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# OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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### ON THE COVER:

*Nigerien Armed Forces conduct a convoy movement, key leader engagement and ambush exercise during Flintlock 18 in Niger, Africa April 15, 2018.*

U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Runser, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4312704/flintlock-2018-fan-convoy-movement>. Attribution: Public Domain

## China Reports on New Anti-Communication System Missile in the Event of Taiwan Conflict

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese state media appears to be turning up the heat in its rhetoric over its pursuit of reunification with Taiwan. In August, the state-controlled broadcast network China Central Television (CCTV) ran footage of a live-fire drill in which the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force launched two "new-type" (no name given) conventional short-range missiles. These missiles are said to be capable of taking out an enemy's communication systems. Reporting on the CCTV broadcast *Global Times*, an English-language program sponsored by *People's Daily*—also a government news source—explained that the "new-type" missiles would be part of the arsenal used in a Taiwan conflict scenario. The article described the missiles as a possible upgraded variant of the DF-15 short-range ballistic missile family. While the body of the missile uses available, current technologies, the warhead reportedly uses new guidance systems and stronger anti-jamming functions. The report claimed that it is able to "paralyze entire hostile systems by pinpointing key hostile facilities."

Also of interest, the article described the conflict's phases, saying that "analysts predict that a potential PLA reunification-by-force operation on the island would start with electromagnetic and cyber warfare, followed by intense missile attacks, and air and sea assaults, before amphibious landing begins." The article did not identify the analysts or explain the use of the new anti-communication missiles in any particular phase.

“...the new missiles can paralyze entire hostile systems by pinpointing key hostile facilities, and they could play a vital role in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity including Taiwan.”



**DF-15B short-range ballistic missile**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DF-15#/media/File:Dongfeng-15B.JPG>  
Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Liu Xuanzun, "PLA Rocket Force Holds Live-Fire Drills, Testing New-Type Conventional Missiles," *Global Times* (English-language publication sponsored by *People's Daily*), 21 August 2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1232069.shtml>

*...the new missiles can paralyze entire hostile systems by pinpointing key hostile facilities, and they could play a vital role in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity including Taiwan, observers said on Saturday.*

*Under harsh natural environment and complex electromagnetic jamming, the 1st Conventional Missile Brigade attached to the PLA Rocket Force launched two new-type missiles in a rapid-reaction confrontational exercise, accurately hitting well-protected "enemy" defense positions hundreds of kilometers away, and effectively paralyzing the opponents' key information nodes in their defense systems, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Saturday.*

*The launches show that the PLA Rocket Force has expanded its arsenal with the new-type advanced warheads, and enhanced the capabilities of conventional missiles in striking with precision in different situations, paralyzing key hostile nodes and destroying "enemy" target, CCTV said.*

*Judging from the report footage and the narration, the new-type missiles seem to be of a new variant of the DF-15 short-range ballistic missile family, upgraded with two new advanced warheads, observers said.*

*By pinpointing key hostile facilities, the missile can paralyze entire hostile systems, providing an important tactic to the PLA, Song said, noting that the exercises proved the new missile is combat-ready.*

*Analysts predict that a potential PLA reunification-by-force operation on the island would start with electromagnetic and cyber warfare, followed by intense missile attacks, and air and sea assaults, before amphibious landing begins*



## China: Central Military Commission Publication Examines Battlefield Victory Through Cognition

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

In 2019, *Quishi Journal*, the leading official theoretical journal of the Chinese Communist Party, explained that “the scope of military struggle in humankind will inevitably extend from the natural, technological, societal realms to the cognitive realm, thus shaping (China’s) three major warfighting dimensions.” Since then, an increasing number of Chinese theorists have been striving to understand and develop the concept of the cognitive domain. The second accompanying excerpted article is a recent example. The article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission, takes a close look at the importance and suggested methods of developing a “cognitive advantage.”

The nature of “cognition” has changed. The article explains that within the past system of mechanized warfare, experience on the battlefield had been the key to survival. Obviously, the older soldiers knew what to expect and their sensory systems (the human mind) were more fine-tuned than those of new soldiers. An experienced soldier could tell the distance of an artillery shell impact point based on the sound of the blast, and they were able to quickly hide and take appropriate action, hence increasing their survival rate. In traditional, mechanized warfare, there was time to react within the range of artillery. However, the article points out that in today’s system of informationization and tomorrow’s system of intelligentization, “discovery means destruction” and human-machine integrated intelligent sensing becomes paramount to survival and victory. In other words, artificial intelligence is needed to extend, expand, and supplement people’s own perception since human perception alone is now too slow to detect and act on any impending danger.

Along with supplementing human thinking with artificial intelligence, to win in psychological war, according to the article, it is “urgently necessary” to strengthen psychological training. The article suggests using artificial intelligence means, such as computer vision, human-machine interaction, and virtual reality technology to construct a high-stress virtual battlefield. Training should include “immersive relaxation training, battlefield psychological adaptability, psychological tolerance, and psychological stability training. This type of training, according to the article, will help the troops to become more psychologically resilient, preventing psychological damage from happening. Along with such training, the article recommends putting into place a system of technology-driven psychological testing to weed out the weak. For example, artificial intelligence technology, such as facial recognition and emotional analysis of big data can capture and record facial expressions, eye contact, and other traits that would determine an individual’s state of mental health and behavioral characteristics. Such testing can take place before war to determine any potential psychological issues that might arise, weeding out officers and soldiers who might not cope as well. This would then ensure overall combat readiness, reduce wartime stress and improve the battlefield survival rate and combat effectiveness. Technology-driven tests can also be used to guide officers and soldiers through psychological recovery, helping them to transition smoothly out of wartime.

“Cognition contains great combat power, of which the perception system is the gateway, thinking mode is the core, and psychological factors are the cornerstone.”

**Source:** Yang Wenzhe, “在变与不变中探寻智能化战争制胜之道 (Seeking the Way to Win Intelligentized Warfare by Analyzing what are Changed and Unchanged),” *Quishi Journal* (leading official theoretical journal of the Chinese Communist Party), 22 October 2019, <http://www.qstheory.cn/defense/2019-10/22/c-1125137570.htm>.

*The scope of intelligentized warfare extends into new domains. Engels pointed out: “Humanity fights in whatever ways production is conducted.” With AI technology rapidly infiltrating into the military domain, it will inevitably lead to a thorough change in the way combat power manifests itself. Being propelled by such new theories and new technologies as big data, quantum computing, smart communications, and brain science, new things that “go beyond people’s expectations and new capabilities of “being omnipotent” will turn people’s current knowledge upside down. The cognitive domain will become another battle domain next to the land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic, and cyber domains of warfare. The scope of military struggle in humankind will inevitably extend from the natural, technological, societal realms to the cognitive realm, thus shaping the three major warfighting dimensions, that is, the physical dimension, the informational dimension, and the cognitive dimension...*

**Source:** Peng Bo, “释放认知战力 撬动胜战之门 (Unleash the Power of Cognitive Warfare to Pry Open the Door to Victory),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (The official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 31 August 2021. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-08/31/content\\_297967.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-08/31/content_297967.htm)

*In intelligent warfare, cognitive space is the key combat space, cognitive advantage is an important strategic advantage, cognitive confrontation is the main form of confrontation. It can be said that “without cognition there is no war.” Cognition contains great combat power, of which the perception system is the gateway, thinking mode is the core, and psychological factors are the cornerstone. Enhancing perception efficacy, constructing intelligent thinking, stimulating psychological advantages, and releasing the cognitive combat power of the officers and men to the greatest extent will bring about great benefits for winning intelligent war.*

## Continued: China: Central Military Commission Publication Examines Battlefield Victory Through Cognition

**Continued Source:** Peng Bo, “释放认知战力 撬动胜战之门 (Unleash the Power of Cognitive Warfare to Pry Open the Door to Victory),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (The official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 31 August 2021. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-08/31/content\\_297967.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-08/31/content_297967.htm)

*Enhance psychological testing. The practice of measuring and selecting soldiers has been around since ancient times. In the Spring and Autumn Period, the young draftee's athletic ability was measured to see if he could wear armor for military activities... In modern warfare, psychological confrontation has its own undercurrents. We should carry out psychological assessments... With the help of artificial intelligence technology, such as facial recognition and emotional analysis using big data, (we can) capture and record facial expressions, direction of vision, and eye to video frequency, to identify the inner psychological state and behavioral characteristics of officers and soldiers. Based on the assessment results, it is necessary carry out psychological adjustments throughout time and in all dimensions. Before combat, conduct thorough psychological prevention and early on to detect officers and soldiers who have not met the mental health standards...; Test for good psychological control during the war to ensure that the psychological state of the participants in the war are able to maintain the best level of combat, reduce wartime stress, and to improve the battlefield survival rate and combat effectiveness; after the war to do a good job of psychological recovery, to help officers and soldiers to achieve a smooth transition between wartime and the normal psychological state.*

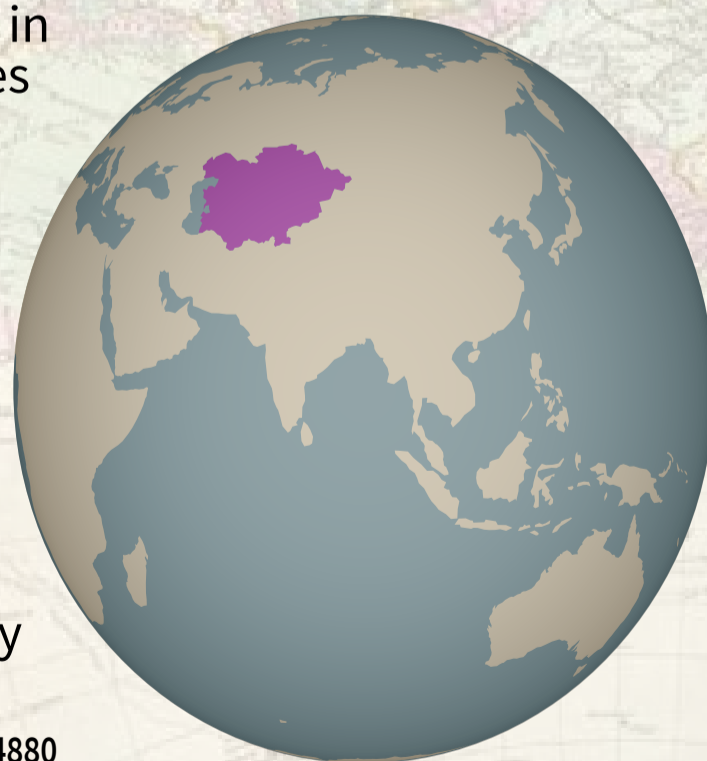
*Psychological training should be used to strengthen morale. Clausewitz pointed out that the courage of soldiers is different from that of ordinary people. Ordinary people's courage is innate while the courage of soldiers can be fostered through exercise and training. Winning intelligent warfare urgently needs the empowerment of psychological training, the concept of psychological training to establish combat effectiveness, the full use of computer vision, human-machine interaction, virtual reality technology, and other means of artificial intelligence to construct a virtual, high-stress battlefield, carry out immersive relaxation training, battlefield psychological adaptability, psychological endurance, and psychological stability training. Such trainings can help participating personnel to effectively enhance their psychological elasticity and stimulate their psychological potential in the battlefield environment time and again so as to prevent the occurrence of psychological damage in war.*

## 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>







Armed version of Wing Loong II side view

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wing\\_Loong\\_II\\_side\\_view.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wing_Loong_II_side_view.jpg) Attribution: CC x SA 4.0

## UAV Used to Provide Communication Services to Flood-Stricken Areas of Central China

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

In mid-July torrential rains struck Henan province in central China, causing severe flooding that resulted in over 30 deaths. The downpour quickly filled reservoirs, flooding subway tunnels and underpasses. As stranded passengers and emergency personnel quickly overwhelmed local communications networks, China's Ministry of Emergency Management deployed long-endurance Yilong-2H (翼龙; lit. Pterodactyl, also known as the Wing Loong) UAVs equipped with communication systems to provide cellphone service radar and optical imagery of affected areas. According to the accompanying excerpt from the *Global Times*, an affiliate publication of the Chinese Communist Party's *People's Daily*, the UAV was deployed to Mihe Township. The township is located between Gongyi County, which has seen major flooding, and Zhengzhou, a city of over 12 million that has also been greatly affected by the flooding.

The UAV was developed as a joint initiative between the Ministry of Emergency Management and the Aviation Industry Corporation of

China (AVIC). The Ministry of Emergency Management is a new ministry created in 2018 after recognition of the inadequacy of emergency responses to both seasonal events and a series of environmental disasters in the past two decades.

The article noted that the Yilong-2 was chosen for this mission due to its high take-off weight and longer endurance compared to other Chinese-developed Medium-Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAVs, helping to fill an important gap for first responders and allowed people to contact emergency services or make contact with family.

China is also testing UAVs for forest fire detection and high-altitude meteorological data collection roles. These activities along with this first deployment of the Yilong UAV to reestablish communications shows a focus in Chinese UAV development overall. The lessons will be applied more expansively and inevitably inform other national sectors including the military as well.

“On July 21, the Yilong-2H took off for the disaster-stricken areas in Henan, flying nearly 1,200km before arriving at Mihe Township which was experiencing communications blackouts.

**Source:** “穿越三省一市飞行1200公里 为什么选翼龙2H无人机给灾区‘送信号’ (Flying 1200 Kilometers Across Three Provinces and One City—Why choose the Yilong-2H UAV to “Provide ‘Bars’” to the Disaster Area?),” *Global Times* (Chinese publication sponsored by People's Daily, the daily newspaper of the CCP Central Committee), 23 July 2021. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-07/23/c\\_1211254483.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2021-07/23/c_1211254483.htm)

*Recently, many places in Henan have been hit by extremely heavy rain, destroying some communications facilities affected areas and interrupting communications. On the evening of July 21, people in the disaster area whose communications had been cut off suddenly received text messages: “The Ministry of Emergency Management has deployed an Yilong drone to the skies above your town which will temporarily restore China Mobile’s public communication network...”*

*According to the official WeChat (social media platform) account of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), the developer of the Yilong series of UAVs, after the disaster, the Yilong-2H emergency rescue UAV was placed on standby for this mission. On July 20, AVIC was tasked with surveying the disaster area. The UAV’s crew quickly set about refueling and completing flight preparations, was well readying the mobile communication base station, synthetic aperture radar and camera system. On July 21, the Yilong-2H took off for the disaster-stricken areas in Henan, flying nearly 1,200km before arriving at Mihe Township which was experiencing communications blackouts. The Yilong-2H’s mobile communications base station was able to provide stable mobile signal connections for an area covering roughly 50 square kilometers.*

*The total flight time of this mission is nearly 16 hours, with a total of 8 hours and 8 minutes spent operating over the disaster area.*

## China Promoting Peacekeeping Agenda to Improve Image

By Jackson Martin  
OE Watch Commentary

China is making a concerted effort to tout its contributions to international peacekeeping operations, almost certainly as a way to win support on the global stage or at least placate nations who are skeptical of Beijing's intentions. On 3 August, *People's Liberation Army Daily* reported the release of "Peacekeepers," a two-part documentary series highlighting China's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa. According to the article, "the program presents the spirit of China's peacekeeping forces to the world, as well as China's unwavering commitment to upholding global peace in its role as a great power. Filmed over 5 years, the program shows the experiences of Chinese military personnel as they carry out peacekeeping duties in South Sudan." The article concludes by saying "[the documentary] objectively presents the faithful fulfillment of duties by and mission conditions of Chinese peacekeeping forces." Produced by the Publicity Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the documentary is the latest in China's efforts to promote its influence within international organizations through positive depictions of its foreign policy in general and its military in particular.

Three weeks later on 26 August, the state-run *China Daily* reported the announcement by China's Ministry of Defense of the inaugural "Shared Destiny" international peacekeeping field training exercises. The training exercises, held from 6-15 September in Henan Province, involved more than 1,000 military personnel from China, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Thailand." According to the article, "main drills included battlefield reconnaissance, sentinel patrols, armed escort, protection of civilians, terrorism response, construction of provisional operating bases, battlefield rescue, and epidemic control procedure."

At the press conference announcing the training exercises, Ministry of Defense spokesperson Tan Kefei told reporters China, "will continue to increase its active involvement in UN peacekeeping missions." The term "Shared Destiny" has become increasingly common under the leadership of Xi Jinping to promote the perception that China is committed to upholding the rules-based international order. According to the UN, China is the second largest financial contributor

“China will continue to increase its active involvement in UN peacekeeping missions.

to peacekeeping operations, trailing only the United States. There are currently about 2,250 Chinese peacekeeping personnel deployed to nine mission areas around the world.

Lastly, a post to the official WeChat account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 30 August provides a look at how the Chinese government continues to put a priority on UN peacekeeping missions. The post described an incident in which Chinese forces were deployed to prevent violent clashes at a refugee camp in South Sudan in 2015 and states how the crowd, "armed with clubs and knives," was brought under control "perhaps by the staunch heroism of China's military peacekeepers." Such accounts of Chinese military personnel abroad work both to build domestic pride in China's armed forces and reinforce the notion of China as a benevolent force motivated not by self-interest, but common prosperity in its dealings with other nations.

**Source:** Feng, S., "反映中国蓝盔风采的纪录片《和平使命》播出 (Broadcast of Documentary "Peacekeepers" Reflects Integrity of China's Blue Helmets)," *PLA Daily*, 3 August 2021. [https://www.81.cn/vh/2021-08/03/content\\_10070369.htm](https://www.81.cn/vh/2021-08/03/content_10070369.htm)

*...the program presents the spirit of China's peacekeeping forces to the world, as well as China's unwavering commitment to upholding global peace in its role as a great power. Filmed over 5 years, the program shows the experiences of Chinese military personnel as they carry out peacekeeping duties in South Sudan...*

*...objectively presents the faithful fulfillment of duties by and mission conditions of Chinese peacekeeping forces.*

**Source:** Ji, X., "中国军队将首次举办“共同命运-2021”国际维和实兵演习 (Chinese Military to Hold Inaugural "Shared Destiny-2021" International Peacekeeping Field Training Exercises)," *China Daily*, 26 August 2021. <https://cnews.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202108/26/WS6128431ea3101e7ce97609bb.html>

*...over 1,000 military personnel from China's People's Liberation Army, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Thailand...main drills included battlefield reconnaissance, sentinel patrols, armed escort, protection of civilians, terrorism response, construction of provisional operating bases, battlefield rescue, and epidemic control procedure...*

*China will continue to increase its active involvement in UN peacekeeping missions...*

**Source:** He, S., "蓝盔”守护非洲小女孩——中国维和部队的初心和使命 (The Blue Helmet and an African Girl - The Mission and Dedication of Chinese Peacekeepers)," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official WeChat Account, 30 August 2021. [https://www.81.cn/vh/2021-08/30/content\\_10082792.htm](https://www.81.cn/vh/2021-08/30/content_10082792.htm)

*...armed with clubs and knives...perhaps by the staunch heroism of China's military peacekeepers...*

## India's Scrutiny of Chinese Actions

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

The border standoff between India and China that flared up in May 2020 has caused Indian officials to pay increased attention to Chinese activities near the border and to developments within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The accompanying excerpted articles report on China's recent announcement of a new commander for the PLA's Western Theater Command and it provides a look at how closely India is scrutinizing Chinese actions.

The article from *Xinhua*, the official state-run press agency of China, reports how Chinese President Xi Jinping recently "presented certificates of order at a ceremony to promote five senior military officers to the rank of general" and that the promoted officers included the PLA's Commander of the Western Theater Command, Wang Haijiang.

The article from *India Today*, an independent news magazine, also reports on General Wang Haijian's recent promotion as well as on related developments. The article notes that this is "the fourth time that the Chinese President" has "changed the top General since the India-China standoff in Ladakh last year" and that Wang "is one of the rare top generals in the [PLA] with actual combat experience." The article also points out that this is not the only change of command, as China has "also posted an additional air force General in the Western Theatre Command since it has increased deployment of both aircraft and air defence formations."

The article goes into more of General Wang's background, including



Image: Map of Western Theatre of PLA

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_Western\\_Theatre\\_of\\_PLA.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Western_Theatre_of_PLA.svg)  
Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

how he "is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district" and that he "has served in all theatres opposite India." Lastly, the article notes how this comes at a time when "China and India have disengaged from most friction points after 12 rounds of talks at the level of the Corps commanders," but that "tensions remain high." As the situation with the border continues to play out, the articles provide a look at what China is doing with leadership in the Western Theater Command and how closely India continues to follow it.

“He is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district.”

**Source:** "Xi presents orders to promote military officers to rank of general," *Xinhua* (the official state-run press agency of China), 6 September 2021. [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-09/06/c\\_1310171657.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-09/06/c_1310171657.htm)

*Xi Jinping, chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), on Monday presented certificates of order at a ceremony to promote five senior military officers to the rank of general.*

*The ceremony was held by the CMC in Beijing... The promoted officers are Commander of the Western Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Wang Haijiang...*

**Source:** Gaurav C Sawant, "China changes Western Theatre Commander again," *India Today* (an independent news magazine), 8 September 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/china-pla-western-theatre-commander-change-president-xi-jinping-1850721-2021-09-08>

*Chinese President Xi Jinping has changed the Western Theatre Commander once again. General Wang Haijiang has been promoted to a General and appointed as the top General commanding the Chinese Western Theatre Command (WTC) opposite the line of control from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh.*

*This is the fourth time that the Chinese President, who is also the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), changed the top General since the India-China standoff in Ladakh last year...*

*59-year-old Gen Wang Haijiang is one of the rare top generals in the People's Liberation Army with actual combat experience. He is a Vietnam War veteran... The Chinese armed forces have also posted an additional air force General in the Western Theatre Command since it has increased deployment of both aircraft and air defence formations...*

*Gen Wang was promoted to the rank of a Lt Gen and made the commander of the Xinjiang region under the Western Theatre command in 2019. He is seen as a domain expert and has served earlier as a commander in the Tibet Military District and in the Xinjiang military district. He has served in all theatres opposite India.*

*Though China and India have disengaged from most friction points after 12 rounds of talks at the level of the Corps commanders, tensions remain high...*



## Russian Loitering Munitions to Enter Serial Production for Domestic and Export Markets

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer*, a Russian weekly newspaper focusing on military and defense issues, Russia plans to put two different loitering munitions into serial production—the Kub and Lancet. Aside from television and thermal imaging cameras and radar transparent

material, which are considered usual for such flying munitions, the electric-powered Kub and Lancet are supposed to be silent. Also of particular note, the article mentions that these systems will not just be available for domestic purchase, but also for foreign customers.

“Based on test results, the military was satisfied with both the Kub and Lancet. Therefore, it is planned to put them in serial production. And it is planned not only to deliver them to the Russian Armed Forces, but also promote them on the global market.

**Source:** Vladimir Tuchkov, “Барражирующий «Ланцет»: Россия стремительно проходит путь от дронов-камикадзе к летающим минным полям (The Loitering Lancet: Russia Rapidly Rises from Kamikaze Drones to Flying Minefields),” *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* (Russian weekly newspaper focusing on military and defense issues), 22 June 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/62626>

*...The Kalashnikov Concern announced its determination to promote a loitering munition, which was created by its Zala Aero subsidiary company and successfully tested in Syria, on the foreign markets. This desire is quite natural, of course. Is it feasible though?*

*Currently there are only three kamikaze drones in Russia. And all of them are produced by the Kalashnikov Concern. As it was mentioned earlier, our domestic designers delayed starting work in this direction and now the global market is filled with loitering munitions, as they say, to every taste and purse...*

*The three Russian loitering munitions by Zala Aero, featuring the traditional length of 1 meter and weight of several kilograms, also fit this concept. The Kub was developed first, and then a year later, the Lancet-1 and Lancet-3 UAVs were tested last year. All of them were tested in real combat conditions at the “Syrian training grounds.”*

*The weight of the warheads of the Kub and Lancet-3 is 3 kilograms. The Lancet-1 is smaller: its warhead weighs 1 kilogram, while its total weight is 5 kilograms. It is launched in traditional way -- with the aid of a catapult. They can fly in the air for up to 30 minutes at speeds of 80 to 130 kph. The operating range is 30-40 kilometers. The three munitions are equipped with television and thermal imaging cameras, which are used by the operator to guide the drone to targets, both stationary and mobile ones. A coordinate system is used to combat stationary targets.*

*The advantages of Kalashnikov loitering munitions include increased stealthiness. It is understandable that they are made of radar-transparent composite materials, which is a general trend. However, the developers claim that they are virtually silent due to the use of an electric motor. At the same time, the Kub’s glider is the shape of a bird. And it moves in the sky similar to a bird, except for not flapping its wings. Although there is also a special mode simulating a bird in flight. The Lancet has a more complex aerodynamic profile: a longitudinal biplane with two pairs of X-shaped wings. Kalashnikov loitering munitions feature various flight modes. They can approach the target at an altitude of 3-4 meters, following the terrain. They also can attack from an altitude of 4.5 kilometers -- this method is used when striking tanks into the least protected upper projection.*

*Based on test results, the military was satisfied with both the Kub and Lancet. Therefore, it is planned to put them in serial production. And it is planned not only to deliver them to the Russian Armed Forces, but also promote them on the global market...*

**Additional Video Sources:** Aerial mining against UAVs, with the Lancet loitering munition Воздушное минирование против БПЛА, барражирующий боеприпас Ланцет <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJygYPKdTfc>

**Additional Video Sources:** Wow! New Kalashnikov Drone (aka Suicide Drone) KUB-UAV - KUB BLA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pasGbe9KewA>



**Lancet loitering munition UAV**

Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/ARMY-2019-Exhibition-pavilions/i-HwGLLZC/0/3a7de479/X2/Army2019Pavilions-071-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Russia's Lessons Learned from Syria: Reinforced Companies



**General Aleksandr Dvornikov, Commander of the Southern Military District**

Source: The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, [http://structure.mil.ru/management/info.htm?id=12088926@SD\\_Employee](http://structure.mil.ru/management/info.htm?id=12088926@SD_Employee) Attribution: CC BY 4.0.

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from *Voyennaya Mysl*, the monthly journal of the Russian General Staff, features an article coauthored by General Aleksandr Dvornikov, Commander of the Southern Military District, about how Russia's Syria experience is causing change in Russian military training practices. The article discusses how reinforced companies are the preferred unit of action for dealing with an irregular enemy, and that small unit commanders must avoid the use of "stereotypical tactics." The article goes on to describe the importance of force-on-force (company vs. company) exercises to hone skills and create better leaders.

An interesting aspect of the article is the terminology used. The article specifically refers to a "reinforced company" [усиленная рота] instead of the term "company tactical group" [ротная тактическая группа (РТГр)], which has been used in other Russian military publications. Given that both terms mean "a company with attachments," and the term "battalion tactical group" [батальонная тактическая группа (БТГр)] is used many times in the article, there is likely some significance to the author's use of the term "reinforced company" instead of "company tactical group."

The author of the article is also notable. General Dvornikov is not only the Commander of the Southern Military District, but is also proffered as a likely candidate to be Russia's next Chief of the General Staff. Clearly influential, the results of his experiments in the Southern Military District may well be implemented throughout the Russian armed forces.

“Unconventional thinking, skillful use of own advantages and leveling the enemy's superiority, misleading the enemy, and achieving a surprise effect—this is what is required for the successful conduct of combat operations in modern military conflicts and this is what we should teach commanders and military formations of the Russian Federation Armed Forces.”

**Source:** General A.V. Dvornikov and Colonel R.R. Nasybulin, “Актуальные направления совершенствования боевой подготовки войск с учетом опыта, полученного в Сирии (Current Ways to Improve Combat Training of Troops Using Experience Obtained in Syria),” *Voyennaya Mysl* (the monthly journal of the Russian General Staff), July 2021. <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/upload/site178/pdj6wywh3M.pdf>

*Analysis of modern armed conflicts, including in the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR), indicates that the active use by the opposing parties, along with regular troops, of irregular armed formations (IAF), applying tactics and methods of conducting combat operations that are atypical of military subunits, is becoming an objective reality.*

*As early as the initial stage of the armed conflict in the SAR, the ineffectiveness of the straightforward, stereotypical tactics of the government army in the armed struggle against the IAF of the so-called opposition, which rather effectively resisted the regular troops, was revealed. Their mobile small groups penetrated the battle formations of the Syrian army and delivered short but painful strikes against them, taking them by surprise. Only militia detachments that fought on the side of the government forces were able to successfully counteract the IAF, since they used nonstandard methods of operation the enemy did not expect...*

*Unconventional thinking, skillful use of own advantages and leveling the enemy's superiority, misleading the enemy, and achieving a surprise effect -- this is what is required for the successful conduct of combat operations in modern military conflicts and this is what we should teach commanders and military formations of the Russian Federation Armed Forces. Of course, tactical exercises remain the main form of training troops and improving their field proficiency. It should be understood that the above qualities, abilities, and skills cannot be acquired and developed in conditions where the trainee's opponent is a "piece of plywood," that is, in a static target environment. This requires opposition from a real rival and elements of competition, which is achievable only in bilateral exercises. It is for this reason that all tactical exercises in the Southern Military District, starting with company-level ones, are conducted in a bilateral format...*

*At the same time, it was necessary to take steps to improve the leadership of exercises. The point is that all existing manuals and guidance documents were developed for conducting exercises with motorized rifle (tank) subunits without reinforcement assets. Meanwhile, modern combat experience attests that autonomous actions of small motorized rifle (tank) subunits reinforced by specialists, personnel, and equipment of other services and combat arms of the Armed Forces, fully equipped and comprehensively provided with everything necessary, are the most effective and, as a rule, lead to success. That is why in the Southern Military District, bilateral tactical exercises are conducted with reinforced motorized rifle companies (MRC), the combat capabilities of which are significantly higher than those of the standard MRC...*

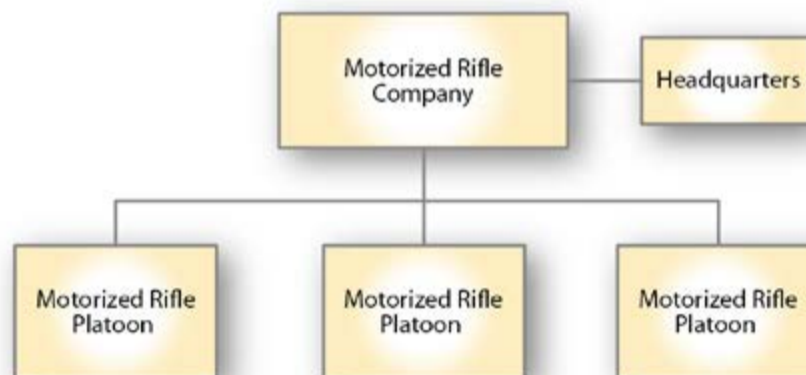
## Continued: Russia's Lessons Learned from Syria: Reinforced Companies

**Continued Source:** General A.V. Dvornikov and Colonel R.R. Nasybulin, “Актуальные направления совершенствования боевой подготовки войск с учетом опыта, полученного в Сирии (Current Ways to Improve Combat Training of Troops Using Experience Obtained in Syria),” *Voyennaya Mysl* (the monthly journal of the Russian General Staff), July 2021. <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/upload/site178/pdj6wywh3M.pdf>

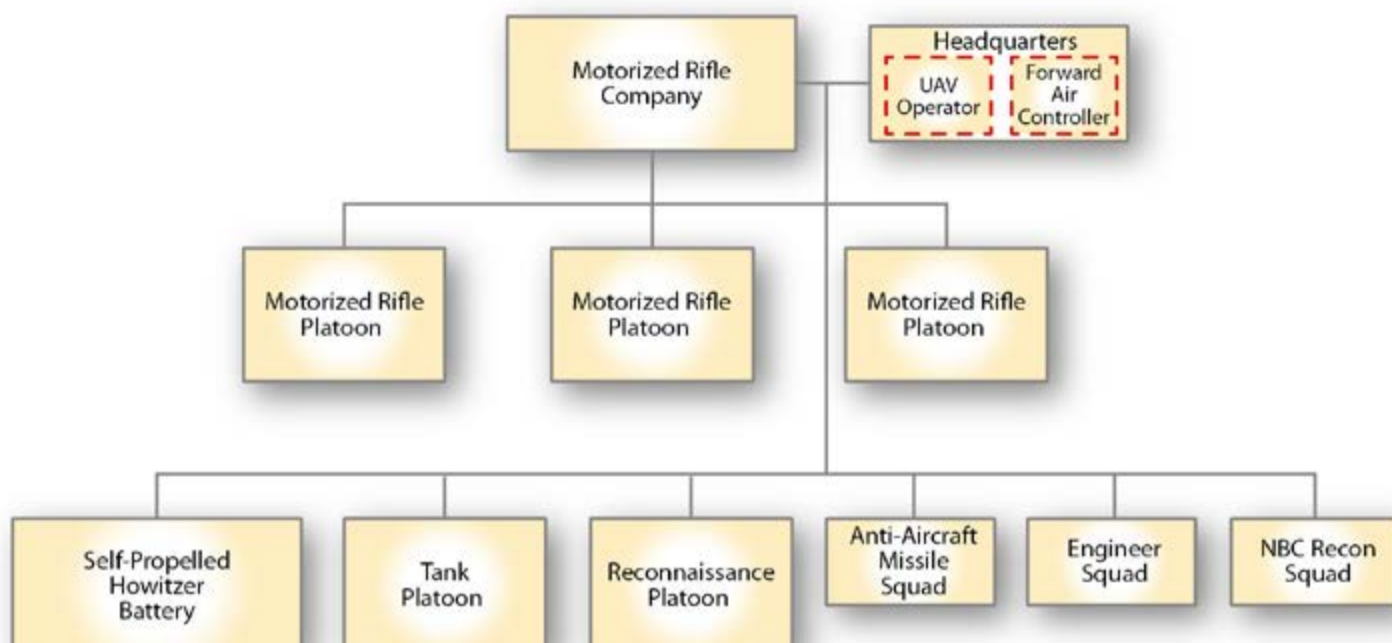
*Correspondingly, command and control of a reinforced MRC is also expanded -- in addition to the company commander and his deputy for military-political work, it also includes an operator of UAVs and an attached forward aircraft controller.*

*To enhance the spirit of competition, two-way training usually involves companies from different battalions. Naturally, this kind of exercise should be conducted by a commander two levels above the subunits being trained, that is, a regiment (brigade) commander should conduct a two-way company-level tactical exercise. However, in order to comply with the principle of “each commander trains his subordinate” and to develop (maintain) the skills of commanders of motorized rifle (tank) battalions, the practice has been introduced in the Southern Military District whereby one exercise in a battalion is conducted under their leadership, but also in the two-way format...*

### Standard Motorized Rifle Company Structure



### Reinforced Motorized Rifle Company Structure







**Palantin EW System**

Source: The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12226385@egNews Attribution: CC BY 4.0.](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12226385@egNews Attribution: CC BY 4.0.)

## Details of Russia's Palantin Electronic Warfare System

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian Ground Forces have a three-tiered system for electronic warfare (EW). At the maneuver brigade and division levels, each has an EW company that focuses on tactical tasks; at the combined arms army level, each has an EW battalion that focuses on operational-tactical tasks; and at the military district level, each has an EW brigade that focuses on strategic tasks. The accompanying excerpted articles from *Izvestiya*, a large-circulation Russian daily newspaper, and the website of the *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, describe the capabilities of the primary EW system at the combined arms army level. (In particular, it notes the system's maximum range (1,000 km); ability to jam jammer of conventional and software defined radios, and also function as signals intelligence platform to) Just as the Borisoglebsk-2 EW system is the primary and latest EW system for maneuver brigade/division-level EW companies, the Palantin EW system is the primary and latest system for combined arms army-level EW battalions.

“The Palantin electronic warfare system calculated how to: protect from unmanned aircraft; disrupt guidance systems of conventional and weapons of mass destruction; and also discovered and jammed cellular and trunk communication channels.”

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Aleksey Ramm, “Гаси волну: юг России закроют непроницаемые «глушилки» (Extinguishing the Wave: Impenetrable “Jammers” Will Close Russia’s South),” *Izvestiya* (a large-circulation Russian daily newspaper), 24 November 2020. <https://iz.ru/1091042/anton-lavrov-aleksei-ramm/gasi-volnu-iug-rossii-zakroiut-nepronitcaemye-glushilki>

...A decision in principle was made to equip all Army EW battalions in the Southern Military District with the latest Palantin systems, sources in the defense department told *Izvestiya*. They are intended to suppress military radio communications equipment and unmanned vehicles including small ones. It is an all-inclusive design will also make it possible to suppress radio relay stations and satellite communications ground terminals...

According to a report from the Defense Ministry Press-Service, the Palantin was tested a year ago for the first time in exercises near Voronezh. With its help, a battalion tactical EW group was drilled in suppressing communications in a belt of up to 1,000 km and to protect troops from the use of a hypothetical enemy's precision weapon...

The saturation of the Southern Military District with the latest EW equipment is no surprise, the expert believes. It is precisely here that there are the most points of collision of Russia's interest with West, as well as with the post-Soviet states. It is sufficient to refer to Crimea, Abkhaziya and South Osetiya...The latest Palantins have been arriving in line units since 2018. The mobile system is accommodated on several four axle “KamAZ” truck chasses. It can be deployed from the transport to the combat position in a half hour.

According to information from the developers, the machine knows how to “jam” network and trunk communications channels, to suppress tactical enemy radio communications in the ultrashort and short wavebands. The most important feature of the system was stated to be the ability to effectively operate against modern and future radios, which are able to flexibly change their frequencies and working logarithms – so-called software-defined radio systems (SDR). Much older EW systems cannot effectively counter them.

The Palantin's' equipment and new software will make it possible as well to get integrated information from various EW and radio assets and transmit it to a higher headquarters. As result, it is possible there to track online the situation in the ether and to make a decision on the synchronized use of various electronic warfare machines.

According to information from the Defense Ministry, the system can also operate in a broadband mode, as well as imposing targeted jamming for concrete sectors and characteristics of a radio signal, that allows it to operate in various different conditions. Both an entire area, as well as some specific transmitter or receiver can be suppressed.

The machine combines within itself the functions of radio intelligence collection and radio suppression. Thus, for example, studying the ether, it can detect not just the presence of a nearby drone, but also calculate the orienting coordinates of its operator, and then suppress the control signal between him and the drone, rendering the device helpless....

## Continued: Details of Russia's Palantin Electronic Warfare System

**Continued Source:** “Специалисты РЭБ общевойсковой армии ЗВО подавили систему связи условного противника в ходе испытаний комплекса «Палантин» в Воронежской области (Electronic Warfare Specialists of a Combined Arms Army in the Western Military District tested the ‘Palantin’ Electronic Warfare System in the Voronezh Region),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (official website of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense)*, 20 July 2021. [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12373034@egNews&print=true](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12373034@egNews&print=true)

...[M]ore than 100 servicemen of a separate EW battalion of a Western Military District Combined Arms Army took part in the tests of the Palantin complex, about 15 pieces of weapons, military and special equipment were involved.

In the Voronezh Region, specialists of a separate electronic warfare battalion of a combined arms army of the Western Military District distorted GPS signals and suppress the radio communication systems of a notional enemy during operational tests of the Palantin electronic warfare (EW) system.

As part of the tests, recently drafted servicemen of the spring draft took part in a road march to an assembly area, and then, with officers, warrant officers and contract servicemen, completed tasks to reduce the reconnaissance and offensive capabilities of a notional enemy.

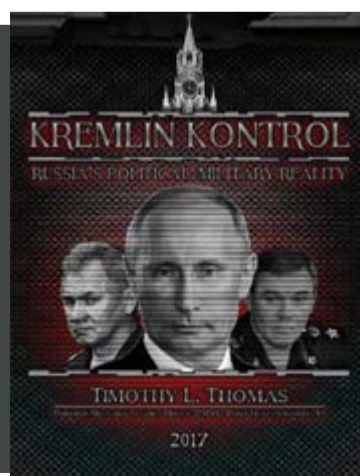
The Palantin electronic warfare system calculated how to: protect from unmanned aircraft; disrupt guidance systems of conventional and weapons of mass destruction; and also discovered and jammed cellular and trunk communication channels...

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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>





Images: L-R:

### Russian Colonels Inspecting Chow

The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=85523@cmsPhotoGallery> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

### Good Chow, Happy Soldiers!

The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=85523@cmsPhotoGallery> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Logistic Requirements of Russian Combined Arms Armies

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from *Materialno-Tekhnicheskoye Obespecheniye*, the monthly logistics journal of the *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, states some interesting estimates concerning the logistic requirements for Russian Combined Arms Armies. According to the article, a combined arms army is envisioned to have 65,000-70,000 personnel. This number is presumably an estimate of war-time strength, as the current (peacetime) strength of these formations is far less. Another interesting detail is the description of the capabilities of the material-technical support (MTO) brigade, a combined arms army's main logistic formation. In particular, it estimates daily throughput of food stuffs at 97-105 tons per day, while not a comparative data point for observers, this is the first time that such information has been publicly disclosed.

“Depending on the combined-arms combined formation being supplied, which could number 65,000-70,000 personnel, and allowing for the standard quantities for supplying foodstuffs and kit, the weight of goods held at the foodstuffs and kit storage of a logistical support brigade could amount to 132-640 tons, which in volume terms corresponds to 420-1,767 cubic meters. The foodstuffs component could be 86-588 tons, kit—45-47 tons.”

**Source:** Anton Bychkov, Oleg Pyrkin, and Yegeniy Katun, “Новые взгляды на хранение материальных средств в полевых условиях (New Views on Storing Supplies in Field Conditions),” *Materialno-Tekhnicheskoye Obespecheniye* (monthly logistics journal published by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation), July 2021. <https://mto.ric.mil.ru/upload/site193/Bj6NPOhEsk.pdf>

...Of all the range of supplies needing to be held at the field depots of a MTO [Material-Technical Support] brigade, the most demanding during storage are foodstuffs and kit. In order to retain their properties these types of supplies (especially foodstuffs) require particular temperature and humidity conditions and they also need to be kept with similar items. Maximum provision of the necessary storage conditions can be provided by fixed depot infrastructure, but to organize and meet them in the field can be problematic.

Thus, depending on the combined-arms combined formation being supplied, which could number 65,000-70,000 personnel, and allowing for the standard quantities for supplying foodstuffs and kit, the weight of goods held at the foodstuffs and kit storage of a logistical support brigade could amount to 132-640 tons, which in volume terms corresponds to 420-1,767 cubic meters. The foodstuffs component could be 86-588 tons, kit -- 45-47 tons.

...By way of example, during a defensive operation the goods turnover at a field depot (kit and foodstuffs) can amount to 102-112 tons per day including 97-105 tons of food and 5-7 tons of kit (mostly linen)...



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>



**Source:** “Долг ли долг: срочная служба глазами вчерашнего солдата (How long is the duty: conscript service through the eyes of yesterday’s soldier),” *Echo Moscow (liberal Russia based radio station)*, 4 July 2021. <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/assembly/2864544-echo/>

*Interview with Daniil Ruvinsky, reserve corporal.*

*I discovered that conscript duty was not so bad, but I would not go through it again.... While I was a conscript, we did not do much in the way of military training, but our unit did visit the firing range on a monthly basis, from June through November...*

*The officers in my unit were quite concerned about hazing and took extra measures to prevent any incidents.... Yes, we had a political-military officer who helped with personnel issues but did not provide any sort of agitation/propaganda....*

*The conscript pay (2,700 rubles) was barely sufficient to cover necessities... The food was decent, thanks to the efforts of the cooks. The only things in short supply were fresh fruits and vegetables.... We were allowed to use basic phones (no camera/Internet) twice a week (Thursdays and Sundays), but more frequently if the need required....*

*Our unit was lacking the requisite number of contract soldiers, so we conscripts were under consistent pressure to consider becoming contract soldiers.... From what I could tell, most of those who signed as contract soldiers, came from depressed economic regions, and had few opportunities outside the military.*

*99% of those young Russian men who enroll to attend university after high school are partially motivated by the desire to avoid conscription.... Based on my experience, it would be more advantageous to complete conscript duty directly after high school, so it doesn’t interfere with post-university career plans.... All in all, my experience as a conscript soldier was a wasted year and I learned nothing valuable while in the military.*

“All in all, my experience as a conscript soldier was a wasted year and I learned nothing valuable while in the military.”

## Recent Russian Conscript Shares His Largely Negative Experience



**Conscripts from Moscow preparing for duty, November 2020.**

[https://stat.mil.ru/russian\\_peacekeeping\\_forces/brief/more.htm?id=12325824@egNews&\\_print=true](https://stat.mil.ru/russian_peacekeeping_forces/brief/more.htm?id=12325824@egNews&_print=true) Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Despite major improvements in equipping, training, and caring for conscript soldiers, many young Russian men remain reluctant to complete their mandatory one-year military obligation. The reasons are many, but most stem from the loss of personal freedom and the rigors of conscript duty. A young Russian who had just completed his year-long conscript duty in the army shared his experiences in a recent interview on the Moscow-based liberal radio station *Echo Moscow*. Some of his comments merit attention: rarely published and presumably his impressions are not filtered by the Kremlin.

This former soldier begins by stating that “conscript duty was not so bad, but I would not go through it again.” He had been assigned to a non-combat unit in the Moscow region where most of the time was spent on guard duty and work details. While basic military training was not a priority, he remarked that his “unit visited the firing range on a monthly basis from June through November.” The officers in his unit were “quite concerned about hazing” and took extra measures to prevent any incidents. His unit had a political-military officer assigned who helped with personnel issues but “did not provide any sort of agitation/propaganda.” Conscripts were permitted to use basic phones (no camera/internet) twice a week. Conscript pay (2,700 rubles or \$37 per month) was “barely sufficient to cover necessities,” though many of his fellow soldiers could still afford to smoke. He described the food as decent and praised the cooks who prepared their meals. While the meals were filling, he complained of a lack of fresh vegetables and fruit.

Since his unit lacked the requisite number of contract soldiers, “conscripts were under consistent pressure to consider becoming contract soldiers.” He surmised that most who signed as contract soldiers, “had few opportunities outside the military.” He asserted that “many young Russian men enroll in the university to avoid conscription,” recommending that future conscripts should complete their obligatory military service right after high school. He had waited until after college, which then interfered with his career plans. He concluded on a rather negative note, claiming that conscript duty had been “a wasted year and that I learned nothing valuable while in the military.”

## Russia Digitizing the Military Commissariat

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

The autumn 2021 conscription campaign begins on 1 October, and for many young Russian males, visiting their local military commissariat (VK) will be their first experience with the military. These commissariats serve as both the focal point for processing new conscripts as well as representing the Ministry of Defense (MoD). Many of these local VKs are poorly staffed and lack a modern digital infrastructure. Earlier this summer, as the first excerpt from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestiya* points out, Defense Minister Shoigu visited a Moscow VK, where he “expressed dissatisfaction with the organization of work,” bemoaning the fact that the office had “no computers to contact another military registration and enlistment office by e-mail.”

The second excerpt from the mostly independent source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* describes the MoD response to the above incident and its plans to launch “a large-scale process of reforming the country’s military commissariats.” The article points out that the MoD, “interacting with the regions, will draw up a program for the transfer of VK to digital technologies by the end of the year.” The article

also asserts that a digitized VK will help with managing reservists “necessary for the resupply of troops and in crisis situations.”

The author of the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* article goes on to describe some of the challenges involved in this modernization effort. The most pressing will likely revolve around funding. Since local VKs are partially funded by regional authorities, it is not altogether clear who will pay for this modernization effort, which, “according to the plans of the Ministry of Defense, must be completed in 2023.” The scope of the task is equally daunting. The article points out that “the armed forces include 83 military commissariats of the constituent entities of

the Russian Federation and 1382 military commissariats of municipalities.” Finally, there is a question of VK staffing. As the article

stresses, “all positions of military personnel [within the VK] were eliminated through reform, and today they are staffed by poorly paid ‘elderly women.’” Merely providing new digital support may prove insufficient in modernizing Russia’s military registration and enlistment offices.

“Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu launched a large-scale process of reforming the country’s military commissariats (VK).”

**Source:** “Шойгу раскритиковал московский военкомат во время проверки, (Shoigu criticized the Moscow military registration and enlistment office (VK) during an inspection),” *Izvestiya (pro-Kremlin source)*, 8 June 2021. <https://iz.ru/1175765/2021-06-08/shoigu-otchital-sotrudnikov-voenkomata-v-moskve>

*As it became known to Kommersant, the Ministry of Defense has identified the culprit in “creating the prerequisites” for the triple murder cRussian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu suddenly appeared at the military registration and enlistment office of the Cheryomushkinsky district of Moscow with a check.... As can be seen in the footage, Shoigu enters one of the offices and expresses dissatisfaction with the organization of work in the military registration and enlistment office.*

*“You have a microwave oven, a refrigerator, but there are no computers to contact another military registration and enlistment office by e-mail.... What kind of work is this?” - he said*

**Source:** Vladimir Mukhin, “Бороться с уклонистами поможет цифровизация военкоматов (Digitalization of military registration and enlistment offices will help fight against draft evaders),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta (mostly independent source)*, 22 August 2021. [https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-08-22/2\\_8231\\_internet.html](https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-08-22/2_8231_internet.html)

*...Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu launched a large-scale process of reforming the country’s military commissariats (VK). Their modernization will make it possible to more effectively use the data sets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation “for solving problems of preparing citizens for military service and their conscription, military registration of the population, and work with a mobilization reserve.”*

*The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation reported that the General Staff, interacting with the regions, should draw up a program for the transfer of VK to digital technologies by the end of the year. ... The modernization, according to the plans of the Ministry of Defense, must be completed in 2023....*

*As in the days of the USSR, now VKs are bodies of local military administration, which, together with the heads of regions and municipalities, are responsible for military mobilization and registration and conscription work in the country. According to the General Staff, “the armed forces include 83 military commissariats of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and 1382 military commissariats of municipalities.”*

*...Meanwhile, as retired colonel Anatoly Mosolov, who at one time headed one of the military enlistment offices of the Moscow region, told NG, the problem of the effectiveness of VK must be solved taking into account the fact that their employees are now poorly motivated: “Basically, elderly women are working in VK now. who receive salaries, often low. When officers worked in VK, there was no such problem, but then all positions of military personnel were eliminated through reform. And now the task is to increase the material motivation of the military enlistment offices employees for their work.”*

*...But the question is: will the regions find appropriate financial resources for these purposes? Indeed, according to the General Staff, about 70% of VK institutions are not yet equipped with modern automated systems for mobilization deployment, and 30% of military enlistment offices do not have access to the Internet through the confidential channels of the Ministry of Defense.*



## Experts Question Whether Robots and Mercenaries Can Fill Russian Military's Manpower Needs

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian military continues to use a blended system of contract soldiers and conscripts to meet its basic manpower needs. Given the technical demands of advanced weapon systems, some observers have questioned the efficacy of conscripting soldiers for a one-year term of service. However, as the brief excerpt from the centrist source *Svobodnaya Pressa* points out, “conscripts serve as a cadre source of the contract army,” where commanders can “offer contract service to the most distinguished.”

The article also touches upon the prospects of using both robots and private military companies (PMCs) to help offset personnel shortfalls. After describing various robotic systems (air, ground and sea), the author asserts that the Russian military may soon not “need pilots, tank crews, submariners, etc.” A military expert, quoted in the article, challenges this assertion, reminding the author that “robots don’t move by themselves...they are operated by people.” This expert goes on to stress that “in order to operate a complex machine, qualified personnel will be required,” and therefore, “there will be a reduction in low-skilled personnel.”

Even though the appropriate legislation has yet to be enacted to allow for the operation of PMCs, the article also touches upon the Russia’s increasing use of them. The article quotes an expert who bemoans the lack of legislation authorizing PMCs, pointing out that because of this

“Conscripts are a cadre source of the contract army.”

ambiguity “it is not easy to hire an IT specialist or a soldier who will go for vague conditions to carry out combat missions.” Russian PMCs have been employed in Syria, Ukraine, Africa, and as the article claims, “according to some reports, more flexible PMCs have now been entrusted to cover the Tajik-Afghan border.”



Combat robot Uran-9  
Source: mil.ru CC BY 4.0

**Source:** Sergey Aksenov, “Военные роботы отправят солдат на дембель раньше срока (Military robots will send soldiers for demobilization ahead of schedule),” *Svobodnaya Pressa* (Centrist source), 4 September 2021. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/308853/#mc-container>

...Recently the Russian military robot “Marker” was tested in the Chelyabinsk region and independently moved 100 kilometers, patrolling the borders of the settlement. At the same time, another device produced a swarm of drones, which the RF Ministry of Defense is actively integrating into the troops. Creating new models, they are tested in real combat in Syria, like the Uran-9 fire support robot....

...The unmanned triad, in addition to a complex of purely military capabilities, demonstrates by its appearance the appearance of the army of the future. It will not need pilots, tank crews, submariners, etc. This means that it does not need to massively train these military specialties, including conscripts. Apparently, it was not for nothing that Sergei Shoigu recently spoke about the senselessness of increasing the number of conscripts.

The transfer of some real combat missions to PMCs can also become a factor that reduces the importance of a conscript in the usual sense.... So, according to some reports, more flexible PMCs have now been entrusted to cover the Tajik-Afghan border.

According to military expert Viktor Litovkin, the quality of military personnel training will replace their number: “The robotization of the army and navy will undoubtedly affect the personnel of the Russian Armed Forces. These should be highly educated, highly qualified and professionally trained people. Others simply will not be able to control drones in the sky, under water and on earth. Drones don’t move by themselves. In any environment, they are led by people - operators...”.

According to the coordinator of the public initiative “Citizen and the Army” Sergei Krivenko, the reduction in conscription is a direct consequence of organizational decisions made at the beginning of the 2000s: “And the conscript service remained only in order to pull up young people, give them a military registration specialty, conduct combat coordination, and then offer contract service to the most distinguished ones. Conscripts are a cadre source of the contract army. Accordingly, the number of conscripts is no longer as high as it used to be. And, apparently, it will decline.”

“...Technical re-equipment, robotization of combat units are simply obliged to touch on private military companies,” thinks an expert on PMC Yevgeny Bersenev. “And this is already happening abroad - there IT specialists are increasingly appearing as part of PMCs, appropriate training courses are arranged for the PMC employees themselves, the composition of the companies themselves is gradually changing. This can be clearly seen in the ads that are published in specialized publications.”

...If the army units of the same IT specialists are recruited under a state contract and the very presence of this fighter in the unit, relatively speaking, is written out by the documents of the General Staff, then the nature of the activities of ‘semi-state’ PMCs is still ‘near-partisan’ in nature with payment of ‘black cash,’ etc. And in these conditions, it is not easy to hire an IT specialist or a soldier who will go for vague conditions to carry out combat missions. These are people of increased demand.”



## Iran, Russia, and China Planning Joint Naval Drill in the Persian Gulf

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying passages from Iranian, Middle Eastern, and Chinese sources provide insight into the planned joint naval exercise between Iran, Russia and China, scheduled for late 2021 or early 2022. The joint exercise named CHIRU was initially announced by Russia's Ambassador to Tehran in late August.

The passage from *Tasnim News Agency*, an Iranian semi-official news agency, reports that the exercise will feature Russian, Iranian, and Chinese warships and include a diving competition organized by the Iranian Navy in the southeastern port city of Chabahar as part of the International Army Games 2021. This competition will include participants from India, Syria, and Venezuela, in addition to Russia, Iran, and China. The Russian Ambassador is quoted as expressing support for improving relations between Iran and Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, which is reportedly one of the goals of Russia's concept for collective security in the Persian Gulf.



**Iranian Navy**

Source: Mehr News Agency via Wikimedia Commons  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran%27s\\_deputy\\_navy\\_commander\\_said\\_that\\_an\\_Iranian\\_naval\\_flotilla\\_will\\_start\\_a\\_journey\\_to\\_the\\_Atlantic\\_Ocean\\_at\\_the\\_beginning\\_of\\_the\\_next\\_Iranian\\_calendar\\_year\\_1398\\_\(starting\\_on\\_March\\_21\).93.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran%27s_deputy_navy_commander_said_that_an_Iranian_naval_flotilla_will_start_a_journey_to_the_Atlantic_Ocean_at_the_beginning_of_the_next_Iranian_calendar_year_1398_(starting_on_March_21).93.jpg) Attribution: CC BY 4.0

“The Marine Security Belt drills - also known as CHIRU - are intended to be an annual event.”

The passage from *Middle East Eye*, a London-based independently funded online news organization, points out that the exercise, also known as the “Marine Security Belt” drills, were first held in 2019 in the northern part of the Indian Ocean and again in February 2021, but they are now intended to be an annual event. While the official goal of the drills is to ensure international shipping safety and combat piracy, the deepening exchange and cooperation between

the navies of the three countries will have political implications as well. For example, the passage from the *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong-based English language newspaper, provides a Chinese perspective of the exercise as a show of Russian and Chinese support for Iran in international affairs. This is echoed in the passage from *Trthaber.com*, a Turkish government news website, which quotes Russia's Ambassador to Iran expressing Moscow's support for Iran's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Iran has held observer status in the SCO since 2005.

**Source:** “Iran, Russia, China to Hold Joint Naval Drill in Persian Gulf: Envoy,” *Tasnim News Agency* (Iranian semi-official news agency), 23 August 2021. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2021/08/23/2559007/iran-russia-china-to-hold-joint-naval-drill-in-persian-gulf-envoy>

*Russia's ambassador to Tehran unveiled plans for joint naval drills of his country, Iran, and China in the Persian Gulf in late 2021 and early 2022.... In an interview with Sputnik, Levan Jagaryan said, “In the end of this year or the beginning of the next year (2022), the annual joint naval exercises CHIRU will be held in the Persian Gulf region. Russian, Iranian and Chinese warships are taking part in it... The main aim is to practice actions on ensuring international shipping safety, and combating sea pirates,” the ambassador added.*

*On the diving competition that the Iranian Navy is holding in the southeastern port city of Chabahar as part of the International Army Games 2021, Jagaryan said, “Along with Russia and Iran, China, India, Syria and Venezuela will take part in it. There are plans to hold a contest between dive teams of these countries' armed forces.”*

*...The ambassador said that the relations between Iran and Arab counties in the Persian Gulf are becoming warmer. “The United Arab Emirates sent a delegation to Tehran to participate in the ceremony of (Iranian) President (Ebrahim) Raisi's inauguration. Iran and Saudi Arabia launched direct contacts. Russia welcomes dialogue in this strategically important region. This is one of the goals of our concept for collective security in the Persian Gulf, which we are promoting,” the Russian ambassador concluded.*

**Source:** “Iran, Russia and China to hold joint drills in Gulf in late 2021, early 2022,” *Middle East Eye* (a London-based independently funded online news organization), 23 August 2021. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-russia-china-joint-naval-exercise-gulf>

*Iran, Russia and China will hold joint maritime exercises in the Gulf around late 2021 or early 2022, Levan Jagaryan, Russia's ambassador to Tehran, said on Monday.... The RIA news agency reported on Monday that the Marine Security Belt drills - also known as CHIRU - are intended to be an annual event. The drills were first held in 2019 and again in February 2021.*

*... “Along with Russia and India, China, Iran, Syria and Venezuela will take part in the drills. There are plans to hold a contest between the dive teams of these countries' armed forces. Representatives of the Russian Navy command will arrive at the opening and closing ceremonies of this contest,” he told another Russian state-owned news agency, Sputnik.*

## Continued: Iran, Russia, and China Planning Joint Naval Drill in the Persian Gulf

**Source:** “China-Russia-Iran naval drill announcement ‘shows support for Tehran’,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong-based English language newspaper), 24 August 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3146157/china-russia-iran-naval-drill-announcement-shows-support>

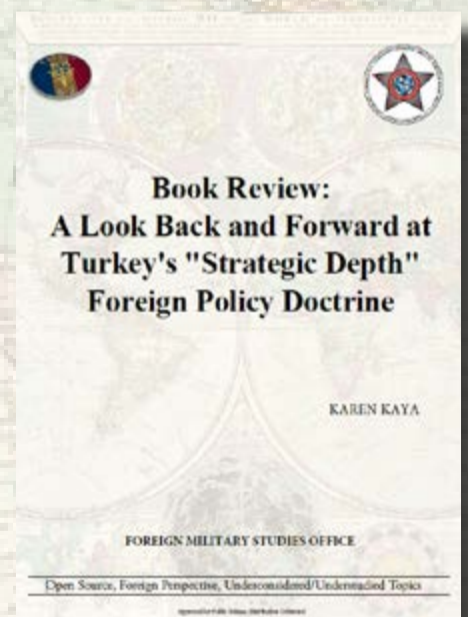
*“Annual exercises in Persian Gulf in late 2021 or early 2022 were announced to show support for Iran in international affairs, Chinese observer says.”*

**Source:** “Iran, Rusya ve Çin’den Basra Körfezi’nde tatbikat (Iran, Russia and China [to conduct] military exercise in the Persian Gulf),” *Trthaber.com* (a Turkish government news website), 23 August 2021. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/iran-rusya-ve-cinden-basra-korfezinde-tatbikat-603691.html>

*Russia announced that it will organize a joint military training exercise with Iran and China in the Persian Gulf. ... The Russian Ambassador noted that the exercise, which would feature war ships from the three countries, mainly aimed to focus on international shipping safety and to combat piracy. Dzhagaryan also noted that “Moscow supports Tehran’s full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.”*

## 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>



## IRGC and Defense Ministry to Cooperate on Enhancing Iran's Missile Power



**Major General Gholam Ali Rashid**

Source: Tasnim News Agency via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gholam\\_Ali\\_Rashid\\_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gholam_Ali_Rashid_(2).jpg) Attribution: CC BY 4.

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying passages provide insight into the new Iranian government's defense priorities. The first article discusses a recent meeting between the new Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics of Iran, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, and the Commander of the unified combatant command headquarters of the Iranian Armed Forces (under direct command of its General Staff), Major General Gholam Ali Rashid. Rashid is a former deputy chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The second article discusses the new government's national security and foreign policy priorities.

The first article is from *Fars News Agency*, an Iranian semi-official news agency, and it notes a focus on developing advanced weapons with the capability to “surprise enemies,” as well as increased cooperation between the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). The article also notes recent comments by the Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, who announced his intention to broaden cooperation with the Defense Ministry to enhance Iran's missile power during the new government's term. These comments were reciprocated by Defense Minister Ashtiani, who also announced his readiness “to take big steps toward providing and meeting the defense and military needs of the Armed Forces, especially the IRGC's Aerospace Force.”

The second article is from *Kayhan Life*, an independent media outlet focusing on Iran, and it discusses Defense Minister Ashtiani's 16 August speech in which he appeared in front of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee to discuss his four-year plan for Iran's Defense Ministry and Armed Forces Logistics. The article notes one of his main priorities is to develop the Islamic Republic's missile, air defense, unmanned aerial vehicle, cyber and modern warfare capabilities. Another priority is to strengthen the “Axis of Resistance... alliance” among Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Syria, while also supporting Iran's allies in Latin America and Africa. The article points out that this aligns with the priorities of the new President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, who, in his previous post as the head of Iran's Judiciary, repeatedly called for increased support for the Axis of Resistance, the Syrian regime, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq. Ashtiani also notes a focus on boosting the country's capability to “battle industrial espionage and sabotage.”

“Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh announced plans to broaden cooperation with the Defense Ministry to enhance Iran's missile power.”

**Source:** “Senior Iranian Commander Urges Production of “Surprising” Weapons,” *Fars News Agency* (Iranian semi-official news agency), 14 September 2021. <https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000623000450/Senir-Iranian-Cmmander-Urges-Prdcin-f-%E2%80%9CSrprising%E2%80%9D-Weapns>

*Commander of Khatam ol-Anbia Headquarters Major General Gholam Ali Rashid in a meeting with new Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani called for more efforts to develop advanced weapons with the capability to surprise enemies.*

*“God willing, you will take large steps in order to fulfill the orders of the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces (Ayatollah Khamenei), with a revolutionary and jihadi approach, to develop defensive and offensive capabilities, specially in priority areas, and produce weapons with advanced technologies and surprising capabilities for battling enemies,” General Rashid said.*

*He also expressed the hope that the level of interactions between the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) would further enhance during General Ashtiani's tenure.*

*Earlier this month, Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh announced plans to broaden cooperation with the Defense Ministry to enhance Iran's missile power.... “God willing, cooperation in the field of upgrading the IRGC missile power will be expanded during the new term of the Defense Ministry,” he added. General Ashtiani, for his part, voiced his ministry's readiness to interact and cooperate closely with the IRGC's Aerospace Force. “With the extensive industrial and production capacities and platforms in the Ministry, we will be able to take big steps toward providing and meeting the defense and military needs of the Armed Forces, especially the IRGC's Aerospace Force,” he said.*

## Continued: IRGC and Defense Ministry to Cooperate on Enhancing Iran's Missile Power

**Source:** "ANALYSIS: What are the New Iranian Government's Defense Priorities?" Kayhan life (an independent media outlet focusing on Iran), 25 August 2021. <https://kayhanlife.com/special-reports/analysis-what-are-the-new-iranian-governments-defense-priorities/>

*President Ebrahim Raisi's defense minister-designate, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, appeared in front of the Majlis' (Iranian Parliament) National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on Aug. 16 to speak about his four-year plan for the Islamic Republic Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics.*

*General Ashtiani told Majlis deputies that one of his priorities was "to maintain and increase the Islamic Republic's defense superiority in the region by developing its missile, air defense, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), cyber and modern warfare capabilities."*

*General Ashtiani added that strengthening the Axis of Resistance — an alliance between Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad — as well as supporting the Islamic Republic's allies in Latin America and Africa and boosting the country's defense capabilities to "battle industrial espionage and sabotage" were part of the ministry's four-year plan.*

*Ashtiani's priorities for the Defense Ministry align with Mr. Raisi's policies, which have always been part of the state's broader agenda, but the defense minister-designate has openly stressed the need to "battle industrial espionage and sabotage."*

*In his previous post as the head of Iran's Judiciary, Mr. Raisi repeatedly called for more significant support for the Axis of Resistance, the Syrian regime, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).*

*The PMF is an Iraqi state-sponsored umbrella organization of 40 militia groups, primarily Shia Muslim, but also including Sunni Muslim, Christian, and Yazidi groups.*

*While former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif famously described himself as a "representative of the state," political insiders have dubbed President Raisi's Foreign Minister-designate Hossein Amir-Abdollahian as a "resistance diplomat." Mr. Abdollahian has been a staunch supporter of the country's missile program and regional activities — policies aimed at extracting concessions from the West.*

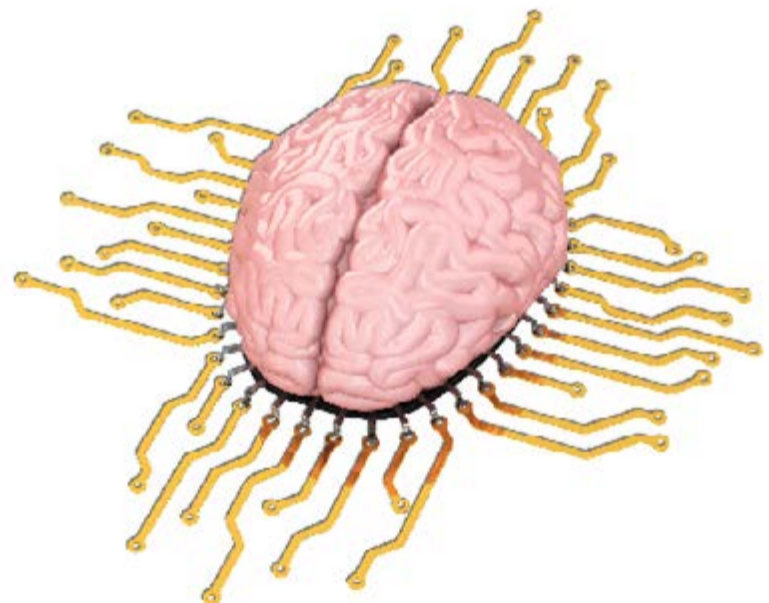
*After his inauguration, President Raisi's first official meeting was with the leaders and senior officials of the Axis of Resistance and Iranian-backed militias.*

*In a meeting with the chairperson of the PMF, Falih Al-Fayyadh, on Aug. 8, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Hossein Salami, said: "America's demise in Iraq has begun, and we, in the Axis of Resistance, stand with you in this epic battle."*

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## Violent Non-State Actors in Africa Increasing Their Use of Drones



**Drones in Africa are often used for humanitarian purposes, but their ready availability has also led to their use by terrorist groups.**

Source: European Union photo by Anouk Delafortrie/flickr, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu\\_echo/43040663251](https://www.flickr.com/photos/eu_echo/43040663251) Attribution: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

As the accompanying article from the South African security think tank the *Institute for Security Studies* notes, the use of drones by African violent non-state actors has received little media attention. However, several of these groups have slowly, but steadily, been increasing their use of unmanned devices. To date it appears they have mostly been deployed for surveillance, particularly to locate targets for attacks, and perhaps to a lesser extent for propaganda purposes. Al-Shabaab in Somalia and various armed factions in the Democratic Republic of Congo are prime examples of non-state actors who employ them in this manner.

Several experts in the article point out that it is almost inevitable that drones used by insurgents, terrorists, and the like, will eventually become weaponized. While it is possible they could acquire such technologies directly, studies based on what happened in Iraq and Syria point towards indigenous innovation using store bought drones being more likely. The conversion of what are essentially hobby drones into devices capable of delivering payloads could significantly alter the operational environment for troops trying to combat those who launch them.

Even if the weaponization of drones by non-state actors does not occur for years, in addition to intelligence gathering capabilities, their present deployment provides a psychological boost to the extremists and maybe a scare to their adversaries. With off-the-shelf availability of large numbers of drones in stores, eventually clusters or swarms of these UAVs could be launched, further enhancing their psychological impact. The article recommends that the use of UAVs by extremist groups be mapped to give better estimates as to how widespread the problem is, as well as provide valuable information to those who might be adversely impacted by them. Another step being advocated is to establish early warning systems that would signal when large consignments of drones are to be delivered to conflict areas. Other measures could also be implemented to help slow the spread of drone use by violent non-state actors, but as the article explains, based on how they are able to obtain so many weapons, it will be very difficult to make a significant impact against drone acquisition.

“Like in the Middle East, drones are a new threat posed by armed groups and violent extremists in Africa.”

**Source:** Karen Allen, “Drones in the Hands of Insurgents: How Africa Can Prepare,” *Institute for Security Studies (a South African security think tank)*, 7 July 2021. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/drones-in-the-hands-of-insurgents-how-africa-can-prepare>

*Like in the Middle East, drones are a new threat posed by armed groups and violent extremists in Africa.*

*In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, insurgents have recently used unmanned aerial systems to locate targets for attacks. And in May, Mozambique’s Interior Minister Amade Miquidade told a press briefing that insurgents had deployed drones for precision targeting in Cabo Delgado province. This aligns with unverified reports by private security companies in the region that militants used small drones for surveillance.*

*The fact that hobbyist drones are commercially accessible and becoming more affordable heightens the threat and presents a challenge to those seeking to restore peace.*

*Even if drones are primarily used for surveillance now, they remain a powerful tool. ‘It doesn’t have to be a hijacking or an attack,’ argues ISS maritime Project Leader Timothy Walker, who is investigating the expansion of maritime policing operations in the region. ‘It just has to be an intrusion for it to have potency.’*

## Syria's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Seeks to Use Taliban's Success

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Syrian group formerly known as the Nusra Front that currently controls most of Idlib Province, publicly celebrated the Taliban's recent rise to power. For the past two years, HTS has sought to shed its image as a Sunni extremist movement linked to al-Qaeda. Now, it may seek to tether itself to the Taliban's success in Afghanistan. According to the accompanying Arabic-language media passages, though, the groups are unlikely to develop a substantial link, despite their important similarities and shared ideological sympathies.



Flag of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag\\_of\\_Hayat\\_Tahrir\\_al-Sham.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Hayat_Tahrir_al-Sham.svg) Attribution: Public Domain

The article from the pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, highlights HTS's campaign to present itself as a Sunni movement focused exclusively on domestic affairs and intent on rooting out ISIS-style jihadist extremism. HTS's evolution from its previous incarnation as al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria is paralleled by the Taliban's apparent commitment to a softer form of governing, at least as compared to its previous stint ruling Afghanistan. The Taliban's rise, according to the article, has provided HTS with "a source of inspiration" and a model by which to persuade the world that it is, indeed, politically moderate.

Both the Taliban and HTS exhibit a great deal of pragmatism "within the limits of Shari'a," according to the second article from the Syrian opposition news website *Enab Baladi*. The article characterizes them as "contextual movements," meaning that they have learned from their experiences and effectively adapted to changing circumstances.

The third accompanying excerpt, from the Saudi-funded daily *Independent Arabia*, claims that segments of the "Syrian street" expect some degree of logistical collaboration between the Taliban and HTS. HTS's hope, by this narrative, is that the Taliban might draw Iranian resources and attention away from Syria, thus allowing HTS to declare its own Taliban-allied "Islamic Emirate." Yet a prospective emirate in Idlib would not necessarily resemble Afghanistan's in the way that ISIS's "franchises" resembled one another, given the differences in

“The Taliban and Tahrir al-Sham have become somewhat pragmatic, but ‘pragmatic within the limits of Sharia’.”

jurisprudential approach within HTS and between it and the Taliban, which are mentioned in all three articles. More importantly, HTS is by most media accounts dependent on Turkey, and as such would be unlikely to declare an "Islamic Emirate" absent some form of Turkish guidance and support.

### Source:

“Taliban’s dream intrigues al-Julani: ‘Be moderate, moderate’ ... so that the world will believe you!,” *al-Akhbar* (pro Hezbollah Lebanese daily), 19 August 2021. <https://al-akhbar.com/World/314546>

حلم «طالبان» يراود الجولاني: «اعتدل، اعتدل... حتى يصدقك العالم!»

*It seems that [HTS], led by Abu Muhammad al-Julani, wants to take advantage of the [Taliban takeover] in the context of its two-year attempts to export a new version of itself, one that is more moderate, less ambitious beyond its borders, and capable of engaging in political life under the guise of “moderation”... the model established by the Taliban has become a source of inspiration for [HTS leader] al-Julani... Among the radical differences is also the Taliban’s independence of decision, which rejects the blind and absolute subordination to any international force. “Tahrir al-Sham,” meanwhile, accepted the role of absolute subordination to Ankara.*

### Source:

“Context and strength... foundations of the paradox between the Taliban and Tahrir al-Sham,” *Enab Baladi* (Syrian opposition news website), 29 August 2021. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/508400>

السياق والقوة.. أسس المفارقة بين طالبان وتحرير الشام

*In an interview with Enab Baladi, [Hassan Abu Haniyeh, a researcher of jihadist groups] explained that... the Taliban and Tahrir al-Sham are “contextual movements to a large degree” that have evolved as a result of their “accumulated experiences” and their contact with the domestic, regional and international situation. The Taliban and Tahrir al-Sham have become somewhat pragmatic, but “pragmatic within the limits of Sharia,” as these groups will remain Salafi and religious. They are trying to re-interpret Sharia through a pragmatic lens permitted by rhetorical traditions, i.e. what is permitted by what they consider legitimate politics, which explains the present context... The most important thing, according to Abu Haniyeh, “is to know that contexts are more important than ideologies, and this explains what is happening with (Tahrir al-Sham). The group is unable to impose its conditions on anyone, but rather begs Europe, America and Turkey to help it confront another enemy within the international game, which is not possible and a different case for the behavior of the Taliban, which leads us to very deep differences between the two experiences.”*



## Continued: Syria's Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Seeks to Use Taliban's Success

### Source:

“What unites the Taliban and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib?” *Independent Arabia (Saudi-funded daily)*, 19 August 2021.  
<https://tinyurl.com/5wvka2ub>

ما الذي يجمع بين طالبان وهيئة تحرير الشام في إدلب؟

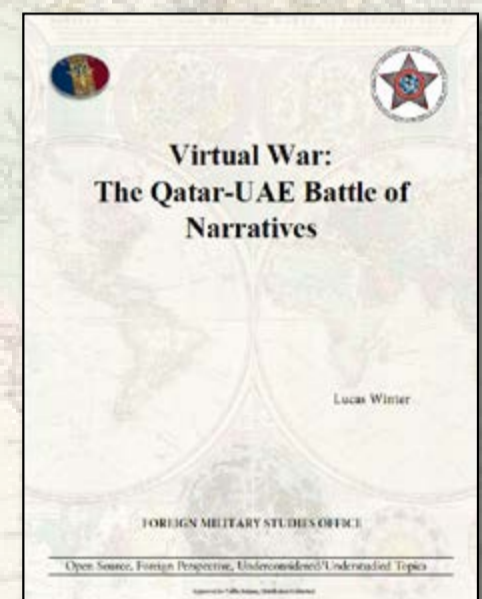
*Omar Rahmon, a researcher in extremist groups, said that “what the armed factions want from the Taliban is to strike Iran from its left flank, in order to reduce its presence in Syria.” As for the level of coordination and what the Taliban can give the hardline Syrian factions, Rahmon suggested that “the factions will not request material support from the movement, because they both get material support from the same sources. They do, however, want the Taliban to open the Iranian front and keep it away from Syria, which would weaken the [Resistance] Axis” that unites Tehran and its allies. At the same time, Rahmon pointed out that “there is a difference in creed between the Taliban on the one hand and Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra and ISIS on the other”... There is a belief in the Syrian street that logistical support will come from the Taliban to the various fighting factions in Syria that are focused on establishing an “Islamic emirate.”*

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

Lucas Winter

May 2020

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



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>

## Turkish Expert Warns of ISIS-Khorasan Terror Threat

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from a top defense expert in Turkey discusses the threat from ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) in general, and the threat for Turkey in particular. Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, who is the Director of the Security and Defense Program at one of the country's top think-tanks, the Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Research, writes that he expects a serious increase in terror acts from ISIS-K, and that Turkey should be particularly alert.



Flag of ISIL.

Source: Yo via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AQMI\\_Flag\\_asymmetric.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AQMI_Flag_asymmetric.svg) Attribution: Public Domain

which is in contrast to al-Qaeda's goal for Afghanistan, which is to establish a country under Taliban rule. He also writes that ISIS-K is very active in the cyber-informational domain, with a large pool of potential young recruits from authoritarian Central Asian countries, former Soviet states,

and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. He argues, it will be increasingly difficult to conduct anti-terror intelligence activities or have comprehensive international cooperation in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, while military activities will be limited to targeted air strikes.

Regarding particular threats against Turkey, Kasapoğlu writes that the group can use the influx of refugees or irregular migrants as a way to shift sleeper cells into Turkey. In recent months, Turkey has been dealing with an increased influx of Afghan refugees, who cross Iran to reach Turkey via transnational human smuggling networks (see: "The Transnational Smuggling Network for Afghan Refugees: Local Insights," *OE Watch*, September 2021). Dr. Kasapoğlu points out that this is a potential threat for Turkey, and that ISIS-K can use sleeper cells against Turkey, in protest of Turkey's role in Afghanistan. He also points out that ISIS has conducted sensational attacks against Turkey in the past, such as the Atatürk Airport attack in June 2016 and the Istanbul New Year's Eve attack in 2017.

“The irregular migration from Afghanistan to Turkey is a potential route for Daesh-Khorasan. The group's [potential] to shift sleeper cells to Turkey through this route... is a threat factor for Turkey.”

**Source:** Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, "Türkiye Afganistan'da Daesh-Horasan Terör Tehdidini Ciddiye Almali (Turkey Should Take the Daesh-Khorasan Terror Threat Seriously)," *EDAM.org* (an Istanbul-based Turkish think-tank called the Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Research), 30 August 2021. <https://edam.org.tr/turkiye-afganistanda-daes-horasan-teror-tehdidini-ciddiye-almali/>

- *Daesh-Khorasan is an important game-changer in Afghanistan. The terror network's relations with the Taliban, its geopolitical vision and its position within the Salafi eco-system, is different than those of al-Qaeda.*
- *In the new era in Afghanistan, we are expecting a serious increase in Daesh-Khorasan-rooted terror activities. [This is because] it is very difficult to continue an effective fight against terrorism and intelligence activities based on international cooperation in the country under Taliban rule. Similarly, military options will be limited to targeted air strikes.*
- *Scenarios which entail Turkey's contribution to Afghanistan's stability, will contradict with Daesh-Khorasan's perspective to establish a chronic failed state in Afghanistan. The potential for the group to carry its terror activities to Turkey should be evaluated with great sensitivity. It should be remembered that Daesh has conducted sensational terror acts in Turkey previously (the Atatürk Airport attack, the Istanbul 2017 new years eve attack).*
- *Daesh-Khorasan is quite active in the cyber-informational domain. In particular, there exists a potential for them to radicalize youth in authoritarian Central Asian countries and the former Soviet geography, where the ability for the state to provide a level of welfare is low.*
- *The irregular migration from Afghanistan to Turkey, is a potential route for Daesh-Khorasan. The group's [potential] to shift sleeper cells to Turkey through this route; and use these cells as an answer to Turkey's presence in Kabul, is a threat factor for Turkey.*
- *There are three facts about Daesh-Khorasan that need to be emphasized: 1. The structure has a high regeneration capacity. 2. It benefits from a broad pool of militants from Central Asia, former Soviet geography, and the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. 3. In contrast to al-Qaeda, its main target is not an Afghanistan under Taliban control; but rather an Afghanistan that stays in chronic chaos and becomes a failed state. Therefore, in the new era, it should be expected that the group will organize terror acts with this goal in mind.*



## Israel Claims Iran Training Terrorists to Operate Drones at Kashan Airbase

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying passages from well-known Israeli dailies *Haaretz* and *The Times of Israel* report on recent comments by Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz regarding Iranian export of terrorism. Gantz recently declared that Iran is using its Kashan Airbase north of Isfahan to train terrorists from Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to operate Iranian-made drones. Speaking at a counter-terrorism conference in Herzliya, Gantz argued that Kashan serves as “a linchpin of the Iranian effort to export aerial terror to the region.” Gantz also claimed that Iran supplies the fuel that allows Hezbollah to thrive in Lebanon, despite the country’s financial and political crisis, at the expense of Lebanon

and its citizens. In Gaza, he claims that Iran provides expertise and arms to Hamas and the Islamic Jihad for building advanced rockets.

Finally, reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Gantz said the nature of terrorism has changed in the past 20 years, from small organizations to “terror armies” taking advantage of countries with limited governance, like Lebanon and Afghanistan. As such, he claimed that Afghanistan might be used as a base of operations for terror groups following the U.S. withdrawal, and that it would be wise to prepare for action against the Taliban regime.

“Terrorists from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are receiving training on how to operate Iran-made drones in the Kashan Base north of Isfahan. Kashan is leading Iran’s export of aerial terrorism in the region.”

**Source:** Yaniv Kubovich, “Israel Says Iranian Base Spearheading Regional Drone Attacks,” *Haaretz* (a popular Israeli daily newspaper), 12 September 2021. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-points-finger-at-iranian-base-spearheading-regional-drone-attacks-1.10201899>

*Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz said Sunday that Iran’s Kashan Airbase is being used to train “terrorists from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon” to operate Iranian-made drones... to carry out regional attacks.*

*Speaking at a conference at Reichman University in Herzliya, Gantz said that “Terrorists from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are receiving training on how to operate Iran-made drones in the Kashan Base north of Isfahan. Kashan is leading Iran’s export of aerial terrorism in the region.” ...*

*“One of the most significant tools that Iran has developed is its unmanned aerial vehicle system,” Gantz said, “an accurate, deadly system that can cross thousands of kilometers. The Iranians produce and export them to their proxies,” who coordinate with Iran.*

*He added that Iran also “supplies the fuel that allows terror groups to survive and build themselves up.” This is the case in Lebanon, he said, where Iran provides Hezbollah with fuel and other means that it needs to operate during the country’s harrowing financial and political crisis, at the expense of Lebanon and its citizens. “This is also the case in Gaza, where Iran provides knowledge and arms for building advanced rockets.”*

*... Following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Gantz said, the country may be used as a base of operations for terror groups, and it is already prudent to “prepare for action against the Taliban regime.”*

**Source:** Judah Ari Gross, “Gantz reveals Iranian drone base, says it is used to train terror groups,” *The Times of Israel* (popular Israeli daily), 12 September 2021. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/gantz-reveals-iranian-drone-base-says-it-trains-terror-groups-there/>

*Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Sunday revealed the location of an Iranian air base that he said is being used to train Tehran’s regional proxies to operate advanced drones.*

*“Iran has created ‘proxy terrorism,’ under which it formed organized terror armies that help it achieve its economic, diplomatic and military goals,” Gantz said. “One of the significant tools that Iran has developed to assist its proxies is an array of unmanned aerial vehicles that can travel thousands of kilometers, and thousands of them are [in] Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.*

*“Iran is trying to transfer knowhow to the Gaza Strip that will allow Hamas and the Islamic Jihad to produce UAVs,” he added, speaking at a counterterrorism conference at the newly renamed Reichman University — formerly the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.*

*According to Gantz, the UAV base is located north of the city of Isfahan in central Iran and serves as “a linchpin of the Iranian effort to export aerial terror to the region.”*

*Reflecting on the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Gantz noted that the proliferation of advanced, explosive drones have made such operations easier for terror groups, without the need to physically hijack a plane. “You can have the same effect of a direct strike on relevant assets in different and no less deadly ways,” he said. ... The defense minister said the nature of terrorism has changed in the past 20 years, from small organizations to “terror armies” taking advantage of countries with limited governance, like Lebanon and Afghanistan.*

## Armenia's Military Reforms after the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War

By Matt Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

The Armenian government looked at acquiring a number of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with reconnaissance and strike capabilities a couple of years before the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War took place, but it had only put into service a limited number of reconnaissance UAVs by the time the war broke out. Azerbaijan's effective use of UAVs during the war, which resulted in significant gains of territory in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, has prompted Armenia to upgrade its UAV capabilities with more urgency. The accompanying excerpted articles report on how this is taking shape as Armenian officials continue to look at ways to reform the armed forces following the 2020 war.

The article from *Armenpress*, an Armenian state news agency, reports on Armenian Defense Minister Arshak Karapetyan's recent trip to Moscow. In the article, Karapetyan outlined a few problems in dealing with the modernization of Armenia's armed forces, including a need to "have new high-quality weapons." The article goes on to note how Karapetyan made this statement "within the framework of the International Military-Technical Forum-Exhibition 'Army 2021' in Moscow." Karapetyan also stated that Armenians "are planning to get new weapons" and "have given up buying old weapons." The Armenian Ministry of

Defense acquired four Su-30SMs from Russia in early 2020, but they sat unused during the war. Additionally, Armenia is one of only two countries (Algeria is the other) that received the export version of the Russian Iskander short-range ballistic missile system. Armenian forces reportedly launched a few Iskander missiles at Azerbaijani targets during the 2020 war, but they had little impact. There have been no other announcements from Karapetyan about purchases of weapons or equipment since his visit to Moscow.

The article from *Eurasia Daily*, an independent Russian-language news website, reports how "a department for [UAVs] will be created as part of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia." The article includes a statement from Armenia's Cabinet of Ministers on

“As part of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia, a department for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) will be created.”

the creation of the department, specifically how "there was a need to pay more attention to the development of [UAV] systems and the process of their control."

The article also notes that the government has approved two more unspecified projects on army reform that are classified. Before the 2020 war, the Armenian Defense Ministry would publicly discuss most military reform efforts (see: "Armenia's Defense and Strategy Reforms," *OE Watch*, August 2020), but it now appears that it will be keeping some of these classified.

**Source:** "Планируем иметь новое, качественное оружие. Аршак Карапетян в Москве (We are planning to have new, quality weapons. *Arshak Karapetyan in Moscow*)," *Armenpress* (Armenian state news agency), 24 August 2021. <https://armenpress.am/rus/news/1061540/>

*Defense Minister Arshak Karapetyan sees three main problems that he faces on the path of creating a new, modernized army and solving the country's security problems, the first of which is to have new high-quality weapons...*

*As reported by Armenpress, the Minister of Defense said this within the framework of the International Military-Technical Forum-Exhibition "Army 2021" in Moscow... "I can say that I have not heard the word "no" here. And we will take practical steps to develop our cooperation with Russia. We are planning to have quality weapons, we are planning to get new weapons, we have given up buying old weapons..." said Arshak Karapetyan...*

**Source:** "Эхо карабахской войны: Генштаб ВС Армении сформирует отдельное Управление по БПЛА (The Echo of the Karabakh War: the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia will create a separate department for UAVs)," *Eurasia Daily* (an independent Russian-language news website), 20 August 2021. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2021/08/20/eho-karabahskoy-voyny-genshtab-vs-armenii-sformiruet-otdelnoe-upravlenie-po-bpla>

*A department for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) will be created as part of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Armenia...*

*"Considering the development of military equipment, as well as the course of hostilities (in Karabakh) in 2020, it became clear that there was a need to pay more attention to the development of unmanned aerial vehicle systems and the process of their control," the Cabinet of Ministers said in its decision...*

*The government has approved two more projects on the army reform, however, they are classified and not subject to publication.*

*Earlier this year, the republic's authorities announced plans to reform and modernize the Armenian army, the need for which arose after the war in Karabakh last autumn...*





**Elchin Guliyev**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El%C3%A7in\\_Guliyev.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El%C3%A7in_Guliyev.jpg) Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

## Pakistan Providing Border Security Assistance to Azerbaijan

By Matt Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

Security cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan dates back a few years before the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War took place and has included joint exercises and mountain warfare training for Azerbaijani Special Forces units in Pakistan. The accompanying excerpted articles report on a couple of recent meetings between Azerbaijani and Pakistani officials on further

security cooperation activities. While officials from both sides have met a few times since the 2020 war ended, these meetings focused on future security cooperation activities.

The first article from Azerbaijani based semi-independent news agency *Trend*, reports on how Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev recently met with Pakistan's Chief of the Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa. President Aliyev stated how "Pakistan is one of the few countries that did not recognize Armenia and did not establish diplomatic ties with it because of the occupation of our land." In addition, earlier this year the governments of Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Pakistan issued a declaration to increase cooperation trilaterally. This included support for ongoing conflicts each are involved in as well as security cooperation. Pakistan does not have the history of conflict or poor relations that Azerbaijan and Turkey have

with Armenia, but its increasing security cooperation with Azerbaijan could put it further into a position against Armenia.

The other articles from *Trend* report on the results of a couple of the meetings Azerbaijani officials had with General Bajwa. The first article notes that in Bajwa's meeting with Azerbaijan's Defense Minister, Colonel-General Hasanov, the two sides "agreed on the joint use of mountain training facilities and joint exercises." The second article mentions that Bajwa also met with "the head of the State Border Guards Service, Colonel-General Elchin Guliyev." It notes how Guliyev is looking "to protect the state border in the liberated territories and activities to create the necessary infrastructure" and that Bajwa responded "that Pakistan is ready to share its experience in creating the necessary border infrastructure as well as experience in mine clearance." The agreement between Pakistan and Azerbaijan's defense ministry shows that both sides will continue existing security cooperation, but the potential cooperation between Pakistan and

“General Bajwa said that Pakistan is ready to share its experience in creating the necessary border infrastructure as well as experience in mine clearance.”

Azerbaijan's border guards is a new development. As Azerbaijan continues to deal with border issues in Nagorno Karabakh (see: "The Impact of Territorial Changes in Nagorno Karabakh," *OE Watch*, July 2021), Pakistan's assistance in border security could play a role in the near future.

**Source:** "Президент Ильхам Алиев принял командира Сухопутных войск Пакистана (President Ilham Aliyev met with the Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan)," *Trend (a semi-independent news agency based in Azerbaijan)*, 21 June 2021. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3443091.html>

*On 21 June, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, met with the Chief of the Army Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Qamar Javed Bajwa...President Aliyev, welcoming General Bajwa, said: "...we are grateful for the very active support provided by Pakistan to Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War...I would also like to note that Pakistan is one of the few countries that did not recognize Armenia and did not establish diplomatic ties with it because of the occupation of our land..."*

**Source:** "Азербайджан и Пакистан договорились о горной подготовке военнослужащих и проведении совместных учений (Azerbaijan and Pakistan have agreed on mountain training of service members and carrying out joint exercises)," *Trend (a semi-independent news agency based in Azerbaijan)*, 21 June 2021. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3443323.html>

*Azerbaijan and Pakistan have agreed on the joint use of mountain training facilities and joint exercises...The agreement was made at the meeting today of Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov with a delegation led by Army General Qamar Javed Bajwa...*

**Source:** "Азербайджан и Пакистан обсудили совместное сотрудничество в сфере пограничной безопасности (Azerbaijan and Pakistan discussed joint cooperation in the area of border security)," *Trend (a semi-independent news agency based in Azerbaijan)*, 22 June 2021. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3443849.html>

*...On June 22, the head of the State Border Guards Service, Colonel-General Elchin Guliyev, met with a delegation from the Chief of the Army Staff of Pakistan, General Qamar Javed Bajwa...*

*(General Guliyev) also informed the members of the Pakistani delegation about the work to protect the state border in the liberated territories and activities to create the necessary infrastructure...*

*General Bajwa said that Pakistan is ready to share its experience in creating the necessary border infrastructure as well as experience in mine clearance...*

## Rising Hostility Between Algeria and Morocco

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

In August 2021, the Algerian government severed diplomatic ties with Morocco. The move comes in the wake of sustained Algerian accusations that its neighbor has been stirring cross-border instability and engaging in “New Generation Warfare” (see: “Increased Algerian Focus on ‘New Generation Warfare,’” *OE Watch*, April 2021). Algerian hostility toward Morocco was starkly expressed in the lead article of the September issue of *El Djeich*, the Algerian military’s official publication. As the accompanying excerpt shows, the accusations in *El Djeich* are direct and unflinching, out of the ordinary for a magazine more prone to patriotic and nationalistic platitudes, especially in its lead article. The piece accuses Morocco of, among other things, supporting the ethno-separatist Kabyle Autonomy Movement (MAK) in eastern Algeria. The Algerian government blamed the MAK for recent forest fires that were, by most accounts, poorly handled by the government. The forest fires simply added to the growing domestic challenges to the Algerian government’s legitimacy. Writing in the pro-Palestinian pan-Arab daily *al-Quds*, an Algerian academic characterizes Algeria’s ruling class as a “flabby and dilapidated” military-controlled government focused above all on preventing the opposition from gaining power.

The bilateral situation, according to the accompanying excerpt from the Moroccan news website *Hespress*, “has become very dangerous

“The Algerian generals are actually preparing for war.”

and does not bode well.” The article’s author, a Moroccan academic, claims that the Algerian military is in fact preparing for war with Morocco. His evidence for making this argument is lengthy but largely circumstantial, and includes the Algerian government’s major



Morocco and surrounding areas, satellite image  
Source: NASA, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/751371/morocco-image-day> Attribution: Public Domain

weapons purchases over the past decade; its recent constitutional changes allowing for cross-border military deployments; its increasingly stringent tone toward Morocco; the need to deflect from domestic challenges to its legitimacy; its harassment of Moroccan civilians in border areas, meant to provoke a Moroccan reaction; and, the Algerian military’s desire to avenge the brief 1963 “Sand War,” in which Morocco was able to occupy Algerian territory.

Morocco-Algeria relations have been cold since early post-colonial times and their borders have been closed since 1994. The severing of relations is, therefore, less significant than it would otherwise be. Still, relations between the two have been deteriorating in ways that may foretell a bilateral crisis. The Western Sahara remains a key source of friction and is always a potential site for escalation. A mutually beneficial deal for Algerian gas to be piped to Spain and Portugal, via Morocco, expires later this year, and what becomes of it may serve as a bellwether for the near-term future of Moroccan-Algerian relations.

### Source:

“Algeria’s stability above all considerations,” *El Djeich* (official Algerian military magazine), September 2021. [https://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/sommaire/revues/images/eldjeich\\_ar.pdf](https://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/sommaire/revues/images/eldjeich_ar.pdf) (French version: [https://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/sommaire/revues/images/eldjeich\\_fr.pdf](https://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/sommaire/revues/images/eldjeich_fr.pdf))

استقرار الجزائر فوق كل اعتبار

*The terrible arson attacks our country has experienced recently have proven what the National People’s Army High Command has repeatedly said about our country being exposed to malicious plots whose threads are woven abroad and which are executed by traitors and agents. The aim is to undermine territorial and popular unity, as well as national cohesion... The reference to hostile plans necessarily leads us to speak of the Makhzen’s involvement in this heinous and unforgivable crime, in one way or another, by virtue of Morocco’s strong and proven link with the two aforementioned terrorist organizations... Algeria has long shown restraint in the face of serious and methodical provocations by Morocco against Algeria, in its insistence on harming our country... The decision taken by Algeria to sever its diplomatic relations with Morocco is sovereign and well-founded, intervening, as we have mentioned, following numerous repeated, attested and well-known attacks and provocations. It is a crucial and firm decision taken by our country, after having long favored the values of brotherhood, good neighborliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of neighboring countries, and having followed an attitude of measured restraint for decades in the face of hostile actions and constant provocations from Morocco.*



## Continued: Rising Hostility Between Algeria and Morocco

### Source:

Noureddine Teniou. "Algeria and Morocco," *al-Quds (pro-Palestinian pan-Arab daily)*, 6 September 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/4by4dmah>

الجزائر والمغرب

*The regime in Algeria is a flabby and dilapidated military system, leading the country to further disintegration, fragmentation and dispersal, because it rules in a manner that is from a different time period. The military regime has gone, irreversibly, in all parts of the world except in Algeria... The real danger of Algeria's severing of its diplomatic relationship with part of its potential entity is that it could lead to the further dismantling of what remains of the Algerian entity. This will further strengthen the Moroccan state, which has become a destination for attracting not only millions of tourists, but also significant investments for Algerians, including, in particular, political investment when pressure and pushback on Algerian politicians intensify... Put differently, we are not far from what was stated in this article, that Algeria's severance of its relationship with Morocco is an internal development of the path of military authority, which is incapable of ruling beyond the system of orders, whether in exceptional circumstances or in circumstances that the authority considers normal.*

### Source:

Abdel Hay Wahrani. "Is Algeria preparing for war with Morocco," *Hespress (Moroccan news website)*, 6 September 2021.

هل تستعد الجزائر للحرب ضد المغرب؟

<https://tinyurl.com/hucv69vc>

*The regime in Algeria is a flabby and dilapidated military system, leading the country to further disintegration, fragmentation and dispersal, because it rules in a manner that is from a different time period. The military regime has gone, irreversibly, in all parts of the world except in Algeria... The real danger of Algeria's severing of its diplomatic relationship with part of its potential entity is that it could lead to the further dismantling of what remains of the Algerian entity. This will further strengthen the Moroccan state, which has become a destination for attracting not only millions of tourists, but also significant investments for Algerians, including, in particular, political investment when pressure and pushback on Algerian politicians intensify... Put differently, we are not far from what was stated in this article, that Algeria's severance of its relationship with Morocco is an internal development of the path of military authority, which is incapable of ruling beyond the system of orders, whether in exceptional circumstances or in circumstances that the authority considers normal.*

### Source:

Abdel Hay Wahrani. "Is Algeria preparing for war with Morocco," *Hespress (Moroccan news website)*, 6 September 2021.

هل تستعد الجزائر للحرب ضد المغرب؟

<https://tinyurl.com/hucv69vc>

*Everyone interested in the political, military, and even social fields in North Africa is aware of the situation that is boiling on a hot stove: recent tension between neighbors Algeria and Morocco. This situation has become very dangerous and does not bode well... For all of the above, the Algerian generals are actually preparing for war. This after the setbacks they suffered domestically and internationally. They are legalizing the interventions of their army outside their borders in an unprecedented step. Their official channels are attacking Morocco without the standard reservations in diplomatic and media norms. They have also acquired huge quantities of weapons, including very advanced weapons such as the Russian Su-35 and MiG-29 fifth generation fighter jets and many T-92 [sic] tanks. They have upgraded their submarines and purchased offensive naval units. They have improved the effectiveness of the 24 bases near the Moroccan border. They have conducted massive maneuvers along the Moroccan border, precisely in places that witnessed fierce battles in the Sand War. The significance of this is clear, which is that the Algerian army is no longer the army of the 1960s and that they are still seeking revenge. They have indicated they are in possession of the Russian long-range "Iskander" ballistic missile, despite knowing that its use gives Morocco international legitimacy to respond with decisive force as deterrence. The army's budget is the first in the region, and all that extravagance in the purchase of weapons is, of course, at the expense of the capabilities and interests of the oppressed Algerian people, who are unwillingly languishing in poverty. There is also harassment practiced against Moroccan civilians in border areas, with some expelled without legal justification from their land in the al-Arjat region of Sulaymaniyah, which they have been cultivating for hundreds of years and despite official denials. The aim is to create justifications to drag Morocco to respond and then respond in kind, from there into limited confrontations and eventually total war. This arrangement is according to the dose that Algeria's generals need in their internal battle against the Hirak movement and regional developments.*

## Algeria Concerned with Mounting Insecurity in Mali and Niger amid France’s Withdrawal from the Sahel



**Nigerien Armed Forces conduct a convoy movement, key leader engagement and ambush exercise during Flintlock 18 in Niger, Africa April 15, 2018.**

Source: U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Runser, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4312704/flintlock-2018-fan-convoy-movement> Attribution: Public Domain

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

The Algerian government is increasingly concerned with the presence of potentially hostile armed groups in areas near its southern border with Mali and Niger. Several high-level Algerian officials made public statements to that effect last August, in the wake of deadly attacks in Mali and Niger and in the context of France’s announced withdrawal from the Sahel, which is to be completed in early 2022. As noted in the

accompanying excerpts from foreign media, these circumstances may drive Algeria to become more active in counterterrorism coordination mechanisms and operations along its southern borders.

The Algerian government appears to think that the recent uptick in terrorist attacks has a foreign, unspecified state-sponsored component, according to the accompanying article from the Qatari-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*. Partly due to this suspicious mindset, Algeria’s stated approach to dealing with insecurity in the Sahel involves regional coordination mechanisms that explicitly exclude external powers. As noted in the accompanying passage from the French international news network TV5, France’s departure means Algeria “must organize itself in order to be able to take matters into its own hands.” This will likely involve bolstering or reactivating two regional coordination mechanisms it established a decade ago: the 2010 Joint Military Staff Committee (CEMOC) that also includes Mali, Niger, and Mauritania; and the 2011 Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), an intelligence-sharing mechanism of Sahel countries (see: “Counterterrorism, Trade, and the Western Sahara: Algeria to Deepen Security Cooperation with Mauritania,” *OE Watch*, February 2021). The article from Turkey’s *Anadolu Agency* emphasizes that a key element in potential Algerian counterterrorism activity along its southern border will be coordination with local tribes and political movements, particularly Tuareg groups fighting for autonomy in their native territory, which they call Azawad and which is primarily located in Mali and Niger, along the border with Algeria.

“The commander of the Algerian army, Lieutenant-General Said Chengriha, constantly mentions measures and plans targeting Algeria on its southern borders, close to Mali, Niger and Libya.”

### Source:

“Algeria concerned by growing terrorist activities in the Sahel and along its southern border,” *al-Araby al-Jadid* (Qatari-aligned daily), 7 September 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/wrmr2pw>

قلق جزائري من تزايد الأنشطة الإرهابية في الساحل وقرب الحدود الجنوبية

*Hossam Issa, a researcher in security and political affairs... explained that “Algeria has called for joint African measures and the rejection of foreign interventions, which are sometimes among the factors that fuel terrorism. Algeria believes that terrorist activities have a basic link with conditions in the Sahel region, where there is no development and fragile central states, but at the same time it feels that terrorist activity is motivated by parties benefiting from the activity of terrorist groups, whether to justify their presence in the region, as is the case with the French forces in northern Mali, Niger and Chad, or to employ terrorism for the purposes of destabilizing and sustaining security in the region”... The commander of the Algerian army, Lieutenant-General Said Chengriha, constantly mentions measures and plans targeting Algeria on its southern borders, close to Mali, Niger and Libya. The recent constitutional amendments that allow the Algerian army to participate in counter-terrorism operations and establish security in cooperation with international and regional bodies, or within the framework of bilateral cooperation, may encourage the Algerian authorities to establish a coordination mechanism with Mali and Niger, especially to combat terrorism, and with the participation of Algerian forces.*



## Continued: Algeria Concerned with Mounting Insecurity in Mali and Niger amid France’s Withdrawal from the Sahel

السيناريو الأفغاني يطرق أبواب الساحل الإفريقي

**Source:**

“The Afghan scenario knocks at the Sahel’s, door,” *Anadolu Agency (Turkish news agency)*, 27 August 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/bew92su8>

*The fall of Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban threatens to ignite the African Sahel even more. It coincides with the escalation of armed attacks in the region, especially Mali... Al-Qaeda may be able to declare an “Islamic emirate” in northern Mali, similar to what is happening in Afghanistan, even before the completion of the French withdrawal from the region in early 2022. This prompted Algeria to express its concern over the “renewal and escalation of dangerous terrorist attacks” in a number of African Sahel countries in recent weeks... Algeria may succeed in preventing the formation of a new alliance between the Tuareg and Azawad movements with al-Qaeda, as happened in 2012, given its good knowledge of the region’s tribes, which represent Algeria’s human extension into the heart of Africa... The Afghan scenario should not be dismissed for the Sahel, if regional countries and their active tribal components and the support of neighboring countries.*

**Source:** “L’Algérie veut renforcer son influence dans le Sahel et au Mali,” *TV5 Monde (French international news network)*, 30 August 2021. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/l-algerie-veut-renforcer-son-influence-dans-le-sahel-et-au-mali-422400>

*In theory, deployments to external theaters of operations are not really part of Algerian military culture, even if this is possible today [The Algerian Constitution now authorizes the deployment of the army outside the country’s borders, Editor’s note]. But we also know that in the past, Algeria has taken initiatives in this direction. For example, there is the Joint Military Staff Committee, created in 2010 [It brings together Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Algeria, Editor’s note]. We can also cite the UFL, the Fusion and Liaison Unit, a coalition of intelligence services from seven countries (Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Libya, Burkina Faso and Chad, joined by Nigeria at the end of 2011), that was established in Algiers, in October 2010. In view of all this, the involvement of France and later the establishment of the G5 Sahel, disturbed Algeria somewhat. Algeria believes that it had already taken initiatives in this direction, and that perhaps they should have been strengthened rather than creating new ones. With the lightening of the French deployment, which will become more pronounced in the future, Algeria no doubt thinks that it must organize itself in order to be able to take matters into its own hands. And even if it criticizes the French presence in the region, it is also aware that it is helping a lot.*

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## India Puts a Priority on Countering UAVs



**Kashmir Region November 2019**

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kashmir\\_Region\\_November\\_2019.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kashmir_Region_November_2019.jpg) Attribution: Public Domain

By Matt Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

The recent UAV attack on an Indian air force base in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir has caused Indian officials to quickly acquire counter-UAV systems. The attack involved a small UAV dropping an improvised explosive device near a hangar, injuring two people. The accompanying excerpted articles report on which counter-UAV systems the Indian armed forces are acquiring and provide a look at how fast-track purchases continue to take place and the capabilities of the country's defense industry in producing an indigenous system.

The article from *India Today*, an independent news magazine, reports

that immediately after the attack, the air force sent out “a Request for Information (RFI) to seek responses from Indian companies.” The RFI included a few required specifications and the article notes that India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been developing “an anti-drone technology to detect, intercept and shoot down drones” that is currently undergoing trials.

The article from *The Print*, an independent English-language news website from India, reports that the Indian army “is in the process of procuring an unspecified number of anti-drone systems.” The article also mentions that “this fast track process was likely carried out under the provisions of the emergency procurement powers that were granted to the services last year by defence ministry” and that the “systems set to be procured by the Army will be different from the ones the Indian Air Force sought to buy recently.” Additionally, it is noted that officials want the system to “be suitable for deployment anywhere, particularly in high altitude areas and mountains.”

Lastly, the article from *Globes*, a daily newspaper in Israel, reports that “Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) ELTA Systems group has announced that it is delivering dozens of Drone Guard (CUAS) systems to a South Asian country in a deal worth tens of millions of dollars.” Many regional security analysts have pointed out that India is the most likely customer. Pakistan is the only other country in the region with a defense budget to make this kind of purchase, but it does not have diplomatic relations with Israel, let alone security cooperation. The article mentions that the purchase is for the “multi-sensor multi-layer ELI-4030 Drone Guard system,” which is a relatively small system that is mounted on a tripod and can be set up or taken down quickly. Overall, the acquisitions show how quickly the Indian armed forces put a priority on defending against UAVs and that an indigenous system will soon be available.

“Defence sources said that these drones should be suitable for deployment anywhere, particularly in high altitude areas and mountains.”

**Source:** Abhishek Bhalla, “IAF wants anti-drone systems with laser weapons to destroy UAVs,” *India Today* (an independent news magazine), 6 July 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/iaf-wants-anti-drone-systems-with-laser-weapons-to-destroy-uavs-1824322-2021-07-06>

...A day after the attack on June 27, the IAF floated a Request for Information (RFI) to seek responses from Indian companies...As per the RFI, the IAF would be deploying these systems at different air bases across the country.

...The RFI mentions that the systems should be equipped with Global Navigation Satellite Jammer System (GNSS) and Radio Frequency jammers as a soft kill option and Laser based Directed Energy Weapon (Laser-DEW) as a hard kill option to destroy the drones...

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an anti-drone technology to detect, intercept and shoot down drones...

“It has both soft kill and hard kill capabilities...Industry has already taken transfer of technology...” said DRDO Chairman G Sateesh Reddy speaking to media. He said the system has been developed and trials are on...



## Continued: India Puts a Priority on Countering UAVs

**Source:** Amrita Nayak Dutta, "Army to procure anti-drone systems as India scales up defences against new threats," *The Print* (an independent English-language news website from India), 9 July 2021. <https://theprint.in/defence/army-to-procure-anti-drone-systems-as-india-scales-up-defences-against-new-threats/692214/>

*The Army is in the process of procuring an unspecified number of anti-drone systems that will detect and jam the communication and navigation signals of a hostile unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or spoof it...*

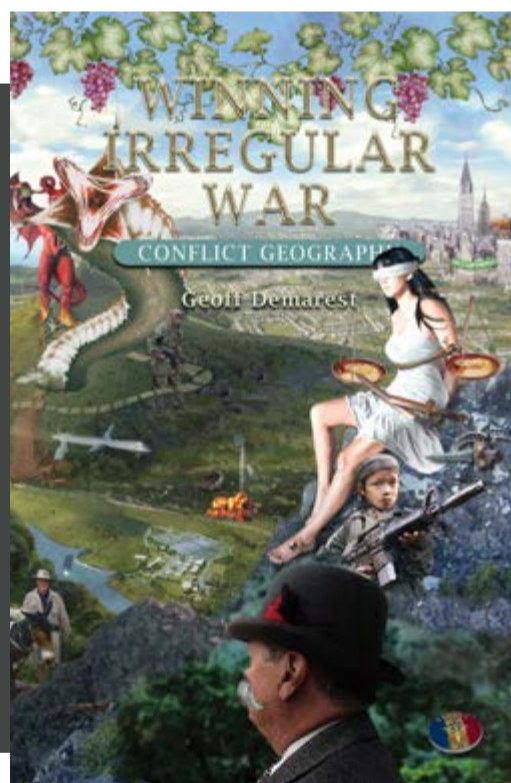
*According to the sources, the procurement process for the first set of anti-drone systems is at an advanced stage and an order is expected to be placed shortly...They added that this fast track process was likely carried out under the provisions of the emergency procurement powers that were granted to the services last year by defence ministry...*

*The anti-drone systems set to be procured by the Army will be different from the ones the Indian Air Force sought to buy recently...*

*Defence sources said that these drones should be suitable for deployment anywhere, particularly in high altitude areas and mountains...*

**Source:** "IAI signs South Asian drone guard deal," *Globes* (a daily newspaper in Israel), 4 July 2021. <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-iai-signs-south-asian-drone-guard-deal-1001376939>

*Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) ELTA Systems group has announced that it is delivering dozens of Drone Guard (CUAS) systems to a South Asian country in a deal worth tens of millions of dollars. The multi-sensor multi-layer ELI-4030 Drone Guard system is one of the world's most battlefield proven systems with the ability to detect, classify, identify and defeat drone attacks...*



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