

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



Volume 11
Issue #12
December 2021

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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ON THE COVER:

GEN. Li Zuocheng oversaw the PLA Ground Forces during the 2016 reforms that created the joint theater commands. He is currently the chief of the Central Military Commission's Joint Staff Department.

Source: By Chief Petty Officer Elliott Fabrizio, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Zuocheng_-_/media/File:China's_Central_Military_Commission_Gen._Li_Zuocheng.jpg Attribution: Public domain

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Volume 11 | Issue 11

December | 2021

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PLA Fields New Integrated Command Platforms, Improving Combined Arms Operations

By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles from *China Military Online* describe improvements resulting from the deployment of integrated command platforms within China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). These improvements highlight the PLA's continuing emphasis on using modern command and communication systems to make the force nimbler and more lethal.

The first article highlights an exercise conducted by an artillery brigade under the 72nd Group Army (Eastern Theater Command). The exercise featured the use of both a scout team and a unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) company. Pointing to the changing nature of war, the brigade commander noted that it is imperative to improve the speed at which artillery can acquire targets, fire on them, and displace to a new position. In the exercise, the artillery battalion was also able to coordinate with a UAV company, using an improved command-and-control system that streamlined communications between reconnaissance, command, and firepower units. According to the article, the PLA partnered with the Chinese defense industry to address deficiencies in the artillery command systems. The resulting integrated command system allows them to have a constantly updated view of

the battlefield, quickly identify enemy targets, direct friendly units to suitable terrain, and issue fire mission plans.

China is rapidly upgrading the mobility of its artillery across the force, with an emphasis on replacing towed systems with wheeled variants. Last December, Chinese state media showcased a new 122mm system designated the PCL-171, and other reports indicate that the 155mm PCL-181 entered service with the Eastern Theater Command in early 2020. The PLA is also adopting wheeled systems for Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) across the force (see "PLA Ground Force Adopts 155mm Mobile Artillery System," *OE Watch*, August 2020).

The second excerpted article discusses the role of these platforms in improving operational design planning. Reporters witnessed an exercise held by an unidentified unit under the 81st Group Army (part of the Central Theater Command) in which a new command system was used. Officers noted that these systems allowed much closer coordination than before and reduced setup times for command posts, which had been time consuming, vulnerable to the weather, and laborious to move.

“In the past, artillery's ability to shoot and retreat was measured in minutes. Now it is accurate to the second. The separation between being destroyed and surviving is the blink of an eye. On the battlefield, if return fire is even one second faster, the chance of victory is that much greater.”



PLZ-07 122mm self-propelled artillery.

Source: Wikimedia User Dan from Beijing, China https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Self-propelled_artillery_of_PLA.jpg Attribution: Self-propelled artillery of PLA, CC BY 2.0

Continued: PLA Fields New Integrated Command Platforms, Improving Combined Arms Operations

Source: Tong Zujing [童祖静], Hong Wei [洪伟], “发现即摧毁！他们这样练就‘秒杀’绝招 (Discover and destroy! This is How They Practiced the ‘Insta-kill’ Trick),” China Military Online (Official news outlet for the People’s Liberation Army), 13 October 2021. www.81.cn/lj/2021-10/13/content_10097972.htm

An artillery brigade of the 72nd Group Army relied on informatization to improve its rapid counterattack capability—This “Iron Firepower Fist” is able to fight at further ranges, faster and more accurately.

As three sirens sounded, an artillery brigade of the 72nd Group Army kicked off a training exercise in southern Jiangsu Province. Upon hearing the order, a long-range strike team moved quickly to firing positions. Analyzing available information on targets in the cabin of a command vehicle, Xu Yifeng [徐逸峰], the commander of an artillery battalion, quickly selected targets and ordered strikes to be carried out. Acting quickly, they were able to go from alert to fire strike completion significantly faster than the unit’s ‘excellent’ standard for training.

According to Xu, “In the past, artillery’s ability to shoot and retreat was measured in minutes. Now it is accurate to the second. The line between being destroyed and surviving is just a blink of an eye. On the battlefield, if return fire is even one second faster, and the chance of victory is that much greater.”

In order to improve the ability of artillery to respond quickly, the brigade set up a task force to work with equipment manufacturers to streamline information sharing between the reconnaissance, command, and firepower combat components to make combat planning and command decision-making more accurate and efficient.

Based on the requirements of rapid firepower response, they systematically addressed issues that introduced delays in receiving and transmitting commands, modifying equipment, and upgrading software, resulting in an informationized command platform that integrates battlefield environment awareness. Combat plans can now be dynamically updated based on this information to ensure that a given unit can respond to orders to fire at any time.

According to the command staff of the artillery brigade, with the accelerated development of informatization and the widespread use of precision-guided weapons, artillery cannot simply be focused on achieving “one shot, one hit” accuracy—reconnaissance and intelligence support and command and control methods must also be improved across the board. Seizing the initiative on the battlefield makes being lethal at “longer ranges, at faster speeds, and with greater accuracy” imperative.

Source: Wang Song [王松], “互联互通：一体化作战指挥平台让营级指挥所战场视野更广阔’ (Interconnected: The integrated operational command platform allows battalion-level command posts to have a broader perspective on the battlefield),” China Military Online (Official news outlet for the People’s Liberation Army), 10 November 2021. www.81.cn/lj/2021-11/10/content_10106571.htm

In late autumn, an operational design exercise [作战筹划演练] was in full swing at a field training site of a brigade of the 81st Group Army. Inside the command vehicle, the battalion commander and several staff officers gaze intently at a screen as they discussed the next phase of the battle plan virtually with their superior officer. This new scene is only possible due to the brigade’s introduction of an integrated operational command platform.

According to the brigade leadership, “In the past, sand tables, maps, and documents were required for designing operations. Establishing command posts for each operational level was time-consuming, laborious, cumbersome and easily susceptible to environmental impacts.”

They also noted that with the introduction of a new set of equipment, connecting operational units is now possible. They took this as an opportunity to invite factory technicians to visit training ground and work with officers and enlisted to build an integrated combat command platform. They were able to deploy and debug the new command and control software in a relatively short period of time.

According to reports, with the help of this platform, commanders and staff of the brigade at all levels can now carry out collective discussions, real-time situational mapping and other command operations virtually. Coordinated team operations are now more convenient and efficient, and operational command efficiency has been greatly improved.

Bridging the Gap Between PLA's New Military Systems and Technical Proficiency



GEN. Li Zuocheng oversaw the PLA Ground Forces during the 2016 reforms that created the joint theater commands. He is currently the chief of the Central Military Commission's Joint Staff Department.

Source: By Chief Petty Officer Elliott Fabrizio, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li_Zuocheng_-_/media/File:China's_Central_Military_Commission_Gen._Li_Zuocheng.jpg Attribution: Public domain

By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

People's Liberation Army (PLA) units appear to be struggling to embrace the technological and organizational changes brought by China's modernization efforts. Many of the remaining issues come down to the human element—training personnel on how to use the new equipment but also to think differently to be effective in combined, joint and multi-domain operations. In the excerpted article from the official newspaper of China's military *PLA Daily*, journalists spoke with members of an unspecified unit of the 78th Group Army based in Northeastern China. According to the article, the unit traces its history to the very beginnings of what became the PLA in 1927 and has grown from a single small unit to a combined infantry division. In the 1980s it was transformed into a motorized division, finally undergoing multiple changes in 2013 and 2017 to become a mechanized infantry brigade with upgraded equipment.

Reviewing these changes, leaders from units under the group army noted that personnel proficiency remained a challenge. The article's authors interviewed a brigade's political commissar who noted that human elements—the people and the knowledge to use new tactics—is a vital corollary to improving equipment. Unit members repeatedly described cultural and generational gaps: some older officers and enlisted simply were not as accustomed to new procedures or command systems, such as sending texts or communicating over video.

Given the importance of these new systems for the nimble and dispersed way of war that the PLA is working to perfect, the group

“Building a strong and successful military will rely on people. Compared with modernizing to achieve the goal of building a world-class military, cultivating high-quality new-type military personnel requires a broader vision and more powerful measures. This is also the direction of the Group Army's efforts.”

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>

army has prioritized training in these skills, cycling officers through specialized staff training, and partnering with colleges and the defense industry to rapidly improve the technological proficiency of the force. The clock is ticking for the PLA to achieve its modernization goals; China's 2019 defense white paper noted that the PLA's goal was “to generally achieve mechanization by the year 2020 with significantly enhanced informationization and greatly improved strategic capabilities.” While the PLA has made great strides on both mechanization and informationization, human factors will continue to require efforts for the PLA to achieve its goals.

Continued: Bridging the Gap Between PLA's New Military Systems and Technical Proficiency

Source: “探索陆军部队改革转型特点规律，新锐力量展现出强大战斗力 (Explore the characteristics and laws of the Reform and Transformation of the Ground Forces; New Cutting-edge Forces Exhibit Strong Combat Effectiveness),” *China Military Online* (Official news outlet for the People's Liberation Army), 3 November 2021. www.81.cn/lj/2021-11/03/content_10104406.htm

"The form of warfare is evolving quickly, and modernizing the Army is not enough!" Returning from an exercise area in northern China, Zhang Hongcan [张洪灿] a brigade political commissar was left with a very deep impression from what he saw there, commenting that a modernized new-type Army requires new kinds of operational thinking, new organizational and personnel systems, new weapons and equipment, and new types of personnel. [The PLA] has already taken large steps toward achieving some of these goals, but in others there is a long way to go...

In the course of interviews with members of the unit many repeatedly mentioned that virtual discussions of tactics and methods make participation much easier—there is no need to stand up with a microphone and ask questions. However, some commanders are still accustomed to face-to-face discussions for operational planning, etc., and still try to use the older methods like sand tables and maps, even when there are electronic displays.

[Referring to these differences in technical proficiency] A leader of the political work department of a service support brigade said "These phenomena seem inconspicuous, but in fact they should not be underestimated." The modernization of weapons and equipment must be accompanied by modernization of operational models and operational theories. Modernization cannot rest on existing achievements. The pace of exploration cannot be stopped, the energy of responsibility cannot be relaxed, and the mentality of waiting and resting cannot be possessed.

At the same time, this unit has also increased its efforts to improve personnel training: personnel from the group army have been sent to participate in operational staff training, systematically learning the new command information system and online command operation methods; inviting new equipment manufacturers and technical personnel to the unit and creating a system of 'masters and apprentices' to pass on skills.

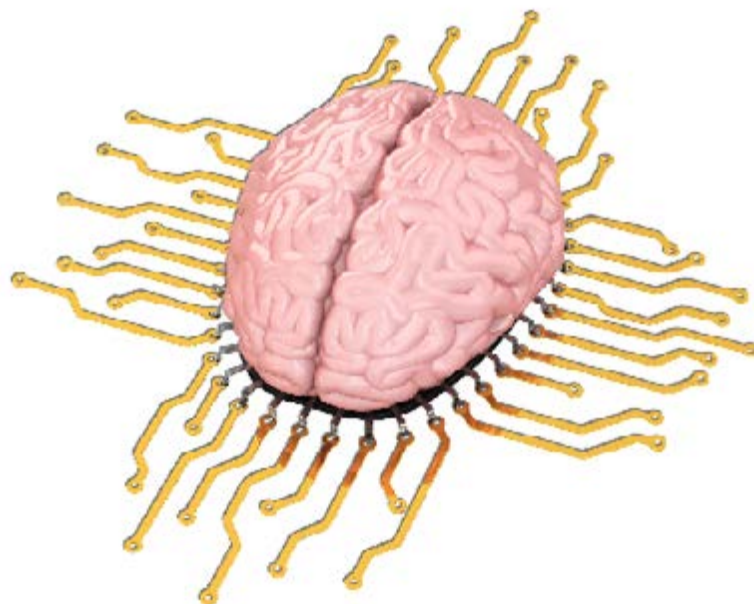
Each brigade also selects a certain number of officers and enlisted to study in colleges and in production facilities every year, and trains reserve specialists on a regular basis. The group army also organizes additional professional skills training for every specialty (radar, drones).

Building a strong and successful military will rely on people. Compared with modernizing to achieve the goal of building a world-class military, cultivating high-quality new-type military personnel requires a broader vision and more powerful measures. This is also the direction of the Group Army's efforts.

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

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



China's Investment in Kenya Creating Wealth Disparity and Potential Instability

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese lending and investments in African nations has created what many fear are debt traps, large amounts of money owed by the various countries to China with natural resources or ports often listed as collateral. However, beyond the debt traps lies another problem far less reported on in Western media...exacerbation of wealth inequality. As the accompanying excerpted article from the independent news source *The Conversation Africa* notes, the enormous scale of many Chinese projects in Africa has led to an increase in the disparity between rich and poor, aggravating an already destabilizing factor.

The article focuses on the Kenya Mombasa-Nairobi Railway, whose tracks are still 120 km short of their proposed extension into Uganda and Rwanda. Its cost of USD \$3.8 billion has been 90-percent financed through a bilateral loan from China's Exim Bank to the government of Kenya. And while Kenya's government claims the project has resulted in a 1.5% boost to its economy, it appears the main beneficiaries are the rich, particularly large-scale landowners who made significant profits selling their properties. As for the many small-scale landowners and those who do not have legal titles to the land, they were forced to move without financial compensation. Furthermore, as the excerpted article from the Nigerian news publisher Vanguard previously reported, several

“...disadvantaged groups, particularly those in remote or historically marginalized regions, have found it more challenging to sustain themselves as a result of large-scale infrastructure development.”



Kenya's Chinese financed train system is increasing wealth disparity.

Source: Erasmus Kamugisha/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kenya_Railways_DF8B_locomotive_on_the_new_SGR_line,_06-06-2017.jpg Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

individuals, including the Chairman of the National Land Commission and the Director of the Kenya Railways Corporation, were arrested on corruption charges related to the project. Additionally, the train has enhanced freight shipping to Nairobi at the expense of Mombasa, a city traditionally neglected by the Kenyan government, where young men are now roaming the streets looking for work. Thus, China's investment in Kenya, claimed as a development initiative, might be counterproductive to that assertion. Idle young men in a country with increasing wealth disparity, where 0.1 percent of the people already own more than the other 99.9 percent, is a potential recipe for instability and conflict.

Source: Gediminas Lesutis, “Kenya’s mega-railway project leaves society more unequal than before,” *The Conversation Africa* (independent news source), 8 November 2021. <https://theconversation.com/kenyas-mega-railway-project-leaves-society-more-unequal-than-before-170969>

In rural Kenya, access to natural resources, like land, is one of the main determining factors of social mobility. Therefore, land acquisitions for the new railway was a significant development.

Besides funding the new railway, China also has a strong influence in the development of the project. China Road and Bridge Corporation, a Chinese state-owned company, was the main contractor.

Kenya's government has been criticised by local civil society for ignoring regulations on project development and instead prioritising short-term stimulus effects over long-term social impacts.

I found that, contrary to the government's promises of prosperity, Kenya's mega-railway is heading down the wrong track of development. My research shows that privileged groups, with sufficient access to economic resources, are experiencing several benefits. However, disadvantaged groups, particularly those in remote or historically marginalized regions, have found it more challenging to sustain themselves as a result of large-scale infrastructure development. The railway-related economic growth is not likely to remedy this, as the project planners expect.

India Improving Surveillance and Infrastructure on Chinese Border

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

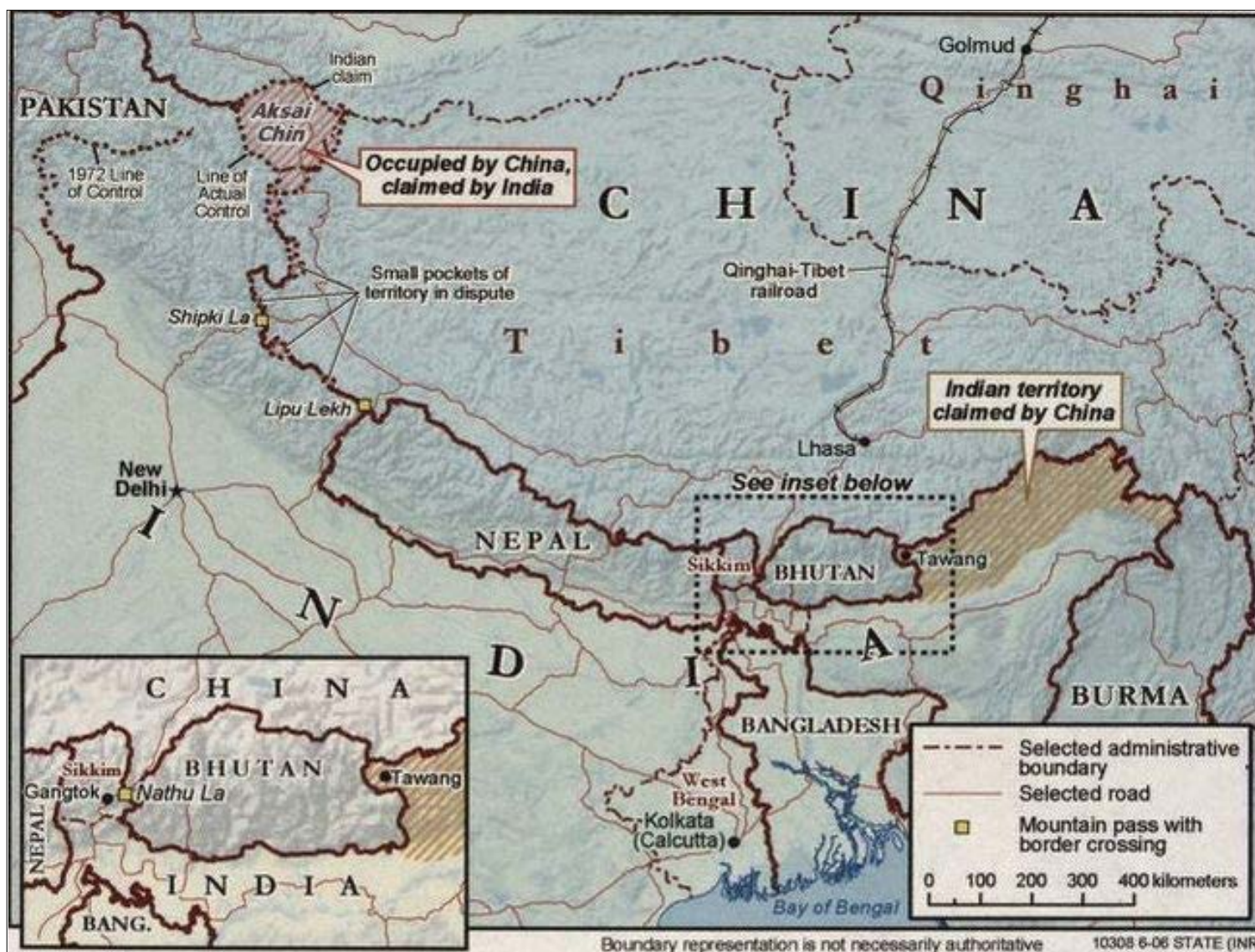
Following the Doklam border standoff in 2017, Indian officials repeatedly stated that the army needs to have better infrastructure in order to be prepared for a war with China. They followed this up with plans to construct a number of roads, bridges, and ammunition storage facilities in areas near the Indian-Chinese border and said that existing infrastructure would receive an upgrade (see “India’s Push for Border Roads,” *OE Watch*, November 2020). While the Indian government has focused on its border with China in Ladakh (western sector) due to the series of incidents that took place there in 2020, the accompanying excerpted articles report on infrastructure improvements in the state of Arunachal Pradesh on the border with China (eastern sector). These provide insight into additional changes the Indian government is carrying out in border areas.

The article from independent English-language newspaper *The Hindu* reports the Indian government is increasing connectivity and surveillance capabilities in Arunachal Pradesh, including the construction of “around 20 bridges, a number of tunnels, airbases and several key roads.” A division commander in the region noted that Indian forces were using technology to increase awareness of the situation on the border alongside construction efforts from the Indian Border Roads Organization. The article also mentions that Indian forces

are using a “sizeable fleet of Israeli-made Heron medium-altitude long endurance drones” for surveillance along the border.

The independent English-language *Economic Times* reports that the Indian defense ministry is in the process of acquiring land to improve military infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh. The defense ministry will “acquire 10.12 acres of land in Ningging village in Tuting tehsil of Upper Siang district, which is about 40 km from the Line of Actual Control.” The article also notes that this is the second request for an acquisition of land in Arunachal Pradesh to take place in 2021 and that it comes after an incursion by Chinese soldiers in the state of Uttarakhand in August, during which they “crossed the border and damaged infrastructure, including a bridge.” While the additional infrastructure and land acquisition in Arunachal Pradesh could take some time to materialize, the overall push for more infrastructure and the increased surveillance demonstrate India’s commitment to address issues on its border with China.

“The defence ministry has moved to acquire strategic land in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh to beef up military infrastructure along the border with China.”



China India CIA map border disputes.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_India_CIA_map_border_disputes.jpg Attribution: Public Domain

Continued: India Improving Surveillance and Infrastructure on Chinese Border

Source: “India giving major push to infrastructure development for quick mobilisation of troops in Arunachal Pradesh sector,” *The Hindu* (independent English-language newspaper), 18 October 2021. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-giving-major-push-to-infrastructure-development-for-quick-mobilisation-of-troops-in-arunachal-pradesh-sector/article37058413.ece>

...India is giving a major push to boosting connectivity and use of high-tech surveillance along the nearly 1,350-km Line of Actual Control in the Arunachal Pradesh sector to ensure quick mobilisation of troops and heavy weaponry to deal with any eventuality in the face of the standoff with China in eastern Ladakh.

As part of the mega plan, around 20 bridges, a number of tunnels, airbases and several key roads are being developed in strategically key areas in Arunachal Pradesh to bolster the overall military preparedness, officials said on Monday.

Major General Zubin A Minwalla, General-Officer-Commanding of the 5 Mountain Division, said the focus has been to further strengthen road infrastructure as well as the use of high-tech surveillance equipment to create more battlefield transparency...

He said there has been a “tremendous push” on infrastructure development by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the civilian government.

“There is no such increase in deployment (of troops). We are creating more (battle field) transparency through technology. We are using technology to increase our awareness of the entire situation,” he said...

A sizeable fleet of Israeli-made Heron medium-altitude long endurance drones is carrying out round-the-clock surveillance over the LAC in the mountainous terrain and sending crucial data and images to command and control centres.

Along with the drones, the Indian Army’s aviation wing has also been deploying the Weapon System Integrated (WSI) variant of the Advanced Light Helicopter Rudra in the region...

Source: Nidhi Sharmaet, “Defence ministry to acquire strategic 10 acres in Arunachal's Siang border,” *The Economic Times* (independent English-language newspaper), 8 October 2021. <https://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/defence-ministry-to-acquire-strategic-10-acres-in-arunachals-siang-border/articleshow/86856936.cms>

The defence ministry has moved to acquire strategic land in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh to beef up military infrastructure along the border with China.

The defence ministry will acquire 10.12 acres of land in Ningging village in Tuting tehsil of Upper Siang district, which is about 40 km from the Line of Actual Control...

According to sources, the land is crucial as it is close to an Army garrison near Tuting. As per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013, any land can be acquired for defence purposes, railways and communication without the requirements of a gram sabha meeting.

...This is the second time within the year that the defence ministry has put in a request to acquire such a vast piece of land in Arunachal Pradesh to ramp up army presence near the Sino-Indian border. Earlier, in January, the defence ministry had moved to acquire 14.128 acres of land in Yorni II border village in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

...The present move follows a recent incursion by 100 PLA soldiers at Barahoti in Uttarakhand in August. The Chinese soldiers crossed the border and damaged infrastructure, including a bridge...

Russian Media Speculating on Role of Mysterious New S-550 Air Defense System

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian government news service TASS, English-language news service *Sputnik News*, and pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestiya* discuss Russia's new S-550 air defense system. If deemed successful and fielded, the S-550 will enhance Russian force protection capabilities, especially when integrated with the S-300V4 that is designed to defeat short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

The introduction of the S-550 was somewhat unusual because it was largely unheralded. Typically, the Russian mass media discusses weapon systems for years before the military accepts them for service and fields them. For instance, the initial design of the S-500 was completed in 2011, the system was fielded in October 2021, with much public discussion of the system in the interim. On 9 November 2021, a TASS report mentioned a statement by Russian President Vladimir Putin about "the importance of delivering S-350, S-500 and S-550 surface-to-air missile systems." The S-500 and S-350 have long been in development and discussed, but this was the first mention of the S-550. As a result, the Russian mass media speculated about the role of the new S-550. The first school of thought posited that the S-550 is

“The head of the state [President Putin] put a special emphasis on the importance of advanced development of domestic air defense and anti-ballistic missile systems, of delivering S-350, S-500 and S-550 systems to the Russian armed forces...”

a 'budget' version of the S-500, much as the S-350 is a budget version of the S-400. The second school of thought posited that the S-550 is related to a high-mobility terminal air defense system that was in development from 1981-1988 and eventually abandoned in 1992. The consensus in the Russian media now favors the latter view, as described in *Sputnik News*. In addition, *Sputnik News* purports that the S-550 is not only more capable of interdicting intercontinental ballistic missiles than the S-500, but also more capable than the U.S.'s Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) Aegis air defenses equipped with the 3M-3 Block IIB missiles. The article by *Izvestiya* states that a "S-550 brigade set" will be delivered to the Armed Forces before 2025.

Source: “Путин акцентировал внимание на поставках в войска систем ПВО С-500 и С-550 (Putin Emphasizes Need for S-500, S-550 Air Defense Systems),” *TASS* (government news service of the Russian Federation), 9 November 2021. <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/12876673>

...During his recent meeting with top Russian Defense Ministry officials and heads of Russian defense industry enterprises, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized the importance of delivering S-350, S-500 and S-550 surface-to-air missile systems to the troops, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday.

"Measures to adequately respond to the volatile situation near Russia's borders were considered. Huge attention was paid to improving the country's system of aerospace defense. The head of the state put a special emphasis on the importance of advanced development of domestic air defense and anti-ballistic missile systems, of delivering S-350, S-500 and S-550 systems to the Russian armed forces," he said...

Source: Oleg Burunov, “Russia's S-550 to Be More Efficient at Intercepting ICBMs Than THAAD & Aegis, Report Says,” *Sputnik News* (English-language news service of the Russian Federation), 13 November 2021. <https://sputniknews.com/20211113/russias-s-550-to-be-more-efficient-at-intercepting-icbms-than-thaad--aegis-report-says-1090711879.html>

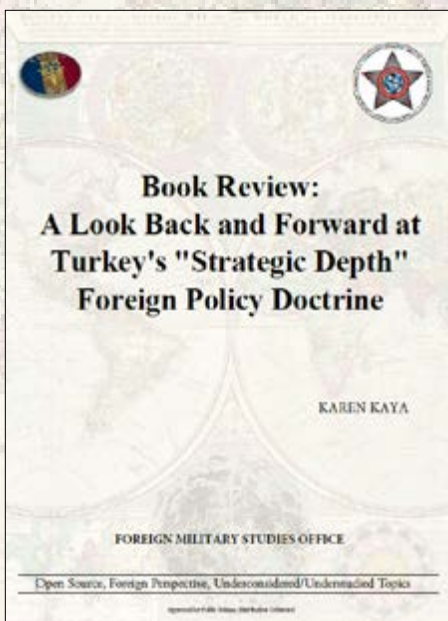
...Russia's S-550 will become the world's first mobile special operation missile and airspace defence system capable of effectively destroying intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), two sources in the military-industrial complex told the Ria Novosti news agency. One insider said that the new surface-to-air system is being developed as an upgraded version of the S-500 Prometey (Prometheus) anti-ballistic missile system.

“The S-550's capabilities to intercept warheads of enemy ballistic missiles, mainly, intercontinental ones, as well as space attack weapons will be by an order greater than the capabilities of the S-400 and the S-500, as well as those of the US THAAD and Aegis air defences fitted with the 3M-3 Block IIB missiles.”

“The S-550's capabilities to intercept warheads of enemy ballistic missiles, mainly, intercontinental ones, as well as space attack weapons will be by an order greater than the capabilities of the S-400 and the S-500, as well as those of the US THAAD and Aegis air defences fitted with the 3M-3 Block IIB missiles”, the insider said. This was confirmed by another source, who added that “the development of a new system is currently at an advanced stage”...

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>

Continued: Russian Media Speculating on Role of Mysterious New S-550 Air Defense System

Source: "Армия РФ получит первую систему противоракетной обороны С-550 до 2025 года (Russian Federation Army to Receive First S-550 Ballistic Missile Defense System Prior to 2025)," *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 15 November 2021. <https://iz.ru/1249785/2021-11-15/armiia-rf-poluchit-pervuiu-sistemu-protivoraketnoi-oborony-s-550-do-2025-goda>

The first S-550 strategic ballistic missile defense (PRO) system will be delivered into the inventory of the Russian Army prior to 2025. TASS was told this by a source close to the Ministry of Defense. "The S-550 has already been created in its final form. The first S-550 will be delivered to the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces prior to 2025," a news agency source stated at the 2021 Dubai International Airshow.

He specified that the delivery of the ballistic missile defense system is included in the State Weapons Program for 2027. Initially, an S-550 brigade set will be delivered to the Army, TASS reported." The S-550 system will use a mobile launcher with a hypersonic missile," the source added, specifying that there is no stipulation for a naval version of the complex...

“The first S-550 strategic ballistic missile defense (PRO) system will be delivered into the inventory of the Russian Army prior to 2025.”

Russia Developing Two New Long-Range Air-to-Surface Cruise Missiles



Tu-160, variable-sweep wing heavy strategic bomber.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-HTt64HK/0/X3/i-HTt64HK-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC by 4.0

“The ability to attack an adversary without entering his air defense or missile defense zones means greater safety for the strategic missile carrier.”

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles from Russian military and defense weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* and pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestiya* discuss two different Russian programs that are developing long-range air-to-surface cruise missile systems. If the military fields either of these systems, they will significantly increase Russian capabilities to deliver conventional and presumably nuclear munitions.

Currently, the Kh-101 (non-nuclear) and Kh-102 (nuclear) long-range cruise missiles fill this niche. The newer Kh-95 program, as described by *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, has a longer range (probably greater than 4,500 km) and higher speed (hypersonic) than the subsonic Kh-101/102 missiles. Russia views this extended range and higher speed as essential for the evasion of a potential adversary's air and missile defenses. The 'Item 506' program, as described by *Izvestiya*, describes a different long-range air-to-surface cruise missile program, with a different focus than the Kh-95. Russia intends 'Item 506' to be a smaller, subsonic cruise missile that relies on some type of stealth technology to penetrate enemy air defenses. An additional advantage of the 'Item 506' program is its substantially smaller size, which permits the possibility the aircraft can carry more missiles. As noted by *Izvestiya*, the Kh-101 demonstrated that Russian Long-Range Aviation was no longer just a nuclear delivery capability but also a credible nonnuclear strategic deterrent.

Source: Vitaliy Orlov, “«Циркон» – это только начало: О новейшей российской разработке в области ракетного гиперзвука (The Tsirkon Is Just the Beginning: About the Latest Russian Development in the Field of Hypersonic Missiles),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (Russian weekly focusing on the military and defense industry), 8 November 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/64569>

In article published in August Colonel General Vladimir Zarudnitskiy, chief of the Military Academy of the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff, made mention in passing of the latest homegrown development in the field of hypersonic weapons -- the Kh-95 air-launched missile. Unsurprisingly, many members of Russia's expert community and not only they wanted to know: Why does a country that is already successfully flying the Tsirkon and Kinzhal need yet another hypersonic missile?

...First we need to look at the cardinal differences (if they exist) between the Kh-95, Russia's newest hypersonic missile, and the slightly earlier advanced developments in this field. The Kh-95's principal divergence from the Kinzhal and Tsirkon was described by military expert and analyst Viktor Baranets: "Although precise data about the technical specifications and operational performance of the Kh-95 is at the present time unavailable, as a basis for comparison we can use open-source information about the performance of the Kh-101 air-launched ultralong-range cruise missile. Discussing this missile's guaranteed target engagement range, Army General Sergey Shoygu gave the figure of 4,500 kilometers. So it is logical to assume that the Kh-95 is 'duty-bound' to fly further. In this case, the Russian Federation is acquiring a fearsome aerial weapon with an extended kill zone. In the contemporary warfare environment, this is something really serious. The ability to attack an adversary without entering his air defense or missile defense zones means greater safety for the strategic missile carrier."

According to information that occasionally seeps into the press about the specifications of the Tsirkon and Kinzhal hypersonic cruise missiles, their effective ranges are 400-1,000 (depending on source) and 2,000 kilometers respectively. But modern air defense assets are constantly extending their coverage zones. This is true especially of fighter-interceptors, which can now reach ranges of 2,000 kilometers or even further with in-flight refueling.

So, the use by strategic (long-range) bombers of missiles with a range not beyond 2,000 kilometers comes with no guarantee of success. The requirement now is for air-launched cruise missiles to have effective ranges in the order of 5,500 kilometers. And precisely this is the kind of capability that the Russian Air Force has in service today, in the form of the Kh-101 strategic air-to-ground cruise missile and its thermonuclear version, the Kh-102.

Among the specifications for any missile is one more key parameter that substantially affects its vulnerability to air and missile defenses -- flight speed. The subsonic speed of the Kh-101 (Kh-102) makes it relatively easy prey for not only air and missile defense systems but also fighter aircraft. This is why the Kh-95 is essential, to minimize the risk of reduced mission accomplishment or of mission failure by the Russian Aerospace Forces' strategic bombers. A hypersonic missile with ultralong range has the potential to cancel out even the most modern air defenses that use both missiles and aircraft to provide what is assumed to be solid protection...

Continued: Russia Developing Two New Long-Range Air-to-Surface Cruise Missiles

“Previously our long-range aviation missile carriers were primarily oriented toward the use of nuclear weapons...The capability to engage long-range aviation in conventional conflicts emerged only with the delivery of non-nuclear cruise missiles into the inventory during the post-Soviet period...”

Source: Anton Lavrov and Aleksey Ramm, “«Известия» разгадали тайну «изделия 506»(Izvestiya reveals the Secret of ‘Item 506’),” *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 10 November 2021. <https://iz.ru/1247452/2021-11-10/izvestiia-razgadali-tainu-izdeliia-506>

This type of weapon does not yet have its own designation or agreed upon name. Moreover, it has not once been mentioned in official Russian military reports and speeches. But work on it is already underway and hundreds of specialists of the best enterprises are participating in this work. The topic of this discussion is the so-called "Item 506," a miniature super-accurate stealth missile that is able to strike practically any target at a distance of thousands of kilometers. It cannot be excluded that in the very near future this stealth munition, which has no world counterpart, will augment the arsenals of new Tu-160M and Tu-95M bombers. Izvestiya has revealed all of the details of the implementation of one of the most covert domestic weapons programs...

Confirmation of the fact that "Item 506" is in fact a cruise missile (KR) can be found in one of the interviews given by Igor Kuznetsov, General Director of AO [Joint Stock Company] "GosNIIImash," in 2016... In the contracts for the "Item 506" the use of an "Item 37R" is mentioned on the state procurement website. According to the 2016 annual report of the Omsk Motor Construction and Design Bureau (OMKB), the company's product line includes "Item 37-01" for the Russian 3M14 "Kalibr" cruise missiles. The enigmatic "Item 37" is mentioned in several open-source publications of the "Saturn" Science and Manufacturing Association. "Item 37" is the family of compact bypass TRDD-50 single-use turbojet engines. One can easily find information in open sources about the fact that the TRDD-50s are being used not only on the sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles, but also on aviation launched Kh-55 and Kh-101 missiles. It turns out that "Item 506" will acquire an especially upgraded engine of this family. The product line of these engines was developed by the Omsk Motor Construction Design Bureau, but the products themselves were produced by NPO "Saturn."

In the opinion of Dmitriy Kornev, editor in-chief of the "militaryrussia" internet project, the main distinction of "Item 37" from other engines of the TRDD-50 family is the work done on its fuel. Instead of traditional aviation kerosene, a mixture of "Detsilin" and Detsilin-M" is used, which gives the missiles new characteristics. "This new more effective fuel mixture allows the flight range of the missile to be increased without expanding the sizes and volume of the fuel tanks," Dmitriy Kornev explained to Izvestiya. "This yields the capability to create compact missiles with a great flight range. At the same time this supports the notion that the munition will be sub-sonic. Most likely, low-observable technologies will be used, such as those in the Kh-101/102, which will enhance the suddenness of the strike and invulnerability to air defense assets."...It will be smaller in size than existing missiles used on strategic missile carriers. Therefore, "Item 506" will also possess similar characteristics. This will allow the number of munitions carried on the bomber to be increased, or the flight range with a full munitions load to be increased.

"Previously our long-range aviation missile carriers were primarily oriented toward the use of nuclear weapons," Dmitriy Boltanov related to Izvestiya. "The capability to engage long-range aviation in conventional conflicts emerged only with the delivery of non-nuclear cruise missiles into the inventory during the post-Soviet period. Modern long-range missiles can be used to strike key targets: headquarters, ballistic missile defense and anti-aircraft radars, and the most important bridges and industry facilities. And the more of them that can be suspended under the aircraft the more dangerous each of our strategic bombers becomes for the enemy," concluded the expert.



Tu-160, variable-sweep wing heavy strategic bomber

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-s3gDncj/0/X3/i-s3gDncj-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC by 4.0

Russia Has Fielded New Arctic Short-Range Air Defense Missile

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

Russia continues to upgrade its air defense in the Arctic. According to the excerpted article in the military- and defense-focused weekly Russian news outlet *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, the newly upgraded Tor-M2DT missile the military fields in the Arctic has substantial improvements from earlier versions. Part of the system's resilience is the strength of its component launcher, the DT-30 PM-T articulated caterpillar-tracked all-terrain vehicle. The article also makes clear the author's disdain for U.S. and European claims in the polar region and insinuates that the new Tor missile can be a strong regional deterrent for Russia's competitors in the Arctic.

“The first Tor-M2DT launches in Arctic conditions took place in July 2019, on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago. The Arctic version of the Tor clearly has some substantial design differences from its more "southern" modifications. It uses fuels and lubricants with special cold-resistant ingredients, which enable it to maintain performance standards even in temperatures of below minus 50.”

Source: Vitali Orlov, ““«Тор» мороза не боится: Зенитно-ракетный комплекс в арктической упаковке способен решать широчайший круг задач (The 'Tor' Fears no Frost. Arctic Version of SAM System Can Perform Widest Range of Tasks),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly Russian news outlet focused on military and defense industrial complex), 19 October 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/64301>

Much has been said about opening up the Arctic, and about its strategic importance for Russia. The region is fantastically rich in natural resources and of such variety that neither the United States, still imagining itself master of the world, nor the European Union, working hard to keep up with its overseas master, can sleep soundly at night. And the pie is so enticing that everyone dreams of carving it up while excluding Russia, which has the longest Arctic borders (22,000 kilometers). If our country were just one quarter less strong than it actually is, the collective West, having long lost the plot, would attempt to resolve the issue by force without a moment's hesitation.

Serial production of the 'Tor' short-range air defense missile system is handled by Izhevsk Kupol Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Plant, part of the Almaz-Antey aerospace defense concern. The system is deployed within groups of forces, to provide effective air defenses for army units and strategic military, state, and infrastructure facilities in extreme climatic and weather conditions.

Its purpose is to destroy precision weapons while they are airborne (guided, cruise, and anti-radiation missiles, guided and gliding air-dropped munitions) and also aircraft, helicopters, and drones within its zone of engagement. This is regardless of the time of day or night or jamming or meteorological circumstances, at significant distances from bases, and in environments of intensive radio, optical, and electronic countermeasures and incoming fire.

The polar version debuted in 2017, when a Tor-M2DT drove across the cobblestones of Red Square during the Victory Day Parade. A year and a half later, the military received the first 12 examples of the serial-production system, based on the DT-30 PM-T articulated caterpillar-tracked transporter. These went to the Northern Fleet. Just two months later, troops of the Northern Fleet's separate motorized infantry brigade began a training course at the air defense forces center in Yeysk. Having completed it, they carried out a series of live launches at a training ground in Astrakhanskaya Oblast.

The first Tor-M2DT launches in Arctic conditions took place in July 2019, on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago. The Arctic version of the Tor clearly has some substantial design differences from its more "southern" modifications. It uses fuels and lubricants with special cold-resistant ingredients, which enable it to maintain performance standards even in temperatures of below minus 50. It is mounted on the unique DT-30 PM-T Vityaz articulated amphibious caterpillar-tracked transporter, which is the only machine in the world that can not only handle Arctic off-road terrain, dangerous fissures, and ice ridges, but also sectors of open water.

The system can simultaneously shoot at four aerial targets that are attacking from different directions. As soon as any situation arises, its computers categorize targets, sorting them by the least time needed to fly to the protected and by the degree of threat. The Tor-M2DT's operator decides what action to take from the information provided. The 9M338 antiaircraft missile calculates for itself the optimal time to explode, to ensure the target's destruction with shrapnel.

The system can operate in manual and automatic modes. In the latter, it monitors the airspace and decides for itself whether to destroy an aerial target that is unidentified by the "friend or foe" radar.

Another way in which the M2DT version's performance in battle differs radically from earlier members of the Tor family is its extreme accuracy. Developers of the Arctic version pronounced the practice of assuming that two missiles per target to ensure destruction was wasteful. At the heart of the Tor-M2DT's performance in combat is the principle of "one missile, one target."

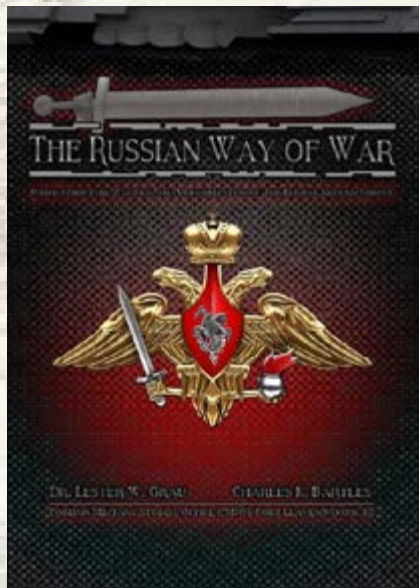
Continued: Russia Has Fielded New Arctic Short-Range Air Defense Missile

Continued Source: Vitali Orlov, ““«Тор» мороза не боится: Зенитно-ракетный комплекс в арктической упаковке способен решать широчайший круг задач (The ‘Tor’ Fears no Frost. Arctic Version of SAM System Can Perform Widest Range of Tasks),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly Russian news outlet focused on military and defense industrial complex), 19 October 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/64301>

Clearly, the performance in battle of any anti-aircraft missile system will largely depend on the engineering and operating qualities of the platform on which it is mounted. We mentioned above the uniqueness of the DT-30 PM-T articulated caterpillar-tracked all-terrain vehicle, which is developed and manufactured at Vityaz Mechanical Engineering Company.

The front section of the DT-30 PM-T articulated caterpillar-tracked all-terrain-vehicle carries the crew compartment and the rear section has the battle control compartment and the antennae and launchers. The manufacturer has provided the crew with the best possible working conditions, which are maintained even during the extreme Arctic cold. The unique fighting and technical performance of the DT-30 PM-T transporter was demonstrated to the state customer during the unprecedented drive from the village of Tiksi to Ostrov Kotel'nyy [island] across ice ridges, fissures and areas of open water in the Arctic Ocean.

When he visited Izhevsk Kupol Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Plant back in 2017, Vladimir Putin examined this advanced product in person. Impressed by its specifications and performance, the Supreme Commander in Chief ordered that the Tor-M2DT be included into the state defense order, and this was the precursor to the start of serial production.

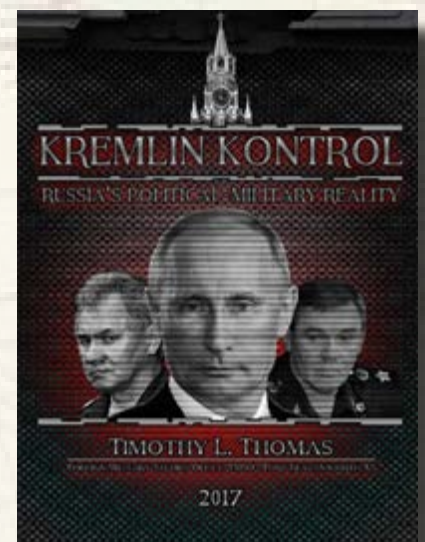


THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

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.

KREMLIN KONTROL RUSSIA'S POLITICAL MILITARY REALITY by Timothy L. Thomas

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.



New Artillery System on the Horizon for Russian Far North and Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

Russian military and industrial-focused news weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* recently announced that field tests on the Arctic Magnolia variant artillery system are partially completed and successful. According to the article, the 120mm self-propelled, swimmable gun mortar moves through snow and swamp and provides direct and indirect artillery fire. It is readily transportable on the large amphibious landing craft of the Northern Fleet. Previously it was posited that the system would marry the 120mm 'Vena' 2S31 gun-mortar turret on the DT-10PM tracked, articulated vehicle (See: "Short Range Arctic Gun-Mortar" *OE Watch*, September 2019). Instead, the Russian Army is using the DT-30 tracked, articulated vehicle, also manufactured by Vityaz, which likely allows for greater ammunition stowage.

“JSC [Joint Stock Company] Scientific and Production Corporation Uralvagonzavod announced the partial completion of field tests of the newest Arctic self-propelled artillery gun Magnolia (120-mm). The results obtained during testing of the SPAG [Self-Propelled Artillery Gun], created on the platform of the two-link tracked all-terrain vehicle DT-30 Vityaz, were successful. The developer plans to complete the program of state tests in the extreme conditions of the Arctic and the Far North next year, in 2022.”

Source: Vitali Orlov, “Арктическая «Магнолия»: У России появился весомый аргумент на Крайнем Севере (The Arctic “Magnolia”: Russia has a weighty argument in the Far North),” *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* (weekly Russian news outlet focused on military and defense industrial complex), 13 September 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/63837>

JSC [Joint Stock Company] Scientific and Production Corporation Uralvagonzavod announced the partial completion of field tests of the newest Arctic self-propelled artillery gun Magnolia (120-mm). The results obtained during testing of the SPAG [Self-Propelled Artillery Gun], created on the platform of the two-link tracked all-terrain vehicle DT-30 Vityaz, were successful. The developer plans to complete the program of state tests in the extreme conditions of the Arctic and the Far North next year, in 2022....

The military operations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the invaluable experience gained in their course served as an impetus for the creation of the latest models of modern self-propelled artillery weapons....

The first information about the self-propelled artillery gun project Magnolia appeared in 2018. The developer of the new artillery system was the JSC Central Scientific Research Institute Burevestnik... The artillery system... consists of an articulated tracked carrier as the firing platform of a universal gun of 120-mm caliber.

The 2A80 gun, installed at the SPAG Magnolia and capable of working as a howitzer, mortar, and cannon, has its own requirements, especially in its upcoming use in difficult meteorological and climatic conditions. "The motivation for the creation of the latest models of modern self-propelled artillery weapons was the military operations of the RF [Russian Federation] Armed Forces in the Syrian Arab Republic and the invaluable experience gained in their course."

The ability to use a wide variety of ammunition types (high-explosive, armor-penetrating, incendiary, thermobaric, cluster, etc.) makes it and the entire Magnolia installation more than just unique. Currently, there is nothing like this in any army in the world. The main operator of the Magnolia should be artillery formations and units serving in the Far North and the Arctic.

In 2017, Lieutenant General Nikolay Parshin, who is the head of the Main Missile and Artillery Directorate of the Russian Defense Ministry, announced the development of the Arctic version of the SPAG. During his speech..., he noted that in order to further improve and develop missile and artillery weapons, more than 50 scientific-research and experimental-design [SRED] works had been carried out, and 20 percent of the SRED work was carried out in the order it was initiated. Nikolay Parshin then especially noted the projects Tor-M2DT and SPAG Magnolia mounted on the articulated snow- and swamp-going vehicle DT-30PM Vityaz.

The choice of this type of chassis is due to the fact that the Vityaz has successfully passed the test program in the Far North and the Arctic, characterized by the presence of changeable soils that create insurmountable difficulties for most types of available equipment.

Two years later, the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces of the Russian Armed Forces, General of the Army Oleg Salyukov, noted ... that the family of highly mobile artillery and mortar weapons ... is designed to increase the level of mobility and enhance the fire capabilities of the battalion's artillery....

For the first time, a Russian developer installed a combat compartment on a two-unit articulated tracked platform... The front vehicle, equipped with a five-wheel tracked chassis, houses the driver's cab, propulsion system components and assemblies, and system elements. In the rear vehicle, a six-roller track serves as a platform for the installation of the fighting compartment... The articulated chassis provides the SPAG with a high level of cross-country ability in swampy and difficult terrain. The chassis is equipped with a significant part of the Arctic equipment in service with the Russian army, and the presence of armor protection minimizes most of the existing threats.

Continued: New Artillery System on the Horizon for Russian Far North and Arctic

Continued Source: Vitali Orlov, “Арктическая «Магнолия»: У России появился весомый аргумент на Крайнем Севере (The Arctic “Magnolia”: Russia has a weighty argument in the Far North),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly Russian news outlet focused on military and defense industrial complex), 13 September 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/63837>

The design of the tower provides for circular visibility. The main goals of the Magnolia SPAG should be fire destruction of a sufficiently wide range of ground (surface) targets: antitank and air defense systems, armored vehicles and tanks, missile and artillery systems, engineering and fortifications, manpower and landing craft....

The new Magnolia SPAG uses almost the entire range of ammunition for various purposes, which allows it to effectively solve the widest range of combat missions. When firing direct fire, the system works as a cannon, and in defilade positions it successfully replaces a howitzer and a mortar....

Despite reports ... which promised an early completion of the self-propelled gun test program, the timing of the end of the testing events remains open. No less vague are the prospects for a demonstration of a serial or at least a prototype of the promising Magnolia SPAG. It is obvious that the completion of the experimental-design works, verification, and subsequent refinement of the samples, and finally, the launch of serial production, will require additional time and expenditures...

With the implementation of the Magnolia project, units and formations of the Arctic group will be armed with a fundamentally new self-propelled gun capable of providing a significant increase in artillery firepower. In a hypothetical armed confrontation in the Arctic, Russia will have weighty artillery arguments....

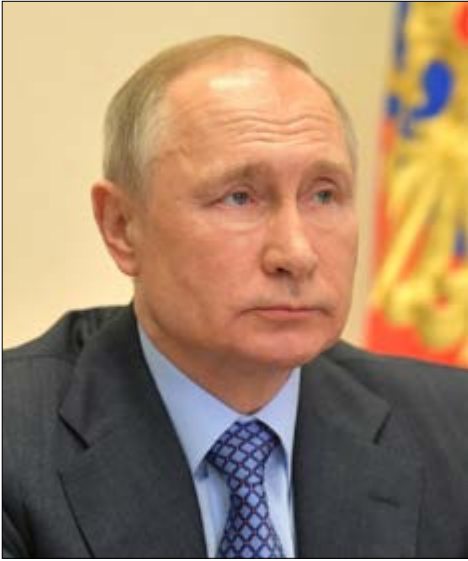
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Vladimir Putin, April 2020.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_April_2020_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_April_2020_(cropped).jpg) Kremlin.ru Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

Kremlin Denouncing So-Called “NATO Infrastructure” in Ukraine

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

The Kremlin appears to be escalating its rhetoric surrounding the simmering conflict with Ukraine. As the first excerpt from the official *Kremlin.ru* site points out, in July, President Putin, in a long essay on Russian-Ukrainian relations, reiterated his stance that Russians and Ukrainians are one people. Putin argued that the West is trying to weaken Russia by gaining a foothold in Ukraine, claiming that “we are witnessing [in Ukraine] not just complete dependence but direct external control, including the supervision of the Ukrainian authorities, security services and armed forces by foreign advisers, military development of the territory of Ukraine and deployment of NATO infrastructure.”

The assertion that NATO is developing military infrastructure within Ukraine serves as the central thesis in the second excerpt from the popular daily, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. Military journalist Viktor Baranets lists nine locations in Ukraine where NATO

members have established military “training centers and training grounds,” despite the Ukrainian constitution forbidding “the stationing of foreign military bases.” After describing each of the training locations, Baranets states, “Ukraine is becoming a large NATO military base,” where “NATO members are stuffing their arms with weapons and equipment.” He catalogs the foreign military equipment provided to Ukraine, asserting, “all in all, more than 20 NATO countries participate in the armament of Ukraine.” Baranets claims, “Ukraine has become NATO's military foothold... with a clear focus on ‘cleansing’ the Donbass and the forceful return of Crimea.” Echoing President Putin, Baranets concludes, “for Russia, Ukraine is not a foreign land. And Moscow will do whatever it must to keep this territory from joining NATO.”

“The conclusion is obvious: all of Ukraine is becoming a large NATO military base.”

Source: Vladimir Putin, “Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев (On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians),” *Kremlin.ru* (official Kremlin news website), 12 July 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

...This is what is actually happening. First of all, we are facing the creation of a climate of fear in Ukrainian society, aggressive rhetoric, indulging neo-Nazis and militarizing the country. Along with that we are witnessing not just complete dependence but direct external control, including the supervision of the Ukrainian authorities, security services and armed forces by foreign advisers, military ‘development’ of the territory of Ukraine and deployment of NATO infrastructure. It is no coincidence that the aforementioned flagrant law on ‘indigenous peoples’ was adopted under the cover of large-scale NATO exercises in Ukraine....

Source: Viktor Baranets, “НАТО втихую уже строит базы на Украине. Сколько их и где они спрятаны (NATO is already quietly building bases in Ukraine. How many and where are they hidden),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (popular, mostly pro-Kremlin source), 20 October 2021. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/28345/4491907/>

...After that conversation, I once again glanced at the constitution of Ukraine: “Article 17: The stationing of foreign military bases is not allowed on the territory of Ukraine.” ...Well, when Kiev is poking its nose at the same 17th article of the constitution, the Ukrainian authorities smile slyly: the temporary military presence of foreigners is not prohibited there. And the “temporary” - has long been perennial!

...The conclusion is obvious: all of Ukraine is becoming a Large NATO Military Base. And this “backyard of the block” (as one of the British warriors tweeted) NATO members are stuffing their arms with weapons and equipment.... All in all, more than 20 NATO countries participate in the armament of Ukraine.

All these foreign military bases and NATO training centers not only openly train Ukraine's 200,000-strong army for a future war with Russia, but also serve as a kind of detachment....

...Ukraine becomes NATO's military foothold. As we can see, the bloc has settled there completely.... And with a clear focus on “cleansing” the Donbass and the forceful return of Crimea....

How will it all end?... In the event of a war, the United States will issue formidable warnings to Moscow, but will not engage in combat. For them, Ukraine is an important springboard, but not more important than Afghanistan. Washington will not risk the start of a nuclear conflict with Moscow because of it.

But for Russia, Ukraine is not a foreign land. And Moscow will do whatever it must to keep this territory from joining NATO....

Kremlin Training Russian Journalists for Conflict

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Over the past 20 years, the Kremlin has worked to monitor and frequently control the flow of information within the country. This is particularly true for information regarding the country's armed forces and security services (See: "Russia Moves Forward with New Restrictions on Military Reporting," *OE Watch*, November 2021). A key element in maintaining this control is proper training of Russian journalists who cover military and security topics.

“At the range we are dragged out of the bus, forced to crawl through the forest amid screams, shots, explosions, jabs and kicks. All this lasts 45 minutes...”

The first excerpt from the Ministry of Defense (MoD) provides general background of the Bastion training course conducted in September 2021. It points out that this training is “designed for [Russian] journalists working in crisis regions and situations (in zones of military conflicts, when covering anti-terrorist, peacekeeping, humanitarian operations, natural disasters, etc.)” According to the article, many different organizations (e.g. MoD, FSB, MVD, the Russian National Guard, etc.) participate in this annual training for journalists, which has

trained “729 representatives of the media and information structures of government bodies” since its first iteration in 2006.

The second excerpt from the liberal news outlet *Novaya Gazeta* provides the perspective of a journalist who recently completed the Bastion training. The author begins by noting, “since 2019, all employees of the Russian media who work in combat conditions are required by law to undergo such training.” Portions of the weeklong training are grueling, where journalists are exposed not only to the elements, but also to mock interrogations, captivity, and abuse. During one portion of the training, the author describes how journalists were “dragged out of the bus, forced to crawl through the forest amid screams, shots, explosions, jabs and kicks. All this lasted 45 minutes.”

Other aspects of the training are less rigorous. Journalists learn “how to protect information, how to work with relatives of victims of disasters and emergencies, and how not to get mixed up or get out unscathed during the dispersal of rallies.” Journalists also learn not to “take their smartphone [with them] into the combat zone,” and that they must never wear a military uniform. Kremlin leaders understand the important role journalists play in conflict situations and have developed a training course to protect these valuable assets and to use them to help protect sensitive Russian military information.

Source: “ВДВ проходят межведомственные учебно-практические курсы для журналистов ‘Бастيون’ (VDV, conducts interdepartmental training and practical courses for journalists ‘Bastion’), *Russian Ministry of Defense*, 16 September 2021. https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12384247@egNews

At the Raevsky training ground of the Novorossiysk Guards Airborne Assault Mountain Formation, a solemn ceremony was held for the opening of the interagency practical training courses “Bastion” to prepare media representatives to work in emergencies and crisis situations. The courses are designed for journalists working in crisis regions and situations (in zones of military conflicts, when covering anti-terrorist, peacekeeping, humanitarian operations, natural disasters, etc.).

...Classes were held on the specifics of the work of journalists during the conduct of hostilities, in natural disasters and emergencies, practical training will be held at the Raevsky training ground, where conditions will be simulated as close as possible to real ones...

The Bastion program was developed in 2001 by the Moscow Union of Journalists and the Military Press Association in cooperation with the Russian Ministry of Defense. The courses are organized by the Moscow Union of Journalists with financial support from the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications with the participation of the Ministry of Defense, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FSB, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee, the Russian Guard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Russian Emergencies Ministry.

The first courses took place 15 years ago - in May 2006... Bastion is held annually... From 2006 to the present, 729 representatives of the media and information structures of government bodies have been trained at the courses.

Source: Valeria Fedorenko, “Тотовся к войне (Prepare for war),” *Novaya Gazeta* (liberal, small circulation site), 31 October 2021. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2021/10/31/gotovsia-k-voine>

...We - journalists and press officers from all over the country - gathered at Bastion. This is the name of interdepartmental training courses for journalists working in extreme and special situations (war, counter-terrorism operations, riots, natural disasters, emergencies, disasters). Since 2019, all employees of the Russian media who work in combat conditions are required by law to undergo such training

...Be that as it may, the seizure is really a serious test, and after it no one is left without bruises. At the range we are dragged out of the bus, forced to crawl through the forest amid screams, shots, explosions, jabs and kicks. All this lasts 45 minutes.... A journalist working in a war has no right to take up arms, this is a basic rule, which we were told about at the training and repeated at Bastion many times.

...Some colleagues even fall asleep during lectures. And there are many of them, and they are not necessarily about the war. How to protect information, how to work with relatives of victims of disasters and emergencies, how not to get mixed up or get out unscathed during the dispersal of rallies... But most of the lectures are still about the war. You find out that you cannot take your smartphone with you into the combat zone... Or that in no case should you wear any camouflage, uniforms or T-shirts with the inscription, for example, “FSB”. Camouflage is the clothes of the military, and we are civilians....



An Iranian ship fires a Nasr cruise missile during Zulfiqar 1400 military exercises, November 2021.

Source: Entekhab.ir https://www.entekhab.ir/files/fa/news/1400/8/17/1158398_931.jpg

Iran Tests New Cruise Missiles

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

The Iranian military's annual "Zulfiqar" military exercise is often used to showcase new military technology. The excerpted article from *Entekhab.ir*, a website that leans more toward the reformist camp in the Islamic Republic's political spectrum, announces successful tests of cruise missiles launched both from southern Iran's Makran Coast (along the Gulf of Oman) and from a ship. The three missiles launched were the 22-mile-range Nasr anti-ship missile that appears to be an upgraded version of the Kosar missile, which itself is based on China's C-704; the 186-mile-range anti-ship Qadir cruise missile that can be fired from both ships and land; and the 125-mile-range Qader anti-ship missile, which is based on the Chinese C-802. In addition, *Entekhab.ir* and other Iranian outlets reported on the successful test of the Arash, a long-range Iranian army suicide drone, which can launch from ships and land-based vehicles as small as ordinary cars.

This growing Iranian anti-ship missile arsenal and its increasing range can upend the operational environment much like Iran's small

“The Qadir cruise missile which destroyed a surface target 300km away...”

boat swarming tactics sought to do by harassing ships in the relatively narrow and shallow waters of the Persian Gulf. In the case of Iranian small boats, U.S. Navy ships continued to engage in freedom of navigation operations throughout the Persian Gulf, but they could operate more securely outside the Gulf where they remained out of range. While the aircraft and missiles of U.S., French, and other blue water navies still outmatch Iran's, the latest exercises and firing of various anti-ship missiles suggest that Iran is rapidly closing that gap. Such missiles deployed along Iran's Persian Gulf coast could hamper shipping beyond the mines that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Navy deployed in the past.

Source: “Shalik-e Mushakha-ye Kruz Qader, Qadir, va Nasr dar Razmyesh-e Mushtarek-e Zulfiqar 1400 (Qader, Qadir, and Nasr Cruise Missiles fired at Zulfiqar 1400 Joint Exercises),” *Entekhab* (website that leans more toward the reformist camp in the Islamic Republic's political spectrum), 8 November 2021. <https://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/646489>

Following the main stages of the Zulfiqar 1400 Army Joint Exercise, the operation to destroy the enemy's surface and floating units was carried out using Iranian Qader and Nasr cruise missiles.

Admiral Sayyid Mahmoud Mousavi, spokesman for the Zulfiqar 1400 Joint Army Exercise, said, "In this stage of the exercises, the Iranian cruise missile, Qadir, was fired from the regular Navy's tactical platform of coast-to-sea missiles along the Makran coast and hit a vessel 200 [124 miles] kilometers away."

He added: "Also, the destruction of the surface target using the indigenous cruise missile Nasr by the regular Navy's missile launcher was another exercise carried out in this phase of the exercise."

Also, at this stage of the exercise, a missile-launcher warship fired the Iranian long-range Qadir cruise missile which destroyed a surface target 300km [186 miles] away.

A spokesman for the Zulfiqar 1400 Joint Exercise said that today Islamic Republic of Iran Navy has a wide and diverse range of cruise missiles. He added, "Unique capabilities, including effective warheads with high explosive power and the ability to withstand the enemy's electronic warfare are among the characteristics of the Navy's cruise missiles, which proved their efficiency in this exercise."

Iran's Supreme Leader Speaks on Martyrdom

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

There is concern among Iran's leadership about how to keep revolutionary fervor alive. It was easy to motivate previous generations upset at the shah's rule or inspired by the seizure of the U.S. Embassy and then, over the following decade, to use the "holy defense" against Iraq's invasion to pump revolutionary fervor into society. Today many Iranians are tired, as revolutionary values have become an excuse to justify Iran's isolation while the economy has stagnated. Many have grown cynical as they see rampant corruption among the clerical elite.

“Martyrdom is a peak...”

It is in this context that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in mid-October delivered a speech to the “Congress of Martyrs of the Zanzan Province,” excerpted here from his website. Khamenei begins by praising just how many martyrs Zanzan, a province between Tehran and Iranian Azerbaijan, contributed. Importantly, he includes not only those who died fighting in the Iran-Iraq War, but also those recently assassinated, allegedly by outside powers, for their involvement in Iran's nuclear program. He named the “Martyr Shahriari” a reference to Majid Shahriari, a neutron transport specialist at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, who was killed when assailants on a motorcycle attached a magnetic bomb to the door of the car that he was driving. Khamenei applauds the Zanzan conference for honoring martyrs and encourages more such events in order to use the life stories of martyrs to inspire a new generation to follow their path up the “hillside” of belief, to use his analogy. Murals of high-profile martyrs



Members of the Zanzan Provincial Congress of Martyrs listen to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Source: Khamenei.ir https://idc0-cdn0.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/48909/C/14000806_1148909.jpg

killed in Mujahedin al-Khalq terrorist attacks plaster billboards and the sides of buildings in Tehran and other large Iranian cities, seeking to encourage posters, books, and movies focused on martyrs; similar to the Palestinian strategy of lionizing suicide bombers.

That Khamenei seeks to re-ignite such a culture of martyrdom, however, reflects worry at the top about the sustenance of the revolution at a time when transition to a new supreme leader is near given Khamenei's age and frailty. Khamenei's strategy, however, may not be enough. He appears increasingly detached from Iranian youth who are more attracted to satellite serials from abroad, Telegram chats, and video games.

Source: “Biyanat dar Didar Dastandarkaran Kongareh Shahada-ye Ostan-e Zanzan (Statement in a Meeting of Officials of the Congress of Martyrs of the Zanzan Province),” *Khamenei.ir* (Supreme Leader's official website), 16 October 2021, <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=48908>

Zanzan is truly an outstanding, exemplary city. Regarding the new sciences, our well-known martyr in Nuclear Sciences, Martyr Shahriari, was one of the honorable sons of the city of Zanzan. Therefore, Zanzan has accomplished many feats. The martyrs from this area too are at the top of the list of achievements....

The point is that martyrdom is a peak, and a peak is not meaningful without a hillside. Each peak has a hillside. Many of us wish to reach that peak, but we have to pass along the hillside. We have to find the path on the hillside and tread the path to reach the peak. Otherwise, it is not possible to reach the peak without passing over the hillside. What is this path and this route? It is sincerity, self-sacrifice, truth, spirituality, diligence, forgiveness, attention to God, working for the people, struggling for justice, and working to establish the rule of religion....

As for you organizers of this commemoration ceremony, first of all you should know that this is a great deed. What is being done is a great deed. This commemoration of the martyrs and the work that is being done surrounding this issue should not be considered a normal, everyday deed. No, this is indeed a great deed that you are doing. Of course, it is a task that is not over. As this dear brother of ours said, it is not such that having held a number of commemoration ceremonies in some cities, counties and provinces, the issue is over. It has just begun. Despite the passage of years since the time of the Sacred Defense, the job of commemorating martyrs has just begun. And it will and should continue. You should come up with new ideas. Of course, the things the friends in the meeting mentioned are all among the best ideas. Writing books, making films, and services that are rendered in the memory of martyrs are all good things.

Malian Military Pursuing Negotiation To Combat Al-Qaeda's Affiliate

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

The two main militant factions in the Sahel, the al-Qaeda-aligned Group for Supporters of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), have frequently clashed in recent years. The excerpted 5 November article in *imangahdien.com*, which specifically reports on northern Malian affairs for an international audience, described the groups' clashes in Tissi, Mali, near the borders with Burkina Faso and Niger. According to the article, these clashes led to ISGS withdrawing from the area, JNIM taking over, and multiple casualties on both sides.

The Malian government is now searching for means to combat JNIM amid its resurgence in Mali and ISGS's waning influence. On 20 October, Malian website *maliweb.net*, which reports on Malian current affairs, noted that Mali's government is trying to establish a dual-track strategy of continued combat operations and negotiations with JNIM. The government is specifically tapping into one of the country's highest religious authorities, Mahmoud Dicko of the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM), to engage JNIM because Dicko understands the government's



Malian airmen attend the opening ceremony for Atlas Accord 2012 at the Mopti Airfield in Severe, Mali, Feb. 9, 2012.

Source: Spc. Kimberly Trumbull https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:120209-A-PO167-178_Malian_airmen_attend_the_opening_ceremony_for_Atlas_Accord_2012_at_the_Mopti_Airfield_in_Severe,_Mali,_Feb._9,_2012.jpg Attribution: CC x 2.0

“The president of the [High Islamic Council of Mali] will have full and entire responsibility for carrying out this mission with a framework defined by the public authorities in terms of red lines not to be exceeded in the negotiations to be carried with the radical armed group”

redlines, such as ceding territory; has contacts in JNIM leadership; and is familiar with negotiation techniques.

Furthermore, the head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Worship and Customs believes negotiation will bring greater stability and security to the country. The government will not abandon the military

option, according to the article, but after eight years of incessant conflict, negotiations are now the priority. With JNIM weary from battling the Malian military and ISGS, and the Malian military itself engaged in counterinsurgency for nearly a decade, the generals leading the Malian government sense a unique opportunity to negotiate with JNIM through respected religious authorities.

Source: “Mission de bons offices pour la stabilité du Mali: Le HCIM chargé de trouver un cadre de dialogue avec les radicaux maliens (Goodwill mission for the stability of Mali: The HCIM is responsible for finding a framework for dialogue with the Malian radicals),” *maliweb.net* (French language Malian news outlet which reports on topics of concern in Malian current affairs), 20 October 2021. <https://www.maliweb.net/societe/mission-de-bons-offices-pour-la-stabilite-du-mali-le-hcim-charge-de-trouver-un-cadre-de-dialogue-avec-les-radicaux-maliens-2948946.html>

The Minister of Religious Affairs, Worship and Customs, Dr Mahamadou Koné, visited the headquarters of the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM). This mission of goodwill towards radical armed groups has existed in the past. But now it has an anchor at the level of the Prime Minister who has set his sights on Imam Mahmoud Dicko. Koné said, “it is a question of identifying people experienced for the task, that is to say with negotiation techniques, real knowledge of the country, and understanding internal and external issues.” The president of the HCIM will have full and entire responsibility for carrying out this mission with a framework defined by the public authorities in terms of red lines not to be exceeded in the the negotiations with the radical armed group.”

Source: “إشتباكات عنيفة بين جماعة نصرة الإسلام والمسلمين والدولة الإسلامية في الصحراء الكبرى أسفرت عن قتلى وجرحى. (Violent Clashes Between the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and Islamic State in the Great Sahara Results in Deaths and Injuries),” *imangahdien.com* (Malian news outlet which specifically reports on northern Malian affairs for an international audience), 5 November 2021. <https://www.chronicles.rw/2021/06/01/sadc-opposes-deployment-of-rwandan-troops-in-mozambique/>

Bloody battles took place between the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and elements of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, affiliated with ISIS, in the Tissi region, located in the Triple Border region. These confrontations resulted in many deaths and dozens of injuries on both sides. According to reliable sources, the elements of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara withdrew from the aforementioned areas to the shores of the Niger River.

Burkina Faso and Borno State, Nigeria Attempt Return to Normalcy Despite Terrorism Risks



Le ministre Simon Compaoré et le général Pingrenoma Zagré, sur les lieux de l'attaque d'Intagom, le 1er juin 2016.

Source: Zoumana Wonogo (VOA) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_ministre_Simon_Compaor%C3%A9_et_le_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Pingrenoma_Zagr%C3%A9_sur_les_lieux_de_l%27attaque_d%27Intagom_le_1er_juin_2016.jpg Attribution: CC x 2.0

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

Burkina Faso's economy is heavily dependent on assistance from international aid organizations and tourism. The excerpted article from generally neutral *mondafrique.com*, which covers North and West African affairs, discusses how militants aligned with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) risk disrupting the government's efforts to appeal to international actors.

The article focuses on the recent Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou, which took place without incident. However, fear of a terrorist attack lingered over the festival because the militants now

operate in 26 of Burkina Faso's municipalities, including Solhan, where the article notes the militants killed around 160 people in one attack in July. More recently, in November, the militants crossed Burkina Faso's border into Togo and launched an attack on a military post for the first time. As a result, the article notes that Mali's hosting of the festival in Ouagadougou, whose hotels and cafes had been attacked by the al-Qaeda-aligned militants in previous years, was risky. Some questioned whether Burkina Faso's President could secure the capital from terrorist attacks, but noted that a safe and successful festival would show international organizations that they could continue to work safely in the country and continue to provide aid to Burkina Faso's hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

Further south in the Sahel, in northeastern Nigeria, where Boko Haram operates, the Borno State government has begun to deploy the military to return internally displaced people (IDPs) to their homes and to close IDP camps. According to an article in the Nigerian daily *Punch*, which reports on social movements and challenges the political authorities, the Borno State government is concerned about rampant criminality in the camps and is planning to build houses and promptly resettle the IDPs. Interviews with IDPs note their desire to return to their villages and reduce dependence on the government, but at the same time there are concerns about whether Boko Haram would return to attack their villages. Like in Burkina Faso, the Borno State government is trying to demonstrate that there is a semblance of normalcy in a war-torn region and show Nigerians and international organizations that there is progress. However, the article concludes that a return to normalcy in either location is not without risks.

“It remains to be seen whether the organization of the festival, even with zero incidents, will be enough to defuse the controversy over the advisability of holding a global festival in a country which has nearly a million internally displaced people and hundreds of thousands of children deprived of schools due to the terrorist threat.”

Source: “Burkina Faso, la grande fête du cinéma africain sous la menace djihadiste (Burkina Faso, the great festival of African cinema under jihadist threat),” *mondafrique.com* (news outlet which covers North and West African affairs from a neutral perspective), 14 October 2021. <https://mondafrique.com/burkina-faso-la-grande-fete-du-cinema-africain-sous-la-menace-djihadiste/>

By organizing the 27th edition of FESPACO just three months after the terrorist attack in Solhan, in the northeast of the country, which left more than 160 dead and caused worldwide anger, the Burkinabé authorities are taking on a risky gamble. Thousands of festival-goers from all over the world in screening rooms, hotels, and restaurants indeed are ideal targets for jihadist groups who have in the past struck the Burkinabé capital twice (2016, 2018). In such a scenario, President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré would struggle to defend his decision, given the extent of the threat. On the other hand, if the 27th edition proceeds without incident, the Burkinabé authorities hope to derive the greatest success from it by praising their control of the security situation in the country.

He especially hopes in this way to receive pledges from his international partners, particularly those who have supported the organization of FESPACO: European Union, OIF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNDP, Africalia, Prince Claus Fund, Stichting Doen, ECOWAS, UEMOA, Conseil de l'Agreement. However, it remains to be seen whether the organization of the festival, even with zero incidents, will be enough to defuse the controversy over the advisability of holding a global festival in a country which has nearly a million internally displaced people and hundreds of thousands of people and children deprived of school due to the terrorist threat.

Source: “Borno cites rapes, drug abuse, goes ahead with IDP camps' closure,” *punchng.com* (Nigerian daily which historically has reported on social movements and challenged the political authorities), 25 October 2021. <https://punchng.com/orno-cites-rapes-drug-abuse-goes-ahead-with-idp-camps-closure/>

The Special Adviser on Public Relations, Media and Strategy to Borno State Governor, Isa Gusau, has said the government will close Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in the state because of growing complaints of rapes and other criminal activities. Some displaced persons have expressed fears over the state governor's pronouncement that all IDP camps in the state would be closed by 31 December. Bitrus Jarma, a 52-year-old displaced father of five stated, “We share border with Cameroon. Boko Haram are still operating in our village. I wonder where they will return us to.” However, some of the IDPs have expressed optimism towards the imminent return to where they referred to as home.

President Lasso Calls for “Plan Ecuador” Amid Growing Security Concerns

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

“Ecuador alone cannot get ahead...I have raised the possibility that it is time for a ‘Plan Ecuador’...‘That plan,’ he added, ‘demands the support and backing of friendly countries, the United States, the European Union’... Ecuador, which shares borders with Peru and Colombia, has in recent years gone from being a transit country for drugs to the United States and Europe to a storage and processing country.”

Following several weeks of gruesome prison riots and a string of hundreds of murders, Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso has called for European and U.S. assistance in the country’s fight against criminal organizations. Ecuador is experiencing a spate of homicides and other crimes related to drug trafficking, reports Quito-based center-right daily newspaper *El Comercio*. Much of the recent insecurity stems from the entrance of some of the largest Mexican cartels—the Sinaloa and Cartel Jalisco, specifically—into Ecuador. Ecuador’s ability to combat these groups may determine whether Mexican cartels have a meaningful presence throughout South America.

Recently, Lasso decreed a “state of exception” to provide him with more latitude to address rising violence in the short term. Center-right Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa* reports that Lasso even went so far as to propose a “Plan Ecuador,” likening his request for security funding to the well-known security cooperation program in Colombia. The media outlet reports that in recent years, Ecuador has transformed from a transit point in drug trafficking routes to a location for storing and processing drugs.



Guillermo Lasso, President of Ecuador.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillermo_Lasso_inauguration_\(4\)_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillermo_Lasso_inauguration_(4)_(cropped).jpg)

Attribution: National Assembly of Ecuador, Flickr

Source: “Lasso pide apoyo a Europa y EE.UU. contra narcotráfico (Lasso asks for support from Europe and the US against drug trafficking),” *El Comercio* (daily newspaper based in Quito seen as center-right in political orientation), 5 November 2021. <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/politica/lasso-plan-europa-eeuu-narcotrafico.html>

Lasso has insisted that “without international support he cannot move forward,” which has led him to propose a plan for Ecuador that “demands the support of friendly countries.” The President has affirmed that there is an “absence of the State” in the country, something that is “being addressed with concrete actions.”

Source: “Lasso quiere un ‘plan Ecuador’ contra el narcotráfico con ayuda de Estados Unidos (Lasso wants an “Ecuador plan” against drug trafficking with the help of the United States),” *La Prensa* (Panamanian newspaper described as center-right), 5 November 2021. <https://www.prensa.com/mundo/lasso-quiere-un-plan-ecuador-contra-el-narcotrafico-con-ayuda-de-estados-unidos/>

Ecuador alone cannot get ahead...I have raised the possibility that it is time for a “Plan Ecuador”...“That plan,” Lasso added, “demands the support and backing of friendly countries, the United States, the European Union”...Ecuador, which shares borders with Peru and Colombia, has in recent years gone from being a transit country for drugs to the United States and Europe to a storage and processing country.

Colombia Celebrates Arrest of Major Drug Trafficker “Otoniel”



A wanted post for Dairo Antonio Úsuga David, AKA “Otoniel”.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/eneas/9538894335> Attribution: Oscar Carbajal, Flickr

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

In late October, Colombian officials arrested Dairo Antonio Úsuga David, also known as “Otoniel,” head of the Gulf Clan. At the time of his arrest, Colombian authorities had been searching for Otoniel, the most wanted man in the country, for more than a decade. Otoniel has been a member of the guerrilla group Popular Liberation Army and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, a far-right paramilitary group. He took over the Gulf Cartel in 2009. Upon his arrest, according to the Colombian news outlet *La Silla Vacía*, Colombian President Iván Duque declared that this was “the most important blow against drug trafficking in Colombia in this century.” However, the outlet notes that it is highly likely that the Gulf Clan will continue to trouble the Colombian government well into the future. Two weeks after the arrest of Otoniel, as if to make the point about perpetual conflict, Spanish-news outlet *La Opinión* reported the Gulf Clan murdered four Colombian soldiers. The outlet speculates that the arrest of Otoniel has likely precipitated a leadership struggle within the cartel, which

“According to security analysts, law enforcement officials, and leaders in the Gulf Clan’s areas of influence, the capture of Otoniel is far from putting an end to the Gulf Clan.”

could trigger further violence beyond the retaliation phase. The arrest of Otoniel impacts not only Colombia’s peace process but will echo for months, if not years, through Colombia’s criminal landscape.

Source: “Un Triunfo Histórico para Duque, en una Guerra Sin Fin Con El Clan del Golfo (A Historic Triumph for Duque, in an Endless War with the Gulf Clan),” *La Silla Vacía* (a Colombian news website scrutinizing elected officials), 24 October 2021. <https://www.lasillavacia.com/historias/silla-nacional/un-triunfo-historico-para-duque-en-una-guerra-sin-fin-con-el-clan-del-golfo/>

It is...a huge achievement for the Armed Forces and the Police. They had been jointly seeking to neutralize “Otoniel” for more than 7 years, who had managed to elude them without leaving the country or his area of influence in Urabá. In addition, they achieve it with a capture that, although it has already been announced would end in an extradition to the United States, can provide valuable information about the criminal group. But, according to security analysts, law enforcement officials, and leaders in the Gulf Clan’s areas of influence, the capture of Otoniel is far from putting an end to the Gulf Clan.

Source: “Clan del Golfo asesina a cuatro militares en Colombia, a dos semanas de la captura de “Otoniel”?” (Gulf Clan murders four soldiers in Colombia, two weeks after the capture of “Otoniel”),” *La Opinión* (Spanish-news website headquartered in Los Angeles with reporting from around the region), 7 November 2021. <https://laopinion.com/2021/11/07/clan-del-golfo-asesina-a-cuatro-militares-en-colombia-a-dos-semanas-de-la-captura-de-otoniel/>

With this attack, the interpretation provided by experts on the security issue was confirmed, by ensuring that the arrest of the drug trafficker was far from being the end of the criminal group, since an internal restructuring is looming.



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.”

Azerbaijan Continues To Prepare for Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

The armed forces of Azerbaijan carried out several military exercises before the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War that worked through scenarios of an operation in the occupied region, including a few joint exercises with Turkey. The accompanying excerpted articles report on another joint military exercise that Azerbaijan recently carried out with Turkey and a command-staff exercise near Nagorno-Karabakh.

The article from independent Russian-language news website *Eurasia Daily* reports that a joint Azerbaijani-Turkish exercise took place in the Lachin corridor and that it was their first joint exercise to take place in the conflict zone. Previous joint Turkish-Azerbaijani exercises took place not far from Nagorno-Karabakh, but this one stood out because of its proximity to the Lachin corridor. Personnel from the exercise reportedly came within a couple hundred meters of the corridor. The corridor provides an important road connection for the occupied territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and is under the protection of the Russian peacekeeping force. The article also notes that the exercise scenario involved operating in difficult terrain.

“This is the first joint exercise of Baku and Ankara in the zone of the Karabakh conflict and, moreover, in the vicinity of the Lachin corridor.”

The article from semi-independent Azerbaijani news agency *Trend* reports that Azerbaijani forces also recently carried out a command-staff exercise in the Lachin corridor. The article mentions that the exercise worked on “operations in mountainous and forested areas with difficult terrain,” which mimics the occupied territory, and that the exercise “took into account combat experience gained in the Patriotic War.”

Lastly, the article from independent news agency *Turan* reports that the Russian peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh recently carried



2020 Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire map.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2020_Nagorno-Karabakh_ceasefire_map.svg Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

out an exercise “to prevent a possible violation with an unmanned aerial vehicle of a conditional enemy and to ensure security at observation posts in the Lachin corridor.” This exercise took place just before the joint Turkish-Azerbaijani exercise and Moscow probably intended for it to deter Azerbaijan. Overall, Azerbaijan’s exercises show that it continues to prepare for another conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh despite the presence of the Russian peacekeeping force, a notable difference compared to exercises prior to the 2020 war.

Source: “Анкара и Баку озадачили Степанакерт первыми послевоенными учениями в Лачине (Ankara and Baku have perplexed Stepanakert with the first post-war exercise in Lachin),” *Eurasia Daily* (an independent Russian-language news website), 6 September 2021. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2021/09/06/ankara-i-baku-ozadachili-stepanakert-pervymi-poslevoennymi-ucheniyami-v-lachine>

The armed forces of Turkey and Azerbaijan are carrying out exercises in the Lachin region, which came under control of Azerbaijan following the war in 2020. This is the first joint exercise of Baku and Ankara in the zone of the Karabakh conflict and, moreover, in the vicinity of the Lachin corridor, which provides Armenia’s land connection with Nagorno-Karabakh...

Particular attention was paid to improving the capabilities of using equipment in difficult terrain...

Source: “Министр обороны наблюдал за командно-штабными учениями в Лачине (The Minister of Defense observed the command-staff exercises in Lachin),” *Trend* (a semi-independent news agency in Azerbaijan), 23 October 2021. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3502323.html>

Azerbaijani Defense Minister Colonel-General Zakir Hasanov observed the command-staff exercises held in the Lachin region, as reported by the Defense Ministry on Saturday...

The exercise looked at operations in mountainous and forested areas with difficult terrain, the development of the level of knowledge of commander and officials, as well as operational decision making...the exercise took into account combat experience gained in the Patriotic War, and tasks were completed in coordination with other types of units...

Source: “Миротворцы отрабатывают борьбу с беспилотниками в Лачинском коридоре (Peacekeepers are working out a conflict with unmanned aerial vehicles in the Lachin corridor),” *Turan* (an independent news agency), 30 August 2021. https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2021/8/free/politics_news/ru/7234.htm/001

Russian peacekeepers carried out an exercise “to prevent a possible violation with an unmanned aerial vehicle of a conditional enemy and to ensure security at observation posts in the Lachin corridor.” This was stated in a press release by the Russian peacekeepers...

Ukraine's Use of Turkish Drones Escalates Turkish-Russian Tensions

By Ihsan Gündüz
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey's recent sale of combat drones to Ukraine is complicating its working relationship with Russia. In October, the Ukrainian army released footage of its first use of the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB-2 drone striking a position controlled by Russian-backed separatists. The first accompanying article from Istanbul-based independent think-tank *EDAM* notes that Ukraine's use of Bayraktar TB-2 drones against Russia-backed forces could escalate tensions between Turkey and Russia. As the second article from independent Turkish daily *Gazete Duvar* reports, Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov stated that Russia's concerns over Turkey's drone sale to Ukraine were justified and warned that Turkish drones could further destabilize the situation in Eastern Ukraine.

According to the first article, if Ukraine continues to wage drone warfare against Russia-backed forces in Eastern Ukraine, Russia could move against Turkey, especially in Idlib, Syria. Russia had already struck targets near Turkish-controlled areas in Syria. Meanwhile, Syrian regime forces, with Russian support, have built up heavily near Idlib. Russia could also further wage counter-drone and electronic warfare to support the Russia-backed separatists.

In addition to Ukraine, Turkey has made a deal to sell TB-2 drones to Poland and is looking for customers among Baltic countries. This would likely create even more tension between Turkey and Russia, leaving Turkey even more isolated after it has faced



Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Source: 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) Attribution: CCA 4.0 International license

“It is also possible that the Kremlin will respond to Ankara as Kiev's UAV supplier, if the Ukrainian Armed Forces systematically use UAVs against pro-Russian militias or increase the operational tempo in UAV activity.”

various consequences from its Western allies for buying Russian S-400 missile systems.

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Ukrayna'nın Donbas'taki SİHA Taarruzu Türkiye-Rusya Gerilimini Tetikleyebilir (Ukraine's Drone Strike In Donbass Can Spark A Turkish-Russian Escalation),” *EDAM* (Center for Economic and Foreign Affairs Research, an Istanbul-based independent Turkish think-tank), 27 October 2021. <https://edam.org.tr/ukraynanin-siha-taarruzu-bir-turkiye-rusya-gerilimine-neden-olabilir/>

On October 26th, 2021, the Ukrainian Armed Forces used Turkey-transferred Bayraktar TB-2 unmanned aerial systems to destroy an artillery position of the Russia-backed rebels in Donbass....

The Ukrainian Armed Forces had previously resorted to Bayraktar TB-2 unmanned aerial vehicles, mainly in the roles of intelligence, surveillance, target detection, and reconnaissance missions against Russia-backed separatists. However, this time, Kiev took the use of UAVs to a different dimension with a direct kinetic strike.

Turkey's position as an exporter of armed drones to countries such as Ukraine and Poland and ironically, being the only NATO ally that procured the S-400 strategic SAM system presents Moscow with a complex political-military landscape.

It is also possible that the Kremlin will respond to Ankara as Kiev's UAV supplier, if the Ukrainian Armed Forces systematically use UAVs against pro-Russian militias or increase the operational tempo in UAV activity.

One particular area that Russia can bleed Turkey is Idlib, Northwestern Syria...

The [drone strike in Eastern Ukraine] may also trigger an increase in Russia's counter-drone and electronic warfare support to Ukrainian separatists. In light of the lessons-learned from Syria, the Russian defense industrial & technological base have long invested in hard-kill and soft-kill drone countermeasures, such as the new, drone-specific interceptors for the Tor-M2 air defense system and Sapsan Konvoy electronic counter-drone system.

Ankara and Kiev enjoy burgeoning defense cooperation with co-production and technology transfer opportunities. Besides, Turkey has already agreed to provide Poland with Bayraktar TB-2s, and Turkish robotic warfare solutions manufacturers are eyeing the Baltic weapons market. In a broad geopolitical axis ranging from Syria and Libya to Karabakh, Turkish and Russian interests remain at odds. Overall, while the S-400 procurement has portrayed an uptrend in Turkish-Russian bilateral ties, the two nations have deep strategic divergences and rivalries.

Continued: Ukraine’s Use of Turkish Drones Escalates Turkish-Russian Tensions

Source: “Rusya'dan Türkiye'ye ‘Bayraktar’ eleştirisi: Endişelerimiz haklı çıktı (“Bayraktar” criticism from Russia to Turkey: Our concerns were justified),” *Gazete Duvar* (an independent Turkish Daily), 27 October 2021. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/rusyadan-turkiyeye-bayraktar-elestirisi-endiselerimiz-hakli-cikti-haber-1539815>

Concerns about Turkey's decision to sell drones to Ukraine are becoming reality, and Turkish drones risk destabilizing the situation in eastern Ukraine.

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Ukrayna’nın Donbas’taki SİHA Taarruzu Türkiye-Rusya Gerilimini Tetikleyebilir (Ukraine’s Drone Strike In Donbass Can Spark A Turkish-Russian Escalation),” *EDAM* (Center for Economic and Foreign Affairs Research, an Istanbul-based independent Turkish think-tank), 27 October 2021. <https://edam.org.tr/ukraynanin-siha-taarruzu-bir-turkiye-rusya-gerilimine-neden-olabilir/>

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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.

More African Countries Eye Turkish Combat Drones

By Ihsan Gündüz
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey continues to expand its military and security cooperation in Africa, particularly with its growing niche as an exporter of armed drones. As the accompanying articles note, Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Morocco, Nigeria, and Rwanda have either purchased or shown interest in buying Bayraktar TB-2 drones from Turkey, suggesting that Turkish combat drones “appear bound for further showing in African skies....”

According to the first article from globally read security news site *al-Monitor*, a drone sale to Ethiopia will complicate Turkey’s efforts to normalize relations with Egypt. Egypt considers Turkey’s engagement, arms sales, and involvement in conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, including Ethiopia, as a national security issue. Specifically, an Ethiopia empowered with Turkish drones and Turkey’s backing would weaken Egyptian military deterrence in the region as the tension between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance

Dam on the Blue Nile continues. From Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s perspective, rapprochement with Ethiopia is an opportunity to advance Turkey’s policy towards Africa.

The second article from pro-government Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* analyzes the recent visit of Erdoğan to Angola, Togo, and Nigeria. The author notes that the highlight of the visit was increasing political and economic relations, cooperation in the defense industry, and signing agreements on military and security cooperation. African countries are interested in learning from Turkey’s counterterrorism experience besides increasingly purchasing more military equipment, such as armed drones, armored vehicles, and other weaponry. Turkey will likely continue to capitalize on this momentum in its relations with African nations.

“Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones, touted as a game-changer for Ankara’s allies in the Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, appear bound for further showing in African skies...”

Source: Fehim Taştekin, “Drone sale to Ethiopia could jeopardize Turkey-Egypt dialogue,” *al-Monitor* (a globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 17 October 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/10/drone-sale-ethiopia-could-jeopardize-turkey-egypt-dialogue>

Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones, touted as a game-changer for Ankara’s allies in the Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, appear bound for further showing in African skies, but not without the risk of complicating Turkey’s foreign ties, primarily its fledgling bid at fence-mending with Egypt.

Ethiopia — long at loggerheads with Egypt over a giant dam on the Blue Nile — has reportedly joined Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria and Rwanda as a potential African buyer of the TB2 drones...

Turkey’s intention to supply armed drones to Ethiopia amid its quest to normalize relations with Egypt raises questions over the strategic wisdom behind the sale. Is Ankara making an imprudent move that would undermine its dialogue with Cairo? Or does it see military cooperation with Ethiopia as a tactic to pressure Egypt for concessions? ...

Two Egyptian security sources told Reuters that Cairo had asked the United States and some European governments to help it freeze any drone deal between Turkey and Ethiopia, while a third Egyptian official said the issue would have to be clarified in bilateral talks. A source close to the Turkish government, meanwhile, told Al-Monitor the deal was progressing faster than expected, stressing Ankara does not anticipate Cairo will react in a way that derails the bilateral dialogue.

...For Erdogan... rapprochement with Ethiopia has offered an opportunity to advance his policy of opening up to Africa.

From Cairo’s perspective, a military dimension in Turkish-Ethiopian ties would be an unwelcome development that might weaken Egypt’s military deterrence in the region. The foremost factor that compelled Cairo to accept Ankara’s offer for normalization earlier this year was the decisive position that Turkey had gained in Libya by backing the Tripoli government.

For Egypt, Turkey’s involvement in conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa has become a fundamental issue of concern...

According to Aydin Sezer, a former commerce attaché at the Turkish Embassy in Cairo, Ankara could hardly gain any leverage against Cairo if it sees the drone talks with Addis Ababa as a card of pressure. Ankara, he argued, is short of the capacity to come up with a strategy squeezing Cairo...

Ethiopia’s use of Turkish armed drones in Tigray could trigger fresh trouble in Turkey’s foreign affairs, beyond the potential tensions with Cairo...

Continued: More African Countries Eye Turkish Combat Drones

Source: Serkan Demirtaş, “Turkey’s Africa opening reaches a new level,” *Hurriyet Daily News* (pro-government Turkish newspaper), 23 October 2021. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-demirtas/turkeys-africa-opening-reaches-a-new-level-168825>

Launched in 1998, Turkey’s more than two-decade-long Africa opening has observed important turning points.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s latest trip to Africa that covered three countries – Angola, Togo, and Nigeria – and the messages he disseminated from there demonstrate Turkey’s continued interest in the continent...

Erdoğan’s recent engagement with the African leaders has an expanding portfolio. Cooperation in the field of the defense industry, the sales of more Turkish weaponry, and signing agreements on military and security cooperation came to the fore along with increasing political and economic relations.

In a statement to the journalists traveling with him, Erdoğan explained what they discussed during the four-way summit in Togo. “As the four leaders, we met over a working meal. The declaration that we issued following this meeting with the leaders highlighted, among other things, our decision to boost our security cooperation,” he said...

It’s true that more African nations want to learn from Turkey’s experiences in combatting terrorism and to buy key military equipment including armed drones, armored vehicles and others. Angola is reportedly seeking to buy armed drones from Turkey with news that Ethiopia is also a potential market for Turkish drones. Turkey’s military sales to the continent have significantly increased in recent years, especially in the aviation sector.



Unmanned aerial vehicle TB2 of Bayraktar at Teknofest 2019.

Source: CeeGee, Own work via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BayraktarTB2_Teknofest2019_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BayraktarTB2_Teknofest2019_(1).jpg) Attribution: CC-BY-SA-4.0

Morocco Denys Conducting Drone Strike Against Algerian Targets in Western Sahara

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

The escalating diplomatic conflict between Morocco and Algeria may be headed for intermittent skirmishes in the Western Sahara, amid rumors that Morocco used its recently acquired Turkish TB-2 drones for the first time. On 1 November, three Algerian truck drivers were killed while traveling from Mauritania to Algeria. Images from the scene, posted on social media, showed two charred transport trucks. According to the French-language Algerian military blog *MenaDefense*, the attack took place along a road linking Nouakchott to Algeria, in Polisario-controlled Western Sahara. The Algerian government claimed the trucks had been targeted by “advanced weapons,” probably a reference to armed drones. *MenaDefense* and other publications, citing purported eyewitnesses who saw drones circling overhead, speculated that Moroccan UAVs were involved, in the form of either an Israeli-made Hermes 450 or one of the recently acquired Turkish Bayraktar TB-2s. Moroccan media has dismissed the allegations, noting that landmines riddle this area while questioning why commercial traffic between Mauritania and Algeria would choose to travel along this heavily mined area, unless it were transporting weapons for the Polisario. According



Bayraktar TB2 (2016).

Source: Bayhaluk, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Ground.jpg Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

to the accompanying excerpt from the Facebook page of *FAR Maroc*, a quasi-official forum dedicated to the Moroccan armed forces, the incident is the latest Algerian attempt to draw Morocco into a conflict in order to deflect from domestic political pressures. Regardless, Algerian officials have promised a response. According to an article in the conservative Spanish newspaper *La Razón*, satellite imagery indicates that Algeria has recently positioned unspecified missiles along the border with Morocco, although this remains publicly unconfirmed.

“... He and many witnesses saw at least one drone circling overhead, coming from the west...”

Source: “Comprendre l’attaque marocaine contre les civils algériens (Understanding the Moroccan attack against Algerian civilians),” *MenaDefense* (French-language Algerian military blog), 3 November 2021. <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/comprendre-lattaque-marocaine-contre-les-civils-algeriens/>

On the basis of testimonies from Algerian truckers frequenting the place, we first had the possibility of a Moroccan artillery strike. H’mida, a Sahrawi journalist and former soldier who was present in the area, excluded this possibility because of the distance of Moroccan artillery positions, about 50 kms away, as well as the absence of a crater and the high precision of the strike. He and many witnesses saw at least one drone circling overhead, coming from the west. Video testimony confirms the presence of a drone and the firing of two missiles. According to several weapons experts, it was likely an attack by a Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 drone, using MAM-L munitions, or an Israeli Hermes 450 drone equipped with two Hellfire missiles. The video showing the two charred vehicles confirms the high precision of the munitions and their moderate explosive capacity. The drone would have taken off from the air base of Smara, in the Moroccan-occupied Sahrawi territories, 230 km from the site of the strike.

Source: Facebook Post, *FAR Maroc* (quasi-official forum dedicated to the Moroccan armed forces), 4 November 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/farmarocofficielle/photos/a.1543183805906600/3133926900165608>

In a new denial of the Algerian rats’ statement about the killing of Algerian civilians who were driving two trucks loaded with weapons for the Polisario, MINURSO members went to the scene to prepare a report to be submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This event confirms that the place of the accident is within the buffer zone, which are areas where any movement is prohibited by the force of international law. One month ago, Algeria brought in international journalists and left them alone in minefields and under shelling of unknown origin, seeking to use their killing to once again internationalize the Sahara issue. Algeria is now sacrificing its citizens in order to support the Polisario and to push the international community to open a new discussion about the Sahara, seeking a statement condemning the Kingdom and its sovereign activities on its soil. The Algerian regime’s number one enemy is the local protest movement (Hirak), and it uses its childish problems with Morocco in order to kill the spirit of the movement. It is supported by countries that view Morocco’s progress and prosperity, despite the pandemic, with suspicion. A strong Morocco... will not be drawn into the quagmire to which the terrorist regimes are trying to drag it.

Source: “Argelia anuncia represalias contra Marruecos tras el asesinato de tres camioneros en el Sáhara (Algeria announces reprisals against Morocco following the assassination of three truckers in the Sahara),” *La Razón* (Spanish conservative daily), 3 November 2021. <https://www.larazon.es/internacional/20211103/zhyu4tmrzba6fdpicuclq42lwy.html>

*The mutual threats coincide with photographs circulating among intelligence services, which *La Razón* has been able to access, indicating that Algeria is positioning missiles pointed at its “enemy” near the border, although there is no official confirmation in this regard.*

Houthis Continue Methodical March Toward Marib

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Houthi-led forces in Yemen are closing in on the city of Marib, the key North Yemen stronghold of the Saudi-backed, Internationally Recognized Government (IRG). Their methodical entry into the province is consistent with their strategy in other parts of Yemen: steady, district-by-district advances, solidified and often preceded by negotiated truces with local tribal leaders. A February 2021 article in the pro-Houthi Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar* provides useful background on how Houthi negotiations with Marib tribal leaders throughout 2020 have paved the way for this advance.

The role of tribal leaders in Yemen’s ongoing conflict, to a large degree, consists of providing services in the absence of the state, and of keeping destructive conflict away from tribal lands. Many of Marib’s tribal leaders are no longer able to do so. In late October, the Houthis and their allies reached an agreement with key segments of Marib’s Murad tribe, among Yemen’s largest and most prominent. If the agreement proves durable, it could represent a tipping point, putting the IRG’s control over Marib, home to Yemen’s main oil fields, under strong pressure.

The deal with the Murad is not only a testament to Houthi savvy in navigating Yemen’s tribal landscape, but also to the IRG’s ineptitude at doing so. As detailed in a recent article published by the highly



Marib in Yemen.

Source: Location of Marib in Yemen, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ma%27rib_in_Yemen.svg Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0

regarded Yemeni think tank *Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies*, the Murad tribe played a prominent national-level role during the era of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Following Saleh’s ouster in 20XX?, Murad leaders sided with what subsequently became the IRG. In recent years, though, key segments of the Murad tribe and other former Saleh allies have been marginalized and at times targeted by members of the “Sunni tribal” Islah Party and its tribal allies, who have come to dominate the IRG’s presence in Marib. As well as being a sign of Houthi success, the Murad tribe’s acceptance of a truce may be tantamount to a no-confidence vote in the IRG and the broader Saudi-backed efforts in Yemen.

“...it is expected that Sanaa will succeed in turning the tables on the ‘coalition’ and the Hadi government from within...”

Source:

A total coup against Riyadh: Marib tribes move toward peace,” *al-Akhbar* (pro-Houthi Lebanese daily), 22 February 2021. <https://al-akhbar.com/Yemen/300518>

انقلاب شامل على الرياض: قبائل مأرب تتجه للسلام

Saudi Arabia has bet on the Murad tribe, which is a major force in the governorate and controls the districts of Rahba, Juba, Jabal Murad, Al Mahlia and Harib, to repel the advance of the army and the “Popular Committees” on the fronts south of the governorate. However, beginning last September, the Sana’a leadership managed to conclude a number of agreements with the Murad tribes, including neutralizing large areas of the above-mentioned districts, which then fell under the control of the army and the Popular Committees, with the exception of some areas... Sana’a’s experience in removing barriers between it and the Marib tribes and reaching binding agreements with them is not new. During the past years, it was able to conclude several agreements with the Jahm and Bani Jabr tribes... With the confrontations reaching the lands of the Ubaidah tribe, whose influence extends from the vicinity of the city of Marib to Wadi Ubaidah, Safer and al-Ruwaik, near the al-Wadi’a port linking Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Sana’a finally opened all channels of communication with Ubaidah... In light of this, it is expected that Sana’a will succeed in turning the tables on the “coalition” and the Hadi government from within, especially since the response of the tribes of Marib to the “rescue” calls did not come from a vacuum, but rather as a result of cumulative mistakes committed by the Islah party (the Brotherhood) against the tribes over a period of six years, during which it controlled by force the revenues and wealth of the province and tried to subjugate a region that had not previously been subject to any central or local authorities over the past decades. Hence, it is unlikely that the Saudi threats and temptations to the tribes cooperating with “Ansar Allah” will work, because the Islah militias committed the most heinous crimes against the tribes during the past three years...

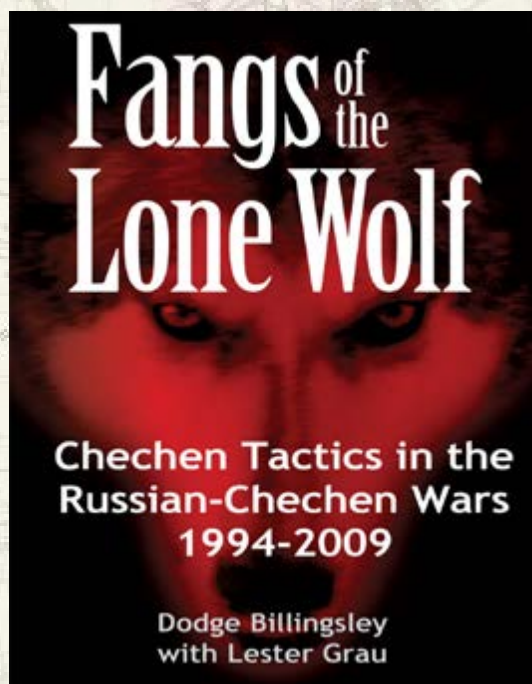
Continued: Houthis Continue Methodical March Toward Marib

Source:

How Outsiders Fighting for Marib are Reshaping the Governorate,” Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies (highly regarded Yemeni think tank), 8 November 2021. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/analysis-ar/15708> (English version: <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/15664>)

كيف يعيد المقاتلون الجدد في مأرب تشكيل المحافظة

In 2014, the Marib branch of the GPC, led by Murad tribal leaders Abdulwahid al-Qabli and his father, Ali Nimran al-Qabli, rejected a request from Saleh to remain neutral and not fight the Houthis. The subsequent deaths of several prominent GPC leaders, including Saleh, who was killed by the Houthis in December 2017, have further eroded GPC support in Marib. Some of these former Saleh loyalists, such as Al-Qablis, established a GPC wing aligned with President Abdo Rabbu Mansour Hadi, while others shifted their support to the Islah party, which has used its powerful presence in the Hadi government and presence on the ground to capitalize on these shifting political winds... While tribal identity remains stronger than party affiliation or other factors, the Islah party has been relatively successful in partnering with Marib locals... However, Islah's relations with Marib's locals have been strained at times by the party's appointment of unqualified loyalists to military, security and public administration positions... Islah has directly supported Marib sheikhs who are perceived as loyalists at the expense of sheikhs aligned with other political parties, such as the GPC and the Yemeni Socialist and Nasserist parties. Individuals from these parties also accuse Islah of installing loyalist military and security leaders from outside Marib over those from the local population. Some GPC figures and sheikhs who were influential before the war, when Islah and the GPC were competing intensely in local and parliamentary elections, say they have since been marginalized.



FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF by 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.

New France-Greece Strategic Alliance Becomes First Intra-NATO Defense Pact

By Karen Kaya
OE Watch Commentary

In October, France and Greece announced a “Strategic Partnership on Defence and Security,” following several defense deals including Greece’s purchase of three French warships and 24 Rafale combat planes. The accompanying passage from a recent report by respected Turkish security expert Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, claims the newly formed alliance may potentially damage NATO’s cohesion. The bilateral pact includes a clause calling for the joint use of military force in the legitimate case of self-defense. The author argues this is problematic because this mutual commitment to come to each other’s defense in the case of an attack already exists within the NATO umbrella. Furthermore, he claims the implicit target of this strategic alliance is Turkey, another NATO country, making the situation even more complicated.

The pact also has implications for the Turkish-Greek military rivalry. Regarding air power, the author claims Greece is on track to achieve techno-generational superiority over Turkey with the recent purchase of the Rafale combat planes. However, in the naval domain, Dr. Kasapoğlu claims Turkey has the military-technological advantage and Greece’s purchase of warships from France will not shift the balance with Turkey, although they will improve Greece’s naval capabilities.

While France and Greece hailed their pact as a step towards a truly autonomous Europe, others noted that it is the first of its kind within NATO. The second passage from Qatar-based international news



Rafale combat plane.

Source: Inflight via Wikimeida, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dassault_Rafale_1.jpg Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

source *Al Jazeera* points out that the mutual defense pact is the first agreement that “joins two NATO members to support one another from an attack originating inside the alliance.”

“...the Strategic Partnership on Defence and Security for the first time joins two NATO members to support one another from an attack originating inside the alliance.”

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Fransa – Yunanistan Savunma Ittifaki & Türk – Yunan Askeri Dengesinin Geleceği (France-Greece Defense Alliance & the Future of the Turkish-Greek Military Balance),” *EDAM* (Center for Economic and Foreign Affairs Research, an Istanbul-based independent Turkish think-tank), October 2021. <https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/211012-FRA-GRE-TUR.pdf>

...Paris sees the Greek weapons market as more than the typical defense portfolio. In fact, Athens’s request for an additional six platforms on top of the 18 Rafale combat planes, was hailed by the French Defense Minister Florence Parly as something beyond a sectoral success, and more of a step towards the establishment of a truly autonomous Europe. Similarly, the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Michotakis repeated the “European autonomy” concept following the defense pact he signed with the French President Macron.

...What makes matters more complicated is that the target of this developing strategic alliance between Greece and France in the establishment of an autonomous Europe, even if implicit, is NATO-member Turkey. In fact, the second clause of the agreement establishes a *casus foederis* between the two countries, foreseeing the use of joint military force for legitimate self-defense. But France and Greece already have this commitment to each other under the NATO umbrella. The current situation increases the potential for damage to NATO cohesion as well as to the Turkish-Greek military balance.

... In terms of air force, Greece is on track to achieve a techno-generational superiority over Turkey. Meanwhile, Greece’s naval purchases from France does not create a techno-generational difference with Turkey. In this domain, Turkey has the military-technological advantage; and the Belharra class frigates to be purchased from France will not be sufficient to close the gap. ...

Source: “Greece ratifies landmark intra-NATO defence pact with France,” *Al Jazeera* (Qatar-based English news source), 7 October 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/7/greece-ratifies-intra-nato-defence-pact-with-france>

Greece on Thursday ratified a mutual defence pact with France, the first between two NATO members.

The two countries are already bound to help each other from an attack originating outside the alliance. But the Strategic Partnership on Defence and Security for the first time joins two NATO members to support one another from an attack originating inside the alliance.

Russian Aid to Ethiopia Failing To Halt Advancing Tigray Defense Force

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Three years ago, the presidents of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace treaty ending a longstanding and sometimes bloody border dispute. This peace treaty, coupled with government reforms Ethiopian President Abiy helped usher in, resulted in what some called the “Ethiopian Spring.” But that “spring” is over, according to the accompanying excerpt from the South African *The Daily Maverick*. After leaders of the country’s Tigray region held an unauthorized election, Abiy deployed the Ethiopian military, which was unable to defeat the Tigray Defense Force (TDF). The TDF, aligned with militias from other disgruntled regions, now is advancing on the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa and if it succeeds in taking it, or even threatens to do so, Ethiopia—a multiethnic state with a long history of interethnic violence—might break apart.

It is during this crisis that Abiy has distanced himself from the United States and EU and has instead turned to Russia, according to the accompanying excerpted article from the German public state-owned international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. Though neither article mentions it, Russia and Ethiopia signed an agreement in July 2021 to transform the Ethiopian military. Based on the poor performance of the Ethiopian military so far, any improvements in their capabilities



Ethiopian soldiers training. Despite superior numbers and equipment, the Ethiopian military is struggling against the Tigray Defense Force.

Source: DoD/Defenseimagery.mil/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethiopian_soldiers_\(01\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethiopian_soldiers_(01).JPG) Attribution: Public Domain

since it signed that agreement seem minimal. The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) already had a large advantage in numbers compared to the TDF, as well as an air force with Turkish, Chinese, and Iranian drones. Meanwhile, with the Horn of Africa occupying an important geostrategic position, if the ENDF is defeated it is unclear how far Ethiopian instability might spread in the region or the effects it might have internationally.

“Two years after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, his country is engulfed in a war with the potential to destabilize the whole region for decades to come...”

Source: Phillip Van Niekerk, “Abiy’s offensive against Tigray collapses: Dreams of a ‘new Ethiopia’ arise,” *The Daily Maverick* (South African news publication), 31 October 2021. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-10-31-abiys-offensive-against-tigray-collapses-dreams-of-a-new-ethiopia-arise/>

“PM Abiy threw an ill-trained peasant army against a battle-hardened, formidable army with an iron will to fight and expected to win,” explained Rashid Abdi, the Kenyan expert on the Horn of Africa.

The political system that kept these tensions in check has been breaking down for decades and the forces of violent ethno-nationalism have grown.

The ensuing conflict has been particularly violent, with upwards of several hundred thousand dead — but these are just estimates; no one seems to be counting and few independent reporters have been near the battlefields. Reports of atrocities have been random and episodic.

Source: “Ludger Schadomsky, “Opinion: Ethiopia at risk of Balkanization,” *Deutsche Welle* (German public state-owned international broadcaster), 4 November 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-ethiopia-at-risk-of-balkanization/a-59723284>

The bloody end to the “Ethiopian Spring” is tragic in many ways: Firstly, for the 110 million people who had hoped for a better future after the 2018 peace deal; and secondly because the economy, already battered by rampant inflation and the pandemic, will suffer from the burden of war for years. The vicious cycle of poverty and hunger will continue.

Two years after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, his country is engulfed in a war with the potential to destabilize the whole region for decades to come, says DW’s Ludger Schadomsky.

Kenya: Weapons and Climate Change a Deadly Mix

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

In the early 1900s the colonial British government in Kenya pushed thousands of native Maasai tribesmen off their land in Laikipia County in order to give it to European farmers. Almost a century later, the loss of usable land due to climate change is exacerbating the friction created when the displaced Maasai pastoralists used farmers' fields for their herds to graze on. Now, an influx of weapons purportedly supplied by politicians from opposing sides ahead of the 2022 elections is compounding the problem, according to the accompanying excerpted article from a South African security think tank, *The Institute for Security Studies*. As if armed farmers and pastoralists fighting over a shrinking amount of land is not enough of a crisis in the center of the country, bandits armed with M16s are taking advantage of the situation to steal livestock. The bandits, though, justify their actions by claiming the land belonged to their ancestors.

While Western media often overlooks such cattle rustling as well as conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Kenya, these tend to be ongoing and potentially quite destabilizing. Now, with the addition of drought caused by climate change as well as a steady supply of arms, this volatile region—where previous elections already have been marred by interethnic and political violence—has become even more dangerous. Meanwhile, the Kenyan government is trying to quell the violence by implementing a curfew. However, as the article points out, until national and county leaders address the Maasai grievances, and develop a plan to protect the pastoralist way of life, not only will security and stability in Laikipia continue to deteriorate, but similar adverse effects can be expected to spread to surrounding areas.



Global warming has pushed Maasai herders onto farmland, resulting in deadly conflict with farmers.

Source: Andreas Lederer/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Young_Masai_herder.jpg Attribution: CC BY 2.0

“Conflicts are fuelled by drought caused by climate change, and political incitement ahead of the elections.”

Source: Guyo Chepe Turi, “Firepower won’t restore trust among Kenya’s warring Laikipia communities,” *Institute for Security Studies* (South African think tank), 3 November 2021. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/firepower-wont-restore-trust-among-kenyas-warring-laikipia-communities>

Conflicts are fuelled by drought caused by climate change, and political incitement ahead of the elections.

Climate change has further complicated the relations between farmers and herders. In the recent incident, which was driven by drought and a lack of grazing, the pastoralist communities forcefully invaded farms, private ranches and community conservancies to save their dying herds.

Laikipia county borders semi-arid Isiolo, Samburu and Baringo counties, which are all inhabited by pastoralists. The latest drought has ravaged these areas, forcing the herders to search for water and greener pastures in Laikipia. This leads to bloody clashes which recur every dry season. Instead of trying to resolve the sporadic conflicts, politicians incite communities and allegedly supply weapons and ammunition to their relatives living in these areas.