

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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## FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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

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# OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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### ON THE COVER:

*The Sudanese army increasingly has to fight terrorists.*  
Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation/Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ArmyScoutMasters2018-04.jpg>  
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## China To Build World-Class Talent Base To Gain “Competitive Advantage”

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is creating a national system of talent-building to address China’s poor track record of technological innovation. During a speech in late September, President Xi Jinping talked about his goals. His speech and news about it were posted on various Chinese state-controlled and government websites, including the *Ministry of Education* website. The following excerpts recap some key parts of Xi’s speech.

According to Xi, by 2025, investment in research and development will increase significantly and China will have made great strides toward building a “main force of scientific and technological innovation.” The country’s ability to gather top scientists, to build its talent base, and to have teams of scientists on hand for key technological fields will improve significantly. By 2030, China will have in place a national system to develop high-quality talent. It will also have a noticeable ability to attract world-class talent and will be home to a number of leaders of new cutting-edge technologies. By 2035, China will have the “comparative advantage” in the competition for talent in many disciplines and will be among the top ranked countries

in terms of national strategic strength in science and technology and in high-level talent.

China’s ability to innovate has long been stifled by the government’s control over society. Schools favor rote memorization over creative thinking. Propaganda and censorship are rampant. While Xi did not talk about these or other specific weaknesses, he highlighted the need to loosen the reins of government control by giving more power to employers, loosen constraints on “talented people,” and create a “talent management system” in which the people are “trusted, respected, treated well, and included.” However, according to Xi, the government should still maintain control through a system of accountability and a strong “military order system” to oversee the success of scientific research projects. Finally, based on Xi’s speech, much of the high-caliber talent building and innovation will likely take place in Beijing, Shanghai, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Areas.

“We (China) are closer than ever to realizing the lofty goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and we also need talents more than at any time in history.”



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

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

## Continued: China To Build World-class Talent Base to Gain “Competitive Advantage”

**Source:** “习近平在中央人才工作会议上强调深入实施新时代人才强国战略 加快建设世界重要人才中心和创新高地 (Xi Jinping Stresses the Need to Comprehensively Implement a Strategy to Become a Talent-Rich Country in the New Era and Speed Up the Building of a Major World Center of Talent and Innovation),” *China’s Ministry of Education Website*, 29 September 2021. [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/s6052/moe\\_838/202109/t20210929\\_568037.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s6052/moe_838/202109/t20210929_568037.html)

*Since the 18th Party Congress, the party central committee has made the important assessment that talents are strategic resources for realizing national rejuvenation and for winning the initiative in international competitions... The Party’s leadership over talent management has been comprehensively strengthened. The ranks of talents have grown rapidly, their efficiency have continued to be heightened, and their comparative advantage has steadily increased...China’s talent-related work stands at a new starting point in history.*

*Today, China has entered a new journey to completely build a modern socialist country and to march toward the second centenary goal. We are closer than ever to realizing the lofty goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and we also need talents more than at any time in history. To realize the goal of our struggles, a high level of independence and self-strengthening in science and technology is key. The competition over comprehensive national strength is ultimately the competition for talents and Talent is an important indicator for measuring the comprehensive national strength of a country. Both the development of a country and the rejuvenation of a nation depend on talents. We should therefore enhance our sense of urgency, attach greater importance to the independent cultivation of talents, and speed up the establishment of a competitive advantage in talents.*

*Our goals are: By 2025, dramatically increase the total funds and investments in research and development of all of society, make major advances in the building of a main army for scientific and technological innovation, make marked improvement in assembling top-tier scientists, continue to raise the capability for independent cultivation of talents and areas of key technologies of a large number of talents in the strategic area of science and technology and of first-class leaders and innovation teams; By 2030, have established a basic human resource system capable of high quality development, have made marked improvement in independent cultivation of innovation talents, have made marked improvement in attracting world-class talents, and have developed a number of leaders within main areas of science and technology including those that are newly emerging, interdisciplinary, and cutting edge technologies. By 2035, China will have a comparative advantage in the competition for talents in many areas and will be among the top ranked countries of the world in terms of national strategic strength in science and technology and of teams of high-level talents.*

*In order to speed up the development of a major world center for talent and innovation, we should carry out a strategic layout... we can build centers for high caliber talents in Beijing, Shanghai, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Areas.*

*It is necessary to give full authority to employers according to the needs and reality and give full play to their positive role in the cultivation, introduction, and use of talents...We should actively loosen the constraints on people with talents as well as improve the talent management system so that talents are at the core and are trusted, respected, treated well, and included. We should grant scientists greater power over technological routes, on the disbursement of funds, and on the allocation of resources. At the same time, we should establish a strong accountability system and a strong military order system to ensure success in scientific research projects.*

### Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars  
1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley  
with Lester Grau

*Fangs of the Lone Wolf* is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

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

## “Degradation Operations:” A New Chinese Interpretation of Asymmetric Concepts

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

According to Sun Tzu, “A victorious army first wins and then seeks battle. A defeated army first battles and then seeks victory.” In other words, in order to achieve victory, one must first attack the adversary’s key capabilities before launching into battle. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its People’s Liberation Army still uphold this important Chinese strategy, even as cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, emerge. The following article excerpts, published in the official newspaper of the CCP’s Central Military Commission *Jiefangjun Bao*, examine a concept the authors call “degradation operations,” which falls in line with Sun Tzu’s teaching and the authors consider a “new interpretation of asymmetric concepts.”

Degradation operations, they write, use various means to reduce the opponent’s overall advantage in order to gain the upper hand. For example, in “environmental degradation,” the goal is to increase the dilemma in warfare to reduce the timeliness and accuracy of the adversary’s decisions as well as their effectiveness. The authors explain that this could be accomplished, for example, by jamming and sabotaging the algorithm of the adversary’s intelligence image recognition systems to make it difficult for their computers to detect and classify targets. In “capability degradation,” there is a reversal, or top-down reduction of the opponent’s

operational capabilities. This means the opponent’s system-of-systems operational advantages are constantly being degraded, preventing the connecting of each element, unit, and system from the bottom up. Finally, in “degradation of the operational domain,” it will be difficult for the opponent to conduct integrated, multi-domain actions.

While historically there has almost always been chaos and disorder in combat, according to the authors, future warfare is expected to become even more chaotic with new technologies coming online. The authors write that there are no good solutions when putting together a war plan because it is impossible to know what the other side is planning or thinking. One small deviation can create a huge reaction resulting in “inestimable consequences.” Therefore, “degradation operations” could be used extensively on the battlefield in future wars, even becoming the main way that both sides—but especially the weaker side—will fight for operational superiority.

“The approach to combat is to reduce the opponent’s advantage to achieve victory.”

**Source:** Zhang Yuantao, Cui Xiaoming, and Zhao Xiaohong, “降级作战：非对称理念新诠释 (Degradation Operations: A New Interpretation of the Asymmetric Concept),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (The official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 5 October 2021. [https://www.81.cn/yw/2021-10/05/content\\_10095985.htm](https://www.81.cn/yw/2021-10/05/content_10095985.htm)

*“Degradation operations” usually refers to the use of various means to degrade the opponent’s environment, reduce both their decision-making and intelligence capabilities, reduce their operational degradation capabilities, thus reducing the opponent’s overall advantage. The approach to combat is to reduce the opponent’s advantage to achieve victory. “Degradation operations” can be seen as a characteristic interpretation of the concept of asymmetric operations. They consist of countermoves and reverse dismantling of moves in joint, all-domain operations and multi-domain operations, and they have certain theoretical advantages and practical application.*

*Environmental degradation. This refers to reducing the opponent’s will to fight or their combat effectiveness by weakening and destroying the environment in which the other side’s personnel or weapons and equipment rely upon to release their combat capabilities.*

*Reduced intelligence and decision making. On one hand, this refers to reducing the timeliness and accuracy of the opponent’s decision-making ability by increasing the dilemma; on the other hand, the effectiveness of the opponent’s decisions can be reduced by actively increasing the cognitive algorithm confrontation. Currently, artificial intelligence technology is based on deep autonomous learning and are mostly “weakly supervised learning.” Once the operations of its algorithm model is disturbed, it may cause a deviation in data analysis and the misperception of artificial intelligent behavior. For example, by obfuscating convolutional neural network data, jamming and sabotaging the intelligence image recognition process algorithm, it can make it difficult for computers to detect and classify targets and to interpretate their behaviors, which increases the cognitive load and difficulty in decision making.*

*Capability degradation: The system-of-systems operational capabilities are broken down into unit operational capabilities and the unit operational capabilities are broken down into element-based operational capabilities. Through this kind of top-down degrading of operations, the opponent’s system-of-systems operational advantages are constantly degraded and the connecting of each element, unit, and system is prevented from the bottom up...*

## Chinese Soldiers Temporarily Detained by Indian Forces in Disputed Territory

By Dodge Billingsley  
OE Watch Commentary

China has a host of disputed borders and has not shied away from using its military to probe those contested lines of demarcation. According to the New Delhi based news source *News18 India*, in early October roughly 200 Chinese soldiers crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) near Bum La in the Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh. This incursion occurred a month after a similar border incursion in Uttarakhand's Barrhoti sector, and just over a year from the bloody clashes in Ladakh. The excerpted article quotes Indian officials who claimed "the matter was subsequently resolved at the local military commander's level...The Chinese soldiers were released and situation was defused." Following last year's violent border skirmish in Eastern Ladakh, India's muted reaction to this latest incident may indicate its preference to maintain vigilance and restraint in the face of periodic Chinese incursions.

The article goes on to explain Tawang's strategic significance to India as "Tawang provides geographical access up to the Brahmaputra plains and provides the shortest axis to Tezpur in Assam." Basically Chinese occupation of Tawang would leave it looking down into the heartland of the Indian state of Assam and its capital city of Guwahati. China holds the Tibetan plateau, but India has established a series of defensive layers based on the Bomdilla, Nechiphu and Se La passes separating Assam from Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang is also the location of the 1962 Sino-Indian War in which the Chinese attacked across the LAC and advanced as far south as Bombilla, killing more than 2,000 Indian soldiers, before pulling back across the LAC days later.

“But, while a disengagement process is underway in eastern Ladakh, the latest intrusions indicate that the Chinese are attempting to expand their scope of transgressions to the eastern and the central sectors too.”

**Source:** "India Foils Chinese Incursion in Arunachal Pradesh, Briefly Detains PLA Troops," *News 18 India* (New Delhi based broadcast and on-line news source), 8 October 2021. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/exclusive-india-foils-chinese-incursion-in-arunachal-pradesh-temporarily-detains-troops-4298540.html>

*A few troops from China were temporarily detained by Indian soldiers in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang after around 200 of them crossed over into the Indian side from Tibet and attempted to damage unoccupied bunkers, highly placed government sources told News18.com.*

*The incident took place last week between the border pass of Bum La and Yangtse, close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).*

*According to sources, the Chinese patrol party's transgression into the Indian side of the LAC was strongly contested by Indian troops and a few Chinese soldiers were temporarily detained.*

*"The matter was subsequently resolved at the local military commanders' level. The Chinese soldiers were released and situation was defused," a source in the government told News18.com.*

*There was no official comment from the Army on the incident. However, defence and security sources told News18.com that there has been no damage to Indian defences.*

*"The India-China border has not been formally demarcated. Hence, there is a difference in perception of LAC between the countries. Peace and tranquility in these areas of differing perceptions has been possible by adhering to existing agreements and protocols between the two countries," the source said, adding that both sides undertake patrolling activities up to their line of perception.*

*"Whenever patrols of both sides physically meet, the situation is managed according to established protocols and mechanisms agreed by both sides. Physical engagement can last for a few hours prior to disengaging as per mutual understanding," the source said.*

*A show of Chinese aggression in the region is not new. In 2016, more than 200 Chinese troops had reportedly transgressed into the Indian side of the LAC at Yangtse, but had gone back in a few hours.*

*The latest transgression comes just over a month after a similar intrusion wherein Chinese troops had reportedly carried out aggressive patrolling in Uttarakhand's Barahoti sector near the LAC. As per a report in the Economic Times, the Chinese had spent a few hours in the sector before turning back.*

*India and China continue to be engaged in a standoff at the LAC in eastern Ladakh since May last year, even though a disengagement of troops from both sides has taken place in the sensitive Pangong Tso area and the Gogra area after a series of military and diplomatic talks. However, there has been no de-escalation by either side, as both continue to maintain thousands of additional troops along the LAC.*

## Continued: Chinese Soldiers Temporarily Detained by Indian Forces in Disputed Territory

**Continued Source:** “India Foils Chinese Incursion in Arunachal Pradesh, Briefly Detains PLA Troops,” *News 18 India* (New Delhi based broadcast and on-line news source), 8 October 2021. <https://www.news18.com/news/india/exclusive-india-foils-chinese-incursion-in-arunachal-pradesh-temporarily-detains-troops-4298540.html>

*India and China will soon be holding the 13th round of Corps Commander-level talks in eastern Ladakh, in which focus will likely be on further disengagement of troops at the Hot Springs area.*

*But, while a disengagement process is underway in eastern Ladakh, the latest intrusions indicate that the Chinese are attempting to expand their scope of transgressions to the eastern and the central sectors too.*

*Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh has traditionally remained a friction point between India and China. In the 1962 war, China had captured Tawang within the first few days. It had laid claim on Tawang as part of a larger Tibet, while claiming Arunachal Pradesh as southern Tibet.*

*The historical significance of Tawang stems from the fact that it is the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama and is an important seat in Tibetan Buddhism after Lhasa. Strategically, Tawang provides geographical access up to the Brahmaputra plains and provides the shortest axis to Tezpur in Assam.*

*A senior defence official told News18.com that the lines of communication from Tawang stretched to Guwahati and the extended Siliguri corridor, which makes Tawang important from the military point of view.*

*“The three major passes there — Bomdilla, Nechiphu and Se La (connecting Tawang to the rest of Arunachal Pradesh) — aid in deployment of defences by India,” the official said.*

*At present, Indian troops are preparing to brace yet another harsh winter across the LAC. While China has been carrying out major infrastructure upgradation on its side of the LAC, India too has developed rapid and mass-scale infrastructure in the region for thousands of the additional 50,000-60,000 troops inducted at the LAC — mostly in eastern Ladakh — since last year.*

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## Chinese Incursions Prompting Indonesia To Step Up Patrols in North Natuna Sea



**An Indonesian Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon flying over what appeared to be a Chinese Navy Type 903 replenishment ship on the disputed region off the coast of Natuna Islands, Riau Islands.**

Source: Indonesian National Armed Forces Public Relations and Media Service  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EXaNIOYU8AEWBmN\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EXaNIOYU8AEWBmN_(1).jpg) Attribution: CC x 2.0

By Jacob Zenn  
 OE Watch Commentary

Indonesia claims the North Natuna Sea as its maritime territory and exclusive economic zone, but China also maintains that it has fishing rights adjacent to the North Natuna Sea within its “nine-dash line.” According to the first excerpted Indonesian-language article from Jakarta-based *kompas*, the Indonesian government will be increasing

patrols in the North Natuna Sea because foreign ships, including Chinese naval vessels, have been entering those waters.

The article notes that members of Indonesia’s House of Representatives have called on the navy to increase the capacity of patrols to ensure other countries’ vessels cannot enter Indonesian waters. It deemed the current total of 10 patrol boats to protect those waters to be inadequate. Legislators also proposed closer coordination between the navy, air force, and National Institute of Aeronautics and Space to surveil foreign ships entering the North Natuna Sea. Finally, legislators proposed summoning fishermen to participate in the North Natuna Sea area patrols, which they acknowledged would follow the example of China’s own strategy of using maritime militias in its territorial disputes with other countries in the South China Sea. The Indonesian government, in turn, would provide monitoring equipment and fuel to the fishermen.

The article concludes by noting that fishermen also have an interest in the Indonesian government restricting foreign ships from entering the North Natuna Sea. The fishermen have, for example, increasingly seen Chinese warships in the sea, which has deterred them from fishing. A separate 15 September article in *kompas* noted that Indonesian fishermen became afraid to fish after seeing a Chinese naval destroyer near the North Natuna Sea. This trend of patrols and counter-patrols using fishermen as tripwires is becoming increasingly common in the region and raises the risk of an accident that could quickly become a significant international maritime incident.

“Sukamta suggested involving fishermen to participate in patrols in the North Natuna Sea area.”

**Source:** “Kapal Asing Kerap Masuk Wilayah Laut Natuna Utara, Pemerintah Diminta Tingkatkan Patroli (Foreign Ships Often Enter North Natuna Sea Area, Government is Asked to Increase Patrols),” *nasional.kompas.com* (Jakarta based international news outlet considered neutral), 17 September 2021. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/09/17/12043051/kapal-asing-kerap-masuk-wilayah-laut-natuna-utara-pemerintah-diminta?page=all>

*Member of the House of Representatives I Sukamta asked the government to increase patrols in the North Natuna Sea area because these waters often have ships entering from other countries, including Chinese warships. The deputy chairman of the Prosperous Justice Party faction is of the view that there are three approaches that the government can take to overcome this problem.*

*First, strengthening the patrol boats of the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla), which has only 10 patrol boats to protect Indonesia’s vast maritime territory. Second, Sukamta assesses that maritime security coordination needs to be improved by involving Bakamla and the Indonesian Air Force to carry out air patrols. According to him, Bakamla can also cooperate with the National Institute of Aeronautics and Space (Lapan) to strengthen the use of technology through satellite and air. Third, Sukamta suggested involving fishermen to participate in patrols in the North Natuna Sea area. Sukamta said this was an example of China’s strategy of using maritime militias in disputes in the South China Sea.*

*The presence of Chinese warships makes local fishermen afraid to go to sea.*

**Source:** “Kapal Perang China Mondar-mandir di Laut Natuna Utara, Nelayan Ketakutan (Chinese Warships Moving Around the North Natuna Sea, Fishermen are Scared),” *kompas.id* (Jakarta based international news outlet considered neutral), 15 September 2021. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/09/17/12043051/kapal-asing-kerap-masuk-wilayah-laut-natuna-utara-pemerintah-diminta?page=all>

*A number of the traditional fishermen in the Riau Islands reported that they had seen six Chinese vessels, one of which was the Kunming-172 destroyer, in the North Natuna Sea. The presence of the Chinese warships made local fishermen afraid to go out to sea. They hope that the security forces intervene to provide a sense of security.*





Russian recruiting poster for the Special Army Combat Reserve (BARS).  
 Source: Russian Federation Ministry of Defense, <http://adm-samosdelka.ru/новости-поселения/705-проект-барс-боевой-армейский-резерв-специальный?template=accessibility> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Zapad-2021 Showcases New Russian Reserve System

By Chuck Bartles  
 OE Watch Commentary

The Russian Federation has long tried with little success to develop a functioning operational reserve system, albeit different than those in the U.S. Army and other Western armies. However, a recent effort spearheaded by the Southern Military District Commander, General Aleksandr Dvornikov, may represent the first steps in implementing a successful operational reserve, as described by military news website *Yezhenedelnik Zvezda*. During the Zapad-2021 exercise, General Dvornikov showcased the Special Army Combat Reserve (BARS) program, which has reportedly enrolled 38,000 soldiers.

The accompanying excerpted article in Russian daily newspaper *Svobodnaya Pressa* explains some of the reasoning behind Russia’s effort to develop an operational reserve. According to one estimate, in order to defend Russia in its entirety in a large-scale warfare situation, an additional 80 brigades would need to be formed, requiring 350,000-400,000 personnel. The accompanying excerpted article from Rostov Oblast regional newspaper *Nashe Vremya* describes how these personnel will be paid—the level of financial compensation and other benefits are perceived to be attractive to potential recruits. If this experiment is successful in the Southern Military District, it may be replicated in Russia’s other military districts—especially since General Dvornikov is mentioned often in Russian media as a likely candidate to be the next Chief of the Russian General Staff.

It is important to note that Russia envisions its operational reserve system differently than the reserve system found in the United States and other Western countries. Russian reservists will not man “reserve units.” Rather, these soldiers will either serve in Eastern European style “territorial defense” units that provide rear area security or will backfill active-duty formations. This type of reserve system may be the way that Russia envisions fully manning the new Ground Forces divisions that have been created during the past few years, given that the active-duty Ground Forces personnel strength has only slightly increased.

“The manning of the country’s army combat reserve is a routine activity to increase defense capabilities, and to make this project reality requires the concentration of efforts by all regional regional authorities and also representatives of Cossack communities within the zone of responsibility of constituent parts of the Russian Federation.”

—Southern Military District Commander,  
 Army General Aleksandr Dvornikov

## Continued: Zapad-2021 Showcases New Russian Reserve System

**Source:** Vladimir Sosnitskiy, “БАРС: военная служба на полставки (BARS: Military Service Part-Time),” *Yezhenedelnik Zvezda* (military news website), 7 September 2021. <https://zvezdaweekly.ru/news/202196111-LmRRi.html>

*Briefly, the army combat special reserve is tens of thousands of “fresh” reservists who have voluntarily undergone a rigorous selection procedure and signed contracts with the military authorities. Preference was given to applicants who were recently discharged from active duty and have not yet forgotten their skills in the most in-demand military specialties. As it calls up volunteers to the active reserve, the Defense Ministry is promising them a unique opportunity to gain additional education and benefit from financial incentives and quality healthcare. As the Defense Ministry press service commented, people joining the mobilization personnel reserve are supplied with up-to-date kit, receive pay and all the allowances, and get quality healthcare...*

*The Southern Military District is the launch pad for implementing the new BARS project. As the Rostovskaya Oblast military commissar, Colonel Igor Yegorov, explained, his region’s commissariat is one of the first to be involved in creating a mobilization personnel reserve for the Russian Federation Armed Forces. Since 2015 it has been taking part in an experiment in running a new way of bringing to the forces recruits who sign up to be part of a mobilization personnel reserve. The first subunit to be manned by reservists was a territorial forces company in the Southern Military District...*

*An army combat reserve of 38,000 was formed in the Southern Military District by early September. The static field camps and storage for the hardware set aside for training musters with BARS territorial defense subunits are nearly ready at the places where reserve units and subunits will be stationed. Twenty-three sites have been resourced and equipped at nine training grounds and 240 officers and NCOs have been selected to work with reservists...*

*According to the training plans our reservists will attend training drills for two or three days a month and annual training camps that generally last 20 days. At training sessions and camps the soldiers in the reserve will learn to fire all kinds of weapons and to drive military vehicles, and acquire other practical skills according to their specialties. As regards the specific uses of the territorial forces that the Southern Military District now has experience of forming, in the event of mobilization their primary purpose will most likely be to guard and defend particularly important military and state facilities in the rear, maintain law and order in populated areas, and assist the public during an evacuation. This will avoid diverting regular units and subunits to these tasks.*

*Incidentally, the Southern Military District commanding officer, Army General Aleksandr Dvornikov, praised the performance of a reservist company of the district during an exercise held recently at a Baltic Fleet military facility. He ordered that all battalion and regimental tactical exercises should include a role for commanders of Southern Military District territorial defense subunits and units. It is possible that the best-trained soldiers in the district’s combat reserve will take part in the Zapad-2021 major maneuvers this year. Training facilities for the reserve units have been prepared and resourced, and their weaponry and hardware make it possible to hold the first training camps with the district’s BARS subunits according to new comprehensive and dynamic plans as early as the second half of September this year. They will mostly be in the format of field drills and tactical exercises...”The manning of the country’s army combat reserve is a routine activity to increase defense capabilities, and to make this project reality requires the concentration of efforts by all regional authorities and also representatives of Cossack communities within the zone of responsibility of constituent parts of the Russian Federation.”*

—Southern Military District Commander, General Aleksandr Dvornikov.

“...in order to properly defend Russia on all fronts, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, about an extra 80 motorized infantry and tank brigades drawn from mobilization resources would have to be deployed, and fast. To do this, the country needs while still in peacetime to somehow get hold of 350-400,000 trained, fit, and motivated reservists. How did they arrive at this number? Very simple. No regular army has ever won a serious war all by itself. It has generally perished in fighting on the borders, to enable the nation in the rear to arrange solid support for the front.”

## Continued: Zapad-2021 Showcases New Russian Reserve System

**Source:** Sergey Ishchenko, “БАРС готов к прыжку: в Южном военном округе против Украины и НАТО сформирован второй фронт (The BARS [Special Army Combat Reserve] Is Ready to Roll: Second Front Against Ukraine and NATO Opened in Southern Military District),” *Svobodnaya Pressa* (Russian daily newspaper), 1 September 2021, <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/308612/>

*1 September 2021 is not only the start of the school year, it is also the date on which the first stage was completed of a General Staff initiative crucial for strengthening Russia's ability to defend itself -- the hasty creation in the Southern Military District of a 38,000-strong Special Army Combat Reserve (BARS)...This is good for the General Staff, because whenever large-scale combat operations have begun in any war, protecting the rear of the front has always been, and still is, a distraction for substantial numbers of troops, of whom there are already not enough in the trenches.*

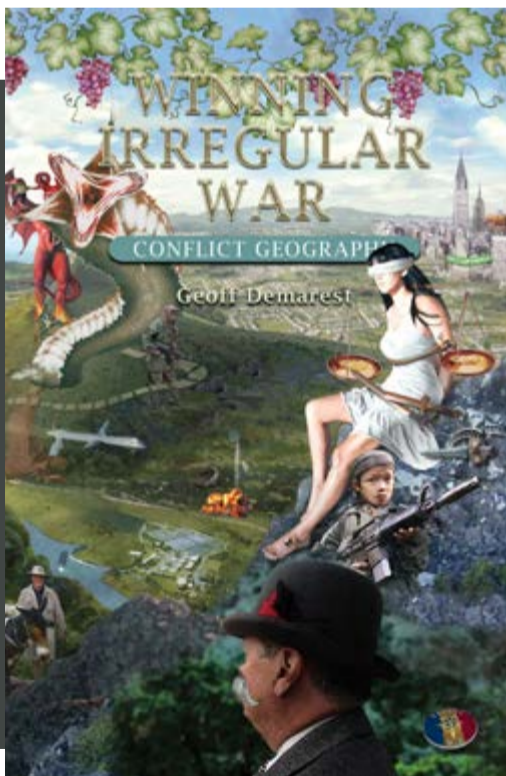
*In order to turn these breathtaking, from the generals' perspective, prospects into reality, every signatory to such a contract commits to leave his wife and children for three days every month, to tear himself way from work or the comfortable sofa at home upon being summoned and rush to the nearby military unit to which he is attached. Where, at the computer, the controls of a tank, or the shooting range, he will rapidly relearn the "science of winning" under the direction of paternal commanding officers...*

*...in order to properly defend Russia on all fronts, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, about an extra 80 motorized infantry and tank brigades drawn from mobilization resources would have to be deployed, and fast. To do this, the country needs while still in peacetime to somehow get hold of 350-400,000 trained, fit, and motivated reservists. How did they arrive at this number? Very simple. No regular army has ever won a serious war all by itself. It has generally perished in fighting on the borders, to enable the nation in the rear to arrange solid support for the front.*

*For example, we met the Great Patriotic War on the western front with just 3.5 million regular soldiers and commanders in the Red Army. But in 1945 we entered Berlin with nearly three times as many, 11.3 million, under arms. To achieve that, taking into account the numbers killed, wounded, or taken prisoner, about 30 million were called up during those four years. They were the Soviet Union's mobilization reserve, and they amounted to 700 percent of the armed forces initial headcount...*

**Source:** Arkady Budnitsky, “Первые резервисты прибыли на полигон Кадамовский (The First Reservists Arrive at Kadamovskiy),” *Nashe Vremya* (regional newspaper covering issues in the Rostov Oblast) 23 September 2021. <https://www.nvgazeta.ru/news/12385/596532/>

*...The army reserve only accepts people after a rigorous selection process and with each recruit it enters into a contract with a guaranteed rate of pay according to rank, position, length of service engagement, and nature of duties. For example, for a three day exercise an officer will receive up to 10,000 rubles [≈ \$139] and an NCO up to 5,000 rubles [≈ \$69]. For 30 days spent at military training camps an officer is due between 30,000 rubles [≈ \$416] and 75,000 rubles [≈ \$1041], and an enlisted soldier up to 25,000 rubles [≈ \$347]. Under the terms of the contract the reservist has the same protections as regular service personnel.*



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

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

## More Russian Conscripts Entering the Ranks with Vocational Certificates

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russian daily *Izvestiya*, describes changes to Russia's conscription system. In the Russian education system, students bound for the university would typically receive educational deferments for military service, while students attending a vocational school would not receive a deferment. In the last few years, Russia has tweaked this system, allowing students attending vocational schools to receive these educational deferments. This was a somewhat controversial reform, as there were concerns that many of the recipients of these vocational educational deferrals would never see military service, as is the case with many of the recipients of the university educational deferrals. However, according to *Izvestiya*, 66 percent of conscripts from the most recent draft cycle have entered the ranks with a vocational education. Since the Russian Ministry of Education accredits both civilian and military educational and training institutions, these vocational certificates can be equated to various military occupational specialties (mechanic, electrician, welder, etc.). Even though most conscripts are drafted for only one year, and there is no centralized basic training, many conscripts are arriving in the ranks with a verified military occupational specialty and can feasibly substantially contribute to the unit's mission. Additionally, Russia has



**Russian conscript appearing before a military commissariat .**

Source: Russian Federation Ministry of Defense, <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anlfbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=100973@cmsPhotoGallery> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

been able to continue inducting the needed number draftees given that it is raising induction targets after the current intake of 127,500 men for the Fall draft and 134,000 men for the Spring draft.

“More mature young people are entering the troops, often after graduating from vocational institutions. Thus, in 2016, 45 percent of conscripts had a vocational education, but based on the results of the last campaign their share was more than 66 percent. . .”

**Source:** Roman Kretsul, “Мое пополнение: как будет проходить осенний призыв в армию (My Generation: How the Spring Draft Campaign for the Army Will Be Conducted),” *Izvestiya* (Russian daily newspaper), 2 October 2021. <https://iz.ru/1229736/roman-kretcul/moe-popolnenie-kak-budet-prokhorodit-osennii-prizyv-v-armiiu>

*On 1 October Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the edict “On the Conscription of Citizens for Military Service.” In all of the regions of the country draft commissions are beginning their work. During the coming three months they will be required to send 127,500 young men to the troops...*

*Speaking of the results of this year's spring campaign, Colonel General Yevgeniy Burdinskiy related that 134,000 young people were sent to the troops. From the moment they arrived at the assembly points all of the new recruits were given all types of benefits, they received hot meals, and immediately before being sent to the troops they were given bank cards and personal electronic cards.*

*The chief of the GOMU [Main Operations Directorate of the Russian General Staff] commented that the average age of draftees has increased. Since 2016 the number of 18-year old new recruits has been reduced to 4 percent. More mature young people are entering the troops, often after graduating from vocational institutions. Thus, in 2016, 45 percent of conscripts had a vocational education, but based on the results of the last campaign their share was more than 66 percent...*

*Vitaliy Cherkashin explained that more than 672,000 people underwent medical commission exams during the spring draft campaign. In his words, based on the campaign results the medical commissions found that 73.5 percent of the draftees were fit for military service. This metric for the spring 2020 campaign was 76.4 percent and it has been maintained in the 75-76 percent range since the beginning of 2016. Vitaliy Cherkashin explained the slight reduction of the 2021 campaign by the more stringent health requirements for recruits introduced relatively recently. “Thus, restrictions based on health conditions are applied to citizens who have a risk of sudden death from a cardiovascular illness and to those who have contracted tuberculosis,” he noted.*

*During this year's spring campaign Andrey Datsko, the main military physician expert of the Ministry of Defense, told *Izvestiya* that prior to 2020 young people who contracted tuberculosis were placed in an observation group after treatment, and if there was no recurrence, they were conscripted to service. But later the military decided that even if there is a slight risk, the military team should not be subjected to danger. As a result a one-time case of tuberculosis became the basis for full exemption from service.*

## Russia Continues To Invest in Precision-Guided Munitions That Are Not Dependent on Satellite Navigation

By Chuck Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russian military news website *Armeyskiy Standart* discusses Russia's Krasnopol-M2 152mm and Kitolov-2M 122mm laser-guided artillery munitions. These systems, along with the KM-8 Gran 120mm laser-guided mortar projectile, require laser-guidance for their precision strike capabilities, as opposed to most U.S./NATO precision-guidance artillery munitions that require satellite navigation. Russia, despite its technical ability to field precision-guidance artillery munitions with satellite navigation, has chosen to stick with laser-guided precision artillery munitions, according to the accompanying excerpted article from Russian government news website *TASS*. The excerpted article from Russian daily *Izvestiya* describes how these laser-guided munitions were employed in Syria and during the Zapad-2021 exercise. It points out that Russia's gun crews routinely practice with laser-guided munitions and that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are equipped with lasers to conduct target designation.

According to *TASS*, Russia is developing a new target-designation system for laser-guided munitions, the Planshet-M-IR artillery command vehicle. The Planshet-M-IR can reportedly integrate data from UAVs and other means of reconnaissance and is fully interoperable with the Automated Guidance and Fire control System (ASUNO) found on most modern Russian artillery systems. Although laser-guided munitions require "eyes-on" a target and more hardware than satellite navigation-based guided munitions, they are significantly more difficult to jam in the electromagnetically contested environments that Russia expects in any peer-level confrontation.

“In general, guided artillery weapons systems significantly improve the effectiveness of combat mission execution. Thus, the number of guns involved decreases 2-3 times, while the munition consumption is reduced by no less than 50 times (or even more!). In particular, the standard number of shells required to destroy an enemy platoon strongpoint is up to 800, while only 10-12 Krasnopol high precision projectiles are enough to do this. Let us take another example. Approximately 900 high-explosive fragmentation shells are needed to suppress a battery of American M109 self-propelled artillery, while only 9 Krasnopol projectiles are required... Speaking of purely the logistic component, the cost of execution of a combat task requires 5-10 times less munitions.”



*Kitolov-2M laser-guided 122mm guided projectile.*

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-RvjjQTM/0/X3/i-RvjjQTM-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



*KM-8 Gran laser-guided 120mm mortar projectile, Kitolov-2M laser-guided 122mm guided projectile, Krasnopol-M2 laser-guided 152mm guided projectile.*

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-wVnBbFF/0/X3/i-wVnBbFF-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



*Krasnopol-M2 laser-guided 152mm guided projectile.*

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-DPRX9pt/0/X3/i-DPRX9pt-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



*Planshet artillery command vehicle.*

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-nfKtHkR/0/X3/i-nfKtHkR-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

## Continued: Russia Continues To Invest in Precision-Guided Munitions That Are Not Dependent on Satellite Navigation

**Source:** Petr Nikolayev, “Точная доставка гарантирована: Управляемые артиллерийские снаряды доказали свою эффективность (Precise Hit Is Guaranteed: Guided artillery shells have proven their effectiveness),” *Armeyskiy Standart* (Russian military news website), 30 September 2021. <https://armystandard.ru/news/20219291030-Akegf.html>

*...While the Krasnopol [precision guided] munition was originally intended for the D-20 towed howitzer, now the range of artillery systems has expanded: 2S3M Akatsiya, 2S19 Msta-S, and 2A65 Msta-B. Given the right caliber, it will also be suitable for the promising Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled artillery system...The guided high-explosive fragmentation projectile comes with a laser rangefinder. Observer-gunner guides the Krasnopol to the target using a laser beam. At the same time, the signal is sent to the projectile at the end of the flight (the duration of the flight is 5-15 seconds), and then, the homing head adjusts the trajectory and ensures that the target is hit. It takes about one minute for a high precision projectile to cover a distance of 20 kilometers.*

*Today, a rather heavy portable set of automated fire control equipment -- Malakhit, which weighs as much as 42 kilograms with a thermal imaging camera and required a crew of three men, is being replaced by UAVs...The gunner can “highlight” three targets at the same time. Incidentally, this is much safer for gunners: They do not have to advance to the forward edge so as to highlight the selected target with a laser...*

*The high combat performance of the Krasnopol presented the developers with the task of creating smaller caliber shells for regimental artillery systems. The result was not long in coming: The Tula Instrument Design Bureau presented the Kitolov-2 guided projectile for 120-mm guns, mainly for various modifications of the Nona artillery system...The more powerful KM-3 Kitolov-2M high-explosive fragmentation projectile is designed for 122-mm guns (2S1 Gvozdika self propelled artillery mount) and is slightly inferior to its older “brother” -- the Krasnopol. Its maximum firing range is 13.5 kilometers. Out of the 28-kilogram weight, the warhead accounts for 12.25 kilograms, including 5.3 kilograms of explosives. The probability of hitting targets is at least 0.8.*

*In general, guided artillery weapons systems significantly improve the effectiveness of combat mission execution. Thus, the number of guns involved decreases 2-3 times, while the munition consumption is reduced by no less than 50 times (or even more!). In particular, the standard number of shells required to destroy an enemy platoon strongpoint is up to 800, while only 10-12 Krasnopol high precision projectiles are enough to do this. Let us take another example. Approximately 900 high-explosive fragmentation shells are needed to suppress a battery of American M109 self-propelled artillery, while only 9 Krasnopol projectiles are required... Speaking of purely the logistic component, the cost of execution of a combat task requires 5-10 times less munitions.*

*There is no doubt that guided artillery weapon systems will continue to be improved further. There are objective prerequisites for this: Equipment that improves the accuracy of guidance (including autonomous homing heads) and satellite navigation are evolving, more efficient drones are developed, and new equipment is supplied to reconnaissance and fire control posts. And again, there is also demand abroad: Such products are worth the money paid, so the export direction also looks promising.*



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

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

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

## Continued: Russia Continues To Invest in Precision-Guided Munitions That Are Not Dependent on Satellite Navigation

“Domestic smart artillery munitions are being employed in Syria - that is the only way that we can understand their real effectiveness. Strikes by those precision-guided weapons are given a high rating in the troops. They can practically instantaneously destroy an important target and affect the course of a firefight. The employment of unmanned aerial vehicles permits them to find important targets in the depth of the enemy’s combat formations. . .”

—Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy

**Source:** Roman Krezul and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Крылья с подсветкой: дроны ударят несбиваемыми снарядами и минами (Wings with Laser Illumination: Drones Will Strike with Indestructible Projectiles and Mines),” *Izvestiya* (Russian daily newspaper), 20 October 2020. <https://iz.ru/1237816/roman-kretcul-bogdan-stepovoi/krylia-s-podsvetkoi-drony-udariat-nesbivaemymi-snariadami-i-minami>

*During the course of the “Zapad-2021” Strategic Exercises, the new “Gran” mortar rounds and also the Krasnopol guided projectiles were guided to the target using Orion (also called “Inokhodets”) and Forpost-R unmanned aerial vehicles, sources in the Military Department told Izvestiya. The UAVs found targets for the artillery personnel and transmitted their coordinates to the command posts. Then the drones had to illuminate them with a laser - this ensured first-shot destruction...*

*Precision-guided weapons - artillery and aircraft munitions, and also operational-tactical missiles - are being actively utilized on the battlefield within the reconnaissance-strike loops at the present time, Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya.*

*“Those same Krasnopol guided projectiles Gran or Smelchak type mortar rounds are being actively used by artillery specialists right now”, he recalled. “Domestic smart artillery munitions are being employed in Syria - that is the only way that we can understand their real effectiveness. Strikes by those precision-guided weapons are given a high rating in the troops. They can practically instantaneously destroy an important target and affect the course of a firefight. The employment of unmanned aerial vehicles permits them to find important targets in the depth of the enemy’s combat formations. The “Inokhodets” or “Forpost” - are UAVs, which can be in the air at high altitude and for long duration, the expert pointed out”...*

*Firing using a “Krasnopol” has become a mandatory drill for artillery personnel. In August of this year, Central Military District “Msta-S” self-propelled howitzers destroyed the notional enemy’s camouflaged armored targets at a range from 10 to 16 kilometers at the exercises. In the process, they used unmanned aerial vehicles to adjust fire. “Gran” - is the latest high explosive-fragmentation munition with a laser seeker head. It was developed for smooth bore and rifled 120-millimeter mortars and is designed to destroy individual and group targets, light armored vehicles, and also fortifications. The mortar round permits the destruction of targets that have been illuminated by a laser with the first shot. In so doing, they can use it during bad weather at any time of day....*

*The tests of the mortar round have shown that it can destroy the designated targets with great effectiveness even in those moments of an engagement, when it becomes ineffective to conduct fire using conventional mortar or artillery munitions. For example, it will help to reach the enemy on the move in narrow gorges and behind the high ridges of cover. These qualities of the munition will become indispensable during the conduct of engagements in the mountains or in dense urban areas...*

**Source:** Новый планшет для управления артиллерией сможет наводить высокоточные снаряды (New Artillery Control System will be Able to Direct High-Precision Shells),” *TASS* (Russian government news agency website), 21 August 2021. <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/12188979>

*The Russian mobile artillery fire control complex Planshet-M-IR will be able to direct the guided artillery shells “Krasnopol-M2” and “Kitolov-2M”. On the eve of the Army-2021 international military-technical forum, TASS was informed about this by Vladimir Pimenov, Director General of the Signal VNII (part of the High-Precision Complexes NPO of the Rostec State Corporation).*

*“The complex will allow you to control fire, including high-precision ammunition Krasnopol-M2 and Kitolov-2M, developed by the Design Bureau of Instrument Making. Academician A.G. Shipunov”, which will make it unique in this class of weapons. These high-precision artillery complexes of the new generation have proven themselves in demonstration tests, military exercises and regional conflicts during firing,” Pimenov informed ...*

## Russia Expanding Military-Patriotic Education to Youth

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Russian security officials continue to improve and strengthen patriotic and military training opportunities for Russian youth. The first brief excerpt from an official Tambov regional source describes the opening of the new Avangard “educational and methodological center for military-patriotic education of youth.” The article says “there are 23 Avangard centers operating in the country, which are aimed at the patriotic education of young people.” It further describes that this new “center [in Tambov] will operate all year round,” where it will “hold regular training sessions on the basics of military service with tenth-graders.” So far, according to the excerpt, “300 children have already taken part in the training camp,” and that “this year about 1,000 schoolchildren will attend the training camp at the center.”

The second excerpt from the pro-business source *Kommersant* provides additional background to the opening of this new Avangard center in the Tambov region. It quotes a local official who said the center will offer “classes on firepower training, first aid, and protection against weapons of mass destruction.” A senior military officer at the center’s opening stated “the main goal of ‘Avangard’ will be the formation of ‘collectivism’ in children.” The officer stressed that the military “will help with technology, the development of the educational base,” but “that the instructors would be mostly former military personnel.” The article describes that the ceremony



Opening ceremony of new Avangard Center in the Tambov region, October 2021.

Source: <https://xn--80ahclcogc6ci4h.xn--90anffbebar6i.xn--p1ai/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=100946@cmsPhotoGalleryMil.ru>. Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

concluded with “a demonstration of the skills of members of a military-sports club with models of machine guns.” These new Avangard training centers may improve both defense awareness and military skills among Russian youth.

“There are 23 Avangard centers operating in the country, which are aimed at the patriotic education of young people.”

**Source:** Ekaterina Zaeva, “В Тамбовской области открылся учебно-методический центр военно-патриотического воспитания молодежи ‘Авангард’ (An educational and methodological center for military-patriotic education of youth ‘Avangard’ was opened in the Tambov region),” *Administration of the Tambov Region*, 1 October 2021. <https://www.tambov.gov.ru/news/v-tambovskoj-oblasti-otkrylsya-uchebno-metodicheskij-centr-voenno-patrioticheskogo-vospitaniya-molodezhi-avangard.html>

*More than 200 children - representatives of military-patriotic, search, cadet, youth-army associations and clubs - took part in the opening of the educational and methodological center for military-patriotic education of youth “Avangard” of the Tambov region....*

*There are 23 Avangard centers operating in the country, which are aimed at the patriotic education of young people. They are created on the initiative of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation in accordance with the decision of the President of the country Vladimir Putin and the Concept of the federal system of training Russian citizens for military service for the period up to 2024....*

*...The center will operate all year round. It is planned to hold regular training sessions on the basics of military service with tenth-graders, military-patriotic shifts during school holidays, retraining and advanced training courses for teachers and leaders. 300 children have already taken part in the training camp. All in all, this year about 1,000 schoolchildren will attend the training camp at the center.*

**Source:** Oleg Mukhin, “‘Коллективизму’ помогут боевой техникой (‘Collectivism’ will be helped by military equipment),” *Kommersant* (pro business news outlet), 5 October 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5018100>

*...Sergei Novikov, the chief of staff of the Yunarmiya in the region, standing at a complex of dugouts and dugouts (it was dug up in the backyard by sappers of a special forces brigade), enthusiastically told how the Tambov Avangard appeared on the ruins of a former technical school for tractor drivers. “We plan to train four thousand people a year within the framework of a five-day camp for tenth graders. For boys, training camps are mandatory, girls will be optional, - assured Mr. Novikov:*

*“Classes on firepower training, first aid, protection against weapons of mass destruction have been organized. There will also be a Patriot park - we are waiting for two heavy rocket tractors, infantry fighting vehicles, tanks.”*

*The military delegated the event to the deputy commander of the Western military district for military-political work, Viktor Zhuravlev. He said that the main goal of ‘Avangard’ will be the formation of ‘collectivism’ in children. “And we will help with technology, the development of the educational base.” However, the political officer immediately made a reservation that the instructors would be mostly former military personnel, and not active duty....*

*The performances of the students of the cadet corps with carbines were replaced by a patriotic song, and then a demonstration of the skills of members of a military-sports club with models of machine guns....*



## Russia Moves Forward with New Restrictions on Military Reporting

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

Reporting on military topics in Russia has now become more problematic. As reported previously (see “Russia Pushing to Classify Reporting on the Military,” *OE Watch*, September 2021), in July 2021, Russian security officials proposed legislation designed to restrict information related to Russian security. Now, as the first brief excerpt from the pro-business source *Kommersant* points out, “despite its ambiguity and a wave of criticism,” this legislation has now “come into legal force.” The article reminds readers that among many other security-related topics, this new law “prohibits the dissemination of even general forecasts about the military-political situation, and information about the moral and psychological state of the troops and the state of military equipment.”

The second excerpt, also from *Kommersant*, describes how this new law has already begun to restrict information regarding the military. For the past 30 years, the “human rights organization Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg,” has helped to protect soldiers and their families by “collecting and recording information about crimes and offenses in

the army.” According to the article, because of the new legislation and concerns over possible prosecution, this “human rights organization has stopped collecting information on crimes in the army.” However, despite this new constraint, the organization does “not intend to curtail legal aid to servicemen who have become victims of offenses.” This article concludes on a cautionary note, highlighting that earlier this year, the Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg noted “the number of manifestations of hazing in the Russian army increased for the first time in seven years.” Restricting the publication of information about the military could have a negative effect on the Russian armed forces because it is likely to reduce accountability at a time when Russian leadership is trying to promote the benefits of military service to the nation at large.

“The list of 60 items is rather vague and in several sections prohibits the dissemination of even general forecasts about the military-political situation, information about the moral and psychological state of the troops and the state of military equipment.”

**Source:** Sergey Sergeev, “ФСБ возродила военную тайну (FSB revived military secret),” *Kommersant* (pro business Russian news source), 1 October 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5016646>

*The list of forbidden topics in the field of the defense industry, the Ministry of Defense... has been approved.... The list of 60 items is rather vague and in several sections prohibits the dissemination of even general forecasts about the military-political situation, information about the moral and psychological state of the troops and the state of military equipment and virtually any information about Roscosmos....*

*FSB order No. 379... “List of information in the area military, military-technical activities of the Russian Federation, which, when received by a foreign state, its state bodies, an international or foreign organization, foreign citizens or stateless persons, can be used against the security of the Russian Federation,” dated September 28... has come into legal force. As Kommersant reported, it was born in the bowels of the special services, and in July was proposed for public discussion.*

*During this time, despite its ambiguity and a wave of criticism, it practically did not undergo any changes.... Many formulations are extremely vague and contain general phrases about data on the state of military units, their deployment, weapons and their modernization, the servicemen themselves and their families, etc.*

**Source:** Maria Starikova, Ksenia Veretennikova, “Солдатские матери Санкт-Петербурга уходят на дембель (Soldiers’ mothers of St. Petersburg are leaving for demobilization),” *Kommersant*, 6 October 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/amp/5019257>

*The human rights organization “Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg” announced the reduction of a number of areas of assistance to servicemen. Human rights activists note that under the recently adopted FSB order, criminal liability may arise, in particular, for “collecting and recording information about crimes and offenses” in the army...*

*“In connection with the adoption by the FSB of a list of information for the collection and distribution of which may lead to criminal liability, we are forced to respond,” says a statement from Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg, published on Wednesday... As Kommersant reported, the FSB order with a list of data that does not contain state secrets, but that poses a threat to Russia’s security when received by foreigners, was published a week ago. It contains 60 points, among which, in particular, “information on the progress and results of consideration of reports of crimes in the army, information on the observance of the rule of law and the moral and psychological climate in the troops, information on the deployment and size of the army...”*

*“We are not closing the organization and will not stop helping servicemen in principle, but we have to stop collecting and recording information about crimes and offenses,” Oksana Paramonova, the head of the organization, explained to Kommersant.*

*...For its part, Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg noted in a statement that in 2021 “the number of manifestations of hazing in the Russian army increased for the first time in seven years.”*

## Russia Conducts Arctic Operation in Conjunction with Zapad-2021

By Les Grau  
OE Watch Commentary

According to a recent article in the Norway-based English-Russian *Independent Barents Observer*, which follows military developments in the Arctic closely, the Russian Northern Fleet began exercises on 8 September in advance of the major Zapad-2021 strategic exercise to the south opposite NATO. Reportedly, Russia employed 8,000 personnel, 50 vessels, and 120 aircraft in the Arctic exercises, which involved missile firings and an Arctic riverine exercise. Russia is the master of such Arctic riverine exercises given that it is the only country to conduct them annually. The amphibious landings in these exercises are usually held against nominal enemy shoreline defenses outside of the major river port of Dudinka on the mighty

Yenesei River. This year the forces stormed parts of Dudinka to oust an enemy who had seized the vital port facilities. Video footage shows scuba divers gaining entry in the predawn hours, followed by an amphibious assault landing complete with swift boats and landing ships supported by naval bombardment. Airmobile insertions from the sea are also shown. Spetsnaz-affiliated weapons are visible in the takedown as Naval Infantry storms ashore. Russian Arctic ground forces are expanding their skill set to include Arctic urban combat with an apparent emphasis on capturing vital cargo-handling equipment intact.

“The ground forces attacked from the sea, air and land in what the Northern Fleet commanders say is the first ever exercise on how to liberate a seaport from enemy forces. Involved were Ka-27 helicopters, speedboats, ATVs. From the nearby waters of the Yenisei River, the Severomorsk destroyer provided naval gunfire support.”

**Source:** Atle Staalesen, “How to ambush an Arctic seaport. Russian marines stage a show,” *The Independent Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), September 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/09/how-ambush-arctic-seaport-russian-marines-stage-show>

*As Russia ... launched the huge Zapad-21 exercise, a force from the Northern Fleet engaged in training in the far northern Taymyr Peninsula. In a carefully staged show, [Naval Infantry] attacked the seaport of Dudinka, the town that is a crucial logistical hub for the mining and metallurgy company Nor Nickel.*

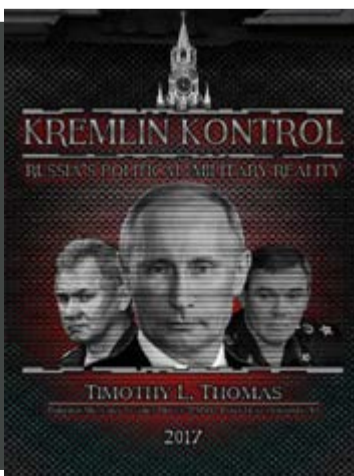
*The ground forces attacked from the sea, air and land in what the Northern Fleet commanders say is the first ever exercise on how to liberate a seaport from enemy forces. Involved were Ka-27 helicopters, speedboats, ATVs. From the nearby waters of the Yenisei River, the Severomorsk destroyer provided naval gunfire support.*

*...Video footage provided by the Northern Fleet shows Spetsnaz and Naval Infantry tiptoeing around the port area before attacking their targets.*

*The training was part of a bigger exercise unfolding at several sites along the Russian Arctic coast. According to the Northern Fleet press service, about 8,000 troops are taking part in the training that will take place on shooting ranges in the Kola Peninsula, as well as in the Barents Sea, Kara Sea and Laptev Sea.*

*Russian forces deployed in the bases at Franz Josef Land and the New Siberian Islands will participate and the drills also include training on the protection of communications systems along the Northern Sea Route, according to the Naval Press Service. About 800 various kinds of military vehicles and tanks, 120 air force units and up to 50 different vessels will be involved.*

*The drills can be seen as part of the Zapad-21, the Russian-Belarus military exercise that officially started on the 10th of September. The drills include about 200,000 soldiers, and is believed to be the largest military exercise in Europe in nearly 40 years.*



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>

## Russian and Norwegian Coast Guards Resume Cooperation in Arctic

By Les Grau  
OE Watch Commentary

Until the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the Russian and Norwegian coast guards would cooperate closely in the Arctic. Their activities included annual search and rescue exercises, supporting the annual polar bear census, and conducting joint fishing patrols. According to the Norway-based English-Russian *Independent Barents Observer*, such cooperation has resumed and the chiefs of the Russian and Norwegian coast guards recently met in person. This official high-level meeting suggests Russia's recent Northern Sea Fleet exercises in support of Zapad-2021 had little impact on the two countries' commitment to Arctic cooperation.

“After a two years break caused by the coronavirus pandemic, chiefs of the Norwegian and Russian coast guards meet in person for talks on preparedness and joint search and rescue in Arctic waters.”

**Source:** Atle Staalesen, “In Spirit of cooperation, FSB Coast Guard makes port call in neighboring Norway”, *The Independent Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 30 September 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/09/spirit-cooperation-fsbs-coast-guard-makes-port-call-neighboring-norway>

*After a two years break caused by the coronavirus pandemic, chiefs of the Norwegian and Russian coast guards met in person for talks on preparedness and joint search and rescue in Arctic waters. It was a rare sight when a Russian coast guard vessel slowly plowed the waters of the Bøkfjord Bay and moored at the quay of Kirkenes on 29 September. This was probably the first time that the Polyarnaya Zvezda, a part of the FSB's new and modernized fleet of Arctic vessels, has made port call in a foreign country. On board the 93 meter long ice-class ship was Lt. Gen. Stanislav Maslov, the powerful Chief of FSB's Border Guard Directorate.*

*On its way to Kirkenes, Maslov and the Polyarnaya Zvezda met the Norwegian coast guard vessel KV Nordkapp at the two countries' 12 nautical mile maritime border line in the Varanger fjord. A minor joint search and rescue exercise was conducted and top leaders from both sides subsequently made visits to each other's vessels. The two ships accompanied each other into the Norwegian fjord and the Polyarnaya Zvezda in the Kirkenes port ultimately placed itself side-by-side with the Nordkapp.*

*“We have a good cooperation,” stated Lieutenant General Yngve Odlo, who heads of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters, the Norwegian Armed Forces operational commando-center. “We today met for the first time in two years and have had good and open dialogue on a range of issues”, he told the Barents Observer.*

*That first of all includes border management, coast guarding, search and rescue.*

*“You know, we work together more or less all the time, we work with the same issues. We stand on each sides of the border, do fishery inspection, follow up fixed roles and responsibilities and on this level we have a good cooperation.*

*The two countries have successfully cooperated in northern waters for several decades. They manage the wide-stretched waters of the Barents Sea, one of the richest fishing grounds in the world. Distances are vast and infrastructure sparse, and the two countries' coast guard services play crucial roles in emergency situations.*

*“This cooperation is very important and we have shown that we can successfully do resource management together for many years,” General Odlo emphasized. “When incidents appear we have an arena where we can address them. There will always be issues to discuss, he says, and makes clear that “we do not always agree on all points. But the most important of it all is that we sit down and talk with each other,” he stated and stated that difficult issues are also addressed. But they stay clear of politics. “Yes, within our settled agenda we can discuss also difficult issues, but there are certain issues that we do not touch.”*

*Search and rescue is now among the few areas where Norwegians and Russians still uphold a high level of interaction. But the Norwegian Lieutenant General admits that also this cooperation has changed. “The issues that we could discuss with Russia before 2014 are no longer addressed. Now we have limited our joint actions to practical issues, to the issues that must be addressed between two neighboring states, first of all related to the border, natural resource management and search and rescue.”*

*Odlo is confident that the two countries will be able to efficiency interact if case of a serious crisis. “I have great faith that this cooperation will work and function in case of a serious accident or incident, at least we are in a position to handle it in the best possible way. As a matter of fact, the only way to handle a major incident in the wide-stretched region is to cooperate.”*

*The high-ranking Norwegian military openly spoke with journalists as the two country's vessels were at the Kirkenes Port. The same was not the case with Russian delegation, which categorically turned down all requests from the press.*

*That must be respected, Odlo emphasized to the Barents Observer. “They have their system and we have our's. I am glad to speak with you and then I fully respect that my colleague sees it differently.”*

*On 1 October, the delegations laid wreaths at the monument in memory of the Red Army soldiers that liberated Kirkenes in October 1944 from Nazi-German occupation.*

## Migrants in “Hybrid War”: An Old Trick in Post-Soviet Space

By Dodge Billingsley  
OE Watch Commentary

Georgian defense correspondent Irakli Aladashvili recently offered his appraisal of the migrant border crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border. In the excerpted article from Georgian independent *Kvirispalitra*, Aladashvili referred to the migrants as weapons in a “hybrid-war” against Europe and NATO specifically, concluding Ukraine’s need to strengthen its border with Belarus should Belarus President Lukashenko decide to direct or point migrants towards Ukraine.

This is a sensitive subject for many on Russia’s southern periphery. The managed flow of migrants for political purposes is not new and Aladashvili referred to the late 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union when Meskhetian Turks from Kazakhstan were returned to Georgia via a Soviet plan of action, to the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, creating an ethnic flashpoint in the region. However, in that case the

Meskhetian Turks were actually from Georgia and had been deported to Central Asia by Stalin during World War II. The same scenario played out in Chechnya after the death of Stalin when the Chechen nation, an ethnic group also deported to Central Asia by Stalin during World War II, began to return to the north Caucasus only to find their ancestral lands occupied by other ethnic groups—leading to ethnic tension and civil unrest in neighboring Ingushetia.

The author speculates that countries that have not experienced Kremlin-directed population relocation policies firsthand may miss the point. The manufactured migrant crisis with Western Europe may not only be an example of “hybrid war,” but also may be intended to place stress on populations and drain resources in Eastern European countries. Although the author does not discuss this, it is possible that Russia’s manufacturing of a migrant crisis on the Belarusian border with NATO member Poland is intended as a distraction or connected to a feint in relation to Russia’s offensive military buildup on its border with Ukraine.

“Why bring tanks to the NATO border, if you can take thousands of aggressive migrants by taxi to the same border, who break the border barbed wire with their bare hands, but enter the EU countries and get refugee status? Perhaps this is exactly what the Lukashenko-Putin duo had in mind.”

**Source:** Irakli Aladashvili, “მიგრანტების შესევა ევროპას - ლუკაშენკო-პუტინის “ჰიბრიდული ომი” Invasion of migrants in Europe - Lukashenko-Putin “hybrid war”),” *Kvirispalitra* (???), 15 November 2021.

<https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/samkhedro-thema/85775-migrantebis-sheseva-evropas-lukashenko-putinis-qhibriduli-omiq.html>

*Why bring tanks to the NATO border, if you can take thousands of aggressive migrants by taxi to the same border, who break the border barbed wire with their bare hands, but enter the EU countries and get refugee status?*

*Perhaps this is exactly what the Lukashenko-Putin duo had in mind. There is no other way to explain that a very poor Syrian or Iraqi Kurd collects 4-5 thousand dollars to officially fly to Belarus from Iraq on a passenger plane, get a visa, take a taxi and cross the Polish border, and then illegally cross this border and enter Poland as a refugee through Germany and other Western European countries.*

*This is one of the clear manifestations of the hybrid war - a potential adversary, in this case NATO member states, [Russia] has created great political and economic problems for them by infiltrating migrants... so that you do not become a military aggressor because you do not use tanks and bombers.*

*For the past few days, thousands of Syrian and Iraqi Kurdish families have been attacking the barbed wire fence in the cold... and throwing stones at Polish border guards and police on the other side of the border.*

*Belarusian law enforcers armed with machine guns are quietly watching this border patrol from behind the scenes and are ready, if any Polish police force uses force to stop a migrant crossing the border, to film it and show it to the world, to demonstrate how the democratically oppressed European ...*

*Russia's official propaganda blames European countries for everything, reminding them that it was their "peacekeeping operations" and bombings that sparked so many migrants, but Moscow forgets that since the fall of 2015, its air bombardment of Syrian cities has sparked outrage in Turkey. Sheltered from where they too are trying to penetrate the EU.*

*The West draws a parallel between the tactics of the presidents of Turkey and Belarus, noting that both Erdogan and Lukashenko are trying to blackmail the EU over migrants, although there is a difference. More than three million refugees were displaced in Turkey first - after the wars in Iraq, then in Syria and Afghanistan, and most of them walked hundreds of kilometers to escape the war. Migrants in Belarus, in fact, as tourists,*

*They arrive so comfortably, which is the main reason why the Polish government officially refuses to cross the border - tourists are not refugees ... Today, in fact, Poland acts as a kind of previous barrier for Germany and protects it from a new influx of migrants.*

*Against this background, Ukraine immediately began to strengthen the border with Belarus, as Kiev may not unreasonably suspect that Lukashenko, who recently "hugged" Putin, could turn the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds from the Polish border to the Ukrainian border, adding to Ukraine's problems.*

*The use of managed flows of migrants for political purposes is not new, although it was not previously called a "hybrid war." Let us recall how in the late 1980s, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow activated the return of Meskhetian Turks from Kazakhstan (where they were deported by Stalin during World War II) to Georgia, to the Samtskhe-Javakheti region.*

*It is good that this did not happen, otherwise a new conflict zone could have emerged in Georgia and we have witnessed armed clashes between the returning Turkish-Meskhetians and Georgian citizens of Armenian descent who have settled in this region.*

## Iran Unveils New Radar and Simulator, Continues Trend in Self-Sufficiency



**The newly unveiled Shams Simulator.**

Source: Fars News Agency, [https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1400/07/10/14000710000432\\_Test\\_PhotoN.jpg](https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1400/07/10/14000710000432_Test_PhotoN.jpg)

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

When Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, Tehran had difficulty operating advanced military platforms ordered by the ousted shah or accessing the spare parts necessary to keep them operational. Because of this, self-sufficiency became central to the Islamic Republic of Iran's security doctrine. Iranian leaders pride themselves on producing their own ships (See: "IRGC Navy Announces Construction of Two New Ships and Unveils New Speedboats," *OEW*, July 2020), tanks (See: "Iran: New Karrar Tank to be Unveiled Soon," *OEW*, January-February 2017), and UAVs (See: "Iran Unveils New Night Vision Drone," *OEW*, August 2014). In recent months, various Iranian military officials have announced enhancements to Iran's air defense, a trend which likely suggests the Iranian leadership's growing obsession with air defense against the backdrop of repeated undetected Israeli penetrations of Syrian airspace. The excerpted article from the *Fars*

“The aim is to [enhance] air defense missiles.”

*News Agency*, an outlet close to the Iranian military and the hardline political spectrum, announces two new components of such air defense: a medium-range radar and a “simulator.” The Hormuz Radar system reportedly will enhance targeting by allowing Iran's Army Air Defense Force to assess incoming missiles with more precision. The Shams simulator, meanwhile, allegedly will help the Army Air Defense Force to practice countering long-range ballistic missiles. Within the Iranian military, the Army Air Defense Force is a separate and co-equal branch of service to the ground forces, navy, and air force. While it is unclear if either the Hormuz or Shams systems will work as planned, the prominence with which the Iranian Army Air Defense Force has announced the two new platforms certainly reflects a growing concern about Iran's vulnerability to missile attack during any future conflict.

**Source:** “Radar-e Hormuz va Shabiyehsaz-e Shams Ravanmaye Shodand (Hormuz Radar and Shams Simulator Unveiled),” *Fars News Agency* (outlet close to the Iranian military and the hardline political spectrum), 1 September 2021. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14000710000330>

*On Saturday, the Hormuz intermediate range tactical radar and the Shams simulator, a long-range strategic system, were unveiled in the presence of Brigadier-General Alireza Sabahifard, commander of the regular army's Air Defense Force and a group of deputies from the Army Defense Force's Self-Sufficiency Organization.*

*The aim of the Hormuz project is to build a medium range radar that can extract the target speed information, determine target distance with high precision and send high-quality information to the fire control center for the air defense missiles....*

## 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>

## Iran: Khamenei Speaks on America's Afghanistan Withdrawal



**Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Speaks at Imam Hussein Military Academy, 3 October 2021.**  
Source: Khamenei.ir; <https://english.khamenei.ir/d/2021/10/03/4/26262.jpg>

By Michael Rubin  
 OE Watch Commentary

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's hostility toward and distrust of American presence in the region is not new; it is a pillar of Iran's revolutionary ideology. While Tehran does not care for the Taliban and, indeed, almost went to war with the group the last time it controlled Afghanistan, it did swallow its distaste both to support the Taliban's insurgency against the United States militarily and to establish more pragmatic political ties (See "Iran Talking to the Taliban," *OE Watch*, June 2020). In the excerpted speech posted on Khamenei's website, the supreme leader seeks to capitalize on the

U.S. withdrawal by questioning U.S. motives in Afghanistan and the wisdom of other regional states partnering with the United States. He accuses U.S. forces of sponsoring terror and furthering Afghanistan's drug trade, conspiracies in which the state-controlled Iranian press have dabbled over the decades. Elsewhere in his speech, Khamenei castigates Hollywood, probably reflecting his concern about the power of American culture and the permeability of Iranian society to it as many younger Iranians turn their backs on Khamenei's revolutionary values.

In his speech, Khamenei also claims, with little basis for support, that anti-Americanism is often high in countries that have strong diplomatic and military partnerships with the United States. Pew Global Attitude surveys repeatedly show high anti-Americanism in Turkey, for example, where the U.S. maintains a military base. Such attitudes do not necessarily hold true in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, though, nor in Japan and South Korea. In Germany, too, Pew shows favorability ratings of the United States in net positive

“The Hollywood pictures... are untrue.”

territory and on the upswing. Khamenei's counsel to other states to turn their back on U.S. military partnerships will likely fall on deaf ears. Many Middle Eastern states may distrust Washington, but they distrust Tehran more and are unlikely to change their strategic posture so long as Iran aggressively undermines the security of regional states.

**Source:** “Biyanat dar Marasam-e Moshtarak Danesh Amukhtegi Daneshjuyan-e Daneshgah-ha-ye Afsri Niru-ha-ye Mosleh (Blackouts at Home in the Bushehr Province are a Red-Line),” 3 October 2021. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=48783>

*...We should pay attention to this fact that this is the nature of the US army. The Hollywood pictures that America and countries like the United States produce about their armies are untrue. The reality of their army is what you have seen in recent days. They went to Afghanistan making extravagant claims and then left in such a disastrous way. The same is generally true about their presence in other countries too. In other countries where the US army is present, even if the rulers in those countries have not had the courage to throw them out, the Americans are hated by those nations. In every country where they are present—for example, in East Asian countries where the US army has been present for many years—they are hated by the people.*

*Well, we should pay attention to this [and understand] that the presence of foreign armies, including the US army, in our own region is a source of destruction and war. Everyone should try to keep countries and their armies independent by relying on their own nations and cooperating with the armies of their neighboring countries and other armies in the region. This is in the best interest of the region. We and they should not allow foreign armies to travel thousands of miles—under the pretext of safeguarding their national interests while these issues have nothing to do with their nations—and to interfere in the affairs of our countries and our armies and to maintain a military presence here. The armies of regional nations can run the region on their own and you should not allow others to enter.*

## Iran Vows Action Against Iraqi Kurdistan-Based Insurgents

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

In the excerpted article from the *Fars News Agency*, an outlet close to the Iranian military and the hardline political spectrum, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, calls on Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish officials to take action against Iranian Kurdish camps inside Iraq.

That Iranian Kurdish dissident groups live with impunity inside Iraq chafes Iranian leaders. Komala, a largely non-violent Iranian Kurdish communist party, operates openly in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), the Iranian Kurdish branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party, also may have some presence in Iraqi Kurdistan, although this appears limited to mountain hideouts. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) bares a particular grudge against the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDPI), however: In 1989, under the guise of negotiating an end to KDPI insurgency, it sent an assassination team to Vienna, Austria to kill KDPI leaders. Three years later, Iranian intelligence conducted a similar operation in Berlin, Germany.

Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) authorities have long allowed the KDPI to maintain a base in Koysanjaq, a town halfway between the Iraqi Kurdish cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, on the condition that the group not use Iraqi Kurdish territory to attack Iran. While the KDPI kept its promise, the IRGC on occasion has targeted its Koysanjaq base. On 8 September 2018, for example, the IRGC launched seven missiles at the KDPI base, some of which scored direct hits on a conference room in which KDPI leaders were meeting. This reflected both the greater precision of Iranian missiles and perhaps inside information with regard to the timing of meetings.



**Komala fighters in Iraqi Kurdistan.**

Source: DefaPress.ir, [https://defapress.ir/files/fa/news/1397/4/23/476015\\_186.jpg](https://defapress.ir/files/fa/news/1397/4/23/476015_186.jpg)

“Dealing with these groups is our right.”

Maj. Gen. Bagheri further implies that the IRGC might take action into its own hands and, in a new twist, accuses U.S. forces based at the Erbil Airport of supporting Iranian Kurdish groups. There is no evidence this is true, but it probably reflects Iranian paranoia about the American presence in Iraq and a desire to use a grievance to justify action. At the very least, Bagheri's call elsewhere in his remarks for Iraqi Kurdish leaders to deny their territory to armed “anti-revolutionaries” who are “agents of America and the Zionist regime” reflects Tehran's new demand, one which, if successful, will couple with similar demands with regard to U.S. forces and an alleged covert Israeli presence in Erbil.

**Source:** “Niru-ha-ye Moseleh Besat Goruh-ha-ye Zad Enqalab-e Moseleh ra Jomah' Khahand Kard (The Armed Forces Will Mobilize against Armed Insurgent Groups),” *Fars News Agency*, 19 September 2021, <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14000627000824>

### ***The Armed Forces Will Mobilize against Armed Insurgent Groups***

...Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Armed Forces, said at a farewell ceremony for the deputy chief of staff of the Armed Forces, and referring to the recent operations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in northern Iraq and the Kurdistan region, that the authorities of this region and the Iraqi government should take action to deal with these groups.

Warning Americans that their base in the region should also be closed and should not be used as a counter-revolutionary center, he said, “Our operations in dealing with counter-revolutionary groups will continue and we will not tolerate any mischievousness on this border.”

Bagheri added, “Dealing with these groups is our right and the UN charter has given us this right.”

## Impact of Taliban's Return to Power on Syrian and Turkish Extremists Still Unknown

By Ihsan Gündüz  
OE Watch Commentary

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan after 20 years of waging an insurgency has raised a debate about how extremist movements in other regions would react. The accompanying article from globally read security news outlet *al-Monitor* analyzes the impact of the Taliban's return to power on Salafi-Jihadi movements in Turkey and Syria. It argues that the implications on extremist movements will largely depend on how the Taliban constructs its relationships with jihadi groups in Afghanistan and with the international community. According to the article, Turkish Islamist groups generally celebrated the Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan but some groups with close

relations with the Taliban, such as Konya Jamaat, remained quiet to avoid drawing the government's attention. On the other hand, an Islamist pro-government Turkish daily newspaper hailed the Taliban's victory. The article also notes some Turkish Salafis were not as pleased with the Taliban because of its failure to pursue the establishment of genuine Islamic rule. As for reactions in Syria, the article states that the Taliban's victory provides an example to Syrian extremist groups on how to strategize their fight. As such, they will likely try to show they abandoned the notion of global jihad and wage sustained protracted war in Syria. However, unlike the Taliban, extremist groups like the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Syria lack popular support among Syrian opposition groups and ordinary people.

“The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has raised complex questions over the future of Salafi-jihadi movements, including in Turkey and neighboring Syria...”

**Source:** Metin Gürçan, “How will Taliban's return affect jihadi movements in Turkey, Syria?” *al-Monitor* (a globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 03 September 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/09/how-will-talibans-return-affect-jihadi-movements-turkey-syria>

*The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has raised complex questions over the future of Salafi-jihadi movements, including in Turkey and neighboring Syria where the threat from such groups has been largely contained. Whether the risks heighten down the road will depend largely on how the Taliban shape their relationship with jihadi groups in Afghanistan.*

*Turkish Islamists of various stripes hailed the Taliban's takeover, though some apparently had to tamp down their jubilation.*

*...Salafi groups in Turkey welcomed the Taliban's takeover, but some were too wary of the authorities to engage in vocal “victory” propaganda. “Especially the Konya Jamaat, which has close relations with the Taliban, remained quieter than expected...”*

*Some in the pro-government media also applauded the Taliban...*

*The Taliban got ovations also from an unlikely quarter: secular but fiercely anti-American Turks who describe themselves as anti-imperialists...*

*Yet some Salafi-jihadi groups in Turkey were not as happy... The prospect of the Taliban's recognition by “taghut” states, the argument goes, is proof that they have failed to install genuine Islamic rule...*

*The core point of contention between the jihadis in Turkey appears to be about methods, namely a disagreement on whether they should strive to create Islamic emirates or an all-encompassing Islamic caliphate...*

*In Idlib, the northwestern Syrian province that borders Turkey and the last stronghold of radical Islamist rebels in the country, Salafi-jihadi groups appeared less jubilant due to Taliban statements about rapport with the international community...*

*The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has triggered also a debate on a possible movement of Islamist fighters from Syria to Afghanistan and vice versa. A flow from Syria to Afghanistan appears possible but only in terms of Tajik, Uzbek, Chechen and Uyghur groups. The Taliban do not need Arab or European fighters. Moreover, they are not expected to accept such fighters because of the security promises they have made. As for Asian fighters, two main reasons could lead them to move to Afghanistan. First, most Asian fighters in Syria had come from Afghanistan and there is nothing left they can do in Syria. Secondly and most importantly, the Taliban can easily melt them into Afghan society.*

*That said, could we see another regional mobilization of armed Salafi-jihadi networks in the near future? Such a prospect appears unlikely both in the Turkish-Syrian and the Syrian-regional context, as most Salafi groups in the region have been either defeated like IS or confined into relatively small areas...*

*Turkey, meanwhile, has restricted the mobility and propaganda of Salafi groups and related communities and organizations...*

*Considering all this, the resurgence of a regional armed Salafi-jihadi movement appears highly unlikely in the medium term.*

*Still, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan will undoubtedly cause some fluctuations on the security fault lines in the region.*

**Source:** Tamer Kormaz, “Batılı Putlar, yıkılmaya mahkûmdur... (Western Idols are destined to be destroyed...)” *Yeni Şafak* (pro-government Islamist Turkish news paper), 01 September 2021. <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/tamer-korkmaz/batili-putlar-yikilmaya-mahkmdur-2059478>

*Twenty years of occupation in Afghanistan ended with the withdrawal of the last American soldier... last night. The US/Western idol has been demolished. ...*

*All human beings will witness the destruction of various Western idols all over the world in the coming years!*



## Turkey Seeking To Play Leading Role in Afghanistan

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

As the sole NATO member who has expressed a desire to stay in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the allied withdrawal from Afghanistan, Turkey may be positioning itself as a mediator between the West and the Taliban. The accompanying passage from a Turkish source featured on the BBC's Turkish-language news platform, *BBC Türkçe*, discusses a recent meeting between a Taliban delegation and the Turkish Foreign Ministry in Ankara. It provides an update on discussions regarding Kabul International Airport, as well as the Taliban's requests for help from Turkey.

As the passage points out, discussions surrounding Turkey's desire to provide operations and security support at Kabul International Airport are ongoing. The airport is temporarily being operated by Qatar, but Turkey wants to take over permanent operations. For its part, the Taliban asked Turkish Foreign Ministry officials for humanitarian assistance, reconstruction help, and continued development investment. As the passage notes, Turkey is currently the only NATO country that still has an embassy in Kabul, and embassy officials there are delivering messages to the Taliban on issues such as the importance of an inclusive government, girls' education rights, and women's rights. Finally, the passage notes that Turkey has not officially recognized the Taliban.

Turkey has a strong religious, historical, and cultural relationship with Afghanistan. The shared Islamic religion and cultural ties have made it easier for Turkey to play an active role in Afghanistan throughout the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force

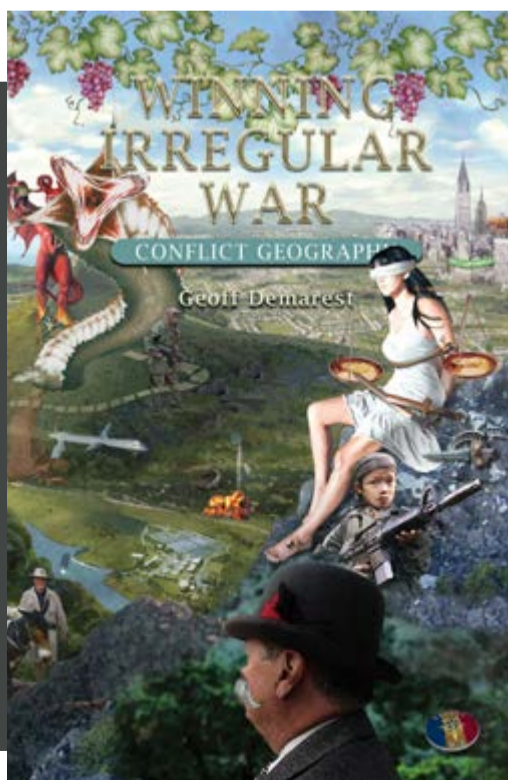


Map of Afghanistan.

Source: Cacahuete via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_Afghanistan.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Afghanistan.png) Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

(ISAF) mission, although it refused to participate in combat operations. Turkish forces' non-combatant role in the ISAF mission included providing military training for Afghan soldiers, conducting civilian missions, building schools, assisting infrastructure development, and helping the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

“Turkey is the only NATO country that still has an embassy in Kabul...”



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

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

## Continued: Turkey Seeking To Play Leading Role in Afghanistan

**Source:** Taliban heyetinin Türkiye ziyareti ne anlama geliyor? (What does the Taliban delegation's visit to Turkey mean?), BBCTürkçe (BBC's Turkish-language news platform), 14 October 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-58913937>

*Emirhan Muttaki, the representative of the Foreign Ministry of the administration the Taliban formed after taking over control of Afghanistan, held meetings in Ankara on Thursday [14 October]. ... Following the talks, [Turkish Foreign Minister] Çavuşoğlu made some statements... "We have been telling the international community about the importance of engaging with the Taliban administration... Recognition is different, engagement is different... There is an urgent need to get humanitarian help. We, as Kızılay [Turkish Red Crescent- the largest humanitarian organization in Turkey] delivered this assistance to the field. The Afghan economy must not collapse. We have been telling countries that have frozen Afghanistan's overseas accounts, to be more flexible. We received information from them [the Taliban] about this. ...*

*Since the Taliban is not officially recognized, it was noted that only the Turkish flag was present in the meetings.*

*Çavuşoğlu said that they "made suggestions" to the Taliban administration: "Unlike Westerners who talk down and lecture by placing pre-conditions, we made suggestions by telling them about the importance [of some issues]. We repeated that they need to be inclusive. We underlined the importance of women's participation in the workforce and of the education of girls. The Maarif Foundation has 50 schools, 14 of which are for girls. We said these schools must reopen. They told us that all women in the health care sector have returned to work."*

*'We told them our expectations regarding the operation of the airports'*

*Çavuşoğlu also said that they discussed the operation of the Kabul Airport, which Turkey has been volunteering for a while: "We explained to them not just our expectations, but those of the entire international civilian air community, regarding the operation of the airports and their security such that regular flights can resume. They conveyed their request for humanitarian assistance, continued investments, and continued help for the development efforts of TİKA [Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency] and our other agencies.*

*Talks about the Kabul Airport are 'ongoing'*

*Turkish officials who talked to BBC Turkish about the visit said that the operation of the Kabul Airport is still being discussed and that the issue the Taliban places the most importance on, during this process, is international recognition and legitimacy.*

*Turkey is the only NATO country that still has an embassy in Kabul and from which its diplomats continue to work out of. The staff at the Kabul embassy continue their daily correspondence with the new administration formed by the Taliban, despite the lack of any formal recognition as of yet. As part of this communication in the field, messages on issues such as "inclusive government, girls' education rights, and women's rights" which are in line with the international community, especially the US, are continuing to be conveyed.*

*Meanwhile, Turkey also wants to permanently operate Kabul Airport. Following the US withdrawal at the end of August, the airport's operation had temporarily been given to Qatar- which has close relations with the Taliban- and temporary systems had been placed to fill the gap regarding the airport.*

*Turkey has been highlighting the importance of opening the airports for continued access by the international community and for the transfer of humanitarian assistance; and has been meeting with the Taliban about this. It is also in touch with its Western allies on this issue.*

*The Taliban also want to open their airports to international access, so they can be able to participate in global trade, receive humanitarian assistance and improve their economy. But before that, it is seeking to be recognized as the legitimate government in Afghanistan. This is why it was positive regarding holding high-level talks with Turkey, who is volunteering to take over the airport management.*

*The Taliban claims that their recognition and engagement into the international system is critical for preventing a wave of migration to the West, and preventing the strengthening of armed groups, especially ISIS-Khorasan. ...*

*[Turkish Foreign Minister] Çavuşoğlu said that four or five officials from the Foreign Ministry would visit Afghanistan soon "to see the issues on the ground, to see what kind of engagement to enter and convey our suggestions to the Taliban."*

## Russia Planning To End Rebellion in Daraa Province and Sideline Iran

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

A Russia-backed plan to both limit Iranian influence and extinguish the embers of rebellion is underway in Daraa Province, the symbolic cradle of Syria's 2011 uprising. Rebel holdouts in the province's capital and its western half, near the border with Israel, have agreed to Russia-guaranteed reconciliation agreements. In the province's east, control over the Russia-backed 8th Brigade, made up of local former rebels, has been transferred to the Syrian Military Intelligence Division (also referred to as Military Security), according to the accompanying excerpt from the opposition news website *alsouria.net*. And as the opposition news website *Enab Baladi* reports, units from the Syrian Army's 4th Division, which is considered to be in Iran's orbit and had taken a hardline stance toward rebels in western Daraa, have withdrawn from the province.

Since the start of the uprising, Daraa has been the arena of complex intra-regime intrigues. The latest developments appear to favor Syrian Military Intelligence and its local head, a man named Louay al-Ali. Al-Ali's influence in the province is such, according to a 2018 article published in the Lebanese pro-Syrian opposition news website *al-Modon*, that meetings between the government and the rebels were meaningless without him present. The emerging hegemony of al-Ali and Military Intelligence in Daraa, though, may be challenged by Syrian government factions aligned with Iran. Last September, al-Ali and a group of Russian Military Police were stopped at a government checkpoint manned jointly by the Syrian Army's 5th Division and Air Force Intelligence, both of which are considered in Iran's orbit. As recounted in the accompanying excerpt, also from *al-Modon*, after arguments and a brief firefight, the checkpoint was handed over to Military Intelligence.

Both Jordan and Israel, it appears, support the stabilization of Daraa under Syrian government control and with Russian backing.



**Map of Syria with Daraa Highlighted Red.**

Source: TUBS, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daraa\\_in\\_Syria\\_\(%2BGolan\\_hatched\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daraa_in_Syria_(%2BGolan_hatched).svg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0

For Jordan it paves the way for reviving bilateral trade, while for Israel it helps sideline Iran. Yet Tehran's influence in Daraa remains strong, and it seems possible that its allies in the province may not be willing, for reasons of their own, to cede power to the Russians and their allies in Military Intelligence without being given something in return. (For more see: "Growing Iranian Influence Near the Border with Israel in Southwest Syria," *OE Watch*, March 2021; "Is Russia Getting Entangled in Southwest Syria?" *OE Watch*, April 2019; and, "Iran Approaches the Syria-Jordan Border," *OE Watch*, February 2018).

“...Russia's ability to implement such provisions, keeping Iran and its militias away from the southern border, is still unknown but will become clear in the near future...”

## Continued: Russia Planning To End Rebellion in Daraa Province and Sideline Iran

روسيا تسحب يدها مالياً عن "اللواء الثامن" في درعا.. هل اقترب تفككه؟

### Source:

(Russia withdraws financial support from the 8th Brigade in Daraa... will it be broken up?)," *al-Souria* (Syrian opposition news website), 13 October 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/44kv8tps>

*Sources in Daraa said that Russian officers told the Eighth Brigade, led by Ahmed al-Awda, that the Military Security Division of al-Assad's forces had become responsible for financing the brigade and paying the salaries of its members. The sources added that "the members of the Eighth Brigade received their salaries two days ago from the Military Security Division" and that "Russian soldiers told the brigade that the salaries and armament of its fighters would come from regime forces."*

"انسحاب" الفرقة الرابعة" من درعا.. تفاهات دولية "لإقصاء الإيرانيين"

### Source:

(4th Division withdrawal from Daraa... International understanding to 'exclude Iran')," *Enab Baladi* (Syrian opposition news website), 27 September 2021. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/515863>

*With the start of the Syrian regime ending the implementation of settlement agreements in Daraa governorate, Enab Baladi verified information that the 4th Division's 666th Regiment was to redeploy to the division's command center in Damascus, with the intention of it evacuating all its military posts in the province. The news of the withdrawal of the 4th Division coincided with the regime's removal of security barriers in Daraa al-Balad, the construction of which dates back more than seven years. However, the security situation of the province for regime forces is not considered ideal for removing the checkpoints, especially with the continuation of assassinations against its agents in the province... In an interview with Enab Baladi, a member of the media office of the opposition Negotiations Committee, Brigadier General Ibrahim Jabawi, said that... many Iranian militias had blended in with the 4th Division in an attempt by Iran to hide them near the southern border of Syria, in light of the pressure posed by the continuous Israeli raids on the sites of militias backed by the "Iranian Revolutionary Guards." He added that Russia's ability to implement such provisions, keeping Iran and its militias away from the southern border, is still unknown but will become clear in the near future...*

ما الفرق بين لؤي العلي ووفيق الناصر؟

### Source:

(What is the difference between Louay al-Ali and Wafiq Nasser?)," *al-Modon* (Lebanese pro-Syrian opposition news website), 13 November 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/acbp6xnu>

*Brigadier General Louay al-Ali spent years in Daraa governorate in charge of the Military Security Division there before the outbreak of the revolution and during the first months of it. Although he was one of those involved in the suppression of popular demonstrations, he was able to repurpose his relations and contacts to facilitate the accession of most of the cities and towns of the south to the "settlement" agreements and the subsequent control of the security situation. Al-Ali's participation in meetings held by opposition delegations with regime representatives in Daraa is essential. A member of the opposition delegation in northwest Daraa told al-Modon that the meetings in which Al-Ali does not participate are "meaningless" and any points that are agreed upon with the representatives of the regime are impossible to pass without his approval, "even if the head of the Military Committee approved them"...*

إشتباك إيراني-روسي في درعا.. والشظايا تصيب الأردن"

### Source:

(Iranian-Russian clashes in Daraa... Shrapnel hits Jordan)," *al-Modon* (Lebanese pro-Syrian opposition news website), 21 September 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/3m4c52wd>

*The Ahrar Houran Gathering stated that an exchange of fire took place on Tuesday, between the elements of the checkpoint near the town of Sheikh Saad on the one hand, which is a joint checkpoint manned by Air Force Intelligence and the 5th Division, and the elements of the Military Security's "Masaken Jalin" roundabout checkpoint, on the other hand... The clashes resulted from a dispute that broke out at the Masaken Jalin roundabout checkpoint, after the officer in charge of it opened fire on the car of Military Security Brigadier General Louay Al-Ali and the Russian military police vehicles... The incident ended with the officer in charge of the checkpoint being replaced by an officer from the Military Security... The Gathering quoted an eyewitness as saying that the officer of the 5th Division who was in charge of the Masaken Jalin roundabout checkpoint, told the military security official, Louay Al-Ali: "I take my orders from Bashar al-Assad, not from you... I don't want to see anyone here at the checkpoint."*

## Terrorist Cells Increasingly Active in Sudan

By Robert Feldman  
OE Watch Commentary

While Sudan has long been a home to terrorist groups, until recently, besides some notable exceptions, few of them carried out operations within the country. However, since the 2019 military overthrow of Omar al-Bashir, who allowed terrorists, including Osama bin Laden, to have sanctuary in the country, terrorist activity aimed at Sudanese security forces has increased substantially. Thus, as the accompanying excerpted article from African media group *The East African* notes, though the transitional government had hoped to portray the country as having mostly rid itself of terrorists, the reality on the ground reveals a very different picture.

Sudan's rise in terrorism, according to the author, is at least partially attributable to being surrounded by countries where terrorist activity is quite prevalent. Neighboring terrorists, who previously crossed Sudan on their way to other countries by taking advantage of relatively open borders, or used it as a safe haven while preparing to execute operations elsewhere, now carry out attacks within Sudan itself. Additionally, these nearby terrorists, as well as those who have arrived in the region after fleeing Iraq and Syria, are influencing Sudan's own homegrown terrorist groups. So far ISIS has been the most active in Sudan, though al-Qaeda and Boko Haram have also carried out operations. Counterterrorism efforts have begun, and while some have been successful, several security forces personnel have lost their lives. Unfortunately, a rise in terrorism is just one of many challenges Sudan faces. A coup attempt by soldiers still loyal to al-



**The Sudanese army increasingly has to fight terrorists.**

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation/Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ArmyScoutMasters2018-04.jpg>  
Attribution: CC BY 4.0

“Sudan’s association with terrorist groups in the past makes it friendly to these movements.”

Bashir, a depressed economy, and mistrust between military leaders and civilian officials are all distracting from the effort to fight this latest scourge.

**Source:** Mawahib Abdallatif, “More woes for Sudan leaders as terrorists activate cells,” *The East African* (an African media group), 10 September 2021. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/more-woes-for-sudan-leaders-as-terrorists-activate-cells-3577888>

*Sudan though had little history of terrorist operations inside Sudan, except for some minor events, which occurred in Sudan, such as the killing of the American diplomat John Granville, or the stabbing incident that occurred on the police officer guarding the American embassy.*

*Sudan’s association with terrorist groups in the past makes it friendly to these movements. The previous regime brought these groups as evidenced by the presence of the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the godfather of terrorist movements. Bin Laden stayed in Sudan for about five years or more in the 1990s and he used to describe Sudan as the home of the migration. He later fled to Afghanistan.*

*“At this time, such groups were described as sleeper cells using Sudan as a crossing and a safe haven to escape from their home authorities and to gather their strength before returning to the battlefield,” added Sudanese political analyst Mohamed Abdulaziz.*



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 Control*, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

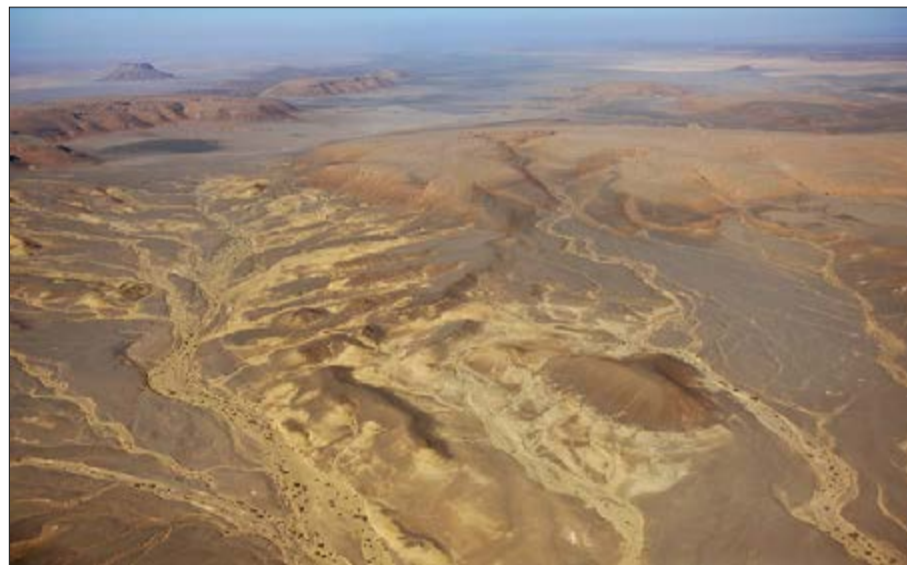
<https://community.apan.org/wq/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>

## Morocco and Algeria Bolstering Their Drone Fleets as Bilateral Tensions Rise

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Recent reports indicate that both Morocco and Algeria are strengthening their unmanned aircraft systems capabilities amid growing bilateral tensions and repeated Polisario Front harassment of Moroccan positions in the Western Sahara. In mid-September, Morocco obtained an initial delivery of Turkish Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles that were purchased earlier this year, as first reported in the accompanying excerpt from the Facebook page of *FAR-Maroc*, a discussion forum dedicated to news about Morocco's armed forces. Algeria, meanwhile, is awaiting delivery of the first batch in an order of 24 Chinese Wing Loong IIs before the end of the year, according to news first reported by an Algeria-focused French-language military news website called *Mena Defense*.

The accompanying excerpt from the pan-Arab daily *al-Quds* foresees the possibility of the Morocco-Algeria desert border becoming akin to the India-Pakistan border, with military deployments and occasional skirmishes but mutual aversion to a large-scale war. UASs are ideally suited for this expansive desert terrain, and both Morocco and Algeria seem likely to continue developing their UAS capabilities beyond the existing purchase contracts mentioned above. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is a recent scoop in the French news website *Africa Intelligence*, claiming that Morocco and Israel will soon begin collaborating on the production of "kamikaze drones." Such a development would likely fuel Algerian efforts to develop or acquire additional UAS and counter-UAS technology, likely through either



**Western Sahara Landscape.**

Source: UN Photo/Martine Perret, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/un\\_photo/36862353953](https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/36862353953)  
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China or Russia, which are its main sources of advanced weaponry. (See: "Algeria Seeks More Active Regional Military Role, with Russian Assistance," *OE Watch*, July 2021 and "Increased Algerian Focus on 'New Generation Warfare,'" *OE Watch*, April 2021).

“...International observers have warned of the possibility of military skirmishes between Morocco and Algeria along the border...”

**Source:** *FAR-Maroc Facebook Page* (discussion forum dedicated to news about Morocco's armed forces), 17 September 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/farmarocofficielle/photos/a.1543183805906600/3098761597015472>

*As part of the completion of the TB2 BAYRAKTAR Turkish combat drones deal, the Far-Maroc Forum learned from sources in Turkey that the delivery of the first drones began today, via transport aircraft flights of the Royal Air Force. The Kingdom had signed a contract to obtain 13 drones, in order to enhance its combat capabilities of unmanned aircraft... The Moroccan military crews completed their training in Turkey a few weeks ago within the framework of the same contract, provided that the delivery process continues within the specified deadlines. Given the development that the battlefields have witnessed today and in light of the experience of Karabakh, Syria and others, there are still other steps that will be taken in the near future to enhance the Kingdom's capabilities in this regard, with UAVs at the highest levels of technological development.*

## Continued: Morocco and Algeria Bolstering Their Drone Fleets as Bilateral Tensions Rise

**Source:** “L’Algérie va renforcer sa flotte de drones (Algeria to reinforce its drone fleet),” *Mena Defense* (Algeria-focused French-language military news website), 23 September 2021. <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/lalgerie-va-renforcer-sa-flotte-de-drones/>

*The Algerian air force, which already deploys six types of drones (four of which are attack drones), has reportedly ordered 24 WingLoong II fighter planes from China’s AVIC. Deliveries are expected to start at the end of this year and end in 2022. WingLoong II has proven itself in many theaters of operations, such as Egypt and Yemen.*

**Source:** “الجيش الصحراوي يشن هجمات جديدة ضد مواقع جنود الاحتلال المغربي” (Sahrawi Army launches new attacks on positions of Moroccan occupation soldiers),” *Algeria Presse Service – APS* (Algeria’s national news agency), 13 October 2021. <https://www.aps.dz/ar/monde/113914-2021-10-13-08-33-12>

*Units of the Sahrawi People’s Liberation Army launched new attacks on the Moroccan occupation forces in the Awsard, Farsiya and Mahbas sectors, according to military statement No. 335 issued by the Sahrawi Ministry of Defense. The statement, which was reported by the Saharawi Press Agency (SPA), said that “the Sahrawi army forces twice targeted the positions and trenches of the Moroccan occupation forces in the Qalb Al-Nass area in the Awsard sector. They also bombed the enemy’s trenches in the Ben Amira area in the Farsiya sector twice”... The attacks of the Sahrawi army continue targeting Moroccan occupation forces, which have incurred heavy losses in lives and equipment along the berm (the wall of humiliation and shame), since Morocco violated the ceasefire agreement on November 13, 2020, signed between the two parties (Morocco and the Polisario Front) in 1991.*

**Source:** “Situation Concerning Western Sahara,” *United Nations Security Council*, October 2021. ([https://minurso.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unsg\\_report\\_october\\_2021.pdf](https://minurso.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unsg_report_october_2021.pdf))

**Source:** (Algeria does not rule out escalation against Morocco amidst news of military tensions along the border), *Al-Quds* (pan-Arab daily), 24 September 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/598yd7y3>

*International observers have warned of the possibility of military skirmishes between Morocco and Algeria along the border, as there are areas claimed by Algeria and inhabited by Moroccans for decades. Observers believe relations between the two countries are likely to transform into something resembling those between Pakistan and India, which witness an exchange of fire from time to time, without entering into a real war.*

**Source:** “Tel Aviv may help Rabat build kamikaze drone sector,” *Africa Intelligence* (French news website), 15 September 2021. [https://www.africaintelligence.com/north-africa\\_business/2021/09/15/tel-aviv-may-help-rabat-build-kamikaze-drone-sector,109691309-gra](https://www.africaintelligence.com/north-africa_business/2021/09/15/tel-aviv-may-help-rabat-build-kamikaze-drone-sector,109691309-gra)

*The latest step in Rabat’s breathless rapprochement with Israel’s defence industry is Morocco’s plan to set up a domestic sector to develop suicide drones, devices that are relatively easy to build and have devastating consequences.*



**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>

## Sanctioned Iranian Airline Shipping Arms to Venezuela

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Iran has helped Venezuela augment its arsenal of weapons through the use of an airline sanctioned by the United States for delivering weapons to Syria's Bashar al-Assad. According to Columbia's centrist or left-center media outlet *Semana*, the Maduro regime in Venezuela has acquired missiles, bombs, radars, and air defense systems from Iran. The article reports that between 12 and 17 flights of Iran's sanctioned Mahan Air purportedly transported these weapons in the cargo holds of several Boeing 747-200Fs. The publication cites internal documents obtained through a confidential source in the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense as its chief source. These weapons acquisitions have contributed to considerable tensions along Venezuela's border with Colombia, according to Colombia's centrist daily *El Tiempo*. The outlet reports that Colombia and Venezuela have violated one another's airspaces with reconnaissance drones. For years, the Maduro regime has built up an arsenal of Iranian and Russian weapons. While many of Venezuela's military branches remain poorly trained and equipped, the entrance of extra-hemispheric actors, and an arms buildup, could create the dynamics for a regional arms race and contribute to regional instability.



Colombian soldiers stand guard in the capital, Bogotá.

Source: <https://pixabay.com/photos/bogota-colombia-soldier-platoon-4074678/>  
Attribution: Alejoturola, Pixabay

“The documents prove Maduro’s acquisition of 2,015 air defense units that were stored at a military base. In total there are 1,050 missiles, 400 bombs, 500 rockets, 30 containers, and 35 radars.”

**Source:** “Colombia en peligro: SEMANA revela las pruebas de los misiles, bombas y radares que Maduro le compró a Irán (Colombia in danger: SEMANA reveals tests of the missiles, bombs, and radars that Maduro bought from Iran),” *Semana* (one of Colombia’s leading weeklies, generally viewed as center or center-left politically), 9 October 2021. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/amenaza-los-misiles-bombas-y-radares-que-maduro-le-compro-a-iran-y-ponen-en-serio-peligro-a-colombia/202146/>

*The documents prove Maduro’s acquisition of 2,015 air defense units that were stored at a military base. In total there are 1,050 missiles, 400 bombs, 500 rockets, 30 containers, and 35 radars. Everything is part of the so-called Operation Bolivarian Shield 2021...two elite groups of Iran’s Revolutionary Force also arrived in Venezuela, the best-trained group in that country in weapons, intelligence, and warfare.*

**Source:** “Drones y detención de soldados reavivan tensión en frontera con Venezuela (Drones and detention of soldiers reignite tension on border with Venezuela),” *El Tiempo* (one of Colombia’s oldest dailies generally described as politically-centrist), 29 September 2021. <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/venezuela/tension-entre-venezuela-y-colombia-por-drones-y-captura-de-sargentos-621630>

*Venezuela accused Colombia of violating its airspace with a drone. President Iván Duque denied it. After that episode, the National Government indicated on Sunday that from Venezuela there was an incursion into Colombian territory with a drone. Colombia has said that the accusation of the violation of Venezuelan airspace made by the Chavista Defense Minister, Vladimir Padrino López, is false and that although they flew over the border, they did not reach the neighboring country.*



## Turkish Armed Forces Acquire Technologically Advanced Drone

By Ihsan Gündüz  
OE Watch Commentary

On 29 August, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) added a new unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) named Akıncı to its inventory. As the accompanying article from Turkey's state-owned news agency *Anadolu Ajansı* reports, the Akıncı is technologically more advanced than Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 drone with heavy firepower and flexible concepts of operations (CONOPS). It can fly at a higher altitude, stay in the air longer, and carry a variety of missiles. The article states that its payload capacity of 1,350 tons makes it a more lethal weapon. The Akıncı's live-fire test flights were conducted with MAM-T smart munitions, the new and heavier variant with more destructive firepower. Among Akıncı's combat payload configurations, SOM-A, Turkey's air-launched cruise missile, will provide the TAF with deeper strike capabilities.

The article states that the technological advancements of Akıncı signal significant advancement in Turkey's defense posture. First, Akıncı has the ability to serve as the mothership for smaller drones including Turkey's Alpargu and Kargu drones with swarming strike delivery capabilities. The article points out that such CONOPS are an indication of "a true Lethal Autonomous Weapons systems era for Turkey." Second, Turkey's defense industry has made significant progress in the integration of electronic warfare capabilities with

drone warfare as implemented during Operation Spring Shield in 2020. Turkey will likely improve on this concept but it is unclear what kind of integration will be operationalized between the Akıncı and the TAF's capabilities in electronic warfare. Third, drone strikes have become a key pillar of Turkey's counterterrorism strategy, and Akıncı will take Turkey's drone strike capabilities to a different level. Finally, it has been speculated that the Akıncı might have air-to-air warfare capabilities because it can be configured for Turkey's air-to-air missiles, Gökdoğan and Bozdoğan. However, the author considers this unlikely as the Akıncı is a high-end strategic UAV and not an air warfare system.

Another article from the pro-government Turkish think tank *SETA Foundation* provides some background on the research and development of Akıncı, as well as details about its technical specifications. It notes that Akıncı, with its capability to carry air-to-surface cruise missiles like the SOM-A, will be able to destroy targets without entering the range of the enemy's air defense systems. This will significantly improve the Turkish military's combat capabilities. The article states that Akıncı makes Turkey a competitive drone manufacturer and gives Turkey the opportunity to shape the global UAV industry.

“With the Akıncı's longer-range, smart, and heavier payload capability, the Turkish intelligence's targeted drone strikes can graduate to a whole new level.”



**Bayraktar Akıncı (UAV) Teknofest 2019.**

Source: Talha Işık, via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar\\_Ak%C4%B1nc%C4%B1\\_S%C4%B0HA\\_\(UAV\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_Ak%C4%B1nc%C4%B1_S%C4%B0HA_(UAV).jpg), Attribution: CC-BY-SA-4.0|Self-published work



**Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.**

Source: [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), via Wikimedia, [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_and\\_Recep\\_Tayyip\\_Erdogan\\_\(2020-03-05\)\\_03.jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Recep_Tayyip_Erdogan_(2020-03-05)_03.jpg)  
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## Turkey's Balancing Act With Its Allies and Russia

By Ihsan Gündüz  
OE Watch Commentary

On 29 September, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin met for the first time in 18 months in Sochi, Russia. According to the first article from independent Turkish daily Gazete Duvar, Erdoğan's efforts to balance relations with both the United States and Russia are failing. First, Erdoğan tried to fix its weakened relations with NATO and the United States at the expense of Russia without any tangible success. However, after failing to secure a meeting with President Biden during his recent

visit to the United States, Erdoğan praised Turkish-Russian relations and headed to Russia for a meeting with his Russian counterpart.

President Erdoğan also left Sochi without a joint press briefing, which indicates the meeting did not yield any concrete results. Contentious issues remain to be resolved through technical talks between the two countries. The article notes that Turkish and Russian relations face several challenges and Russia already has an upper hand because of Turkey's strained relations with its NATO allies. First, Turkey's sale of Bayraktar TB-2 drones to Ukraine and its stance on Russian-occupied Crimea remain areas of concern given that Russia sees these issues as significant for its national security. Second, Turkey's natural gas contracts expire by the end of this year and five of these contracts are with Russian companies. Turkey is not in a good negotiating position because Russia's need for the Turkish Stream pipeline was

“What [President Putin] needed to do is to turn the desperation of [Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan] into strategic gains.”

diminished when the United States withdrew its veto on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Additionally, the last rebel stronghold, Syria's Idlib province, remains the most contentious issue between the two countries. Tensions between Russia-backed Syrian regime forces and Turkish-backed rebels have escalated. In all of these issues, the only leverage that Turkey might have in its relations with Russia seems to be the purchase of additional S-400s. A second article from Turkey's state-owned Anadolu Ajansı states that the two powers' disagreement in Syria remains unresolved. The author states that both leaders emphasized that peace in Syria depended on Russia and Turkey, suggesting they will continue trying to resolve their differences in Syria.

**Source:** Fehim Taştekin, “Soçi’den bir muhtıra çıkmadı mı? Ne şaşırtıcı! (A memorandum didn’t come out of Sochi? How surprising!)” *Gazete Duvar* (an independent Turkish Daily), 30 September 2021. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/sociden-bir-muhtira-cikmadi-mi-ne-sasirtici-makale-1536805>

*When unable to get an appointment with [President] Biden, [President Erdoğan] stated that the partnership is falling apart. He talked about a hostile relationship... emphasizing that the relationship is not going well.*

*The door [he] would knock on next is obvious: Russia... [Turkey's] natural gas contracts have expired, natural gas prices in the market have started to climb, and Turkey's natural gas needs have increased to 60 billion cubic meters, but we still see Erdoğan butchering Russia at America's gates. This time, out of necessity, he turns to Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and says, “We haven't seen any wrongdoing in our relations with Russia so far.” ... “S-400 is a done deal and it is not possible to step back.”*

*Tactics to gain strategic advantages by using two great powers against each other... Officially, agenda items were Syria, Karabakh Ceasefire Agreement, elections in Libya, relations with the Taliban administration in Afghanistan, the second S-400 package, joint production proposals in the field of defense, renewal of natural gas agreements, and ongoing energy projects.*

*Erdoğan weakened his hands so much before going to [Russia] that Putin probably didn't even bother to issue friendly or hostile warnings. What [Putin] needed to do is to turn the desperation of his interlocutor into strategic gains. Extending a dialogue with a leader who has come to his door after breaking up with the Americans should have a place in cold-blooded Russian diplomacy.*

## Continued: Turkey's Balancing Act With Its Allies and Russia

**Continued Source:** Prof. Dr. İlyas Kemaloğlu, “Soçi Zirvesi ve Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinin seyri (The Sochi Summit and the course of Turkey-Russia relations)” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey’s state-owned news agency), 30 September 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/soci-zirvesi-ve-turkiye-rusya-iliskilerinin-seyri/2378895>

*...on one hand, Turkish-Russian relations have developed in many ways and the two countries become dependent on each other in areas such as trade, energy, defense and tourism while, on the other hand, Turkey's interest regarding the developments [in the region] clash with that of Russia. Although the fact that both countries have problems in their relations with the U.S.A. and the European Union (EU) brings Turkey and Russia closer and enables them to act together as in the Middle East and Caucasus... However, one of the most important features of the Turkish-Russian relations that provides a hope for their future, is the immediate intervention of the leaders, especially in times of increased problems between them.... This is the biggest factor that... Russia and Turkey have not entered into a hot conflict. As a matter of fact, the positive evaluations of both leaders regarding their meeting at the end of yesterday's visit show that the parties are ready to solve all problems at the table. Indeed, peace in the region depends mostly on these two countries and is in the interests of both of them.*



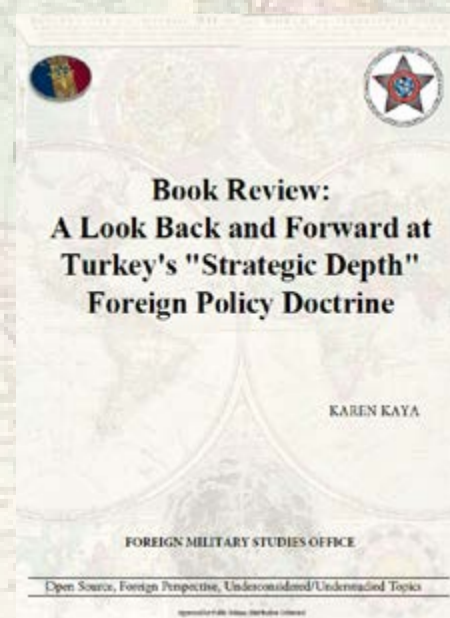
*Fangs of the Lone Wolf* is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

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

## 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>

## Syria Set for Return to the Middle East Stage

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

As the accompanying passage from a respected Middle East expert featured on Turkish online news portal *Gazete Duvar* convincingly argues, the winds are shifting in favor of Syria in the Middle East, particularly among some Gulf countries. The author points to a long list of recent developments indicating a thaw in Syria's relations with many members of the Arab League, and a possible reinstatement of Syria's membership into the Arab League before 2022. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan "and its focus on Asia," he suggests, has led Arab countries to be more receptive to Syrian calls for normalization. He points out this is taking place in spite of the U.S. Caesar Act, which punishes economic relations with Syria, and which previously deterred these countries from working with Syria.

Syria has also experienced a warming of relations that can be seen in various levels of interaction with the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. For example, the Syria-UAE Businessmen's Council is being revived, and the two countries plan to improve trade and economic relations. Meanwhile, a recent phone call between Jordanian King Abdallah and Assad, discussing normalization of relations, came shortly after the Nassib/Jaber border crossing between the countries was opened last month after being closed since 2015. In September, ministers from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Egypt decided to help Lebanon's electricity crisis by piping Egyptian natural gas to Lebanon via Jordan and Syria. The author also notes that Interpol has once again integrated Syria into its system. Even in Tel Aviv, he claims the shifting winds are being noted, where Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett "felt the need" to say the world's normalizing relations with Assad would not impact the occupied Golan Heights.

“The winds are starting to change for Damascus... Critical in this shift is Russia's increasing influence among Gulf countries, who are experiencing mistrust in their relations with the US.”

Syria has been suspended from the Arab League since 2011, shortly after the Syrian conflict began. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the UAE had initially supported the opposition and bet on the demise of the Assad regime. The changed course of the conflict after Russia's intervention on behalf of the Assad regime, and Russia's increasing influence among Gulf countries, which the author claims "are experiencing mistrust in their relations with the U.S.," has accelerated the trend to bring Syria back into the fold.



Map of the Middle East and Gulf.

Source: Cacahuete, amendments by Globe-trotter and Joelf, via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_Middle\\_East.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Middle_East.png), Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Fehim Tastekin, "Esad'la Arap kucaklaşması yakın mı? (Is an Embrace between Assad and the Arabs Imminent?)," *Gazete Duvar* (online news portal critical of the Turkish government), 12 October 2021. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/esadla-arap-kucaklasmasi-yakin-mi-makale-1538215>

*The winds are starting to change for Damascus. The idea to bring Syria back into the Arab world as a way to push back against Iran and Turkey is emerging. We've been talking about this tendency ever since the UAE opened up its embassy in Damascus in 2018. The reason the process has been moving slow, is the deterrence presented by the [US] Caesar Act sanctions, which punished economic relations with Syria. Even though the US State Department said, "The US will not normalize, improve or encourage others regarding diplomatic relations with the Assad regime," the fact that Arab countries have increased dialogue with Damascus, points to a flexibility [to this law] in practice.*

*Critical in this shift is Russia's increasing influence among Gulf countries, who are experiencing mistrust in their relations with the US. In addition to the UAE; Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have communicated with Damascus at different levels. Most recently, on 10 October, the UAE's Ministry of the Economy announced an agreement to improve economic cooperation with Syria to pave the way for new opportunities for other sectors. It was announced that the trade volume between the two countries (outside of oil) was 272 million dollars in the first half of 2021, and that the UAE was Syria's most important trade partner. This statement came after comprehensive meetings at the Expo 2020 Dubai... The Syria-UAE Businessmen's Council is also going to be revived. The UAE leadership had also attracted attention on 5 October, when they issued a statement congratulating Syria's leadership on the anniversary of the 1973 Arab-Israel War.*

*The most significant communication recently is the phone call between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the Jordanian King Abdullah. According to Jordanian sources, the call entailed detailed discussion of developing relations between the two countries. In the call, King Abdullah expressed his support for Syrian sovereignty, stability, territorial integrity and protection of the public. This meeting also came after two separate delegations of Syrian ministers' meetings in Amman. The Nassib/Jaber border crossing [between Jordan and Syria], which was closed in 2015, opened in 2018, and the closed again in 2020 due to Covid-19, was re-opened last month, as part of the steps towards normalization. Civilian flights between Damascus and Amman have started... The two sides refer to their relationship as "two brotherly countries."*

## Continued: Syria Returns to the Middle East Stage

**Continued Source:** Fehim Tastekin, “Esad’la Arap kucaklaşması yakın mı? (Is an Embrace between Assad and the Arabs Imminent?),” *Gazete Duvar* (on-line news portal critical of the Turkish government), 12 October 2021. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/esadla-arap-kucaklasmasi-yakin-mi-makale-1538215>

*The fact that Interpol has included Syria in its system once again, is another sign of the changing winds. Capitals that once wanted to try Assad on crimes against humanity, will now likely receive requests to capture the “beloved revolutionaries” of the Friends of Syria Group, on charges of terrorism! In light of these developments, the Assad regime is re-gaining its self-confidence. ...*

*In his interview with [Saudi Arabian] Al-Watan newspaper, [Syrian Foreign Minister, Faysal] Mikdad said, after meeting with his Russian, Iranian, Egyptian, Tunisian, Jordanian and Iraqi counterparts in [the UN meetings in] New York: “The international atmosphere was less adversarial, most countries didn’t even mention Syria. We felt that the world has understood that the crisis in Syria is one that was made up to sabotage the Syrian government, support terror and support Israel’s invasion.”*

*Mikdad said that Syria was the heart of Arabism, that the Arab League couldn’t do without Syria, and that they are now more optimistic about dialoug with the Arabs... Mikdad points to three issues that are still troubling for them in Syria: “The first is the Turkish invasion and Turkey’s support to terrorism. The second is the US invasion in the northeast and its support for the separatist movement. The third is the US’s illegal and inhumane sanctions.”*

*Mikdad said similar things on 11 October, during the 60th anniversary of the Unaligned Movement in Belgrade. The US’s abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan and its focus on Asia with a view to encircle China, makes Syria’s message to the Arab countries resonate very easily.*

*Where does the US stand regarding this softening on the Arab street? It is being said that the Biden administration isn’t resisting its Arab friends who want a different approach to Syria. ...*

*What will the Saudis do? Asharq Al-Awsat (an Arabic international newspaper), reports that the Arab diplomatic circles believe that Syria will return to the Arab League before 2022.*

*If there had been a break between Iran and Syria, surely it would not have taken long for Arab ambassadors to head to Damascus. [However] the view within the establishment in Syria, is that it would be impossible [for Syria] to distance itself from Iran, who showed its friendship [to Syria] in [Syria’s] darkest days; in contrast to the Arab countries who can’t act independent of US pressure. In fact, Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir Abdullahiyan’s two visits to Damascus on 29 August and 9 October, confirms the strategic partnership between them. On the other hand, the Assad regime does place importance on an Arab opening that would by-pass the embargo camp, for the sake of Syrian reconstruction. In order to exit this dilemma, Damascus hopes that the Riyadh-Tehran dialogue that started in Baghdad yields positive results.*

*The changing winds must be felt in Tel Aviv too, because the Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett felt the need to say that the world’s normalizing relations with Assad would not impact the occupied Golan Heights.*

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## Increased Military Cooperation in the Caucasus Raise Concern in Iran and Russia

By Ihsan Gunduz  
OE Watch Commentary

In early October, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia held Eternity 2021, a five-day military exercise to enhance military capabilities and protect strategic energy infrastructure in the South Caucasus. This exercise coupled with one held in September between Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan have created friction among regional players and militarized regional rivalries, according to the accompanying passages. Both exercises drew the attention of Iran and Russia, which view such joint military activities as a threat to their interests in the region.

As security news site *al-Monitor* reports, growing military cooperation between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia has led some observers to make assumptions about an emerging trilateral security bloc. The author states that cooperation between these countries, coupled with Azerbaijan's growing ties with Israel, rattle Iran because it worries that Azerbaijan—with the support of Israel—may seek to redraw borders by annexing a southern border strip from Armenia that would link Azerbaijan's mainland to its enclave, Nakhchivan, thereby

severing Iran's land border with Armenia. Cutting Iran's land access to Armenia and the northern Caucasus would have direct economic and geostrategic implications for Iran, and strong Israeli and Azerbaijani defense cooperation puts Iran under threat from the north. Iran has already accused Israel of a military build-up and containment strategy from the southwest. For its part, Russia also is unhappy with the military activities in this region and has called on countries to avoid provocative military exercises.

The second article from Turkey's state-owned news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı*, provides insight into the earlier trilateral military exercise, known as Three Brothers 2021, which was held in Baku by Special Forces from Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan in September 2021. The objective was to exchange the experience and views between militaries of these countries and facilitate further improvement of professional training.

“The military rapprochement between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, coupled with growing military ties between Azerbaijan and Israel, seems to be ringing the alarm bells in Iran...”

**Source:** Metin Gürcan, “Geopolitical rivalry in Caucasus gets militarized” *al-Monitor* (a globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 07 October 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/10/geopolitical-rivalry-caucasus-gets-militarized>

*Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey began five days of military exercises this week to enhance their preparedness to protect regional economic projects. The Eternity 2021 exercises, which kicked off in Georgia Oct. 4, aim to develop capabilities on both command and staff level to ensure the security of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, according to the Georgian Defense Ministry.*

*The growing military cooperation between the three countries has led observers to question whether a trilateral security bloc is emerging in the Caucasus.*

*The military rapprochement between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, coupled with growing military ties between Azerbaijan and Israel, seems to be ringing the alarm bells in Iran...*

*Azerbaijan's joint military exercises with Georgia and Turkey are of great importance in terms of improving security cooperation, increasing interoperability between their militaries, dominating the airspace of the Caucasus, securing energy pipelines, limiting Armenia's land connection with Russia and surrounding Armenia geographically from the west, north and northwest.*

*Joint military exercises between Azerbaijan and countries neighboring Iran also point to a shift in the strategic balance in the Caucasus. Israel's strong defense cooperation with Azerbaijan is a clear indication that Iran is now under threat from the north.*

*A possible operation by Azerbaijan to control a strip connecting Nakhchivan to Nagorno-Karabakh and then mainland Azerbaijan, thus disabling Iran's direct land passage to Armenia, would cause many stones to be moved in the Caucasus.*

*Also, Iran has been carefully monitoring Israel's alleged increasing military and intelligence profile in the Caucasus as well as northern Iraq, wary that it could end up contained from both the north and the southwest...*

*At the geopolitical level, Russia has been keeping Turkey and Azerbaijan at bay, while trying to keep Armenia under its full domination and defuse Iran's concerns. However, Russia's balancing policy is hardly sustainable, given the fragility of the Nagorno-Karabakh deal and the increasing geopolitical complexity in the Caucasus due to the power game between Turkey, Iran and Israel*

**Source:** Ruslan Rehimov, ““Üç Kardeş 2021” tatbikatının “Seçkin Gözlemci Günü” yapıldı (Distinguished Observer Day of Three Brothers 2021 exercise held)” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey's state-owned news agency), 20 September 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/uc-kardes-2021-tatbikatinin-seckin-gozlemci-gunu-yapildi/2369704>

*The "Distinguished Observer Day" of the joint military exercise conducted by the special forces of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Pakistan in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, was held with the participation of Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov, Head of State Security Service Ali Nagiyev and Turkish Special Forces Commander Major General Ömer Ertuğrul Erbakan.*

*After the briefing given to the ministers and commanders, the soldiers participating in the exercise carried out tasks such as search operations in the area of responsibility, controlling the detected objects, destroying the representative enemy's management zones, and transmitting the representative enemy coordinates to the center for artillery and aerial shots.*

## Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Differ in Response to New Taliban Government



**Abdulaziz Kamilov**

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abdulaziz\\_Kamilov\\_July\\_2018.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abdulaziz_Kamilov_July_2018.jpg)  
Attribution: Public Domain

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

For a number of years the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan prepared for a possible change in government in Afghanistan, particularly how it would affect their security. While it appeared that both governments might be reluctant to engage with the Taliban following the change in government, the accompanying excerpted articles provide a look at how each is reacting to the recent change.

The articles from independent Tajik news website *Asia Plus*, report on a number of developments in Tajikistan. The first article reports on the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon’s visit to “a military parade of the Border Guards, service members of the ground forces of the Ministry of Defense and law enforcement” at the end of September. The parade took place in the town of Khorog near the Tajik-Afghan border, and the article notes Rahmon told service members “to continue to protect peace and stability in their home land like the apple of their eye.” While the parade appeared to be limited in size, it marks another example of the Tajik government promoting border security. The other *Asia Plus* article reports that Tajik officials are closely watching what is happening in Afghanistan and quotes a source in the government, who said “the situation in Afghanistan has caused concern” and noted the defensive preparations the government has been putting in place. The article also notes

that President Rahmon “has repeatedly supported the Panjshiris”—a reference to an Afghan province dominated by ethnic Tajiks that served as the stronghold of the anti-Taliban National Resistance Front of Afghanistan against the Taliban. Tajikistan remains the only Central Asian state that has not met with officials from the new Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the Uzbek government is more inclined to cooperate with the new Taliban government. The article from Uzbekistan-based news website *Kun.uz* reports on what the Uzbek government has done following the change of government in Afghanistan. The article reports that Uzbekistan’s Foreign Minister recently met with the Taliban regime’s deputy head of the interim government for political affairs in Kabul. The article notes how the Afghan delegation appreciated assistance from Uzbekistan “in restoring the operation of the Mazar-i-Sharif international airport” and said that they will soon meet to negotiate carrying out construction projects that include the “Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar rail line.” A decade ago Uzbekistan constructed a rail line from Termez (a city on the Uzbek-Afghan border) to Mazar-i-Sharif with funding from the Asian Development Bank using 1520mm Russian gauge track. The proposed Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar line will be constructed with the same gauge.

“On 7 October, a delegation from Uzbekistan led by Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov held talks in Kabul with the leadership of Afghanistan, led by the deputy head of the interim government for political affairs, Mullah Abdul Kabir.”

**Source:** “Эмомали Раҳмон призвал солдат и офицеров беречь мир в Таджикистане как зеницу ока (Emomali Rahmon called on soldiers and officers to protect Tajikistan like the apple of their eye),” *Asia Plus* (an independent news website in Tajikistan), 30 September 2021. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20210930/general-armii-emomali-rahmon-prizval-soldat-i-ofitserov-berech-mir-i-stabilnost-v-tadzhikistane>

*As part of a working trip to GBAO (the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast) today in Khorog, the president took part and spoke at a military parade of the Border Guards, service members of the ground forces of the Ministry of Defense and law enforcement...*

*...The president called on the soldiers and officers “to continue to protect peace and stability in their home land like the apple of their eye.”...*

**Source:** Avaz Yuldashev, “Источник: Таджикистан не наблюдает скопления боевиков на границе с Афганистаном (Source: Tajikistan is not observing a group of militants on the border with Afghanistan),” *Asia Plus* (an independent news website in Tajikistan), 1 October 2021. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20211001/istochnik-tadzhikistan-ne-nablyudaet-skopleniya-boevikov-na-granitse-s-afganistanom>

*...He said the situation in Afghanistan has caused concern...“About 10 years ago, Tajikistan created three lines of defense on the border with Afghanistan: border guards are the first line, soldiers are on the second, and reservists are the third,” the source said...*

*The President of Tajikistan has repeatedly supported the Panjshiris and demanded the creation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan with the participation of all minorities, including Tajiks...*

## India and Pakistan Participating in Shanghai Cooperation Organization Smoothly but Unevenly

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

When India and Pakistan joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2017, questions abounded about how the two governments could cooperate in the organization while they had so many political and security issues between them. There have been no significant issues between the two that has interfered with their participation in the SCO since then, but the accompanying excerpted articles offer an example of how their participation in the organization is vastly different.

The article from Pakistan-based independent English-language newspaper *Dawn* reports on a recent joint military exercise of units from China and Pakistan. The article mentions that it “was the first military exercise conducted in Pakistan” with the SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and that it “was conducted in two stages.” It appears that the first stage took place with participants carrying out training on their own in July, while the second stage involved Pakistan and China from 21 September to 4 October. This is not the first time that the Chinese government carried out an exercise under the auspices of the SCO and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), but not with all member states of the organization. RATS is

headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and allows member states to share intelligence on security threats.

The article from India-based independent English-language news website *The Print* reports on how the Indian government “will send a three-member team to Pakistan” for the exercise. The article notes that India will “not be participating” in the exercise, but “will be involved in the process as an “observer” in “gathering intelligence about counterterrorism measures” that the SCO is planning. The article also notes this is the first SCO event to take place since “the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan” and that “India is keen on participating in it despite its tensions with Pakistan.” It is worth remembering that the Indian government chose not to send participants to the SCO exercise “Kavkaz-2020” last year because of China and Pakistan’s involvement, although it did send around 200 personnel to take part in the SCO exercise “Peace Mission 2021” in September of this year. Ultimately, the recent SCO RATS exercise provides a look at how Pakistan and India continue to be involved in the SCO without any major issues, but that India limits its participation.

“India will “not be participating” in any kind of physical exercise, it will be involved in the process as an “observer” in “gathering intelligence about counterterrorism measures” that the SCO is planning to lay out.”

**Source:** “Anti-terrorist exercise with Chinese troops concludes,” *Dawn* (independent English-language newspaper from Pakistan), 5 October 2021. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1650190>

*The closing ceremony of the two week long Joint Anti-Terrorist Exercise 2021 was held at the National Counter Terrorism Centre, Pabbi, where the troops from China and Pakistani armed forces took part in the drill.*

*This was the first military exercise conducted in Pakistan under the ambit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s Regional Anti Terrorism Structure...*

*The exercise was conducted in two stages. The stage one of the training was conducted in respective SCO member countries from July 26 to 31, while the stage two was conducted in Pakistan from Sept 21 to Oct 4...*

*During the training, the troops from China and Pakistan extensively practiced various drills as part of the joint counterterrorism operations from planning to conduct, including cordon and search, compound clearance, close quarter battle, rappelling from helicopter, explosive handling and medical evacuation.*

**Source:** Nayanima Basu and Snehes Alex Philip, “Indian team to visit Pakistan this week for SCO anti-terror exercise, but only as ‘observers’,” *The Print* (an independent English-language news website from India), 1 October 2021. <https://theprint.in/defence/indian-team-to-visit-pakistan-this-week-for-sco-anti-terror-exercise-but-only-as-observers/743276/>

*India will send a three-member team to Pakistan for an anti-terror exercise under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) framework...*

*Sources told The Print that while India will “not be participating” in any kind of physical exercise, it will be involved in the process as an “observer” in “gathering intelligence about counterterrorism measures” that the SCO is planning to lay out.*

*...According to sources, while no representatives from the Indian armed forces will participate in this, a three-member team from the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) could be sent.*

*...Since this is the first time the SCO anti-terror exercise is taking place post the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan, India is keen on participating in it despite its tensions with Pakistan, sources said.*



## Argentina Looks To Rebuild Its Air Force with Pakistani-Chinese Fighter Jet

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Argentina is seeking to rebuild its air force with the purchase of 12 JF-17A Block III fighter jets jointly built by Pakistan and China. Argentina's largest daily newspaper, *Clarín*, which is generally opposed to the current left-wing government, reported that if the sale goes through, this would be the first time in history that Chinese fighter jets were sold to a Latin American country. To signal the seriousness of its intention to acquire the Chinese planes via Pakistan, the Argentinian government submitted the request through the 2022 budget proposal process. Argentina seeks Chinese planes because they do not feature parts made in the UK, which has vetoed Argentina's previous attempts to acquire military aircraft, according to regional defense news website *Zona Militar*, given the two countries' ongoing dispute over ownership of the Falkland Islands (known as the Malvinas Islands in Argentina).

Although it is not out of the ordinary to see foreign weapons systems in Latin America—the Russian Federation recently offered Argentina a package comprised of MiG-35 fighters and Mi-171 helicopters, among other weapons systems—it is rarer for China to sell weapons to the region. The sale of Chinese fighter jets dovetails with a burgeoning role for China in Argentina in both the economic and security domains, and the need to service these aircraft could see an even greater Chinese footprint in Argentina. Lastly, the sale of Chinese military equipment to Argentina could impact the balance of power over Argentina's unresolved claim on the Falklands Islands.



**A Pakistan Air Force Chengdu JF-17 fighter plane.**  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistan\\_JF-17\\_\(modified\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pakistan_JF-17_(modified).jpg)  
Attribution: Shimin Gu, Wikimedia, CC by SA 4.0

“The JF-17 is an attractive option for Argentina because the aircraft is out of the reach of a possible parts veto by the United Kingdom and, at the same time, it is the only new aircraft within the reach of the Argentine Air Force.”

**Source:** “El Gobierno planea comprar aviones militares a China a través de Pakistán (The government plans to buy military aircraft from China through Pakistan),” *Clarín* (the largest newspaper in Argentina and generally opposed to the current left-wing government), 20 September 2021. [https://www.clarin.com/politica/gobierno-planea-comprar-aviones-militares-china-traves-pakistan\\_0\\_6ogiGYHex.html](https://www.clarin.com/politica/gobierno-planea-comprar-aviones-militares-china-traves-pakistan_0_6ogiGYHex.html)

*The Minister of Economy, Martín Guzmán, presented the national budget for fiscal year 2022. There the request was included, without it being disclosed to the media—a debt of \$664 million for the purchase of at least 12 JF-17 Thunder Block III fighters. It is an aircraft jointly developed by the Chinese company “Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation” and the Pakistani “Pakistan Aeronautical Comple” at 50 percent cost for each country.*

**Source:** “Podría el Reino Unido evitar que Argentina compre el avión de combate JF-17? (Could the UK prevent Argentina from buying the JF-17 fighter jet?),” *Zona Militar* (a website that compiles regional defense news), 29 September 2021. <https://www.zona-militar.com/2021/09/29/podria-el-reino-unido-evitar-que-argentina-compre-el-avion-de-combate-jf-17/>

*The JF-17 is an attractive option for Argentina because the aircraft is out of the reach of a possible parts veto by the United Kingdom and, at the same time, it is the only new aircraft within the reach of the Argentine Air Force. The UK previously pressured suppliers to cancel deals with Argentina, or sabotaged them by seizing critical British components. The UK has effectively maintained an arms embargo on Argentina since the 1982 Falklands War.*

## Mali Possibly Weighing Use of Russian Mercenaries as French Counterterrorism Forces Draw Down



**Rostov-on-Don 2014 Victory Day Parade Rehearsal, Russian Army, Soldiers, Russia.**

Source: Vyacheslav Argenberg  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rostov-on-Don\\_2014\\_Victory\\_Day\\_Parade\\_Rehearsal,\\_Russian\\_Army,\\_Soldiers,\\_Russia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rostov-on-Don_2014_Victory_Day_Parade_Rehearsal,_Russian_Army,_Soldiers,_Russia.jpg) Attribution: CC x 4.0

By Jacob Zenn  
 OE Watch Commentary

On 27 September, the left-center French publication *Le Monde*, which reports on global affairs from an analytical perspective, featured the excerpted article about France’s response to the possibility of Russian mercenaries operating in Mali. According to the article, Mali’s Prime Minister, Choguel Maïga, alluded to Mali welcoming Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group into Mali to combat militants aligned with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This potential cooperation with the Wagner Group came as Maïga claimed France was abandoning Mali by considering a 50 percent reduction of the 5,100 French troop deployment to the Sahel by 2023.

The article notes, however, that France considers its reduction of troops in Mali not as a decrease in commitment to counterterrorism operations, but a change in strategy. France’s Minister of the Armed Forces also stated that Western support to Mali was incompatible with Mali working with Russian mercenaries. Further, as the state-owned *France24* reported on 16 September, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that French troops had killed Adnan Abou Walid al-Sahraoui, the leader of the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) several weeks earlier—a message likely meant to demonstrate France’s continued commitment to counterterrorism in Mali.

“Paris maintains that the reduction in the number of its soldiers in the Sahel is not a redefinition of its priorities but a transformation of strategy.”

The possibility that Mali would host Wagner Group mercenaries was heightened at the UN General Assembly in September when the Russian Foreign Minister stated that Mali was turning to a Russian military company for counterterrorism support, which, according to the article, implicitly meant Wagner Group. The article assesses that Mali is hinting at inviting the Wagner Group to Mali as a way to press France to increase its counterterrorism commitment to Mali by exploiting a perceived rivalry between France and Russia. At the same time, the article does not discount the possibility that, since the coup in Mali in May, the new Malian government may be strategically reorienting itself away from France and toward Russia. If this is the case, then Maïga may not be bluffing about welcoming Wagner Group into Mali after all.

**Source:** “L’hypothèse Wagner fait monter la tension entre la France et le Mali (The Wagner hypothesis raises the tension between France and Mali),” *lemonde.fr* (left-center French publication that reports on global affairs from an analytical perspective), 27 September 2021. [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/09/27/au-mali-le-premier-ministre-ouvre-la-voie-aux-mercenaires-russes-du-groupe-wagner\\_6096210\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/09/27/au-mali-le-premier-ministre-ouvre-la-voie-aux-mercenaires-russes-du-groupe-wagner_6096210_3212.html)

*The name of this Russian private military company without formal existence is carefully avoided by the Malian Prime Minister, Choguel Maïga. His speech before the podium of the United Nations General Assembly and his latest statements to the press, however, seem like confirmation of the discussions between his government and the controversial company.*

*France has not ceased in recent days warning Bamako against the consequences of this possible security reorientation. The Minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, went on September 20 to tell her counterpart of the ‘serious incompatibility’ between the use of these mercenaries and Western support. Paris maintains that the reduction in the number of its soldiers in the Sahel is not a redefinition of its priorities but a transformation of strategy.*

*Paris was very shocked by the statements of Choguel Maïga, as a few moments before his UN speech, Sergei Lavrov, the head of Russian diplomacy, offered the pleasure of confirming at a press conference that ‘the Malian authorities turned to a private Russian military company.’*

*The Malian leaders can take advantage of international rivalries to solicit a stronger commitment from their current partners and Moscow enjoys the anger of the West at the announcement of the arrival of these mercenaries in their area influence. A question arises, however: is Mali today on the verge of reversing its alliances and turning to Moscow?*

**Source:** “Abou Walid al-Sahraoui, vétéran du jihad, cible no.1 de la France au Sahel (Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, jihad veteran, France’s No. 1 target in the Sahel),” *france24.com* (state owned international news outlet), 16 September 2021. <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20210916-abou-walid-al-sahraoui-v%C3%A9t%C3%A9ran-du-jihad-%C3%A9tait-la-cible-n%C2%B01-de-la-france-au-sahel>

*French forces killed Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, a longtime jihadist figure in the Sahel. His elimination has been described as a ‘major success’ for France by President Emmanuel Macron. Florence Parly, Minister of the Armed Forces, said at a press conference that Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi died after ‘succumbing to injuries caused by a strike by the Barkhane force in August 2021.’*