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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ON THE COVER:

Kazakh Peacekeeper.

Source: TSgt. Jim Varhegyi (USAF), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan_paratrooper.jpg.

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Capabilities of the 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV Self-Propelled Howitzer

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted TASS interview of Pavel Kovalev, the head of the Scientific Design Center, TsNII Burevestnik, specifies a few of the capabilities of Russia's 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled howitzer. TsNII Burevestnik is Russia's primary artillery design bureau, responsible for designing the Koalitsiya-SV. Of particular interest is the 2S35's ability to fire several projectiles in rapid succession and, by varying the barrel trajectory, have them arrive simultaneously on target. This capability is known as Multiple Rounds Simultaneous Impact (MRSI). It was first seen in the 2S19M2 Msta-S self-propelled howitzer, which was adopted for service with the Russian army in 2014. Based upon various Russian mass media reports, *Janes* publications have assessed that the 2S35 could at least conduct an eight round MRSI at a range of 30 km. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



“The presence of such a firing mode [Multiple Rounds Simultaneous Impact (MRSI)] in the gun significantly facilitates the accomplishment of the firing mission and the possibility of a rapid antifire maneuver. Having carried out an artillery strike, the crew quickly repositions the SAO to a reserve fire position, escaping a retaliatory strike by the enemy, which the latter carries out upon determining the firing SAO coordinates”

-Pavel Kovalev, the head of the Scientific Design Center of the TsNII Burevestnik

Source: “Огневой налет одним орудием: Комплекс “Коалиция-СВ” превзошел мировые аналоги (Multiple Round Simultaneous Impact: The Koalitsiya-SV System Surpasses World Equivalents),” *TASS Online*, 3 July 2020, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/8785241>

It is the latest generation of self-propelled guns and in terms of its main tactical and technical characteristics -- the rate of fire, range, and accuracy of firing -- surpasses modern domestic and foreign equivalents. The basis of its firepower is the 152-mm cannon with a fire rate of more than 10 rounds per minute, which is higher than that of other artillery systems. One of the main features of the Koalitsiya is the possibility of remote control of firing, the accuracy of which is provided by an automated command and control system of weapons guidance, target selection, and navigation...

The advanced Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled artillery system (SAO) has no equivalents in the world, thanks to the introduction of innovative technical solutions into the design. Above all, it is the unmanned robotic combat compartment. The SAO command and control is carried out by a reduced three-men combat crew, from automated workstations in an isolated compartment of the chassis...the SAO offers a fully automated firing preparation process, including the choice of the projectile type, the formation of a modular propelling charge, the installation of the detonator, and the targeting of the gun. “Thereby, the first shot preparation time is reduced, and a high rate of fire is ensured at any angle of the gun’s elevation. The time of reaction to any surprise target is being reduced, which is especially important in modern conditions and cannot be ensured by existing models of artillery armament,” Pavel Kovalev, the head of the Scientific Design Center of the TsNII Burevestnik, said.

The Koalitsiya-SV employs a high-ballistics artillery cannon, which provides a large firing range. “The accuracy of firing was enhanced thanks to the onboard system of automatic firing adjustment based on the results of own trajectory measurements. The necessary firing mode is ensured by the automatic operation of the barrel bore cooling system’s cooling liquid injection,” the Burevestnik TsNII specialist notes...

As with the Msta, the new self-propelled gun has a Multiple Round Simultaneous Impact (MRSI) capability. Until recently, this task was unattainable in the Russian artillery. According to Kovalev, this firing mode consists of the fact that “several projectiles, which have been successively released at various angles of the gun’s elevation, strike the target simultaneously, ensuring its effective destruction.” Its implementation on this advanced SAO, the constructor adds, has been made possible by the presence of high-precision powerful targeting drives on the cannon, as well as by its high rate of fire.

“The presence of such a firing mode in the gun significantly facilitates the accomplishment of the firing mission and the possibility of a rapid antifire maneuver. Having carried out an artillery strike, the crew quickly repositions the SAO to a reserve fire position, escaping a retaliatory strike by the enemy, which the latter carries out upon determining the firing SAO coordinates,” Kovalev explains...



9K51M Tornado-G MLRS Gets New Two-Stage Munition

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses a new munition for the 9K51M. The 9K51M Tornado-G multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) was officially accepted into service in 2014 as a replacement for the ubiquitous BM-21 Grad found in Russian 122mm MLRS battalions, and is intended to completely replace the BM-21 by the end of the decade. Although the Tornado-G is similar in outward appearance to the BM-21, it has a greatly improved fire control system with satellite navigation (for the computation of firing solutions) and ability to automatically load location data from reconnaissance assets and higher headquarters.

These capabilities, in addition to a new generation of munitions as outlined in the excerpt, significantly improve the accuracy, speed, and range of the 9K51M Tornado-G over its predecessor. This munition is reportedly a two-stage rocket with detaching warheads, which are stabilized by parachutes, that can descend vertically upon a target, and are suitable for destroying armor, personnel, and field fortifications. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



2B17M combat vehicle of 9K51M Tornado-G MLRS.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/5th-Anniversary-of-Park-Patriot/i-F9bH7SV/0/9a8f1ce0/X2/5letPatriot-49-X2.jpg>, CC BY 4.0

“The new munitions mean that a single launcher can fire a salvo at several targets at once, and that several launchers can concentrate their fire on a single target. This is why a two-stage design is being used in place of the traditional single stage. Not only that but the rocket warheads detach, which makes it impossible for air defense systems to intercept them. Targets can now be hit even if they are under cover and on the reverse side of higher ground.”

Source: “Добить залпом: в войска поступили новые ракеты для «Торнадо-Г» (Finish Them off With a Salvo: Troops Take Delivery of New Rockets for the ‘Tornado-G’),” *Izvestiya Online*, 30 September 2020. <https://iz.ru/1067114/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/dobit-zalpom-voiska-postupili-novye-rakety-dlia-tornado-g>

A new design of precision rocket has been developed for the Tornado-G launcher. It has already been tested and accepted for service and is being delivered to the troops, sources in the military told Izvestiya...

The new munitions mean that a single launcher can fire a salvo at several targets at once, and that several launchers can concentrate their fire on a single target. This is why a two-stage design is being used in place of the traditional single stage. Not only that but the rocket warheads detach, which makes it impossible for air defense systems to intercept them. Targets can now be hit even if they are under cover and on the reverse side of higher ground -- something that was beyond the ability of ordinary Grad systems. Izvestiya reported earlier, 300-mm rockets from the Tornado-S heavy multiple launch system, which is currently replacing the renowned Smerch, also have this capability. The Defense Ministry announced earlier that the new Tornado-G rockets with detaching warheads had been used for the first time, during the Kavkaz-2020 exercise. According to the military, they descend onto their target in practically vertical attitude on stabilizing parachutes, which ensures a high degree of destruction of targets under cover.

Rocket artillery routed a notional adversary’s armor during one of the episodes of the Kavkaz exercise, which played out at the Prudboy training ground near Volgograd. This stage involved more than 20 Tornado-G multiple rocket launchers, and the result was the destruction of more than 15 armored targets.

The advantage of multiple launch systems over conventional artillery is that they engage targets in waves, Izvestiya was told by Colonel General Anatoliy Sitnov, a former Deputy Defense Minister for armaments. “During conventional artillery fire you have 40 seconds to run and take cover. But this is virtually impossible when under fire from rocket launchers, because they are letting off rounds less than one second apart,” he explained. “Also, when multiple launch systems are being used they create a seismic wave, which wrecks dugouts and other cover.”

General Sitnov emphasized that the emergence of modern rocket systems and high-tech rounds for them is the result of decades of nonstop development. Fundamental research and design and development work never ceased and the scientific institutes and design bureaus managed to retain their human resources even during the most financially challenging of times...



Russian Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy Air Defense Systems Under Single C2 System

OE Watch Commentary: In the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, the Russian Defense Ministry discusses how its Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy air defense systems were placed under a single command-and-control system during the recent Kavkaz-2020 Strategic Command Staff Exercises. The existing Russian system does not inherently have unified command and control, so this was seen as an evolutionary step.

The majority of Russia's long-range air defense capability resides in the Air and Missile Defense (PVO-PRO) Troops of the Aerospace Forces. Their primary focus is the area defense of the State borders, key administrative-political centers, critical infrastructure, essential economic assets, and military facilities and formations. The weapon systems (S-300, S-400, Pantsir, etc.) of the PVO-PRO Troops usually occupy stationary positions in peacetime to fulfil these duties. The Ground Force's Air Defense (PVO) Troops are primarily responsible for protecting Ground Forces' elements in assembly areas and on the march from a diverse group of threats ranging from small UAVs to ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. Given these missions, most PVO Troops' systems are of the short-range variety. (Gibka-S, Strela-10, Tor, Tunguska, Osa-AKM) Since the PVO Troops accompany the formations that they defend, their equipment usually have suitable mobility characteristics to escort combat vehicles while on the march, and into battle. The Russian Navy also has significant air defense assets. Many Aerospace Forces and Ground Force air defense systems have ship mounted naval variants (S-300F, S-400F, Pantsir-M, 3K95 Kinzhal [Tor], 3S90M Buk, etc.). In addition, the Navy's Coastal Defense Troops also operate S-300, S-400, and Pantsir systems to defend naval bases, and certain littoral regions.

As the article points out, it has been a "long-standing dream" to integrate these. While not revealing details, the article implies that progress was made toward this goal during the exercise. The article also took note that in historical terms, after the system of airspace control was disrupted with the demise of the Soviet Union, air defense responsibilities shifted and various individual services were blamed for failures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



S400 on Red Square.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/VictoryDayParade2013/i-SbbSmsq/0/bc05ca28/X2/Parade2013_38-X2.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“The servicemen’s long-standing dream is to integrate the entire air situation... With such a system in place, no one will be shifting responsibility for the situation, no one will be able to say that the PVO of the Ground Troops or the Navy didn’t do its job, and so on...”



Continued: Russian Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy Air Defense Systems Under Single C2 System

Source: Anton Lavrov and Artem Kretsul, “Зенитное положение: военные объединили системы ПВО в единый контур (Zenith Position: Military Formations Have Combined Air Defense Systems into a Single Circuit),” *Izvestiya Online*, 6 October 2020. <https://iz.ru/1069790/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/zenitnoe-polozhenie-voennye-obedinili-sistemy-pvo-v-edinyi-kontur>

Earlier, the Defense Ministry reported that the actions of the PVO at the Kavkaz-2020 exercises were directed from a single center with the aid of an automated command and control system. Enemy target data was transferred to the PVO assets on alert duty as soon as it was detected by the radars. Next, in real time mode, they were distributed among the launchers, and the order to open fire was issued.

“The servicemen’s long-standing dream is to integrate the entire air situation, which is controlled by the PVO of the Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and the Navy, into a single system... So a single commanding officer will answer for everything. If this was achieved during the Kavkaz-2020 exercises, then it is a great success. With such a system in place, no one will be shifting responsibility for the situation, no one will be able to say that the PVO of the Ground Troops or the Navy didn’t do its job, and so on,” Aytech Bizhev, former deputy commander-in-chief of the Commonwealth of Independent States’ Joint Air Defense, told Izvestiya.

According to the expert, the commanding officer sees the entire situation and, having all the resources at hand, distributes target designation per each asset for its destruction. This is important both in naval and in land-based theatres of military operations. Huge masses of Navy troops and forces were involved in the strategic exercises. And they all had to be protected from the air strikes. Today, it is impossible to move troop groupings without a PVO system present, for otherwise they are doomed to destruction.

According to the Defense Ministry information, in the course of one of the exercise episodes on the Ashuluk range, the Pantsir-S, Buk-M2, and long-range S-400 systems repelled a massive attack by a hypothetical enemy. Around 20 high-speed target missiles were utilized to simulate the attack. They were all shot down. In another situation, two dozen Southern Military District aircraft simulated an air raid with their “friend or foe” responders turned off. At the same time, some of the combat vehicles were operated at extremely low altitudes, following the terrain, while others flew at supersonic speeds high above the ground. The crews of various PVO assets and systems were rehearsing detecting them in real conditions, tracking and conditionally destroying them with simulated electronic missile launches.

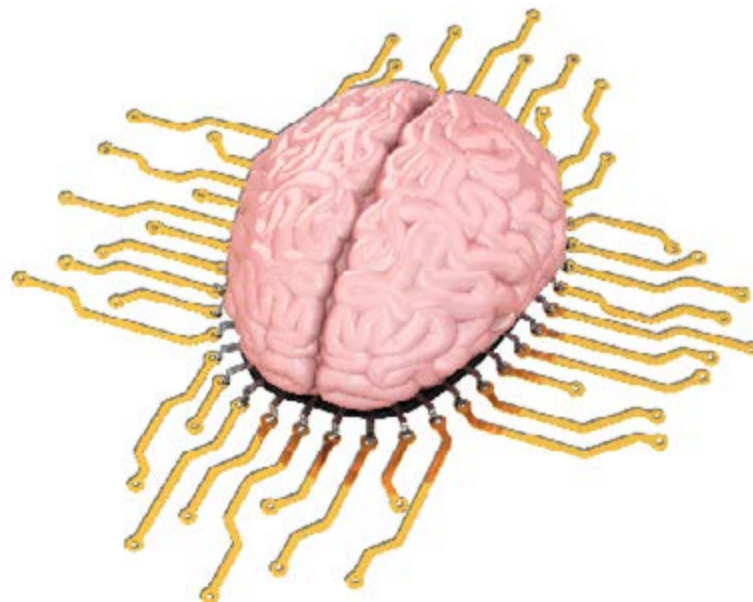
Not only the ground systems, but also ships of the Caspian Flotilla, as well as the Black Sea Fleet, were involved in these maneuvers. The Black Sea Fleet flagship, the cruiser Moskva, also took part in them. It has a maritime version of the S-300F anti-aircraft missile system installed onboard, which makes it possible to provide cover not only for the ships’ squadrons, but also for land-based facilities. The cruiser has already taken part in the operation in Syria and has provided its PVO “umbrella” over the Russian bases in Khmeimim and Tartus.

“In Soviet times, the PVO forces kept under control practically all of the country’s airspace,” Aleksandr Gorkov, former chief of the Air Force Air and Missile Defense Troops, told Izvestiya. “However, the system was then disrupted, and until now the facilities and areas are not always covered adequately, especially at medium and low altitudes. The forces of the VKS are not always sufficient for the creation of an effective defense on tactical and strategic axis, so the assets of the Ground Troops and the Navy are being combined.”...

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





Russia Fields First S-300V4 Brigade in the Far East to Deter US

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans to deploy S-300V4 brigade in the Russian Far East. According to *Izvestiya*, this system is intended to deter US aviation from flying in the vicinity of the Sea of Okhotsk. Although the S-300V4 is certainly capable of engaging aircraft, the system is generally envisaged to protect formations by destroying cruise and ballistic missiles. If the true intent was to deter US aircraft, perhaps an S-400 deployment might have been a better choice for this purpose. The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* describes more of a ‘traditional’ employment of the S-300V4 in the Southern Military District during the Kavkaz-2020 Strategic Command Staff Exercises. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Judging by the intensity of reconnaissance flights in the Pacific region, the Americans have recently significantly strengthened their grouping there...We must not forget that an entire American fleet is roaming around the Pacific Ocean in permanent readiness. The fact that mobile air defense forces are deployed in the region will give us the opportunity to create groupings in dangerous directions. This is a significant boost, which will make many people think twice before poking their nose into this region..”



9A83M TELAR of S-300V4 system.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/Dress-rehearsal-of-2020-Moscow-Victory-Day-Parade/i-QV3XwRC/0/ed130c49/X2/DressRehearsal-20062020-074-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Continued: Russia Fields First S-300V4 Brigade in the Far East to Deter US

Source: “Восточная усиленная: в РФ сформирована новая мобильная зенитная бригада (Eastern Beefed Up: New Mobile Air Defense Brigade Formed in Russian Federation),” *Izvestiya Online*, 21 September 2020. <https://iz.ru/1063083/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/vostochnaia-usilennaia-v-rf-sformirovana-novaia-mobilnaia-zenitnaia-brigada>

The Ministry of Defense has completed the formation of the first mobile air defense missile brigade in the Far East. In the immediate future, it will begin in full strength experimental alert duty and then alert duty, sources in the military department told Izvestiya.

The Eastern Military District formation stationed in the Yevreyskaya Autonomous Oblast is armed with the S-300V4 ultra-long-range SAM systems, which will provide anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense. Their unique maneuverability allows quick redeployment of the brigade to any place in the Far East and Siberia. Experts believe that the strengthening of air defense was a response to the growing US activity in the Asia-Pacific region.

To neutralize the emerging threats in the Eastern Military District, the Ministry of Defense is also carrying out rearmament of the air defense troops. In addition to creating a new brigade, it plans to equip two regiments with the S-400 systems by the end of the year, as well as to switch two anti-aircraft missile battalions to the Buk-M1-2 systems. Izvestiya reported earlier that it is planned to include batteries of the Pantsir-SM-SV anti-aircraft missile and artillery systems in the air defense units of the ground forces equipped with the S-300V4 systems. It has not yet been announced whether the new brigade will receive them.

“Judging by the intensity of reconnaissance flights in the Pacific region, the Americans have recently significantly strengthened their grouping there... We must not forget that an entire American fleet is roaming around the Pacific Ocean in permanent readiness. The fact that mobile air defense forces are deployed in the region will give us the opportunity to create groupings in dangerous directions. This is a significant boost, which will make many people think twice before poking their nose into this region.” Colonel Vladimir Anokhin, vice-president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, told Izvestiya.

According to reports by the Russian military, American strategic bombers’ flights in the airspace over the Sea of Okhotsk have also become more frequent. For this purpose they use a narrow corridor of neutral international space between the Kuril Islands. US strategic aviation flights along Kamchatka and the country’s eastern coast in the Bering Sea have also become regular.

Source: “Наше небо мы никому не отдадим (We Will Yield Our Sky to No One),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 23 September 2020. <http://redstar.ru/nashe-nebo-my-nikomu-ne-otdadim/>

...The preparatory measures preceding a strategic command staff exercise included the operations of all troop air defense units and formations, without exception, of the Southern Military District. Air defense subunits carried out live firing from “Pantsir-S” air defense missile and cannon complexes and “Tunguska” air defense cannon and missile complexes; “Shilka” self-propelled air defense mounts; and “Strela-10,” “Tor,” “Buk-M3” and “Osa” air defense missile systems. Southern Military District subunits of an air defense missile formation armed with the unique S-300V4 air defense missile system also successfully executed their assigned tasks. Lieutenant-Colonel Nikolay Mayorkin’s battalion repelled a notional enemy’s massive strike, thereby ensuring the security of an army staff command post.

Compared to its “colleagues” the S-300V4 excels, not only in firing range and target strike altitude, but also in its ease of exploitation. To execute the mission of protecting troop groupings it is necessary for the air defense troops to always be near the “defended object,” i.e., one’s own troops. And this means having maximum mobility. And all of the subunit equipment of the air defense missile brigade, from the command post, the radar station and the multichannel missile guidance stations, to the launchers and the launch and loading mounts are built on tracked platforms. In summer, winter, and in between, in the heat or the cold or slush, this equipment has no fear of off-road operations...

To support live firings the specialists of the training range service have prepared more than 70 target systems for use, including “Kaban,” “Pishchal,” “Strizh-1,” “Saman,” and “Pensne” models for air defense missile troops. Some of these simulate cruise missiles, which must be detected and destroyed in a timely manner. Excellent work was done by the personnel of Major Dmitriy Ryzhikov’s battery. The crew of the multichannel missile guidance station detected and identified its targets in a timely manner, and after the targets were classified, locked on for tracking, and tracked, it issued the command for their destruction. That work was concluded by the launcher personnel. All of the cruise missiles (namely those simulated by the target systems) were destroyed. The complex situation, including the radio electronic environment (the enemy used not only tactical cunning, but various electronic warfare means as well), did not hinder this task.



Corvette Missile Firings in the Arctic

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article from *Izvestia*, the Russian Navy recently tested “its latest small missile ship, the project 22800 Karakurt” in the Arctic. The “Karakurt” [type of spider] missile-firing corvette is designed for coastal defense and river work. Its shallow draft does not make it ideal for Arctic winter gales, but it will suffice if needed. The Arctic provides an ideal firing range for long-range missile systems and the Baltic Fleet tested the Karakurt and heavier, deeper-draft Buyan-M corvettes in the late summer and early fall. The Karakurt is equipped with the Kalibr long-range missile, Pantsir-M air defense system and the Orlan-10 UAV—all of which were originally designed for ground forces and put into naval use. Russia is designing military equipment that has application beyond one armed service (See “Small Boat Cruisin’ for a Bruisin’,” OE Watch, September 2018). **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Russian Navy has completed testing its latest small missile ship, the project 22800 Karakurt, in Arctic latitudes. It was unknown whether such ships could operate in conditions of abnormally low temperatures and bad weather. However, during an almost two-month voyage, the project 22800 “Odintsovo” small missile ship successfully completed all missions in the Barents and White Seas and conducted missile firing.”

Source: “Пришедший с севера: «Каракурт» успешно испытали в Арктике (Coming From the North: Karakurt Successfully Tested in the Arctic),” *Izvestia*, 1 October <https://iz.ru/1067623/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/prishedshii-s-severa-karakurt-uspeshno-ispytali-v-arktike>, 1 October 2020

The Russian Navy has completed testing its latest small missile ship, the project 22800 Karakurt, in Arctic latitudes. It was unknown whether such ships could operate in conditions of abnormally low temperatures and bad weather. However, during an almost two-month voyage, the project 22800 “Odintsovo” small missile ship successfully completed all missions in the Barents and White Seas and conducted missile firing. According to experts, the ability to transfer small ships with cruise missiles on board from the Baltic to the Arctic radically increases the capabilities of the Russian group in the Arctic.

Tests on the small missile ship in the Barents and White Seas were successful ... The ship, which was sent to the northern latitudes in early August, completed the set of tasks assigned to it and returned to Saint Petersburg by inland waterways a few days ago.

The Karakurts are small ships with a displacement of 800 tons and with an impressive arsenal: They carry Kalibr cruise missiles and a 76.2-mm AK-176MA launcher, and can be equipped with Oniks antiship missiles if necessary.

In addition, Orlan-10 drones with a range of up to 120 kilometers are based onboard the ship. The Navy plans to use them as airborne scouts and spotters. The UAVs will make stealth ships almost invisible because the environment can be assessed by lifting drones into the sky rather than turning on radar, which signal can be detected by the radar of a likely enemy.

The project 22800 small missile ship is equipped with modern command and control, detection, targeting, and communication systems.

The “Odintsovo” is the third member of the series, and changes were made to its design. The main difference between this ship and its predecessors is the on board of marine version of the Pantsir-M anti-aircraft missile and gun system. It consists of eight mountings and two six-barreled 30-millimeter rapid-fire automatic guns. The system can shoot down cruise and antiship missiles, drones, planes, and helicopters.

Plans are that the “Odintsovo” will join the Baltic Fleet’s 36th Missile Boats Brigade 1st Guards Battalion. Its ships are stationed at the Baltiysk naval base (Kaliningradskaya Oblast). The first small missile ships of this project, the “Mytishchi” and “Sovetsk”, are already in service there.

For All Fleets

The Baltic Sea does not have the necessary space for ships to conduct missile launches over even half of the maximum range, Admiral Valentin Selivanov, former chief of General Staff of the Navy, noted. Therefore, the testing of the small missile ships’ weapons systems was moved to the northern seas. However, the fact that they successfully completed all tasks, including in difficult weather conditions, makes it possible to transfer them to the Northern Fleet if the need arises.

According to Admiral Selivanov, “The tests on the small ships took place even in severe weather conditions -- we looked at how the weapon works when the sea is rough at force five to seven. In the event of an aggravation of the situation in the north, if there are large enemy forces, the small missile ships can be transferred there from the Baltic Sea”....

The project 22800 small missile ships are considered the heaviest and most modern ships supplied to the fleet today. A total of 18 “Karakurts” have been ordered for the Navy. According to the plan, they should be divided equally between the Pacific, Baltic, and Black Sea Fleets.

Simultaneously, the “Zelenyy Dol” small missile ship of project 21631 Buyan-M was tested in the waters of the northern seas. The ship, which is part of the Baltic Fleet, came to the exercise area via inland waterways, via the Neva River, Lake Ladoga, and the White Sea-Baltic Canal to the White Sea. While in the Northern Fleet, the small missile ship made calls at Severodvinsk and Severomorsk. In total, the crew covered more than 3,300 nautical miles. In the White Sea, the ship conducted a live launch of a Kalibr cruise missile.

The “Zelenyy Dol” small missile ship has a displacement of 850 tons and is designed to destroy maritime targets in the coastal zone. It has on board eight launchers for Kalibr class cruise missiles or Oniks antiship missiles as well as artillery. In addition, these small ships are equipped with impressive reconnaissance equipment and, if necessary, can be included in the reconnaissance-fire and reconnaissance-strike systems.



Potential Equipping of Russian Naval Infantry with the BMP-3F

OE Watch Commentary: The sea-worthy BMP-3F infantry fighting vehicle was developed at least ten years ago, but Indonesia was the only country using it. The Russian Naval Infantry has been using BTR-82 armored troop carriers, which lack in armor and firepower compared to the BMP-3F. The Russian Navy has lacked an “over-the-horizon” amphibious capability. The BMP-3F provides that capability and is especially designed for amphibious landings. According to the excerpted article, Russia has improved its seaworthiness and buoyancy. The BMP-3F can fire accurately at Beaufort Sea Force 2 and function up to Sea Force 3. Reportedly, it can endure sustained amphibious operations for up to seven hours. According to the source, the BMP-3F lacks the self-entrenching capability of most Russian combat vehicles, but their job is carry naval infantry to shore and fight anything they meet underway and on shore. The article also discusses the Russian BT-3F tracked, armored troop carrier. It has the same amphibious and land movement characteristics as the BMP-3F, but lacks the heavily armed BMP-3F turret. It has a three-man crew and can carry 14 dismounts. It can mount a machine gun or automatic grenade launcher. Indonesia seems enthusiastic about their BMP-3F and BT-F3 amphibious vehicles and according to this report, the Russian Naval Infantry is near “final decision” regarding replacing their BTR-80 series vehicles with these. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



BMP-3F.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2020-Static-part-1/i-t4ZKsph#>

“The BMP-3F will appear on the Caspian coast during the course of the Kavkaz-2020 Exercises. The final decision on reequipping the Naval Infantry (MP) brigades with the new armored vehicles will be made based upon the results of these maneuvers.”

Source: “Rush with the wave: Naval Infantry will get new armored vehicle”, *Izvestia*, 22 September 2020. <https://iz.ru/1063543/roman-kretcul-anton-lavrov/nakhlynut-s-volnoi-morpekhi-poluchat-novye-boevye-mashiny>

The BMP-3F will appear on the Caspian coast during the course of the Kavkaz-2020 Exercises. The final decision on reequipping the Naval Infantry (MP) brigades with the new armored vehicles will be made based upon the results of these maneuvers...

The BMP-3F - is the “naval” modification of the most state-of-the-art BMP-3 armored infantry vehicle that have been accepted into the inventory. It differs from the basic version by its enhanced buoyancy. The vehicle is equipped with a light-weight splash guard, a telescoping air intake snorkel, and additional splash guards on the turret. It can move through ... waves of ... up to one meter in height, and it is capable of conducting aimed fire in waves of up to half a meter in height. Maximum speed along a paved road is 70 kilometers per hour, and afloat - up to 10 kilometers per hour. The vehicle can be continuously swim under power ... for up to seven hours.

The armored vehicle carries an impressive arsenal - a 2A40 100-millimeter gun, which also serves as an Antitank Guided Missile] launcher, a 2A42 30-millimeter automatic cannon, and three 7.62-millimeter machineguns: two hull machineguns and one paired with the main gun.

Of all of the armored vehicles, in which motorized riflemen, airborne troops, and naval infantrymen operate, the BMP-3 has the strongest armor. It withstands a hit of a 30-millimeter projectile in the forward compartment. The side armor is capable of defending the assault force from bullets and shrapnel....

Two years ago, the Ministry of Defense decided to reinforce the Naval Infantry brigades with tanks. However, it is impossible to employ the tanks in the first phase of an amphibious assault operation against a defending enemy. According to military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy, “One can disembark main battle tanks, when a sector of coast at on the water’s edge has been seized. The Naval Infantry urgently needs an amphibious vehicle with seaworthiness, which is no worse than a BTR-82 but has more powerful weaponry. The BMP-3 has proven itself in combat. The 100-millimeter gun does a good job of destroying dug-in targets. It has guided missiles to combat armored vehicles. As compared to armored transport vehicles, the BMP-3 possesses a better cross-country capability, thanks to its tracked base.”

Military Historian Dmitriy Boltenev noted, “The BMP-3 is essentially a light tank and a BTR is incomparable with it based upon firepower. It is impossible to oppose an enemy with heavy weapons with a BTR. With the new armored vehicles, the naval infantry will be able to fight tanks and direct bursts of gunfire against the enemy while landing on the coast.

Despite the fact that the naval modification of the BMP-3 was developed more than 10 years ago, these vehicles were not integrated into the Russian forces. Indonesia was the only country with BMP-3Fs in their inventory. Indonesia’s first contract was in 2009 for a trial batch of 17 BMP-3Fs for their Marines. They purchased 37 more in 2012 for \$114 million. The Indonesian marines noted the high power of the BMP-3F’s weapons, its low silhouette, the effectiveness of its jet propulsion devices, and its reliability and ease of maintenance.

In addition to the Russian vehicles, Indonesia planned to acquire Ukrainian BTR-4 amphibious armored transport vehicles. But their seaworthiness proved inadequate in tests. In 2019, Indonesia contracted for the delivery of another 22 BMP-3F and 21 BT-3F tracked armored transport vehicles. The cost of the order totaled \$175.2 million. This March, the Indonesian Ministry of Defense requested another \$286 million from the government to purchase 79 armored transport vehicles from Russia.

“Right now, Indonesia has at least two battalions in these vehicles,” Viktor Murakhovskiy stated. “While taking into account that this is an island country, the Indonesian Marines have fully tested all of the BMP-3’s capabilities. They have not only conducted the landing of an assault force from ships but have also conducted small transits between islands in them.

The Naval Infantry is ... capable of landing both from the sea and from the air. In recent years, these formations have been appreciably strengthened, and they are expanding their functionality. There are five brigades and a separate regiment of “Black Berets” in the Russian Navy’s composition today....



Russian Exoskeleton Development

OE Watch Commentary: The following *Novosti* interview with Maksim Skokov, a deputy in the development of Russian exoskeleton systems, lays out a brief history of Russian work in this field. According to the article, the Russians tested an exoskeleton in Syria in 2017. Russian engineers testing the Uran-6 mine clearing, unmanned ground vehicle had to carry a heavy command-and-control system strapped to their chest. However, the EO-1 Ratnik exoskeleton enabled these engineers to keep up with ease. According to the interview, Skokov discusses Sotnik, which is a third generation exoskeleton that is supposed to debut in 2025. His firm is developing exoskeletons and robots for Russian Armed Forces, the National Guard, the Federal Security Service, and others in industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Several variations of exoskeletons have been developed for different tasks. There are three main types of tasks. The first is march-related, when a soldier needs to move quickly and effectively and efficiently perform dynamic combat tasks. The second is a low-movement task. For example, sappers, miners who do not need to run anywhere but who work with heavy equipment and equipment. The third group is rigging and various loading operations.”

Source: “Максим Скоков: для российской армии создается несколько экзоскелетов (Maxim Skokov: several exoskeletons are being created for the Russian army),” *RIA Novosti*, 28 September 2020. <https://ria.ru/20200928/ekzoskelety-1577781686.html>

Exoskeletons that multiply a person’s physical abilities are no longer a fantasy – such developments are currently implemented not only in the world’s advanced armies, but also in industrial enterprises, helping to boost workers’ endurance and productivity. Maksim Skokov, deputy director general for special projects of the enterprise Rostekh-Trusted Platforms – Robotic Systems [Rostekh-Doverenniyye platformy – Robototekhnicheskiye komplekсы] (RT-DP RK) was interviewed by... Ivan Surayev about the creation of an exoskeleton for the new generation of Sotnik combat equipment, advanced projects for the Russian special services, and also the company’s developments in the field of unmanned aircraft and robotics.

[Surayev] How did your company come into being, and what main results have you managed to achieve so far?

[Maksim Skokov] RT-DP RK was founded in 2016 by decision of the Rostekh state corporation. The company was created to attract private investment in projects of national importance, mainly orders from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense. Today, we are a design bureau specializing in the development of robotic systems and complexes, including unmanned ground-based vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles and exoskeletons for civilian, special, and military purposes. The production facilities and testing site are located in Vladimirskaya Oblast.

We have the necessary licenses, including those issued by the FSB [Federal Security Service] of Russia to work with state secrets and the Russian Federation Ministry of Industry and Trade to develop military products classed as “Unmanned Systems and Aircraft.”

Our first projects were related to the development of unmanned aerial vehicles. We worked on the possibility of specific use of drones in the interests of the Armed Forces, including for delivering goods to hard-to-reach places. In addition, our company carried out work for radiation, chemical, and biological defense troops; we demonstrated the possibility of using standard flamethrowers from drones. Development work was opened based on the results of the tests.

[Surayev] What is the point in putting a flamethrower on a drone? It’s easy enough to shoot it down...

[Skokov] You are wrong there. When testing the technology with spetsnaz, they found that it is very difficult to shoot down a UAV without proper training. Countering small unmanned aerial vehicles is a serious problem for all the armies of the world today.

I would like to note that our main focus today is still on another topic – the development of exoskeletons, wearable devices that can increase a person’s physical capabilities when performing heavy work and reduce the risk of industrial injuries under harmful or dangerous working conditions.

[Surayev] Are you involved in the development of exoskeletons for the Russian equipment of the soldier of the future, the new-generation Sotnik?

[Skokov] Yes, we have been participating in this project since 2018 and interact with the main developer of the combat equipment set – the Central Research Institute of Precision Engineering (TSNIITChMASH). Right now we already have prototype exoskeletons. We demonstrated them during “Government Week” at the ERA Technopolis and at the Army-2020 international forum.

In addition, we participated in cooperation on the development of an active exoskeleton for the needs of the Ministry of Defense and, in 2019, we successfully defended our part of the work. The work was mainly performed by the Central Research Institute of Robotics and Technical Cybernetics (TSNII RTK). Apart from us, Android Technology [Androidnaya tekhnika], the Southwestern State University, and the Rokad Scientific and Technical Center participated in this project. Several variations of exoskeletons have been developed for different tasks.



Continued: Russian Exoskeleton Development

Source: “Максим Скоков: для российской армии создается несколько экзоскелетов (Maxim Skokov: several exoskeletons are being created for the Russian army),” *RIA Novosti*, 28 September 2020. <https://ria.ru/20200928/ekzoskelety-1577781686.html>

[Continued]

There are three main types of tasks. The first is march-related, when a soldier needs to move quickly and effectively and efficiently perform dynamic combat tasks. The second is a low-movement task. For example, sappers, miners who do not need to run anywhere but who work with heavy equipment and equipment. The third group is rigging and various loading operations.

A distinctive feature of our exoskeleton is that it does not restrict the soldier’s movement. We showed a demonstration sample of it at Army 2020. The introduction of our development into the new equipment model will help to take the strain off the soldier’s musculoskeletal system, provide increased endurance by relieving muscle groups, and boost his combat capabilities.

We place a serious emphasis on ergonomics – the exoskeleton should not restrict the soldier’s movement, and there are some successes in this area. A soldier equipped with our skeleton can sit down, run, lay down, rollover into cover, and so on without additional effort.

This summer, an important event occurred for us – the Ministry of Defense decided to categorize the topic of exoskeletons and robotics into a separate system. It should be understood that the work on combat equipment for the military is divided into separate systems: life support, protection, power supply, and so on.

Until this summer, the exoskeleton was part of the life support system, but now, having allocated this part of the equipment in a separate area, which will have its own chief designer, the Ministry of Defense will more closely monitor the work and formulate clearer technical requirements for them.

We are also working with other security agencies – Rosgvardiya [Federal Service of National Guard Troops], the FSO [Federal Protection Service], the FSB. They were interested in our development, called “Shchitovik” [Shield]. During an assault with the spetsnaz, there was an operative carrying a large armored shield in front of him, covering himself and his comrades walking behind him. His task is to move slowly, call fire on himself, and protect other spetsnaz. The weight of such a shield can reach up to 45 kilograms, the Shchitovik exoskeleton makes it possible to reduce this load.

[Surayev] At what stage is this work?

[Skokov] For now it is a matter of prototypes.

[Surayev] Recently, there have been press reports about the ProEXO exoskeleton for industrial work; what are the prospects for this project?

[Skokov] Implementation of this development should increase labor productivity and reduce worker fatigue. The project won the Rostekh innovation competition “Vector” – we expect to receive a grant and start serial production of the ProEXO. At the beginning of next year, we plan to release the first samples of this exoskeleton for sale. Potential consumers are large companies such as Rostekh, Gazpromneft, Rusal, Rosatom, and SUEK. Companies that are engaged in mining, manufacturing, logistics, and freight transportation.

One of the elements of an industrial exoskeleton that we have created for workers is the so-called exochair [ekzostul]. This is a technology that allows a person to sit while standing. The exochair fixes the position of the knee joint, and the person feels as if he is sitting on a real chair. The device will help those workers who stand behind a conveyor belt for an entire shift. There have been many studies showing how the productivity of such monotonous work falls during the day.

[Surayev] Have you already tested this technology on real workers?

[Skokov] The testing of civilian exoskeletons is complex, and their precise methods have not yet been developed, either in Russia or abroad. Our country has an Institute of Occupational Medicine which claims to be a leader in this field. By 2021, the Institute should develop two state standards certifying exoskeletons as personal protective equipment.

[Surayev] Could you tell us about your projects in the field of robotics – what was the Uspekh {success} system developed for, and at what stage is this work now?

[Skokov] The initial goal of the project is to develop an onboard control system or, more simply, “brains” for a robotic platform that works not only on radio control, but also has artificial intelligence. A platform equipped with Uspekh must itself identify the terrain, make decisions on how to avoid obstacles, and so on.

For the experimental model, we used a civilian all-terrain vehicle. Later, these “brains” can be installed on any military equipment – a tank, armored personnel carrier, armored car, and so on, to make a full-fledged robot out of a combat vehicle. The tests were successful, and three research and development projects were opened to develop these ideas.



The Russian BMPT Terminator is Going Into Limited Production to Test “Brigades of the Future”

OE Watch Commentary: The Soviets and Russians have long sought to effectively combine tanks and infantry fighting vehicles in the same permanent companies or battalions. According to *Izvestia*, the Russian Defense Ministry is considering forming regiments and brigades “with enhanced combat capabilities.” The combined arms battalion and battalion tactical group have a long history. The differences in gunnery qualifications and maintenance stood in the way. On the battlefield, tanks tended to outdistance the following infantry fighting vehicles, leaving the tanks exposed to ATGM fire. The Russians have been developing the BMPT “Terminator” Armored Tank Support vehicle for decades, but never had the funds to enter full production. The “Terminator” is designed to stay with the tanks and destroy enemy ATGM systems and other threats during armor attacks. (For background on the development of the Terminator system, see also “A New System Preserves Armor Dominance of the Future Battlefield: The BMPT Terminator-2,” *Armor*, April-June 2015 at <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmsso/m/fmsso-monographs/195073>.) Next year’s tests of the “armored attack forces” will test Russian concepts of modern armor attack and true combined arms. Artillery, air defense and aviation interface will certainly be part of the tests’ final determination. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



“In general, the idea of combat modules of tanks, BMP’s, and BMPT’s in the same subunit has already has been advocated for a long time. We have to see how this will look in practice. There possibly will be tank, motorized rifle, and [tank] support platoons in one company, or these will be companies as part of a battalion task force.”



Continued: The Russian BMPT Terminator is Going Into Limited Production to Test “Brigades of the Future”

Source: “Броня по выбору: Минобороны объединит «Терминаторы» и «Бережки» (Armor of choice: the Ministry of Defense will combine Terminators and Berezhki),” *Izvestia*, 5 October 2020. <https://iz.ru/1069405/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/bronia-po-vyboru-minoborony-obedinit-terminatory-i-berezhki>

Terminators, Proryv’s, and Berezhok’s will be united. The Defense Ministry considering forming regiments and brigades “with enhanced combat capabilities. These will be based on existing units that will be rearmed with new armored vehicles: T-90M tanks, BMP-2M infantry fighting vehicles with the Berezhok turret, and Terminator tank support fighting vehicles (BMPT). The vehicles will be concentrated in several force elements [formirovaniyeto create “armored attack forces” capable of radically altering the battlefield.

A final decision on establishing the new regiments and brigades will be made after special test exercises are conducted... Commander-in-Chief Ground Troops Oleg Salyukov announced earlier that maneuvers involving the Proryv T-90M, Berezhok BMP-2M, and Terminator BMPT will be held next year. Their role ...will be determined by the results of the vehicles’ combat training employment. The Army already has called the future force elements “brigades of the future.”

The modernized T-90M is the most state-of-the-art tank of those in Russia’s inventory. In terms of its characteristics, it comes close to the advanced Armata T-14 tank, which now is being tested. The T-90M is only slightly inferior to Armata in running characteristics and armor protection while having the same firepower. The modernized version received the improved 2A46M5-01 gun, a more powerful diesel engine, the Kalina automated fire control system, and the remotely controlled Kord-MT anti-aircraft machinegun. The vehicle’s protection was increased substantially during modification. In particular, splinter screens of kevlar fabric have been installed inside the fighting compartment and the bulk of munitions had been moved outside to a special box behind the turret.

The BMP-2M is considered an in-depth modernization of the BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle developed back in Soviet times. However, this is an entirely different vehicle. It received a new 400-hp turbocharged UTD-23 engine, hydraulic shock absorbers with enhanced energy absorption capacity, and reinforced road wheels, and the rubber block tracks serve longer and do less damage to roads. Sights with night and thermal imaging viewing channels have been mounted for the commander and gunner-operator. The weapons and observation devices are stabilized and can automatically hold a target in the sight day and night as well as in movement.

The chief advantage of the BMP-2M is the Berezhok [unmanned] combat turret, which gives the vehicle considerable fire capabilities. It includes a 30-mm automatic gun, 7.62-mm machinegun, as well as automatic grenade launcher. In addition, four Kornet-E anti-tank missiles are mounted on it. They can hit ground and airborne targets at a range up to 10 kilometers and are capable of penetrating all armor protection.

The Terminator BMPT belongs to a fundamentally new class of vehicles, and there are no analogues of it... The military are determining the most appropriate role and place for it in the armored combat formation. The vehicle is armed with two 2A42 30-mm autocannon, two AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers, and four Ataka guided missiles with supersonic flight speed. All this is mounted on a T-72 chassis, so the BMPT is not greatly inferior to tanks in protection.

Military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy believes that the firepower of the new regiments and brigades will be substantially superior to that of current tank and motorized rifle units. “Combat capabilities are considerably higher both for the BMP-2M with Berezhok module and the T-90M tanks than for previous modifications, and the BMPT generally is a new kind of vehicle. In general, the idea of combat modules of tanks, BMP’s, and BMPT’s in the same subunit has already been advocated for a long time. We have to see how this will look in practice. There possibly will be tank, motorized rifle, and [tank] support platoons in one company, or these will be companies as part of a battalion task force. We have not had such composite force elements, in contrast to certain foreign states. For example, the Bundeswehr has composite battalions where there are motorized infantry and tank subunits.”

According to Murakhovskiy, concentrating the newest vehicles in the same regiments and brigades is enormously more effective than evenly distributing vehicles throughout the Ground Troops. This will permit assembling an armored strike force on an important axis that can decide the outcome of battle. “How to employ these forces must be studied in practice. That is how it always has been when we received new equipment or new forces structures were tried: tactical live-fire exercises were held in a varying situations, actual combat capabilities were determined, and so on.”....



Russia Going “Green” for Kavkaz 2020

OE Watch Commentary: Kavkaz 2020 is a major annual regional strategic exercise, which rotates from Zapad [West] to Vostok [East] to Tsentr [Center] to Kavkaz [Caucasus]. As the *Izvestia* article points out, one of the side events will be public field trials of ecologically friendly field power sources. Armies have lots of field generators, which make noise and give off heat, making it difficult to hide the location of ground forces. These solar and wind-powered generators are still in the early stages, so wind-powered tanks are not on the near horizon. However, they may prove ideal for encampments and command posts. Of greater interest in the article are the foreign participants. Last year, China, India and Pakistan were among the players. This year India is not. Evidently the problem that China and India are having on their mountain borders have caused India to stay at home. India’s official position blames COVID-19. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Participants in the Kavkaz-2020 strategic exercise will be provided with ecologically clean energy... Wind turbine and solar generators ... will provide energy for command posts, weapons systems, military equipment, and tent camps.”

Source: “Маневры с энергией: на учениях «Кавказ-2020» испытывают экогенераторы (Maneuvers with Energy: Kavkaz 2020 will use Ecogenerators”, *Izvestia*, 14 September 2020. <https://iz.ru/1060156/roman-kretcul-anton-lavrov-aleksei-ramm/manevry-s-energiei-na-ucheniakh-kavkaz-2020-ispytaiut-ekogeneratory>

Participants in the Kavkaz-2020 strategic exercise will be provided with ecologically clean energy... Wind turbine and solar generators ... will provide energy for command posts, weapons systems, military equipment, and tent camps. Unlike diesel generators, these new power supply systems do not disclose troop positions. In addition, they may save fuel.

During the exercises, the military will determine how effective wind and solar generators’ employment will be in the field, and what facilities they will be able to support in garrison... The 10 kW standalone power module... incorporates a photovoltaic and wind-energy capability and can supply power both in garrison and the field. There are also more powerful wind-powered systems with a capacity of up to 35 kW that operate at wind speeds from 2.5 to 25 m/s.

Today, power for tent camps and military equipment is provided by diesel generators. It is unlikely that the troops will stop using them anytime soon, but the new energy sources will significantly help to save fuel. According to Colonel Aleksandr Perendzhiyev, associate professor of the Russian University of Economics named after Plekhanov, stated that “during the exercises, it will be possible to determine how the solar and wind systems can meet the troops needs. It’s best to spend the diesel fuel saved by these power sources for refueling combat vehicles. In any event, based on the results of the maneuvers, orders and guidance documents will be issued on the employment of solar and wind stations.”

Military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy stated that “in addition to fuel savings, the new generators have another advantage. Diesel generators emit noise and heat, which assist enemy reconnaissance in detecting the positions of our troops. “Nowdays, the services are densely saturated with various electronics and electrical engineering systems.... Not only combat and support vehicles, but also a multitude of portable devices: field tablets, optronic reconnaissance devices, communications equipment, portable radio stations, and many others. The majority of these operate on batteries, which require charging. There are charging stations, but they are fitted on equipment which is not always available. Solar and wind generators are of immense importance in this situation. As for field kitchens and tents, it is unlikely that new devices will be able to fully meet their power demand. They need a reserve diesel generator.”

In recent years, the troops have received modern equipment for field support. Firewood-fed field kitchens are being replaced with crockpots and bakeries equipped with electric generators. Canvas tents with cast-iron stoves are giving way to modern shelters with climate control. They will provide comfortable rest for the servicemen even when the outside temperature reaches -50 degrees Celsius.... The Kavkaz-2020 strategic exercises will be held from 21 through 26 September at the Kapustin Yar and Ashuluk ranges, as well as in the waters of the Black and Caspian seas.... Deputy Defense Minister Aleksandr Fomin stated that ground forces, aviation and air defense groups, as well as the Black Sea Fleet and Caspian Sea Flotilla will be involved. Subunits from Armenia, Belarus, China, Myanmar, and Pakistan will participate in the ground force, while Azerbaijan and Iran have been invited to participate in the exercise rehearsal in the Caspian Sea waters.



Autumn Conscription Campaign Begins in Russia

OE Watch Commentary: On 30 September 2020, according to an article published by *TASS*, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree formalizing the conscription of 128,000 Russian citizens for military service. The decree also releases from military service all those whose terms have expired, and obligates Russian government officials at regional levels to ensure the safe and effective implementation of the conscription campaign.

The article cites Colonel-General Evgeny Burdinsky, head of the Main Organizational and Mobilization Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces, who stressed that the mobilization of these new recruits would be done cautiously in the context of the global pandemic. Military commissariats, he noted, have already been provided with the requisite medical equipment, and the preventative measures taken during the Spring 2020 conscription will continue.



Parade Victory Day. 9th of May, Samara area.

Source: <https://pixabay.com/photos/parade-victory-day-the-9th-of-may-716561/>, Free for commercial use, no attribution needed

Conscription is still a significant part of military recruitment in Russia, and it occurs every Spring and Autumn. According to a related *RIA Novosti* article, Russian men between the ages of 18 and 27 are eligible for conscription. Exemptions are provided for men who are ruled unfit to serve for health reasons, or who engage in alternative forms of state service, or who earn a scientific degree from a university. The sons and siblings of those who died as a result of their military service are also exempt, as well as other categories. The conscription campaign began on 1 October and will continue until 31 December 2020. The *TASS* article notes as well that in the Spring 2020 conscription, 135,000 new recruits were called up; Burdinsky attributes the smaller number for autumn conscription to an increase in volunteer recruits serving under contract. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rodger)**

“According to a decree signed on Wednesday by the President of Russia, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Vladimir Putin, from October 1 to December 31, 128,000 people will be called up for military service.”

Source: “В России начинается осенний призыв в армию (Autumn Conscription for the Army Begins in Russia),” *TASS*, 30 September 2020. <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/9597203>

The 2020 autumn recruiting campaign, which began on Thursday, will be the second (after the spring), which takes place during the coronavirus pandemic. According to a decree signed on Wednesday by the President of Russia, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Vladimir Putin, from October 1 to December 31, 128,000 people will be called up for military service. The draft campaign will take place in all 85 regions of the Russian Federation.

In the spring conscription 135,000 recruits were called up. Colonel-General Yevgeny Burdinsky, head of the Main Organizational and Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, explained ... that the decrease in the number of conscripts is associated with an increase in the number of servicemen serving under contract.

The whole range of anti-epidemic measures taken in the spring will be extended to the autumn campaign. The military enlistment offices and military units have created the necessary stocks of medical equipment, medicines and medicines. All involved premises and vehicles will be regularly disinfected, barrier control with temperature measurement will remain, masks and sanitizers will be issued.

Source: “Призыв на военную службу в России (Conscription for Military Service in Russia),” *RIA Novosti*, 1 October 2020. <https://ria.ru/20201001/prizyv-1577930050.html>

Conscription for military service - the statutory involvement of citizens for the performance of military duties (conscription) in the ranks of the armed forces and other troops; an integral part of the manning of the armed forces. Russian men between the ages of 18 and 27 are eligible for conscription.



Russia's Young Army Journalists

OE Watch Commentary: The current Russian leadership continues to enact policies and develop programs to strengthen the sinews of patriotism—especially among the country's youth. Since military service remains a key component in their patriotic formula, it was not surprising that the Yunarmiya or Youth Army organization would have a prominent display during the recent *Armiya 2020* (Army 2020) exhibition at Patriot Park. An article in *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye* (*Independent Military Review*) included an interview with the leader of the Young Army movement, and Hero of the Russian Federation, pilot-cosmonaut Roman Romanenko. A few of his remarks merit closer study.

The article begins by describing the Young Army display at the exhibition, “where children and their parents could examine military equipment, assemble and disassemble small arms, take a course in primary medical care, and try themselves in other competitions.” Romanenko points out that today, even though COVID-19 has presented challenges, “there are more than 700,000” children enrolled within the Young Army ranks. He describes some of the interactive exhibits of the Young Army display, stressing that “everything is appropriate and extremely exciting for visitors.”

The article highlights an exhibit called Young Correspondents, where “guests were clearly demonstrated the principle of work of modern mass media.” Children could become familiar with “a real television studio - a camera, a screen and even a prompter,” and try their hand at working as “a journalist, news anchor and operator.” Those who demonstrated particular talent were awarded with “prizes and gifts.” The article also describes a recently opened TV studio for Young Army members in Sevastopol, which has become “one of the most successful and requested projects,” and where “the videos of our young correspondents are gaining tens of thousands of views and positive comments.”

Understanding the importance of cultivating patriotism among Russian youth, the Kremlin leadership has developed tools like Patriot Park, the *Armiya* forum, and the Young Army movement. To ensure that the Kremlin's narrative remains fresh and convincing, it has also invested considerable resources in creating a class of new, young journalists to faithfully spread its message. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“... In the space of “Young Correspondents,” the guests were clearly demonstrated the principle of work of modern mass media....”



Source: Irina Dronina, “Юнармия работает по принципу – есть спрос, будет предложение (Yunarmiya works according to the principle - there is demand, there will be supply),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*, 10 September 2020. https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-09-10/3_1108_unarmiya.html

The Army 2020 Forum has become not only an exhibition of the achievements of the military-industrial complex, but also a place to demonstrate the work of the Ministry of Defense in military-patriotic education. For the first time in the history of the expo, the military department has deployed a whole thematic platform where children and their parents could examine military equipment, assemble and disassemble small arms, take a course in primary medical care, and try themselves in other competitions. The head of the General Staff of the Yunarmiya, Hero of the Russian Federation, pilot-cosmonaut Roman Romanenko, spoke with correspondent... Irina Dronina about how it was organized and what tasks were solved.”

Roman Yurievich, Yunarmiya has been participating in the International Military-Technical Forum since its inception in 2016. Do you always have something to show?

-

The forum is an opportunity to show achievements in our work. And we have something to be proud of. The number of participants in the movement is growing: now there are more than 700,000....

Instead of booklets and leaflets from the last century, the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Movement has created an interactive exhibition module, where everything is appropriate and extremely exciting for visitors.

In the space of “Young Correspondents,” the guests were clearly demonstrated the principle of work of modern mass media. Everything here is like in a real television studio - a camera, a screen and even a prompter. You can try yourself as a journalist, news anchor and operator. The most productive earn prizes and gifts.

The project of the School of Young Correspondents is also actively developing. You recently presented a studio in Sevastopol. What's next?

The TV studio, equipped for the young correspondents of the Youth Army, will become the central broadcasting point. The media center has been equipped with modern digital equipment, on which schoolchildren will be able to work as correspondents, operators, and program hosts. Not only teachers, but also students of the Sevastopol State University, who already have experience of working at the university television studio, will study with the children.

The junior school is one of the most successful and requested projects. The videos of our young correspondents are gaining tens of thousands of views and positive comments, and are also posted on many Russian media sites.



Strengthening Political Loyalty of the Russian National Guard

OE Watch Commentary: The recent protests in Belarus may have been a proximate cause in the recent decision to introduce new “political instructors” within the Russian National Guard (RNG). Thousands of protesters took to the streets in Belarus after the incumbent, and increasingly unpopular, Alexander Lukashenko claimed that he had won his sixth presidential election in early August with 80% of the vote (Lukashenko has held this office since 1994). To quell these protests, the Belarusian leadership employed domestic security forces, who arrested and detained hundreds of protesters. This forceful strategy to secure the presidency appears to have worked—at least for the short-term.

Recall that when the RNG was created in April 2016, many observers suggested that this new force would strengthen the Kremlin’s control over domestic protest (for additional background on the RNG, see: “National Guard: Defense Against Color Revolution,” *OE Watch*, May 2016; and “National Guard: Defense Against Color Revolution,” *OE Watch*, July 2017). The accompanying excerpt from an article from the moderate source, *Noviye Izvestiya*, describes the recent decision whereby “military-political work will be organized in the Russian Guard to strengthen discipline and order.” Similar to the recently added Main Directorate for Political-Military Affairs within the Ministry of Defense, the new RNG political instructors will be responsible for “organizing political work,” as well as “holding events in the field of physical culture and sports.”

The article quotes the head of the RNG, Viktor Zolotov, who had earlier announced that introducing political officers was “necessary for the further development of moral and psychological support.” The article does not discuss the curriculum that these new political officers will use, but presumably it will align with the current Kremlin narrative (e.g. the West is intent upon weakening Russia and will employ the “Color Revolution” weapon to spark public protests). While the Kremlin leadership never tires of describing the growing military danger from the West, the decision to introduce political instructors within the RNG suggests that it may see a threat closer to home. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Russian National Guard Forces in the 2018 Victory Day Parade.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018_Moscow_Victory_Day_Parade_55.jpg, CCA 4.0 Intl

“Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree according to which military-political work will be organized in the Russian National Guard to strengthen discipline and order.”

Source: “В Росгвардии организуют военно-политическую работу (Military-political work is organized in the Russian National Guard),” *Noviye Izvestiya*, 21 September 2020. <https://newizv.ru/news/society/21-09-2020/v-rosgvardii-organizuyut-voenno-politicheskuyu-rabotu>

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree according to which military-political work will be organized in the Russian National Guard to strengthen discipline and order. This is somewhat reminiscent of the revival of the institution of Soviet “political instructors.”

The text of the decree says that two changes will be made to the regulations on the Federal Service of the National Guard Troops. In addition to organizing political work, the new “political instructors” will be responsible for “holding events in the field of physical culture and sports.” The decree comes into force today.

In the army, such an institution has existed for two years, when in July 2018 Vladimir Putin signed a decree on the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Ministry of Defense. The website of the Ministry of Defense says that this department is intended for “organizing military-political work in the Armed Forces” and “implementing state defense policy, maintaining the moral, political and psychological state, law and order and military discipline in the Armed Forces.” The department is also engaged in “the organization of military-political propaganda and agitation in the Armed Forces,” notes newsru.com.

In the Rosgvardiya [RNG], its head Viktor Zolotov announced the need to organize military-political work back in March of this year. It was noted that this is necessary for “the further development of moral and psychological support.”



Crazy Russian Military Propaganda?

OE Watch Commentary: While monitoring the official and state-sponsored Russian media, one might presume that the current Kremlin leadership has fully restored Russia's role as a great power. Whether describing its successful defense of the Assad regime in Syria, fending off coup attempts in Venezuela, or producing the first vaccine to defend against COVID-19, these Kremlin-friendly media portray Russia as moving from strength to strength, particularly in the foreign policy and military realms. Some of the Kremlin achievements are genuine, yet their sanguine portrayal does not necessarily reflect domestic reality.

The accompanying lead article from the authoritative military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, describes a much less formidable Russia. The author begins by asserting that “the Russian Federation suffers severely from internal diseases. The power failures on all fronts are obvious,” warning that “if the trend continues, the Putin administration could lose control of the situation.” According to the author, the primary source of this domestic weakness stems from a failure to “diversify the economy” when fossil fuel revenues were high. The author maintains that despite the external bravado, “poverty is felt everywhere,” and that given the worsening economic situation, “defense spending will also have to be cut.”

Instead of adopting the necessary structural political and economic changes to weed out corruption and introduce genuine political and economic competition, the author asserts that the current Kremlin leadership is relying upon “crazy military propaganda” to maintain social control. He goes on to claim that “nonsense about the imminent appearance of ‘gravitational weapons’ in our country, now irritates more and more people and works against the regime.” The author concludes by stating that the oft-repeated assertion that a “new Hitler stands at the borders of the country,” has grown stale and that the people have grown weary of the constant warning of “Wolves! Wolves!”

This article suggests that the powerful image of Russia portrayed by the Kremlin-friendly media should be taken with considerable skepticism. It also indicates that the common stereotype of Russia's censored media needs correction. That one of the most influential military journals freely criticizes the current Kremlin leadership speaks volumes regarding both the country's current direction and the level of media freedom. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“... The best sign of how the situation is deteriorating is just crazy military propaganda....”

Source: Maxim Kalashnikov, “Камо грядеши: Дела у власти плохи по всем направлениям. Куда же нас ведут? (Whither goest? The authorities are doing badly in all directions. Where are they taking us?),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, 6 October 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/58951>

The Russian Federation suffers severely from internal diseases. The power failures on all fronts are obvious. It's time to face the truth: If the trend continues, the Putin administration could lose control of the situation. Where did you take us, Mr. President?...

...In fact, there are two main reasons for the current collapse in the Russian Federation in all directions. First, the fact that Putin's team mediocly missed the opportunity to use the fat oil years 2000–2014 in order to industrialize the country, get rid of raw materials dependence and diversify the economy. Therefore, today we are stagnant, there is not enough decently paid jobs, and the real incomes of citizens have been falling since 2014....

...Vladimir Vladimirovich stubbornly did not want to deal with the main thing: the country's economy, rolling around the world like Gorbachev and engaging in such a pleasant and easy foreign policy.... Poverty is felt everywhere....

...Now defense spending will also have to be cut, providing a difficult time for the defense industry. The diversification of the defense industry was ten years late and began when the crazy oil trillions ended....

...If the economy collapses, everything fails in foreign policy. Vladimir Putin's team allowed a repetition of the situation of the 80s: the Russian Federation is again engulfed in an arc of wars and instability. Only now, instead of Poland and Afghanistan - Belarus, Ukraine and Transcaucasia.... The loss of Ukraine is generally a colossal failure of Putin's team....

...More and more people see how rotten the notorious vertical of power is, how affected it is by incompetence and irresponsibility.

...The best sign of how the situation is deteriorating is just crazy military propaganda.

...Agitprop, carrying nonsense about the imminent appearance of “gravitational weapons” in our country, now irritates more and more people and works against the regime.... For no new Hitler stands at the borders of the country. How long can you talk about war, which still does not exist? How long can you shout: “Wolves! Wolves!”?



The Function of the Russian-Armenian United Group of Forces

OE Watch Commentary: When the Armenian government finalized the agreement to establish the United Group of Forces with Russia a few years ago (see: “The Russian-Armenian Joint Military Force,” *OE Watch*, January-February 2017), it did not appear that it believed the agreement would necessarily include support from Russia in an operation against Azerbaijan. The accompanying excerpted article reports on the involvement of the United Group of Forces in the recent Kavkaz-2020 exercise recently held in Russia and it helps gauge how the Russian government would provide support to Armenia through the United Group of Forces in light of the recent clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh.

The article, from the Russian-language news website *Eurasia Daily*, reports “from 21-26 September, motorized rifle units, aviation and air defense systems of the (Russian) Southern Military District and Armenian Armed Forces were involved in actions under the leadership of the commander of the United Group of Forces Major General Tigran Parvanyan.” It is worth remembering that in the event the United Group of Forces



Armenian soldiers training at the Vazgen Sargsyan Military Institute.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_Army#/media/File:Armenian_soldiers_at_the_Vazgen_Sargsyan_Military_Institute.jpg Attribution: CC BY SA 3.0

responds to a conflict, it will fall under the operational command of Russian forces, not Armenian as depicted in the exercise. The article also mentions how the goal of this portion of Kavkaz-2020 was to “assess the readiness of the units of the Southern Military District to localize and deal with armed conflicts in connection with combating terrorism as well as to protect the interests and ensure the security of the two countries.”

Overall, Kavkaz-2020 focused on counterterrorism and it marked one of just a couple of exercises involving the United Group Forces. If this is any indication, the United Group of Forces appears to be focusing largely on counterterrorism efforts and not other types of operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“During the exercise, the command will assess the readiness of the units of the Southern Military District to localize and deal with armed conflicts in connection with combating terrorism as well as to protect the interests and ensure the security of the two countries”

Source: “Объединённая группировка войск Армении и России развернула «Кавказ-2020» (The joint group of forces of Armenia and Russia have deployed to “Kavkaz-2020”),” *Eurasia Daily*, 21 September 2020. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2020/09/21/obedinyonnaya-gruppirovka-voysk-armenii-i-rossii-razvernula-kavkaz-2020>

Russian and Armenia units started joint operations today, 21 September, at the “Alagyaz” high-altitude training facility during the “Kavkaz-2020” strategic command and staff exercises...

“From 21-26 September, motorized rifle units, aviation and air defense systems of the Southern Military District and Armenian Armed Forces were involved in actions under the leadership of the commander of the United Group of Forces Major General Tigran Parvanyan,” – said the Russian Defense Ministry in a statement.

During the exercise, the command will assess the readiness of the units of the Southern Military District to localize and deal with armed conflicts in connection with combating terrorism as well as to protect the interests and ensure the security of the two countries...



Georgian Deputy Minister Says No Military Cargo to Nagorno Karabakh via Georgia

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article in *Georgia Today*, the Deputy Foreign Minister categorically rejected any reports that military equipment bound for the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh was passing through Georgia on civil aviation or cargo flights. At the same time the article points out that the Deputy Minister “stated that it is the responsibility of a particular carrier and cargo holder to comply with the norms of international law and not to abuse the humanitarian corridors. This is a big deal because Georgia borders both Azerbaijan and Armenia and has significant Azeri and Armenian minority populations.

The Deputy Minister seemed to clarify that military material may have crossed through Georgia prior to the conflict but, “As soon as the situation escalated in Karabakh, the transit of military cargo through Georgia was suspended both by land and by air, both in the direction of Azerbaijan and Armenia.”

The accompanying source from a well-known Georgian military blogger featured in the daily *Kviris Palitra* was a bit more retaliatory of those suggesting Georgia might be complicit in moving combatants or arms to either neighboring country, suggesting that Georgia being involved in the transfer of either combatants and/or arms via commercial or cargo flights is nonsense. The author goes on to remind readers that there is really only “one road” across Georgia into Azerbaijan and that border crossings have been heavily restricted since COVID-19. He also suggests that Russian flights into Armenia and Turkish flights into Azerbaijan need to be checked prior to departure. Georgia cannot be responsible for accessing and policing civilian planes passing through or over Georgia.

The idea of military manpower and material from the outside is a sensitive topic in Georgia. In both Georgia’s own wars with the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, combatants from outside Georgian territory were considered a significant factor in the loss of both of those separatist regions. Perhaps that is why both the Deputy Minister and weekly defense columnist are adamant in their denial of foreign combatants and equipment using Georgia as a transit corridor. Both articles seem to want to make it clear that Georgia would do anything to protect Georgia from not being dragged into the neighboring conflict or spark unrest in within its own borders.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“As soon as the situation escalated in Karabakh, the transit of military cargo through Georgia was suspended both by land and by air, both in the direction of Azerbaijan and Armenia.”



Map of South Caucasus featuring conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagorno-Karabakh_Map2.png

Attribution: CCA-Share Alike 4.0 International



Continued: Georgian Deputy Minister Says No Military Cargo to Nagorno Karabakh via Georgia

Source: “MFA: Military Shipments to Azerbaijan, Armenia Not Carried Out via Georgia,” *Georgia Today*, 13 October 2020. <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/22667/MFA%3A-Military-Shipments-to-Azerbaijan,-Armenia-Not-Carried-Out-via-Georgia>

Deputy Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia stated that it is the responsibility of a particular carrier and cargo holder to fully comply with the norms of international law and not to abuse the humanitarian corridors.

Darsalia pointed out that military transit is not carried out through the territory of Georgia.

“As soon as the situation escalated in Karabakh, the transit of military cargo through Georgia was suspended both by land and by air, both in the direction of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Therefore, we would like to state once again that military transit is not carried out through the territory of Georgia. Based on the documents available to Georgia, the flights operated in Georgian airspace are only of a humanitarian and civil nature, and fully comply with ICAO standards.

“Georgia continues to fulfill its obligations related to humanitarian and civil, including commercial, cargo”, said the Deputy Minister.

Source: “რატომ “აბრალებენ” საქართველოს ყარაბაღის ომში დაქირავებული მებრძოლების გატარებას და კონტროლის რა მექანიზმებია ოფიციალური თბილისის ხელში (Why Georgia is “blamed” for the conduct of mercenaries in the Karabakh war and what control mechanisms are in the hands of Tbilisi officials),” *Kvilis Palitra*, 16 October 2020. <https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/qarsenaliq-irakli-aladashvilis-blogi-anitacia/69986-ratom-qabralebenq-saqarthvelos-yarabaghis-omshi-daqiravebuli-mebrdzolebis-gatarebas-da-kontrolis-rameqanizmebia-oficialuri-tbilisis-khelshi.html>

According to the Armenian side, Turkey is sending Turkish-speaking fighters to Azerbaijan to fight against the Assad regime in Syria, while Baku accuses Yerevan of calling on Kurdish fighters to help Armenians in Karabakh. How real are these mutual accusations?

... But how could Syrian fighters get to Baku from Turkey, or how could Kurds and Armenians living abroad get to Yerevan? Only one road passes through Georgia, or rather there are two routes - land and air. The mass crossing of the land border was already halted due to the coronavirus pandemic, with air travel the only remaining corridor.

The Georgian government has temporarily closed the transit of military cargo to both Azerbaijan and Armenia, ie., banned the shipment of military cargo to these countries by land and air.

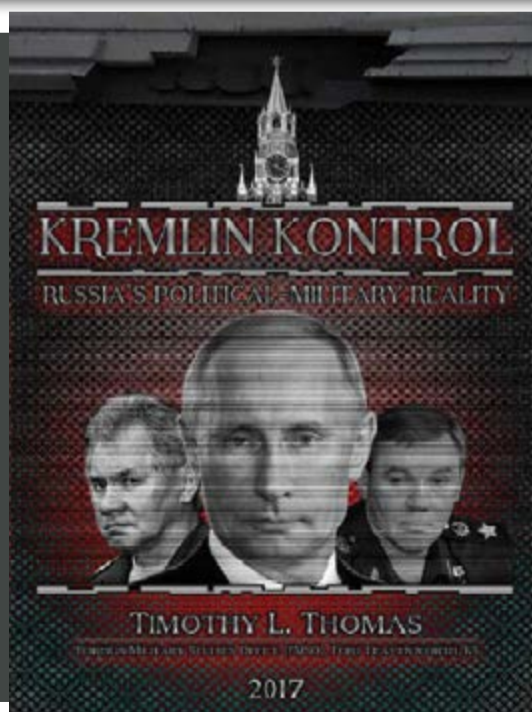
But this restriction does not apply, for example, to Turkish Air Force military transport planes flying over Azerbaijan through the Georgian skies, because Turkey [can] ...Overfly our airspace at any time without any problems or no longer need to give permission for a particular flight.

Cargo planes of one of the well-known Azerbaijani companies also regularly fly to Azerbaijan through Georgian airspace, but Georgia cannot check these flights either unless the air crew indicates that it is carrying military cargo.

The same situation occurs with planes flying to Armenia ... from Russia.

... If the international community really wants to avoid mercenaries in the Karabakh war, then they should thoroughly check the passenger list at the airport [of origin] and identify potential fighters, but this also seems unrealistic.

So instead of blaming the opposing sides in the Karabakh war for the transit of mercenaries over or through Georgia, it is better to demand an answer from the countries from which these passenger planes originate.



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>



Kazakh Peacekeeping Exercise



Kazakh Peacekeeper.

Source: TSgt. Jim Varhegyi (USAF), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kazakhstan_paratrooper.jpg, This image is a work of a U.S. military or Department of Defense employee, taken or made as part of that person's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain in the United States.

The peacekeeping force was composed of an array of specialist units. As the article stresses, President Tokayev "...emphasized that the peacekeeping training center is training such specialists at a high level." These exercises frame the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan as a highly trained and specialized peacekeeping force.

The image of the Kazakh Armed Forces' role as peacekeepers was carefully maintained in the exercises, "...which included practicing the actions of the peacekeeping contingent while escorting a convoy with humanitarian cargo." This focus was reinforced by President Tokayev who "...pointed to the growing role of the army, which performs large tasks in peacetime." These exercises framed Kazakhstan's army as a force for peace, and not just for Kazakhstan. In terms of scope "the President stressed the importance of ensuring peace and tranquility not only in [Kazakhstan], but throughout the world." **End OE Watch Commentary (Cabana)**

“The President stressed the importance of ensuring peace and tranquility not only in our country, but throughout the world. For this, he said, Kazakhstan regularly sends peacekeeping missions to conflict zones.”

Source: “Казахстанская армия унаследовала боевые традиции отважных батыров – Токаев (Kazakh Army Inherited the Fighting Traditions of Brave Warriors-Tokayev),” *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 8 October 2020. <https://www.kazpravda.kz/news/prezident2/kazahstanskaya-armiya-unasledovala-boevie-traditsii-otvazhnih-batirov--tokaev>

The President stressed the importance of ensuring peace and tranquility not only in our country, but throughout the world. For this, he said, Kazakhstan regularly sends peacekeeping missions to conflict zones.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev noted that the peacekeeping activities of the Armed Forces created by the First President - Elbasy, in fact, demonstrate our country's commitment to the principles of peace, international security and stability. The Head of State added that since 2007, 35 Kazakh servicemen, including four women, have taken part in the UN missions in Nepal, Côte d'Ivoire, Western Sahara and Lebanon as staff officers and military observers. A significant step in strengthening the peacekeeping potential of our country was the sending of the first Kazakhstani company to Lebanon in 2018, operating under a UN mandate. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief emphasized that the peacekeeping training center is training such specialists at a high level. Noting the professionalism of the military personnel demonstrated during the exercises, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev expressed gratitude to the Kazakhstani peacekeepers for their impeccable service. The Head of State pointed to the growing role of the army, which performs large tasks in peacetime.

...The first time in the history of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan, complex peacekeeping exercises... have completed in the Almaty region.

...involved more than 1,000 military personnel, over 100 units of combat and special equipment of the airborne assault forces, the air force, the military police, military medical institutions, the Peacekeeping Training Center and the Mine Clearance Center. The peacekeeping force was composed of an array of specialist units.

President Tokayev... emphasized that the peacekeeping training center is training such specialists at a high level.

...which included practicing the actions of the peacekeeping contingent while escorting a convoy with humanitarian cargo.” President Tokayev who... pointed to the growing role of the army, which performs large tasks in peacetime... the President stressed the importance of ensuring peace and tranquility not only in [Kazakhstan], but throughout the world.



Fresh Water Woes for Crimea



Russian military forces preparing to lay water pipe in Crimea, August 2020.

Source: <https://mil.ru/novosti/472-ministerstvo-oborony-postroit-vodoprovod-v-krymu>, mil.ru CCA 4.0 Intl

adequate fresh water supplies to Crimea is not a new problem. The second excerpt from the official news agency, *Interfax*, points out that in mid-August, Russian military forces laid a pipeline between the Taigan and Simferopol reservoirs... in order to transfer fresh water to the Crimean capital." The article cites the head of Crimea, Sergei Aksenov, who asserts that "the current year is one of the driest for the peninsula in 150 years."

The third excerpt from the moderate source, *Noviye Izvestiya* warns, "the situation with water supply in Crimea is getting worse every day. In the six years that have passed since the annexation of the peninsula to Russia, the country's authorities have not managed to solve this problem." While the military's efforts to transfer water from one reservoir to another provided limited relief to Crimea's capital, Simferopol, the overall water situation on the peninsula remains critical. The article concludes on an ominous note, quoting a local journalist who asserts that "it looks like a real humanitarian disaster is starting in Crimea. This should have been the main news in Russia, but everywhere there is silence about it (except for the Crimean media)." Cooler weather may provide some relief for local residents, but since the Kremlin leadership still has been unable to peacefully resolve Crimea's water woes, they may be tempted to adopt more forceful measures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...The situation with water supply in Crimea is getting worse every day..."

Source: "Putin opens Tavrida highway in Crimea," TASS, 27 August 2020. <https://tass.com/politics/1194449>

The Tavrida highway, which connects Kerch and Sevastopol, has been officially opened in Crimea, Russian President Vladimir Putin has already driven on it, Russian Transport Minister Yevgeny Dietrich said at a ceremony on Thursday.

Source: "Военные построили трубопровод для переброски воды в Симферополь (The military built a pipeline to transfer water to Simferopol)," *Interfax*, 10 August 2020. <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/721079>

The Russian military, at the request of the Crimean authorities, laid a pipeline between the Taigan and Simferopol reservoirs... in order to transfer fresh water to the Crimean capital.

...At the beginning of 2020, many reservoirs in Crimea became shallow. Aksenov called the current year one of the driest for the peninsula in 150 years....

Source: "Ситуация с водоснабжением в Крыму становится катастрофической (The situation with water supply in Crimea is becoming catastrophic)," *Noviye Izvestiya*, 24 September 2020. <https://newizv.ru/news/economy/24-09-2020/situatsiya-s-vodosnabzheniem-v-krymu-stanovitsya-katastroficheskoy>

...The situation with water supply in Crimea is getting worse every day. In the six years that have passed since the annexation of the peninsula to Russia, the country's authorities have managed not to solve this problem, despite the fact that everyone has been well aware of it since Soviet times....

...By the way, the lack of water supply is not the only reason for the situation, it is further complicated by significant water losses, which in Crimea reach 80% with the national average level of 20-30%, and this year there is also a drought. Water supply restrictions are already being introduced on the southern coast of the peninsula....

..."It looks like a real humanitarian disaster is starting in Crimea. The main news in Russia should have been broadcast everywhere, but everywhere there is silence about it (except for the Crimean media)..." commented journalist Pavel Pryanikov.

...It is the unresolved issue of water supply in Crimea, and not the sanctions of the West, that is the most serious problem associated with the return of the peninsula to Russia....

The lack of adequate attention to this issue over the past six years defies rational explanation.



Catalonian Separatism Examined Anew

OE Watch Commentary: The question of Catalonian separation from Spain returned to the front page this month, and with an interesting twist. Quim Torra is the President of Catalonia and an avowed separatist. He was elected in May 2018. During the campaign he openly displayed pro-independence symbols in his campaign advertising, which the national election board had forbidden. As reported in the first accompanying reference, the Spanish Supreme Court upheld a lower court's ruling that Torra had been disobedient, and in its decision the court stripped Torra of eligibility to continue to serve in office for the next year and a half. This means new elections will almost certainly be held within a few months. Those elections are likely to once again turn into a referendum on separation and Torra's punishment is likely to be used as a rallying call for protests.

The second accompanying reference is a useful review of the Catalonian separatism issue. It uses the Spanish King's travels as a vehicle to express the significance of events in terms of Spanish identity. The King of Spain (Philip VI or 'Felipe Juan Pablo Alfonso de Todos los Santos de Borbón y Grecia') is the official head of state and living symbol of Spanish unity and political coexistence among the various autonomously governed entities within the Spanish republic, some of those entities being more autonomous than others. In what the article's author calls an unprecedented move, the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, has forbidden the King to travel to Catalonia. The order is quite a significant symbolic accommodation to the Catalonian separatists and a slight to the Monarchy. As our past reporting has noted, Catalonia is a significant and complex European hotspot. (See: "Catalonia Not Well," *OE Watch* December 2019; "Iberia Culture War," *OE Watch*, June 2019; "Spain and Catalonia," *OE Watch*, August 2018; "Is Catalonia an Irregular Warfare Battleground?" *OE Watch*, May 2018; "Catalonia: Police Rebellion Deflates," *OE Watch*, December 2017.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Joaquim 'Quim' Torra, ex-President of Catalonia
(photo circa 2015).

Source: Omnium Cultural, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quim_Torra_2015_Foto_%C3%92mnium_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Quim_Torra_2015_Foto_%C3%92mnium_(cropped).jpg)

“...sentenced the still President of the Generalitat, Quim Torra, to a year and a half of disqualification...”

Source: “El Tribunal Supremo inhabilita a Torra por desobediencia (The Supreme Court disqualifies Torra for disobedience),” *ABC*, 28 September 2020. https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-tribunal-supremo-inhabilita-torra-desobediencia-202009281303_noticia.html

“The criminal chamber of the Supreme Court agreed this Monday to confirm the sentence of the Catalonian Superior Court of Justice which this past December sentenced the still President of the Generalitat, Quim Torra, to a year and a half of disqualification to hold elected public office...”

“Only a couple of hours after the notification of the decision, the Catalonian Superior Court has ordered its execution with a resolution according to which ‘the disqualification for the government position that he currently holds is effective immediately.’”

“...Pedro Sánchez...has prohibited the king from traveling to Barcelona...”

Source: “El Rey, solo ante el separatismo (The King, alone against the separatism),” *ABC*, 26 September 2020. https://www.abc.es/espana/casa-real/abci-solo-ante-separatismo-202009262033_noticia.html

“Ten years ago, the king could stroll peacefully down the streets of Gerona/ ABC was witness to of one such stroll on 11 December 2009, when he toured the historic center of the city...the separatists had not yet destroyed coexistence ...The last amiable act between the King and the Catalonian authorities was lived the 25th of July 2017. That day Barcelona celebrated its 92nd anniversary and Puigdemont [separatist], who became the president of the Generalitat [Catalonian government] and Ada Colau, who became the mayor of the city, posed smiling together with Don Felipe [the King]. But it was all a farse...Neither the slights of the president of the Generalitat, nor the threats of radicals, nor the violence on the streets had ever been able to deter the presence of the King in this Spanish territory. However, it has been Pedro Sanchez [current Spanish Prime Minister and President of the Administration] who, in an unprecedented decision, has prohibited the king from traveling to Barcelona. For the first time during the democracy, the president of the administration has sold out the royal crown...”



China's Push for Key Military Innovations Heats Up as Tensions Rise

OE Watch Commentary: China has been feeling the heat of competition in military technologies, prompting a recent push to master transformative technologies. Transformative technologies include 5G, big data, blockchain, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. According to *South China Morning Post*, an official journal of the People's Liberation Army was urging China to speed up innovation so that it can become self-reliant in key technologies. The article seems to attribute the new push in innovation to rising confrontation between the United States and China, especially over the disputed South China Sea. It quoted the PLA news source as stating that “only the innovators can win military confrontations.”

According to Song Zhongping, a Hong Kong-based military commentator, while China has poured money into technological development, it continues to lag behind other major countries in a number of ways. For example, in the semiconductor industry, China “cannot produce good quality chips and can only rely on imported ones.” This reportedly has created a bottleneck in China's development of more sophisticated military technologies. Song went on to explain that China has no other choice but to build a more advanced military because if a country is not strong enough, it cannot be self-reliant and this puts national security at risk. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Faced with rivals, China has no other choice but to build a more advanced military.”

Source: “China Must Become Self Reliant in Key Technology to Be Secure, Says Military Newspaper,” *South China Morning Post*, 6 October 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3104367/china-must-become-self-reliant-key-technology-be-secure-says>

An official Chinese military newspaper has urged the country to speed up innovation and become self-reliant in key technology.

The article, headlined “Gain superiority with innovation” and published by the PLA's China National Defence News, said China should speed up the development of strategic, forward-looking and transformative technologies.

The article named 5G, big data, blockchain, artificial intelligence and quantum computing as examples of key technologies to master and said “no matter how difficult it is, we must face the hurdles, try to surpass other nations, and level up the contribution of technological innovation to the military and combat capabilities build-up”.

“A new round of scientific and technological revolution is speeding up around the world, new technologies continue to make breakthroughs ... and have profoundly changed the development and evolution of military and war patterns,” it said, adding “only the innovators can win military confrontations”.

“Despite China having made impressive progressive in hi-tech weapons like hypersonic drones, China's technological foundation is still relatively weak. Take the semiconductor industry for example, China cannot produce good-quality chips and can only rely on imported ones. This is also a bottleneck for China to develop more sophisticated military technologies,” said Song.

“If a nation's military is not strong enough and cannot be self-reliant, the country's national security and developmental interests would be put at risk. Faced with rivals, China has no other choice but to build a more advanced military,” said Song.



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 Launches Another Gaofen Satellite: Potential Military Applications

OE Watch Commentary: About a decade ago, China kicked off a project to launch a series of high-resolution earth observation satellites known as “Gaofen.” These satellites provide optical satellite imagery of the earth. What this means is that they capture high resolution images of both visible colors and infrared bands. According to the highlighted article, published in *South China Morning Post*, this makes them ideal for many civilian purposes, including monitoring pollution and environment, estimating agricultural yields, forecasting weather and disasters, and detecting minerals.

According to the article, however, while the satellites’ ability to take infrared ray images is ideal for civilian applications, they have also been used recently to track the flight of “a fighter jet, thought to be an F-22 (stealth tactical fighter)... .” The article goes on to explain that stealth jets might be able to avoid radar detection. However, equipment such as the higher-resolution cameras found in the Gaofen, and advanced identification and tracking capabilities made possible through artificial intelligence, “could serve as an important support to air defense radars.” China is said to have already launched over 20 satellites since 2013. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“If equipped with higher-resolution cameras and advanced identification and tracking capabilities thanks to artificial intelligence, [Gaofen] satellites could serve as an important support to air defence radars.”

Source: “China is Sending More of Its Gaofen Satellites into Space. Here’s Why,” *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3105209/china-sending-more-its-gaofen-satellites-space-heres-why>

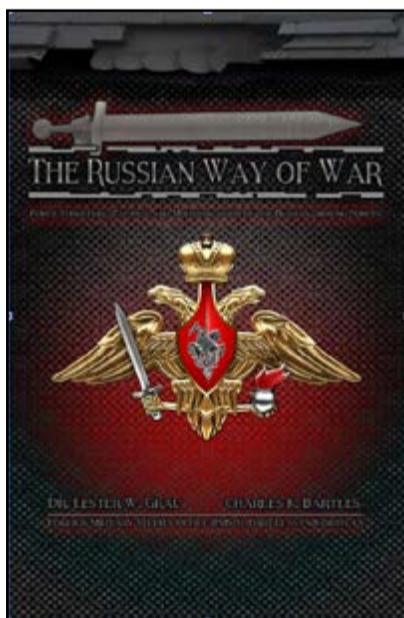
“Gaofen” is a Chinese abbreviation of “high resolution”, which refers to the High Resolution Earth Observation Satellite programme.

China began the project in 2010 and has launched more than 20 satellites, over half of them in the past two years.

These satellites observe and take photos of the Earth, including some infrared ray images, which can be used for many civilian purposes, including monitoring pollution and environment, estimating agricultural yields, forecasting weather and disasters, and detecting minerals.

There are also military applications for the satellites. Last month, China released a video captured by the Jilin-1 Gaofen-3 satellite, in which it continuously tracked the flight of a fighter jet, thought to be an F-22, the most advanced American stealth fighter.

Stealth jets are designed to avoid radar detection, but are visible by optical observation. If equipped with higher-resolution cameras and advanced identification and tracking capabilities thanks to artificial intelligence, these satellites could serve as an important support to air defence radars.



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.

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A Look At the Chinese Effort to Lure Top Tier AI Experts... Including Chinese Experts

OE Watch Commentary: The following article, published in *South China Morning Post*, explains that in striving to become a global leader in artificial intelligence (AI) over the next decade, Beijing is trying to attract global talent, particularly its own. Zhu Songchun, a highly regarded, award-winning academician and researcher is the latest top-tier expert to return to China. He is considered an expert in computer vision, cognitive science, and other interdisciplinary studies. In his new role, Zhu will be leading the newly established Institute for Artificial Intelligence at the University of Peking, a major research university ranked as one of the top academic institutions in China.

Zhu had graduated from the University of Science and Technology of China in Anhui province before heading to Harvard University where he received both his Masters of Science and his PhD. In 2002, after a short stint at Stanford and Ohio State Universities, he settled in at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). At UCLA Zhu was a professor of statistics and computer science and director of the Center for Vision, Cognition, Learning and Autonomy, according to the second source, published in *IEEE Xplore*.

China has drawn thousands of top experts through a number of nationally funded programs. Programs such as the One-Hundred, One-Thousand, and Ten Thousand Talents schemes began to emerge in the 1990s. These programs are intended to build a multi-level and multi-channel system of fostering talents for economic development in the new millennium. The incentives can be huge, as demonstrated by a recent recruitment notice put out by the University of Science and Technology Beijing. The third source cited is an excerpt from that advertisement. It states that the Chinese government will provide 1 million RMB (nearly \$150,000 USD) for living allowances for any qualified candidate. The university will provide a minimum annual salary of 800,000 RMB (approximately \$118,578 USD). They further sweeten the deal with 5 to 10 million RMB (\$741,114 to \$1,482,228 USD) in start-up capital.

There is no mention of what drew Zhu back to China after spending more than two decades in the United States, where he built up an impressive portfolio. However, it is evident that China is determined to get more top tier AI experts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“(Beijing will) strive to become a global leader in AI innovation in the coming decade and try to attract global talent as well as nurture local experts.”

Source: “Artificial Intelligence Expert Zhu Songchun to Return to China from US,” *South China Morning Post*, 29 September 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3103543/artificial-intelligence-expert-zhu-songchun-return-china-us>

A leading Chinese artificial intelligence researcher in the US has returned to China as Beijing strives to become a global leader in the field.

Professor Zhu Songchun, an award-winning expert in computer vision at the University of California at Los Angeles, has joined Peking University to lead its Institute for Artificial Intelligence, the university said in a statement last Friday.

The university said it was working with Beijing city and the central government to set up a new and separate AI research institute in collaboration with other leading Chinese universities. Zhu will be involved in the setting up of the Beijing Institute for General Artificial Intelligence, but the statement did not give further details.

According to a study earlier this year by MarcoPolo, a US think tank affiliated with the Paulson Institute in Chicago, China is the largest global source of top-tier AI talent. However, 88 per cent of those who completed graduate studies in the US have chosen to stay and work there, helping America lead the way in the field.

But as the technological war between the US and China unfolded, Washington heightened its scrutiny of Chinese researchers and stepped up its visa controls, casting a shadow on global flow of AI talent into the US, the MarcoPolo study concluded.

Beijing’s deputy mayor Sui Zhenjiang recently told a forum that the capital city would strive to become a global leader in AI innovation in the coming decade and try to attract global talent as well as nurture local experts.



Continued: A Look at the Chinese Effort to Lure Top Tier AI Experts... Including Chinese Experts

Source: “Song-Chun Zhu,” *IEEE Explore*, accessed 13 October 2020. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/author/37086082126>

Song-Chun Zhu received the PhD degree from Harvard University, in 1996. He is currently professor of statistics and computer science with UCLA, and director of the Center for Vision, Cognition, Learning and Autonomy (VCLA). He has published more than 200 papers in computer vision, statistical modeling, learning, cognition, and visual arts. In recent years, his interest has also extended to cognitive robotics, robot autonomy, situated dialogues, and commonsense reasoning. He received a number of honors, including the Helmholtz Test-of-time award in ICCV 2013, the Aggarwal prize from the Int’l Association of Pattern Recognition in 2008, the David Marr Prize in 2003 with Z. Tu et al., twice Marr Prize honorary nominations with Y. Wu et al. in 1999 for texture modeling and 2007 for object modeling respectively. He received the Sloan Fellowship in 2001, a US NSF Career Award in 2001, and an US ONR Young Investigator Award in 2001. He is a fellow of the IEEE since 2011, and served as general co-chair for CVPR 2012.

Source: “Senior Talents and Excellent Young Faculty at Home and Abroad,” USTB Website, May 2019. <https://en.ustb.edu.cn/admissions/undergraduate/talent/11304843.htm>

Eminent scientists and/or engineers, such as CAS members, CAE members, awardees of The Recruitment Program for Innovative Talents (Long Term) and awardees of The Ten Thousand Talent Program.

- a. The Chinese government provides 1 million RMB (tax-free) living allowance (one-off payment) for awardees of the Recruitment Program for Innovative Talents (Long Term), and maximum 1 million RMB special support for awardees of The Ten Thousand Talent Program.*
- b. USTB provides a minimum annual payment of 800,000 RMB (before tax), with normal teaching and research subsidies, various bonus, and allowances from subordinated departments, institutes and schools.*
- c. Housing subsidies will be granted accordingly.*
- d. USTB provides 5-10 million RMB start-up capital for science and engineering research, and 1-3 million RMB for Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences research.*

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>





PLA Fields New Rapid-Assembly Camp System

OE Watch Commentary: In July 2020, the PLA announced that it had adopted a new rapid-assembly system developed by the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF), an organization under the Central Military Commission established in 2016 to improve logistic capabilities at the strategic and theater level.

The system is intended to provide integrated field support for a battalion-sized force and includes command, dining storage, and other modules but is flexible depending on requirements. As detailed in the excerpted article, the system also includes improved power generation and water systems.

The field camp system also includes improvements to force protection and is designed to be more easily concealed and resistant to strikes. Accompanying images indicate this includes the use of fillable barriers similar to Hesco barriers to rapidly create a perimeter fence and protect command buildings or generators.

More importantly, this system is part of a major theme in official media coverage of the PLA, improved logistical flexibility, rapid transport capability, and integration of new technologies. This system would likely help support a rapid surge in troop numbers to one of China's remote borders that continue to be a source of tensions with its neighbors.

At the tactical level, two exercises in September showcased how the PLA is experimenting with UAVs to improve logistic capabilities. In one case, a support group under the Qinghai-Tibet Depot tested delivering hot meals and water to troops manning sensitive border positions from a position in the rear using drones. In a separate exercise in September, a unit under the Guilin Joint Logistics Support Center tested using two- and six-rotor remote control vehicles to resupply units in the field. After receiving a call for additional ammunition or medical supplies to a grid location over the radio network, the drones would be loaded and dispatched. While the technology appears rudimentary, as technology improves (consider, for example, commercially available drones that can automatically recognize and follow you), these could become a real capability to rapidly provide troops on the front line with necessary supplies.

China's geography complicates logistics. The East is densely populated and has a well-developed transportation infrastructure. The Western half of the country has a fraction of the population, tall mountains (including the Himalayas), and less infrastructure. Moreover, China has expanded its footprint abroad with rising involvement in peacekeeping missions and a base in Djibouti. Taken together, development of improved logistical capabilities at the strategic, campaign and tactical levels will impact the PLA's ability to deploy and fight effectively within its own borders or, should the need arise, abroad. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



“The camp can be quickly completed in a short period of time, providing integrated support for a battalion-size force.”

Source: “我军首个快装式野营支援保障系统投入使用 (Chinese Military's First Rapid-Assembly Field Support System Enters Service),” *PLA Daily*, 25 July 2020. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-07/25/content_266868.htm

In the summer of 2020, following the guidance of the Central Military Commission Logistics Support Department [军委后勤保障部], the PLA formally adopted a rapid-deployment outpost support system developed by the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force (JLSF).

The system is light, made up of simple structures, and can be set up quickly, and is mainly used in cases where there is not a pre-existing base structure. The system makes use of modern advancements in industrial and modular design so that living quarters, meeting rooms, canteens, etc., can be rapidly assembled or inflated. The camp can be quickly completed in a short period of time, providing integrated support for a battalion-size force.

In order to meet the requirements of forces in the field and improve the living conditions of personnel, the JLSF, in cooperation with other services, departments, and civilian organizations, has developed a number of improvements and innovations, including improved water filtration and quiet mobile power generators.

The next step for the JLSF is to continue to work with the Military Academy of Sciences and other scientific research institutions to continue to optimize and improve the system's camouflage protection, counter-strike, and other functional modules, and develop clear use cases, force composition, support processes, and related standards. The goal is to use the system to speed the development of strategic and campaign-level support, force building, and force generation.

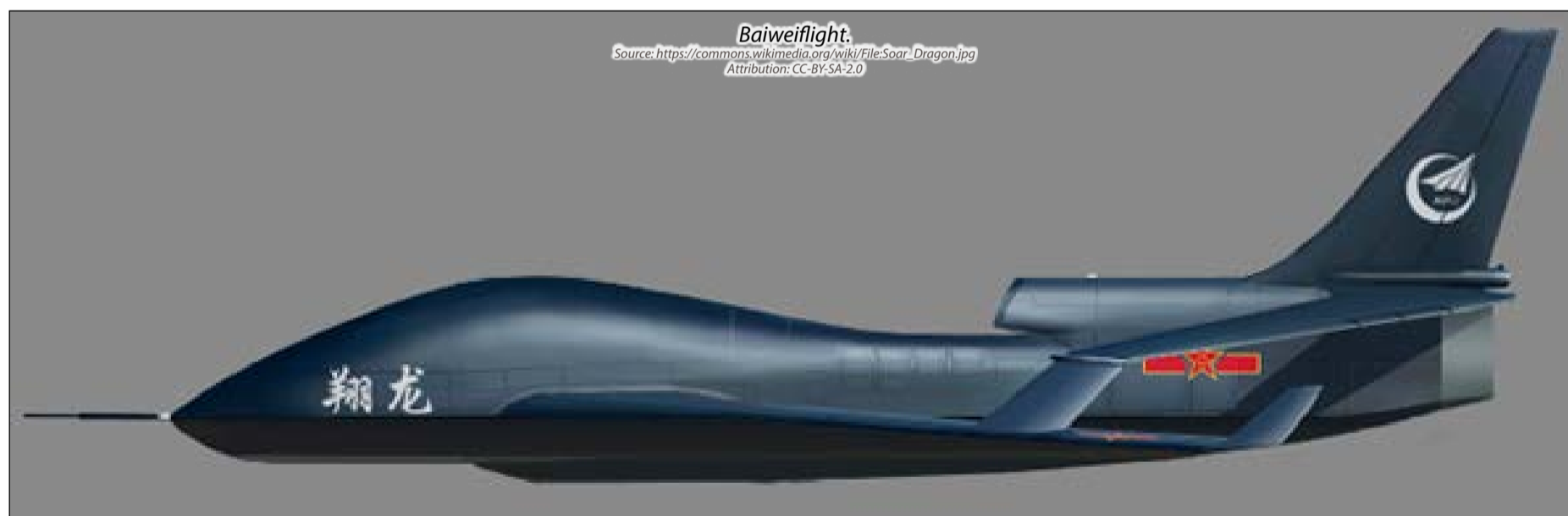


China: Employing UAVs in Intelligentized Air Operations

OE Watch Commentary: Artificial intelligence is viewed by the Chinese as a growing force that will change the form of war, and Chinese military analysts are looking more closely at “intelligentized” operations. For example, in the following article excerpt, published in *People’s Daily*, the authors explain that unmanned air combat operations will create foreseeable qualitative changes in future “intelligentized” air operations. They go on to outline five different ways unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can be used to enhance air power. In the first method, described as “air mobile operations,” UAVs can be dispatched in advance to conduct forward penetration under more volatile situations. Second, in “air block operations at close quarters,” UAVs get into the combat mix to collect and distribute real-time intelligence and target information. This provides an all-around situational awareness about the battlefield. Third, in “air block operations,” manned aircraft remain outside of firepower range and covertly command UAVs to perform the different combat tasks. Fourth, in “operation to seek air supremacy,” UAVs, through their comprehensive capabilities, protect manned aircraft. This allows the manned aircraft to focus on the overall battlefield situation. Finally, in “strategic air attack,” the UAV’s endurance, lower detectability, and ultra-long range raid capabilities significantly improve an aircraft’s penetration and survivability in wartime.

The authors argue that in order to develop UAV technology, existing technology first needs to be improved, more high-end talent needs to be trained, and technical difficulties need to be overcome. They believe that China’s UAV industry is bound to be on the rise. They argue that UAVs will benefit the military sector and possibly even the civilian sector. Finally, they conclude that artificial intelligence will be the key driver to the success of UAV combat capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“...UAV intelligent coordinated air operation will not only bring great revolutionary changes to the methods of air operations in the future, but also impact and disrupt the methods of operations for aviation forces.”



Source: “智能化战争下的空中无人作战 (Unmanned Air Combat Operations Under Intelligentization,” *People’s Daily*, 15 September 2020. <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0915/c1011-31861929.html>

As a foreseeable brand-new combat force and an effective channel for the development of system-of-systems operations, the UAV intelligent coordinated air operation will not only bring great revolutionary changes to the methods of air operations in the future, but also impact and disrupt the methods of operations for aviation forces.

The employment of air power in operations mainly includes five methods of operations, namely, air mobile operation, air support operation at close quarters, air block operation, operation to seek air supremacy, and strategic air attack operation.

... As a key technology identified in the future of unmanned combat aircraft, artificial intelligence will become the foremost disruptive technology in the next step of development. Once a breakthrough is made, the intelligent coordination, intelligent mission, and intelligent flight capability of unmanned combat aircraft will become a reality and the main force in future air operations.

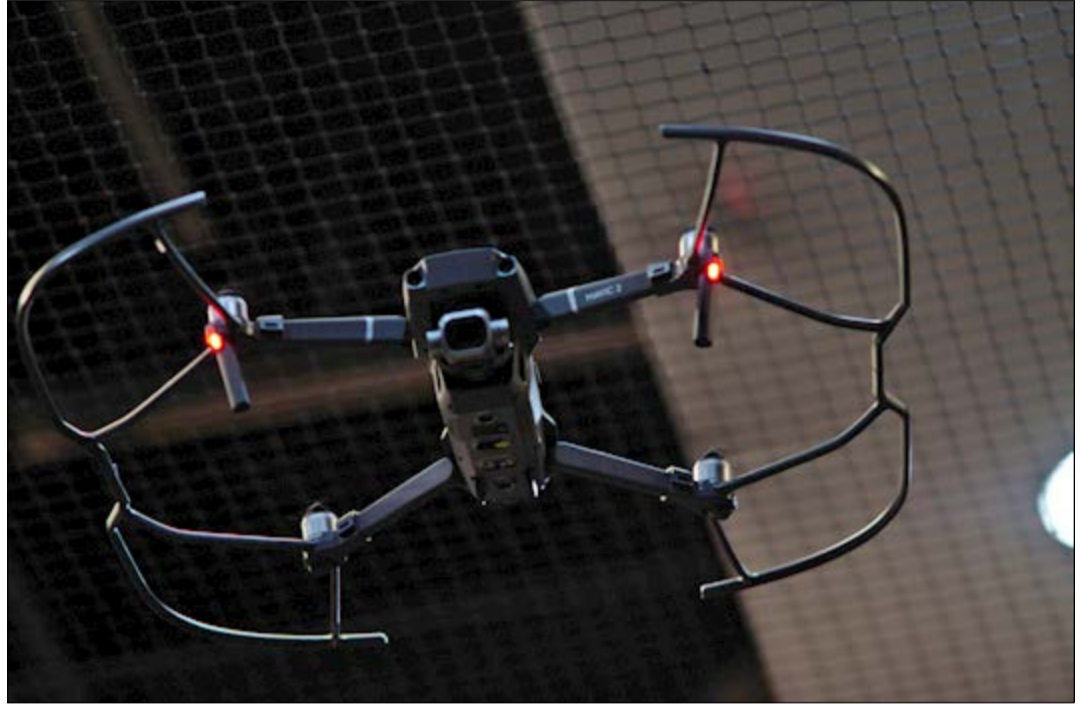
... With China’s S&T development and the continuous enhancement of China’s national defense strength, China’s UAV industry is bound to be on the rise. UAVs can not only be used in the military sector, but also will show its might in the civilian sector.

In the long run, artificial intelligence will become an important driver of UAV combat capability.



A Chinese Perspective on Intelligent Warfare and Future Urban Operations

OE Watch Commentary: As the source publication points out, Chinese military thinkers are imagining how cutting-edge technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and the internet will shape future combat operations. Chinese publications frequently refer to the next stage of warfare as “intelligent warfare”, a deepening of the integration of sensors and communication networks from “informationized warfare” in which human and machine intelligence are combined to operate across platforms, domains, and environments. One of the theorists imagining how these technologies will change warfare is Wu Mingxi, who recently published a book, *Intelligent Wars*, which covers not only AI but also other technologies that are developing in parallel and which will converge to have an even greater effect.



DJI UAV.

Source: Thomas Vogt via Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/DJI_UAV_%2843139863710%29.jpg Attribution: CC BY-SA

Trained as an engineer, Wu has worked on cutting edge technologies in the Chinese state armaments development system and defense industry for around 30 years, including

positions in the Central Military Commission’s General Armament Department, as Secretary-General of Chinese arms company NORINCO’s S&T committee, and as a technical expert for the Chinese Central Military Commission’s Equipment Development Department and S&T Committee.

The translated excerpt below is from an interview with Wu in the popular magazine *Ordnance Knowledge*, in which he describes how some of these emerging technologies may play out in urban operations.

The global trend in urbanization is leading to larger and larger cities, and as noted by Wu, they will remain the focal point of conflicts. China, of course, ranks first globally in terms of the total population with over 1.4 billion people. It not only has some of the largest megacities (cities with over 10 million inhabitants) but also over 100 cities with more than 1 million inhabitants. For context, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. had just ten cities with populations of over 1 million inhabitants in 2015.

Technological shifts will alter how conflicts play out in these areas. In particular, operations in non-physical domains, including psychological warfare, public opinion, and collection of information, will take on increased significance. Avoiding civilian casualties will require precision operations, but the proliferation of sensors will make this mode of conflict much more dangerous and require human-machine teaming to clear complex, three-dimensional urban environments.

While Wu is imaging the future, there are some indications that the PLA is already working on man-machine teaming. PLA army aviation units in northeast China, for example, have already begun testing attack helicopter-UAV teaming to improve situational awareness and help overcome the difficulties of operating in built-up environments (See: “PLA Tests Armed Helicopter/UAV Integration,” *OE Watch*, August 2019). Aerial reconnaissance drones are now commonly used at every level, from massive strategic UAVs to hand-launched drones deployed at the platoon level. The Chinese defense industry is rapidly improving the individual soldier systems available for PLA ground forces and developing exoskeletons to further enhance their capabilities. But as noted by Wu, entirely new concepts of operations will be needed to tie these capabilities together to and adapt to dense urban environments.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“At the tactical level, future urban operations will very likely be based on three-dimensional, precision operations with human operators in command but dominated by unmanned systems connected by a network information system..”

-- Wu Mingxi



Continued: A Chinese Perspective on Intelligent Warfare and Future Urban Operations

Source: “大数据、城市、灰色与智能化作战——吴明曦研究员谈智能化战争 (Big Data, Urban, Gray, and Intelligentized Operations—Researcher Wu Mingxi Discusses Intelligent Warfare),” Ordnance Knowledge [兵器知识], May 2020, 14-19.

Interviewer: “The book devoted a chapter to the analysis of future urban operations. Judging from the news, it seems like urban warfare has indeed become very common from Iraq to Syria. Why is urban warfare so common?”

Wu: “Cities are concentrated places for human civilization, and they are bound to become important targets and the focus of all kinds of military confrontations. Especially with the development of informationized warfare, the boundaries between the front lines and rear areas have become increasingly blurred. The U.S. military believes that ‘war under conditions of informatization means to seizing cities rather than attacking hilltops.’

The city is the most complex battlefield, with densely concentrated buildings, vertical and horizontal streets and pathways, and numerous targets. Military targets, civilian targets, above-ground targets, underground targets, fixed targets, mobile targets, equipment and facilities, and other hard targets, as well as ‘soft targets’ such as key figures and social organizations. Relying on intelligent technology and intelligentized military [forces] to solve the complex problems in urban warfare is a relatively good approach.”

...

Interviewer: “What are the effects of dense urban buildings, vertical and horizontal blocks, and complex social environment on combat operations? What problems does intelligentization mainly solve?”

Wu: “...To deal with the characteristics of cities, new theories of operations, concepts and methods should be put forward to enhance combat capabilities, especially light of [factors including] full environmental awareness, precision targeting, and strikes, enhanced command capability, control of operational risk, the need to reduce collateral damage, prevention crises of public opinion and adapt to social changes, etc.”

...

Reporter: “Is competition for control of the physical domain of urban areas still important? Are there other requirements for ‘intelligentized’ [warfare]?”

Wu: “Physical domain operations in urban centers are still the core and focus of competition in the era of intelligentization. But judging from the trend of ‘civilized warfare,’ future urban operations in the physical domain should not include indiscriminate bombing.

At the tactical level, future urban operations will very likely be based on three-dimensional, precision operations with human operators in command but dominated by unmanned systems connected by a network information system, requiring higher levels of intelligentization and facing greater demands. Take offensive operations as an example. First, using information on targets and the situational gathered beforehand, distributed swarms of low- and medium-altitude UAVs, etc. would carry out accurate targeting and strikes in urban neighborhoods. Unmanned ground platforms (commanded from manned platforms in the rear) would then be used as the main force to make breakthroughs and provide targeting. Relying on accompanying strike systems at the front and rear, combined aerial reconnaissance and three-dimensional precision strikes could then be carried out against armored ground targets and concealed positions and snipers. At the same time, mixed manned-unmanned special operations teams and the individual soldier systems, using an ‘unmanned systems in front, personnel behind’ posture, could carry out coordinated operations to search and clear buildings, buildings, underground parking lots, underground tunnels, subways, etc., and eliminate blind spots.”

Reporter: “In addition to competing in the physical domain, are virtual and cross-domain combat operations also important in urban operations? What are the focus points for intelligentization?”

Wu: “Future urban operations represent a shift from a traditional mode of combat where attacks in the physical domain are the focus to a new mode of combat where virtual and physical space are fused, and psychological attacks are more prominent, and collateral damage is low. This will be reflected in all stages of conflict (pre-conflict, during, immediately after and in peacetime) and will mainly include perceptions and cognitive confrontation [认知对抗], control of public opinion and intervention, surveillance of key targets and crowds, electronic deception and interference, ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ regional blockades and isolation, and post-conflict defense and counter-terrorism and other tasks such as management of critical infrastructure.”



A Chinese Scholar's Analysis on Border Clashes with India

OE Watch Commentary: In July, the Chinese academic journal *Modern International Relations* published the excerpted article in Chinese-language, which the Eurasian System Science Research Association posted on its website on 7 September. The article, which presents the views of Hu Shisheng, who is affiliated with China's Ministry of State Security, assesses India's "behavior logic" during India's recent deadly confrontations with China along their mutual Himalayan border.

The article asserts that India seeks absolute security on its border with China, which is impossible because it would require China to then be in a situation of absolute insecurity. It attributes India's position to its reliance on the colonial-era borders set by the British and India's continuation of the colonial system. Thus, the article states that to avoid a zero-sum game with China on the border, India needs to accept the current status quo and cease its "forward policy" along the border.

There is also a hint of pessimism from Hu Shisheng on prospects for peace. For example, Shisheng is skeptical of the Indian government's conservative turn, which has squeezed liberals out of power whose business interests made them more accommodating in India's relations with China. Hindu nationalism, according to Shisheng's article, also causes leading Indian politicians to attempt to appear as strongmen and take positions against China to rally popular support. In addition, the article insinuates that the Indian government's coronavirus lockdown negatively impacted Indians' livelihoods and the clashes with China at the border helped distract attention from that.

In the conclusion, the article expresses a desire for the world's two most populous countries to unite. However, it assesses that India's obeisance to an international order led by the United States leads India to be hostile towards China. The article does not assess Chinese policy or strategy or note what China can do to restore harmonious relations with India. It, therefore, places blame for the border clashes on India, which is unsurprising considering the author is a scholar associated with the Chinese government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



甜水海兵站.

Source: Eric Feng, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E7%94%9C%E6%B0%B4%E6%B5%B7%E5%85%B5%E7%AB%99.jpg>
Attribution: CC x 2.0

“The so-called ‘absolute security’ of one party will inevitably constitute ‘absolute insecurity’ to the other party.”

Source: “印度对华示强外交的行为逻辑 (The Behavioral Logic of India's Diplomacy to China).” *essra.org.cn*, 7 September 2020, <https://www.essra.org.cn/view-1000-1116.aspx>

The conflict in the Galwan Valley between India and China sunk the relationship between the two countries to their lowest point since the 1962 border war. The international community, which does not know the truth, expresses sympathy to India, and US political leaders even took the opportunity to succumb to the heat, including frequently criticizing the “China threat” and publicly supporting India.

As early as the Nehru period, thanks to the benefits of the terrain and inheritance of the British Empire's colonial heritage, New Delhi implemented the “forward policy” with great fanfare, and “self-corrected” after the Sino-Indian border in accordance with its own security needs. After Prime Minister Modi came to power, the Indian Border Forces focused their efforts on advancing the “forward policy” in the western section of the Sino-Indian border. This is also the main reason why the border confrontation between the two countries primarily occurred in the western section after Modi took office.

Under the joint promotion of right-wing organizations, Hindu populism has prevailed. Since the Modi government came to power, conservative forces have quickly squeezed the space of liberals traditionally dominated by diplomatic and business elites after they gained political power.

Just when the Modi government was suffering from a lack of effective measures to deal with domestic riots, the outbreak of the new coronavirus epidemic suddenly relieved him, allowing him to quickly resolve the domestic political turmoil in a short period of time by “locking down.” However, the pandemic prevention and control measures quickly brought down people's livelihoods.



Cracks in the Avengers Initiative...or...The feasibility of Cooperation Between the SCO, CSTO and CIS

OE Watch Commentary: Several governments are member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The accompanying excerpted articles report on potential closer cooperation between the three organizations and while the common members and goals of each organization might appear to be close, the articles provide a look at how cooperation has actually played out in one area. (Note: when the articles mention the CIS, it could be referencing the Council of Defense Ministers, the body within the CIS that coordinates defense cooperation).

The article from *Fergana Agency*, a Moscow-based, Russian-language news website with a focus on Central Asia, reported in early September that the ministries of defense of the three organizations planned to “carry out the first joint exercise to fight terrorism at the end of September” and that it was set to be a “part of the Kavkaz-2020 maneuvers.” The article

also notes how the “heads of the defense ministries of the SCO, CIS and CSTO also discussed possible measures for mutual assistance and to build capabilities to fight biological threats.” It did not specify if the threats included the coronavirus.

The article from the online version of Russian-language newspaper *Kommersant* reports on the Kavkaz-2020 exercise and how “Russia invited six countries to participate in the Kavkaz-2020 military exercises – Armenia, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Pakistan and Iran” and how “earlier, Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu reported plans that nine countries will participate.” The article mentions how “representatives from Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka” attended as observers. The article brings up how “India refused to participate in the exercises” and that “according to the official version, because of the coronavirus.” However, the articles notes how “local media sources claim it is because of China’s participation in the exercises.” While it has not been confirmed why the Indian government chose not to take part in Kavkaz-2020, there have been questions as to how well India could work alongside Pakistan and China in the SCO. This is in addition to how well Armenia (a CSTO and CIS member) and Azerbaijan (a CIS member) would cooperate, as it was reported that Azerbaijan cancelled its participation in Kavkaz-2020 and sent observers instead. In any case, future cooperation between the three organizations might come up again, but the level of participation in Kavkaz-2020 provided a look at how it could play out. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Heads of state of member states at the 2018 summit in Qingdao, Shandong, China.
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation_-_media/File:SCO_summit_\(2018-06-10\)_1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation_-_media/File:SCO_summit_(2018-06-10)_1.jpg)
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“At the meeting, the heads of the defense ministries of the SCO, CIS and CSTO also discussed possible measures for mutual assistance and to build capabilities to fight biological threats”

Source: “ШОС, СНГ и ОДКБ впервые проведут совместные антитеррористические учения (The SCO, CIS and CSTO will carry out the first joint counterterrorism exercise),” *Fergana Agency*, 4 September 2020. <https://fergana.agency/news/120974/>

The Ministries of Defense of the states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will carry out the first joint exercise to fight terrorism at the end of September of this year...

The exercise will be held as part of the Kavkaz-2020 maneuvers...The format of the exercise is not yet known.

At the meeting, the heads of the defense ministries of the SCO, CIS and CSTO also discussed possible measures for mutual assistance and to build capabilities to fight biological threats...

Source: “Число стран—участниц учений «Кавказ-2020» в России снизилось с девяти до шести (The number of countries – participants of the exercise “Kavkaz-2020 in Russian decreased from nine to six),” *Kommersant*, 14 September 2020. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4491779>

Russia invited six countries to participate in the Kavkaz-2020 military exercises – Armenia, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Pakistan and Iran. Representatives of six more states will come as observers. Earlier, Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu reported plans that nine countries will participate...

The observers will include representatives from Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka...It is also known that India refused to participate in the exercises. According to the official version, because of the coronavirus. Local media sources claim it is because of China’s participation in the exercises...



India's Push for Border Roads

OE Watch Commentary: The government of India has widely discussed plans to purchase new weapons and equipment in response to the dispute with China over the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which intensified in May of this year (see: “The Indian Army’s Shopping List,” *OE Watch*, September 2020). The accompanying excerpted article reports on another aspect of the Indian government’s plans to deal with the situation on the LAC and it shows how infrastructure will play a role in any future response to incidents amid reports that a few weapons acquisitions have fallen through or have been delayed.

The article comes from *The Print*, an English-language news website in India, and it reports on how the Indian government “is planning to expand the motorable network along the India-China border by building two new roads — one connecting Pooh in Himachal Pradesh to Chumar in Ladakh, and the other linking Harsil in Uttarakhand to Karcham in Himachal Pradesh” and that in addition to these roads, the government “stepped up work on an alternate road being built to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), where India’s highest airstrip is located, in eastern Ladakh.” The article goes on to note how “the two new roads are not part of the 73 India-China Border Roads (ICBRs) planned for brisk movement of troops and weapons — a project already under way.”



Road sign from BRO's Himank project in Ladakh, India.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sign_in_Ladakh_02.jpg
 Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

The article provides a brief explanation of how the new roads (between Pooh and Chumar and between Harsil and Karcham) “will provide additional flexibility to the deployment of troops along the LAC and also allow a faster switching of their locations.” The article also includes a statement from a government official, who said “the faster construction of the alternate route to DBO remains the government’s top priority” and that “in case there is an attack on the vital logistics supply route to DBO (the existing road), this route will be away from the direct enemy line of sight and delay detection of troops and logistics movement.”

The article also highlights issues with the Border Roads Organization (BRO), including delays in construction. It mentions that “while the BRO earlier had been questioned repeatedly over the inordinate delays in the construction of the identified border roads, government officials said the pace has increased substantially in the last few years” and how the BRO “built close to 10 bridges last year on the roads in eastern Ladakh alone,” before the most recent incidents with China took place this year. Ultimately, the Indian government appears to be pushing to build up better roads near the LAC as it continues to work out the logistics of deployments to the region and alongside acquisition efforts.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Under the India-China Border Roads (ICBR) programme conceptualised in the late 1990s by the China Study Group — and subsequently cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security for construction in 1999 — a total of 73 roads measuring 4,643 km had to be constructed along the China border”



Continued: India's Push for Border Roads

Source: “Modi govt’s infra push along China border — 2 new roads, alternate route to Daulat Beg Oldie,” *The Print*, 15 September 2020.

The Narendra Modi government is planning to expand the motorable network along the India-China border by building two new roads — one connecting Pooh in Himachal Pradesh to Chumar in Ladakh, and the other linking Harsil in Uttarakhand to Karcham in Himachal Pradesh.

It has also stepped up work on an alternate road being built to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), where India’s highest airstrip is located, in eastern Ladakh...The Border Roads Organisation (BRO), under the Ministry of Defence, will be constructing all three roads.

The two new roads are not part of the 73 India-China Border Roads (ICBRs) planned for brisk movement of troops and weapons — a project already under way.

Government sources told ThePrint that both roads will be around 150-km long, and that construction would be a tedious task given that it would involve cutting through multiple passes...

...They will provide additional flexibility to the deployment of troops along the LAC and also allow a faster switching of their locations. At present, it takes nearly 20 hours by road to traverse the 720-km long distance between Pooh and Chumar. Harsil and Karcham are separated by nearly 450 km, a distance that takes over 16 hours to cover.

Pooh is a strategically important town located just 18 km by road from the LAC, while a key military post lies at Chumar along the LAC, south east of Pangong Tso...Harsil and Karcham are about 52 and 26 km, respectively, from the border with China...

A second senior government official told ThePrint that the faster construction of the alternate route to DBO remains the government’s top priority.

This alternate road in Eastern Ladakh will start from Sassoma along the Nubra river to the vital locations of Sasser La and Gapshan before joining the existing route to DBO...

Sasser La is situated at a height of nearly 18,000 ft — even higher than the Khardung La pass — while Gapshan is located in a valley that subsequently joins the existing DS-DBO road.

The existing Durbuk-Shyok-DBO road — which runs literally along the LAC — is 255-km long and is currently the only road to reach DBO. It has 47 bridges on it...

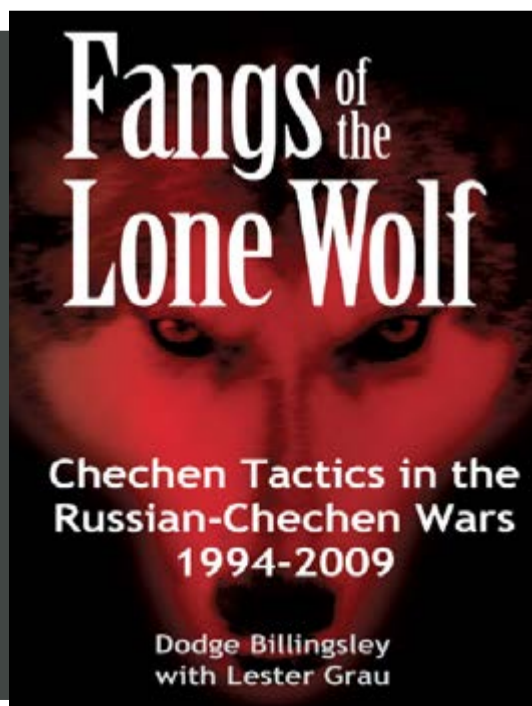
“In case there is an attack on the vital logistics supply route to DBO (the existing road), this route will be away from the direct enemy line of sight and delay detection of troops and logistics movement,” the official said...

The BRO has been constructing multiple road networks and strengthening the existing road infrastructure connecting the forward locations of Pangong Tso and others through eastern Ladakh...

While the BRO earlier had been questioned repeatedly over the inordinate delays in the construction of the identified border roads, government officials said the pace has increased substantially in the last few years.

The BRO built close to 10 bridges last year on the roads in eastern Ladakh alone.

Under the India-China Border Roads (ICBR) programme conceptualised in the late 1990s by the China Study Group — and subsequently cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security for construction in 1999 — a total of 73 roads measuring 4,643 km had to be constructed along the China border...



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>



Philippines Military Sees Imminent End to Communist Insurgency

OE Watch Commentary: The Philippines has been battling Communist insurgents in the New People’s Army (NPA) for decades. Despite the end of the Cold War, the NPA has remained resilient. However, the excerpted 27 September article by one of the largest Filipino media networks, *abs-cbn.com*, reported that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) is predicting an end to the insurgency by 2022.

According to the article, one reason for the AFP’s prediction is that it has calculated that 169 Communist rebels have been killed while nearly 5,000 have surrendered in 2020. If these numbers are correct, then the NPA has been significantly diminished. Moreover, the article notes that the NPA leader Mario Caraig and a deputy, who had both masterminded several attacks on police officers, were also killed. In addition, the article notes that eight NPA fronts have been dismantled in the past year, including in three different parts of the country: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The article states that the military’s partnership with police has also been a main cause of recent successes. They have not only coordinated together, but they also have established training programs to reintegrate former NPA rebels into society. According to the article, 2,105 of the 3,742 former rebels who have joined the training program have also earned employment placements through another Department of Labour livelihood program.

Although the article presents an optimistic portrayal of the AFP’s counter-insurgency efforts against the NPA, it also notes that COVID-19 may cause budgetary dilemmas. For example, government officials are contemplating whether an anti-insurgency task force should still receive more funds than the embattled labour and tourism agencies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Philippine Army Seal. Department of National Defense, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Army, as approved by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philippine_Army_Seal.svg Attribution: CC x 2.0

“The chief of the Philippine military expressed confidence that the Communist insurgency in the country will be wiped out by 2022.”

Source: “AFP ‘confident’ of defeating NPAs by 2022, claims ‘neutralizing’ over 5,000 rebels, supporters this year,” *abs-cbn.com*, 27 September 2020. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/27/20/afp-confident-of-defeating-npas-by-2022-claims-neutralizing-over-5000-rebels-supporters-this-year>

The chief of the Philippine military expressed confidence that the Communist insurgency in the country will be wiped out by 2022 as the organization said 169 Communist rebels have been killed so far this year while 4,777 have surrendered. Among those killed were alleged New People’s Army (NPA) leader Mario Caraig and a certain Mitchel Fat, allegedly the mastermind in the killing of 4 policemen in Ayungon, Negros Oriental in July 2019, the military statement said.

Authorities also dismantled 8 guerilla fronts this year, of which 3 were from Luzon, 2 were from Visayas, and 3 were from Mindanao. The military and police concluded the National Joint Peace and Security Coordinating Center meeting. In the meantime, some 3,742 former communist rebels have graduated from training programs of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, while 2,105 received aid from the labor department’s livelihood program.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon earlier questioned the P16-billion budget next year for an anti-insurgency task force as it is higher than allocations for the labor and the tourism agencies, which were crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Indonesia Releases Terrorism Recidivism Report

OE Watch Commentary: On 5 September, the Indonesian-language website, *pikiran-rakyat.com*, which means “thought of the people” and reports on current news in Indonesia, examined a report on terrorism recidivism in Indonesia. The excerpted article discussed the report, which was published by the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC). The report found that from 2002 until May 2020 there were 94 Indonesians who were released from prison but committed a second terrorism offense after their release. This reflected 11.4 percent of 825 male and female terrorism convicts during that period.

The article acknowledged that these findings indicate most terrorists will not commit a second offense, which is a positive sign. However, it quotes IPAC, which argued that further research is still needed to understand the factors that caused 11.4 percent of Indonesian terrorists to re-engage with terrorist organizations. According to the article, there is also a need to further study interventions that prevented terrorists who might have otherwise re-engaged. The article mentions reasons for terrorist re-engagement include radicalism in prisons, militant family members who come into contact with released terrorists, and the strength of the ideologies of extremist groups.

Lastly, the article asserts the above factors may not be the only factors involved in terrorist recidivism, but they are the ones deserving special attention. Future research remains to determine what other factors may be involved. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Bali Bombing Mural, Sardaka.
 Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:\(1\)Bali_Bombing_Mural.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:(1)Bali_Bombing_Mural.jpg)
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“High levels of radicalism in prisons, militant spouses or family members who come into close contact after release, and the pervasiveness of strong ideological movements, are among the factors for recidivism.”

Source: “IPAC Merasa Aneh pada Indonesia Terkait 11 Persen Narapidana Teroris Dibebaskan, Ada Apa? (IPAC feels concerned about Indonesia regarding 11 percent of terrorist convicts being released, what’s wrong?),” *mantrasukabumi.pikiran-rakyat.com*, 5 September 2020. <https://mantrasukabumi.pikiran-rakyat.com/nasional/pr-20721321/ipac-merasa-aneh-pada-indonesia-terkait-11-persen-narapidana-teroris-dibebaskan-ada-apa>

At least 94 Indonesian convicted terrorists who were released from prison from 2002 to May 2020 committed a second terror-related crime, a report by the country’s Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) has found. Repeat offenders, including 825 male and female terrorism convicts who were released, brought the recidivism rate to 11.4 percent.

“But the challenge is to understand the factors that can tempt individuals to re-engage with extremist organizations and program interventions that might get in their way,” said IPAC. High levels of radicalism in prisons, militant spouses or family members who come into close contact after release, and the pervasiveness of strong ideological movements, are among the factors for recidivism, according to the IPAC report.



Turkey to Mass-Produce Anti-Ship Missile

OE Watch Commentary: Atmaca, Turkey's first domestically manufactured anti-ship missile developed by Roketsan is in the final stages of being mass-produced. The Atmaca's resistance to countermeasures, target update, re-attacks and task cancellation capabilities, and advanced routing system enables it to be effective against fixed and moving targets. It is a subsonic and sea-skimming guided missile. The accompanying articles from Turkish sources highlight the importance of this missile being added to the Turkish Navy's inventory.

The first article provides the specifications of the Atmaca. Turkey's Defense Industries President Ismail Demir stated that "Atmaca was test-fired with its own internal inertial navigation unit, onboard" and before mass-production one more test-fire will be carried out. The article notes that the missile has superior capabilities against electronic warfare. In 2018 Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries signed a contract with the Turkish defense company Roketsan to mass-produce Atmaca. Turkey hopes this domestically manufactured missile will replace US-made Harpoon anti-ship missiles. Atmaca missiles have a range of 155 miles and Turkey intends to use them on corvettes built under Turkey's National Ship (MILGEM) project and other ships and submarines. Atmaca will use the KTJ-3200 engine domestically developed by Turkey's Kale Group. Turkish defense contractor ASELSAN produced the launch control systems for the missile and the Turkish Naval Research Center Command developed the fire control system.

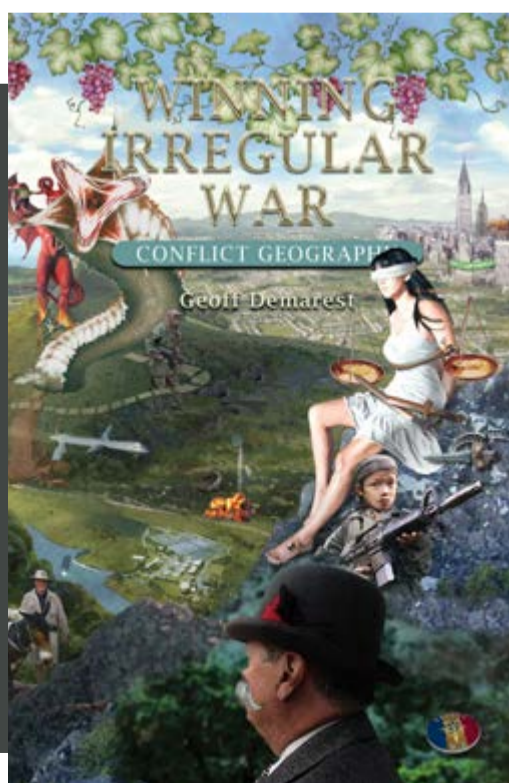
The second article analyzes what it means for the Turkish Navy to acquire this anti-ship missile, especially when confronting Turkey's adversaries in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. The article states that currently the Turkish and Greek navies have similar power capabilities. However, with its longer range, Atmaca will give Turkey an edge and tilt the balance of power in Turkey's favor. Turkey also is working on a land-to-land version of Atmaca cruise missiles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Atmaca Missile test firing in Sinop.

Source: Şahin 1 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Atmaca_F%C3%BCzesi_Sinop%27da_ger%C3%A7ekle%C5%9Fen_deneme_at%C4%B1%C5%9F%C4%B1.png CC-BY-SA-4.0

““Turkey is currently in the final stages of testing its first domestically manufactured maritime missile, Atmaca...” Ismail Demir, the President of Turkey’s Defense Industries”



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/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



Continued: Turkey to Mass-Produce Anti-Ship Missile

Source: “Turkey’s 1st maritime missile Atmaca nears mass production,” *Daily Sabah*, 29 September 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/turkeys-1st-maritime-missile-atmaca-nears-mass-production>

Turkey is currently in the final stages of testing its first domestically manufactured maritime missile, Atmaca, Defense Industries Presidency (SSB) Chairperson Ismail Demir said...

He added that one last test was left for the anti-ship missile before it entered mass production.

Demir said on Twitter that Atmaca was test-fired with its own internal inertial navigation unit onboard, independent of the GPS. The test was successful and that the final test will be carried out with a warhead. This development also showcased the missile’s superior capability against electronic warfare (EW).

The development of the anti-ship missile began in 2009 and a deal for mass production was signed between the SSB and manufacturer Roketsan in 2018.

Roketsan Chairperson Murat İkinci earlier said Atmaca cruise missile, which has a 250-kilometer (155-mile) range, is a national product that includes technology only available to a very few countries.

İkinci also said... “We are also working on the land-to-land version of the Atmaca cruise missile,” he said, adding that such technologies are set to make a serious contribution to the strength and expertise of Turkey’s defense forces and industry.

...

The Atmaca missiles are expected to be used on corvettes built under Turkey’s National Ship (MILGEM) project, along with other vessels and submarines that currently use Harpoon missiles...

The country’s first maritime missile will be powered with a fully indigenous KTJ-3200 engine, developed by Kale Group, the head of the SSB confirmed earlier.

Atmaca is a modern, all-weather guided missile. It is effective against fixed and moving targets thanks to its resistance to countermeasures, target update, reattack and task cancelation capabilities, as well as an advanced, 3D routing system.

The launch control systems for the missile were produced by the Turkish defense giant ASELSAN, while the fire control system was developed by the Turkish Naval Research Center Command (ArMerKom)...

Source: “Atmaca’nın menzili dengeleri değiştirecek (Atmaca’s range will change the balances),” *TRT Haber*, 28 September 2020. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/atmacanin-menzili-dengeleri-degistirecek-519186.html>

Defense Industry Researcher Anil Sahin, stated that the Atmaca is an extremely important product for Turkey, after entering the inventory, this missile will open a new page in the Aegean and Mediterranean...

Şahin noted that currently as NATO members both Turkey and Greece have similar [weapons] systems... the two countries have almost identical frigates... the same goes for anti-ship missiles...

However, Atmaca... has successfully carried out [a strike] for 220 kilometers recently. If you could have a missile that goes almost twice as far as the one you already have, the existing balance of power will reset and you will be the main player...



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The Role of Turkey's Drones in Military Engagements Abroad



Bayraktar TB2 on Runway.

Source: Bayhaluk via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Runway.jpg CC-BY-SA-4.0

its UAV industry has been part of this drive to boost self-reliance. While the first accompanying article highlights the role Turkish drones played in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the second article reports on the possibility of Turkey's largest-ever drone export to Ukraine.

The first article states that Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 a medium-altitude long-range tactical unmanned drone, along with Roketsan-manufactured smart munitions has dominated the battlefield in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, even more important to the success of Azerbaijan has been Turkey's war plans which it developed through its military operations in Syria and Libya. According to the author of the first excerpted article, this concept of war was developed by the Turkish Armed Forces in partnership with the defense industry. As the author states, this concept of war is to destroy surface-to-air-missile systems with UAVs to suppress the enemy's air defense. The article notes that the successful utilization of Turkish TB2 drones by Azerbaijan is significant for the future of Turkey's defense industry and specifically for its drone industry. This could possibly pave the way for Azerbaijan purchasing other Turkish drones currently under development.

According to the second article, Ukraine plans to purchase up to 48 Bayraktar TB2 UAVs. However, it is unclear whether these UAVs will be manufactured with a joint venture in Ukraine or in Turkey. The article notes that since this is a large purchase, they might be manufactured in Ukraine to reduce the cost. In 2019 Ukraine signed an agreement with TB2 drone's manufacturer Baykar Makina to purchase 12 TB2 UAVs and by the end of 2019, Baykar Makina delivered six of them to Ukraine alongside three ground control station systems and equipment. However, the article states that this additional purchase is likely to depend on the resistance of TB2 to severe climatic conditions in Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“...the open-source intelligence data available [shows] Ankara transferred Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs and Roketsan-made smart ammunition (possibly MAM-L) to Baku.”

Source: “Türk Harp Yaklaşımında ‘Dronizasyon’ Dönemi: Azerbaycan, Türkiye’nin Orta Doğu’daki SIHA Konseptlerini Kafkasya’ya Taşidi (Dronization Period in Turkish Approach to War: Azerbaijan carried Turkey’s UAVs concept in the Middle East to Caucasus),” *Edam.org*, 28 September 2020. <https://edam.org.tr/turk-harp-yaklasiminda-dronizasyon-donemi-azerbaycan-turkiyenin-orta-dogudaki-siha-konseptlerini-kafkasyaya-tasidi/>

As it can be seen from the open-source intelligence data available, Ankara transferred Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs and Roketsan-made smart ammunition (possibly MAM-L) to Baku. As a matter of fact, the news report indicated that Azerbaijan was interested in the purchase of Bayraktar TB-2 in the summer of 2020. These systems, which stand out with their thousands of hours of combat flight experience and their performance against Russian-made weapons in hybrid warfields such as Syria and Libya, seem to have achieved results against Armenia.

However, the skills transfer from Turkey to Azerbaijan is not limited to weapons systems. What is even more important here is that a concept successfully implemented by the Turkish Armed Forces in Syria and Libya is being implemented by the Azerbaijani Armed Forces in the Caucasus.

This concept results from Turkish Armed Forces and Turkey’s rising defense industry cooperation by destroying surface-to-air missile systems with armed unmanned systems to suppress the enemy’s air defenses.

Source: “Ukraine considers buying 48 Bayraktar TB2 drones from Turkey,” *Daily Sabah*, 06 October 2020. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/ukraine-considers-buying-48-bayraktar-tb2-drones-from-turkey>

Kyiv plans to purchase up to 48 Bayraktar Tactical Block 2 (TB2) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), Turkey’s domestically made combat drones, a Ukrainian news site reported, citing the export and import body operating under Ukraine’s defense industry umbrella institution. The purchase of such a large number of UAVs raises questions of whether the vehicles would be jointly produced or produced locally inside Ukraine...

Additionally, in line with the accelerating cooperation between Kyiv and Ankara and as part of the mutual visits by high-level officials from both countries, the defense industry has always been at the forefront of the relationship. Turkish drone magnate Baykar Makina, owner of the Bayraktar TB2 drones that have been dubbed game-changers since the TSK’s first use of them on the field, would be no exception to such cooperation.

[Vadym Nozdri, the CEO of Ukrspetsexport] said that they are now testing the already purchased drone’s resistance to more severe climatic conditions which will be a determining factor in additional purchases.



Air Defense Systems Hunter: Drone Swarms and Loitering Munitions

OE Watch Commentary: As seen in the recent conflicts in Syria, Libya, and now in the Caucasus, drone swarms can be a difficult scenario to defend against, even for the most capable air defense systems, including Russia's Pantsir anti-aircraft system. An important component of drone swarms are loitering munitions designed to destroy the radars of air defense systems, given their difficulty in being detected by air defense system radars.

In the conflict in the Caucasus, loitering munitions (or kamikaze drones as they are also called) have attracted attention as a game-changer on the battlefield. Israeli-made "Harop" loitering munitions used by Azerbaijan proved critical in destroying Armenian armored vehicles, artillery and air defense systems. The accompanying passage describes how the Harop works, and how future versions of it may be used in future conflicts.

The passage is from a *YouTube* video by a Turkish defense expert, who describes these loitering munitions as an "air defense system hunter." He explains that loitering munitions are used in conjunction with unmanned aircraft systems (UASs) and armed UASs, which drop them to follow a specific target, and when commanded, strikes at its target. He details how the "Harop" ammunition used in this conflict is actually a newer, more advanced version of the Israeli-made "Harpy" from the 1990s. Harpy has a 500 km range, flies quietly to follow radar signals, and has a basic, 35 horsepower engine. Because it flies at low altitude, and has a short wing, it can evade SAMs and radar detection systems designed to target larger aircraft. While it loiters, it obtains radar information and transfers this information to the command center, from which it gets orders to strike the radars of the air defense system it is hunting. Once an air defense system's radar is destroyed, the entire air defense system becomes obsolete. The expert recalls that in 2007, Israel came up with the more advanced "Harop" (which was initially named the Harpy 2) that was seen in the Caucasus.

The expert claims that the Harop is an even more effective system, which can loiter for six hours and has a range of 1000 km, allowing it to lock in on the radar of the air defense system it is hunting and then, to shoot. It is said that the air defense systems have only three seconds before they can see that they are about to get struck, giving no time to prevent the impending attack. While these loitering munitions appear simple, they have a significant software and testing process to enable the capability of precision attacks. The expert further notes that future uses of this will likely entail larger concentration of these, perhaps used as squadrons, within drone squadron attacks, becoming a game-changer in a conflict. (Also see: Mad Scientist Webinar, "The Future of Unmanned Aerial Systems Webinar: Messrs. Kallenborn, Bendett, & Goldstein," *YouTube*, 17 September 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G37DeNoi4k&t=2216s>). **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



IAI Harop Pas 2013.

Source: Julian Herzog via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IAI_Harop_PAS_2013_01.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“It is said that the air defense systems have only three seconds before they can see that they are about to get struck, giving no time to prevent the impending attack.”

Source: "Hava Savunma Sistemi Avcısı: HARPY ve HAROP (HARPY and HAROP: Air Defense System Hunters)," *TolgaOzbekcom/YouTube*, 2 October 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOX1PRsYTjw&feature=youtu.be>

...These loitering munitions are basically "air defense system hunters." Loitering munitions are used in conjunction with UASs and armed UASs, which drop them to follow a certain target, and when commanded, strikes at its target. The "Harop" ammunition used in this conflict is actually a newer, more advanced version of the Israeli-made "Harpy" from the 1990s. Harpy has a 500 km range, flies quietly to follow radar signals, and has a basic, 35 horsepower engine. Because it flies at low altitude, and has a short wing, it is not detected by radars. While it loiters, it obtains radar information and transfers this information to the command center, from which it gets orders to strike the radars of the air defense system it is hunting. Once an air defense system's radar is destroyed, the entire air defense system becomes obsolete. The expert discusses that in 2007, Israel came up with the more advanced "Harop" (which was initially named the Harpy 2) that was seen in the Caucasus.

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The Threat of Salafism in Turkey

OE Watch Commentary: In early September 2020, Turkish Intelligence and counterterrorism police arrested Mahmut Özden, a top figure within the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in a Turkish city close to the Syrian border. The Turkish government made the arrest after intelligence showed that Özden had constantly received orders from both Iraq and Syria to carry out attacks in Turkey. Over the last few years, several reports have indicated increased radicalization and Salafi networks throughout Turkey. As the excerpted articles claim, the increasing activities and armament of Salafi groups in Turkey pose a national security threat to Turkey.

According to the first article, reports indicate that “private gun ownership among radical Islamist Salafi groups” is posing an increasing threat to Turkey’s national security. The article states that after recent rumors on Turkish television regarding the armament of Salafi groups and their preparation for a civil war in Turkey, the Turkish Interior Ministry launched an investigation into the matter. However, the article points out that concern over the presence of Salafi groups is not new. In 2015, the Turkish National Intelligence Organization’s (MIT) report indicated that “Salafi ideology has around 20,000 supporters in Turkey.” The article quotes a Turkish theologian saying Syrian, Afghani, and Pakistani refugees have played a significant role in the spread of Salafi ideology among Turkish citizens.

The article notes that specifically after the failed coup attempt in 2016, the Turkish government’s leniency on individual armament has exacerbated the situation further. Additionally, in 2018, the government increased the maximum number of bullets each authorized weapon can have from 200 to 1,000 which makes the situation more concerning. However, considering how much Salafi ideology has gained ground in Turkey, the government has realized the seriousness of private armament among extremist groups and is taking action to mitigate the situation.

The second article revisits the MIT’s 2015 report to analyze the threat that extremist groups pose to Turkish national security in light of the recent discussions surrounding the activities of extremist Salafi groups in Turkey. The article states that some of the radical Salafi groups are ideologically close to al-Qaeda and some are close to ISIS. They have established separate organizational structures, mosques, and publishing houses to attract new recruits and radicalize those who sympathize with extremist ideology. They are active in cyberspace. Some have even established separate underground schools for their children. The article surmises that while the Turkish government’s surveillance might be preventing Salafi groups from resorting to violence now, that does not mean they will not use violence in Turkish cities in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Mourning after the 2015 Ankara bombings.

Source: Yıldız Yazıcıoğlu via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mourning_after_the_2015_Ankara_bombings_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mourning_after_the_2015_Ankara_bombings_(1).jpg) CC-PD-Mark | PD VOA

“Reports of increasing private gun ownership among radical Islamist Salafi groups have shed light on the risks of rising Salafism and individual armament in Turkey.”



Continued: The Threat of Salafism in Turkey

Source: “Are Turkey’s Salafi groups taking up arms?,” *Al-Monitor*, 05 October 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/turkey-syria-are-salafi-groups-taking-up-arms-civil-war.html>

Reports of increasing private gun ownership among radical Islamist Salafi groups have shed light on the risks of rising Salafism and individual armament in Turkey.

Concern surrounding the armament of Salafi groups was set off when Muslim televangelist Ahmet Mahmut Unlu — also known as the Cloaked Ahmet Hodja — made headlines in early September when he warned Turkish authorities about the rising armament among Salafi associations...

Unlu’s warning prompted Turkey’s Interior Ministry to launch an investigation on the matter, with Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu saying Oct. 1 that Unlu would soon be invited to testify in front of officials about his claims.

...

According to a 2015 intelligence report, Salafi ideology has around 20,000 supporters in Turkey.

...

According to Cemil Kilic, a theologian, Syrian, Afghan and Pakistan refugees with Salafi beliefs have played a role in Salafi ideology gaining ground in Turkey. Kilic said Salafism has especially grown stronger in Turkey’s predominantly Kurdish southeast and eastern regions, with Salafi organizations reaching out to locals by opening teahouses, associations and foundations.

...

The government leniency on civilian armament began after the July 15 coup attempt. Ersin Kalaycioglu, political science professor at Istanbul’s Sabanci University, noted that dozens of weapons distributed to civilians in the post-coup attempt period were never returned. “Probably the government is now informed about how serious the situation has become and felt the need to take action,” he told Al-Monitor.

The government’s recent efforts to curb private armament among radical groups are a step in the right direction, Kalaycioglu added: “This is the first time the government is addressing this issue.” Security expert Abdullah Agar said private armament among any organized group poses risks for internal security...

...

He said all of these organizations are prone to manipulation through tactical actions, which in turn could lead to civil unrest, as happened in Iraq in 2006 when al-Qaeda attacked a Shiite mosque in Samarra.

Agar also said arms smuggling to Turkey from Syria and Iraq has reached serious levels. “Those smugglers are manipulating the people in the direction of their interests,” he said.

Whether the government investigation over private armament will be limited to Salafi organizations or not remains an open question.

Source: İsmail Saymaz, “MIT’in Selefi Raporu (MIT’s Salafism Report),” *sozcu.com.tr*, 24 September 2020. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/yazarlar/ismail-saymaz/mitin-selefi-raporu-6051588/>

According to the secret level letter from MIT dated September 7, 2015, the four years proceeding 2011, 2,750 people went to fight in Syria and Iraq.

...

“The number of radical elements going to the conflict zone from Turkey are almost at the level of those going from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Jordan... [they] pose a threat to our country.”

...

Turkish Salafists operate in congregations in 27 cities.

Some are close to al-Qaeda, some to ISIS.

They have associations, mosques and bookstores/publishing houses.

They crowd around influential televangelists.

They use the Internet effectively.

Salafism is not a matter of belief.

It is a matter of national security.



Observers Note Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy

OE Watch Commentary: In recent years the goal of Turkish foreign policy has been to achieve short-term results with coercive measures. Rather than engaging in diplomacy, Turkey has relied on hard power and military interventions to resolve issues in its immediate surroundings such as Syria, Libya, the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. While Turkey might seem to achieve short-term results, the long-term consequences of this parochial approach to foreign policy will likely have damaging results on Turkey's relations with other nations. The accompanying article from *al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East, examines the reasons why Turkish foreign policy has become more aggressive and militarized in recent years.

The article states that the institutional capacity of Turkey's Foreign Ministry has been significantly damaged due to polarization and inconsistent policies. The article continues on to say "Ankara has come to pursue dreams of "spoiling games" by others rather than [pursuing] a foreign policy based on its economic and military capacity." It further notes that the lack of "a realistic, rational and strategic framework" has resulted in Turkey being isolated in the international arena, which leads to "revisionist military activism." However, the author notes the role of the military in managing Turkey's foreign policy goals used to be very limited.

As the article notes, external threat perceptions and domestic dynamics played a significant role in Turkey's embrace of hard power in its foreign policy. Externally, Turkey's "threat perceptions have shifted east and south, owing to growing security risks in the Eastern Mediterranean, Iraq, North Africa and Syria, and to strategic competition with Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other regional powers." Furthermore, Turkish officials still point to the lack of support from its Western allies when it perceived threats on its southern borders due to the Syrian crisis. Turkish officials also continue to maintain that their Western allies failed to show solidarity with Turkey over the 2016 failed coup attempt.

The article states that four domestic factors led to the militarization of Turkish foreign policy. First, cross-border operations generally help the Turkish president "enjoy strong popular support" and consolidate power domestically. Second, Turkish armed forces favor military deployment abroad as it benefits them financially and "provides valuable experience in joint force operations." The third factor is Turkey's "role in harmonizing ties between the military and civilian leadership, who agree on the need to enhance Turkey's military capabilities and defense industry." The success of the Turkish defense industry and the need to find international markets is the final domestic factor that plays a significant role in the militarization of Turkey's foreign policy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“Turkey’s embrace of muscular [foreign policy] is rooted in profound transformations in its external environment and domestic dynamics.”



Turkish soldiers conduct patrol on outside Manbij, Syria.

Source: VOA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_soldiers_conduct_patrol_on_outside_Manbij,_Syria.jpg CC-PD-Mark | PD VOA



Continued: Observers Note Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy

Source: “Turkey’s foreign policy becoming alarmingly militarized,” *Al-Monitor*, 22 September 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/09/turkey-libya-syria-six-problems-aggressive-foreign-policy.html>

...almost everyone in Ankara feels entitled to speak on foreign policy matters... foreign policy in Ankara today is a realm of inconsistency and confusion.

...

A grave repercussion of Erdogan’s foreign policy posture, which has come to mirror his short-tempered and polarizing style in domestic politics, is the erosion of institutional decision-making and execution on foreign policy matters. The Foreign Ministry’s institutional capacity has been seriously damaged and overly politicized, including through nepotistic appointments and promotions.

...

Since 2018, the gap between Ankara’s dreams or desires and the reality on the ground or the realpolitik has widened as well. Ankara has come to pursue dreams of “spoiling games” by others rather than a foreign policy based on its economic and military capacity... Because of its failure to develop a realistic, rational and strategic framework, Turkey has grown increasingly isolated, trying to compensate for its risky loneliness with revisionist military activism.

Until the 2010s, Ankara used only limited military force to manage a complex, multi-threat environment. Its main priority was the four-decade domestic conflict with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Diplomacy and deterrence were used to freeze rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Cyprus conflict. This began to change in the summer of 2018 when Erdogan assumed sweeping powers under a new executive presidency system.

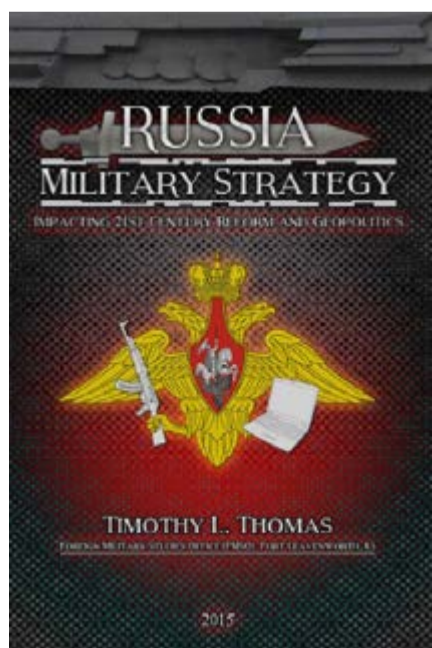
Turkey’s embrace of muscular methods is rooted in profound transformations in its external environment and domestic dynamics.

Externally, Ankara’s threat perceptions have shifted east and south, owing to growing security risks in the Eastern Mediterranean, Iraq, North Africa and Syria, and to strategic competition with Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other regional powers. Ankara was particularly unnerved by NATO’s passivity on its southern flank during the Syria crisis, which contributed to a security vacuum there. In relying on the People’s Protection Units — the PKK’s Syrian franchise — to counter the Islamic State, Western powers ignored or dismissed Turkey’s well-known concerns. Also, there is a pervasive and enduring sense among the Turkish ruling elite that the Western security block failed to adequately support Ankara during and after the coup attempt of July 2016.

A number of domestic factors have also driven the militarization of foreign policy. First, foreign policy has become a crucial plank of Ankara’s political agenda since the executive presidency system took effect. Military actions abroad enjoy strong popular support and help sustain Erdogan’s popularity. In particular, his embrace of a more nationalist discourse at home has helped consolidate his de facto coalition with the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party.

Second, military deployment abroad is popular with the armed forces themselves. It boosts morale and motivation through extra pay and promotion opportunities and provides valuable experience in joint force operations.

A third domestic driver of Turkey’s more militaristic approach is its role in harmonizing ties between the military and civilian leadership, who agree on the need to enhance Turkey’s military capabilities and defense industry. The military is more concerned with the technical dimensions of this consensus as part of a transformation and restructuring process called Vision 2033. Politicians, meanwhile, are keen to use this new capacity and energy in domestic and foreign policy. They also hope that keeping the army busy abroad will make civilian control of the military easier as the generals focus on external rather than domestic affairs. Finally, the boom in the Turkish defense industry allows Ankara to pursue a more independent strategy and display its defense systems for the purpose of international marketing.



RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

Russian military’s main tasks are to maintain the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and to ensure the Russian Federation’s defensive capability. Russia’s military heritage will assist this process tremendously. Combat readiness includes updated strategic thought, new equipment revelations, and future-war projections. Defensive capability includes not just protecting Russia’s territory, but also the security of the nation’s national interests and conduct of geopolitics. Capturing the essence of these developments is the goal of this book. In the process a few templates for understanding Russian military thought and actions are offered for further consideration and use.

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The Quds Brigade: Palestinian Militia Emerges as Key Russian Partner in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian “Quds Brigade” (“Liwa al-Quds” in Arabic, also translated into English as the “Jerusalem Brigade” and not to be confused with a similarly named group in the Gaza Strip) is a Palestinian-majority pro-government militia that has been in the spotlight recently, as attested by the accompanying excerpts from Arabic-language media. The attention stems from the Quds Brigade’s role as Russia’s strike force in its ongoing anti-ISIS campaign in the Syrian desert, which was launched last August following the killing of a senior Russian officer by an IED in eastern Syria.

The first accompanying passage, published in late August by the opposition media outlet *Syria TV*, highlights the history of the Quds Brigade. Among others, the article draws on testimony from a rebel commander in Aleppo, who identifies the Quds Brigade as “the only group formed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the regime that was able to defend the [Aleppo] airport from Free Syrian Army attacks” in 2012. As the article explains,



Syrian desert.

Source: Theklan, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Syrian_desert.jpg
Attribution: CC BY-SA (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)

the Quds Brigade comes from Nayrab, a Palestinian camp/neighborhood on the eastern edge of Aleppo, adjacent to a strategic complex housing a military airbase and Aleppo’s airport. After becoming a formal militia, with backing from both Syrian Air Force Intelligence and the IRGC, the group’s influence spread to Syria’s other Palestinian camp/neighborhoods, most importantly in Damascus (Yarmouk) and Lattakia (al-Ramel). Since then, the Quds Brigade has been deployed to Syrian flashpoints in Raqqa, Deir Ezzor and Idlib provinces; it is now said to include “fighters from various regions, including Daraa, rural Damascus, Hama, Deir Ezzor and Raqqa.” Amidst constant manpower shortages in the loyalist camp, the Quds Brigade has – according to opposition sources cited in the accompanying passage – stood out for “its ability to absorb numerous casualties due to its relatively large number of fighters, their lack of combat experience and the fact that they are given narcotic pills that affect their mental states.”

As the article from *Syria TV* recounts, the Quds Brigade garnered support from the IRGC’s Quds Force in the early stages of the Syrian conflict, thanks to its leaders’ connections with government security services and with Hezbollah, which established a presence in Aleppo after a wave of Lebanese refugees settled there following the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war. Relations between Russia and the Quds Brigade developed quickly following Moscow’s 2015 intervention and blossomed after the 2016 retaking of Aleppo from opposition forces, in which the Quds Brigades played a major role. A 2017 photo showing Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, alongside Quds Brigade leader Mohammad Saeed, likely helped cement the partnership. Since early 2019, Aleppo’s two main Palestinian neighborhoods (Nayrab and Handarat) have hosted Russian-supervised Quds Brigade training camps, from which fighters have been drawn to be the “tip of the spear” of Russian anti-ISIS operations in eastern Syria. A journalist cited in the first accompanying passage calls the brigade “a Russian proxy that can strike anywhere,” while one cited in the second one calls it “the face of Russian influence in eastern Syria.”

Initially held together by what one of the articles characterizes as Palestinian “solidarity” (‘asabiya), the Quds Brigade now enjoys what media reports describe as extensive Russian support, including the provision of training, equipment, salaries and other perks that are superior to those received by Iranian-backed militias. According to the accompanying Arabic-language media reports, in recent years the Quds Brigade has occasionally clashed with Iranian-backed forces in Aleppo province, the Syrian desert and along the Euphrates. While opposition media tends to describe the Quds Brigade as having shifted from Iranian to Russian patronage, as with much else that involves Russian-Iranian competition in Syria the devil is in the details. A commentator cited in the *Syria TV* report, for instance, describes the situation in northern Syria as follows: “The Quds Brigade can be said to have left the Iranian mantle in terms of support and training, but it has not been able to fully sever the relationship. It actually needs flexible relations given that the military and geographical weight in northern Syria favors the Iranian militias, which control 85% of territory, while Russian militias, including the Quds Brigade, control and influence only 15% of it.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...[The Quds Brigade] has become the face of Russian influence in eastern Syria, Russia’s counter to Iranian influence...”



Continued: The Quds Brigade: Palestinian Militia Emerges as Key Russian Partner in Syria

Source: لواء القدس.. ميليشيا روسية خارج حدود حلب
 “(Quds Brigade... Russian Militia Beyond Aleppo’s Borders),” *Syria TV*, 25 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y5fnmeoy>

[Mustafa Berro, commander of Aleppo’s Fastaqim Kama Umirt rebel group] noted that the Quds Brigade, which tricked the Free Syrian Army (FSA) factions and relied on “Palestinian solidarity,” was the only group formed by the IRGC and the regime that was able to defend the airport from FSA attacks... The displacement of thousands of Lebanese to Aleppo after the July 2006 war was the key to the tight relationships between [Quds Brigade leader Mohammed] Saeed and Hezbollah. Saeed was active in relief operations and in receiving displaced Lebanese, and the city became a destination for party leaders to coordinate efforts to help the Lebanese in the city. Journalist Manar Abd al-Razzaq pointed out that with the start of the demonstrations in the city of Aleppo, Air Force Intelligence assigned Saeed security tasks to control the Palestinian camps in Aleppo. With the beginning of military action, he approached the Iranians and became an arm of the Iranian Quds Force. He received logistic and military support from them and participated in several operations rooms alongside Hezbollah in Aleppo...

Mustafa Berro, the rebel group leader, said that the Quds Brigade was different from other regime militias because of its ability to absorb numerous casualties due to its relatively large number of fighters, their lack of combat experience and the fact that they are given narcotic pills that affect their mental states. This was evident in the regime’s battle to besiege the city of Aleppo, launched from the Nayrab Airbase and for which the Quds Brigade was the tip of the spear. Berro explained that the Quds Brigade relied on a tactic of attacking in waves, pushing group after group of its fighters along the offensive axis until finally being able, under heavy cover from airstrikes and artillery, to control the area... Toward the end of the Aleppo battle the brigade numbered 6,000 fighters, according to Mustafa Berro... After that, the Quds Brigade expanded to the Yarmouk Camp south of Damascus and the al-Ramel camp in the city of Lattakia, in addition to opening headquarters in the central region as a launching pad and supply center for its forces in the Syrian desert all the way to Deir Ezzor... [Journalist Khalid] al-Khattib added that since early 2019, the Quds Brigade has established two training and preparation centers under Russian supervision, one in Handarat north of Aleppo and the other in Nayrab, to the east of the city. With Russian support, more fighters have joined its ranks and their salaries have become more formalized. It is here that competition between them and the Iranian militias began, and several clashes have occurred in Aleppo’s eastern neighborhoods, in which they have lost a number of fighters... Journalist Khalid al-Khattib, who closely follows regime militias in Aleppo, believes that the Quds Brigade has today become a Russian proxy that can strike anywhere, after being supplied with all types of military equipment and growing in numbers. It participated significantly in the Idlib battle and was a pivot in the operation alongside the Tiger Forces. These days, it is the tip of the spear in operations against ISIS as well as in competition with Iranian militias in the Syrian desert, specifically the Hama and Aleppo deserts, which is to say areas between north and central Syria reaching Damascus. Al-Khattib pointed out that “The Quds Brigade can be said to have left the Iranian mantle in terms of support and training, but it has not been able to fully sever the relationship. It actually needs flexible relations given that the military and geographical weight in northern Syria favors the Iranian militias, which control 85% of territory, while Russian militias, including the Quds Brigade, control and influence only 15% of it.”

Source: المليشيات الإيرانية تنسحب.. لواء القدس يقاتل داعش وحيداً
 “(Iranian Militias Withdraw... Quds Brigade Fights ISIS Alone),” *al-Modon*, 1 September 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/yyzl9wvo>

The Quds Brigade brought hundreds of new volunteers into the battles against ISIS in the Syrian desert, after they finished training for new volunteers early and quickly joined military operations. The door to joining (volunteering in) the brigade remains open with support from the Russian forces, which have turned the Quds Brigade into the tip of the spear of their revenge military operation, called “White Desert,” against ISIS, following the killing of a senior Russian general in rural Deir Ezzor in mid-August. Hundreds of new volunteers from the Quds Brigade arrived in the Syrian desert to participate in the military operations against ISIS. The brigade’s training camps in Handarat, north of Aleppo, and Nayrab to the city’s east, dispatched a number of military convoys after the training suddenly ended, something that was repeated in the camps in Deir Ezzor, with the aim of filling the shortfall in the brigade’s ranks, which have suffered heavy losses in recent confrontations with ISIS...

The brigade provides its fighters with a \$200-dollar monthly salary, which is twice the salary that volunteer members in Iranian militias receive, in addition to perks such as protection, leave and food benefits. These factors have made it easier for the brigade to draw large numbers into its ranks since early 2020. The list of those killed in the brigade recently points to its not inconsiderable sway and presence in its heartland of Aleppo, as well as the fact that it has fighters from various regions, including Daraa, rural Damascus, Hama, Deir Ezzor and Raqqa...

Media activist Ahed Sulaibi, from Deir Ezzor, told al-Modon: “Russian support to the Quds Brigade in the desert and specifically Deir Ezzor makes it a force to be reckoned with in the area. It has become the face of Russian influence in eastern Syria, Russia’s counter to Iranian influence, which is represented by a large militia deployment along the southeastern Euphrates river, from Raqqa and Deir Ezzor all the way to Albu Kamal along the Iraqi border.” Sulaibi added that Hadi Mohammed Hadid, nicknamed “the Cameroonian,” direct the brigade’s military operations in direct coordination with Russian forces. The Central Command of the Quds Brigade is located in the Villas (al-Filat) neighborhood in the city of Deir Ezzor, and to a lesser extent in the southeastern and northwestern suburbs of al-Tebni and others, all the way to the outskirts of Ma’dan.

ISIS attacks in the Syrian desert target Russian and Iranian militias alike, but the latter succeeded in reducing its losses after redeploying and adopting the strategy of gathering forces in specific and fortified central points in the main cities and towns, rather than broad deployment of fixed and mobile groups in open areas. Meanwhile, the Quds Brigade and other Russian-backed supporting formations fell into ISIS’s trap. ISIS has had unprecedented success in its lightning attacks, which opened its appetite for a tactical shift focused on holding fortified areas bordering military sites, oil fields, and cities and towns that the brigade has turned into staging posts for its offensive operations against ISIS...



A New Arab-Israel Axis Against Iran? Where Does Saudi Arabia Stand?

OE Watch Commentary: On 13 August, Israel and the UAE signed an agreement establishing full diplomatic relations between the two countries. With this deal, the UAE became the third Arab state, after Egypt and Jordan, to fully recognize Israel. Shortly after, on 15 September, Bahrain followed suit. The accompanying passage by Middle East expert Ömer Taspınar provides insight into some of the significant implications these deals will have for Arab-Israel relations, Iran, the Palestinians and Saudi Arabia.

As the first passage discusses, the Israel-Palestinian issue will be less of a priority in the region. Countries in the region are no longer divided along where they stand on the Palestinian issue. Instead, the author writes “a new Israel-Arab axis is forming against Iran.” However, he also notes that this new axis will not be able to impact Iran much, unless Saudi Arabia joins it.

This raises the question of where Saudi Arabia stands on this issue. The author claims that the UAE and Bahrain would not have been able to sign these deals without some kind of green light from Saudi Arabia. He suggests that the Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman (MbS) may be laying the groundwork for its own deal with Israel by letting others go first. The reasons for this are twofold, he argues. First, MbS may not be ready to take such a step, given that King Salman takes the Palestinian issue very seriously, fervently calling for a two-state solution to the issue. So, MbS may not think it is the right time. Second, the religious aspect (Wahhabism) is more dominant in Saudi Arabia. The author notes that Saudi Arabia still has a conservative religious structure, as opposed to the UAE, which is more secular. The author claims that MbS wants to go slower with Israel than the others for these reasons, but in the meantime, is “using back channel diplomacy” to clarify that “Saudi Arabia wants this but is not ready yet.” Therefore he concludes that yes, Saudi Arabia will likely follow eventually.

The expert also notes an ominous possible future scenario, in which Iran uses Hamas and Hezbollah to “provoke Israel to conduct a military operation in Gaza and the West Bank.” In this scenario, Qatar would use *Al Jazeera* to fill television screens with civilian Palestinians being killed, causing the Palestinian issue to become a top priority again. He points out that Iran and Qatar have this ability together (Iran via proxy powers and Qatar via *Al Jazeera*). (Also see: “The UAE-Israel Agreement: Implications for Defense and Airspace,” *OE Watch*, October 2020.)

End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)



Flags of Israel and the UAE, together with the flag of Netanyahu, flown on Netanyahu's "Peace Bridge" August 2020, Netanya, Israel.

Source: TaBaZzz via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Netanya_HW-2_IL_UAE_Flags_20200821_113130_08.jpg, CC by SA 4.0

“... MbS may be preparing the groundwork for [normalizing relations with Israel] by letting others go first.”

Source: Rusen Cakir, Ömer Taspınar, “Transatlantik: BAE-Bahreyn-İsrail Anlaşması, Doğu Akdeniz krizinde yumuşama, & ABD başkanlık seçimleri (Transatlantic: The UAE-Bahrain-Israel Agreement, a softening in the Eastern Mediterranean crisis & the US presidential elections),” *Medyascope/YouTube*, 16 September 2020. <https://medyascope.tv/2020/09/16/transatlantik-bae-bahreyn-israil-anlasmasi-dogu-akdeniz-krizinde-yumusama-abd-baskanlik-secimleri/>

...The Israel-Palestinian issue is a secondary issue [in the Middle East] now. Iran is much more central now. A new Israel-Arab axis is forming against Iran. But as long as Saudi Arabia doesn't join this axis, this won't impact Iran much. If Saudi Arabia joins this axis, the Middle East will become more polarized.

Some might say that these countries wouldn't be able to conduct a deal like this with Israel without consent from Saudi Arabia, and that might be true. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Muhammed bin Salman (MbS) may not be ready to take such a step for Saudi Arabia yet but it does seem like they are preparing the groundwork for this by letting the others go first. But, there are also some differences between these countries and Saudi Arabia. King Salman still takes the Palestinian issue seriously. And he says he'd like to go back to the 1967 borders and to see a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian issue. So, Saudi Arabia takes this issue more seriously than Bahrain and the UAE.

Second, the religious aspect (Wahhabism) is more dominant in Saudi Arabia. They still have a conservative religious structure there; as opposed to the UAE where things are more secular, more financial, and socially different than Saudi Arabia, which is more conservative. And MbS wants to modernize and go slower with Israel than the others. It's using back channel diplomacy to say they want this but are not ready yet. MbS's message seems to be something like "I'm working on modernization, I'm moderate, I want to sit down with Israel, but the authoritarianism at home is to control the groups aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood. So, yes, Saudi Arabia may follow, but not right away.

...Iran may use non-state actors (Hamas and Hezbollah) to provoke Israel to conduct a military operation in Gaza and the West Bank. If such a scenario takes place, Qatar would use Al Jazeera to create a picture where civilian Palestinians are killed. That's the main power of Qatar. Al Jazeera is very important, they are controlled by Qatar, but act as they are objective regarding the Middle East. But the whole thing is based on criticizing Israel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. So if such a war breaks out, if Israel suddenly goes to war, this would fill the screens, and the Palestinian issue would reemerge. Qatar has this ability.



Iran Navy Soon to Field Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) continues to honor both Qods Force Chief Qassem Soleimani and Kataib Hezbollah Secretary-General Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, both of whom were killed in a 3 January 2020 drone strike on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport. In the latest iteration, as per a recent piece from *Islamic Azad University News Agency*, Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, announced that the Navy would soon take possession of the Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile, which would more than triple the range of Iranian anti-ship cruise missiles to 650 miles. General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, spoke about the progress the IRGC had made in developing anti-ship missiles, saying that the highest range missile was just 30 miles prior to the Islamic Revolution. He added that the developments in Iran’s anti-ship missiles had caused consternation outside the West. “We will bring them to their knees and we, as the representatives of the Iranian nation in the Persian Gulf, will be a guardian,” he said.



The Abu Mahdi cruise missile on display, 20 August 2020.

Source: Tasnim News, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1399/05/31/13990531122026606209987310.jpg>

How Iran will deploy the Abu Mahdi remains unclear. Its range would be overkill given the maximum width of the Persian Gulf is only 210 miles. Likewise, it is unclear whether Iranian proxies would have need for such a new missile at strategic choke points such as the Bab-el-Mandeb. That said, as the Iranian Navy develops its ports on the Gulf of Oman/Northern Indian Ocean coasts, as the article suggests, a longer-range missile would, in theory, enable the Iranian Navy to better threaten shipping far beyond its coasts. This in turn would change the operational environment because it would enable Iran to close the gap between Iran’s own missile range and the range at which adversarial carrier-borne aircraft could strike at Iran. That Iran has, until this point, been effectively defenseless against platforms operating in the northern Indian Ocean has been both Iran’s major Achilles’ heel and an enabler to those countries seeking to deter Iran from afar. The possession of the Abu Mahdi by Hezbollah could also significantly challenge shipping in the Eastern Mediterranean and be an insurance and strategic concern not only for Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, but also for Egypt as well.

As always, however, the usual disclaimer is necessary that a gap exists between the capabilities claimed by Iran and the capabilities that its missiles demonstrate in reality. Certainly, part of the reason why Iranian outlets like *Islamic Azad University News Agency* would promote the announcement of the Abu Mahdi would be to promote the mythology surrounding Muhandis and signal to those within Iran’s security apparatus that Iran remains committed to avenging Soleimani and Muhandis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The missile complex is like the long arm that guarantees the security and authority of the country.”

Source: “Mushak-e Kurz ‘Abu Mahdi’ dar Ekhtiar-e Niru-ye Darya-ye Artesh Qarar Khahad Gereft (The Abu Mahdi Cruise Missile Will be Delivered to the Navy)”, *Islamic Azad University News Agency*, 23 August 2020. <https://ana.press/fa/news/15/510088>

...Earlier this morning at an induction ceremony for the new commanders of the southern fleet, the 1st naval zone, and missile forces in Bandar Abbas, Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, said, “Our path to happiness is in following the line of the Hosseini school, and we adhere to this path from this province.” He stated that part of the promotion to command in this country is about willingness to accept the important mission of realizing the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, and he added, “Command, in addition to the surrounding facilities, brings with it hardship and losses, and assuming this responsibility must at the beginning of this commission be accompanied by certain features and characteristics....”

Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, with reference to the three major naval zones in the south of the country, including the first region of the Imamate, the second region of the Velayet, and the third of the Prophecy, and the planning for their growth and development, said, in the future, the largest naval fleet in the third region will be in Chahbahar and its bases will be centralized.

The commander of the Navy continued, “Between the end of this year and March 2021, we will expect rapid growth in the second and third [naval] regions, and these bases and regions from Khorramshahr in the westernmost point of the Persian Gulf to Pasabandar in the easternmost point of the Sea of Oman need comprehensive and wise management in order to cooperate and create the conditions of combined coordination....”

Admiral Khanzadi further referred to the plan of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces in developing the missile capability of our country’s armed forces and said, “The missile complex is like the long arm that guarantees the security and authority of the country.... In the past, our missiles were bought abroad but thanks to God and with the great efforts of the children of this country, we have been able to use capable and powerful missiles with a range of 200 miles and sea cruise missiles, and today I promise that the longest-range cruise missile in Iran named after Martyr Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandes will be given to the Navy and it will have a range of 650 miles, and this will be a game-changer. We will also acquire supersonic missiles in the future, and this is a priority for us,” he added.



Iran Unveils Intelligent Combat Robot

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Republic has long prided itself on its indigenous military industries, not only because it sees them as a symbol of Iranian power, but also because Iran's leadership sees the ability to manufacture top-tier platforms as key to maintaining independence. "Although, today we do not have F-35 fighters, our equipment is not borrowed and we are not the puppets of the big powers in the region," Brig.-Gen. Mohammad Hossein Dadras, deputy commander of the Ground Forces, said at a ceremony to unveil new technology at the Ground Forces' research center in Bandar Abbas, according to *Basij News Agency*. The experience of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War etched into the Iranian strategic psyche that they should never again become dependent on foreign powers for the spare parts or equipment needed to maintain their military.



The Hadaf-2 dual launcher at an unveiling ceremony for new army technology, 27 September 2020.

Source: BasijNews.ir https://basijnews.ir/files/fa/news/1399/7/6/2967534_247.jpg

Iranian official rhetoric often exaggerates and it is unclear how many of the new technologies Iran unveiled are anything more than prototypes or would be embraced and mass-produced by the Iranian military. Still, upgrading the capabilities of its drone fleet is consistent with recent military doctrine and Iran's own asymmetric emphases. The presence of unmanned surface vehicles in the Bab el-Mandeb suggests Iran also experiments with autonomous boats. That no photos of the Caracal robot were available raises the possibility that the robot is not as developed as the Iranian military claims. Nevertheless, even if nowhere near ready for deployment, Dadras' remarks suggest an interesting new direction for Iranian investment and development. It is unclear, however, how Iran might employ the Caracal.

In contrast to the lack of photographs of its robots, the Iranian military did release photographs of the Hadaf-2 dual rocket launcher, which reportedly can fire Labik-1 missiles simultaneously.

The ceremony described in the accompanying article came against the backdrop of the supposed delivery of almost 200 drones to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Navy on 23 September 2020, the delivery of two water-landing helicopters, and concurrent demonstrations of new vertical take-off and landing variants of the Sepehr, Shahab-2, and Hodhod-4 drones.

While the operational environment will not shift significantly with the announcement of new Iranian military technologies, the ceremony reports excerpted here suggest Iran will continue to invest in automation not only for the air and sea, but for the ground forces as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Caracal intelligent war robot... has the ability to carry light and semi-heavy weapons.”

Source: Haft Dastavard-e Jadid-e Artesh (Seven New Army Achievements) *Basijnews.ir*; 27 September 2020. <https://basijnews.ir/fa/news/9280338>

Seven New Army Achievements

According to the *Basij news agency*, the Masih [“Messiah”] rescue robot, UAV piston engines, high-frequency jump communication system, Caracal intelligent warrior robot, Ground Forces' Hadaf-2 dual-launcher, Gohar 4x4 tactical vehicle, and 40x26 upgraded vehicle were unveiled by the Ground Forces Self-Sufficiency Research and Jihad Organization. The unveiling ceremony of the defense achievements of the Research and Jihad Self-Sufficiency Organization of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held this morning at the Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization of Ground Forces in the presence of Brig.-Gen. Mohammad Hossein Dadras, deputy commander of the Ground Forces, and Brig.-Gen. [Kioumars] Heydari, commander of the Ground Forces....

Source: “Lanchir Do Favarandi va Jangjuye Hushmand Caracal Ravanmaye Shod (Dual Launcher and Caracal Intelligent Combat Robot Unveiled)” *Fars News*, 27 September 2020. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/13990706000152>

...According to the *Fars News Agency*, the features of the unveiled devices are as follows: The Caracal intelligent war robot, designed for ground combat, is very agile and has an independent suspension; With a maximum speed of 18.6 mph and an operating range of more than 1650 feet, this robot has the ability to carry light and semi-heavy weapons, as well as an intelligent remote control system, laser rangefinder and optical system.... [and] the Hadaf-2 dual launcher is the platform for the Labik-1 missile and can fire two missiles simultaneously.



The University Jihad Stands Together with the Defense Jihad

OE Watch Commentary: The excerpted article from the hardline Iranian news site *Javan* illustrates the long-established interplay between Iranian universities and the Islamic Republic's defense industry. It cites Mohammad Saeed Seif, a director-general at the Ministry of Science and Technology speaking about 1,000 university and defense projects over the past year alone. Iran's most prominent universities worked on the bulk of these projects. Beyond the excerpt, *Javan* gives several examples broken down by university: Sharif University, for example, is heavily invested in research and development of radar, offering courses in radar and electronic warfare. Its systems currently are deployed to give an overview of activities across the Persian Gulf. The Air Defense University has collaborated with the University of Tehran to construct Iran's so-called dome defense. Shahid Sattari University, meanwhile, has worked on jamming and disrupting signals from enemy drones and aircraft. The university brags about its work not only on disruptors incorporated into UAVs, but also says that it developed a mobile unit able to fit in a backpack. The Jamaran-class destroyer, meanwhile, received contributions from more than 100 different universities, according to *Javan*. Amir Kabir University, meanwhile, built the Law Enforcement Forces' drone. University laboratories and professors also helped upgrade F-15 electronic boards.



University of Tehran, Iran's flagship university (and electronic warfare research center).
Source: Borna News.ir <https://static1.borna.news/servev2/Runfokkm4500/KxuoffTghAA/اگشناد/مژ.نارهت+هگشناد>

The list is more expansive but the sheer scale of university-military collaboration suggests that Iranian universities are far less centered around pursuit of pure knowledge and much more organized around directed research in order to advance Iran's indigenous military industries. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iranian ideological commissars worked to enforce a cultural revolution on university campuses. This slowly changed the nature of universities in Iran vis-à-vis their Western counterparts with which Iranian campuses had partnership agreements prior to 1979. The presence of Basij (revolutionary paramilitary) units on campus serves to further imprint a transformative ideological agenda on Iranian universities. That Iranian defense industries are now so fully intertwined with campuses and apparently dominate science and engineering further changes the understanding of the purpose of higher education in Iran's most premier institutions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The country's universities have been the research arm of the Armed Forces....”

Source: “Jihad-e Daneshgah Hampa-ye Jihadgaran-e Defa-ye (The University Jihad Stands With Defense Jihadists),” *Javan Online*, 29 September 2020. <https://www.javanonline.ir/fa/news/1021420>

The country's universities have been the research arm of the Armed Forces from the time of the Holy Defense [Iran-Iraq War] to the height of the embargo, carrying out defense and military projects. The role of the universities alongside the armed forces is so important that the deputy coordinator of the Revolutionary Guards considers the independence of the armed forces in the construction of military equipment to be the result of self-confidence in the university. Statistics show that there were nearly a thousand projects between the university and the Ministry of Defense last year.

Ministry of Science research projects for defense uses are not a new topic. In the post-revolutionary period, the Ministry of Defense collaborated with faculty members. Certainly, any country that wants to remain independent, the first thing that is attacked is its defense sector. Defense equipment changes from year to year and relies heavily on knowledge. That is why the Ministry of Science and Technology has made great efforts in recent years to meet the needs of the defense sector in the form of independent projects.... Last year, Mohammad Saeed Seif, Director General of the Industry Relations Office of the Deputy Minister of Research and Technology of the Ministry of Science, announced about a thousand joint projects of the country's universities with the Ministry of Defense. Among these, ten institutions of higher education had the highest number of contracts. These were: Malek Ashtar University of Technology [in Isfahan], Amir Kabir University of Technology [in Tehran], Tehran University, Shahid Beheshti University [in Tehran], Sharif University [in Tehran], the [Iran University of] Science and Technology [in Tehran], Khajeh Nasir [Toosi University in Tehran], Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Tarbiat Modares University [in Tehran] and Shiraz University.



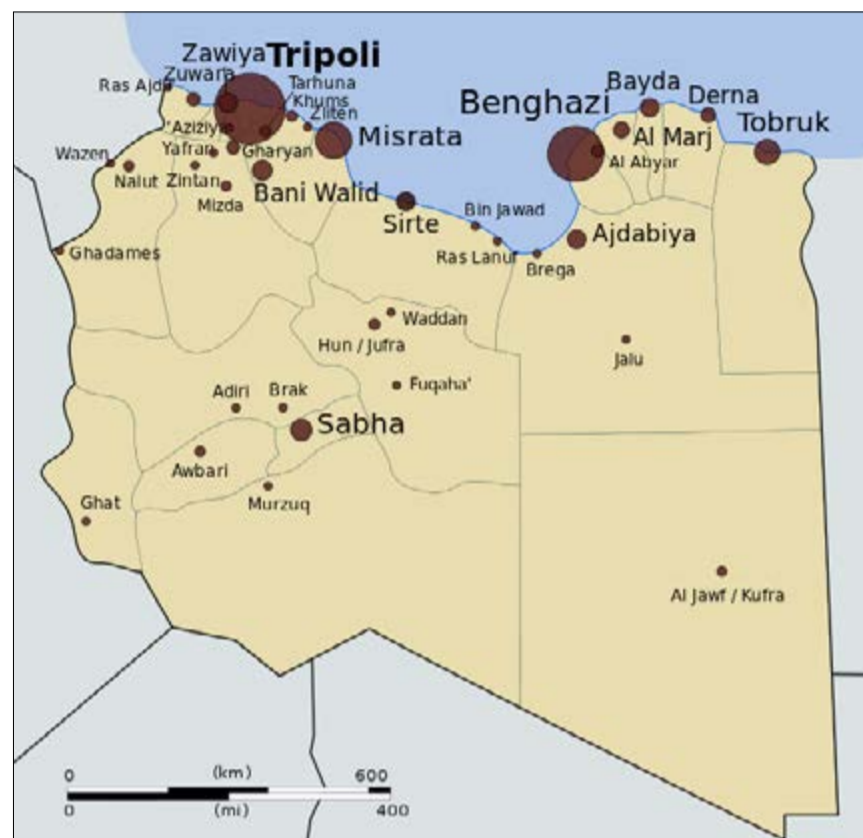
Russia Settling into Strategic 'Oil Crescent' in Libya

OE Watch Commentary: Having acquired the Tartus and Latakia bases in Syria, Russia is now further reinforcing its posture in the Mediterranean by settling into the strategic town of Sirte on the coast of Libya, according to the first three articles. As the fourth article points out, the area stretching from Sirte to the city of al-Jufra farther inland (referred to as the “Sirte-Jufra line”) is considered critical to swaying the conflict, due to the access it provides to Libya’s oil pipelines and hydrocarbon reserves.

Discussed in the first article from *Anadolu Ajansi*, Turkey’s state-run news agency, a Russian cargo plane brought Syrian fighters to Sirte in early October, in what is only the latest round of Russia deploying Syrian fighters to the area. As the second article from *The Libyan Observer* reports, in June “11 Russian cargo planes landed at the Qardabiya Base, south of Sirte, carrying mercenaries from Syria, weapons and ammunition on board.” The passage also reports that at that time, Russia deployed six anti-aircraft Pantsir air defense systems in Sirte. The third article from *Perspektif Online*, a popular Turkish news source, reports that Russia has deployed Mig-29 hunters and Su-24 attack planes to the Jufra base, claiming that this “points to a potential for conflict not seen in Libya in the post-2011 period.”

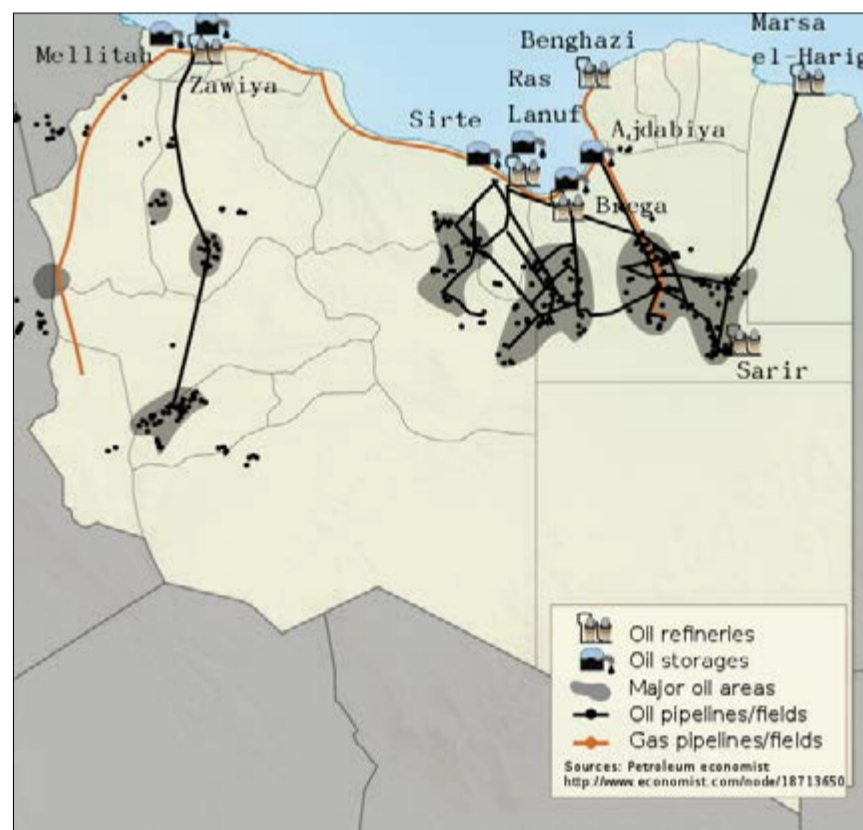
What makes Sirte so critical? As the final article from *Al Monitor*, news website with reporters from various Middle Eastern countries, notes, Sirte sits right in the middle of Libya’s coastline and is the “western gateway of the country’s oil crescent region.” It is also the route to control if Russia wants to dominate the ports of Sidra, Ras Lanuf, Marsa al-Brega and Zuwetina, “where 11 oil pipelines and three gas conduits reach the Mediterranean coast” (see map). The article notes that capturing Sirte enables the seizure of a 217 mile coastal stretch, all the way to Benghazi. This stretch is full of pipelines, refineries, terminals and storage facilities. This “oil crescent” region is also home to 60% of Libya’s hydrocarbon reserves, which is significant, given that 96% of the country’s public revenue came from hydrocarbons before the war. The author writes, “controlling the ‘oil crescent’ in a way that ensures the flow of oil could have a multiplier effect in swaying the conflict and Sirte is seen as the key to seizing the region.”

The third article provides a background of the developments that have led to the current situation in the Sirte-Jufra line. In June 2015, ISIS had taken control of Sirte, after which the Turkey-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) took control of the town in December 2016. In January 2020, forces of the Libya National Army (LNA) took control of the city. Ever since then, the city has been considered a “red line” in the conflict, due to its strategic position. GNA forces were eyeing this strategic area after their victories in the capital of Tripoli. However, in August, Egypt declared that it would use military force to prevent the GNA’s forces from advancing beyond the Sirte-Jufra line. To this end, the Egyptian parliament approved a motion allowing sending troops to Libya. As the passage explains, Egypt, the UAE, Russia and France have been supporting the Libyan National Army (LNA) forces under Halifa Haftar, who have been trying to seize the capital of Tripoli for over a year. Following their failures in the Tripoli front, they withdrew to the Sirte-Jufra line, and for the past two months, this area has witnessed significant military transfers by Russia, who appears to be settling here. (Also see: “Russia’s Increasing Military Presence in Libya,” *OE Watch*, December 2019 and “Libya Conflict: Oil as the Latest Weapon,” *OE Watch*, March 2020). **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Map of Libya.

Source: Rafy, en:User:Interchange88 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libyan_Uprising.svg, CC0



Libya location map-oil & gas, 2011.

Source: NordNordWest, Yug via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libya_location_map-oil_%26_gas_2011-en.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0



Continued: Russia Settling into Strategic 'Oil Crescent' in Libya

“Sitting right in the middle of Libya’s coastline, Sirte is the western gateway of the country’s “oil crescent” region and the route that one has to control to dominate the ports of Sidra, Ras Lanuf, Marsa al-Brega and Zuwetina, where 11 oil pipelines and three gas conduits reach the Mediterranean coast.”

Source: “Libya: Russian plane brings Syrian fighters to Sirte,” *Anadolu Ajansi*, 3 October 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/libya-russian-plane-brings-syrian-fighters-to-sirte/1994770>

A Russian cargo plane carrying Syrian fighters landed in Libya’s Sirte province, controlled by warlord Khalifa Haftar, the Libyan army said on Saturday [October 3rd]. The aircraft arrived at 11.00 a.m. local time (0900GMT) at the Ghardabiya Airbase, according to officials from the Sirte and Jufra operation department of the Libyan army.

Source: “Drah confirms arrival of six Russian air defense systems in Sirte,” *The Libya Observer*, 27 June 2020. <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/drah-confirms-arrival-six-russian-air-defense-systems-sirte>

The Spokesman for the Sirte-Jufra Military Operations Room, Brigadier-General Abdel-Hadi Drah, confirmed the arrival of six anti-aircraft Pantsir air defense systems to the city of Sirte, arriving from Russia.

Drah added in a press statement that more than 11 Russian cargo planes landed at the Qardabiya Base, south of Sirte days ago, carrying mercenaries from Syria, weapons and ammunition on board.

Source: “Libya’da Sirada Ne Var? (What’s Next in Libya?),” *Perspektif Online*, 7 August 2020. <https://www.perspektif.online/libyada-sirada-ne-var/>

...The fact that Russia has deployed Mig-29 hunters and Su-24 attack planes to the Jufra base, points to a potential for conflict not seen in Libya in the post-2011 period.

Following Egypt’s declaration that it would use military force to prevent the Turkey-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) forces from advancing beyond the Sirte-Jufra line, and the Egyptian Parliament’s approval to allow sending troops to Libya, the regional and international competition in Libya became apparent once more.

Egypt, the UAE, Russia and France have been supporting the Libyan National Army forces under Halife Haftar, who have been trying to seize the capital of Tripoli for over a year. Following their failures in the Tripoli front, they withdrew to the Sirte-Jufra line, and for the past two months, this area has witnessed significant military transfers.

Source: Fehim Tastekin, “Why is Sirte everyone’s ‘red line’ in Libya?” *Al Monitor*, 20 June 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/06/turkey-libya-russia-egypt-why-sirte-everyones-red-line.html#ixzz6QyHyW93G>

Sitting right in the middle of Libya’s coastline, Sirte is the western gateway of the country’s “oil crescent” region and the route that one has to control to dominate the ports of Sidra, Ras Lanuf, Marsa al-Brega and Zuwetina, where 11 oil pipelines and three gas conduits reach the Mediterranean coast. By capturing Sirte, one could easily seize a 350-kilometer (217-mile) coastal stretch all the way to Benghazi, abounding in pipelines, refineries, terminals and storage facilities. Hifter’s seizure of the “oil crescent” — home to 60% of Libya’s hydrocarbon riches — had given him the leverage to undermine the Tripoli and Misrata forces.

In prewar Libya, 96% of public revenues came from hydrocarbons. The country’s reserves amount to 48.3 billion barrels of oil and 1.5 trillion cubic meters of gas. Its oil output, however, has plunged to 90,000 barrels per day from the 1.6 million barrels of yesteryear.

In sum, controlling the “oil crescent” in a way that ensures the flow of oil could have a multiplier effect in swaying the conflict and Sirte is seen as the key to seizing the region.

The New Face of Iraq's Shiite Militias

OE Watch Commentary: The killing of Qassim Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a US drone strike last January led to a change in the way that Iranian-backed militias operate in Iraq, according to the two accompanying Arabic-language excerpts, the first from *al-Araby al-Jadid* and the second from *Independent Arabia*. According to the first passage, nine previously unknown militias have been formed and taken credit for attacks targeting US interests in Iraq since the assassination. Listed by name in the first accompanying passage, these hitherto unknown groups operate under the broader name of the “Islamic Resistance” (al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya). Per the article, most analysts and observers link them to the main Iranian-backed militias in Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) – Kata’ib Hezbollah, al-Nujaba, al-Khorasani, Sayyid al-Shuhada, al-Tafuf and others.



Raising flag of Iraq and Popular Mobilization Forces after defeating DAESH.

Source: Tasnim News Agency / Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raising_flag_of_Iraq_and_Popular_Mobilization_Forces_after_defeating_DAESH.jpg CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

These new groups, both articles argue, should not be considered to be reflective of divisions among Iraq’s pro-Tehran militias, but rather as deliberate attempts to “reshuffle the deck,” confuse the Iraqi government and its security services, garner media attention, and “camouflage and divert suspicion and avoid punishment while also implementing what Iran requires of them, namely putting pressure on the Americans by targeting their interests wherever they are found in Iraq.” A commentator cited in the second article characterizes these new groups as “the spurs of traditional powers.” The new militias have been particularly effective in their messaging, releasing slick videos and drawing media attention by distributing their message via social media channels on Telegram (rather than Twitter, where they are quickly banned). The authors of both passages make it clear that observers believe this is only the beginning and there are “expectations that other militias will emerge” to further complicate the security situation in Iraq. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“Since last January, nine new armed militias have been announced... All of them espouse ‘taking revenge’ for Soleimani and al-Muhandis and removing US forces from Iraq...”

Source: ولادة 9 مليشيات في العراق خلال 10 أشهر: محاولات لإشاعة الفوضى
“(Birth of 9 Iraqi Militias in Past 10 Months: Attempts to Sow Chaos),” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 4 October 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y6ybj9vr>

The killing of former Iranian Quds Fore commander Qasem Soleimani and the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in an American raid early this year near Baghdad International Airport was the beginning of a change in the way pro-Iranian militias operate in Iraq, as they worked to transform their behavior from intermittent strikes on the perimeter of the US embassy in central Baghdad’s Green Zone to intensifying their efforts toward weekly and almost daily strikes. In recent weeks, attacks using Katyusha rockets and IEDs actually occurred daily. In this context, new militias have emerged claiming these attacks as part of the so-called “Islamic Resistance,” embracing slogans of “revenge” against the coalition, specifically American forces.

Since last January, nine new armed militias have been announced. The first of them was the “Ashab al-Kahf” (Companions of the Cave), followed by the “Usbat al-Tha’irin” (League of Revolutionaries), and after them the “Saraya Thawra al-Ashrin al-Thaniya” (Second 1920 Revolution Company), “Quwat Dhu al-Fiqar” (Zulfikar Forces), “Saraya al-Muntaqim” (Avengers Company), “Awliya’ al-Dam” (Blood Brigades), “Tha’ir al-Muhandis” (al-Muhandis Revenge), “Qasim al-Jabarin” (He who Smites the Necks of the Cruel), and “al-Ghashiya” (The Overwhelming). All of them espouse “taking revenge” for Soleimani and al-Muhandis and removing US forces from Iraq. This comes amid expectations that other militias will emerge as part of the plan to reshuffle the deck and create confusion in the government of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and the American forces alike. All observers and those concerned with the affairs of armed groups assert that the birth of these new militias comes from the main factions that are currently part of the PMF, such as Kata’ib Hezbollah, al-Nujaba, al-Khorasani, Sayyid al-Shuhada and al-Tafuf, among others. These militias use Telegram as a platform for announcing their operations, after repeated closure of their accounts on Twitter. Sabreen News, al-Jadaha, Rubuallah and Wild al-Shuaib are considered their most prominent channels...



Continued: The New Face of Iraq's Shiite Militias

Source: هل الميليشيات الجديدة في العراق مناورة من الأطراف القديمة أم انقسامات؟
 “(Are Iraq’s New Militias a Maneuver by Existing Groups or Divisions?),” *Independent Arabia*, 7 October 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y4xy24n6>

Observers believe they will not be the last and there are expectations that new militias will be formed in order to reshuffle the deck of cards and confuse both the al-Kadhimi government and the American forces...

While the phenomenon of announcing new militias and factions is often considered to reflect a state of division among traditional forces, Raad Hashem, a researcher on Iraqi affairs, has a different opinion. He explained to Independent Arabia that “this issue cannot be understood as a divisive dispute between traditional forces insofar as it is a division that serves their interests, by creating factions with different titles and names, to camouflage and divert suspicion and avoid punishment while also implementing what Iran requires of them, namely putting pressure on the Americans by targeting their interest wherever they are found in Iraq.” Hashem noted that these militias have mastered the game of politics in Iraq, as they are “an open participant in the political process and a hidden participant in the tug-of-war game under the cover of militias.” In the same context, Kazim al-Waeli, a former advisor to the International Coalition Against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, said that “these factions emerged from the Mahdi Army and consequently understand the same people and factions, but they seek to change their names to reshuffle the deck. This phenomenon cannot be classified as divisions, but rather as the spurs of traditional powers. There are forces and there are special forces, and it is possible to consider the new factions as special forces with different names.”

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Radars and UAVs: Saudi Arabia Taking Steps to Localize Military Industries

OE Watch Commentary: Arab countries are focused on growing their domestic military industries out of strategic concerns, according to the accompanying excerpted article from *al-Arab*. The article’s author attributes the growing focus on localizing military production to “the troubling regional security situation, the expansion of hostile parties seeking to dominate countries suffering from internal fragility, and the need for pivotal Arab countries to play a greater role beyond their borders to confront the colonial dreams of Turkey and Iran.” Establishing a domestic military industry is no simple feat, he cautions, due to the scarcity of local skilled labor, the high fixed costs of establishing manufacturing facilities, and resistance from “scientifically, technically and industrially advanced countries and their major companies” who “seek to retain a monopoly on the Arab market,” worth nearly a trillion dollars. However, in the cost-benefit calculus of many countries, most notably Saudi Arabia, the potential rewards of a domestic military industry outweigh its costs. So long as there is “political will,” the author of the passage from the prominent Saudi daily *al-Riyadh* explains, “industrial, military and defense independence” are within reach.

Among Arab countries, Saudi Arabia is embarking on the most ambitious localization plan. The kingdom’s goal, according to a development plan launched by Saudi crown prince and de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman, is for 50% of Saudi military expenditures to be directed toward domestic industries by 2030.

An emerging piece in this development plan is the Prince Sultan Defense Studies and Research Center (PSDSARC), a governmental institution “working on applied research and production of technologies such as radars, drones and advanced military communication systems in the hands of young Saudi engineers.” A recent interview with the PSDSARC’s director, published in the Saudi daily *al-Jazirah*, provides insights into the center’s priorities, which are divided into five domains: radars and advanced-warning sensors; electronic warfare; remotely controlled systems such as self-piloted drones; lasers and thermal cameras; and, military communications and information. Sensitive foreign-manufactured equipment such as radars have a fatal flaw, per the PSDSARC’s director: “We are convinced that we cannot know all the programming details of advanced radars developed outside of the kingdom as well as we can the details of radars developed by Saudi labor; therefore, we are committed to focusing on this sensitive technology.”

The author of the first excerpt, alluding to Turkey and Iran’s growing domestic military industry capabilities, explains how “the widening gap between regional powers with broad experience in [the military industrial] field and the emerging Arab visions” has led some Arab countries to feel their localization efforts are “doomed to failure unless supported by foreign expertise.” Partnerships and licensing agreements with foreign firms are “the first step toward strategic independence and military readiness,” according to the excerpt from *al-Riyadh*. In the meantime, though, increased nationalism, the widening military-industrial gap with Turkey and Iran, and the exigencies of war along its southern border together seem likely to push Saudi Arabia to accelerate the pursuit of self-reliance in the PSDSARC’s five fields of focus and beyond. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Saudi Arabia map.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saudi_Arabia_map.png
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“...our path toward ‘industrial, military and defense independence’ is not easy or paved with roses, but it is also not impossible, provided that the national political will is available...”



Continued: Radars and UAVs: Saudi Arabia Taking Steps to Localize Military Industries

Source: تحديات أمنية واقتصادية تدفع الدول العربية لاقتحام مجال التصنيع العسكري
 “(Security and Economic Threats Push Arab Countries into Military Manufacturing Industry),” *al-Arab*, 31 August 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/yygfwdr>

*The troubling regional security situation, the expansion of hostile parties seeking to dominate countries suffering from internal fragility, and the need for pivotal Arab countries to play a greater role beyond their borders to confront the colonial dreams of Turkey and Iran, together require maintaining production capabilities in military industries through which to meet the precise needs of militaries. This has prompted the pursuit of self-reliance in the manufacture of ammunition, light weapons and some types of defensive weapons... Major General Mohammed al-Shahwi, an advisor at the Command and Staff College, attributes the reliance on international powers active in the armament industry to the absence of skilled labor in Arab countries that can produce advanced technologies in the fields of defense and armament, requiring developments in the capabilities of military colleges and a focus on technological training that goes beyond traditional military education. In a statement to *al-Arab*, he stressed that Arab countries will need to proceed in a pyramidal fashion to eventually localize the weapons industry, passing through stages of assembling weapons, equipment and imported parts, and subsequently reaching a stage that combines import and partial assembly, which means gradual industrialization and gradually deepening the proportion of local manufacturing... The local Arab manufacturing of weapons collides with a set of obstacles, according to the study published by the Arab Affairs Magazine, issued by the League of Arab States, entitled “Military Industries in the Arab Region... Reality and Challenges.” Chief among them are the high costs required for military industrialization... [and] the competitiveness problems facing domestic weapons in light of the widening gap between regional powers with broad experience in this field and the emerging Arab visions, which constitutes a frustration for some initial attempts in producing weapons that are seen as doomed to failure unless supported by foreign expertise, related to the importing of weapons and allowing for the production of these weapons locally. Some military experts agree that emerging Arab ambitions are facing resistance from countries and major companies that manufacture weapons and military equipment, and that these scientifically, technically and industrially advanced countries and their major companies seek to retain a monopoly on the Arab market for importing weapons and equipment to avoid losing nearly a trillion dollars, which is the amount of Arab budgets directed toward weapons in the past ten years.*

Source: الاستقلالية الاستراتيجية والجاهزية العسكرية
 “(Strategic Independence and Military Readiness),” *al-Riyadh*, 7 September 2020. <http://www.alriyadh.com/1840803>

In reality, our path toward “industrial, military and defense independence” is not easy or paved with roses, but it is also not impossible, provided that the national political will is available from the hierarchy of top leadership, which is what we rely on today first and foremost thanks to God Almighty...

So that we realize and understand what the Saudi government is doing in terms of securing its national, military and defense security in the short and medium term, including the licensing of 38 national companies with an investment of 9.5 billion riyals and working in the fields of armor plating of military equipment, shelters, simulations and military binoculars, manufacturing spare parts for military equipment, gear boxes, and the repair, maintenance and overhaul of military vehicles and shelters, programming sensors for drones using the latest military technology and other projects...

Among GAMI’s achievements was the signing last December of the first industrial partnership agreement with Raytheon Saudi Arabia, with the aim of localizing the maintenance and renewal of the Patriot air defense system, which contributes to building capabilities in the targeted military industries, taking advantage of existing local capabilities and transferring knowledge related to the concepts of maintenance and preparing the Saudi labor force. This is the first step toward strategic independence and military readiness. May God preserve my nation and strengthen its capabilities.



Continued: Radars and UAVs: Saudi Arabia Taking Steps to Localize Military Industries

Source: *السعودية تصنع الرادار الصامت وراдар حصن وطائرة حارسه أجواء المملكة*
 "(Saudi Arabia Manufactures Passive and 'Fortress' Radars, Kingdom 'SkyGuard' Drone)," *al-Jazirah*, 23 September 2020. <http://www.al-jazirah.com/2020/20200923/ym67.htm>

The Prince Sultan Defense Studies and Research Center (PSDSARC) is considered one of the unique centers in this field, working on applied research and production of technologies such as radars, drones and advanced military communication systems in the hands of young Saudi engineers. Over the past years, the center has many achievements including a "passive radar," the "national shield" anti-drone system, multi-purpose drones such as the "Skyguard," the "Dove" and the "Sa'id" UAVs...

Q: What is the center currently working on in its military research and studies?

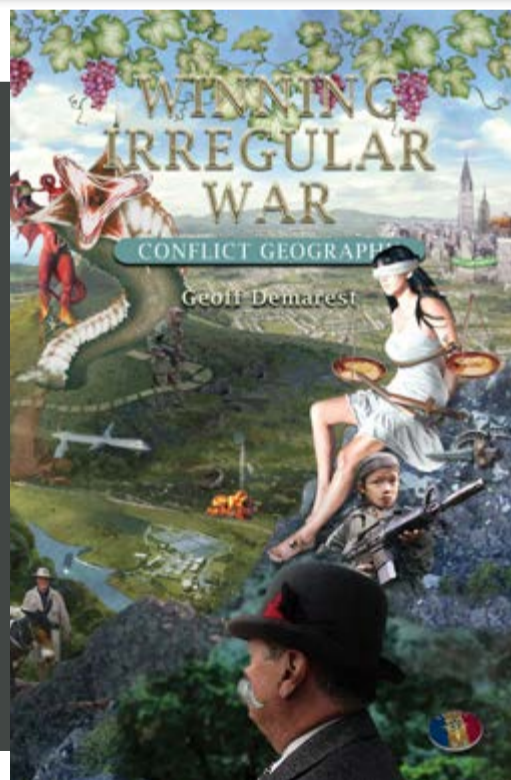
A: The center is currently conducting research, studies and development of what our armed forces need. We are currently focused on five main research areas, which are the advanced technologies needed by many military systems. They include "radars and advanced-warning sensors" of dangers such as drones and enemy missiles. Our research is focused on meeting the needs of our forces for these high-quality and technical radars in a timely manner. The second field is focused on electronic warfare with modern engineering technology in the field of electromagnetic communications. This specialization requires enormous capabilities in terms of scientists and experts, and we are working on and have made great strides in this field. The third field is remotely controlled systems such as self-piloted drones. The center has for some time been working in this field and has produced advanced drones. We soon look forward to, God willing, bringing them into service. As you know, the world is heading toward intensive drone use in the future and many global military studies confirm that future wars will be focused on aerial capabilities, such as drones. We are focused on developing these systems so our military forces can rely on them, God willing. The fourth field is research and studies on thermal cameras that can film at night and detect thermal targets. We also have a team doing field research on laser technologies with military specifications to direct smart weapons targeting. The fifth field is military communications and information such as command-and-control systems and modern communications systems that work in an encrypted and secure manner to avoid enemy eavesdropping...

Q: Are there products currently being used in the field?

A: Yes, there are many technologies that are currently being used by our armed forces along the southern border, and we consider it a badge of honor and pride for the center to participate with our colleagues in the battlefield through our techniques and achievements...

Q: What are the differences in the drones and radars that are manufactured at home and those that are manufactured abroad?

A: Radars are among the most important systems used by militaries in all countries for the monitoring, defense and detection of hostile targets. Because of these systems' importance and sensitivity, many countries are keen to develop capabilities to produce them locally or at least be able to supervise their programming and ensure that they work efficiently. At the center we are working on becoming self-sufficient first in the production of these systems and also developing the capacities of Saudi scientists and engineers to understand the precise operation of these systems to support our armed forces, to program and secure the operation of these radars, and ensure they are not disrupted while operating in the field, primarily in defending Saudi borders from any breaches. We are convinced that we cannot know all the programming details of advanced radars developed outside of the kingdom as well as we can the details of radars developed by Saudi labor; therefore, we are committed to focusing on this sensitive technology...



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/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



UAE Expansion into Space Yields Positive Earthly Results

OE Watch Commentary: The UAE has become the first Arab nation to join the race towards reaching Mars via its successful Mars probe launch and is already benefiting from this space exploration. As evident from local media in Japan, China and the UAE, kickstarting the Emirates' space industry has enhanced mutual relations with China and will serve as an inspiration for future generations of Emirati youth to pursue "future sciences."

In July 2020, Japanese rockets helped carry the first UAE made H-IIA (Hope) probe orbiter mission to Mars. This successful rocket launch was done by a private engineering company, which has conducted other launches for various foreign countries over the years. As stated in *The Japan Times*, "the Emirati project is one of three racing to Mars, along with Tianwen-1 from China..., taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are closest." This is only the beginning for the UAE's ambitious plans for space, as they also plan to send an unarmed spacecraft to the moon in 2024. According to the *Global Times China*, space exploration serves to expand scientific research and diversify the UAE's economy, which remains heavily dependent upon oil exports.



UAE Vice President, Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mohammed_Bin_Rashid_Al_Maktoum_at_the_World_Economic_Forum_Summit_on_the_Global_Agenda_2008_2.jpg CCA SA 2.0 Generic

Joining the UAE's space initiatives with China's Tianwen-1 Mars project has expanded relations between the two nations. In August 2020, *Global Times China* reports that the UAE Ambassador to China stated that he sees "...great potential for cooperation ... [as they move] humanity to further levels of advancement." This cooperation centers upon the Beijing-based China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) and the UAE space agency. Alongside international benefits, the Hope project is helping to push UAE youth towards sciences related to this industry, contributing towards continued future economic success. As highlighted in the *Khaleej Times*, Sheikh Mohammed of the UAE has stated that "space industries have become a major nerve in the UAE's economic system, in sync with the goals of the National Space Strategy launched by the government in 2019."

As the first Arab country to launch a successful interplanetary mission, the UAE will serve as an example to the other surrounding Arab nations. As the third excerpt emphasizes, the UAE ambassador mentioned that he believes the UAE space mission "will reignite the Arab world's enthusiasm in science, and more engagement with the solar system." **End OE Watch Commentary (Jaradat)**

“Reports of increasing private gun ownership among radical Islamist Salafi groups have shed light on the risks of rising Salafism and individual armament in Turkey.”

Source: "Japan launches first Arab space mission to Mars," *The Japan Times*, 20 July 2020. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/07/20/national/science-health/japan-arab-mars-mission/>

Japan reports of its involvement in the UAE's historic Mars launch via the private Japanese company, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima Prefecture. This initiative works in hand with global efforts to send humans to Mars one day. The Hope probe will not land on Mars, but rather orbit the planet for a whole Martian year. "The UAE already has nine functioning satellites in orbit, with plans to launch another eight in coming years," the article stated.

...the Emirati project is one of three racing to Mars, along with Tianwen-1 from China..., taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are closest...



Continued: UAE Expansion into Space Yields Positive Earthly Results

Source: “Young Emiratis switch to ‘future sciences’ thanks to space missions,” *Khaleej Times*, 11 October 2020. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/news/government/young-emiratis-switch-to-future-sciences-thanks-to-space-missions->

...His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum touches on the importance the newly explored space initiative of the UAE will have on its future economy and youth. He believes that it will “...provid[e] support to Emirati entrepreneurs and encourag[e] young people to enter new economic fields represents a fundamental approach in the framework of establishing our position in the future industries sector... space industries have become a major nerve in the UAE’s economic system, in sync with the goals of the National Space Strategy launched by the government in 2019.”

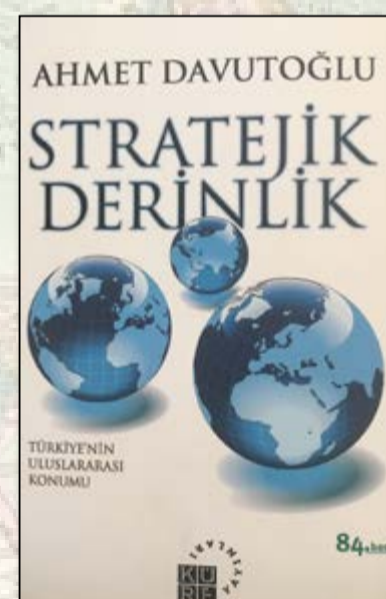
Source: “China, UAE eye space ties after launching Mars probes: envoy,” *Global Times China*, 6 August 2020. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1196978.shtml>

...UAE ambassador to China sees potential strong relations in the space industry between the UAE and China and future collaborative efforts with their space agencies. Despite countries like China and the US launching initiatives to Mars, it is stated that “...the UAE is focused on its own development and does not see itself as involved in a space competition.... and will reignite the Arab world’s enthusiasm in science, and more engagement with the solar system.”

Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey’s “Strategic Depth” Foreign Policy Doctrine

Karen Kaya
February 2020

“Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)” is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama’s “End of History” and Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey’s position in his book “Strategic Depth.” From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/309386>



Corruption Frequently Plagues African Arms Deals

OE Watch Commentary: With numerous African nations embroiled in conflict, be they terrorist actions or civil wars, many of the continent's militaries have significant ongoing needs for weapons. Meeting this demand are arms dealers, who, as the excerpted accompanying article from *Deutsche Welle* points out, are frequently corrupt and often associated with other corrupt individuals, particularly government officials. Since enormous sums were and continue to be spent on weapons, often with insufficient oversight, the amounts siphoned off by fraud are estimated to be quite large.

South African author Andrew Feinstein, who was a former ruling African National Congress MP, has been studying African arms deals for over 20 years. His research leads him to conclude that increasingly Africa is the hotspot for international arms trading. Additionally, as the article notes, Feinstein finds that "in most cases" these deals involve corruption and fraud. One particularly blatant scandal occurred in Niger, where the country has been battling Sahel-based insurgents. To combat them, the government purchased \$1 billion worth of military equipment between 2011 and 2019, with much of that money coming from foreign governments. However, journalists showed that businessmen from Niger, Russia, and Ukraine likely diverted a portion of those funds. As a result, as the article explains, far fewer arms were purchased for Niger than originally intended, and some middlemen fraudsters became rich.



Soldiers from Niger, one of the countries implicated in corrupt arms deals.
Source: US Navy Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Michael Larson/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger_Army_322nd_Parachute_Regiment.jpg, Public Domain

The transactions in the Niger weapons scandal, as described in the article, were often convoluted and opaque. For example, the offshore suppliers used were owned by middlemen who submitted overpriced bids, funds were transferred through dubious financial institutions, amounts paid for Russian aircraft were higher than their actual worth, and Russian companies laundered some of their ill-gotten gains through Germany. Feinstein claims the reason the money was laundered through Germany and not Russia is that doing it through the former would arouse less suspicion by American investigators than if done through the latter. As for the reason not all of the money was laundered through Germany, using multiple banks in multiple countries helps obscure where the cash is really going.

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Niger is certainly not alone in Africa when it comes to corrupt arms deals. Also, as the article notes, the corruption is not just limited to local officials and middlemen. Bribable officials exist in several countries in the northern hemisphere, such as Russia, where these weapons and/or the initial deals often originate. Thus, as the article describes, corruption can occur at one or multiple steps of the arms trade and can make fighting fraudulent arms deals quite difficult. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“In most cases, arms deals in Africa are a huge part of corruption and fraud, says Feinstein, who penned the book “The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade” in 2011”

Source: “Africa: The big rip-off in arms deals,” *Deutsche Welle*, 18 September 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-the-big-rip-off-in-arms-deals/a-54951312>

In most cases, arms deals in Africa are a huge part of corruption and fraud, says Feinstein, who penned the book “The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade” in 2011.

According to Feinstein, one of the criminal masterminds in Niger, Aboubacar Hima, also had a personal relationship with Ukraine’s ex-president Viktor Yanukovich and bought several apartments in Prague. Currently, Nigerien intermediaries are purchasing expensive villas in Niamey, he says.

This information was contained in an internal Nigerien government audit document, which Feinstein and the OCCRP journalists obtained. The audit report also listed numerous fraudulent arms deals. For example, in 2016, two MI-171Sh combat helicopters were purchased from the Russian state-owned export agency Rosoboronexport for €55 million (\$59 million), almost €20 million above the regular price.

For anti-corruption activist Paul Holden, the OCCRP report highlights how such businesses work. The arms trade is particularly prone to corruption, says the South African, founder of the London-based anti-corruption organization Shadow World Investigations.

The Niger scandal is not an isolated incident, explains Paul Holden: “In Africa, there is definitely a lot more corrupt arms deals. The arms trade is responsible for 40% of corruption in world trade, and unfortunately, this also affects many African countries.”



Do Deficiencies in Governance Justify Coups? The African Union Says “No”

OE Watch Commentary: The 18 August coup d'état in Mali that toppled then-President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was roundly condemned by various international peace and security organizations. The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), according to the excerpted accompanying article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies*, went a step further with their condemnation; they imposed sanctions on the coup plotters. That was a rather remarkable action for the AU to take as it is normally critical of international sanctions imposed on African nations, and thus reflects its deep disapproval of the overthrow. What the AU did not address in detail, however, but which this article does, is what were the causes behind this as well as many other coups in Africa.

The AU's stance on removing governments other than through the ballot box is strict and in large part based on the Lomé Declaration of 2000 and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance of 2007, both of which define what constitutes unconstitutional changes of government. The article gives several examples of these, including military coups, interventions by mercenaries or rebels that replace an elected government, and refusal of a government fairly defeated by an election to relinquish power.

However, as the article notes, while the concern back when those documents were signed was to protect civilian political institutions from the “authoritarianism” of military interventions, citizens' priorities have since evolved to emphasize good governance, fair electoral processes, and other qualities of a well-run democracy. Failure of a government to meet these priorities can lead to social discontent. Thus, in 2014 the AU Peace and Security Council noted that unconstitutional changes of government originate from “deficiencies in governance.” Some of the deficiencies mentioned in the pronouncement include greed, mismanagement, human rights violations, manipulation of constitutions, corruption, and several others. However, the presence of these deficiencies still does not mean African organizations will countenance a coup.

The article's authors point to Mali as an example where despite a popular uprising of the people against the president preceding the coup, the AU and ECOWAS still condemned the overthrow. The authors further describe the response from those African organizations as prioritizing a symptom, which is the coup, over the root causes, such as corruption and questionable legitimacy of the government. As a result, the AU and ECOWAS appear to be protecting the incumbency, despite its many flaws. Thus, as the authors note, condemnation by the AU, ECOWAS, and others of coups against unpopular leaders, such as the recent one in Mali, puts them at odds with the citizens of those countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Censuring coups isn't enough – African and international actors should tackle the poor quality of democracy and governance.”



Malian soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, have launched several successful coups.

Source: US Air Force Master Sgt. Ken Bergmann/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mali_army_drill_Tombouctou_070904.jpg, Public Domain

Source: “What Causes Africa's Coups? That Is the Question,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 8 September 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-causes-africas-coups-that-is-the-question>

Censuring coups isn't enough – African and international actors should tackle the poor quality of democracy and governance.

The council's call for ‘a zero tolerance for government policies and actions that may lead to a resort to unconstitutional means to overthrow oppressive systems’ has not changed the dominant norms and actions. Despite the clarity provided by the PSC, in practice the AU and regional organizations have reduced democracy to the holding of elections and selective respect for term limits.

In 2014, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) noted that unconstitutional changes of government originated from ‘deficiencies in governance. Greed, selfishness, mismanagement of diversity, failure to seize opportunities, marginalization, human rights violations, unwillingness to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions and their revision through unconstitutional means to serve narrow interests, and corruption are all major contributors to unconstitutional changes of Governments and popular uprisings.’

Africa's peace, security and governance norms and instruments will increasingly be tested by complex challenges. Reports from early warning systems and civil society organizations often correctly predict governance failures. Without political commitment to conflict prevention, the AU and regional organizations will increasingly react rather than pre-empt crises. It then becomes politically expedient to condemn a coup rather than take bold political steps to address the causes of social discontent.



South African National Defence Force Losing Strategic Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: The downward spiral of South Africa's defense budget continues to take a toll. As the excerpted accompanying article from the South African website *DefenceWeb* notes, a recent mini-symposium held by a defense committee found the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) has deteriorated to the point that they have lost certain strategic capabilities. This diminished SANDF is now unable to respond to regional crises such as the insurgency in neighboring Mozambique.

Part of the problem, as the article's author describes, is SANDF has not been forceful enough in asking for more money. Additionally, because SANDF often still manages to carry out many of their assigned operations even while under-resourced, or as the article calls it "pulling a rabbit out of the hat," some people question whether they really require more funding. However, many others do recognize the need for additional funds. One defense expert even commented that if the government won't give the navy more money for its extended deployment in the Mozambique Channel, then the navy should return home.

Despite the calls and demonstrated need for additional funds, it is uncertain such help will materialize. Indeed, according to the article the country's economic troubles will result in revenue continuing to decline, with the result that future budgets will actually be decreasing, not increasing. Against this backdrop of financial woes, the author finds it will be necessary for the government to define what roles SANDF should play and then to redesign the force, within the economic constraints imposed by declining funding, to fulfill those roles.

Defining SANDF's roles will in part include thinking about the country's involvement in regional conflicts. While South Africa has long thought of itself as a regional power, its economic decline and concomitant military decline means that while it wants to help its northern neighbors, "there is no funding to back up that commitment."

As for redesigning the force, the author puts forth several suggestions. These include trimming personnel numbers in logistics and combat support; providing an exit mechanism for some of the older troops in the junior ranks; and no longer having an independent military health system. However, cutting military personnel would be problematic not only because it would add to the country's unemployment numbers but also due to labor legislation and the costs associated with retrenchment packages.

Thus, there are significant obstacles to both defining SANDF's roles and restructuring it to meet those roles. Meanwhile, as the article notes, SANDF is in trouble as it tries "to be a regional force on a borderline budget." **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The defence force is often its own worst enemy. It always seems to pull a rabbit out of a hat and get the job done, therefore people say okay, it doesn’t need more cash. Meanwhile the defence force is cutting into muscle and bone.”



South African paratroopers.

Source: SPC Taryn Hagerman/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:South_African_soldiers_board_a_C-130_Hercules_aircraft_for_a_practice_jump_at_Air_Force_Base_Bloemspruit_in_Bloemfontein,_South_Africa,_July_23,_2013,_in_preparation_for_exercise_Shared_Accord_2013_130723-A-FP002-005.jpg, Public Domain

Source: "The SANDF needs to put its foot down," *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 8 September 2020. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/feature-the-sandf-needs-to-put-its-foot-down/>

“The defence force is often its own worst enemy. It always seems to pull a rabbit out of a hat and get the job done, therefore people say okay, it doesn’t need more cash. Meanwhile the defence force is cutting into muscle and bone.”

Khanyile noted that “we need to help out our brothers and sister up north but there is no funding to back up that commitment.”

Defence expert Helmoed Romer Heitman said that most countries build defence forces to deal with identified threats with some agility to deal with unforeseen threats. “If we look at the SANDF today we are too weak to meet that standard,” he said.

Nevertheless, the SANDF goes where government tells it to, but Heitman believes the SANDF needs to say “give us more money or else we don’t go.” He added that the 2015 Defence Review argued for an operational deployment budget and the Department of Defence needs to approach treasury to implement that.

The defence force is in trouble,” Heitman said. “Really, it is time for government to decide what they want the defence force to be able to do,” as currently South Africa is “trying to be a regional force on a borderline budget.”

Professor Lindy Heinecken said the SANDF cannot address a new force design without consulting politicians and society. “What roles should be prioritised given the current allocation of resources? Without understanding the SANDF’s role, one cannot design or plan a new force design,” she said.



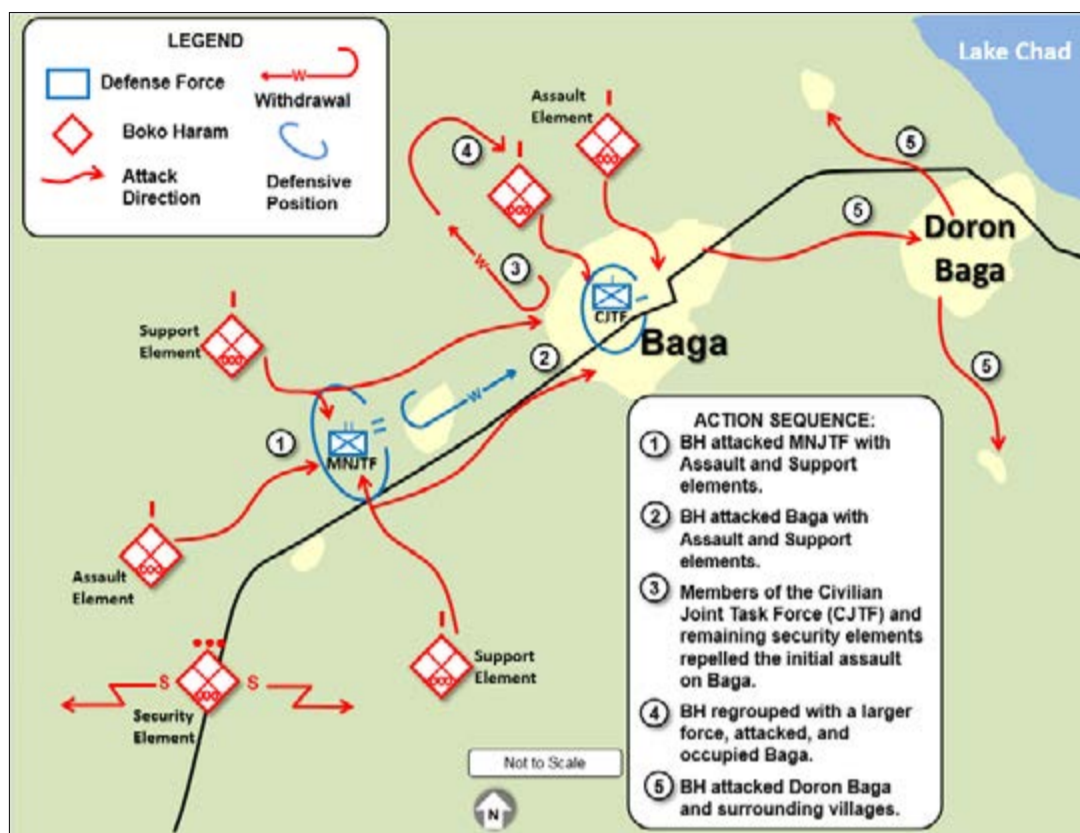
Nigerian Governor Reacts to Boko Haram Attack in Baga

OE Watch Commentary: Babagana Zulum is the governor of Nigeria's Borno State, which borders, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and has been the epicenter of the Boko Haram conflict since 2010. On 26 September, the excerpted article for *nigerianvoice.com*, which reports on current affairs in Nigeria, discussed Zulum's visit to the town of Baga on Lake Chad's shorelines. The visit resulted in calamity when, according to the article, 11 anti-Boko Haram vigilantes and police officers were killed in an ambush by Boko Haram's Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal faction.

The article notes that Zulum praised the commitment of the fallen vigilantes and police officers. In addition, Zulum reflected on why Baga is strategic for Boko Haram, which previously unsuccessfully attacked Zulum's convoy in Baga in July. Zulum asserts that Baga is the largest fishing hub on Lake Chad and is connected to numerous villages. This is why Boko Haram uses the town's access to Lake Chad for charging taxes on fishermen and accumulating wealth for its militant pursuits.

The article also mentions the context of Boko Haram's attack on Zulum's convoy. Zulum has been promoting the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their hometowns, including Baga, so that life for Borno civilians can return to normalcy. Boko Haram's operations to disrupt Zulum's plans for IDP resettlement, however, demonstrates that the government cannot effectively govern, which weakens the government's legitimacy.

The article, therefore, highlights Nigeria's quandary in seeking to end the war in Borno. Boko Haram is still too capable of carrying out sophisticated ambushes for there to be peace in the state, while IDPs face insecurity if they attempt to return home from IDP camps. Zulum's comments after this latest ambush, however, indicate that it is an imperative to continue the process of IDP resettlement and the military must redouble efforts to prevent further Boko Haram ambushes or disruptions of humanitarian operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



USArmy-BokoHaram-Baga.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:USArmy-BokoHaram-Baga.png>
Attribution: [CC x 2.0]

“Baga, Borno’s largest fishing community in the shores of the Lake Chad with waterways to neighbouring countries is considered strategic to Boko Haram’s operation.”

Source: “Gov. Zulum Of Borno State Breaks Silence On Boko Haram Ambush Of His Convoy And Death 11 Persons,” *nigerianvoice.com*, 26 September 2020. <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/292215/gov-zulum-of-borno-state-breaks-silence-on-boko-haram.html>

Gov. Babagana Zulum of Borno has condemned the killing of eight policemen and three members of Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) in an ambush by Boko Haram terrorists in Baga, Kukawa Local Government Area.

Zulum was in Baga from as part of the efforts to resettle people back to their community after displacement by Boko Haram insurgents. According to him, the visit to Baga was “aimed at cutting Boko Haram’s long use of the commercial town as main transit for undertaking major fishing trade and tax administration, from which the insurgents fund their murderous activities. Baga, Borno’s largest fishing community in the shores of the Lake Chad with waterways to neighbouring countries, is considered strategic to Boko Haram’s operation,” the governor said.

The governor prayed for the repose of their souls and urges all stakeholders to remain committed to the ongoing peacebuilding efforts.



Al-Shabaab Successfully Recruits in Kenya's Isiolo County

OE Watch Commentary: Despite Kenya's Isiolo County being located far from the Kenya-Somalia border as well as the country's hotspots of violent extremism, such as Nairobi and the coast, and despite the deployment of large numbers of antiterrorism police in that county, al-Shabaab is having considerable success there recruiting young people to its organization. The excerpted accompanying article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies* offers several reasons for al-Shabbab's achievements in this area considered isolated from more troubled regions. Indeed, it is perhaps that very isolation which helps make Isiolo County such a tempting target for al-Shabaab recruiting efforts.

Recruitment and radicalization efforts by al-Shabaab in the county have been made easier by the young people's growing use of drugs. This is because al-Shabaab operatives, as the article points out, frequent drug dens to bring disaffected youth into their fold.

Social media is also being successfully used by al-Shabaab to recruit and radicalize. There is additional concern that with COVID-19 forcing children to attend school online they will be increasingly exposed to radical websites. The government's failure to launch an effective counter-narrative to the online violent extremism the children could be exposed to has only amplified the parents' unease.

The county does have an action plan against violent extremism, drawn up in 2018, which calls for the population helping to combat youth radicalization. However, for the most part the plan has not been implemented, thus not providing community buy-in so important for mitigating al-Shabaab's efforts.

Deployment of anti-terrorism police in the county also does not appear to be significantly hindering al-Shabaab's efforts, and at times has even made the situation worse. The article explains this is probably in part due to some police being mired in corruption. As the author describes it, corrupt police have "turned anti-terrorism activities into a booming enterprise." They will arrest young people for purported crimes linked to radicalization and then demand a bribe for their release. Such actions turn people against the police and government, and make it easier for al-Shabaab to recruit.

Suggestions to make inroads against al-Shabaab's recruitment success include more anti-radicalization content on social media, civil society organizations to combat youth radicalization, and fighting police corruption. However, as the article notes, for now al-Shabaab has the upper hand.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)



Kenya's Isiolo County in red.

Source: NordNordWest/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isiolo_County_in_Kenya.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE

“Violent extremism is taking hold in Kenya's Isiolo County, positioning the vast area as the centre of youth radicalization in the country.”

Source: “Violent Extremists Find Fertile Ground in Kenya's Isiolo County,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 8 October 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/violent-extremists-find-fertile-ground-in-kenyas-isiolo-county>

Violent extremism is taking hold in Kenya's Isiolo County, positioning the vast area as the centre of youth radicalization in the country. In Isiolo, the problem has been brewing for several years, prompting the deployment in 2016 of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU).

Police corruption is also a factor. Some officials in Kenya's security agencies are involved in corruption that has turned anti-terrorism activities into a booming enterprise. Residents told ISS Today that some police construe many crimes, especially those committed by the youth, as being linked to radicalization – whether or not this is the case. Police then demand bribes for the release of those they arrest.

There is very little partnership between religious leaders, mainstream media and local radio stations to provide a counter-narrative, discussions or statements – such as ‘Islam means peace’ – that could neutralize the messages used by extremists to recruit. In Isiolo, partnerships of this sort to prevent radicalization are insufficient, according to Mohamud.

The national police needs to combat corruption within its ranks. Relations between the community and police also need to improve, but this is unlikely to happen while police corruption prevails. Better relations will facilitate information sharing and help reduce police harassment of young people.



As Lake Chad Shrinks, Terrorism Grows

OE Watch Commentary: What was once the world's sixth largest inland body of water has shrunk 90% since the 1960s. Lake Chad, as the accompanying article from the South African news site *The Conversation* explains, provides water for drinking, sanitation, and irrigation for over 30 million people. However, as this valuable resource dries up due to climate change and overuse, conflict related to its increasing scarcity grows. Particularly impacted by the receding lake are the four nations that share borders with it: Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Other countries such as Algeria and Sudan, which are indirectly connected with it, also feel the effects.



Lake Chad.

Source: Sani Ahmad Usman/ Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lake_Chad_\(Baga_site\)_borno_state.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lake_Chad_(Baga_site)_borno_state.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

The article provides reasons why this loss of water causes increasing instability in an already unstable area, the Lake Chad region. To begin with, many people who depend on the lake for their livelihood, such as farmers, pastoralists, and fishermen, are finding it difficult to survive. This has led to some of them turning to criminal activity or being recruited by terrorist organizations. Often the criminal activity and terrorist organization overlap. For example, Boko Haram frequently resorts to cattle rustling to raise funds for its operations.

Attempting to develop a regional approach to the issues, where the four nations would come together, is made difficult by the uneven shrinking of the lake. As the lake dried up, water shifted to the Chad and Cameroon sides, leaving Niger and Nigeria with essentially little to no lake water left. The result is people ignoring borders to find water, leading to political problems and interstate conflicts.

So far, much of the response from the regional governments to the violence, as the article points out, has been the use of military forces. For example, billions of defense dollars have been spent on combating Boko Haram. However, the article's author states the way forward to stability needs to be based less on the use of soldiers and more on replenishing Lake Chad's water. This would be no easy task, with challenges including funding and trying to implement large-scale projects in a hostile environment. Complicating the situation even more, according to the author, is Nigeria's conflict relationship with the other Lake Chad countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The lake is central to regional stability. To achieve peace, countries should focus on reviving the water body rather than on military activities.”

Source: Saheed Babajide Owonikoko, “The key to peace in the Lake Chad area is water, not military action,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 30 September 2020. <https://theconversation.com/the-key-to-peace-in-the-lake-chad-area-is-water-not-military-action-146152>

The study found that loss of livelihoods has promoted criminality, easy recruitment by terrorist groups, and migration to urban centres. This has also led to violence and crime in cities and towns. Management of the shrinking lake has caused conflicts among the states that depend on it and this has made it more difficult for them to collectively fight insecurity in the region. The lake is central to regional stability. To achieve peace, countries should focus on reviving the water body rather than on military activities.

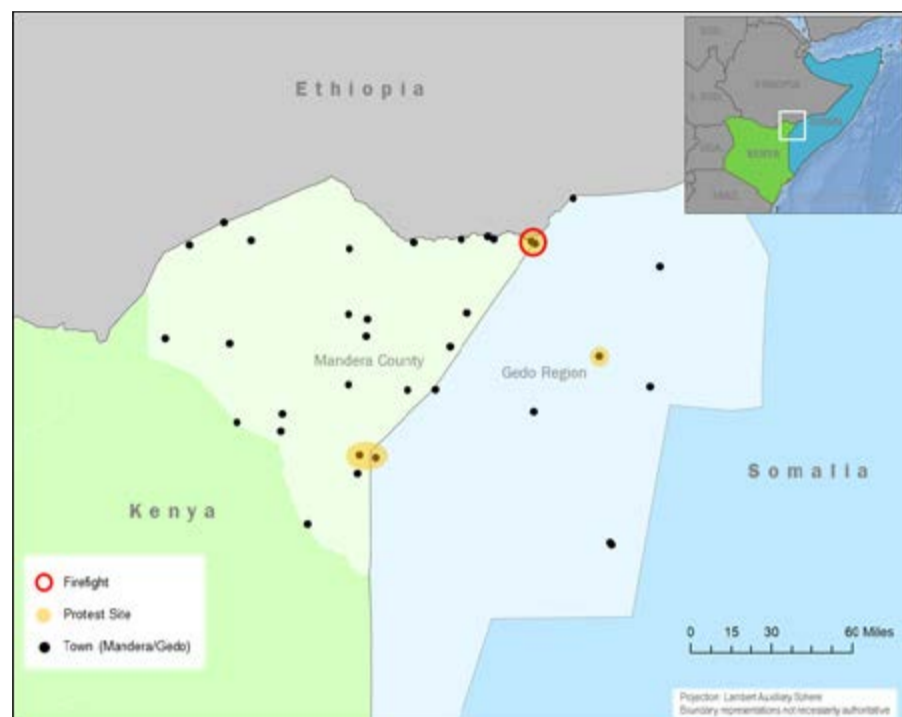
The result has been competition for resources, especially farmer-pastoralist conflict. Between 2016 and 2019, almost 4,000 people died in Nigeria as a result of farmer-pastoralist conflicts.

Given the rate at which the lake is disappearing, in less than a decade it may cease to be. The Lake Chad region, however, is one of the most unstable in the world. According to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index report, countries of the region are among the 10 least peaceful countries in Africa.

Loss of the traditional means of livelihood leads to widespread poverty and food insecurity. A 2017 report estimated there were about 10.7 million inhabitants of Lake Chad Region in need of humanitarian services.



Tensions Flare Again on the Kenya-Somalia Border



Graphic: (Made by author using ArcGIS Pro).

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 September, troops from the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) and Somali National Army (SNA) exchanged fire along the border between Bulahawa and Mandera towns amidst protests over the alleged abduction and killing of three Somali nationals by the KDF. The non-lethal firefight is the second spike in tensions between the two countries this year. In March, fighting between SNA and Jubaland forces spilled across the border into Kenya. The accompanying articles from *Garowe Online*, an independent Somali newspaper focusing on political and security affairs, and *The Daily Nation*, a popular Kenyan newspaper, outline and contextualize the incident.

According to the first excerpted article from *Garowe Online*, hundreds of Somalis gathered in three border towns to protest the conduct and presence of the KDF in the region, believing the KDF had abducted and likely executed three Somalis. Tensions between KDF and SNA forces in the area are heightened, the article states, because of accusations that Kenya is protecting Jubaland security forces from the SNA (Jubaland's president, who is backed by Kenya, is clashing with the federal government of Somalia over issues of regional autonomy). *The Daily Nation* reports

that during the protests, Kenyan troops manning a border post fired shots “to deter” approaching Somali demonstrators. SNA troops stationed nearby responded and the two forces exchanged gunfire for several minutes. There were no reported casualties on either side.

The second article from *Garowe Online* states that additional KDF troops have deployed to the area amidst heightened tensions. Eyewitnesses cited in the article said the troops are “armed to the teeth,” but did not provide further details on their equipment. It remains unclear what the newly deployed troops' immediate mission is. According to the article, the majority of these troops are not a part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (the United Nations-approved regional peacekeeping operation) to which Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and several other nations contribute troops. The protests and firefight described in the accompanying articles constitute the most recent flare-up between two countries whose continued cooperation is integral to the fight against Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabaab. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartung)**

“...Somali and Kenyan troops engaged in a minutes-long firefight on Saturday at the two countries' shared border, local officials and witnesses said after the Kenyan side fired shots to deter Somali demonstrators from approaching...”

Source: “Protests Against KDF Intensify in Troubled Region of Somalia,” *Garowe Online (Somalia - Puntland)*, 28 September 2020. <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/protests-against-kdf-intensify-in-troubled-region-in-somalia>

And in the last three days, protestors carrying Somalia's national flags have been flooding the border town, calling for an immediate withdrawal of KDF from Somalia, over accusations of allegedly attacking locals besides abducting three people in recent days under controversial circumstances.... But the SNA troops have often been at loggerheads with the KDF team who they accuse of protecting the Jubaland security forces.

Source: “Somali, Kenyan Troops Exchange Gunfire at Shared Border,” *The Daily Nation (Kenya)*, 27 September 2020. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/africa/kenya-somali-troops-exchange-gunfire-2372936>

Somali and Kenyan troops engaged in a minutes-long firefight on Saturday at the two countries' shared border, local officials and witnesses said after the Kenyan side fired shots to deter Somali demonstrators from approaching.... The Somali forces close to the area intervened in the situation by engaging (in a) gunfight with the Kenyans...

Source: “More KDF Troops Deployed Near Somalia Border After Clashes with SNA,” *Garowe Online (Somalia - Puntland)*, 4 October 2020. <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/more-kdf-troops-deployed-near-somalia-border-amid-clashes-with-sna>

Reports indicate that a suspected KDF contingent “abducted” three people within the vicinity of the border town of El-Wak and subsequent killing of another resident under controversial circumstances in Balad-Hawo. The three are yet to be located and it's believed that they were executed.... More troops from the Kenya Defense Forces [KDF] have been deployed along the Kenya-Somalia border...amid simmering tensions between troops from the two neighboring nations.

Officials said that the fresh contingent is mainly non-AMISOM troops and are deployed along the fragile border amid rising tensions.... Eyewitnesses said the troops were armed to teeth and it's not clear what their immediate mission was.



Algeria Calibrates Greater Security Role in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: Algeria and Mali share an 844 mile border and common enemy in al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its offshoots. While Algeria has largely contained AQIM, the group's offshoots now present a serious threat to Mali, including staging numerous attacks on Malian military posts in recent years. The excerpted 21 August French-language article in *lexpressiondz.com*, which is an Algerian publication focusing on national affairs from a generally pro-government perspective, discussed Algeria's foreign minister Sabri Boukadoum's intent to increase its diplomatic and military footprint in Mali to support Mali's counter-terrorism efforts.



In Amenas س ا ن ا م ا ن ا - panoramio habib kaki.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:In_Amenas_%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3_-_panoramio.jpg Attribution: CC 3.0

According to the article, Algeria considers Mali a longtime friendly nation and therefore Boukadoum has made two recent visits to Mali.

Further, Boukadoum recognizes that the security situation in Mali is deteriorating and that it inevitably affects Algeria. This, in turn, necessitates Algeria's becoming increasingly concerned about Mali. Boukadoum noted Libya is already a front of insecurity for Algeria and that it cannot risk Mali's becoming another such front.

The article also recounts the attack in 2013 at Tiguentourine gas plant in Algeria, which was launched from Libya by AQIM-allied jihadists, who had occupied northern Mali in the previous year. That attack led to the deaths of around 40 foreign employees at the gas plant and still serves as a reminder to Algeria about the regional dynamics of terrorism in northwest Africa. The article emphasizes that Algeria must expand its global diplomatic footprint and security alliances given these trends. It also notes that France and Turkey are increasingly competing in Libya, which creates uncertainties for Algeria that it cannot afford to ignore. Therefore, the article specifically states that one of Algeria's next steps will be to expand its diplomatic posts to Latin America, Asia, Africa, and elsewhere in the Arab World. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sabri Boukadoum, indicated that Mali is an ‘extremely important’ country for Algeria and all that concerns this neighboring country ‘concerns us also.’”

Source: “Sabri Boukadoum en visite à Bamako L’urgence d’un dossier brûlant (Sabri Boukadoum Visits Bamako: The Urgency of a Hot File),” *www.lexpressiondz.com*, 21 September 2020. <http://www.lexpressiondz.com/nationale/l-urgence-d-un-dossier-brulant-335353>

Sabri Boukadoum yesterday started a working visit to the Malian capital Bamako “during which he will have talks on the situation in this country,” indicated a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which specifies that this visit “is part of the fraternal relations, friendship and cooperation that bind Algeria to Mali”. This is the second visit in less than a month that Boukadoum has made to Mali, which reflects the special attention paid by the Algerian authorities to this burning issue. During his last visit, on August 28, in Bamako, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sabri Boukadoum, indicated that Mali is an “extremely important” country for Algeria and all that concerns this neighboring country “concerns us also.”

Algeria's interests include the strategic depth that Mali represents for Algeria. The political and security destabilization that this neighboring country has been experiencing recently has been of great concern to Algeria, which fears the opening of a new insecure front after Libya.

The Islamist convoy which carried out one of the worst terrorist attacks against the Tiguentourine gas complex on January 16, 2013 was from northern Mali. This visit also takes place in a regional context in turmoil with, in particular, hawkish exchanges in Libya between France and Turkey.



Zimbabwe Considers Counter-Terrorism Operations in Mozambique



Mozambique regions, Shaund.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mozambique_regions.png
Attribution: CC x 4.0

OE Watch Commentary: On 29 September, the excerpted article in the online newspaper, *iharare.com*, which reports on Zimbabwean current affairs, discussed the prospects of Zimbabwe sending soldiers to neighboring Mozambique. The article stated that Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo would only consider assisting Mozambique if targeted international sanctions on Zimbabwean officials were withdrawn. Although the article does not indicate Zimbabwean support to Mozambique is imminent, it does indicate that Zimbabwe's president Emmerson Mnangagwa is concerned about an increasingly strong Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal group in southern Africa.

The article is significant for being among the first articles to raise Zimbabwe's possible military support to Mozambique in Zimbabwean media. The ISIS-loyal militants in Mozambique now control several strategic port towns and villages in the north of the country and Mozambique's army has been unable to quash the insurgency. Therefore, it is consistent that Mozambique's neighbors, including Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa, and foreign countries are becoming increasingly concerned about regional security.

Lastly, the article recounted that Zimbabweans have combat experience in Mozambican territory. This occurred during the war against white-majority rule in Rhodesia in the 1970s. In addition, Zimbabwe's military supported Mozambique to quell the Renamo insurgency in the 1980s and 1990s. While the article does not state that Zimbabwe would, therefore, be effective in combating the ISIS-loyal militants, it does indicate that intervening militarily on Mozambican territory would not be out of the question for Zimbabwe from a historical perspective. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“President Emmerson Mnangagwa, akin to the US, is concerned about the ISIS-linked militants [in Mozambique].”

Source: “Zimbabwe Turns Down US Request To Help Fight Isis Militant Group In Mozambique,” *iharare.com*, 29 September 2020. <https://iharare.com/zimbabwe-turns-down-us-request-to-help-fight-isis-militant-group-in-mozambique/>

iHarare has learned that the Government of Zimbabwe said it would only consider assisting in fighting the ISIS-linked militant group in Mozambique if the US withdraws targeted sanctions against Zimbabwean officials first.

According to the officials, Sibusiso Moyo added that President Emmerson Mnangagwa, akin to the US, is concerned about the ISIS-linked militants and that the two nations share strategic interests elsewhere, however, sanctions remain a stumbling block. When contacted for comment by the publication, a US State Department spokesman said Moyo and Nagy did not discuss the removal of sanctions in response to counter-terror assistance.

During the Second Chimurenga Zimbabwe used Mozambique as a base from which to launch attacks on then White-ruled Rhodesia. Zimbabwean troops also intervened to quell a rebellion by militants affiliated to Mozambique's opposition Renamo party in the 1980s and 1990s.



COVID-19 Pandemic Fuels Violence Against Women



Sexual violence has been a longstanding problem in parts of Africa, as evidenced by this 2013 photo, but it has significantly increased with the COVID-19 pandemic.
 Source: DFID - UK Department for International Development/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrea_Dondolo_-_Activists_for_change_\(8550822157\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrea_Dondolo_-_Activists_for_change_(8550822157).jpg), CC BY 2.0

for women “was already bad.” Another individual claims the driving forces for GBV include drug and alcohol abuse, but that the most significant factor is the low status of women. The pandemic made the situation worse, for during curfews subjugated women are at the mercy of their male partners.

There have been some attempts by governments to address GBV. In Kaduna, a Nigerian State, a law was introduced to allow for the chemical castration of rapists whose victims are under the age of 14, and in Malawi, the Supreme Court ordered the police in a small town to compensate the people they had raped. There are other examples, but as the article explains, the measures taken against GBV in many instances have been relatively ineffective.

Some suggestions are provided by the article’s author to combat GBV, including improving the status of women and including more of them in government leadership positions. Additionally, a bigger share of national budgets should go towards women’s issues, such as family planning, as often it receives a lower priority than other needs such as infrastructure.

The pandemic has exacerbated an already significant problem in many parts of Africa, gender-based violence, with political will, as the article notes, being a necessary ingredient to help solve it. Until more is done, paralleling the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to be this shadow pandemic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The number of cases of sexualized violence and femicide in Africa has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Source: “Violence against women: Africa’s shadow pandemic,” *Deutsche Welle*, 6 October 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-pandemic-violence-rape-women/a-55174136>

“The situation was already bad for women before the pandemic. The pandemic merely lifted the veil from what was not being seen,” Jean Paul Murunga of the women’s rights organization Equality Now told DW.

In May, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said: “The scourge of gender-based violence continues to stalk our country, as the men of our country declared war on the women.”

According to the latest statistics from the South African Police Service, every three hours a woman is murdered in the country.

The number of cases of sexualized violence and femicide in Africa has risen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Will those in power finally grow aware of the extent of the problem? As long as governments consist only of men, gender-based violence will remain a “shadow pandemic.”

According to Murunga, one thing above all must change: African governments must include more women able to speak for and with other women.

In some countries, governments have created bodies or issued statements against gender-based violence. But government budgets rarely include money for concrete measures.



Mexico Narco Update

OE Watch Commentary: The first two accompanying references are from *NarcoNews*, a non-governmental investigative website that has been looking at the illegal drug phenomenon in Mexico for a number of years. The recent surge in drug-trade violence in the border town of Nuevo Laredo (across from Laredo, Texas) is the immediate subject of the two-part series. In the first part of the series, the author asks an interesting question. How is it that in spite of losing gun battle after gun battle against government forces, the locally dominant Northeast Cartel never seems to lose control? The author ends part one with the assertion that people do not trust the government. In the second part, the author starts by noting a relationship between local politics and the cartels, then goes on to outline a complicated political intrigue too detailed to fairly capture in this comment. The overall assertion is that local political leaders are deeply corrupt and attempting to play off one cartel against another. The third accompanying reference, from *Infobae*, gives additional commercial and geographic context. The article reaffirms that the two principal cartels, both with international reach, are the New Generation Jalisco Cartel (CJNG) and the Sinaloa Cartel. According to the report, there are at least 19 competitive cartels, with the CJNG being the most expansive. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Nobody in Nuevo Laredo likes the CDN, but nobody has confidence in the [explicative] government...”

Source: El Parece, “La Batalla Por Nuevo Laredo (The Battle for Nuevo Laredo),” *Narco News*, 19 September 2020. <https://www.narco.news/la-batalla-por-nuevo-laredo>

“You can’t kill us out of existence. Consider the CDN [Northeast Cartel, also sometimes known as Los Zetas], the current criminal hegemon in Nuevo Laredo. In spite of years of attrition, its dominion has been resistant to invasion from rivals and the efforts of state and federal governments to eliminate them...”

One of the forms with which they maintain control is by way of armed confrontations with the state, a contest that they lose almost 100% of the time. Nevertheless, they persist in Nuevo Laredo in spite of suffering far more losses than they inflict. How is that possible?...

Nobody in Nuevo Laredo likes the CDN, but nobody has confidence in the [explicative] government.”

“...The main targets are the self-defense groups that formed to defend themselves...”

Source: El Parece, “La Batalla Por Nuevo Laredo - Parte II (The Battle for Nuevo Laredo, Part II),” *Narco News*, 19 September 2020. <https://www.narco.news/la-batalla-por-nuevo-laredo-parte-ii>

“The violence in Tamaulipas also has a complex political dimension...the security strategy of the state government is principally centered around retaking Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa. These are possibly the two most important Tamaulipas cities economically and politically. The cities of Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa interconnect with Monterrey in Nueva León, the financial capital of northeast Mexico. The great part of the drug traffic coming from the states of the east and center of Mexico move by way of Monterrey and Reynosa or Nuevo Laredo. Nuevo Laredo might be the most important crossing point of Mexico with approximately 40% of all the commercial export traffic passing through the city toward I35 in the United States...”

“At least 19 criminal organizations threaten the country.”

Source: El nuevo mapa del narco en México: CJNG se extiende como una plaga por todo el país (The new narco map in Mexico: CJNG expands as a plague in the whole country),” *Infobae*, 22 September 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2020/09/22/el-mapa-del-narco-en-mexico-cjng-se-extiende-como-una-plaga-por-todo-el-pais/>

“The Sinaloa Cartel also maintains its dominant presence in spite of the fall of Chapo Guzmán...”

At least 19 criminal organizations threaten the country. The violence is a long way from stopping in Mexico. In spite of the fact that the federal government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador ordered the deployment of the armed forces in the country, the expansion of the narcos in the territory continues...

At a little more than ten years after its appearance, the CJNG overtook the Sinaloa Cartel and is now the aggrupation with the most expansion in Mexico. From a presence in four states (2010), it expanded to dominate 24 states [Mexico has 31 states, not counting the capital district]...”



Mexican Cartels Turn to the Dark Web for Drug Operations



INTERPOL Report on Crime Groups.

Source: Interpol official Twitter, https://twitter.com/INTERPOL_Cyber/status/1290543329986277377?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1290543329986277377%7Ctwgr%5Eshare_3&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.milenio.com%2Fpolicia%2Fcarteles-mexicanos-dark-web-apps-distribuir-drogas

conventional currencies, such as the US dollar or Mexican peso. Through individual exchangers and exchange houses, users can get cash or crypto assets in their virtual wallets. Crypto assets can then be exchanged to bills, or changed from bitcoin to real currencies. Using the Dark Web and various applications allows people and activities to remain anonymous. Transactions in cryptocurrencies are beneficial to organized crime by making it extremely difficult for national and international policing organizations to trace their revenue streams and also allows for the easy transfer of illicit funds for global money laundering purposes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavarz)**

“Cartels have turned to the Dark Web and popular applications for the sale and distribution of drugs.”

Source: “Cárteles migran a la web para distribuir Drogas y ‘blinder’ operaciones de autoridades (Cartels shift to the web to sell drugs and ‘shield’ operations from authorities),” *Milenio*, 27 September 2020. <https://www.milenio.com/policia/carteles-mexicanos-dark-web-apps-distribuir-drogas>

Cartels have adapted to the new reality by shifting to new technologies to distribute large and small shipments of drugs.

Source: “Cárteles Mexicanos utilizan la ‘Dark Web’ y Tinder para vender Drogas (Mexican cartels using the ‘Dark Web’ and Tinder to sell drugs),” *TeleDiario*, 27 September 2020. <https://www.telediario.mx/nacional/carteles-mexicanos-utilizan-la-dark-web-y-tinder-para-vender-drogas>

Due to COVID-19, Mexican cartels have been forced to conduct business by other means. Sinaloa and CJNG have established IT offices within their structures, through applications, fake pages and other sites on the Dark Web.



Signal Inhibitors Seized in Two Recent Raids Against CJNG in Mexico

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying news report, *La Silla Rota*, a citizen report alerted authorities to suspicious activity in the Paseos de la Fragua neighborhood in León on 22 September 2020. The anonymous call suggested an alleged kidnapping, which led Mexican authorities to the house. While in this case there was no kidnapping victim, authorities found an arsenal, money and drugs. Five suspects linked to *Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG)* were apprehended. In addition to a small arsenal of firearms and ammunition, one signal inhibitor was also discovered.

Additionally, on 12 October 2020 a Guardia Nacional (National Guard) report was released that a citizen complaint led to a kidnapping victim as well as the seizure of a variety of weapons and tactical equipment in San Luis Potosí. According to the accompanying press release, a field investigation by elements of the National Guard seized five vehicles, a variety of firearms and ammunition, and ballistic vests and helmets.

There were also two signal inhibitors found in the raids. In a further report from the Mexico based news outlet *Tala Jalisco Noticias*, elements of the National Guard raided a ranch in the municipality of Lagos de Moreno on 4 October 2020. Weapons, tactical elements, narcotics, and even farm animals were seized. CJNG insignia was branded on tactical vests and other items, indicating the ranch was occupied by CJNG members.

As noted above, RF (radio frequency) signal inhibitors have recently been seized in raids against the CJNG. An even earlier incident in June 2020, in which CJNG targeted Mexico City's police chief in a street ambush, also resulted in the seizure of one of these devices. Such inhibitors can be planted in 'kill zones' to block law enforcement and state security forces communications in order to isolate them so that they cannot request response aid. The increasing frequency of RF inhibitors turning up in CJNG arsenals is indicative of the cartel's evolving tactical sophistication.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavarz)



Two Signal Inhibitors.

Source: "Gracias a una denuncia ciudadana liberan a una persona privada de su libertad y aseguran vehículos, armamento y equipo táctico (Thanks to a citizen complaint, a kidnapping victim was released and vehicles, weapons and tactical equipment were secured)," Government of Mexico, National Guard, <https://www.gob.mx/guardianacional/prensa/gracias-a-una-denuncia-ciudadana-liberan-a-una-persona-privada-de-su-libertad-y-aseguran-vehiculos-armamento-y-equipo-tactico?state=published>

“A citizen complaint led to a kidnapping victim as well as the seizure of a variety of weapons and tactical equipment, including two signal inhibitors, in San Luis Potosí.”

Source: “Gracias a una denuncia ciudadana liberan a una persona privada de su libertad y aseguran vehículos, armamento y equipo táctico (Thanks to a citizen complaint, a kidnapping victim was released and vehicles, weapons and tactical equipment were secured),” *Government of Mexico, National Guard*, 12 October 2020. <https://www.gob.mx/guardianacional/prensa/gracias-a-una-denuncia-ciudadana-liberan-a-una-persona-privada-de-su-libertad-y-aseguran-vehiculos-armamento-y-equipo-tactico?state=published>

Individuals fled the scene in the vicinity of the municipality of Villa de Guadalupe when they saw law enforcement approaching.

Source: “Asegura Guardia Nacional armas, Drogas y animales en Lagos de Moreno (The National Guard secured weapons, drugs and animals in Lagos de Moreno),” *Tala Jalisco Noticias*, 6 October 2020. <https://talajalisconoticias.com/2020/10/06/asegura-guardia-nacional-armas-drogas-y-animales-en-lagos-de-moreno/>

The Mexican National Guard raided a ranch located in the municipality of Lagos de Moreno on October 4, 2020. Weapons and tactical equipment, including a signal inhibitor, were among the items seized by authorities.

Source: Ivonne Ortiz, “Caen 5 integrantes de *Cártel Jalisco*, escondían en Paseos de la Fragua (5 members of the Jalisco Cartel fall, hiding in Paseos de la Fragua),” *La Silla Rota*, 22 September 2020. <https://guanajuato.lasillarota.com/estados/caen-5-integrantes-de-cartel-jalisco-escondian-en-paseos-de-la-fragua-privacion-libertad-policia-leon/436800>

The anonymous call suggested an alleged kidnapping, which led Mexican authorities to the house. While there was no kidnapping victim, authorities found an arsenal, money and drugs.



China's Fishing Pirates Loot the Americas

OE Watch Commentary: At least a slice of Latin American geopolitical observers are on board with the idea that the Communist Chinese government uses the vast Chinese fishing fleet as a geostrategic weapon and that this is a danger not just to local fishing industries around the world, but to sovereignty and the environment. The accompanying references from Latin America were chosen because they appear to represent converging opinion from several countries of the region. The first, most recent reference, from the *PanamPost*, citing US government sources, *Oceana*, the *Guardian*, *Epoch Times*, *NBC* and others, makes a sweeping accusation of Chinese international trespassing, piracy and environmental criminality. The second reference is from an online journalists' co-op, *Cuatro Pelagatos*, centered in Ecuador. It was published in late July and takes an alarmed tone. Ecuadorans take great pride in their stewardship of the Galapagos Islands and they are reasonably worried that the huge industrial fishing fleet might not fully respect Ecuadoran sovereignty, much less the zone's environmental pristineness. The *Cuatro Pelegatos* authors note that the fishing fleet is used for more than fishing, but also as an instrument of strategic coercion. The third reference came out independently at almost the same time. It is from *Infobae*, a major online news network out of Argentina. The *Infobae* analysis is more global. The prompt for their article was not the felt imposition of the fleet in the eastern Pacific, but rather news that an even larger Chinese fishing fleet was dominating North Korean waters and pushing North Korean vessels out. The *Infobae* piece brings up a macabre angle—hundreds of fishing boats with dead Koreans have been washing up on Japanese shores. The article suggests that this aggression from the Chinese fleet along with North Korean weakness are the principle drivers of the phenomenon. The last reference is from Mexico. The article is of a worry expressed from the Mexican fishing industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...The boats turn off their radars and locator systems in order to avoid detection, which suggests illicit activity...”

Source: “Piratas chinos se dirigen a Chile: arrasan con la pesca legal y los recursos marítimos (Chinese pirates go towards Chile: devastates legal fishing and maritime resources),” *PanamPost*, 2 October 2020. <https://panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2020/10/02/piratas-chinos-se-dirigen-a-chile-arrasan-con-la-pesca-legal-y-los-recursos-maritimos/>

At least 340 clandestine boats of Chinese origin arrived in the Pacific to plunder its maritime resources, violating international norms. The boats turn off their radars and locator systems in order to avoid detection, which suggests illicit activity by what would be this parallel navy of the Chinese regime...They do not respect borders...

“...one of the silent wars that is most costly to nature...”

Source: Los chinos, los nuevos piratas de los mares (The Chinese, the new pirates of the sea),” *Cuatro Pelagatos*, 27 July 2020. <https://4pelagatos.com/2020/07/27/los-chinos-los-nuevos-piratas-de-los-mares/>

China, the postmodern pirate: China has 260 boats in the waters near the Galapagos Islands. It is a looting point for the largest fleet in the world, that is carrying out one of the silent wars that is most costly to nature: the war on illegal fishery...

China doesn't just fish: it destroys ecosystems that took thousands of years to form...This is an activity of the Chinese State. In fact, the authorities in Peking consider their fleet of fishing boats as an instrument of expansion and presence in disputed maritime zones...

A navy far superior to what was imagined: The report of ODI (High Seas Development Institute) states that the fishing fleets in waters distant from China are 5 to 8 times larger than expected. Of 16,966 boats identified, 12, 490 have been seen outside Chinese international waters. Their ownership and control is not transparent...

No one knows its size exactly, but it is monumental...

[It is] an invention of the Chinese Communist government...

The Chinese fishing fleet developed thanks to a state subsidy of more than a billion dollars a year...The price of calamari doesn't come close to the cost of the fuel needed to catch it...

Fishing fleet and paramilitary fleet...From North Korea to Mexico, Indonesia and South America, the incursions of the Chinese fishing boats are increasingly more frequent, shameless and aggressive. It is easy to imagine how an apparently civil confrontation could change into a military conflict...



Continued: China's Fishing Pirates Loot the Americas

“...North Korean ‘ghost boats’, that are frequently found filled with cadavers on the beaches of Japan...”

Source: Cómo opera la armada de piratas chinos que saquean los mares y enfrenta al régimen con Corea del Norte (How the fleet of Chinese pirates that loot the seas and confront the North Korean regime operates),” *Infobae*, 23 July 2020.

<https://www.infobae.com/america/mundo/2020/07/23/la-armada-de-pesqueros-ilegales-que-saquean-los-mares-y-enfrentan-a-china-con-corea-del-norte/>

A gigantic fleet of industrial ships is looting the waters of North Korea, turning the regime in Pyongyang into the latest victim of Beijing’s limitless ambitions...

The Chinese activity had catastrophic consequences for the economy of North Korea...So, in recent speeches Kim Jong-un ordered the state fishing industry to increase its range. The North Korean fishermen, desperate, found themselves forced to navigate to distances from the coast that were increasingly dangerous, poorly equipped and with few fuel reserves...

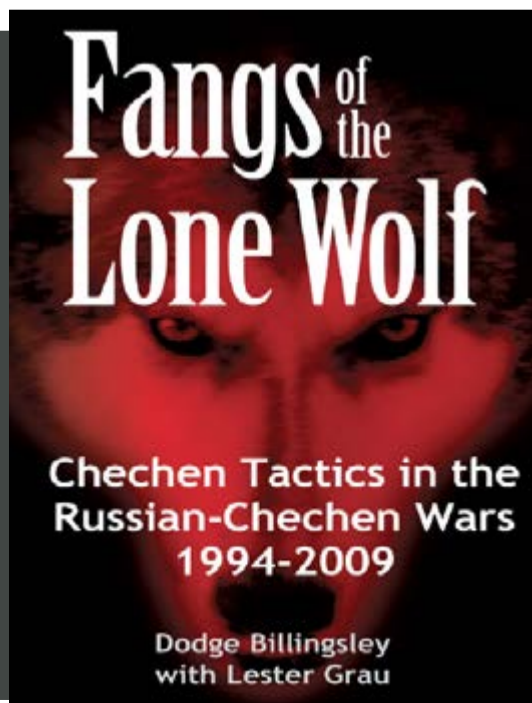
In 2017 the Japanese Coast Guard also reported having seen more than 2,000 North Korean fishing boats fishing illegally in [Japan’s] waters...

also, the Chinese practice [of coercing North Korean boats out of their own waters] appears to finally explain the mysterious phenomenon of the North Korean ‘ghost boats’, that are frequently found filled with cadavers on the beaches of Japan...There were more than 500 in the last five years, with some 150 in the past year...

“...any moment the Chinese fleet might want to fish in their national waters...”

Source: Piratas chinos acechan aguas mexicanas (Chinese pirates creep into Mexican Waters),” *Excelsior*, 4 August 2020. <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/piratas-chinos-acechan-aguas-mexicanas/1397892>

...Recent accusations in social media from the Ecuadoran Navy about the presence of the Chinese-flagged fishing fleet near the emblematic Galapagos Islands provoked organized fishermen throughout Latin America to launch the voice of alarm to unite to eradicate illegal fishing... Humberto Becerra Batista, vice-president of Alescas [fishing union conglomerate] explained that the countries of the region are raising their voices in face of the possibility that at any moment the Chinese fleet might want to fish in their national waters. Also the president of the Chamber of Fishing and Aquatic Agricultural Industries (Canainpesca) in Mexico, he underlined that up to know...



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>



Barbados Red Flag

OE Watch Commentary: The island country of Barbados has evidently decided to drop Queen Elizabeth as Head of State, effective a year from November. The accompanying reportage and editorial articles come from the Virgin Islands Free Press, an established regional outlet. The author of the latter of the two articles, from 24 September, reports commentary made by a UK legislator and opines that influences on the Barbados government to take the sovereignty decision at this time include pressure from the government of China. Influence over the island's politics offers potential military strategic and international law enforcement advantage due to its location at the center-east of the Lesser Antilles archipelago. Analysts should take note of the *VIFreepress* author's warning that the move to distance the UK from the island republic is being promoted by China because, if true, this communist influence could logically support and benefit the Cuban Communist Party and Bolivarian regime in Caracas as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Barbados at Sunset circa 2012.
Source: Berit from Redhill/Surrey, UK, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Follow_my_Footstep_to_the_Sunset,_Barbados_\(6776546804\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Follow_my_Footstep_to_the_Sunset,_Barbados_(6776546804).jpg)
Attribution: CCA2.0

“...Barbados will take the next logical step toward full sovereignty...”

Source: “God Save the Queen! Barbados Says It Will Remove Queen As Head of State,” *VIFreepress* and *Reuters*, 16 September 2020. <https://vifreepress.com/2020/09/god-save-the-queen-barbados-says-it-will-remove-queen-as-head-of-state/>

“While in 2019 the Dominican Republic exported \$5, 125.9 million to the United states, the value exported to the Asian market was only \$200 million...Nevertheless, Abinader clarifies that diplomatic relations with China will be maintained and that the Administration is open to whatever investment that Chinese businessmen wish to make, so long as they are not in strategic sectors of national security...President Abinader is quite clear that he must maintain close relations with the United States in spite of the tensions between that country and China. And it is that for several years, the United States is the principal destination of Dominican exports and imports...China is not within the first five places...In 2018, the United States represented 77.4% of the remittances that came to the Dominican Republic, in 2019 it represented 76.4% and between January and July of the current year it represented 81.8% of the \$4, 302,6 million that came into the country in this form. China does not figure into the countries sending remittances of the Central Bank...In 2019, US Americans represented the largest quantity of tourists that visited the country by air, with a total of 2,030, 257, above other countries such as Canada, or regions like South America or the continents, like Europe. This year, only 11,880 tourists from China, according to the central bank.”

“...swapping a symbolic Queen in Windsor for a real and demanding emperor in Beijing...”

Source: “China’s \$490 Million ‘Investment’ in Barbados behind Snap Decision to Remove the Queen,” *Vifreepress*, 24 September 2020. <https://vifreepress.com/2020/09/chinas-490-million-investment-in-barbados-behind-snap-decision-to-remove-the-queen-tory-mp/>

“China is behind Barbados’ snap decision to remove the British Queen as its head of state. That’s the shocking claim of a conservative member of the UK Parliament who said that a Chinese investment of \$490 million in Bridgetown’s tourism infrastructure forced the Barbadian leader’s hand in the matter this month. ‘Some islands seem to be close to swapping a symbolic Queen in Windsor for a real and demanding emperor in Beijing’, Tom Tugendhat, chairman of the UK’s Foreign Affairs Committee, said...Barbados, meanwhile, has received at least \$490 million, mostly as investment in the tourism sector, but is also thought to be benefiting from private deals.”



Venezuela Update

OE Watch Commentary: Many reports are coming out of Venezuela indicating that societal decline there continues, dangerously. The first of the accompanying articles reports that most of the country's inventory of fuel tanker trucks is now out of service. Without context that report might seem to be a relatively minor item in the litany of Venezuelan woes, but it serves to remind that as the entire economic structure collapses, what seem like simple fixes to shortages become increasingly impossible. As the second reference notes, the delivery trucks in service are not carrying gasoline produced inside Venezuela, as domestic refining has all but ceased. The gasoline is coming from Iran, but without a robust delivery system, the regime cannot fulfill its promises of making fuel available around the country so as to end the long waiting lines at gas pumps. One petroleum union leader predicts that



President Rouhani with Nicolás Maduro circa 2015.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Rouhani_in_meeting_with_Venezuelan_President_Nicolás_Maduro_02.jpg
Attribution: Hossein Zohrevand

when the Iranian gasoline runs out in a couple of months there will be yet another round of street protests. There is no debate about how unhappy the majority of the population is with the regime, especially outside of Caracas. The third accompanying reference is of a recent UN human rights report. While the contents will not come as new to analysts who have been following the region, the report is a reminder about the nature of the Bolivarian regime. The regime has not been destructive only because of its corruption or the failures of its Cuban inspired central-planning. It is also a habitual abuser of basic human rights, even according to the UN. Effective internal political opposition does not appear likely. The fourth reference is reportage of what for some Venezuelans is the most disheartening. A meeting occurred between representatives of the Maduro regime and Henrique Capriles, one of the better-known personalities from within what has passed for the opposition. Capriles apparently came to another accommodation with the regime regarding a proposed new round of public referenda. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...there are not sufficient tankers to distribute the gasoline...”

Source: “No hay suficientes gandolas para distribuir la gasolina (There aren't enough tanker trucks to distribute the gasoline),” *El Nacional*, 6 October 2020. <https://www.elnacional.com/economia/no-hay-suficientes-gandolas-para-distribuir-la-gasolina/>; <https://dolartoday.com/eudis-girot-hay-suficientes-gandolas-para-distribuir-la-gasolina/>

“Eudis Girot, executive director of the Unitary Federation of Venezuelan Petroleum Workers pointed out that of 1,568 service stations, only 370 are functioning. The majority, he said, charged in dollars. He explained that there are not sufficient tankers to distribute the gasoline. ‘Serious supply problems. Of 2,700 tankers only 469 are operative. The rest are in bad condition.’”

“...by December the lines and protests in the country will begin again...”

Source: “Gasolina iraní para dos meses: advierten que en diciembre regresarán las colas y las protestas (Iranian gasoline for two months; they warn that in December the lines and the protests will begin again),” *El Nacional*, 4 October 2020. <https://www.elnacional.com/economia/gasolina-irani-para-dos-meses-advierten-que-en-diciembre-regresaran-las-colas-y-las-protestas/>

“The 900,000 barrels of Iranian gasoline the Nicolás Maduro regime bought to soften the shortage in the internal market will only be enough for two months...The union leader warned that by December the lines and protests in the country will begin again because of the irregularities in the supply of fuel... It is not just a question of the shortage of gasoline, to that must be added the electrical outages, the shortage of piped potable water and an implacable economic crisis that the regime has not been able to handle...”



Continued: Venezuela Update

“...Maduro and the ministers of Defense and the Interior knew about the crimes...”

Source: Editors, “Venezuela: Misión de la ONU indica que las autoridades cometieron violaciones graves de los derechos humanos (Venezuela: UN mission indicates that the authorities committed grave human rights violations),” *Noticias ONU*, 16 September. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/09/1480562>

“The Independent International United Nations Mission for fact-finding about Venezuela reported that the government as well as state agents and groups who work with them have committed flagrant violations of human rights in that country. The report of the group of experts indicated that President Maduro and the ministers of Defense and Interior knew about the crimes.”

“...The Venezuelan opposition had better finish making itself independent from the United States...”

Source: “Arreaza confirma reunión con Capriles: “Se llegaron a acuerdos importantes (Arreaza confirms meeting with Capriles: They came to important agreements),” *Nacionales Política*, 6 October 2020. <https://www.noticierodigital.com/2020/10/arreaza-confirma-reunion-con-capriles-se-llegaron-a-acuerdos-importantes/>; <https://dolartoday.com/arreaza-confirma-reunion-con-capriles-se-llegaron-a-acuerdos-importantes/>

“Minister Jorge Arreaza confirmed in an interview with El País, of Spain, that the government of Nicolás Maduro carried out meetings with the opposition sector led by Henrique Capriles and representative Stalin González, in which ‘important agreements’ were reached...‘The Venezuelan opposition had better finish making itself independent from the United States,’ responded Arreaza on being asked if there had been a meeting with the ex-presidential candidate.”

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