Benefits for Contract Soldiers

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian military continues to grapple with manpower issues, particularly with the retention of its professional cadre (officers and contract soldiers). While the overall personnel situation has greatly improved over the past decade, given the current economic challenges and increased op-tempo, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) has had to make adjustments to the benefits provided to its professional cadre. The first excerpt comes from the popular radio program *Voennoye Revue* (Military Review) that dealt with the question “Why are contract soldiers fleeing the army?” The program’s hosts identified three major reasons as to why contract soldiers are not extending their contracts: “insufficient benefits to cover housing costs,... not receiving promised additional benefits for skills,... and relative low pay (on average 23,000 rubles (\$383) base salary).”

The second excerpt from the weekly *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, describes recent funding initiatives to induce contract soldiers to extend their contracts. The article quotes Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who recently announced that contract soldiers “will now receive the same compensation for rented housing as officers and warrant officers, and accordingly, they will be able to rent such housing.” Besides helping with retention, Medvedev claims that this change “is an important measure aimed at increasing the prestige of military service for sergeants.”

While the above change may help with contract soldier retention, this article also discusses various problems with retaining junior officers. Back in 2014, officers were permitted to extend their contract for a single year, which proved to be quite popular. The article quotes an expert who points out that “in 2018, about 4 thousand officers signed new contracts for a period of one year, which is 80% more than a year earlier.” However, according to the article, “a government commission on legislative activities prepared a proposal to exclude the possibility for officers to conclude contracts for a period of one year. Very soon, the minimum contract for military service for an officer will be three years...” The article goes on to claim that “many officers, and not only young officers, simply do not want to serve in the army due to low material incentives or are disappointed in the service.”

The current Kremlin administration has done much to modernize and improve the combat capabilities and prestige of the Russian military. These sources, however, suggest that maintaining well-trained and motivated personnel to staff this military remains a work in progress. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“The problem is that many officers, and not only young officers, simply do not want to serve in the army due to low material incentives or are disappointed in the service...”***

**Source:** Colonels Viktor Baranets and Mikhail Tymoshenko, “Почему контрактники бегут из армии (Why are contract soldiers fleeing the army),” *Voennoye Revue* (podcast) *Komsomolskaya Pravda Radio*, 26 December 2019. <https://www.kp.ru/radio/27073.4/4142878/>

*“We receive a lot of messages from contract soldiers and many of them assert, ‘I’m leaving, I’m leaving.’ ...There are three basic reasons: one, insufficient benefits to cover housing costs, though as of September [2019], contractors receive the same amount as officers; two, not receiving promised additional benefits for skills; and three, relative low pay... on average 23,000 rubles (\$383) base salary...”*

**Source:** Vladimir Mukhin, “Сержантам – доплаты, офицерам и отставникам – ничего (To sergeants - bonuses, officers and retirees – nothing),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 17 December 2019. [http://www.ng.ru/politics/2019-12-17/1\\_7754\\_military.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2019-12-17/1_7754_military.html)

*Despite the economic crisis and the relative decrease in defense spending, the Government of the Russian Federation is seeking funds to raise the material level of certain categories of military personnel. This mainly applies to the soldiers and sergeants who signed up for contract service.... Like officers, they will receive increased compensation for rental housing, and the government is also considering paying for their vacation travel.*

*...As Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said the other day, monetary compensation for renting housing for certain categories of military contractors is increasing in the country. “They will now receive the same compensation for rented housing as officers and warrant officers, and accordingly, they will be able to rent such housing,” he said. This, of course, is an important measure aimed at increasing the prestige of military service for sergeants.*

*...A government commission on legislative activities prepared a proposal to exclude the possibility for officers to conclude contracts for a period of one year. Very soon, the minimum contract for military service for an officer will be three years, while soldiers and sergeants will still be able to serve under the contract for a whole year.*

*...But the officers liked the contract for the year. “In 2018, about 4 thousand officers signed new contracts for a period of one year, which is 80% more than a year earlier,” says Gruzdev. “If the trend continues, problems may arise in the future with planned replacements in military units.” But the point here is not only in “planned replacements.” The problem is that many officers, and not only young officers, simply do not want to serve in the army due to low material incentives or are disappointed in the service...*





## General Gareev's Legacy in Russian Military Science

**OE Watch Commentary:** In May 2020, Russia will commemorate the 75th anniversary of its victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II). This triumph has become the absolute centerpiece of the current Kremlin ideology and continues to affect how many Russians see the world. Within the Russian military, the painful lessons from this war continue to be studied and analyzed for how they might be applied today. One of modern Russia's most influential military theorists, Army General Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev, who frequently referred to the lessons of World War II, passed away on 25 December at the age of 97. The brief excerpt from the pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestia* describes General Gareev's background and some of his impressive legacy within Russian military science.

The article begins by reminding readers that Gareev's understanding of World War II was based on his personal experience, where he went from "leading a rifle battalion in the battle of Moscow" at the beginning of the war, to serving as "a senior officer in the operational department of the army headquarters" by the war's end. After the war, Gareev continued his schooling and field experience, serving in a variety of leadership positions both within the USSR and abroad. For instance, as the article points out, "after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, General Gareev was instructed to head the task force of military advisers to President Najibullah," where thanks to his efforts, "the Afghan government managed to hold out for several more years."

Even though General Gareev retired in 1992, he continued to play an influential role as the new head of the Academy of Military Sciences, a position he held until his death. In this capacity, General Gareev was a prolific writer, authoring "several books and more than 250 scientific publications." The excerpt stresses that "Gareev anticipated the modern development of the Russian Armed Forces." For example, even in the 1980s, Gareev "was an ardent supporter of equipping troops with drones." He was also a strong proponent of "mobility and combat readiness... and the introduction of military automated control systems." While General Gareev will not be present at the World War II commemoration in May, his writings will continue to influence the Russian military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Vladimir Putin met with Army General Makhmut Gareev in July 2013 to wish him a Happy 90th Birthday.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18946>, CCA 4.0 Intl

**“...His ideas are still in demand in the Armed Forces...”**

**Source:** Anton Lavrov, "Пять войн генерала Гарева (Five wars of General Gareev)," *Izvestia*, 25 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/958399/anton-lavrov/piat-vojn-general-gareeva>

*On the morning of December 25, at the 97th year of life, an outstanding Soviet and Russian military commander, Army General Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev, suddenly died. Over more than 50 years of service, he went from a cadet of a military school to the deputy chief of the General Staff, took part in five wars and military conflicts, and became a major theorist. His ideas are still in demand in the Armed Forces.*

*In March 1941, at less than 18 years old, Makhmut Gareev entered the Tashkent Military School. After graduating from a shortened program due to the outbreak of war, the young lieutenant had to lead a rifle battalion in the battle of Moscow.... As the war ended, he was serving as a senior officer in the operational department of the army headquarters....*

*In 1974, he began serving in the General Staff as head of the military scientific department. Makhmut Akhmetovich quickly established himself as a talented military theorist. He became a doctor of military sciences, doctor of historical sciences, professor, president of the Academy of military sciences, author of several books and more than 250 scientific publications.*

*As a faithful ally of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, the general took an active part in the development and preparation of the giant strategic exercises Vostok-81 and the operational-strategic research Dozor-86. It was on them that a new strategy for controlling the Soviet army was born in the conditions of full-scale modern wars.*

*...Many ideas of Makhmut Gareev anticipated the modern development of the Russian Armed Forces. He was an ardent supporter of equipping troops with drones. In the 1980s, more than a thousand reconnaissance Tu-141 and Tu-143 were put into service with the USSR....*

*...In the military reform of Minister of Defense Serdyukov, the ideas of Makhmut Gareev were used, originally from the early 1990s. Then he, together with Marshal Ogarkov, tried to modernize the army of the new Russia, turn it into a mobile effective force, creating experimental army corps consisting of brigades....*

*...More than ever, his work on the introduction of military automated control systems looks more modern. At the current technical level, the automation of military operations control at the operational-tactical and strategic levels has become one of the key areas for increasing the capabilities of the Russian troops.*

*...But the matter was not limited to one theoretical work. From 1989 to 1991, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, General Gareev was instructed to head the task force of military advisers to President Najibullah. During this period, he again sometimes had to personally lead the hostilities and again was injured. Thanks to the help of advisers, the Afghan government managed to hold out for several more years....*

*...Approaching his 70th birthday, in 1992 he retired, but did not stop his scientific work. In 1995, Makhmut Akhmetovich headed the Academy of Military Sciences, established by decree of the President of Russia....*



## Strengthening Russian Military Morale at the Small Unit Level: Return of the Military-Political Directorate

**OE Watch Commentary:** Two years ago, the Ministry of Defense reinstated the Main Military-Political Directorate within the Russian Armed Forces, for a variety of reasons. Military leaders feared that young soldiers could be infected with extremist ideologies, and were concerned that junior personnel lacked a firm understanding of Russia's place in the world and the military's role in preserving this status. Since then, the directorate's mission has been better defined, and progress has been made regarding the training of military-political personnel to accomplish these tasks. As the brief excerpt from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestia* points out, "specially selected contractors, soldiers and sergeants" will now be tasked with carrying out military-political training (MPT) at the platoon level.

The article suggests that more experienced soldiers will be appointed as platoon-level MPT personnel as an extra duty, and the "official name of the new post is a freelance instructor in military-political work." The stated qualifications are based on the selected soldier's ability "to work with people, having a humanitarian education, and rich life experience." The article does not describe any special training for these military-political workers, merely listing some of their duties: helping to "maintain unit cohesion...", explaining to soldiers the military-political situation in the world..., organizing cultural and leisure events, sports events, and congratulating soldiers on their birthdays."



Iconic image of Soviet Commissar.

Source: Ria Novosti via Wikimedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RIAN\_archive\_543\_A\_battalion\_commander.jpg, CC-BY-SA 3.0

This Soviet era institution was widely derided by the time the USSR collapsed, and since modern Russia officially has no state ideology, the political mission of these new junior commissars remains to be more completely defined. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“Specially selected contractors, soldiers and sergeants will monitor the mood of colleagues and maintain their fighting spirit.”***

**Source:** Roman Kretsul, Alexey Ramm, “Развели политруками: настроение бойцов отследят внештатные инструкторы (Brought up by political instructors: the mood of the fighters will be tracked by freelance [non-permanent] instructors),” *Izvestia*, 12 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/952459/roman-kretsul-aleksei-ramm/razveli-politrukami-nastroenie-boitcov-otslediat-vneshtatnye-instruktory>

*Specially selected contractors, soldiers and sergeants will monitor the mood of colleagues and maintain their fighting spirit. The official name of the new post is a freelance instructor in military-political work. The main criteria for their selection are the presence of a desire to work with people, a humanitarian education, and rich life experience. Instructors will be appointed in small military units, where the post of political officer is not provided.*

*The position of instructor for military-political work (VPR) will be created in each platoon, as well as in companies and batteries of less than 50 people.... Contractors will be appointed to it, well-established, and willing to work with other military personnel.*

*Helping the commander to conduct military-political work will be adults who have been in the army for many years, who have an impeccable reputation and authority among colleagues. As explained in the department, this new category of military personnel should become an important link between the soldier's team and officers.*

*The tasks of these VPR assistants are the same as for the officer-political workers. They will be responsible for maintaining unit cohesion, as well as for explaining to soldiers the military-political situation in the world and their readiness to carry out the tasks. In addition, they will be entrusted with the duties of getting to know unit personnel, issuing duty rosters and wall newspapers, organizing cultural and leisure events, sports events, and congratulating soldiers on their birthdays. These instructors should compile and clarify the socio-psychological characteristics of all unit soldiers and report them to the commander.*

*“The soldier's deputy politician” is obliged to know the business and moral-psychological qualities of his colleagues, their family situation, their religious affiliation, the Ministry of Defense specified. He should be able to timely track if any of the soldiers have problems; ensure that unit personnel do not take drugs and do not drink. Also, the VPR instructor will report to the command about distinguished soldiers and prepare materials about them for brigade and division newspapers.*

*...In other words, there is a political officer in every motorized rifle and parachute assault company, company of the marine corps or special forces, as well as in higher-level formations - battalions, divisions, and so on.*





## New Regulations for Foreign Applicants to the Russian Armed Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** Military service can be a shortcut to Russian citizenship, but the Russians are screening their foreign applicants to ensure that terrorists and criminals are not included in their ranks. Most of the foreign applicants are from former Soviet Central Asia. Armenia and Tajikistan host Russian military bases on their territory and have drawn local young men into the Russian Armed Forces. The accompanying passage from *Izvestia* discusses a new algorithm for the acceptance of foreigners for contract service. As the article notes, previously, foreign citizen applicants had to prove that they had not committed crimes and violations of the law on Russian Federation territory and also were not released from the Armed Forces based upon adverse circumstances. Now, “a mandatory check for involvement in organizations that are banned in Russia also awaits them.” The applicants’ biographies are scrutinized for such things as education, foreign relatives, language capability, involvement with “extremist or terrorist activity” and only after a positive finding can their application be processed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“The Military Department has developed a new algorithm for the acceptance of foreigners for contract service... The experts think that the procedure will help to weed out unreliable applicants.”***

**Source:** Bogdan Stepovoi and Aleksei Ramm “At the Entrance of the Examination Contract Servicemen Will Pass a Test for Extremism. The Ministry of Defense Has Developed New Regulations for the Acceptance of Volunteers from Foreign Countries for Service in the Armed Forces,” *Izvestia*, 18 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/955336/bogdan-stepovoi-aleksei-ramm/na-vkhode-proverki-kontraktniki-proidut-test-na-ekstremizm>

***At the Entrance of the Examination Contract Servicemen Will Pass a Test for Extremism. The Ministry of Defense Has Developed New Regulations for the Acceptance of Volunteers from Foreign Countries for Service in the Armed Forces***

*In order to apply for a vacant position in the Army or in the Navy, the applicant-foreigner needs to visit the Russian Armed Forces recruitment activity – they exist in all of the major cities. There, he will have to fill out the application: indicate that he is a citizen of which country, where he was born, what kind of education he has, have his relatives remained in his homeland, and also report his registration location in the Russian Federation and to submit documents that he is fluent in the Russian language at the proper level. The recruiters will transfer the personnel file to the RF Armed Forces Main Cadre Directorate and the FSB [Federal Security Service] regional administration. The “Guidance” indicates that intelligence service officers will ... check for involvement “with extremist or terrorist activity”. And the RF Armed Forces Main Cadre Directorate will establish whether the foreigner previously served in the Russian Army. All further processing will halt during the check. The leadership has not spelled out the precise time periods of the check... Processing an applicant into the ranks of the Armed Forces will continue only after confirmation from the competent agencies – a potential contract serviceman must not be linked with terrorists or extremists....*

*After the check, the volunteer will undergo a medical board and tests on physical fitness and psychological health. Based upon the results, he will ...be sent to a military unit.*

*More than 380,000 contract servicemen are performing service in the Armed Forces. The Military Department did not reveal how many are citizens of foreign states. Various estimates posit that there are several thousand...*

*By 2025 the Ministry of Defense plans to bring the number of contract servicemen up to 475,000, including an increase in the percentage of foreigners. A foreigner’s right to conclude a contract was granted in 2017. The contract is in force for one term and Russian citizenship is required for contract renewal. *Izvestia* has previously reported that the Military Department has developed a simplified procedure to obtain [Russian citizenship] for good service.*

*The check of the foreigners, who desire to serve in the Russian Army, is needed, according to Military Political Scientist Aleksandr Perendzhiyev.... After the defeat of the IS armed formations (the organization is banned in Russia) and a number of other terrorist organizations in Syria, the guerrillas have begun to return to their own countries – including to the Central Asian countries. “Our forces are partially manned by local residents in this region. The personnel of the Joint Russian Military Base in Kyrgyzstan and also of the 201st Base – in Tajikistan – are augmented in this way. These formations play an important strategic role, while ensuring stability. For example, the Russian units located near the Tajik Border defend the territory from the penetration of guerrillas from Afghanistan. Many terrorist organizations dream about including their agent network in these units – this would permit them to plan their actions with the maximum results....*

*The prestige of the Russian Federation Armed Forces is high in the countries of the former USSR and the majority of foreigners arrive in the Russian Army from there. The opportunity to master the state-of-the-art equipment and to make a career attracts these young men...*





## Russia's Security Assistance Balancing Act in the Caucasus

**OE Watch Commentary:** There are some Armenian officials who believe Russian security assistance to both Armenia and Azerbaijan is carried out in order to maintain leverage with the governments in the event of an escalation of the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. The accompanying excerpted articles offer an update on Russian security assistance in the region from an Armenian perspective, including a few things worth noting.

The article from *EA Daily* reports that the Russian Tor-M2KM surface-to-air missile system “recently entered service in the Armenia Armed Forces.” The article mentions how the Armenian government “did not indicate the number of systems purchased from Russia,” but did note that it is taking place around the same time as “the first delivery of Russian Su-30SM.” The article does not mention the configuration of the Armenian Tor-M2KM, but Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was reportedly photographed in front of the new systems, which were mounted on vehicles.



9A331MK-1 autonomous combat module from Tor-M2KM system on TATA chassis.  
Source: Vitaly V. Kuzmin via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MAKS\\_Airshow\\_2013\\_\(Ramenskoye\\_Airport,\\_Russia\)\\_521-38.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MAKS_Airshow_2013_(Ramenskoye_Airport,_Russia)_521-38.jpg), CC BY 4.0

The article from *Lragir* reports that in addition to the acquisitions of the Su-30SM and Tor-M2KM, “there are ongoing negotiations for the acquisition of long-range weapons.” This article also notes how these recent acquisitions are “taking place alongside Russian negotiations on the supply of Su-57 fighters to Turkey and Azerbaijan.” While any deal for the Russian sale of Su-57 fighters to Azerbaijan or Turkey has yet to take place, the article is discussing it as though it will happen, stating “the weapons are being delivered to Baku and Ankara after Armenia receives the recent systems.” While the new Tor-M2KM provides an improvement in capabilities for the Armenian military, Armenian officials believe it is only a matter of time until Azerbaijan, or even Turkey, receives a new weapon system that changes the balance of power in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

***“The “Tor-M2KM” air defense and missile system, which recently entered service in the Armenia Armed Forces, is among the best in the world.”***

**Source:** “Минобороны Армении довольны российскими «Торами»: Удобны во всём (The Ministry of Defense of Armenia is satisfied with all of the Russian “Tors”),” *EA Daily*, 26 December 2019. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/12/26/minoborony-armenii-dovolen-rossiyskimi-torami-udoben-vo-vsyom>

*The “Tor-M2KM” air defense and missile system, which recently entered service in the Armenia Armed Forces, is among the best in the world...As for the cost of the Russian system acquired by Armenia, the defense ministry press secretary did not provide an amount, but added that the supplied military equipment are not cheap...*

*The government did not indicate the number of systems purchased from Russia, citing “state secrets.”*

**Source:** “Москва на сей раз действует иначе: что происходит? (Moscow is acting differently this time: what is happening?),” *Lragir*, 30 December 2019. <https://www.lragir.am/ru/2019/12/30/163524/>

*At the end of the year, Armenia demonstrated the latest weapons – Su-30 fighters and air defense systems. The Armenian military received other weapons, which are not mentioned. There are ongoing negotiations for the acquisition of long-range weapons...*

*The deliveries of fighters and air defense systems are taking place alongside Russian negotiations on the supply of Su-57 fighters to Turkey and Azerbaijan...Russian officials say this is being done to have a military balance in the region.*

*...Starting with 2014, when Russia began to supply Baku with a large number of weapons, deliveries of already agreed upon weapons to Armenia did not take place...Consequently, just before the April (2016) war, Baku had military superiority, which it tried to take advantage of. Armenia should have apparently been defeated and request for outside assistance, after which Russian forces would move into Artsakh and establish order...*

*Now Moscow is doing it differently – on the basis of political relations, supplying Baku and Ankara with the latest systems to maintain a balance. Moreover, the weapons are being delivered to Baku and Ankara after Armenia receives the recent systems...*



## The Kazakh Defense Industry's Involvement in Air Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** The government of Kazakhstan often discusses the new defense enterprises it has been developing over the years, but does not always provide specifics. The accompanying excerpted article provides a glimpse into one of these enterprises and its capabilities. The article, from the Russian-language *Inform Buro*, reports on a recent trip that the Kazakh Ministry of Defense organized for journalists to visit an air defense unit near Almaty, which is equipped with the S-300PS surface-to-air missile system. The article mentions that these systems recently underwent testing after they “underwent major refitting from the Kazakhstan defense company Granit” and that in recent years the company “has modernized several similar systems, which carry out constant combat duty in different regions of the country.” Lastly, the article notes that Granit specifically carried out modernization of “the control panels in the cabin, the electric components and the chassis.” Overall, Granit’s work on the S-300PS systems appears to be enough that the Kazakh government did not need to involve an outside company to carry out modernization. While this is short of the government’s goal of building its own systems, the capability to modernize an air defense system demonstrates another area where the defense industry is growing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



“Әуе қорғанысы күштері ([Kazakh]Air Defense Forces)”

Source: MO PK via Wikimedia,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakh\\_Air\\_Defense\\_Forces#/media/File:Coo\\_vvsvrk.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakh_Air_Defense_Forces#/media/File:Coo_vvsvrk.svg), Public Domain

***“It is significant that over the past seven years, Granit has modernized several similar systems, which carry out constant combat duty in different regions of the country...”***

**Source:** Grigory Bedenko, “Как несут службу в бригаде ПВО, прикрывающей небо Алматы. Фоторепортаж (How they serving in an air defense brigade, covering the sky of Almaty. A photo report),” *Inform Buro*, 19 December 2019. <https://informburo.kz/stati/kak-nesut-sluzhbu-v-brigade-pvo-prikrivayushchey-nebo-almaty-fotoreportazh.html>

*The leadership of the Air Defense Forces of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan recently organized a press tour to one of the units of the Almaty region...Media members and bloggers visited the unit, which is equipped with the air defense system S-300PS...In mid-October, it was previously reported that the at the Sary-Shagan range, tests of the S-300PS were conducted after the systems underwent major refitting from the Kazakhstan defense company Granit...*

*It is significant that over the past seven years, Granit has modernized several similar systems, which carry out constant combat duty in different regions of the country...At the Granit facility, the control panels in the cabin, the electric components and the chassis were all completely modernized...*





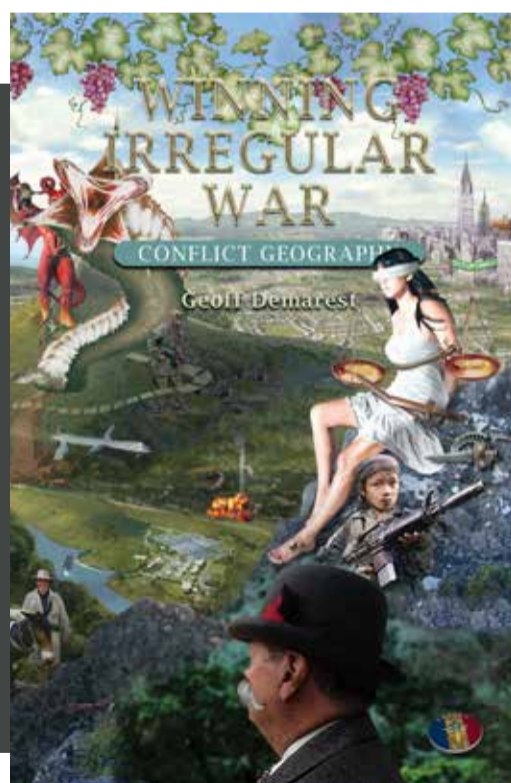
## Pedro Sánchez Elected Spanish Prime Minister

**OE Watch Commentary:** Socialist Pedro Sánchez just won a close parliamentary vote that allows him to form a government and stay in power as Prime Minister in Spain. The margin of victory was razor-thin, with the parties in government more to the left and the opposition parties more to the right than they have been in years. Part of the formula for Sánchez's success was the acceptance of Pablo Iglesias, of the far left Podemos party as vice president. The first accompanying reference is from Venezuela, where the questions of Spanish foreign policy and ideological inclination are strongly felt. The passage points out that Sanchez's victory "supposes that he will have the first coalition government in recent Spanish history, as well as the most left-tilted and tightest in the Congress..." **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

***“Sanchez’s victory Sunday supposes that he will have the first coalition government in recent Spanish history, as well as the most left-tilted and tightest in the Congress...”***

**Source:** Frank Thomas “Sánchez es confirmado como presidente del Gobierno español (Sánchez is confirmed as president of the Spanish administration),” *Venepress*, 8 January 2019. <https://venepress.com/internacional/Sanchez-gano-en-el-Congreso-con-estrecho-margen1578407030568>

*“...The PSOE leader got 167 votes in favor, 165 against and 18 abstentions. The negative votes came from the parties: Citizens, Popular Party, Vox and two Catalan independence parties, JxCat and CU and from various regional conservative formations.... Sanchez’s victory Sunday supposes that he will have the first coalition government in recent Spanish history, as well as the most left-tilted and tightest in the Congress...”*



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsol/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



# Facing Up to China's Military Interests in the Arctic

by Anne-Marie Brady

Republished and edited for OE Watch in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, The China Brief, Vol: 19, Issue: 21, dated 10 December 2019.

For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/facing-up-to-chinas-military-interests-in-the-arctic/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's military ambitions in the Arctic and its growing strategic partnership with Russia have rung alarm bells in many governments. Chinese submarine-based ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) operating in the Arctic could restore China's nuclear deterrence capability. China currently operates six nuclear-powered attack submarines, four nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, and 50 diesel attack submarines, with more under construction. If Chinese nuclear-armed submarines were able to access the Arctic basin undetected, this would be a game-changer for the United States, the NATO states and their partners, and the wider Asia-Pacific. It would strengthen China's military dominance in Asia and bolster China's emerging position as a global military power.

Xi Jinping, the current President of China and Party Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is acutely aware of the strategic importance of both the Arctic sea route and the Arctic nuclear missile route to China's security. Moreover, because of People's Liberation Army (PLA) involvement in setting up China's first Antarctic base during the same time period, Xi is more conscious than most senior CCP leaders about the strategic importance of Antarctica also.

China's rapid economic growth and technological progress over the last two decades have enabled it to steadily expand its submarine capabilities. In 2013, China demonstrated the capacity to take its nuclear-armed submarines beyond China's near seas and into the Indian Ocean. China's nuclear submarines can now launch missiles at targets 4,600 miles away. China's land-based nuclear arsenal targeting the US already has an Arctic trajectory. In 2015, Global Times predicted that the next breakthrough for Chinese submarine forces would be accessing the Arctic Ocean.

Russia's negative attitude has always been a sticking factor in China's long-held Arctic military plans. People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) submarines transiting to the Arctic must get through several chokepoints: (1) the straits that divide the Japanese archipelago; (2) the Bering Strait; and (3) Russia's Severnaya Zemlya and New Siberian Islands along the Northern Sea Route. Japan, Russia and the United States closely observe these chokepoints and waters. A further potential barrier to PLAN sailing in Arctic waters is that there is a scarcity of detailed charts on Arctic sailing routes and bathymetrics. Currently, Russia is reputed to have the most precise route charts, though China's polar researchers have mapped submarine and shipping routes in the Arctic for at least the last 10 years. But what if Russia not only tolerated China's submarines operating in its waters, but actively facilitated their presence there?

In May 2019, in a report for a Russian military magazine, Russian military specialist Alexander Shirokorad raised the possibility of Russia providing port support for Chinese submarines in the Arctic and proposed a joint Russia-China air and missile defense system for the Arctic. In August 2019, the Russian ambassador to China invited Beijing to invest in port and infrastructure development in the Russian Arctic in order to open up the Northern Sea Route. China's Arctic submarine plan will require nuclear icebreaker back-up and friendly ports. Russia has 10 nuclear icebreakers (the United States has none).

Russia is also an enthusiastic partner in Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which includes plans for a "Polar Silk Road." China incorporated the Arctic into the BRI over five years ago. Among Arctic region countries, Finland, Iceland, and Russia have signed on to the BRI; while Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have adopted a wait-and-see approach. Canada and the United States have made it clear they will not sign on.

BRI partners participate in China's Digital Silk Road, which utilizes Beidou-3, China's indigenous global navigation system. The Beidou ground station at Norway's polar scientific hub Svalbard is crucial for the global coverage of Beidou. In 2020, Beidou is expected to have accuracy on par with the US Global Positioning System (GPS). Beidou, like GPS, provides missile positioning and timing, as well as access to fleet-based broadband for unclassified and classified systems and environmental situational awareness. During a potential conflict, if the United States denied access to GPS, China and Russia could employ Beidou and the Russian GLONASS to guide strike weapons and other military operations. However, China's Arctic military interests do not depend on Russian collaboration and support.

China has quite a long-term agenda in the Arctic. In January 2018, China's State Council Information Office released a white paper on "China's Arctic Policy." This paper gave a partial account of China's Arctic strategy, highlighting scientific and economic interests in the region while eliding China's military and strategic interests. China's polar analysts divide China's Arctic interests into three core priorities:

- Security (安全, anquan): the Arctic is crucial for China's nuclear deterrence.
- Resources (资源, ziyuan): China wants access to Arctic minerals and hydrocarbons, fishing, tourism, and transport routes.
- Strategic science and technology (科技, keji): access to the Arctic is essential for the roll-out of the Beidou global navigational system, China's rival to GPS. Beidou is crucial for China's cyber warfare capabilities and C4ISR.

The PLA is an important actor in planning China's future polar strategy, and its role has long been disguised by China's polar science program. But since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, China has been more and more upfront about its interests and priorities in the Arctic. The PLAN is integrating recent political, economic, and strategic developments in the Arctic into its global maritime strategy. The PLAN is the world's largest navy in terms of personnel, and second only to the US Navy in fleet tonnage. In other words, China is steadily moving from being a land-based regional military power to becoming a maritime power with a global reach.

(Continued)





## Continued: Facing Up to China's Military Interests in the Arctic

The PLA's military expansionism strategy is to develop a blue water navy to protect sea lines of communication (SLOCs); develop global markets; gain privileged access to resources and/or establish colonies to secure resources; and promote maritime consciousness in the population. China's significant global shipping interests are the official justification for the PLAN's expanded maritime strategy and capabilities. As Arctic shipping, tourism, scientific expeditions, and Arctic oil and mineral exploitation become more significant for China, the PLAN may be expected to become more active in protecting Chinese interests in the Arctic.

In order to operate safely in Arctic waters, the PLAN must have: accurate bathymetric charts; the capability to monitor Arctic atmospheric conditions and utilize remote sensing to identify the thickness of Arctic ice; submarine personnel experienced in under-ice operations; submarines capable of navigating the aforementioned series of chokepoints safely and secretly; a Chinese nuclear icebreaker; and access to friendly seaports and airports in the Arctic.

The Chinese polar science program's new research vessel, XueLong 2, launched in July 2019. It was built to PLAN specifics and is equipped for bathymetric surveys. In September 2019, China launched its first polar observation satellite, BNU-1 to monitor sea ice drift and ice shelf collapse, which will improve China's remote sensing capability and help expand Arctic shipping.

In 2018, China's State Oceanic Administration announced that it was planning to build a nuclear icebreaker for polar science expeditions and to support Chinese shipping in the Arctic. (The PLAN currently has four diesel icebreakers for port operations.) It will also be built to PLA specifications and could be used to rescue Chinese submarines in the Arctic. In a time of war, State Oceanic Administration vessels are under PLA command.

Since 2003, China has followed the example of other polar great powers such as Russia and the United States in setting up short-term Arctic ice camps (冰站, bingzhan). This enables China to avoid Arctic sovereignty issues while establishing a scientific base useful for strategic science. The United States uses Arctic ice camps as temporary command centers for training submariners to operate under the ice.

China—like the United States—regards Arctic sea routes as international straits, but neither Russia nor Canada accepts this position. China favors accessing the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as it crosses directly over the Arctic Ocean. China is adamant that it must be included in setting the norms for international shipping along this route. Beijing stresses its interest in the Arctic sea route as a means to position China as having legitimate interests in the Arctic region, so that it can ensure that it has a seat at the table in any future Arctic-related negotiations.

From the point of view of China and the United States, the opening of the Northern Sea Route as a regular, ice-free sea route in the summer months could turn Russian and Canadian territorial waters into acknowledged shipping straits—which would mean that international-waters rules would then apply for submarine transit.

Understanding China's Arctic military interests requires knowledge of China's interlocked strategic, economic and science activities in the Arctic. China's military interests in the Arctic are merged with commercial objectives, or the Party-State-Military-Market nexus (党政军企共建, dang-zhen-jun-qi gongjian). Some of China's Arctic science activities have both civil and military use ends. The challenge for other states in the Arctic will be working out which partnerships with China are benign or mutually beneficial, and which will serve as force multipliers for the PLA. If China succeeds in its military goals in the Arctic, then its ascendance as a new global power will be certain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Brady)**



**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.**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



## China: The Evolution of Cyber-Electronic Warfare in the Information Age

**OE Watch Commentary:** Within China's ever-evolving military strategy and modernization efforts, the cyber electronic domain is a top priority. In the accompanying passage from *Jiefangjun Bao*, the author discusses a number of key concepts that fall within the cyber electronic domain – namely cyber electronic warfare, cyber electronic space, cyber electronic attack, and cyber electronic defense. As the author states, the competition to lead in the new battle domain of cyber-electronic space is heating up and will only get fiercer in time.

The strategic and joint attributes of cyber-electronic warfare are becoming increasingly prominent. As a result, it is important to have a full understanding of its attributes and the trends in this field. Wars have demonstrated that “whoever takes the lead in gaining dominance in a new battle domain, will seize the initiative and win the victory in rivalry and confrontation.”

The author envisions cyber-electronic attacks as eventually becoming the primary way to destroy the enemy's combat system. In the physical geographic space, he argues, it is often difficult to find the enemy's vital nodes or weak links. However, “attacks from the invisible cyber-electronic space can effectively destroy the enemy's combat systems.”

Finally, the author sees cyber-electronic defense as becoming the key to ensuring stability in China's joint operations system, writing, “In the future joint operations, the cyber-electronic space will become the first battlefield and a domain where security threats frequently occur.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

***“In the future joint operations, the cyber-electronic space will become the first battlefield and a domain where security threats occur frequently.”***

**Source:** Wang Feiqiu, “How will Cyber-Electronic Warfare Evolve in the information Age?,” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 19 December 2019. [http://www.81.cn/jfbmap/content/1/2019-12/19/07/2019121907\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.81.cn/jfbmap/content/1/2019-12/19/07/2019121907_pdf.pdf)

### ***How will Cyber-Electronic Warfare Evolve in the information Age?***

*At present, the form of war is accelerating towards informatization, and the characteristics of intelligentization are beginning to take shape. In this context, the intangible cyber-electronic space surpasses the tangible geographical space, plays an increasingly important role in military confrontation and rivalry. The strategic and joint attributes of cyber-electronic warfare are getting more and more prominent. For this reason, accurately understanding the attributes of cyber-electronic warfare in the context of the current times and grasping its development trends is of crucial importance for seizing the initiative in future wars.*

*...The cyber-electronic space is a key area where the overall national interest is highly concentrated. ...*

*Practice of war shows that whoever takes the lead in gaining dominance in a new battle domain will seize the initiative and win the victory in rivalry and confrontation.*

*The battle around information acquisition and anti-acquisition, destruction and anti-destruction is getting more and more intense, and the attributes of the cyber-electronic space as a battle domain will also be further enhanced.*

*... the means of cyber-electronic operations will not only effectively combat the enemy's electronic targets such as those for reconnaissance, early warning, command and control, weapon guidance, navigation and identification, but also mount strikes on the enemy's information infrastructure facilities and such potential war targets as energy, power, and transportation information networks. Under certain conditions, cyber-electronic attacks will surpass firepower strikes, becoming the preferred method adopted by battlefield commanders, and independently achieving the war purpose through a combination of soft and hard strikes.*

*Cyber-electronic attacks will become the core means of destroying the enemy's combat system. In informatized warfare, in most cases, it is very difficult to find the enemy's vital nodes or weak links in the physical geographic space, but attacks from the invisible cyber-electronic space can effectively destroy the enemy's combat system...*

*Cyber-electronic defense will become the key to ensuring the stability of our joint operations system. In the future joint operations, the cyber-electronic space will become the first battlefield and a domain where security threats occur frequently...*





## China: Bolstering Training in Logistics and Equipment

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the early years of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China suffered many casualties, setbacks, and losses in various conflicts due to outdated capabilities, strategies, and thinking. For example, the PLA's losses during the Korean War (1950-1953) have been attributed to archaic army tactics, a lack of effective communication, poor logistics and rear-echelon support. These factors led to units running out of supplies, including ammunition in the midst of the battle, leading to many preventable deaths. Today's PLA has dramatically evolved, striving to maintain pace with, or in some cases surpass, the global evolution of technology.

While China has made impressive headway in the acquisition and development of advanced military technologies, it has been struggling to achieve the level of management, support, and technical expertise needed to run its systems and procedures. Trying to turn things around, the PLA has been incorporating real-life combat training into its program. Of particular interest is the area of Logistics. The accompanying article published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, offers brief insight on recent training conducted on one of the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) bases and how the PLA has been trying to overcome some of its shortfalls in Logistics and Equipment Support.

Having morphed from the Second Artillery Corps, the PLARF, a branch of the PLA, is responsible for China's nuclear arsenal. Each one of China's five Military Districts possesses at least one PLARF brigade. According to the article, the unidentified PLARF base focused on solving "tough problems" facing logistics and equipment support. The article briefly mentioned different areas of training, which likely point to the areas of concern. In their training, troops performed specific joint support missions, set up collaborative relationships, coordinated support operations, and supported force cooperation. Training was heavily focused on joint training and joint exercises.

With its past providing valuable lessons learned, the PLA is determined to never repeat any of its old mistakes. Ensuring the creation of fully integrated joint logistical support capability will enable China to achieve what it lacked in past decades -- continued and seamless combat operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

***“In order to enhance the actual combat and support capabilities of the force, the base explores ways of joint training for joint support, and strives to make new breakthroughs in building and perfecting the chain of command, the chain of action, and the chain of support..”***

**Source:** “火箭军某基地破解后装保障难题: 锻造全地域作战保障力量 (Rocket Force Base Resolves Problems in Logistics and Equipment Support, Forging Support Forces for Operations in All Areas),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 24 December 2019. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-12/24/content\\_250585.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-12/24/content_250585.htm)

*In early December, the Rocket Force base conducted a comprehensive exercise, focusing on solving tough problems in logistics and equipment support.*

*Focusing on training for performing specific joint support missions, they [Rocket Force Base] mainly practiced such actions as setting up collaborative relationships, coordinating support operations, and supporting force cooperation, and concentrated efforts on organizing joint training and joint exercises, in which they collected more than 1,500 batches of combat data in various types.*

*In order to enhance the actual combat and support capabilities of the force, the base explores ways of joint training for joint support, and strives to make new breakthroughs in building and perfecting the chain of command, the chain of action, and the chain of support. To drive the support efforts, they focus on studying and solving issues in the delivery of precision support on the battlefield under the joint logistics system.*

*In addition, the base also actively concluded and signed agreements with relevant organizations in the civilian sector for the delivery of emergency support in wartime with reserved resources, and established a joint reserves-based support model...*



## China's Aircraft Carrier Program

**OE Watch Commentary:** The *South China Morning Post* recently published a series of articles that piece together the progress and expectations of China's aircraft carrier program. The accompanying excerpts highlight some of the noteworthy points.

Currently, China has two aircraft carriers that are fully operational. The first one, Liaoning, a refitted Soviet Kuznetsov-class vessel, was commissioned into the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy in September 2012. The second aircraft carrier, the Shandong, was commissioned in December 2019.

With each aircraft carrier, we should expect China's level of capability to rise. For example, the Liaoning reportedly carries 24 J-15 fighter jets, while the Shandong, with its higher capacity, is expected to hold up to 40 aircraft (36 J-15 fighter jets, and some Z-9 helicopters and KJ-600 early warning planes).

While the Liaoning is homeported in Qingdao, within China's Northern Theater, the newer Shandong is

expected to be homeported in Sanya, a large naval port on the southern tip of Hainan Dao (Island), within the Southern Theater. However, both carriers are expected to fall under the command of the PLA Navy headquarters, rather than their respective theater commands. In the event of wartime joint operations, the Shandong would likely be placed under the command of Southern Theater Command. Then, in the event of a war surrounding Taiwan, the Liaoning and Shandong would likely join forces to form a dual-carrier battle group to cut off foreign military access (such as from the United States or Japan) to Taiwan.

According to the second report, the formation of a dual-carrier battle group would be a defensive measure and would likely include two Type 055 guided-missile destroyers (the region's most advanced destroyers), four Type 054 frigates, six guided-missile frigates, one supply ship, and three Type 093B nuclear submarines. Hong Kong-based military commentator Song Zhongping argues that for maximum impact within the sea and air domains, the PLA would need to coordinate joint operations between combat units, such as the rocket force, amphibious troops, and other service groups; in addition to forming a dual-carrier battle group.

At least two more aircraft carriers are expected to come about in the foreseeable future. According to the third article, a third aircraft carrier is expected to be more modern than the first two. Construction of that one could reportedly begin as early as 2021. The third and fourth carriers, unlike the first two, will be equipped with electromagnetic catapults to launch jets. While these first four aircraft carriers are conventional carriers, China has also been exploring the possibilities of building more technologically advanced, nuclear powered vessels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



*Aircraft Carrier Liaoning in Hong Kong Waters in 2016.*

Source: Baycrest via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_aircraft\\_carrier\\_Liaoning#/media/File:Aircraft\\_Carrier\\_Liaoning\\_CV-16.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_aircraft_carrier_Liaoning#/media/File:Aircraft_Carrier_Liaoning_CV-16.jpg)  
CC BY-SA 2.5

***“Together the [Liaoning and Shandong] aircraft carriers would be able to launch nearly 30 carrier-based J-15 fighter jets to target any warplanes from American carrier strike groups, which would effectively reduce the numerical strength [of the American forces].”***





## Continued: China's Aircraft Carrier Program

**Source:** Minnie Chan, "First Made-in-China Aircraft Carrier, the Shandong, Officially Enters Service," *South China Morning Post*, 17 December 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3042469/chinas-second-aircraft-shandong-carrier-officially-enters>

### ***First Made-in-China Aircraft Carrier, the Shandong, Officially Enters Service***

*The ship (Shandong) is a modified version of the Kuznetsov-class design that features upgraded radar and bridge systems and a ski-jump deck for take-offs...The ship will be able to carry 36 J-15 fighter jets compared with the Liaoning's capacity of 24...Beijing-based naval expert Li Jie said that in total the vessel would be able to carry 40 aircraft, including Z-9 helicopters and KJ-600 early warning planes.*

*Sanya provides easy access to the South China Sea and is the largest naval complex of its kind in Asia...Hong Kong-based military expert Song Zhongping said the Shandong was expected to be stationed in Sanya.*

*...the two carriers [Liaoning and Shandong] would be under the command of the PLA Navy headquarters, rather than the Northern and Southern Theatre Commands... But...the Shandong "might be placed under the Southern Theatre Command for joint operations in the event of war in the South China Sea."*

**Source:** Minnie Chan, "China's Aircraft Carriers Tipped to Team up to Target Foreign Forces Aiding Taiwan," *South China Morning Post*, 19 December 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3042688/chinas-aircraft-carriers-tipped-team-target-foreign-forces>

### ***China's Aircraft Carriers Tipped to Team up to Target Foreign Forces Aiding Taiwan***

*China's new aircraft carrier is likely to team up with its sister ship to form a dual-carrier battle group to cut off foreign military access to Taiwan during a war, according to a military magazine and defence specialists.*

*"[Another major] task of the [battle group's aircraft] is to stop US long-range bombers from taking off from a naval base in Guam. This would be to prevent American aircraft targeting the PLA's landing transport formations and Chinese submarines," ...*

*In addition to the Liaoning and Shandong, the dual-carrier group will include two Type 055 guided-missile destroyers, the region's most advanced destroyer; four Type 054 frigates; six guided-missile frigates, as well as one supply ship and three Type 093B nuclear submarines, according to the report.*

*Hong Kong-based military commentator Song Zhongping said a dual-carrier group would help the People's Liberation Army extend its combat range from the coast of mainland China to the air-sea domains around Taiwan.*

*"However, in order to take supreme advantage in sea and air domains, the PLA needs to coordinate not only the dual-carrier battle group, but also joint operations between different combat units, such as the rocket force, amphibious troops and other service groups."*

*"Together the two aircraft carriers would be able to launch nearly 30 carrier-based J-15 fighter jets to target any warplanes from American carrier strike groups, which would effectively reduce the numerical strength [of the American forces]," Zhou said.*

**Source:** Minnie Chan, "Chinese Navy Set to Build Fourth Aircraft Carrier, but Plans for a More Advanced Ship are Put on Hold," *South China Morning Post*, 28 November 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3039653/chinese-navy-set-build-fourth-aircraft-carrier-plans-more>

### ***Chinese Navy Set to Build Fourth Aircraft Carrier, but Plans for a More Advanced Ship are Put on Hold***

*The Chinese navy is moving ahead with plans to build another aircraft carrier, but plans for a fifth have been put on hold for now, according to military insiders...*

*"China doesn't possess the nuclear technology required, although it has developed many nuclear-powered submarines," said the source, who added that developing a reactor for use on a large warship is more challenging than making one for a submarine.*



## China Commissions New Type 055 Destroyer into Service

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 12 January, China commissioned its largest destroyer, the Nanchang [南昌], Pennant Number 101 into service at Qingdao. The name is a deliberate reference to the two ships named Nanchang, one of which served during the Chinese Civil War, and another which was one of China's earliest guided-missile destroyers, entering service in 1982 and retiring in 2016.

While the Type 055 (NATO: Renhai class) is sometimes referred to as a cruiser by Western media due to its tonnage, Chinese sources refer to the class as destroyers, though at 10,000 tons it vastly outclasses China's next largest destroyer family, the Type 052D, at 7,500 tons. Built at the Jiangnan Shipyard in Shanghai and launched in June 2017, this is the first of at least six Type 055s

to be commissioned. Three additional destroyers were launched in 2018 and another two in 2019, which are in the process of being fitted out. As the first of its class, the Nanchang will serve as a testbed for the technologies and setting standard operating procedures. The Nanchang was also the lead ship during the 70th Anniversary Parade for PLA Navy in April 2019.

Captain [上校] Zhou Minghui [周明辉] commands the Nanchang; Senior Captain [大校] Chen Weigong [陈维工] serves as commissar. Captain Zhou previously commanded the Xining (No. 117), a Type 052D destroyer under the North Sea Fleet.

In an interview with state television, Captain Zhou noted that the Type 055 had significantly improved capabilities compared to the Type 052D, not only in terms of more VLS cells but also because of its four phased array radars and other sensors.

The destroyer is 180m long and 20m wide. It has two groups of Vertical Launch System (VLS) cells, with 64 forward and 48 amidships for a total of 112. The VLS cells can launch surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles, land-attack cruise missiles, and anti-submarine missiles. While previous generations of Chinese destroyers adopted a Russian/Soviet-derived revolver VLS system, modern updates of the Type 052(D) and Type 055 have adopted a grid arrangement.

Phased array radars are placed on four sides on the hexagonal central structure. The front aspect of the destroyer is guarded by a seven-barreled 30mm Close-in Weapon System (CIWS), with the rear covered by a Rolling Air-Frame-like box launcher for aircraft and possibly cruise missiles. Publicized figures for the export FL-3000N version indicate a dual infrared and microwave homing and range of just under 1km.

Commissioning the Type 055 into service is just one part of the PLAN's rapid growth. In 2019, 28 new ships were launched, including 8 Type 052D destroyers, 1 Type 071 LPD, 1 Type 075 LHD (see: "New Class of Amphibious Assault Ship Will Expand PLA Navy Operational Capability," *OE Watch*, June 2019), two Type 055 destroyers and 16 Type 056A Corvettes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Type 055 destroyer.

Source: 星海军事 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Type\\_055\\_destroyer.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Type_055_destroyer.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0

***“The commission of Nanchang marks the Navy’s leap from the third generation to the fourth generation of destroyers, according to the statement.”***

**Source:** “China’s first Type 055 destroyer Nanchang commissioned,” *Xinhua*, 12 January 2020. [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2020-01/12/content\\_75604742.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2020-01/12/content_75604742.htm)

*The Nanchang, China’s first Type 055 guided-missile destroyer, was commissioned in the People’s Liberation Army Navy on Sunday morning in the port city of Qingdao, east China’s Shandong Province.*

*The 10,000 ton-class destroyer officially debuted at the multinational naval parade in celebration of the Chinese navy’s 70th founding anniversary on April 23, 2019.*

*Launched on June 28, 2017, the destroyer was equipped with new air defense, anti-missile, anti-ship, and anti-submarine weapons, said a statement from the Navy.*

*The commission of Nanchang marks the Navy’s leap from the third generation to the fourth generation of destroyers, according to the statement.*





## Civil Air Defense Organizations in South China Sign Cooperative Agreement

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early January, nine major cities in China's Pearl River Delta region signed an agreement to coordinate civil air defense. The Pearl River Delta region is located in Guangdong province, which has consistently ranked number one in China in terms of GDP since the 1980s. With over 113 million people, it is one of China's economic powerhouses. Recognizing this, China is attempting to further strengthen the region against air attacks beyond the major military forces stationed in the region using civilian resources. The agreement represents the culmination of several years of holding coordinated exercises with sister cities throughout the province. The accompanying passage from China's Ministry of Defense website discusses this agreement.

As part of China's National Defense, on 21 September, China's "Education Day", many cities throughout China hold civil air defense drills. The holiday, inaugurated in 2001, is meant to commemorate China being forced to sign

unequal treaties by foreign powers. Guangzhou, the provincial capital of Guangdong, holds an annual civil air defense exercise called Guangzhou Sky Shield [羊城天盾]. A point of emphasis is expanded coordination at the provincial and municipal level between air defense and maritime security apparatuses. The most recent exercise included defense against a simulated combination of enemy air raids and Special Forces infiltration. The municipal government practiced coordinating with the maritime militia, coast guard and other related departments to repel the attacks.

On China's east coast, Anhui, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and district- and city-level organizations met in December to discuss coordination on what appears to be a similar scale. This second group represents the "Yangtze River Delta" area, which, like the Pearl River Delta is another economic powerhouse for China. The December meeting brought together civil air defense organization leaders with relevant experts to improve existing civil air defense practices.

The new agreement in Guangdong province and the efforts by other governments to improve coordination highlights the ways in which China is improving its air defenses and furthering Military-Civil Fusion, a national strategic program that seeks to achieve strategic effects through better linkages between civilian and military organizations across the full range of social, governmental and industrial organizations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

***“They have achieved the ability to support each other whenever any one party comes under air attack.”***

**Source:** “珠三角9个城市签订人防协同发展协议 (Nine Cities in the Pearl River Delta Sign Civil Air Defense Coordination Agreement),” China Ministry Of Defense, 3 January 2020. [http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2020-01/03/content\\_4857955.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2020-01/03/content_4857955.htm)

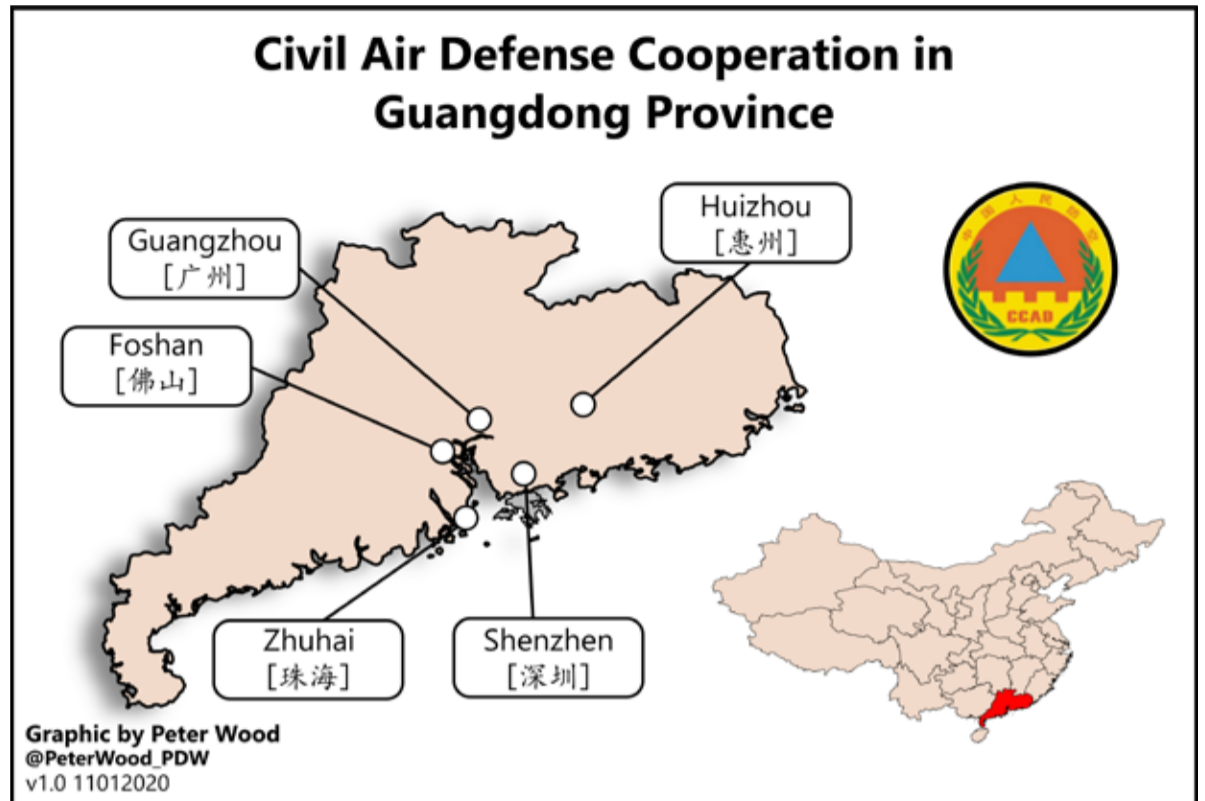
*On New Year's Eve, nine cities in South-East China's Pearl River Delta, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, and Huizhou, signed in Guangzhou the Framework Agreement of Pearl River Delta City Cluster on Coordinated Civil Air Defense Development [珠三角城市群人民防空协同发展框架协议]. The signing officially kicked off the coordinated construction of civil air defense facilities in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) region.*

*With the development of air assault weapons, it's possible in future warfare that multiple locations will be attacked at the same time with one of them being the key target. In that case, resources have to be shared in civil air defense efforts in order to form a powerful synergy to protect the people.*

*Bearing this in mind, the Guangzhou Office of Civil Air Defense actively explored coordinated civil air defense training in the Pearl River Delta city cluster in recent years. It has carried out multiple joint training and trans-regional assistance operations with similar units in surrounding areas testing core capabilities such as establishing communication networks, protecting important economic targets and removing debris and recovering from air attacks. They have achieved the ability to support each other whenever any one party comes under air attack.*

*The signing of the civil air defense agreement is aimed to further intensify cooperation, achieve complementarity of civil air defense systems in the Pearl River Delta more quickly, and jointly build and share relevant resources in the region.*

*In the course of researching and later signing the agreement, the leaders of the People's Defense Offices of the nine cities of the Pearl River Delta reached a consensus: create an 'indestructible shield of the people' through rapid development of the Pearl River Delta area, focusing on scientific and technological defense and independent innovation, and constructing a resource sharing mechanism, a joint training mechanism, and a cross-regional support mechanism.*





## China Modifies Military Conscription Cycle, Adopts Biannual Recruitment

**OE Watch Commentary:** China is modifying its conscription to a two-phase system. Currently, China has a single annual conscription intake cycle. The change does not represent an increase in the total number of recruits, but rather a staggering of the overall intake process, as discussed in the accompanying passage from the *PLA Daily*.

According to Articles 3 and 12 of the Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China, all citizens of China "have the obligation to perform military service... regardless of ethnic status, race, occupation, family background, religious belief and education" and are eligible for enlistment between ages 18 and 22 (or 24 if they have higher education). While legally this means anyone who meets physical standards is eligible, in practice, conscription is largely voluntary. After basic training, the new conscripts [新兵] graduate to private [列兵]. The term of active service for a conscript is two years after which they may become a non-commissioned officer.



Chinese University has the Military Training every year for fresh student.  
Source: Zhiwen Cai via Unsplash, <https://unsplash.com/photos/7NizHj3vww8>, Public Domain

Prior to 2013, almost all recruits began basic training in mid-December. This was later shifted to 1 September. Under the new system, conscription will have two phases, with one beginning in mid-February and a second in mid-August. As noted in the article, college students and those with backgrounds in technical or other higher educational institutions are a major target for recruitment due to their much higher technical skills compared to high school students. The new system is meant to take into account the academic school year and allow more efficient recruitment.

The new system, by staggering the recruitment period, may give units greater flexibility by reducing the total number affected by turnover at a given time. The rate of turnover has consequences for the PLA's effectiveness, as units cycle out soldiers that have essentially just begun training with their respective units bringing in new soldiers. This becomes more important as the services adopt more detailed training regimens (including large scale combined or joint and transregional exercises).

This reform fits into a pattern of changes meant to improve and make the intake more systematic. China has also previously experimented with various changes to its NCO corps, itself a relatively recent development. The long-term goals are clear: improve quality, education and technical proficiency of recruits, and increase realism and rigor of training. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

***“Under the new system, the yearly conscription cycle is divided into two parts: the first cycle begins in mid-February and ends at the end of March...The second phase begins in the middle of August and ends at the end of September.”***

**Source:** “2020年起实行一年两次征兵两次退役 (Beginning in 2020 China Will Hold Conscription and Retirement Twice a Year),” *PLA Daily*, 17 January 2020. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-01/17/content\\_252374.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-01/17/content_252374.htm)

*The State Council and Central Military Commission have approved a change to the conscription and discharge cycles to twice per year.*

*Under the new system, the yearly conscription cycle is divided into two parts: the first cycle begins in mid-February and ends at the end of March. New recruits enter service in this phase on March 1st. The second phase begins in the middle of August and ends at the end of September. Recruits are enlisted on September 1st. According to the Military Service Law of the People's Republic of China 《中华人民共和国兵役法》 the period of active service for compulsory soldiers is two years, at the end of which conscripts are released from service or become non-commissioned officers. The end date for those leaving service corresponds with their respective start date.*

*After the adjustment of the recruitment cycle, the total number of recruits will remain stable compared with previous years. The conditions, standards, procedures and related policies for recruitment also remain unchanged. The recruitment target remains focused on college students. In the first half of the year, recruits focused on recruiting graduates from all levels of colleges and universities, graduates from vocational and technical colleges, and those with various types of technical skills. In the second half of the year, recruits focused on recruiting fresh graduates, students, and freshmen at various levels of institutions. Focusing on providing equal opportunities for outstanding young people to join the army, after the reform, the two-phased conscription will be implemented across all provinces (regions, cities), cities, and counties in the country will simultaneously organize two recruitments, and counties (cities, districts).*





## China Issues Policy Adjusting High-Level Officer Promotions for PLA

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December, the Central Military Commission (CMC), China’s highest military authority, issued the Notice on Adjusting the Policy Concerning the Promotion of Military Ranks of Officers at and above the Corps Level. The new regulation is intended to continue wide-sweeping reforms that adjust the structure of units from the Theater Command level down to individual brigades across all services.

As the passage from *Xinhua* discusses, the reforms have been characterized by two phrases: “above the neck” [脖子以上] and “neck and below” [脖子以下], where “neck” refers to the Corps level. The former has included the creation of the Joint Theater Command System and additional services such as the Strategic Support Force while the latter has included the wide sweeping reorganization of many units into a “base-brigade” structure.

Previous phases focused on shifts to the organizational structure. Now that this change is complete, it appears that the emphasis is turning to the rank structure to make the required adjustments. Notably, the article mentions that by addressing ranks at the Corps and above level, it will begin the process of adjusting the ranks with the PLA’s grade structure. In the PLA, the grade structure consists of 14 levels, which range from Platoon Leader[排职] to Central Military Commission Member[军委委员]. This grade structure (rather than rank), is the ultimate determinant of position and promotion, and designates which billet a soldier is assigned.

However, this system creates a mismatch with international norms, so that a Chinese senior leader can at most be a three-star general meeting with a four-star equivalent from another country. The reforms to the PLA’s structure laid out above have not been easy. While there have been multiple calls for reform in the past, the announcement of the Notice is one of the first definitive indications that the rank system will finally be addressed and updated. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



Xu Qiliang, one of two Vice-Chairmen of the CMC.  
Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50712/photos/42492>, CC BY 4.0

***“Starting with the reform of the ranks promotion system for commanding officers at and above the corps level, the Chinese military will streamline the corresponding relationship between military ranks and grades at various levels...”***

**Source:** “《关于先行调整军级以上军官军衔晋升有关政策的通知》印发 (Notice on Adjusting the Policy Concerning the Promotion of Military Ranks of Officers at and above the Corps Level Issued),” *Xinhua*, 9 December 2019. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2019-12/09/c\\_1210387474.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2019-12/09/c_1210387474.htm)

*China’s Central Military Commission recently issued a Notice on Adjusting the Policy Concerning the Promotion of Military Ranks of Officers at and above the Corps Level (hereinafter referred to as the “Notice”). This is an important measure taken by the Chinese military to promote its professionalized reform of military officers and advance its military human resources system.*

*The Notice emphasizes... that the Chinese military will adjust the military officers’ promotion policy that is based on the military ranks system and takes into account the needs of officers with various ranks and categories. Starting with the reform of the ranks promotion system for commanding officers at and above the corps level, the Chinese military will streamline the corresponding relationship between military ranks and grades at various levels, so as to set an example and provide practical support for the revision and implementation of the Law on Officers in Active Service.*

*The Notice emphasizes that the Chinese military will adjust the military officers’ promotion policy that is based on the military ranks system and takes into account the needs of officers with various ranks and categories. Starting with the reform of the ranks promotion system for commanding officers at and above the corps level, the Chinese military will streamline the corresponding relationship between military ranks and grades at various levels, so as to set an example and provide practical support for the revision and implementation of the Law on Officers in Active Service.*

*The Notice provides specific regulations on the target groups of military ranks adjustment, methods of military ranks promotion and adjustment, rules for starting time of military ranks, and other matters. It also clarifies stipulations on approval authority, handling procedures, ceremonies for military ranks promotion, etc.*

*The Notice provides specific regulations on the target groups of military ranks adjustment, methods of military ranks promotion and adjustment, rules for starting time of military ranks, and other matters. It also clarifies stipulations on approval authority, handling procedures, ceremonies for military ranks promotion, etc.*

*According to the Notice, based on the adjustment of the policy concerning the promotion of military ranks of officers at and above the corps level, the military will accelerate the adjustment of policies related to the promotion of military ranks of officers at and below the division level and specialized technical officers.*



## China Railways to Add 4,000 km of New Track in 2020

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's infrastructure appears to be set to continue its rapid expansion in 2020. According to the excerpted article from *China Daily*, there are plans to add an additional 4,000 kilometers (2,485 miles) of track, half of which will be for high-speed railways. The new high-speed rail lines appear to be concentrated on the east coast, where they will connect more "second-tier" cities such as Yangzhou and Nantong.

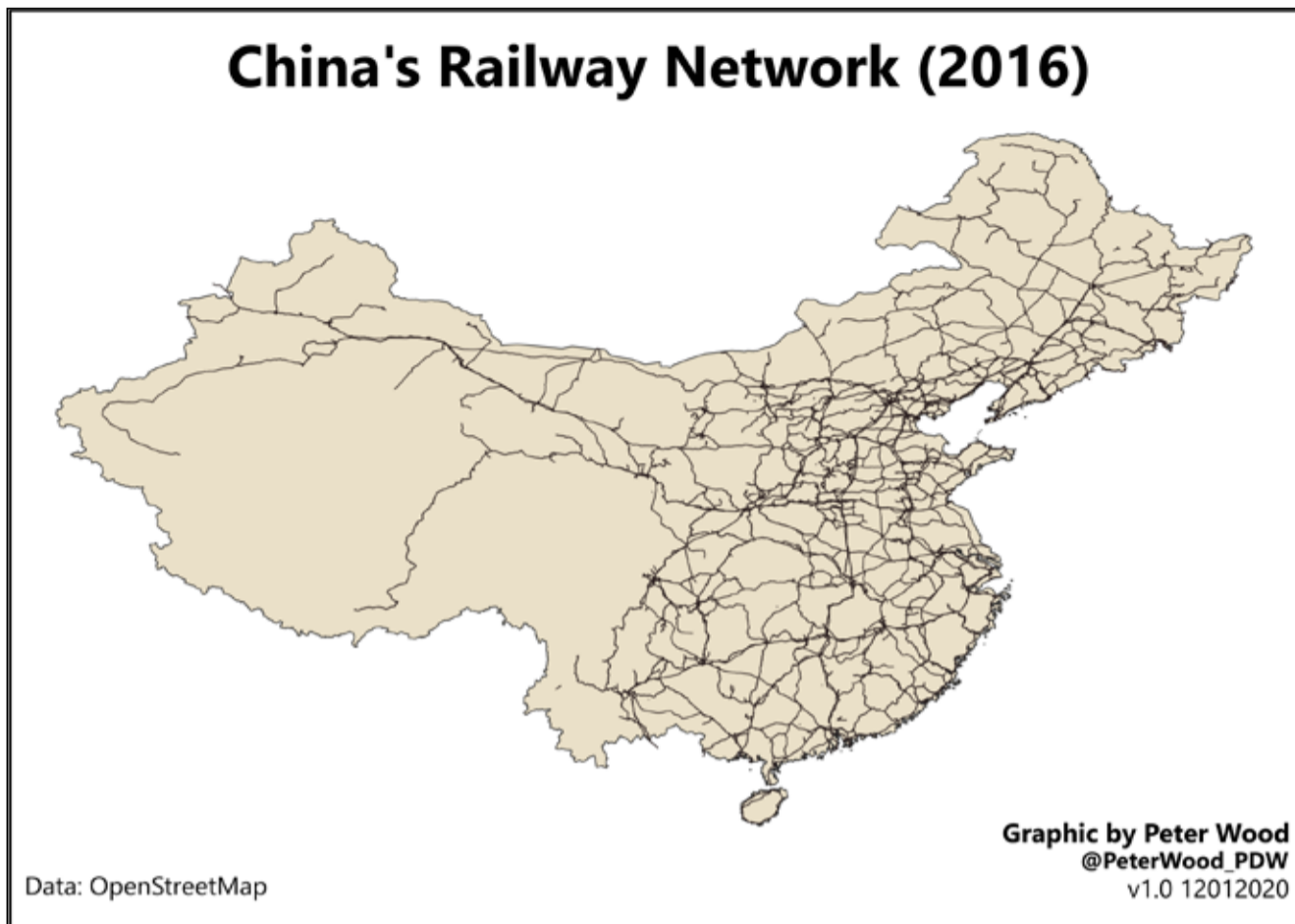
As the passage points out, in 2019, China opened 51 new railway lines "and 8,489 km of new track became operational, surpassing the annual targets of 800 billion yuan for investment and 6,800 km of new lines." Regarding 2020, in December, the Ministry of Transport projected that China would spend at least 2.7 trillion yuan (\$386 billion) on transport infrastructure, 29.6% of which would go to railways.

The cost of high-speed rail remains out of reach for some members of society, who still use the slower but much cheaper rail lines. However, the expansion of high-speed rail has allowed people to live further from urban centers where they work, or remain connected to family that remain in rural areas. As noted in the article, China Rail is exploring ways to make faster rail more accessible through flexible pricing.

As seen in the accompanying map, the western half of China, which is much less densely populated and includes a number of very mountainous areas including the Tibetan Plateau, are not served by nearly as many rail lines. The article notes that there are plans to build a second line to connect Sichuan province with Tibet.

On the east coast, high-speed rail strings together once-separate urban areas into an almost seamless whole. The fastest service on the Nanjing-Shanghai line, for example, passes through the cities of Nanjing, Zhenjiang, Changzhou, Wuxi, Suzhou and Shanghai in less than an hour. Shanghai has a population of over 24 million, while the other cities each have a population of over three million.

While some of the projects are in support of the 2022 Winter Olympics, the overarching goal is to reduce transportation costs and further boost China's economy. Zhang Xiaodong, a professor of rail transportation economics at Beijing Jiaotong University interviewed for the article noted that since 2008, China "has constructed more high-speed rail lines than Japan and Europe did in 40 years." **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



***“.. the nation’s fast-expanding railway network reached a total length of 139,000 km by the end of last year, while the high-speed rail network exceeded 35,000 km..”***





## Continued: China Railways to Add 4,000 km of New Track in 2020

**Source:** “Nation to build over 4,000 km of new rail lines,” *China Daily*, 3 January 2020. <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202001/03/WS5e0e4d2fa310cf3e35582272.html>

*China plans to build at least 4,000 kilometers of new railway lines this year, including 2,000 km of high-speed lines, the country’s top rail operator said on Thursday.*

*The planned development of new railways this year is part of the nation’s effort to maintain the large-scale fixed-asset investment, Lu Dongfu, general manager of China State Railway Group, said at its annual work conference.*

*The Ministry of Transport said in December that China would spend at least 2.7 trillion yuan (\$386 billion) on transport infrastructure projects this year, with 800 billion yuan going to railways.*

*In 2019, 802.9 billion yuan was spent on railways in China and 8,489 km of new track became operational, surpassing the annual targets of 800 billion yuan for investment and 6,800 km of new lines.*

*As a result, the nation’s fast-expanding railway network reached a total length of 139,000 km by the end of last year, while the high-speed rail network exceeded 35,000 km, a year ahead of China’s plan to build a total of 30,000 km of high-speed railway lines by 2020.*

*Among the 51 new railway lines last year, the opening on Monday of the high-speed route linking Beijing and Zhangjiakou, co-host city of the 2022 Winter Olympics, marks significant progress in the autopilot system of China’s high-speed trains. Equipped with the system, trains can run automatically at a maximum designed speed of 350 km per hour.*

*As for this year, measures will continue to be taken to bolster areas of weakness in the nation’s railway infrastructure, Lu said.*

*Construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway, the second railway into the Tibet autonomous region after the Qinghai-Tibet line, will be a major project this year, he said.*

*The company called for preparatory work to take place on the project’s official launch, including optimizing a plan for organizing early construction of certain sections, pushing forward the railway’s initial design, and drawing up its specified technical and management standards.*

*Lu also told the conference that the total revenue of the rail transport sector increased 6.1 percent year-on-year in 2019 to 818 billion yuan, and it is expected to reach 868 billion yuan by the end of 2020.*

*In a bid to make the company more market-oriented and capable of providing better cargo and passenger transport services, it will establish a mechanism for evaluating the profits of train operations and thus better organize rail services.*

*It will also explore more flexible pricing mechanisms for high-speed trains and offer deeper discounts on a growing number of railway lines, as well as start piloting the application of digital ticketing throughout the network.*

*The construction of high-speed railways in China saves passengers travel time and has assisted regional economic development, he said, adding that it also played an important role in boosting the flow of talent and information and reshaping China’s economic map.*



## New Bridge to Connect Russia's Far East with China's Northeast

**OE Watch Commentary:** A new bridge between Blagoveshchensk, Russia and Heihe, China recently passed inspections and is opening to commercial traffic. After construction was completed in December, teams from both countries participated in a test, which involved fully-loaded dump trucks making runs across the bridge. Having successfully passed this test, the bridge is set to open to commercial traffic in the near future.

Heihe [黑河] is a prefecture-level city of over 1.6 million people and is separated from Blagoveshchensk (population 200,000) by the Amur river. However, in part due to past tensions between Russia and China, the two cities have historically relied on riverboats for commerce. Building a direct link then overcomes a major hurdle in connecting China's Northeast with Russia's Far East.



*Amur River and Heihe.*

Source: Baycrest via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amur\\_River\\_and\\_Heihe.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amur_River_and_Heihe.jpg), CC BY-SA 2.5

The overall bridge project includes 19.9 kilometers of roads, 6.5 kilometers in China and 13.4 kilometers in Russia. The project required a total investment of 2.47 billion yuan, of which China invested 566 million yuan (82 million USD) and Russian 1.905 billion yuan (275.8 million USD).

Both sides clearly anticipate that the bridge, beyond its message of warming Chinese and Russian ties, will bolster the economic fortunes of the region. Russian official estimates suggest that the bridge will bring 4 million tons of goods and 2 million Chinese tourists.

Additional Chinese reporting on the bridge notes that China has set up a “pilot free trade zone” next to the bridge terminus on the Chinese side, which is intended to help turn the area into an international logistics hub.

In December, Chinese and Russian leaders presided over the opening of the Power of Siberia Gas Pipeline [中俄东线天然气管道] which is expected to provide northeast China with five billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2020. In March 2019, China and Russia also completed the first rail bridge connecting the two countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

***“The Sino-Russian Heilongjiang Bridge has been opened to traffic, making ‘one bridge connecting the two countries’ a reality.”***

**Source:** “中俄首座跨界江公路大桥通过验收 具备通车条件 (After Inspection, Traffic Approved For China-Russia Bridge),” *Xinhua*, 17 January 2020. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-01/17/c\\_1125475139.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-01/17/c_1125475139.htm)

*Reporters recently learned from relevant departments that the first cross-border traffic has crossed the recently-constructed bridge, officially marking its opening for traffic.*

*The dump trucks carrying a full load were supervised by the Russian bridge supervision and testing center staff and experts from Harbin University of technology. Taking the bridges' design into account, the experts allowed full-load heavy vehicles to travel along the bridge, with a maximum of 318 tons.*

*The bridge represents an important infrastructure link in China-Russia trade connectivity. The bridge begins in Heihe city, Changfa village in China and crosses into Kanikulgan, Blagoveshchensk in Russia. The bridge is 1,284 meters long and 14.5 meters wide with the major span.*





## Sri Lanka: Operations Begin on New Chinese-Funded Artificial Island

**OE Watch Commentary:** A newly reclaimed island adjacent to Sri Lanka's capital Colombo has begun attracting businesses. Named "Port City Colombo," the 269 hectares (664 acres) of reclaimed land juts almost two kilometers into the Laccadive Sea. The project is intended to help turn Colombo into a retail and financial hub, the latter dubbed "Colombo International Financial City," pulling in investment from India and South Asia.

The excerpted article notes that China provided the entirety of the \$1.4 billion dollars needed to build the island, setting China's investments in the country apart from those of the US and Japan, which the article claims, "are also vying for influence" in the country along with India.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was elected Sri Lanka's president in November 2019, is viewed as being pro-China, and the article notes that his prime minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa, served as President during a period of growing relations with China.

The Colombo project is not the only billion-dollar Chinese investment in the country. The Hambantota Development Zone, on Sri Lanka's southern coast and initiated in 2008, has attracted even more foreign scrutiny than the Colombo project. In 2017, then-Prime Minister Wickremesinghe agreed to terms that gave China Merchants Port Holdings Company a 99-year lease. The company is majority-owned by China Merchants Group [招商局集团], itself owned by China's State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission which oversees State-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Norochcholari Coal Power Plant in Northwestern Sri Lanka has also run to over 1 billion dollars. The Export-Import Bank of China provided loans for the project in 2006, and construction was undertaken by China Machinery Engineering Corporation. China Merchants Group owns a stake in the power plant.

Foreign investment along these lines is likely tempting as many developing countries see the infrastructure they build as a way to rapidly grow their economies. As seen in the case of Hambantota, however, they can quickly run into questions of national sovereignty. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

***“China .. provided the \$1.4 billion investment to dredge the sea and build the artificial island. It is the largest foreign direct investment project ever undertaken in Sri Lanka.”***



ColomboHarbour-November2015-04.

Source: Rehman Abubakr via Wikimedia, <https://zh.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ColomboHarbour-November2015-04.JPG>, CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Marwaan Macan-Markar, "China grips Sri Lanka with artificial island off Colombo," *Nikkei*, 12 December 2019. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/China-grips-Sri-Lanka-with-artificial-island-off-Colombo>

*China, no stranger to building islands, has finished one off the coast of Colombo that gives Sri Lanka, a strategically located South Asian nation, the potential of erecting a futuristic business hub.*

*Billed as Port City Colombo, the 269 hectares of land reclaimed off the coast of Sri Lanka's largest city was officially declared part of the country last weekend. The night sky above Colombo's coast lit up with fireworks to mark the moment this Chinese-led venture was formally able to begin attracting foreign investors.*

*Seasoned observers reckon the island will further deepen China's economic ties with debt-strapped Sri Lanka, where India, the U.S., and Japan are also vying for influence.*

*But it was China that provided the \$1.4 billion investment to dredge the sea and build the artificial island. It is the largest foreign direct investment project ever undertaken in Sri Lanka.*

*Diplomatic sources in Colombo say Port City Colombo stands apart from other big-ticket ventures in the country, a big beneficiary of China's belt and road largesse. Billions of dollars in Chinese loans have resulted in a slew of projects -- a port, airport, and highways.*

*Port City Colombo will not join this list; the FDI project comes at no financial cost to Sri Lanka.*

*The project began in September 2014, when Chinese President Xi Jinping first visited Sri Lanka. It involved China Communications Construction Company, the giant developer and most active builder when it comes to Sri Lanka's BRI projects, through an affiliate, China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC).*

*Officials at CHEC Port City Colombo, a company floated by CHEC for this venture, are targeting investors from the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, and China in their endeavor to turn the island into "South Asia's premier residential, retail and business destination," as the company states in its promotional material.*

*Financial analysts in Colombo reckon that Port City Colombo's location will allow it to draw Indian businesses. At the company's roadshow in Mumbai, India's financial capital, one message was driven home -- that the new hub is a three-hour flight away.*

*But as CHEC Port City Colombo points toward its goal of attracting a further \$13 billion in property development investments, it awaits some action in the Sri Lankan parliament, which needs to pass several pieces of legislation, including one to make the island a special economic zone.*

*Some of the legislation is contentious, especially that calling for a new legal regime and regulations that some observers are likening to the "one country, two systems" formula China uses with Hong Kong. That will require an amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution.*



# India and China Conduct Joint Military Exercise

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Indian government’s relations with the Chinese government appeared to improve over the past couple of years following the 2017 Doklam Standoff, particularly after a series of meetings between Indian and Chinese civilian and military officials. The accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent joint military exercise between Indian and Chinese forces and it provides a look at how Indian-Chinese relations continue to play out.

The article discusses the exercise “Hand-in-Hand 2019” and how it is “the eighth edition of the joint exercise.” The article also notes how the exercise took place in “Umroi, Meghalaya,” that it was “at the company level” with “100-200 troops from both countries” as well as how it focused on “joint planning and conducting counter terrorist operations in semi-urban terrain.” It is worth noting that the location of the exercise is in northeast India, in a region not far from where the Doklam Standoff took place.

The article discusses how there was “no joint exercise in 2017” because of the Doklam Standoff and that past iterations of the exercise took part in 2007 (the first exercise in the series) and 2008. It also notes how “there was no drill in 2009-2010” because of strained relations, but that the exercise “was later re-started in 2013 at Miaoergang in China, followed by the next one in Pune (India) in 2016.” Overall, the focus of the exercise is an area in which both sides have a common interest and while it did not involve a large number of personnel, the fact that it took place after a two year break shows at least one effort from both sides to try to improve relations and avoid another confrontation on the border. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

***“The joint drill to take place in Umroi, Meghalaya from December 7-20 2019 will be at the company level and around 100-200 troops from both countries will be participating...”***

**Source:** “Exercise Hand-in-Hand 2019: Troops from India, China to conduct joint drill this week,” *Financial Express*, 2 December 2019.

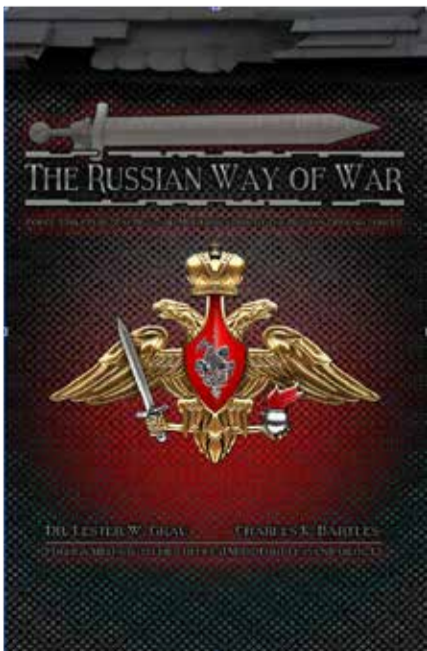
<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/exercise-hand-in-hand-2019-troops-from-india-china-to-conduct-joint-drill-this-week/1782237/>

*As part of its efforts to further expand its military to military cooperation, India and China will conduct a joint training exercise ‘Hand-in-Hand 2019’ (HiH) combat exercise later this week. This will be the eighth edition of the joint exercise.*

*The joint drill to take place in Umroi, Meghalaya from December 7-20 2019 will be at the company level and around 100-200 troops from both countries will be participating. The whole drill will focus on joint planning and conducting counter terrorist operations in semi-urban terrain.*

*...due to a 72 days long standoff between the two armies in Doklam, there was no joint exercise in 2017...The first HiH for the first time was held in at Kunming (China) in 2007, followed by the second edition at Belgaum in 2008. However, due to diplomatic spats over stapled visa and other matters, there was no drill in 2009-2010. This was later re-started in 2013 at Miaoergang in China, followed by the next one in Pune in 2016.*

*Close on the heels of a recently concluded successful informal summit between the leaders of both countries, such joint exercises help in further strengthening relations with the armies of both sides....Also, this year the number of transgressions has considerably reduced in comparison to the previous year, as well as there has been a drop in the number of face-offs between the two sides.*



## THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

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

**DOWNLOAD AT:**

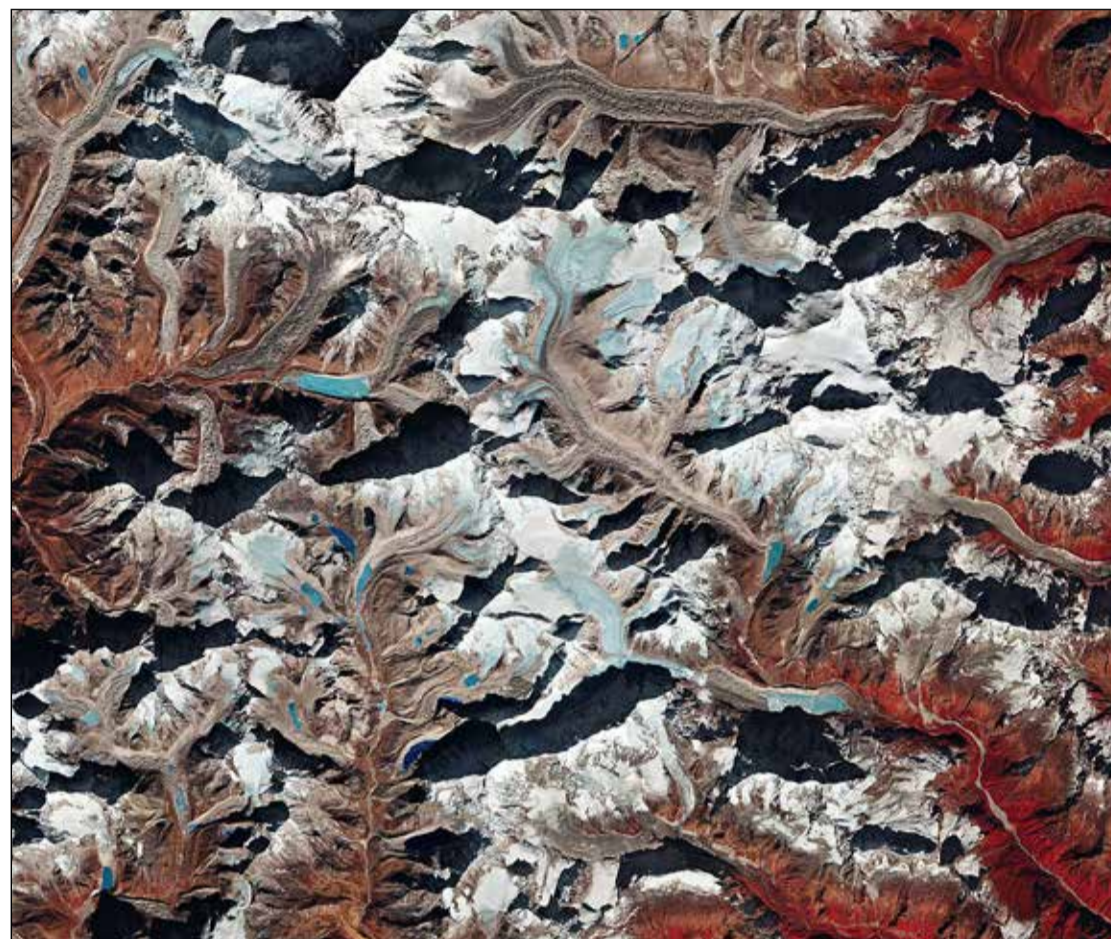
<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/fms0-books/199251/download>





## Tibet's "Shigatse Army Division" to Receive All-Terrain Training

**OE Watch Commentary:** A news article published by the Chinese state-run *China National Defense News* on 8 January, claimed that Tibet's Shigatse Army Division (西藏日喀则军) is currently training soldiers to maneuver a broad range of terrain. The push for the new training allegedly came following Chinese President Xi Jinping's signing of the Central Military Commission's Order No. 1 of 2020, "which set off an increase in training" across China. According to the article, the commander of the army division's cavalry subdivision said, "President Xi's mobilization order is a call for the military to march forward. We must train our army division intensively based on our current needs, and improve the soldiers' abilities for all-terrain adaptability." The article expresses the need to improve all-terrain adaptability to be prepared for future battles in high-alpine environments.



Satellite Image of Mount Makalu, Himalayas.

Source: Contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount\\_Makalu,\\_Himalayas\\_ESA395402.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Makalu,_Himalayas_ESA395402.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0-IGO

The article proceeds by outlining some of the core elements of the new all-terrain training. The exercises consist of the simulation of the combat environment, including low-temperatures, nighttime activities which likely include patrols and defensive measures, and also "active maintenance," which likely refers to the strategic options for units to maneuver in unfamiliar environments. Since much of the terrain that is now being traversed by the army division currently lacks topographical and geographical data, active officers and infantry are sending out advanced teams consisting of scouts and reconnaissance for exploration. The teams record the conditions of geology and hydrology in the regions along the way.

An additional article published nearly two weeks earlier by *China National Defense News* on 24 December 2019, claimed that the Tibet Shigatse Army Division has hired "eight outstanding retired soldiers" to train units since the beginning of 2019. The retired soldiers who are now tasked with training the units come from backgrounds in China's special forces, reconnaissance, and anti-aircraft artillery units. Preference was given to applicants with previous experience as squadron leaders and who also participated in military activities with units above the regiment level. According to the article, "During the selection process, the selection committee required each military department to evaluate the theoretical literacy, professional skills, organizational training, and management education of the selected candidates in order to truly select a group of highly qualified training personnel." It is unclear, however, if these new training personnel have adequate experience in the all-terrain environments of the Shigatse Army Division. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartnett)**

***“President Xi’s mobilization order is a call for the military to march forward. We must train our army division intensively based on our current needs, and improve the soldiers’ abilities for all-terrain adaptability.”***





## Continued: Tibet's "Shigatse Army Division" to Receive All-Terrain Training

**Source:** Luo Kai & Yan Liang, "Tibet's Shigatse Army Division's Innovative Training Initiatives Train Its Ability to Prepare for War," *China National Defense News*, 8 January 2020. [www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2020-01/08/content\\_4858242.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2020-01/08/content_4858242.htm)

*At the beginning of the new year, President Xi signed the Central Military Commission's Order No. 1 of 2020 and issued a training mobilization order to the entire army. From the shores of the East China Sea to the western snowcapped mountains, and from the southern islands to the northern border, the national defense mobilization front was moved by the orders and quickly set off an increase in training and high morale.*

*The commander of the army's cavalry subdivision said, "President Xi's mobilization order is a call for the military to march forward. We must train our army division intensively based on our current needs, and improve the soldiers' abilities for all-terrain adaptability."*

*"The enemy cannot appear only in familiar areas. To win future high-alpine mountain wars, we should practice multi-terrain combat well." Consensus is formed at all levels to guide the troop training. The training department formulates the training plan and requires all types of units to combine the tasks, locations, and selection of the combat direction. The training exercises highlight actual combat elements such as low-temperature start-up, night services, and active maintenance.*

*The units moved in response to the order, sending soldiers in unfamiliar areas. Not only are there no military and topographical data in these places for reference, even geographical data are rarely captured there. Active officers and militiamen are "crossing the river by feeling the stones." A regiment sends out an advance team consisting of scouts, reconnaissance, bridges, and communications for exploration. Professional militia teams follow the whole process in order to assist the endeavors, recording concurrent circuit conditions, geology, and hydrology along the way.*

**Source:** Luo Kai & Yan Liang, "Outstanding Retired Soldiers Serve in Tibet's Shigatse Army Division as Militia Trainers," *China National Defense News*, 24 December 2019. [www.chinamil.com.cn/hbll/2019-12/24/content\\_9702648.htm](http://www.chinamil.com.cn/hbll/2019-12/24/content_9702648.htm)

*The retired soldiers are a group of soldiers who have served in special forces, reconnaissance, and anti-aircraft artillery units. Priority is given to retired soldiers who have served as squad leaders, participated in the training of advance commanders, and participated in military activities at units above the regiment level. During the selection process, they required each military department to evaluate the theoretical literacy, professional skills, organizational training, and management education of the selected candidates in order to truly select a group of highly qualified training personnel.*

*This year, the army's district has selected 8 outstanding retired soldiers to join the militia trainer team. Many comrades have been soldiers in various units leading the war and are the vanguard of training groups. It is reported that the army division will also increase the scope of selection in follow-up work, and also further improve the selection and appointment mechanism of militia coaches, reserve sufficient teaching team training talents, and continuously improve the quality of education and training of the militia team.*

### Fangs of the Lone Wolf

**Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars  
1994-2009**

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.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195587/download>





## Maldivian Police Reveal Airline Terror Plot

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the excerpted article from Maldivian news source *Raajje.mv*, Maldivian authorities apparently thwarted a major terrorist attack in 2017. While there have been Maldivian fighters with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the country has not typically been considered a terrorism target.

The Maldives Police Service (MPS) only disclosed in December 2019 that ISIS had planned to bomb an airplane in the country in 2017. The article does not reveal which company's airplane would have been the target, but only that the detonation would have occurred on an airplane traveling within the Maldives. ISIS reportedly gave the order through a Maldivian foreign fighter in Syria, who then contacted the bomb-makers in the Maldives.

Breaking up the operation required international cooperation. The article notes, for example, that the Commissioner of Police in the Maldives stated that five other countries collaborated in the investigation and that it was the largest counter-terrorism operation in the entire year of 2017. Moreover, the counter-terrorism operation involved joint operations by the MPS, Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), and the Maldives' National Counter Terrorism Centre (NTCC).

Despite that counter-terrorism success, the article notes that there also have been other attempts by ISIS to target public gatherings in the Maldives. In addition, this is not the only country in this region that ISIS has targeted. In 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack in Sri Lanka, which killed over 250 people at hotels and churches during the Easter holiday. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Maldives Air Taxi 0571.

Source: H. Bernwald via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maldives\\_Air\\_Taxi\\_0571.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maldives_Air_Taxi_0571.jpg), Public Domain

***“Five of the world’s leading countries also collaborated in the operation, making it ‘the largest counter-terrorism, intelligence and investigation operation of 2017 in the world.’”***

**Source:** “ISIS attempted to carry out an airliner bombing in the Maldives, says Police,” *Raajje.mv*, 16 December 2019. <https://raajje.mv/67827>

*Maldives Police Service (MPS) has revealed that the terrorist organization known as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) had made plans to carry out an airliner bombing in the Maldives during 2017. Mohamed Hameed disclosed that, in 2017, a group of Maldivians built an improvised explosive device (IED) as instructed by ISIS leaders via a Maldivian militant living in Syria. The group was commanded to plant the bomb on a plane traveling within the Maldives. Nevertheless, the commissioner stated that the plan was stopped in its tracks due to a joint operation by the MPS, Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), and National Counter Terrorism Centre (NTCC). According to Hameed, five of the world’s leading countries also collaborated in the operation, making it “the largest counter-terrorism, intelligence and investigation operation of 2017 in the world.” Hameed also added that, in 2017, plans had also been made to blast two IED’s in a public gathering inside the Maldives.*



## Indonesia Introduces New Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 30 December, Indonesia released photos of the country's newest unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The excerpted Indonesian language article from *Tribunnews* discusses the new UAV and its potential uses, noting that it was created by local companies in coordination with the Ministry of Defense. The new UAV will take part in combat missions and conduct air strikes. Its name "Elang Hitam" means "Black Eagle."

According to the article, the UAV will conduct operations to counter terrorism and smuggling, as well as illegal logging and fishing. This suggests there will be both land and maritime uses for the UAV. The article quotes one of the directors of the project, who notes that versatility was one of the key objectives of the Elang Hitam's design. This

also reflects the diversity of Indonesia's security threats. On the one end, there are cells loyal to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the mountains of Sulawesi, while the country also has dense forests that are vulnerable to fires for which aerial imagery can be of assistance. Considering that the country is also a vast archipelago that has maritime disputes with other countries such as China, and that has thwarted Chinese vessels from entering Indonesian fishing space, the Elang Hitam can also be put to use in protecting the country's sovereignty.

At a flying speed of 235 kilometers per hour and with the ability to fly for 30 hours at 30,000 feet, Indonesia appears to have developed a mid-range UAV suitable for responding to the country's defense needs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



*The Eye of the Young Eagle.*

Source: yanaitsuky via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tatapan\\_Si\\_Elang\\_Muda.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tatapan_Si_Elang_Muda.jpg)

***“It is hoped that the existence of the Elang Hitam will reduce the threat of terrorism, smuggling, piracy and theft of natural resources such as illegal logging and illegal fishing.”***

**Source:** “‘Elang Hitam’ Pesawat Tanpa Awak Karya Anak Bangsa: Bisa Terbang 30 Jam dan Kecepatan 235 Km Per Jam (‘Black Eagle National Unmanned Aerial Vehicle: Ability to Fly 30 Hours and at a Speed of 235 Km Per Hour),” *Tribunnews*, 31 December 2019. <https://solo.tribunnews.com/2019/12/31/elang-hitam-pesawat-tanpa-awak-karya-anak-bangsa-bisa-terbang-30-jam-dan-kecepatan-235-km-per-jam>

*This aircraft is capable of flying at an altitude of 30 thousand feet for 30 hours with a speed of 235 kilometers per hour. In addition, Elang Hitam has a payload capacity that is able to accommodate combatant missions. This unmanned aircraft is the first unmanned aerial vehicle created by PT DI which is the result of a collaboration agreement in the form of a consortium between the Ministry of Defense, BPPT, TNI, ITB, PTDI and PT Len Industri (Persero).*

*The creation of the Elang Hitam aims to support the fulfillment of security defense equipment products. It is hoped that the existence of the Elang Hitam will reduce the threat of terrorism, smuggling, piracy and theft of natural resources such as illegal logging and illegal fishing. “We want the development of this drone to be used for various benefits, especially for Indonesia’s defense,” said Director of PT DI, Elfen Goentoro.*





## Vietnamese Officials Present National Defense White Paper in Algeria

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late December, Vietnamese officials presented Vietnam's 2019 National Defense White Paper in Algeria. The White Paper, the first one that Vietnam has released in 10 years, focuses on national sovereignty and neutrality. The Vietnamese Deputy Head of Mission and Vietnamese Defense Attaché made the presentation in front of their Algerian counterparts at an event that included 200 participants. According to the accompanying article from a Vietnamese source, these included "many officials and representatives of the [Algerian] Ministry of Defense, the [Algerian] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Algerian] press agencies, representatives of the Defense Attaché and a number of foreign diplomatic delegations in Algeria."

Vietnamese-Algerian relations have historically been strong because both countries were French colonies that waged insurgencies against France, and more recently because the two countries have developed economic relationships as two oil exporters. The article mentions how Vietnam's Defense Attaché stated before the presentation that the two countries share anti-colonial histories and supported each other decades ago. However, the Defense Attaché acknowledged the relationship today is not as strong as it used to be, saying "bilateral defense cooperation is currently not equal to the traditional relationship and potential of the two militaries."

According to the article, the White Paper emphasized that Vietnam would not enter into alliances that oppose any specific country, threaten the use of force against other countries, or allow foreign countries to establish bases in Vietnam to oppose other countries. This is similar to the foreign policy of Algeria, where the White Paper was received favorably and Algerians expressed support for Vietnam's views and strategy. The article also quotes Vietnam's Counselor for Political Affairs as saying "I hope that defense relations and cooperation between Vietnam and Algeria will be increasingly strengthened ... to build strategic partnerships between the two countries in the future." **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Vietnamese People's Army Defense Intelligence.

Source: Taitamting via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vietnamese\\_People%27s\\_Army\\_Defense\\_Intelligence.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vietnamese_People%27s_Army_Defense_Intelligence.png), CC BY 4.0

***“Colonel Duong Duc Thuan, the Vietnamese Defense Attaché, also said that Vietnam and Algeria shared a tradition of fighting for independence and liberating their nations from the problem of colonialism in the 20th century.”***

**Source:** “Công bố Sách Trắng Quốc phòng Việt Nam tại Algeria (Propagation of Vietnam’s National Defense White Paper in Algeria),” *Baotintuc.vn*, 19 December 2019. <https://baotintuc.vn/thoi-su/cong-bo-sach-trang-quoc-phong-viet-nam-tai-algeria-20191219070634498.htm>

*Around 200 guests attended the event, including many officials and representatives of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the host country press agencies, representatives of the Defense Attaché and a number of foreign diplomatic delegations in Algeria. Speaking at the opening of this event, Counselor Trinh The Hung emphasized, “defense relations and cooperation will create strategic trust among countries and I hope that defense relations and cooperation between Vietnam and Algeria will be increasingly strengthened and developed, creating beneficial conditions to build strategic partnerships between the two countries in the future.”*

*Colonel Duong Duc Thuan, the Vietnamese Defense Attaché, also said that Vietnam and Algeria shared a tradition of fighting for independence and liberating their nations from the problem of colonialism in the 20th century. However, he said bilateral defense cooperation is currently not equal to the traditional relationship and potential of the two militaries.*

*In the launching ceremony of Vietnam’s Defense White Paper 2019 that took place on the same day, Colonel Duong Duc Thuan introduced the main contents of the White Paper, referring to important policies of Vietnam, such as not joining the coalitions featuring one country against another; not allowing foreign countries to set up military bases or use Vietnamese territory to oppose other countries; and not using force or threatening to use force in international relations.*



## Israel, Greece, and Cyprus to Construct “East-Med” Natural Gas Pipeline

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from various foreign sources discuss the Israeli-Greek-Cypriot agreement to construct the “East-Med” natural gas pipeline. The agreement comes after Turkey and the Tripoli-based Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) signed a maritime agreement creating an exclusive economic zone spanning the length between the two countries.

As the first excerpt from the Israeli *Jerusalem Post* outlines, the East-Med pipeline is to carry natural gas from Israeli and Cypriot natural gas fields while connecting to the Poseidon Pipeline in Greece which subsequently connects to Italy. The pipeline is planned to carry up to 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas and span 1,900 kilometers (1,180 miles). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated the cooperation between the three countries is “a real alliance in the eastern Mediterranean” and promotes regional stability and security. The pipeline is intended to increase energy security among European Union member states and competition in the European energy-market.



Eastern Mediterranean basins including Levant basin and oil and gas fields.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern\\_Mediterranean\\_basins\\_including\\_Levant\\_basin\\_and\\_oil\\_and\\_gas\\_fields.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eastern_Mediterranean_basins_including_Levant_basin_and_oil_and_gas_fields.png), Public Domain

The second excerpt from the Turkish government news site *TRT World*, points out that the maritime deal between the Turkish Government and the Libyan GNA Government signed on 27 November lays Turkish and Libyan claims to maritime territory between “Turkey’s southwestern coast of Fethiye-Marmaris-Kas and Derna-Tobruk-Bordia coastline of Libya.” Both the Libyan GNA and Turkish governments claim that Greece and the Cyprus Governments have violated boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean by laying claim to Libyan and Turkish waters. The Turkish news source says the Libyan-Turkish maritime accord may force the Israeli, Greek and Greek-Cypriot Governments to negotiate with Turkey in order for the East-Med pipeline to pass through the disputed waters. As mentioned in the third excerpt from the Turkish *Anadolu Agency*, the spokesperson for the Turkish Foreign Ministry stated, “any project disregarding Turkey, and the Turkish Cypriots, who have equal rights over the natural resources of the Island of Cyprus cannot succeed.”

The Turkish-Libyan maritime deal had drawn criticism from across the Mediterranean as outlined in the final excerpt from *Al-Monitor*. The Egyptian Foreign Ministry said the Turkish-Libyan agreement is “null and lacks legal effect per Article 8 of the Skhirat Agreement between warring parties in Libya. The (Skhirat) agreement specified that the GNA has no prerogative to conclude international agreements without referring back to the Libyan parliament.” Additionally, Egyptian Major General Gamal Mazloum said the Egyptian naval drills on 11 December were in response to the maritime agreement between the Libyan GNA and Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fesen)**

**“Any project disregarding Turkey, and the Turkish Cypriots, who have equal rights over the natural resources of the Island of Cyprus cannot succeed.”**

**Source:** Lahav Harkov & Eytan Halon, “Israel enters pipeline agreement with Greek, Cyprus leaders,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 January 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-enters-pipeline-agreement-with-Greek-Cyprus-leaders-612950>

*The ambitious East-Med energy project will include the construction of a 1,900-kilometer offshore and onshore pipeline from Israeli economic waters to the western Greek mainland via Cyprus and Crete.*

*“Cooperation between Israel, Greece and Cyprus, which Netanyahu called “a real alliance in the eastern Mediterranean,” is economic and diplomatic, but also stabilizes the region and contributes to its security...*

*The pipeline project has been included in the EU’s list of “Projects of Common Interest,” boosting energy-market competition and fostering increased energy security for member states...Capacity is subsequently forecast to increase to 20 bcm.*





## Continued: Israel, Greece, and Cyprus to Construct “East-Med” Natural Gas Pipeline

**Source:** Ufuk Necat Tasci, “Ankara: Turkey-Libya deal in ‘complete accordance with international law’,” *TRT World*, 4 December 2019. <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/ankara-turkey-libya-deal-in-complete-accordance-with-international-law-31910>

*...UN-backed Libyan leader Fayeze al Sarraj and Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a deal on November 27, preventing Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration and other regional states from violating maritime boundaries...*

*...Ankara and Libya are now working towards establishing control between Turkey’s southwestern coast of Fethiye-Marmaris-Kas and Derna-Tobruk-Bordia coastline of Libya...*

*...Ankara’s recent agreement with Libya could push Israel, Egypt, Greece and other European Union (EU) states to open negotiations with the Turkish government.*

**Source:** Gözde Bayar, “‘East Mediterranean gas pipeline project can’t succeed’,” *Anadolu Agency*, 3 January 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/east-mediterranean-gas-pipeline-project-can-t-succeed/1690732>

*Any project disregarding Turkey...and the Turkish Cypriots, who have equal rights over the natural resources of the Island of Cyprus, cannot succeed,” spokesman Hami Aksoy said in a statement.*

**Source:** Hagar Hosny, “Egypt flexes its muscles in the Mediterranean after Libyan-Turkish agreement,” *Al-Monitor*, 20 December 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/12/oil-gas-maritime-border-security-turkey-libya-egypt.html>

*Egypt’s Foreign Ministry condemned the agreement...“such agreements are null and lack legal effect, per Article 8 of the Skhirat Agreement between the warring parties in Libya that was signed in 2015 in Morocco under UN auspices. The agreement specified that the GNA has no prerogative to conclude international agreements without referring back to the Libyan parliament.”*

*Maj. Gen. Gamal Mazloum, an adviser at the Nasser Higher Military Academy, told Al-Monitor... military drills are certainly connected to the developments unfolding in the region, especially in light of the GNA-Turkey agreement...*

## Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

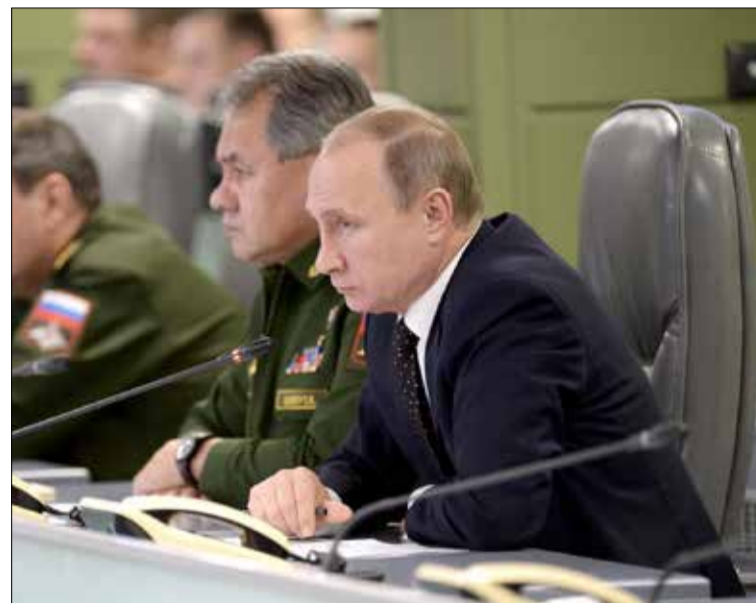




## Russia's Increasing Presence in the Middle East

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has become a major regional power broker in the Middle East. Its military intervention in Syria has changed the course of the war in favor of the Assad regime. Even though Russian presence in the Middle East dates back to the Soviet Union, in recent years Russia has transformed its relationship with its old allies and forged new relations. It has relations in the energy sector with Iraq; is constructing nuclear power plants with Iran and Turkey; and collaborating with the defense industry and sharing weapons systems with Syria, Libya, Egypt, and Turkey. Russia also has good relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel. The accompanying article from Turkey's state-run news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı* discusses increased Russian influence in the Middle East.

According to the excerpt, several factors helped the Soviet Union keep strong ties with some countries in the Middle East. The author notes for example, "the education of the children of elite families of the Middle East... in Moscow, financial support and credit of the Kremlin to Middle Eastern countries, and the sale of weapons technologies, gave the Soviets a strong position in the Middle East." However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian ties to the Middle East weakened. Since the early 2000s, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, Russia started focusing on the Middle East again. Russia prioritizes its relations with the Middle East because the region provides a marketing opportunity for Russia's defense industry and other sectors. Russia also seeks to diminish American influence in the region.



Meeting on Russia's Armed Forces actions in Syria.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting\\_on\\_Russia%E2%80%99s\\_Armed\\_Forces\\_actions\\_in\\_Syria\\_\(03\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting_on_Russia%E2%80%99s_Armed_Forces_actions_in_Syria_(03).jpg), CC BY 4.0

After the Arab Spring, Russia was able to maintain its ties with Damascus and Iran despite its diminished influence in the region. Despite supporting the opposite sides of the Syrian conflict, Russia maintained good relations with Turkey. The Russian strategy to increase its influence in the Middle East is multi-faceted and includes supporting authoritarian regimes, increasing trade, and helping countries build nuclear power plants. Russia's first strategy was to support the regimes it had relations with during the Arab Spring at any cost to maintain its influence. Syria is a good example of this strategy, as the al-Assad's regime owes its survival to Russian support. In exchange, the Syrian regime has granted Russia permanent bases such as a naval facility in Tartus and the Khmeimim Air Base.

Another strategy is to increase the trade volume with the countries in the region. Russian exports consist of military technology, petrochemical products, diamonds, fertilizer, and wheat. As of 2017, Russian trade volume with the region was around 53 billion dollars. This trade volume is likely to increase because regional countries have shown an interest in Russian defense and military technologies especially after seeing Russia use them in defense of the Syrian regime. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates have purchased Russian defense and weapons systems. Most importantly Russia was able to market its S-400 anti-aircraft weapon system to NATO-member Turkey, and is in talks with Saudi Arabia to do the same. Russia's state-owned Rosneft has struck major energy deals in Iraq and invested in its energy sector. Finally, Russia has signed agreements with Iran, Turkey, and Egypt to construct nuclear power plants. Russia's Atomstroyexport completed the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran. Russian ROSATOM is constructing the Akkuyu nuclear power plant in Turkey and developing the El Dabaa nuclear power plant in Egypt. The article argues that Russia will probably construct power plants in other countries in the region as well. The author points out that Russia increases its influence in the region at the expense of the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***“Russia has increased its influence not only politically but also in economic and military areas in the region...”***

**Source:** Prof. Dr. İlyas Kemaloğlu, “Rusya'nın Orta Doğu'ya dönüşü (Russia's Return to the Middle East)” *Anadolu Ajansı (Anatolian News Agency)*, 02 January 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/rusya-nin-orta-dogu-ya-donusu/1690139#!>

*The Middle East is one of the regions that Moscow prioritizes. Factors such as the education of the children of elite families of the Middle East at the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in Moscow, financial support and credit of the Kremlin to the Middle Eastern countries, and the sale of weapons technologies give the Soviets a strong position in the Middle East.*

*With the collapse of the USSR, the Kremlin's presence in the Middle East was weakened, as was the case in other Soviet-dominated regions... With the rise of oil and gas prices, the Russian economy recovered, Vladimir Putin pursued a multifaceted foreign policy... [with] the deterioration of romantic relations with the West and the resumption of polarization, Russia began to give importance to the Middle East again.*

*... In recent years, Russia has wiped out the debts of many countries in the Middle East and increased its influence in the region... In this context, Russia has developed cooperation with Iraq in the field of energy, with Iran in nuclear energy (construction of Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant), with Libya and Egypt in the military technologies and energy fields, with Syria in military and commercial fields.*

*However, the increasing influence of Russia in the region [disrupted] with the Arab Spring...*

*Today, Russia is one of the only states in the region that communicates with all states and forces. Besides close cooperation with Turkey and Iran, Moscow is able to keep good relations with Israel. Reaching an agreement on oil exports with Iran and Saudi Arabia, two regional rivals...*

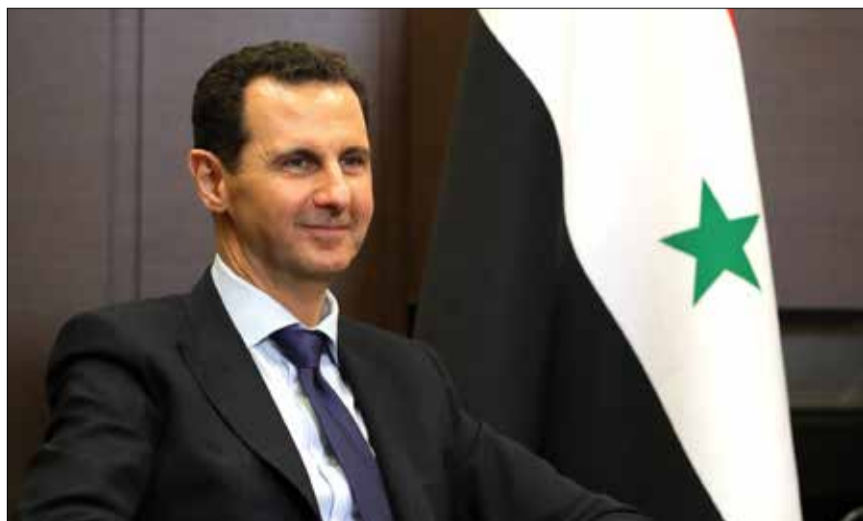
*Russia has increased its influence not only politically but also in economic and military areas in the region...*

*Another issue that Russia attaches importance to is the development of relations with countries of the region on the construction of nuclear power plants.*





## Assad Invites China to Invest in Syria's Reconstruction



Bashar al-Assad.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bashar\\_al-Assad\\_\(2018-05-17\)\\_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bashar_al-Assad_(2018-05-17)_02.jpg), CC BY 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December 2019, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad granted an interview to China's *Phoenix Television*, where he expressed Syria's desire to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and invited Chinese companies to help in Syria's reconstruction. The noteworthy parts of the interview, which contained important messages to China and other potential investors, are excerpted here from *Syria News*, which re-published the full interview.

Assad notes that any investment that China will make in Syrian reconstruction "will not be a loan or aid without returns, it is a profitable investment in every sense of the word." He also points out that the Syrian government is currently talking to a number of Chinese companies "to find ways to evade sanctions" and have access to the Syrian market. Investors and companies have concerns about the way sanctions could impact them, even though the process may be profitable, he notes. However, he says that

they have found "certain formulas, which will not be disclosed" for these companies to enter the Syrian market and participate in the reconstruction process.

Assad also emphasizes that support for reconstruction is not limited to the economy, but is anything that contributes to Syrian stability, whether it be creating jobs so that people are not vulnerable to being exploited by terrorists, or helping with the fight against terrorism, saying "the support from China and other friendly countries in Syria's reconstruction is as important as the military efforts in restoring stability in Syria, and striking and fighting terrorism."

The interviewer also asks about steps that the Syrian government has taken in order to attract investors coming from China and other friendly countries. Assad responds that they are working to secure the investment environment by addressing necessary measures "like transparency, clarity on investors' rights and obligations in the country and the legal or judicial aspects of their investments." He also highlights that they have made progress on their investment laws, basing it on international investment standards including legal guarantees, financial guarantees, exemptions, and clearly laid out tax implications.

However, Assad also discusses a big challenge in attracting Chinese investment into the country: "the current lack of sufficient or effective financial channels between Syria and China for the transfer of money. This is a real problem caused mainly by the sanctions." He underscores that this is a problem that requires a solution from state level discussions as well as the engagement of the relevant financial institutions of both countries. He expresses hope that "the Chinese state with its relevant institutions – like the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation, [will] encourage investors to come to Syria or at least to areas which have become completely safe."

Regarding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Assad highlights that this year, "we have started a serious dialogue with the Chinese government on how Syria can become part of the BRI." He adds that they proposed "around six projects to the Chinese government in line with the Belt and Road methodology and we are waiting for the Chinese government to determine which project, or projects, is in line with their thinking." The interview to the Chinese outlet was one of three interviews he granted to international outlets, the other ones being *Paris Match* and Italian *RAI*. (Also see: "Syrian Reconstruction: The Economic Battleground," and "China Sees Opportunity in Syrian Reconstruction," *OE Watch*, November 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

***“This year, we started a serious dialogue with the Chinese government on how Syria can become part of the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative).”***  
***- Syrian President Bashar al-Assad***



## Continued: Assad Invites China to Invest in Syria's Reconstruction

**Source:** "Assad Discusses Belt and Road, US Aggression, with China's Phoenix Television," Syria News, 16 December 2019. <https://www.syrianews.cc/assad-discusses-belt-and-road-us-aggression-with-chinas-phoenix-television/#mh-comments>

**Question:** And here we ask, Mr. President, what are the most important areas in which Syria needs the help of friendly countries, including China?

**President Assad:** ... Now, with the liberation of most areas, we have started discussions with a number of Chinese companies experienced in reconstruction.... We would hope that Chinese companies start looking and studying the Syrian market which is improving quickly and constantly in terms of security. It is essential that we start discussing investment opportunities, because it is well-known that rebuilding countries destroyed partially or totally by war is very profitable and has high returns-on-investment. The process is not limited to loans or providing aid without any returns, it is a profitable investment in every sense of the word.

We have started talking to a number of Chinese companies on finding ways to evade sanctions and have access to the Syrian market. They have shown an interest because the process is profitable, but investors and investment companies still have concerns about the way sanctions could impact them. We have found certain formulas, which will not be disclosed of course, for them to enter the Syrian market safely and consequently contribute to the reconstruction process in Syria.

I would like to emphasize that this support is not limited to the economy; reconstruction ultimately means contributing to Syria's stability for two reasons. First, in the past two years, millions of Syrians have returned from abroad without finding sufficient job opportunities, which in itself is a factor that can be used by terrorists and outside powers. Second, the reconciliation we have achieved in Syria, was in part with those who worked with the militants or the terrorists at a certain period. They agreed to lay down their weapons and return to their normal lives – this return requires job opportunities. So, the support from China and other friendly countries in Syria's reconstruction, is as important as the military efforts to restoring stability in Syria, and striking and fighting terrorism.

**Question:** So, can we ask about the concrete measures that are being taken by the Syrian government in order to attract investors coming from China and other friendly countries?

**President Assad:** ... As to the investment environment, there are requirements any investor would need, regardless of whether there is a war or not. In this regard, we are focusing on two things: the urgent, which is improving this investment environment by addressing necessary measures, like transparency, clarity on investors' rights and obligations in the country and the legal or judicial aspects of their investments. With all these issues, we are currently drawing up clear guidelines for investors.

However, the more important and comprehensive step is the investment law. We have achieved significant progress in developing our investment law in-line with similar laws in many other countries around the world, thus ensuring it is based on international investment standards.

This law clearly identifies the guarantees given to investors concerning their investment in Syria: legal guarantees, financial guarantees, exemptions clearly laid out, the tax situation for their investments – and any other aspects which constitute a guarantee to ensure that this investment is completely safe and profitable.

**Question:** Well, Mr. President, are there specific measures taken to ensure the existence of a safe investment environment which assure Chinese investors to come and not face any security problems? Chinese investors are very concerned about this.

**President Assad:** That's right, this is a serious challenge. In fact, there are two challenges. First, is the current lack of sufficient or effective financial channels between Syria and China for the transfer of money. This is a real problem caused mainly by the sanctions. A solution must be found if we want investors to come to Syria; a solution needs the engagement of relevant financial institutions from both countries, which requires discussion at a state level. This is a major obstacle that needs to be overcome.

The second issue is the fear that many Chinese companies still have. Today, there are companies which are willing to send experts to Syria. This is important because many Syrian industries have started to show interest in the Chinese market, for example Syrian factories which buy their equipment from China. Previously, Chinese experts had concerns about coming to Syria; this has recently started to improve, which is a new step.

However, when we talk about Chinese investment with Chinese capital, this needs more assurances; we must exert greater effort in this regard as a Syrian state and we hope the Chinese state with its relevant institutions – like the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation, to encourage investors to come to Syria or at least to the areas which have become completely safe.

**Question:** Mr. President, I would like to ask you about the Belt and Road Initiative. How do you see this initiative in general?

**President Assad:** From a strategic perspective, it constitutes a worldwide transformation, a transformation in the nature of international relations. If we look at the current situation in the world, we see that it is governed by Western attempts of domination, particularly on the part of the United States... Today, we see that there is a superpower – China, trying to strengthen its influence in the world. But what kind of influence? It is not the negative influence we have become accustomed to, but rather an influence in the sense of relying on friends and an influence based on mutual interests. When we in Syria think about being part of the Silk Road and Syria is a small country – by international, geographic, demographic, economic and military standards...

...When we are part of this Road, China treats us as equals and not as a superpower dealing with a small country. There are mutual interests: it is beneficial to China, Syria and all the countries on this Road.

Another aspect, is that it is not limited to China's bilateral relations with these countries but rather it is a relationship among all the countries on this axis. So, it is a relationship of culture and civilization which ultimately leads to greater prosperity and investment, and the improvement of the social, economic and security conditions in these countries. This means more stability in the world, which is contrary to what we have known in our modern and recent history. This is what we see in the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative): stability and prosperity.

**Question:** Syria, for its part, expressed its desire to take part in the Belt and Road Initiative. Are there any developments in this regard?

**President Assad:** During the previous period, and especially in the early years of the war due to the instability, it wasn't our priority. Perhaps because it didn't make sense to talk about infrastructure when you are in a state of life or death, not as individuals but as a homeland, as a nation – Syria.

Now that we have overcome this stage and with the increased stability and the improvement of the economic cycle in Syria, we have started this year a serious dialogue with the Chinese government on how Syria can become part of the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative). At present Syria is not on the route; there are different routes and Syria is not on them. However, part of the initiative includes cultural, educational and scientific domains, and through the direct relationship between us and China, there has been a large number – which has increased in recent years – of scholarships offered to Syria that we are benefitting from. The discussions have recently started concerning infrastructure, which is one of the most important elements and could make Syria a part of the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative) in the future. We have proposed a number of projects only a few months ago.

... In areas related to infrastructure, we have proposed around six projects to the Chinese government in line with the Belt and Road methodology and we are waiting for the Chinese government to determine which project, or projects, is in line with their thinking. I think when this infrastructure is developed, with time, the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative) passing through Syria becomes a foregone conclusion, because it is not a road you only draw on a map. Whilst it is true that historically the Silk Road passed through Syria, Iraq and this region, today however, this initiative takes into account the available infrastructure required for these routes. Therefore, by establishing, strengthening, and developing this infrastructure, the Silk Road (Belt and Road Initiative) will pass through Syria in the future.





## Efforts to Unify Kurdish Parties in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Fragmentation of the Kurds in Syria continues despite the previous attempt to unify the Kurdish parties there. Despite differences, their ultimate objectives seem similar: advocate for democratic governance, language and cultural rights of the Kurds. The recent Turkish operation in Syria reignited the discussion to create a unified Kurdish front in Syria. The accompanying articles provide insight into this effort.

The Kurdish movement in Syria is divided into two major sides: the self-declared Autonomous Administration (NES) supported by the Democratic Union Party (PYD-which forms the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)); and the Kurdish National Council (ENKS), supported by the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG). As the first article states, the former President of the KRG Masoud Barzani had spearheaded efforts to



YPG-SDF fighters near the Euphrates east of Raqqa.

Source: VOA News via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:YPG-SDF\\_fighters\\_near\\_the\\_Euphrates\\_east\\_of\\_Raqqa.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:YPG-SDF_fighters_near_the_Euphrates_east_of_Raqqa.png), Public Domain

unify Syrian Kurdish parties to establish a “united political front” to work towards finding a resolution for the Kurdish issue in Syria in particular and the Syrian conflict in general. The initial efforts led to both sides signing agreements. These efforts failed because Syrian Kurdish parties lack autonomy in their decision-making process, and their failure “to grasp the responsibility on their shoulders,” misreading political developments in Syria, and the role of international and regional actors. A joint French and American effort also did not bear any fruit. However, the recent Turkish operation into Syria has changed the political calculus and Kurdish parties have resumed talks of unity. The article states that “high-level calls between the [KRG’s] leadership and the leadership of the Kurdish-led SDF took place.” These calls pave the way for “Mazloun Abdi, commander in chief of the NES-controlled SDF, to lead “an initiative to unite the Kurdish political ranks.”

The second article reiterates similar efforts, and more importantly, provides the views of ENKS regarding negotiating with the PYD and the SDF to unify Kurdish parties in Syria. “Mohammed Ismail, the administrative officer of... a member of ENKS stated that “the PYD and the SDF... after the fall of Afrin, ... [Ras al-Ain] and Tell Abyad,... are trying... to cover up their political, administrative and military failure... To gain popularity among Kurds, the SDF is also trying to... make an agreement with the [ENKS] to cover up its failure.” He also stated that the PYD has to “release the detainees, uncover the fate of the missing people, open a party office and allow political and media activities. These would be a prelude to a dialogue with an influential international guarantor.” He further stated that any agreement between Kurdish parties “should be comprehensive at the political, military and administrative levels.” These views indicate that despite the ongoing dialogue, ENKS has reservations and Kurdish parties must engage in confidence-building dialogue before they can unite. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***“Kurdish and international efforts, and a positive response on the side of the Syrian Democratic Forces, indicate the existence of serious joint efforts to reformulate the political process in Rojava.”***



## Continued: Efforts to Unify Kurdish Parties in Syria

**Source:** Hussein Omer, “Rival Kurdish sides in Rojava cannot miss second chance at unity” *Rudaw.net*, 19 December 2019. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/191220191>

*Rival Kurdish factions in Rojava missed the chance to unite [the parties]. In the wake of the Turkish invasion, the renewed opportunity to unite and preserve the achievements of the Kurdish people in Rojava cannot be missed again.*

*Throughout the years of the Syrian Civil War, the Kurdish movement in northeastern Syria (Rojava) suffered from acute division along the lines of two main sides: the Autonomous Administration (NES), which is backed by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the Kurdistan National Council (ENKS), which is supported by the ruling government of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish people in Rojava paid the cost for this division when they were occupied and displaced.*

*Before the occupation of Afrin by Turkish forces (alongside extremist and terrorist armed groups for which the Turkish-backed Syrian Coalition provides political cover), there had been Kurdish efforts, led by President Masoud Barzani, to establish unity among Kurdish ranks in Syria. President Barzani wanted this unity to evolve into a united political front that would work towards solving the Syrian question in general and the Kurdish question in Syria in particular.*

*These efforts initially succeeded – the two Kurdish sides signed multiple joint agreements. However, they were soon killed because both sides of the division failed to grasp the responsibility on their shoulders, misread political developments in Syria, and lacked independence in their decision-making. Additionally, many international and regional powers held negative views towards increased Kurdish unity.*

*A French initiative, coordinated with the Americans, was presented, but the initiative did not succeed due to the Kurdish sides’ complacency as each side had illusions of its own.*

...

*Shortly after Operation Peace Spring commenced, high-level calls between the Kurdistan Region leadership and the leadership of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) took place. The calls increased in frequency, leading to decreased hostility between the Kurdish sides. Rhetoric became calmer, allowing for negotiation. Eventually, Mazloum Abdi, commander in chief of the NES-controlled Syrian Democratic Forces, spearheaded an initiative to unite the Kurdish political ranks.*

*... Both sides need to deal in good faith, and be patient while building on these first steps. Kurdish and international efforts, and a positive response on the side of the Syrian Democratic Forces, indicate the existence of serious joint efforts to reformulate the political process in Rojava.*

**Source:** Shivan Ibrahim, “Syria’s Kurdish parties do not see eye to eye,” *Al-monitor.com*, 9 December 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/12/kurds-syria-pyd-national-council-russia-syrian-regime.html>

*SDF commander Mazlum Kobane announced Oct. 28 that the SDF was ready to unite Kurdish nationalist parties in Syria’s Kurdistan.*

...

*Kobane said that the SDF did not mind the return of any Kurdish force to fight under the banner of the SDF, a jab at the Rojava peshmerga.*

...

*Mohammed Ismail, the administrative officer of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK) in Syria and member of the Kurdish National Council, commented on the SDF initiative for rapprochement between the Kurdish parties in Syria and on the Kurdish self-administration’s effort to communicate with the Syrian regime.*

*“In fact, the self-administration, the PYD and the SDF, with its all different names, are one and the same system,” he said. “After the fall of Afrin, Sari Kani [Ras al-Ain] and Tell Abyad, these groups are trying, by all means, to cover up their political, administrative and military failure, including opening channels of communications with the Syrian regime and some of the international stakeholders involved in the Syrian situation. But with this mindset of taking action individually, the SDF will lose the rest of the areas, too. In order to gain popularity among Kurds, the SDF is also trying to communicate and make an agreement with the Kurdish council to cover up its failure”...*

*He continued, ... The PYD has also to release the detainees, uncover the fate of the missing people, open a party office and allow political and media activities. These would be a prelude to a dialogue with an influential international guarantor. The Kurdish dialogue is tactical and not decisive or fundamental. Therefore, any agreement should be comprehensive at the political, military and administrative levels.”*

*He believes that the “PYD is evading all these steps because it does not believe in a political partnership or joint action but in the implementation of agendas of the parties it agrees, with disregard to the Kurdish national issues...”*

*Kurds continue to wait for an agreement and a unified stance among all the Kurdish components that would serve as a guarantee for the Kurds’ future in Syria.*





## Transfer of Functions to Egypt's New Administrative Capital to Begin Mid-2020

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Egyptian government is to start transferring functions to the partially built New Administrative Capital (NAC) in the middle of 2020, according to recent statements by President Abdel Fattah Sisi. The NAC is envisioned as a modern and efficient “smart city” located on the easternmost edge of greater metropolitan Cairo. It is to include a business district housing Africa’s tallest building (the “Iconic Tower”), a massive complex housing the country’s defense department (the “Octagon”), a canal flanked by a “larger-than-Central-Park” green area (“The Green River Project”), a high-tech “digital city,” an international airport, housing units, hospitals and schools, embassies and foreign representations, and an administrative center where government functions will be conducted. A grandiose mosque (“al-Fattah al-Aleem,” second in size only to the Great Mosque in Mecca) and basilica (“The Nativity of Christ,” Africa’s largest cathedral) have already been built. Calling the project ambitious may be an understatement.

Critics of the Egyptian government argue that the project is marred by corruption and inefficiencies. The excerpted report from the Qatari-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadid* claims that several foreign contractors and companies have pulled out of the project due to it being the “personal project” of President Sisi; consequently, the article claims, “any change in the current political system would lead to the suspension of governmental and official support for the project.” The article highlights 10 Kuwaiti companies that recently withdrew from the project and “filed international arbitration cases to obtain compensation from the Egyptian government for the losses they had suffered.” Shortly after the article’s publication, Egypt’s semi-official *al-Ahram* published a rebuttal of sorts, cautioning local media against repeating uncorroborated reports regarding the NAC, which in Egypt are more often than not attributed to Qatari-linked media outlets. Egyptian authorities have always held that the project is economically self-sufficient, paying for itself via sales of pricey NAC land. As noted in the accompanying excerpt from the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, the economics of the NAC assume demand for high-priced real estate will be met, including from foreign diplomatic missions who may not in fact be interested in trading their Nile-front headquarters for expensive land in the desert. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*“... News of unknown origin that seeks to undermine the confidence of citizens in one of the giant national projects should be ignored ...”*



*Al-Fattah al-Aleem Mosque, New Administrative Capital.*

Source: Tarek Wageh via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD\\_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85\\_%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A\\_1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85_%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A_1.jpg), CC by 4.0



## Continued: Transfer of Functions to Egypt's New Administrative Capital to Begin Mid-2020

**Source:** العاصمة الإدارية لمصر: مشروع السيسي في أزمة  
 "Egypt's Administrative Capital: Sisi's Project in Crisis," *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 2 November 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/rrr2k43>

*...The sources said that the major companies believe that the momentum around the administrative capital project and the achievement of its goals are tied to the current Egyptian president, who considers the new administrative capital his personal project. This means that any change in the current political system would lead to the suspension of governmental and official support for the project, which would mean incurring significant losses...*

*The source said that 10 Kuwaiti companies withdrew from the administrative capital project over the past year and a half. They also filed international arbitration cases to obtain compensation from the Egyptian government for the losses they incurred, after disputes with the authorities responsible for implementation, including the Urban Communities Authority and the Armed Forces Engineering Authority... According to the source, the Egyptian government fears losing the arbitration cases: "In this case, the state treasury will incur fines in the billions of pounds." The official source added that Sisi personally intervened in the request for mediation, bringing it up during his meeting with the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his recent visit to Kuwait. This comes at a time when a number of foreign companies have withdrawn from investing and working in the administrative capital project...*

**Source:** تعرف على حقيقة طرح المرحلة الأولى من أراضي العاصمة الإدارية الجديدة  
 "The Truth About Phase-One Land Offers in the New Administrative Capital," *al-Ahram*, 8 November 2019. <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/2322777.aspx>

*Some social media pages have circulated news on the cancellation of the first phase of land offers in the New Administrative Capital, "40 thousand acres", as a result of the withdrawal of real estate developers. The media center of the Council of Ministers contacted the New Administrative Capital Company, which denied the news... Finally, the company calls on all media and social media users to seek accuracy and objectivity in disseminating the news. News of unknown origin that seeks to undermine the confidence of citizens in one of the giant national projects should be ignored. In case of any inquiries, you can refer to the official website of the company (acud.eg).*

**Source:** مصر: قرب تشغيل مقرات الحكومة في العاصمة الإدارية يهدد لزيادة الأسعار  
 "Egypt: Prices Increase as Government Headquarters to Operate Soon in the Administrative Capital," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 27 November 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/uap4owh>

*Egyptian officials expect the price of land and real estate in the new capital (east Cairo) to increase once the headquarters of the Egyptian government begin operating there in the middle of next year. Egyptian companies are racing against time to complete the construction of the government district in the capital, in preparation for the transfer of ministries there in the middle of next year... Real estate expert Hussein Al-Homsani told Al-Sharq Al-Awsat that "sales of housing projects in the New Administrative Capital have recently decreased, leading companies to provide more payment facilities that reach 10 years in some projects"... Al-Homsani added, "the administrative capital projects are targeting wealthy citizens, due to the high prices, and therefore large companies with prior experience will be more stable, able to implement projects and attract this segment of consumers"... The move of ministries and official bodies to the new administrative capital implies the transfer of diplomatic missions as well, so they can be close to decision-making centers and to government headquarters that share their work. This is what the Administrative Capital Company seeks to achieve, but this matter faces "great difficulties," especially since most diplomatic missions in Egypt has headquarters overlooking the Nile: "It is difficult to give them up in favor of alternative headquarters," according to statements made to al-Sharq al-Awsat by a number of representatives of diplomatic missions operating in Egypt...*





## Germany's Wintershall and Libya to Conduct Joint Oil Exploration

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-January, the Berlin Conference on Libya was held with the leadership of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has been trying to mediate between members of the international community. As the accompanying passage from German *Deutsche Welle* notes, Berlin has no direct military involvement in Libya or any direct cooperation with either of the warring parties. While there are several reasons behind Germany's efforts to facilitate a cease-fire to the Libyan conflict, the accompanying passages provide some context, by discussing a recently-signed agreement between the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) and German Wintershall for oil exploration.

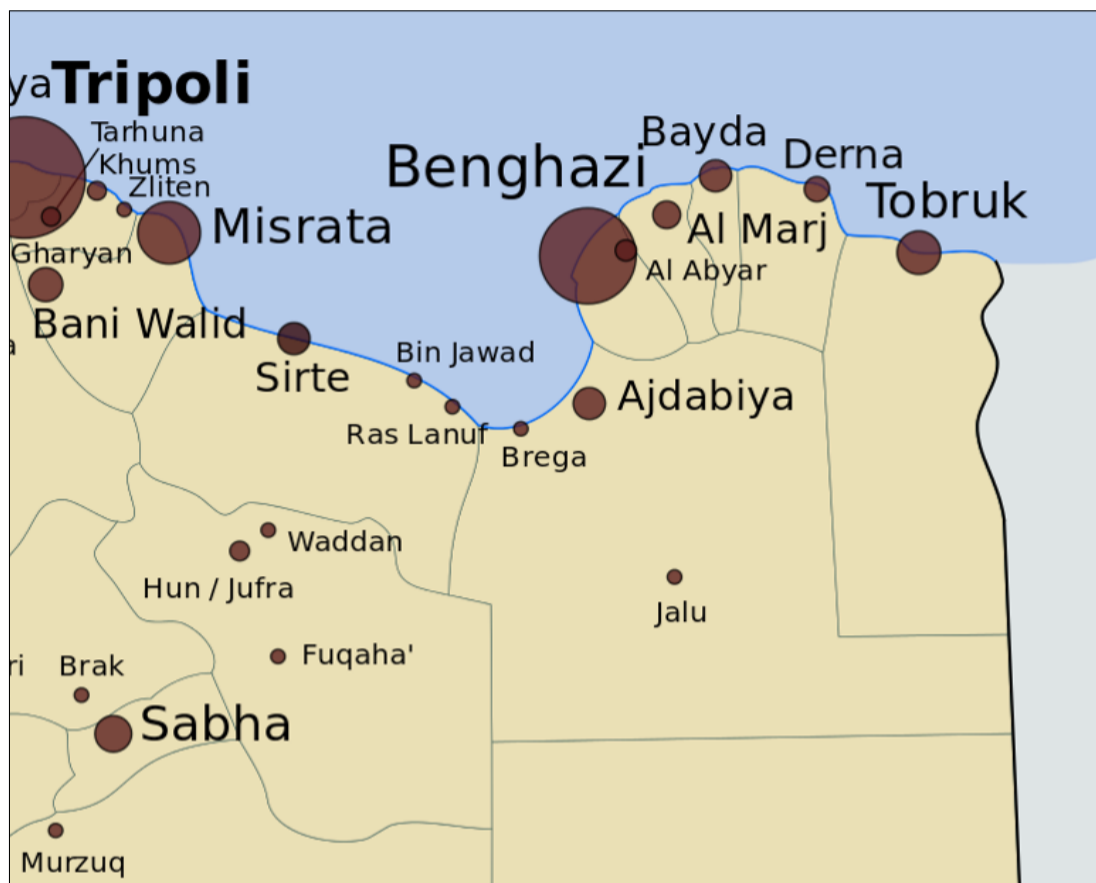
As the passage from the *Libya Observer* notes, German Wintershall and the Libyan NOC signed an agreement in mid-December to conduct exploration and production-sharing in two regions in the Sirte basin until 2036 and 2037. The agreement calls for the establishment of a joint operator company named "Al-Sirir Petroleum Operations Company." According to the passage, "Wintershall will pay \$ 100 million signing bonus for the two agreements, in addition to another \$ 50 million over a 10 years period, to social responsibility and sustainable development programs and projects, managed by the National Oil Corporation (NOC)." The passage from *The Libya Herald* provides more detail, noting that

"Libya's state National Oil Corporation and Wintershall Aktiengesellschaft (WIAG) agreed to implement a 2010 deal which involves converting Wintershall's Sirte Basin concession to an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA IV) format." The website of Wintershall writes, "WIAG and NOC will establish a joint operating company (JOC) named "Sarir Oil Operations" (51% NOC, 49% WIAG) that, following a transitional 6-month period of continued WIAG operatorship shall assume operational responsibility in both contract areas."

The Wintershall website also provides some background on the company. It notes that it has been involved in the exploration and production of crude oil in Libya since 1958. Apparently its affiliate Wintershall Aktiengesellschaft is a joint venture of Wintershall Dea and Gazprom E&P International, which have been operating nine oil fields across two concessions in the Sirte Basin since 1966. This puts German (and Russian) involvement in Libya cease-fire efforts into better context.

To be sure, this is not the only reason that Germany is interested in facilitating a ceasefire in Libya. As the passage from the *Deutsche Welle* notes, Germany wants to restart the political process in Libya, which includes a humanitarian truce, a high-level international conference and then talks among the Libyan warring parties. The passage highlights that Libya is "a key transit country for migrants, and several German politicians have warned that further escalation could send another large wave of refugees towards the EU." In addition, the German Chancellor has expressed concern about the dangers of Libya sliding into Syria-like chaos.

While Commander Haftar and his Libya National Army (LNA) control the territories that house Libya's oil fields and refineries, the income from this oil goes into the coffers of the Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli. To protest this, Haftar's forces recently halted oil exports and shut down all oil terminals, causing the NOC to declare force majeure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Map of the Libya Conflict.

Source: Rafy, en:User:Interchange88 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libyan\\_Uprising.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libyan_Uprising.svg), Public Domain

***“The National Oil Corporation has signed with German Wintershall two agreements for exploration and production sharing in two regions in the Sirte basin, until 2036 and 2037.”***



## Continued: Germany's Wintershall and Libya to Conduct Joint Oil Exploration

**Source:** "Germany Calls Libya Conference in Berlin," *Deutsche Welle*, 14 January 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-calls-libya-conference-in-berlin/a-51999875>

*Germany supports the plan of UN envoy Salame to restart the political process in Libya. The plan includes a humanitarian truce, a high-level international conference, and then talks among Libyan warring parties.*

...

*Berlin has been trying to mediate between members of the international community but has no direct military involvement in Libya and there is no direct cooperation with either of the warring parties, says Middle East and North Africa expert Tim Eaton.*

...

*War-torn Libya is already a key transit country for migrants, and several German politicians have warned that further escalation could send another large wave of refugees towards the EU.*

**Source:** "NOC signs with German Wintershall partnership agreements in Sirte basin," *The Libya Observer*, 15 December 2019. <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/noc-signs-german-wintershall-partnership-agreements-sirte-basin>

*The National Oil Corporation has signed with German Wintershall two agreements for exploration and production sharing in two regions in the Sirte basin, until 2036 and 2037.*

*The agreement provides for converting two concessions of Wintershall into production exploration and sharing agreements retrospectively from January 2018.*

*It also states the establishment of a joint operator company named "Al-Sirir Petroleum Operations Company".*

*Wintershall will pay \$ 100 million signing bonus for the two agreements, in addition to another \$ 50 million over a 10 years period, to social responsibility and sustainable development programs and projects, managed by the National Oil Corporation (NOC).*

**Source:** "NOC and Wintershall implement 2010 oil deal, convert it to EPSA IV format," *The Libya Herald*, 14 December 2019. <https://www.libyaherald.com/2019/12/14/noc-and-wintershall-implement-2010-oil-deal-convert-it-to-epsa-iv-format/>

*Libya's state National Oil Corporation and Wintershall Aktiengesellschaft (WIAG) agreed to implement a 2010 deal which involves converting Wintershall's Sirte Basin concession to an EPSA IV format.*

*The deal involves the establishment of the Sarir Oil Operations Company (SOOC), to which operations will be transferred in mid-2020.*

*Wintershall will carry out exploration activities at its own cost and bear half of the development cost as well as fund US\$ 150 million USD for corporate social responsibility and sustainable development programmes and projects.*

*The agreement is an old agreement signed on August 26, 2010 between the NOC and Wintershall (WIAG) for two EPSAs for Areas 91 and 107 in the Sirte Basin.*

*Pursuant to this agreement, WIAG will carry out exploration work, including drilling two wildcat wells in Area 107 and one in Area 91.*

*WIAG will also pay a 100 million USD signature bonus for the two agreements in addition to 50 million USD over a period of 10 years for corporate social responsibility and sustainable development programmes and projects which will be managed by NOC.*

**Source:** "EPSA agreements signed with Libya's NOC," *Wintershalldea.com*, 12 December 2019. <https://wintershalldea.com/en/newsroom/epsa-agreements-signed-libyas-noc>

*WIAG and NOC will establish a joint operating company (JOC) named "Sarir Oil Operations" (51% NOC, 49% WIAG) that following a transitional 6-month period of continued WIAG operatorship shall assume operational responsibility in both contract areas...*

*Wintershall Dea (formerly Wintershall and DEA) has been involved in the exploration and production of crude oil in Libya since 1958. Its affiliate Wintershall Aktiengesellschaft, a joint venture of Wintershall Dea and Gazprom E&P International, has since 1966 been operating nine oil fields across two concessions in the Sirte Basin, located about 1,000 kilometres southeast of the capital Tripoli in the Al-Wahat municipality. Since 2008, Gazprom E&P International holds a share of 49% in these activities. The most important reservoir is the As-Sarah Field near the oasis settlement of Jakhira.*





## Houthi Military Spokesman: 2020 Will be a Year of Air Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to Brigadier Yahya Saree, spokesman for the Houthi-led Yemeni military forces, 2020 will be “the year of air defense.” In an extensive end-of-year press conference in late December, Saree added that in the coming year, the Sana’a-based forces would focus on domestic military production to expand “the armed forces’ strategic stockpile of weapons of all types, foremost among them strategic deterrence weapons” that can be used “to launch destructive offensive military operations.” Saree’s emphasis on strategic targeting was punctuated by what he described as a three-tiered system of targets in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with the top tier consisting of nine vital targets, six in Saudi Arabia and three in the UAE.



CH-4 combat drone (used by the Algerian Army).

Source: Zerbout via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CH-4\\_UAV.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CH-4_UAV.jpeg), Public Domain

Although the Houthi-led forces often put out bombastic and exaggerated claims and statements, they have nonetheless developed a degree of credibility when it comes to their threats. Saree noted, for instance, that promises of increased capabilities in guided missiles and UAVs have been kept over the past three years. Presently, he claimed, “the armed forces possess the full ability to manufacture integrated missile systems and different generations of attack and reconnaissance drones.”

In early January, Houthi military media posted a video purportedly showing a Chinese-made Saudi CH-4 drone being brought down by a missile over the Yemeni border province of al-Jawf. A tweet by Saree claimed that the video showed a new land-air missile that would be publicly unveiled in the near future. Houthi military media posted video of the CH-4 wreckage (with a largely intact engine) the following week. The video’s narrator was sure to remind viewers that 2020 would be the year of air defense. In mid-January, media reports claimed Houthi forces had downed another Saudi drone, though no official statement or confirming evidence was provided. In his end-of-year press conference, Saree claimed that in 2019 the Houthi-led forces had shot down 69 enemy aircraft, including “seven combat aircraft, nine low-flying reconnaissance planes and 53 spy planes.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**“...2020 will be a year of air defense ...”**

**Source:**

“Missiles and Drones: The Upper Hand to Consolidating Victory and Protecting Sovereignty,” *al-Thawrah*, 1 January 2020. <http://althawrah.ye/archives/607386> (article based largely on press conference available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdIoYacX9yY>)

الصواريخ والمسيرات يد طولى نحو ترسيخ النصر وحماية السيادة

...Brigadier Yahya Saree, who confirmed in his press conference last Sunday, December 29, that the target list for the armed forces had expanded to include vital and sensitive centers all across the geography of the aggressor countries. He noted that the target list is divided into three levels, the first of which includes nine very important goals, six in Saudi Arabia and three in the UAE... He also stressed that the year 2020 will be a year of air defense and a year of victory, as well as one to develop military industries and the armed forces’ strategic stockpile of weapons of all types, foremost among them strategic deterrence weapons... He stated that the armed forces possess the full ability to manufacture integrated missile systems and different generations of attack and reconnaissance drones. The armed forces also have a strategic stockpile of missiles of various kinds alongside the drones, which allow them to launch destructive offensive military operations... He said: If the years 2017 and 2018 were for ballistic missiles, then the year 2019 was the year of guided missiles, which became an important part of the Yemeni missile arsenal and one of the most important strategic deterrence weapons... In terms of air defense operations during the current year, Brigadier Sari explained that 69 aircraft belonging to the aggression forces had been downed, among them seven combat aircraft, nine low-flying reconnaissance planes and 53 spy planes. The number of repulsion and interception operations, as well as forced departures, totaled 237.

**Source:** Tweet by Yahya Saree (@army21ye), Twitter, 7 January 2020. <https://twitter.com/army21ye/status/1214478627825434624> (video of purported shoot-down: <https://central-media.org/34927/599> and video of wreckage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKDV8hLs3Ps>)

By the grace of God air defense forces downed a CH-4 surveillance drone in al-Jawf Province while it was conducting hostile activities in Yemeni airspace. It was targeted using a land-air missile that will be unveiled subsequently. It is the third aircraft of the type to be downed.



## Digital Riyals, Liras and Dinars: The Looming Dawn of the Cryptocurrency Era?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past few months, reports have emerged of potential digital currency adoption in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Syria, Yemen and Tunisia. As the accompanying media excerpts indicate, the particulars vary by country, but taken together they hint at the looming dawn of the cryptocurrency era in Arabic-speaking countries.

The central banks of Saudi Arabia and the UAE are working on a bilateral Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), to be called “Aber.” The blockchain-based digital currency would be used exclusively for cross-border transactions between the two countries’ “government institutions and banks,” in order to make these transactions “more



Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT), 2008.

Source: DrFOJrTn via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BCT\\_-\\_Tunis.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BCT_-_Tunis.jpg), CC by 3.0

seamless, cost-effective and secure.” The concept of the bilateral CBDC was first floated in 2017, publicly announced in early 2019 and confirmed during a November 2019 visit to the UAE by de facto Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman. It is unclear when the CBDC may begin functioning.

In Syria, a new company calling itself Souriyati is hoping to draw government interest with its pitch to establish a “digital economy system” underpinned by a “digital Lira.” The appeal of cryptocurrency in Syria is primarily driven by obstacles on dollar-denominated international transactions, which are costly and complicated due to sanctions and the banking crisis in neighboring Lebanon. According to Souriyati’s director, “It is possible that the digital currency will take the place of the dollar for foreign transactions, such as imports, which are a major drain on foreign currency and are causing an increase in demand for it.”

In Yemen, the Houthi-led government in Sana’a introduced what it calls the “eRiyal” or “electronic riyal” back in 2018, in response to a liquidity crisis and disputes with the central bank controlled by Yemen’s competing, internationally recognized Aden-based government. In late 2019, the Houthis issued an edict forbidding the use of banknotes that the Aden-based central bank has printed since 2016; the order gave residents in areas under Houthi control one month to exchange the newer bills for grimy and tattered old bills or for eRiyals. On the face of it, the eRiyal would thus appear to be a bottom-up attempt to digitize the Yemeni economy. The head of a Yemeni economic think tank cited in the accompanying passage disagrees, arguing that the eRiyal is unfeasible as an alternate currency and instead is being used by the Houthi government as “a pressure tool on the international community and the internationally recognized government (of Yemen) to restore the central bank in Sana’a.”

The November 2019 news that the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) was about to introduce a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) turned out to be misleading. First reported in Russian media, the rumor was denied in a BCT press statement that pinpointed the false information to a private company with “no moral or contractual relationship whatsoever with the BCT.” The company, a Russian startup called Universa, had used a “technical feasibility demonstration” done in Tunisia as “a marketing operation where the BCT’s name has been unduly used.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*“It is possible that the digital currency will take the place of the dollar for foreign transactions...”*





## Continued: Digital Riyals, Liras and Dinars: The Looming Dawn of the Cryptocurrency Era?

**Source:** “A statement on launching “Aber” project, the common digital currency between Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) and United Arab Emirates Central Bank (UAECB),” *SAMA Website*, 29 January 2019. <http://www.sama.gov.sa/en-US/News/Pages/news29012019.aspx>

*As for the mechanism agreed upon by SAMA and UAECB for the implementation of “Aber” project, the Statement emphasized that concentration in the initial stages will be on technical aspects. The use of the currency will be restricted to a limited number of banks in each state. In case that no technical obstacles are encountered, economic and legal requirements for future uses will be considered.*

**Source:** “Quicktake: How would a UAE-Saudi digital currency work?” *The National*, 28 November 2019. <https://www.thenational.ae/business/money/quicktake-how-would-a-uae-saudi-digital-currency-work-1.944110>

*At least in its initial stages, it would most likely be used between government institutions and banks. The goal is to make trade and remittances between the two countries more seamless, cost-effective and secure.*

**Source:** “Company to Soon Launch First Syrian Digital Currency for Foreign Transactions,” *al-Iqtisadi*, 15 December 2019. <https://aliqtisadi.com/1591580-شركة-تطلق-أول-عملة-رقمية-سورية-للتداولات-الخارجية-قريباً-شركة-تطلق-أول-عملة-رقمية-سورية-للتداولات-الخارجية-قريباً> (English summary available at: <https://syrianobserver.com/EN/news/54991/souriyati-to-launch-digital-currency-for-foreign-trading-soon.html>)

*The organization’s director, Fadi Shamout, said: “It is possible that the digital currency will take the place of the dollar for foreign transactions, such as imports, which are a major drain on foreign currency and are causing an increase in demand for it.” He added: “This could be achieved by contracting with companies and countries abroad to deal with them in ‘lira,’ especially in light of the international movement towards reducing dollar circulation globally, which looked serious when the BRICS nations issued their own digital currencies, allowing sanctioned countries to deal with them.”*

**Source:** “Traders threaten strike in Houthi-controlled Yemen as rebels ban currency,” *Arab News*, 30 December 2019. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1606181/middle-east>

*The Houthis recently banned people from using the newly printed notes, asking them to replace their notes with a virtual currency called the “electronic riyal.” The move has caused widespread anger, with people leaving Houthi areas with their cash to avoid confiscation... “The Houthi group would not be able to put into place their electronic riyal. They are using this as a pressure tool on the international community and the internationally recognized government (of Yemen) to restore the central bank in Sana’a.”*

**Source:** “Clarification,” Press Release from the Central Bank of Tunisia, 11 November 2019. <https://www.bct.gov.tn/bct/siteprod/actualites.jsp?id=638&la=AN>

*Following rumours about the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT)’s adoption of a digital currency solution and its commitment with a foreign company for the establishment of this solution, the BCT denies all of these groundless allegations and information...*

*In fact, within the framework of the latest Tunisia’s FOREX Club event – an independent association from the BCT - and in order to encourage Tunisian young startups, participants at this event have attended a technical feasibility demonstration of a digital currency theoretical solution, initiated by a private startup, having no moral or contractual relationship whatsoever with the BCT. This Proof of concept was taken out of context, becoming thereby a marketing operation where the BCT’s name has been unduly used...*



## Saudi Arabian Military Inaugurates Women into Combat Positions

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 19 January, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Defense announced on its website, "Gen. Fayyad bin Hamad Al-Ruwaili, chief of staff of the Saudi Arabian armed forces, launched the first section for women in the Saudi military..." The announcement was also made on the Ministry of Defense's Twitter feed (see image). As *Arab News* reported, "women can now join the military as lance corporals, corporals, sergeants, and staff sergeants in the Royal Saudi Land Forces, Air Force, Saudi Arabian Navy, Air Defense Forces, Strategic Missile Forces and Armed Forces Medical Services."

As the passage from *Morocco World News* points out, while women could previously apply for military service, their ranks were limited to positions in public security, customs, criminal investigations, and drug combat. Now, according to *Arab News*, "women will be able to achieve senior positions in the Saudi Armed Forces." *Middle East Monitor* also echoes this point, reporting, "Having women serve in the Saudi military is not altogether a new initiative, however it is the first time they will be considered for senior ranks of the four branches of the Saudi Armed Forces, allowing women to rise up through the ranks."

This initiative to allow women to climb the ladder towards senior ranks is part of Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" Program, which includes the empowerment of women and giving them more leadership positions. In 2018, the country had authorized women to join its security force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

***“Women can now join the military as lance corporals, corporals, sergeants, and staff sergeants in the Royal Saudi Land Forces, Air Force, Saudi Arabian Navy, Air Defense Forces, Strategic Missile Forces and Armed Forces Medical Services.”***



Source: Twitter account of the Ministry of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 19 January 2020

**Source:** "عزل سمل اتاوقلا يف يرئاسن مسق لوأ حاتتفا" (Saudi Armed Forces Establish Women's Section)," *Ministry of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, 19 January 2020. <https://www.mod.gov.sa/MediaCenter/MinistryNews/Pages/582.aspx>

*Gen. Fayyad bin Hamad Al-Ruwaili, chief of staff of the Saudi Arabian armed forces, launched the first section for women in the Saudi military on Sunday. The goal is to draw interest from and meet the needs of women in the various branches of the armed forces.*

**Source:** "Saudi military opens first women's section," *Arab News*, 22 January 2020. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1615806/saudi-arabia>

*Saudi military chief of staff, Gen. Fayyad Al-Ruwaili, launched the first military section for women in the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces on Sunday.*

*The director general of admission and enlistment, Maj. Gen. Imad Al-Aidan, explained the regulations of acceptance, and allocated locations where the female staff will be stationed.*

*Under the initiative to incorporate more women into the field, previously announced in October 2019, women can now join the military as lance corporals, corporals, sergeants, and staff sergeants in the Royal Saudi Land Forces, Air Force, Saudi Arabian Navy, Air Defense Forces, Strategic Missile Forces and Armed Forces Medical Services.*

*The initiative is the first to allow women to climb the ladder towards senior ranks.*

*Former Shoura Council member Haya Al-Muni'I previously told Asharq Al-Awsat that these new laws support women's rights and capabilities in the Kingdom's military.*

*"Naturally, they will enter a new sphere of work. It's a reflection of a national belief in the equality between women and men," she said.*

*The initiative is part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Program, pushing for the empowerment of women and giving them more leadership positions, and highlighting the significance of their involvement across different fields.*

**Source:** Morgan Hekking, "Saudi Arabia's Military Opens Up Combat Positions to Women," *Morocco World News*, 4 October 2019. <https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2019/10/283976/saudi-arabia-military-combat-positions-women/>

*In early 2018, Saudi Arabia first allowed women to apply for military service but their ranks were limited to positions in public security, customs, criminal investigations, and drug combat. Now, women will be able to achieve senior positions in the Saudi Armed Forces.*

**Source:** "Saudi women granted right to rise up military ranks," *Middle East Monitor*, 3 October 2019. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191003-saudi-women-granted-right-to-rise-up-military-ranks/>

*Having women serve in the Saudi military is not altogether a new initiative, however it is the first time they will be considered for senior ranks of the four branches of the Saudi Armed Forces, allowing women to rise up through the ranks.*





## Turkish Aerospace Industries Opens Office in Pakistan

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December 2019, Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) opened an office in Pakistan's National Science & Technology Park (NSTP), becoming one of six countries to have an office in Pakistan's first NSTP, located at the National University of Sciences and Technology in Islamabad. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan was present at the ceremony. The accompanying article provides insights into why one of Turkey's premier defense companies opened an office in Pakistan.

According to the article, Turkey intends to increase its collaboration with Pakistan and establish a presence in South Asia. Turkey already signed an agreement with Pakistan to supply 30 TAI T129 attack and reconnaissance helicopters to the Pakistan Army in July 2018. This move is also part of Turkey's efforts to find a market for its defense industry. As the article highlights, TAI Marketing and Communications Director Serdar Demir stated that the company will also collaborate with universities in Pakistan and would like to increase cooperation with

Pakistan. Furthermore, TAI is negotiating to possibly sell other defense platforms to Pakistan. Mr. Demir noted that 15 students from Pakistan's National University of Science and Technology came to Turkey to receive training for a month. Students had the opportunity to learn about the aerospace industry from TAI's engineers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



T129 – Turkish Aerospace Industries.

Source: Aleem Youssaf via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T129\\_-\\_Turkish\\_Aerospace\\_Industries\\_\(14703528485\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T129_-_Turkish_Aerospace_Industries_(14703528485).jpg), CC BY SA 2.0

**“[TAI Marketing and Communications Director Serdar] Demir stated that they want to increase cooperation with Pakistan in a multidimensional way.”**

**Source:** Göksel Yıldırım “TUSAŞ Pakistan’ın ilk teknoparkında yerini aldı (TAI took its place in Pakistan’s first technopark)” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Anatolian News Agency), 24 December 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/tusas-pakistanin-ilk-teknoparkinda-yerini-aldi/1682426>

*Turkish Aerospace Industries Inc. (TAI) opened an office in National Science & Technology Park, the country’s first technopark, which is expected to make significant contributions to the technological development of Pakistan.*

*TAI Marketing and Communications Director Serdar Demir making a statement to AA correspondent said that they made an export agreement with Pakistan [to sell] 30 attack helicopters [and] they want to complete the ongoing process in a positive way. Demir stated that some of the projects they have negotiated are also bearing fruit.*

*Demir stated that they want to increase cooperation with Pakistan in a multidimensional way.*

*In this context, last year 15 students from Pakistan’s National University of Science and Technology came to Turkey... they stayed a month and had the opportunity to learn the latest developments in the aviation and aerospace industry directly from TAI’s engineers...*



## Turkey's Defense Industry Releases Strategic Plan for 2019-2023

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) recently released its "Strategic Plan for 2019-2023," which lays out Turkey's vision for its defense and aerospace industries through 2023. According to document, Turkey plans to increase its defense and aerospace revenue from 6.7 billion in 2018 to 26.9 billion in 2023.

The plan analyzes the previous strategic plan for 2017-2021 and takes stock of their accomplishments. As the excerpted passage from the document states, the main objective is to strengthen the capacity of Turkey's defense



Bayraktar TB2 Runway.

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

industry by domestically producing defense products to meet the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces. Another objective is to ensure the skills acquired in the defense industry sector are being spread to the civilian sector.

The plan reveals three main policies to achieve its objectives: minimize foreign dependence in the defense industry by developing domestic technologies; strengthen the defense industry by ensuring sustainability in training a skilled labor force (by supporting companies in the defense sector and taking measures to increase cooperation among them); and ensure critical technologies that support defense industry are 100 percent domestically developed.

According to the article from *Anadolu Ajansı*, Turkey did not have "a dull moment...in its military affairs agenda in the year 2019" because of its military actions and the use of indigenous weapons in real combat situations. The author states that the warfighting capability of Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and "dronization" are the bricks of Turkey's defense eco-system. The TAF have successfully been carrying out military operations and testing its indigenous arms in Syria and northern Iraq simultaneously in the "most dangerous operational environments" as it faced hybrid warfare fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) simultaneously. Developing indigenous drones and adding them to TAF's inventory has been "the most crucial aspect of Turkey's defense modernization" in past decade. Turkey's indigenous medium altitude and long-range (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) TB-2 and Anka have been instrumental in combat in Turkey's incursions into Syria and in northern Iraq against the PKK. Additionally, Akıncı, a high-altitude long-endurance unmanned combat air vehicle that is currently under development with "its planned payload (up to 1.5 tons) and advanced sensors... would be tantamount to a breakthrough in 'dronization.'"

However, the author states that while the strategic plan and developments in the defense industry seem promising, Turkey faces three significant challenges in the defense industry: "the advancement in artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons systems; acquiring fifth-generation fighter jets for its air force; and augmenting and diversifying its international defense ties." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***“The main objective is to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem in order to meet the needs of our Armed Forces and security forces...”***





## Continued: Turkey's Defense Industry Releases Strategic Plan for 2019-2023

**Source:** "2019-2023 Stratejik Plan (Strategic Plan for 2019-2023)," Savunma Sanayi Baskanligi (The Presidency of [Turkish] Defense Industries), 04 December 2019. [https://www.ssb.gov.tr/Images/Uploads/MyContents/V\\_20191213172340705166.pdf](https://www.ssb.gov.tr/Images/Uploads/MyContents/V_20191213172340705166.pdf)

*The main objective is to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem in order to meet the needs of our Armed Forces and security forces with the goal of continuous development with national technologies and domestic opportunities...*

### *Policy and Measures*

*Projects will be implemented to minimize foreign dependence in the defense industry with national technologies and domestic opportunities.*

...

*In order to strengthen the defense industry ecosystem and ensure sustainability; in order to meet the need for qualified manpower, the training infrastructure will be strengthened, support will be provided to sector companies, especially to [small and middle scale businesses], and measures will be taken to increase cooperation in exports.*

...

*The transformation in defense industry technologies will be achieved and the national technology momentum will be elevated...*

**Source:** Dr. Can Kasapoglu, Turkey's defense outlook for 2020s very promising," Anadolu Ajansi (Anatolian News Agency), 03 January 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/turkey-s-defense-outlook-for-2020s-very-promising/1691178>

*Turkey's main procurement body, the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB – Savunma Sanayii Baskanligi) released the document in late 2019. The plan envisages the nation's military roadmap until 2023, the centennial of the republic.*

...

*The document prioritizes managing technological transformation and building the required elite workforce to enable it. In other words, for the first time, an official release by Ankara primarily focuses on the broader defense eco-system with all the stakeholders involved, rather than on the defense sector itself with a purely industrial mindset.*

*In league with the new strategic plan, Turkey's military and defense-technological uptrend hints at more aspirant capability development efforts in the 2020s. To grasp the new reality, one should glance at the bricks of this eco-system.*

*The Turkish Armed Forces remain a battle-hardened, warfighting deterrent. Since 2016, Ankara has flexed its military muscles in Syria's most dangerous operational environments. Having faced a hybrid warfare threat landscape on both sides of the Euphrates River against Daesh and the PKK, the Turkish Armed Forces have firmly relied on indigenous weaponry to a considerable level...*

*Notably, the Turkish Armed Forces' emerging concepts of operations (CONOPS) are promising as to digesting the newly gained capabilities. Unmanned aerial systems' ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance) tactical fusion with land-based fire-support elements (artillery and MLRS), for example, were essential for the Turkish military's counter-terrorism expeditions in Syria.*

*'Dronization' has been the most crucial aspect of Turkey's defense modernization in the 2010s...*

*With Bayraktar TB-2 and Anka lines registering key achievements, the next up for Ankara remains the development of more advanced systems to execute strategic missions. Akinci, thanks to its planned payload (up to 1.5 tons) and advanced sensors (including AESA radars), would be tantamount to a breakthrough in this respect...*

*Despite the remarkable scorecard noted hitherto, Turkey also has to face and overcome significant challenges in the coming decades.*

*Firstly, ... there is a long way to go with regards the cognitive layer revolving around artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous weapon systems...*

*Secondly, there is the 5th-generation military aviation agenda still awaiting clarity...*

*Thirdly and finally, ... Ankara has to augment and diversify its international defense ties.*



## Khamenei Warns Veterans of Declining Revolutionary Fervor

**OE Watch Commentary:** When Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980, Iranian revolutionary fervor was at its peak. Many young revolutionaries volunteered their service to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and deployed to the trenches and the frontlines to take part in the so-called “Sacred Defense.” The paramilitary Basij famously sent 14-year-olds with plastic keys to paradise across minefields in order to clear them. Many died, but others survived. Such revolutionaries coalesced into the *usulgarayan*, literally, those who uphold the principles [of the Islamic Revolution]. Often depicted in English as hardliners in a reform-hardline dichotomy, their revolutionary mettle makes them much more in the Iranian context.

Generations change, however, and aging Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is worried. In a speech to war veterans, war wounded, and families of martyrs in Khomeinishahr, a central Iranian town called Hodayunshahr before the revolution, Khamenei warned veterans to maintain their revolutionary fervor, which he depicted as a gift from God. Khamenei’s warning about declining fervor suggests he is worried. That he would have to warn war veterans about not losing their revolutionary values and enthusiasm suggests the regime faces a crisis of legitimacy among the very class of people who once embodied and sacrificed for revolutionary change and values.

There could be several reasons for changing attitudes among the revolutionary elite. Many Iran-Iraq War veterans feel the regime abandoned them following the 1988 ceasefire; they neither received adequate medical care nor pensions enough to sustain them. Others leveraged their service into comfortable bureaucratic positions, only to become disillusioned by clerical corruption. Still others had children who did not share their revolutionary ambitions, hence the number of senior regime officials whose sons and daughters study in or migrate to Europe. More than youthful reformism, the disenchantment of this revolutionary elite is a trend to watch. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Young Iranians both volunteered or were pressed into service during the Iran-Iraq.

Source: Masjed.ir, <http://www.masjed.ir/en/newsagency/32940>

**“Our war veterans showed the spirit.”**

**Source:** “Biyanat dar Didar Dastandarkaran Kongereh Tajlil az Razmandagan va Isargaran Khomeinishahr (Statements at a Meeting in Khomeinishahr of the Veterans and those Sacrificing),” *Khamenei.ir*, 16 December 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=44517>

### **Statement to Veterans in Khomeinishahr**

*...Martyrs receive special kindness from God. This kindness has not been given to those who have not been martyred yet, but they might be martyred later on thanks to their efforts. There were certain disabled war veterans of the Sacred Defense Era who were martyred later on as a result of the side effects. However, being a war veteran is a value in itself. Therefore, we should hold this value in high regard. If a society and country are devoid of the spirit of being prepared to stand up against evil and to show resistance on the path of the truth, that society will be ruined. Being ruined does not mean that it will be completely eradicated, rather it means that it will lose its honor, dignity, independence and reliance on its willpower and that it will be others who will rule over its fate. Such societies and countries will either suffer from domestic dictatorship or foreign interference.*

*This spirit of resistance and steadfastness is very important and our war veterans showed this spirit. However, my advice is that they should preserve that spirit because it is a divine provision and it will be a pity if they lose it. Some individuals were fairly young during the Sacred Defense Era. They were enthusiastic and dynamic and they moved forward in certain arenas, but later on, various attractions swayed them here and there. This is a pity. This is really losing a true value and a provision. It is losing a treasure.*

*If God the Exalted helps someone carry out a good and great feat, they should always be thankful to Him. And being thankful shows itself by continuing this path because without it, it is not possible to be thankful. Therefore, we respect the dear war veterans who made many endeavors during the Sacred Defense Era and we hold them in high regard, but we also advise them to do their best to preserve that spirit.*





## The Role of Nanotech in Iran's Future Economy

**OE Watch Commentary:** In recent years, the Iranian government has put renewed focus on its nanotechnology industry (see: “Khamenei Speaks on Nanotechnology,” *OE Watch*, March 2015; “Iran Preparing to Host Nanotechnology Festival,” *OE Watch*, August 2018). The excerpted article from a website close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) highlights progress in Iran’s nanotechnology industry. The article features quotes by Saeed Sarkar, secretary of Nanotechnology headquarters, who spoke about 610 items available on the domestic market related to nanotechnology, 406 of which were nanotechnology products and the remainder equipment related to the nanotechnology industry. He reported that Iranian firms use nanotechnology in 15 industrial sectors including pharmaceuticals, construction, textiles, automotives, oil, gas, petrochemicals and home appliances. The Iranian press also reported the mass production of a silica gel utilizing particles between 15 and 35 nanometers, or a billionths of a meter.



Iran Nanotechnology Initiative Council (INIC) head Saeed Sarkar.  
Source: Tasnim News, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1398/07/15/1398071512034398118599454.jpg>

While Iranian officials regularly exaggerate their indigenous technological capabilities, Sarkar’s claims that Iran has exported nanotechnology products to over 45 countries (including Turkey, Iraq, Ethiopia, Azerbaijan and Indonesia) suggests there is substance to Iranian claims. Sarkar’s claims that Iran’s annual nanotech fair attracted 50 percent more companies suggests the field is taking off inside Iran. That Sarkar is pitching nanotech as a means to diversifying Iran’s economy is likely sincere on his part, given that decades of efforts to reform Iran’s oil-driven economy have largely failed as the regime consistently falls back on the short-term ease of cashing in on its number one resource. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

***“We have no choice but to stay on the path to the high-tech economy.”***

**Source:** “Dabir Stad Fanavari Nano: Chereha-ye Joz Vorud beh ‘Eghtesadha-ye Tek’ Nadarim (Secretary of the Nanotechnology Initiative Council: ‘We have no choice but to enter the tech environments’),” *Tasnim News*, 7 October 2019. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1398/07/15/2113390>

### ***“We Have No Choice but to Enter the Tech Environment”***

*The 12th Nano technology exhibition was held this morning in the special nanotechnology headquarters. Said Sarkar, the director of this center, opened the exhibition...and said that this year’s nanotechnology exhibition will focus on the development of nanotechnology in industry and commerce, and manufacturers are ready, and so we have increased the space available for booths by 50 percent at this year’s fair.*

*He said, “A collection has also been added to the Nation’s Hall, and there will be 200 active companies. The development of nanotechnology has also been included in the ten-year strategic plan. The extent of this will be apparent at this year’s fair.”*

*Sarkar continued, “This year’s exhibition will also include foreign guests from countries such as Turkey, Iraq, Ethiopia, Azerbaijan and Indonesia. These countries will observe our products to find the product they need.”*

*The head of the Nanotechnology center said, “Increasing exports of nanoproducts is a serious goal, and we have gained a good position in science, and now this will be reflected in technology and products We have maintained the fourth ranking internationally in nanotechnology for the third consecutive year, and we now have 610 nano-tech based products....”*

*“We have no choice but to stay on the path to the high-tech economy, and we are getting rid of the oil addiction,” the Sarkar said. “Technology will be a substitute for raw materials. Our raw materials are our specialist human resources.”*



## Iran to Send Astronaut into Space?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Iran's space program is both a source of pride for the country's leaders and a reason for consternation for those more suspicious of Tehran's motives. It has now been over a decade since Iran launched its first indigenous satellite, the so-called Omid [Hope]. Over subsequent years, the Iranian space program suffered a number of failures, but the Iranian space agency did manage to send living organisms into space in February 2010, and launched the surveillance Fajr [Dawn] satellite in 2015. In August 2019, Iranian Space Agency head Morteza Barari said that Iran would send an additional three satellites into orbit by the end of the Iranian year, in March 2020.

In the excerpted article from the *Center for Progress and Development of Iran* (an organization under the Iranian presidency which in theory promotes development but in reality is little more than a news aggregator website), Barari speaks about his desire to launch an Iranian astronaut into space. He suggests that discussions are well underway with a number of countries to do this. Given that many countries now rely on Russia's Baikonur launch facility in Kazakhstan and that Russia remains the Islamic Republic's chief great power patron, however, it seems likely that Iran is talking to Russia about the possibility of Russia sponsoring the launch of an Iranian astronaut. Barari further states his desire that any Iranian astronaut be more than a "space tourist" and instead undertake a research function, perhaps on the International Space Station. This would bring Iran's space and scientific programs great prestige, something Tehran desires after the United Arab Emirates successfully beat Iran in the regional race to launch an astronaut into space (see: "Saudi Arabia and the UAE: Space Ambitions in the Arabian Peninsula," *OE Watch*, December 2019). However, an Iranian presence on the International Space Station would create significant diplomatic hurdles given the presence of American astronauts in the facility and the continued lack of diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran.

For this reason alone, Iran will likely not fulfill its immediate goals. However, placing an Iranian in space will likely remain a near-term goal for the Islamic Republic, especially after its construction of its own space facility (see: "Iran: Launch Officially Opens Space Facility," *OE Watch*, September 2017) underlined the goal for repeated space launches, even if Iran's track-record of failed launches make its own launch of an astronaut unlikely. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



The Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, used by Russia and other countries for space launches.  
Source: Image Credit: NASA/Joel Kowsky, <https://www.nasa.gov/content/sunrise-at-the-soyuz-launch-pad>

***“We could send a research astronaut to the space station.”***

**Source:** “Rais-e Sazman-e Fazlayi: Aghaz-e Rayizani ba Yek Keshvar Pishrafteh baraye ‘Azam Fazanavarad Mohghagh (Head of the Space Agency: Consultations have Begun with an Advanced Country to Send a Researcher-Astronaut into Space),” *Center for Progress and Development of Iran*, 31 December 2019. <http://cpdi.ir/news/content/3260>

### ***Consultations have begun to send an Astronaut into Space***

*Morteza Barari, in a conversation with a Mehr correspondent, spoke about the project to send an Iranian astronaut to the space station, and said, “Consultation has begun with an advanced country about deploying an Iranian astronaut, but it cannot be announced until it is finalized.” He said that, according to the Minister of Communications, the Iranian Space Agency has started cooperation with an advanced country to send an astronaut. “We started our consultation, and we hope that we will reach agreement with one of the countries, but the country is not finalized, but when it is, we will announce the name of the country.”*

*Barari emphasized that this is the effort, and that with the cooperation of one country, we could send a research astronaut to the space station rather than simply a space tourist, and he added, “The purpose of this project is to participate in international collaborations, and that means that an Iranian astronaut should orbit the earth or be on the space station, so that they can play a role in international research projects.”*





## France Seeks Validation for Operation Barkhane

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early November, two weeks before 13 French soldiers lost their lives in Mali during a single operation, the Bamako press reported that France had reached out to other European nations for special forces support in 2020 to augment its mission in Mali and the Sahel. According to the media report, French Minister of the Armies Florence Parly made the announcement while visiting French and Malian military forces in Gao. At the time of the statement, the minister conceded that although (the as of yet unnamed) European countries had responded positively to France's request for special forces, getting soldiers on the ground was still subject to political agreements with the individual governments from which France hoped a military commitment might come. Those discussions are on-going.

Despite recent casualties, France has not backed down from its military commitment in Mali. It has however, in addition to seeking additional European support, sought a referendum with its Sahel partners of its position and actions in Mali. In a ceremony in early January at the 5th Combat Helicopter Regiment base in Pau, French President Macron met with the heads of state of the G5 Sahel force in search of a firm commitment of these nations to the fight against regional Islamic terrorism. In the wake of growing local criticism of France's role in Mali, Macron wants assurances from France's African partners reaffirming French legitimacy in the region.

The choice of the 5th Combat Helicopter Regiment was symbolic as it is the home unit of seven of the 13 French soldiers killed in action when their two helicopters crashed into each other during the initial stages of a combat action against Islamic terrorists. Holding the conference at the regimental base was a message to its Sahel partners that despite recent losses, France would not falter in its commitment to the region. Nor would it let its fallen soldiers die in vain. The last few months have been tough going for French military action in Mali. In addition to the deaths of numerous French soldiers, France's role in Mali has been challenged in various local media outlets.

President Macron is surely under some pressure at home to justify the cost of France's mission in Mali. A strong commitment from its regional allies is likely seen as a must for additional or expanded support from France and any additional European countries who might be willing to send support to its mission in Mali and the Sahel. As the accompanying passage from *Journal du Mali* suggests, without regional support from the other members of the G5 Sahel, France would likely have to seriously consider a gradual withdrawal from the Sahel. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**



French Troops depart Mali, January 2013.

Source: U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman James Richardson via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French\\_troops\\_depart\\_C-17\\_in\\_Mali\\_130121-F-GO452-1200.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:French_troops_depart_C-17_in_Mali_130121-F-GO452-1200.jpg), Public domain

***“France wishes to see the emergence of a solid and assertive voice from the G5 states regarding their desire to see France’s action against terrorist groups continue.”***

**Source:** “Le sommet de Pau : la France est prête à s’investir davantage dans le Sahel mais demande des garanties à ses partenaires (The Pau summit: France is ready to invest more in the Sahel but asks for guarantees from its partners),” *Journal du Mali*, 13 January 2020. <https://www.journaldumali.com/2020/01/13/sommet-de-pau-france-prete-a-sinvestir-davantage-sahel-demande-garanties-a-partenaires/>

*France ... its action in the Sahel, through Barkhane, is experiencing a crisis of confidence within the G5 Sahel, in particular due to the deadly attacks in Niger, Mali and Burkina-Faso which have occurred in recent months. Faced with these anti-French narratives emanating from public opinion, France wishes to see the emergence of a solid and assertive voice from the G5 states regarding their desire to see France’s action against terrorist groups continue. The political support of the G5 states is fundamental insofar as France’s military results cannot be preserved in the long term without the political and administrative exploitation supposed to accompany them... The adoption of a common political will in favor of the continuation of military engagement is announced as the most decisive point of this summit and its follow-up. Because otherwise France would seriously consider a gradual withdrawal from the Sahel.*

**Source:** “Des forces spéciales européennes en 2020 (European Special Forces in 2020),” *Journal du Mali*, 7 November 2019. <https://www.journaldumali.com/2019/11/07/forces-speciales-europeennes-2020/>

*A dozen [European] countries have been contacted and ... they have essentially received positive feedback. “They remain subject to a political agreement”, she however underlined, saying optimistically.*



## Mali: Opposition to Foreign Troops Grows



French soldiers assigned to Operation Barkhane working in conjunction with Malian soldiers. For some Malians the presence of foreign troops, especially from the country's previous colonial power, has become a growing concern.

Source: TM1972 via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opération\\_Barkhane.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opération_Barkhane.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

a rally planned in Bamako, Mali's capital, protesting the French presence in their country.

France is not alone in trying to stabilize the region with the use of military forces. The G5 Sahel, a joint reaction force with approximately 5,000 soldiers from Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, and Mali have also been active in trying to battle the jihadist threat. Additionally, the UN is present in Mali with its stabilization mission, MINUSMA. Unfortunately, a lack of coordination among all of these forces, frequent accidents, and ongoing attacks from jihadists – some quite massive such as a December attack on a military base in western Niger that left 71 African soldiers dead – have “shaken public confidence” according to the article.

With the meeting at Pau, French President Macron hopes that the African leaders who attend will publicly acknowledge the importance of the French military presence on their continent, helping bolster support back home. As for the African leaders, several of whom have to compete in upcoming elections, they must convince their people to continue to allow a foreign military on their land. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Heads of state from West Africa and France will be meeting ... to find new strategies against jihadists in the Sahel. But resistance to the presence of French troops in the region is growing.”***

**Source:** Martina Schwikowski, “Africa’s Sahel seeks new ways to fight terrorism,” *Deutsche Welle*, 9 January 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/africas-sahel-seeks-new-ways-to-fight-terrorism/a-51942821>

*Heads of state from West Africa and France will be meeting in Pau, France on Monday, to find new strategies against jihadists in the Sahel. But resistance to the presence of French troops in the region is growing.*

*“Despite all military efforts that have been put in, more is needed to tackle the problem of jihadist terrorism in the Sahel,” said Paul Melly, a West Africa expert at the London-based think tank Chatham House. “Essentially everybody, the governments of Sahel, governments of West Africa more generally and international partners [France, Germany, the EU, the UN] recognize that.”*

*“After the losses we suffered in different countries and during operation Barkhane, it was necessary to sit down and see if we had to change course or correct it,” said Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, former Prime Minister of Mali in December. “We all know that the fight against terror in the Sahel is not easy, that it takes place very close to the population and therefore has a strong influence on public opinion,” Boubèye Maïga added. And that plays an important role.*





## Organized Crime Funds Terrorism at Mali's Borders

**OE Watch Commentary:** Funding for terrorism comes from multiple sources, including donations from abroad, taxes on locals, and sometimes even legitimate business enterprises. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* notes, depending on the terrorist organization, a significant amount might also come from connections with organized crime groups or through the terrorists themselves engaged in organized crime. The article also examines how ties between terrorists and organized crime groups are formed and maintained, with an emphasis on the Liptako-Gourma region, which includes parts of Mali's borders with Niger and Burkina Faso.

The organized crime activities that terrorist groups engage in are a means and not an end. Overall, the article identifies three purposes: generating financial resources, providing livelihoods and operational capabilities, and finally, strengthening their local roots through processes such as recruitment of locals to assist in the criminal activities.



*Illegal artisanal gold mining in Nigeria. Similar operations in Niger are an important source of funds for terrorist groups.*

Source: Dame Yinka via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Illegal\\_Gold\\_mining\\_Nigeria2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Illegal_Gold_mining_Nigeria2.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

What are these criminal activities? To begin with, there is cattle rustling, which is quite prevalent in the Niger-Mali border strip as well as some areas of the Dogon Plateau in Central Mali. Frequently the target is cattle belonging to local, religious, or traditional authorities. To prevent their livestock from being stolen, protection money must be paid, or else their valuable herd could be taken from them and sold or butchered.

Artisanal gold mining is another way extremist groups finance themselves. In many places, such mining is prohibited, but the extremists take control of existing exploitation sites as well as open new ones. Besides the financial gains from dealing in the gold, their creating access to these prohibited locations carries favor among the locals who can now also mine and hunt in the areas without government interference.

There are numerous other examples of terrorist groups engaging in organized crime, with much of it related to trafficking, be it of humans, drugs, or arms. As the article notes, stopping these lucrative activities, which are complex and deeply rooted, will take national, regional, and even international actors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Illicit activities provide violent extremist groups with financial, operational and human resources.”***

**Source:** William Assanvo, “Is organized crime fueling terror groups in Liptako-Gourma?” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 10 December 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/is-organised-crime-fuelling-terror-groups-in-liptako-gourma>

*Illicit activities provide violent extremist groups with financial, operational and human resources.*

*The financial resources generated through these different activities enable the groups to acquire operational capabilities, notably weapons, motorcycles and fuel. The existing arms trafficking in the Sahel provides the groups with the means to continue their insurgency. They maintain supplier-client relationships with the traffickers behind this illicit arms market.*

*The financial resources generated through these different activities enable the groups to acquire operational capabilities, notably weapons, motorcycles and fuel. The existing arms trafficking in the Sahel provides the groups with the means to continue their insurgency.*

*By allowing communities to hunt and mine, even though access and exploitation of some forests and protected areas are restricted or prohibited, and a ban on artisanal gold mining has been ordered, terror groups have managed to gain the support of locals. This has resulted in some community members joining or forming associations with extremist groups.*



## China Forges Ties With Ethiopian Space Agency

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 20 December 2019, Ethiopia became the 11th African nation to launch a craft into space. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Agence de Presse Africaine* reports, the country had significant help from China.

The \$8 million ETRSS-1 is a 72 kg multi-spectral satellite that will provide data related to climate change and weather phenomena. This information will then be used to help with agriculture, forestry, and natural resource conservation. While launched from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi Province, China, the craft's command and control center will be based in Ethiopia at the country's Entoto Observatory and Space Science Research Center, north of the capital Addis Ababa.

Cooperation between the Chinese Academy of Space Technology and the Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute made this mission possible. A competence transfer clause was included in that cooperation, enabling Ethiopian scientists and engineers to further develop their capabilities in space related technical areas. Indeed, approximately 20 Ethiopians have already been trained in China to provide data interpretation and maintenance for the African country's nascent space program. Ethiopian Minister of Technology and Innovation, Getahun Mekuria, has even set the ambitious goal of becoming autonomous by the third or fourth launch.

The name ETRSS-1 invokes the expectation that there will be an ETRSS-2 at some point. The work for the spacecraft to follow can be expected to further strengthen Ethiopian and Chinese ties. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Ethiopia has launched its first satellite, the 72 kg multi-spectral ETRSS-1, into space atop a Chinese Long March 4B rocket (pictured here is a Long March 5 Y2).

Source: 蓝竹水声 via Wikimedia Commons, [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lange\\_Mars\\_\(raket\)#/media/Bestand:长征五号遥二火箭转场.jpg](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lange_Mars_(raket)#/media/Bestand:长征五号遥二火箭转场.jpg), CC BY 4.0

***“By launching its first satellite on December 20, 2019, Ethiopia joined the exclusive club of the few African countries to have sent spacecrafts into space.”***

**Source:** Ngagne Diouf, “Ethiopia, Africa’s newest power in space!” *Agence de Presse Africaine*, 9 January 2020. <http://apanews.net/en/news/ethiopia-africas-newest-power-in-space>

*By launching its first satellite on December 20, 2019, Ethiopia joined the exclusive club of the few African countries to have sent spacecrafts into space.*

*“Given the growing international interest in the continent, it is now high time to measure Africa’s potential in terms of 21st century aviation and space technologies,” Sékou Ouédraogo, president of the African Aeronautics and Space Organization (AASO) said.*

*According to the author of the book “The African Space Agency, a vector for development” published in 2015, one of the priority challenges of the continent is the implementation of partnerships in aeronautics and space sciences through local expertise and those of the African diaspora for the benefit of the continent.*

*It is the result of cooperation between China and Ethiopia through the Chinese Academy of Space Technology (CAST) and the Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute (ESSTI).*





## Niger: High Ranking Military Officers Sacked After Terrorist Attack



Flintlock 2017 kicks off in Niger 170227-A-BV528-005.

Source: Spc. Zayid Ballesteros via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flintlock\\_2017\\_kicks\\_off\\_in\\_Niger\\_170227-A-BV528-005.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flintlock_2017_kicks_off_in_Niger_170227-A-BV528-005.jpg), Public Domain

Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad) following ISGS's recent attacks. The article notes the main topic of the meeting was coordination between France and the five countries to stem the tide of jihadist attacks. Niger's president, therefore, was signaling his willingness to take decisive steps to combat ISGS and other jihadist groups.

The article cites statistics from the United Nations, which indicate 4,000 people were killed in jihadist attacks in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali in 2019 alone. This underscores the growing nature of the threat in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“All of the Sahel - in particular Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso - are targeted by the increasingly daring assaults of Islamist groups.”***

**Source:** “Attaque de Chinéogodar au Niger: les chefs d'état-major limogés (Chinéogodar Attack in Niger: the Chiefs of Staff Dismissed),” *TV5 Monde*, 13 January 2020. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/attaque-de-chineogodar-au-niger-les-chefs-d-etat-major-limoges-341166>

*General Ahmed Mohamed, and the Chief of the Land Staff, General Sidikou Issa, were replaced, the Nigerien government announced the day after announcing the death toll of 89 soldiers killed during the attack on its Chinéogodar base on January 9. The decision was taken during an extraordinary council of ministers held just before the departure of Nigerian President Mahamadou Issoufou for the Pau summit (south of France) which brings together the G-5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad) and France to discuss the fight against jihadism in the area.*

*Niger's authorities have revised up the toll of the attack on Chinéogodar from 25 soldiers killed to 89, the deadliest attack suffered by the Nigerien army since the resumption of jihadist attacks in 2015. This attack occurred a month after that of Inates, in the same region of Tillabéri, bordering Mali, which had claimed the lives of 71 soldiers and traumatized the country. All of the Sahel - in particular Mali, Niger and Burkina - is targeted by the increasingly daring assaults of Islamist groups, despite the strengthening of local armies and the presence of 4,500 French soldiers of the Barkhane anti-terrorist force. According to the UN, jihadist attacks in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso killed 4,000 in 2019.*

*The Pau summit must strengthen the controversial legitimacy of the French soldiers deployed in the area and mobilize the European allies, but also address coordination between the countries of the region and try to find better efficiency in the fight against jihadist groups.*



## Nigerian Governor Seeks Peace Deal with Bandits

**OE Watch Commentary:** Northwestern Nigeria's Katsina State has suffered from an increase in banditry in recent months. Specifically, groups of youths on motorcycles have been kidnapping villagers, raiding villages and extorting civilians. As a result, according to the excerpted article for Nigeria's *Pulse.ng*, Katsina's government has made a peace deal with bandit leaders. However, the article notes that kidnappings have continued since the deal was reached. Most recently, for example, bandits abducted passengers on two buses in Katsina. Most passengers were rescued, but seven of the passengers remain in captivity.

The article mentions that Katsina's governor attributes the continued banditry to two bandit leaders not signing the peace deal. In addition, the governor argues that people have still been paying ransom money to kidnappers, which has only encouraged them. The governor says the kidnappings escalated after agreements were made with the bandits to end cattle rustling.

The article concludes by noting that the final stage of the peace deal will be the disarmament of repentant bandits. This has not occurred yet, but will be a major test for the governor in checking banditry in the country. In addition, the governor will still have to find a way to combat or reach a peace deal with the remaining few bandit leaders in Katsina who remain active and have not signed any peace deal. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Nigeria Katsina State map.

Source: Himalayan Explorer based on work by Uwe Dederling via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigeria\\_Katsina\\_State\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigeria_Katsina_State_map.png), CC BY 3.0

***“The governor said the next step for the peace accord would be disarmament of the repentant bandits.”***

**Source:** “Masari says peace accord with repentant bandits in Katsina has not collapsed,” *Pulse.ng*, 10 January 2019. <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/masari-says-peace-accord-with-repentant-bandits-in-katsina-has-not-collapsed/f6g6yl8>

*According to the police, the latest kidnapping was when occupants of two buses were abducted along Ruma road in Batsari local government area. However, security agencies succeeded in rescuing the victims, except seven taken away by the kidnappers. The governor agreed that there were still some challenges, but that the “peace accord is still on course.... Their gang leaders like the one called Dangote and Dankarami refused to join, but those living in Sabuwa, Dandume and Safana embraced the peace accord and are now assisting the government in fighting the unrepentant ones.*

*Masari further said his administration met the problem of cattle rustling but after addressing it, banditry also came up, and after the peace accord, now it was kidnapping, which was all over the country. He therefore advised people to stop paying ransom to kidnappers, saying as long as people continue to pay ransom, it will take longer time to stop it. The governor said the next step for the peace accord would be disarmament of the repentant bandits.*





## Cameroon Grants Special Status to Anglophone Regions

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since 2016, Cameroon's two Anglophone regions have witnessed a rebellion related to Anglophone rebels' demands for greater autonomy. An estimated 2,500 people have lost their lives as a result of the crisis, in the past two years alone. Cameroon President Paul Biya has sought a resolution by proposing a new law that grants special status to the two English-speaking regions. The new law was adopted by the Cameroonian parliament in an extraordinary session in late December. The accompanying passage from the French-language *koaci.com*, an independent Pan-African online newspaper, discusses this new legislation called the "General Code on Decentralized Communities."

The article suggests that the new legislation allocates 15% autonomy for local authorities and creates a chamber of representatives and traditional chiefs for the two Anglophone regions. This will impact those regions' judicial, educational, and cultural institutions as well as publicly owned television. In addition, the article notes Cameroon's government will no longer appoint (the equivalent of) mayors for those two Anglophone regions. Rather those positions will be filled by officials elected by the people of the two regions.

The article does not discuss reactions to the changes by rebels in the Anglophone regions. However, according to an official quoted in the article, the legislation does offer a unique status that is unseen in most other countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Southern Cameroon map.

Source: CIA World Factbook via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern\\_cameroon\\_map.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Southern_cameroon_map.JPG), Public Domain

***“The [proposal]... responds to a strong demand formulated by the society public which consisted of increasing the autonomy of local authorities.”***

**Source:** “Cameroun: Crise anglophone, le statut spécial des régions anglophones est effectif (Cameroon: Anglophone crisis, the special status of English-speaking regions is effective),” *Koaci.com*, 25 December 2019. [https://www.koaci.com/article/2019/12/25/afrique/politique/cameroun-crise-anglophone-le-statut-special-des-regions-anglophones-est-effectif\\_137956.html](https://www.koaci.com/article/2019/12/25/afrique/politique/cameroun-crise-anglophone-le-statut-special-des-regions-anglophones-est-effectif_137956.html)

*President Biya promulgated the decree implementing the law on the general code of decentralized communities, which was adopted by the Cameroonian parliament in an extraordinary session. The new general code of decentralized communities enshrines the introduction of the special status of the two English-speaking regions of the northwest and the southwest that are in crisis. According to Georges Elanga Obam, the Minister of Decentralization and Local Development (Minddevel) the General Code of Decentralized Communities is a step forward. “The new general code of decentralized authorities provides for an allocation of up to 15% to decentralized local authorities,” said Georges Elanga Obam, interviewed by publicly-owned television. For the government, the new general code of decentralized local authorities responds to “a strong demand formulated by the society public which consisted of increasing the autonomy of local authorities.”*

*In addition to the regional councils for all regions, the North West and South West will have a chamber of representatives and traditional chiefs. The general code of decentralized communities provides for a unique organization of the judicial, cultural and educational system in the two independence regions in the north-west and the south-west, which has been embroiled by the Anglophone crisis since the end of October 2016.*



## Pro-Iranian Bolivarian Response to Targeted Soleimani Killing

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to at least a few regional experts, the Bolivarians will enthusiastically help the Iranian regime take revenge against the United States for the killing of Iranian terrorist chief Qasem Soleimani. The first accompanying reference, by noted scholar Eduardo MacKenzie, was published not long after the United States killed Soleimani and before the Iranian missile strike against US targets in Iraq. Mackenzie notes that Nicolas Maduro was quick to call for an unscheduled meeting of “politicians, leaderships and social movements of the Forum of Sao Paulo, enlarged” in a demonstration of solidarity with the Iranian regime.

The second accompanying reference, from *La Patilla*, reports on an emblematic expression of condolences and solidarity for Soleimani given by Bolivarian Defense Minister, General Padrino López, a man some had apparently counted on to conduct a coup against the leadership of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in favor of Juan Guaidó one year ago. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

***“... an urgent meeting... to set a course of action... of the Forum of Sao Paulo to respond to Tehran’s call to take reprisals against the United States for the bombing that put an end to the life of General Qasem Soleimani...”***

**Source:** Eduardo Mackenzie, “¿Maduro ayudará a Teherán en su venganza contra Estados Unidos? (Will Maduro help Tehran with its vengeance against the United States?)” *Periodico Debate*, 7 January 2020. <http://www.periodicodebate.com/index.php/nacion/politica/item/24936-cnews-01-06-2019>

*“...The Maduro party press (PSUV and JPSUV) just announced in Caracas that the days of 22,23 and 24 January there would be in Venezuela a ‘great world encounter of politicians, leaderships and social movements of the Forum of Sao Paulo, enlarged’... Everything indicates that what it is about, in reality, is an urgent meeting, with worldwide character, determined by the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro, to set a course of action, agitation and propaganda of the Forum of Sao Paulo to respond to Tehran’s call to take reprisals against the United States for the bombing that put an end to the life of General Qasem Soleimani...”*

*Since the Hugo Chávez epoch, the Venezuelan regime has maintained close ties, military and economic, with the Iranian regime. Joseph Humire, a hemispheric security expert, warned that since a few days ago there exists a possibility that Iran will use Venezuela to attack the United States because Maduro owes the regime of Mullahs many favors...”*

**Source:** Editors, (“¿Vergüenza! Padrino López rindió tributo al “líder revolucionario” Qasem Soleimani (Shame! Padrino López ceremonially honors ‘revolutionary leader’ Qasem Soleimani),” *La Patilla*, 8 January 2020. <https://www.lapatilla.com/2020/01/08/verguenza-padrino-lopez-rindio-tributo-al-lider-revolucionario-qasem-soleimani-fotos/>

*...“In a shameless way, he said that, ‘we come in the name of the Venezuelan people and the FANB [Bolivarian National Armed Forces] to surrender honor and glory to the martyr, revolutionary leader of Iran, Lieutenant General Solaimani, a man who taught with virtue and humility; always by way of moral example.’...”*





## ELN and Gulf Clan Landmines

**OE Watch Commentary:** Colombia’s High Commissioner for Peace, Miguel Ceballos, is in charge of the government’s peace process with FARC guerillas and any incipient negotiation process with the guerilla National Liberation Army (ELN). He recently raised awareness about the increased use of landmines by the ELN and the Gulf Clan in Chocó Department, along the northwestern Pacific coast, explaining that “the armed criminal groups are planting mines in that territory to ‘protect’ the corridors by which they transport chlorohydrate of cocaine toward the Pacific Ocean.” This is useful reportage in that landmines give a very specific geographic reference as to physical presence and priority.

Bojayá, which is highlighted in the report, is known for a massacre committed by the FARC in 2002 and has long been known to host drug smuggling routes with which the use of landmines is directly associated, as the reportage notes. Some of the place-names mentioned in the article -- Bahia de Cupica, Riosucio, Pogue, Lomas de Bojayá, Piedra Candela, Bellavista (the county seat) – give a geographical frame regarding the smuggling routes. A large county, Bojayá includes Cupica Bay, a known smuggling port. Cupica faces a break in the coastal ridge. The increasing use of the mines is a good indication that the ELN and the Gulf Clan may be feeling increased pressure from government’s military presence (which the article also notes has increased) in the region. It might seem that the ELN’s use of mines would decrease the chances that the Colombian government will concede to the ELN the kind of favorable power-sharing agreement as given to the FARC, but perhaps it just increases the ELN’s leverage. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the armed criminal groups are planting mines...”*

**Source:** Manuel Reyes Beltrán, “El gobierno exige al ELN detener siembra de minas antipersonal en Bojayá (The administration demands ELN stop sowing antipersonnel mines in Bojayá),” *Radio Santafé*, 7 January 2020. <http://www.radiosantafe.com/2020/01/07/gobierno-exige-a-grupos-armados-detener-siembra-de-minas-antipersonal-en-bojaya-por-alto-riesgo-para-comunidades/>

*“...This Tuesday, High Commissioner for Peace, Miguel Ceballos, called on armed groups of the ELN [National Liberation Army] and the ‘Gulf Clan’ to stop planting antipersonnel mines in Bojayá county (Chocó Department), because of the high risk it places the communities of that region of the country under...”*

*The High Commissioner explained that it is not possible to do humanitarian demining because of the zone’s current security conditions. ‘We can do demining, but by way of the anti-explosive teams of the Army and the Public Force. We cannot do humanitarian demining, because one of the fundamental conditions for humanitarian demining is that the civilian organizations that do it are unarmed... Likewise, Ceballos explained that the armed criminal groups are planting mines in that territory to ‘protect’ the corridors by which they transport chlorohydrate of cocaine toward the Pacific Ocean...”*



Bojayá in Chocó, Colombia.

Source: Milenioscuro via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia\\_-\\_Choc%C3%B3\\_-\\_Bojay%C3%A1.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia_-_Choc%C3%B3_-_Bojay%C3%A1.svg), CC BY-SA 3.0



## Illegal Gold Mining in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Illegal gold mining in Colombia is becoming increasingly common and is utilized by criminal groups who then transport it into neighboring countries. As the first passage from *Insight Crime* discusses, methods that traffickers use to move gold include “hiring legitimate jewelers, human mules and by disguising gold by adding steel or silver layers on top of it and using these to make chains, bracelets, keychains and purse straps unbeknownst to mules.” Other tactics utilized to traffic illegally mined gold include bribing corrupt officials as well as airport officials with either cash or jewelry imported from European countries.

Colombian news sources *La Semana* and *El Tiempo* estimate that currently, 95,000 hectares of land and as many as 83,620 ecosystems are affected by criminals dedicated to illegal gold mining in Colombia. And while land use is high, smugglers must also utilize dangerous chemicals (mercury and cyanide), which they pump into land and rivers in order separate gold from other substances. These activities have caused irreparable environmental damage to land, lakes and rivers in Colombian states to include Santander, Antioquia, Choco, Bolivar and Cordoba, as discussed in the final passage. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Fairmined Ingot and Nugget.

Source: Alliance for Responsible Mining via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fairmined\\_ingot\\_and\\_nugget.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fairmined_ingot_and_nugget.jpg), CC by SA 4.0

***“Intelligence reports obtained by the Anti-Narcotics Monitoring System... indicate that gold traffickers are utilizing more than 95,000 hectares of land in Colombia to extract gold.”***

**Source:** “Gold Smugglers Innovating Along Colombia-Panama Route,” *Insight Crime*, 6 May 2019. <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/empresarios-de-oro-de-colombia-usaron-mineros-falsos-y-muertos-para-lavar-dinero/>

*Colombian authorities dismantled an unnamed criminal organization in mid-2019 dedicated to smuggling gold by utilizing creative methods. The reported route used by the criminal group was reported as being located between Colombia and Panama. Some methods reported included hiring legitimate jewelers, human mules and by disguising gold by adding steel or silver layers on top of it and using these to make chains, bracelets, keychains and purse straps unbeknownst to mules.*

**Source:** “Minería ilegal: estudio revela la peor devastación en la historia de la Amazonia (Illegal Mining: Study Reveals the Worst Devastation in History of the Amazon),” *La Semana*, 18 January 2019, <https://sostenibilidad.semana.com/impacto/articulo/mineria-ilegal-estudio-revela-la-peor-devastacion-en-la-historia-de-la-amazonia/42659>

*Intelligence reports obtained by the Anti-Narcotics Monitoring System (Sima) indicate that gold traffickers are utilizing more than 95,000 hectares of land in Colombia to extract gold.*

**Source:** “47% de la minería de oro esta en zonas de protección especial (47 % of illegal gold mining occurs in protected areas),” *El Tiempo*, 19 June 2018. <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/crecio-la-explotacion-ilegal-de-oro-en-colombia-entre-2014-y-2017-232574>

*Illegal gold mining affects 83,620 ecosystems in the country; up 6% from 2014 when total ecosystems affected were reported as 78,939 hectares. Of the amount of land affected by illegal mining, 47% is located in national protected parks or rivers.*





## Peru's Cyber Defense Law

**OE Watch Commentary:** Peru passed its first cybercrime laws in 2013. Although controversial at the time, Congress viewed the need to protect its citizens from data breaches, banking trojan viruses (malicious computer programs), and mobile malware. In time, the public accepted the law, which paved the way for the Peruvian government to pass Law 30999 in August 2019; the country's first-ever cyber defense law. As reported by Spanish news media source *IAAP* in the first accompanying passage, this law contains multiple operational articles which will be carried out by competent military personnel. The second passage from *El Peruano* provides the first five articles of this law, where the third article notes "the law will be utilized in the cyber defense realm and will be applied when and if attacks affect national security interests." The *El Peruano* link also contains Chapters one and two of this law, which relate to cyber defense capabilities and cyber space operations as well as the use of force in cyber space.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Peruvian Congressional Building.

Source: Protontorniyo via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lima\\_Peru\\_city\\_-\\_Congress\\_Building.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lima_Peru_city_-_Congress_Building.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0

***“The Peruvian Congress approved Cyber Defense Law 30999 in August. This law establishes how cyber defense will be handled. It also includes operational articles that will guide and regulate military operations conducted in cyber space.”***

**Source:** Se promulga la nueva Ley de Ciberdefensa de Perú (Peru Passed New Cyber Defense Law),” *IAAP News*, 18 September 2019. <https://iapp.org/news/a/se-promulga-la-nueva-ley-de-ciberdefensa-de-peru/#>

*The Peruvian Congress approved Cyber Defense Law 30999 in August. This law establishes how cyber defense will be handled. It also includes operational articles that will guide and regulate military operations conducted in cyber space.*

**Source:** “Ley de ciberdefensa (Cyber-Defense Law),” *El Peruano*, Undated. <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/ley-de-ciberdefensa-ley-n-30999-1801519-5/>

### *Article 1. Objective*

*This law aims to establish a normative mark regarding cyber defense in Peru by regulating military operations in cyber space. These roles will be carried out by competent member of the Defense Ministry.*

### *Article 2. Purpose*

*To defend and protect sovereignty, national interests, and resources that are key to maintaining national roles related to combatting cyber defense threats or attacks when and if they affect national security.*

### *Article 3. Realm of Application*

*The law will be utilized in the cyber defense realm and will be applied when and if attacks affect national security interests.*

### *Article 4. Definition*

*This law will be utilized by trained military operators and permits them to respond to threats/attacks in cyber space that have the capacity to threaten national security.*

### *Article 5. People who can Carry Out Cyber Defense Laws*

*Individuals allowed to carry out Peru's cyber defense law include members of the Armed Forces which consists of soldiers serving in the Army, Marines, Air Force and the Joint Military Command.*



## The Proliferation of Drone Use by Drug Traffickers

**OE Watch Commentary:** Buen Jarin, Peru is inhabited by an indigenous community called the Tikuna. This community is located along Peru's triple border, which is shared by Colombia and Brazil along the Amazon River. As the first passage from the Peruvian news source *El Confidencial* discusses, areas around the community are infiltrated by drug traffickers dedicated to producing cocaine and cutting down valuable trees utilized to make high end products for export. To thwart this activity and to monitor the community, an NGO called the Rainforest Foundation has provided drones. According to indigenous leader Pablo García Akawasa, the drone donation is useful because deforestation is so extensive in Buen Jarin that their land is "turning into a pampa (extensive treeless plains)."



*The Quietest Drones.*

Source: Alwayne Gray via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quietest\\_Drones.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quietest_Drones.jpg), CC by SA 4.0

Drone use is not exclusive to Peru, or to NGOs or community leaders. Colombian and Mexican cartels also utilize this new technology as discussed in *El Confidencial*. José Acevedo, a Commander of the Regional Police in Colombia stated that, "Drones are utilized by criminal groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to transport cocaine to Panama. These drones can carry up to 10 kilograms of cocaine." Furthermore, drone use is not exclusive to drug trafficking as evidenced by the seizure of one in September 2019. The drone seized in Colombia is believed to have belonged by the FARC and contained a plastic explosive device filled with nails, screws, and nuts. Had the explosive detonated, it would have caused extensive damage.

As for drones in Mexico, cartels have been using them since 2010, but have recently began using these devices to monitor authorities, carry out attacks with explosives, and monitor illegal migrants crossing the border with the help of coyotes as this represents a secondary business of many criminal organizations in Mexico. The passage from *Zeta Tijuana* discusses the use of explosives in Mexico. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

***“Drones utilized to carry drugs have the capacity to move shipments of 5 kilos or more and can travel up to 100 miles.”***

**Source:** “Del narco al ‘coyote’: el mundo del crimen latinoamericano reinventa el uso del dron (From Drug Trafficking to Coyote: Latin America’s Criminal World Reinvents Drone Use),” *El Confidencial*, 1 January 2020. <https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2020-01-01/del->

*According to Pablo García Akawasa, a leader within the indigenous Tikuna community, the drone donation from the Rainforest Foundations is useful as these drones can detect new areas of deforestation as well as locations in which drug traffickers are operating.*

...

*Mark Cancian of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) indicated that drone use is not exclusive to Peru’s indigenous community. He further indicated that drug traffickers in both Colombia and Mexico have access to this technology and that “drones are now accessible to many groups not associated with NGO’s to include criminal organizations.” Furthermore, he indicated that “the drones being utilized are not as sophisticated as those used by the United States, but instead are purchased commercially and then modified to carry light drug shipments, messages, drugs, mobile phones, and even explosives.” Drones are also used to collect intelligence regarding positions and activities of local authorities and to monitor drug shipments and drug trafficking routes. Finally, he indicated that drones utilized to carry drugs have the capacity to move shipments of 5 kilos or more and can travel up to 100 miles.*

**Source:** “Con drones envían granadas a casa de Sosa Olachea (Armored Drones Used to Attack Residence of Sosa Olachea),” *Zeta Tijuana*, 10 July 2018. <https://zetatijuana.com/2018/07/con-drones-envian-granadas-a-casa-de-sosa-olachea>.

*Mexican cartels are once again changing the rules of drug trafficking by armoring their drones to conduct criminal attacks. The first reported attack was carried out in July of 2018 when an unnamed drug cartel utilized an armed drone was used to attack the house of Baja California State Public Safety Secretary Gerardo Sosa Olachea in the city of Tecate along the US-Mexico border. At least two drones were allegedly used in the strike. The first was armed with audio and video equipment and two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that did not explode after falling into the official’s yard. A second drone was seen above the house likely performing surveillance.*





## Maduro Names New Parliamentary Leader in Unconstitutional Hearing

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 5 January, members of the Venezuelan government arrived at the National Assembly only to find that if they were not members of the Maduro party, they would not be allowed into a pending session. Argentinian news source *Infobae* reported that these members included John Guaidó, Parliamentary President and Interim Venezuelan President and unnamed opposition leaders. Parliamentary members not on site were not allowed to participate in a videoconference or to vote.

As the situation progressed, Interim President Juan Guaidó was recorded attempting to jump over a barricade to get through the soldiers blocking his entrance to the building. Video footage also showed Maduro supporters blocking a principle entrance to the building and using that entrance only for Maduro supporters to allow them quick and uninhibited access. Once inside, Maduro supporters quickly called a vote for a new Parliamentary leader given that Juan Guaidó was detained outside the building and could not contest it. The vote was cast at the National Assembly and in a matter of minutes, “any form of democracy was taken off the table in Venezuela” as *Infobae* writes. Ironically the newly elected Parliamentary President Luis Parra was quick to state that the vote represented a “new success for democracy.” As the passage discusses, Juan Guaidó and opposition leaders were eventually let into the National Assembly, and many were very outspoken. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Luis Parra in January 2019.

Source: Voice of America via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luis\\_Parra.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luis_Parra.png), Public Domain

***“Chavist leaders denied Juan Guaidó (currently President of the Assembly) and his closest supporters access to the National Assembly on 5 January 2020. In Guido’s absence, Maduro supporters chose Luis Parra as Guido’s replacement.”***

**Source:** “Golpe de Maduro: la dictadura bloqueó el ingreso de la oposición a la Asamblea Nacional e instaló a Luis Parra como su presidente (Hit on Maduro: The Dictatorship Blocked the Entrance of the National Assembly and Appointed Luis Parra as its President),” *Infobae*, 5 January 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/01/05/golpe-de-maduro-la-dictadura-bloqueo-el-ingreso-de-la-oposicion-a-la-asamblea-nacional-e-instalo-a-luis-parra-como-su-presidente/>

*Guaidó was able to enter the National Assembly along with other opposition leadership who had been held outside, but once inside, Parra attacked him. Maduro quickly responded that “Guaidó did not want to show his face...” Other comments made were:*

1. *“We will tell the world that this dictatorship does not even allow a fair quorum at an illegal and unconstitutional hearing,” stated Julio Borges, Chanciller to Juan Guaidó.*
2. *“They (Parra) do not represent Venezuela, it is a show imposed by Maduro’s complices and his regime in the National Assembly,” stated by Henrique Capriles, Oppositional Leader.*