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OEWATCH

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Russian Peacekeeping Operation in Nagorno-Karabakh

OE Watch Commentary: From a military perspective, the recent Russian peacekeeping operation in and around the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been declared successful by the Russian media. In mid-November 2020, a Russian peacekeeping force of some 2,000 soldiers deployed to both Karabakh and the Lachin corridor between Karabakh and Armenia. As the brief excerpt from the military weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* points out, “in just a matter of weeks, Russian peacekeeping forces have created a full-fledged security infrastructure there.” The article goes on to describe the evolution and development of Russian peacekeeping forces as well as partial details from the current operation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

The article begins by asserting that “since the beginning of the 90s, the [Russian] Armed Forces have gained vast experience in disengaging the warring parties.” Early on, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) began to form “the first specialized peacekeeping units and subunits,” and they were deployed to stem conflict in Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Tajikistan. The author recalls that in the mid-1990s “officers of the 589th [Guards Motorized Rifle] Regiment received training programs under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program...,” during which some of the “units traveled to the United States on several occasions to conduct joint exercises.” Some of these lessons, the articles claim, were used during joint peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The author also describes some of the debate within the MoD about whether to create units specifically designed to handle peacekeeping operations (largely airborne) or to merely designate and train specific units within military districts to handle these types of missions. The result has been the creation of both dedicated peacekeeping units and nominal “peacekeeping units assigned to each military district.”

The author describes the current composition of the units now deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, stating that “the core of the Russian peacekeeping force is made up of two brigades - the 15th Motorized Rifle and 31st Airborne Assault.” He asserts that “these units are constantly ready to carry out the assigned peacekeeping tasks,” which according to the author, “have been completed accurately and on time.” The article concludes on a positive note, asserting that “for three decades, the Russian peacekeeping forces have traveled a difficult path. Now these are highly efficient, well-trained and well-equipped units, ready to help at any time,” a validation that peacekeeping remains a very active and evolving concept in contemporary Russian military doctrine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Azerbaijani soldiers and Russian peacekeepers in Kelbadzhar district, Karabakh, Azerbaijan. 25 Nov 2020.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense (mil.ru) <https://bit.ly/3jPcBVs>, Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

“The Russian Armed Forces currently have one of the most effective peacekeeping forces in the world....”

Source: Pavel Ivanov, “Стража мирной жизни: Российские Вооруженные силы располагают самыми подготовленными и эффективными миротворческими силами (Guardian of a peaceful life: The Russian Armed Forces have the most trained and efficient peacekeeping forces),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (a military weekly), 8 February 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/60789>

...Since the ceasefire in Karabakh, in just a matter of weeks, Russian peacekeeping forces have created a full-fledged security infrastructure there. These are checkpoints, inspection points, specially equipped positions, headquarters, warehouses for the placement of humanitarian aid and other equally important objects. From the first hours of the operation, the Russian peacekeepers established a peacekeeping service and the implementation of all agreements.

The Russian Armed Forces currently have one of the most effective peacekeeping forces in the world. They include several brigades, aviation squadrons and battalions... also separate divisions, including medical, engineering, logistic.... Since the beginning of the 90s, the Armed Forces have gained vast experience in disengaging the warring parties. At the same time, the formation of the first specialized peacekeeping units and subunits began...

...The 589th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (GMRR)... became the first peacekeeping unit of the Russian Armed Forces.... The regiment received peacekeeping status at the end of 1992. Transnistria became the first region of responsibility of the 589th GMRR.... Later, the Volga peacekeepers began to fulfill their duties in Abkhazia...

...In 1992, the 554th Airborne Battalion was formed specifically for operations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.... In the mid-1990s, the military-political leadership of Russia planned to actively use Russian peacekeepers abroad.... Therefore, officers of the 589th Regiment received training programs under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. The regiment’s units traveled to the United States on several occasions to conduct joint exercises. At the same time, the Russian military-political leadership had plans to create separate regular peacekeeping forces....

...In 1996, the formation of peacekeeping forces began as part of the Airborne Forces. At the same time, a new position appeared in the command of the troops - the deputy commander of the Airborne Forces for peacekeeping operations. In the same year, a new peacekeeping brigade was formed, deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later deployed to Kosovo....

...Therefore, in 2016, a new reform of the peacekeeping forces of Russia started.... At the end of last year, the work was completed, and it is already possible to evaluate its results. The core of the Russian peacekeeping force is made up of two brigades - the 15th Motorized Rifle and 31st Airborne Assault. These units are constantly ready to carry out the assigned peacekeeping tasks. How successfully they can do this has been shown by the experience of the operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. All tasks were completed accurately and on time.

...At present, peacekeeping units are assigned to each military district for a certain period... If necessary, these battalions, companies and detachments can reinforce the permanent peacekeeping forces. They also begin to act when the peacekeeping mission is long. This will allow rotation of personnel and ensure high readiness of unused peacekeepers.

...For three decades, the Russian peacekeeping forces have traveled a difficult path. Now these are highly efficient, well-trained and well-equipped units and units that are ready to help at any time.



Few Elite in the Russian Military

OE Watch Commentary: Several recent polls indicate that Russian attitudes toward its armed forces and military service have improved significantly over the past decade. Better pay, upgraded living conditions, and a persistent positive media image, combined with the state's successful portrayal of operations abroad, are restoring the status of those in military uniform. Many young Russians, especially from poorer regions, now regard military service as a social lift, either for pursuing a private sector or civil service career. However, as a recent article in the popular pro-Kremlin daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* suggests, the Russian elite does not fully share this positive attitude toward military service. In the accompanying excerpt, military journalist Victor Baranets describes why the son of a wealthy businessman recently decided to join the army and the wider message it sent to Russian society.

Baranets begins by recounting a conversation with a senior Ministry of Defense official, whereupon he learned “that the famous Russian businessman - billionaire Alexei Mordashov, when sending his son into the army, persistently asked him to pick ‘a real unit’ where he will not have indulgences and where the harsh army school will make a real man and a good specialist out of him.” The son complied and is now in basic training and then will be sent to a regular engineering unit. According to the article, the new recruit has discovered that military service now includes “a warm barracks with all the amenities, showers, and where we are fed like at a buffet!” Baranets goes on to explain that Mordashov’s son “joined the army after being expelled from the Higher School of Economics, where he studied for a year.”

Baranets concludes the article by asking rhetorically, what other “children and grandchildren of famous people in Russia today have served in the army?” and ruefully replies, “there are not many of them.” He lists but a handful of recent examples of elite sons who have donned a military uniform. Reader comments to this article are mostly indignant, pointing out that in today’s Russia the elite appear to operate with a different set of rules, asking for instance, “by law, isn’t he supposed to serve?” Another reader complains, “the list of honest guys from the top is too small.” While the status of Russian military soldier has risen considerably over the past ten years, elite representation within the ranks remains an exception to the rule. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Children and grandchildren of famous people in Russia today have served in the army? There are not many of them....”

Source: Victor Baranets, “Миллиардер отправил сына в армию — поучиться жизни (The billionaire sent his son to the army – to learn about life),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (popular pro-Kremlin daily), 14 January 2021. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27226/4352384/>

...Well done father, he directed his son along the right path. This decision can only command respect, - I heard these words during a telephone conversation with one of the military leaders of the Ministry of Defense. From him I learned that the famous Russian businessman - billionaire Alexei Mordashov, sending his son into the army, persistently asked Nikita to pick ‘a real unit’ where he will not have indulgences and where the harsh army school will make a real man and a good specialist out of him...”

As a result, he was sent to the ‘training’ (educational unit), where he is now preparing to take the oath. And then he will be sent to one of the engineering units. Where is she stationed? “In Central Russia,” the Defense Ministry told me. More precisely, they refused to name the coordinates....

Nikita also confessed to his colleagues that he did not expect to “see an army like this.” At the Higher School of Economics (Higher School of Economics), they say, they told him horror stories about the service, and here “a warm barracks with all the amenities, showers, and where we are fed like at a buffet!”

It is worth noting that the son of the billionaire Mordashov joined the army after being expelled from the Higher School of Economics, where he studied for a year....

MILITARY DOSSIER “KP”

Children and grandchildren of famous people in Russia today have served in the army?

There are not many of them....

...Nikita is the son of the famous writer Sergei Mikhalkov: a famous film actor and film director, served in the Pacific Fleet. In the same place, in the Far East, the grandson of Mikhalkov Sr., Stepan (in the naval unit of the border troops), also served.

The son of the first deputy chairman of the board of VTB and chairman of the board of directors of FC Dynamo Vasily Titov was called up to serve after graduation.

The son of the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Igor Shuvalov served on Russky Island in the naval special forces of the Pacific Fleet. The son of the former governor of the Amur Region, Oleg Kozhemyako (now the governor of the Primorsky Territory), also pulled a strap in the ranks of the marines.

Reader replies:

By law, isn’t he supposed to serve?...

The list of honest guys from the top is too small....



Quadcopter UAVs to Be Used by Russian Ground Forces

OE Watch Commentary: According to the well-known military journalists Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul on the staff of the pro-Kremlin daily newspaper *Izvestia*, Russian ground reconnaissance forces will be issued small, limited-range quadcopters en masse this year. According to the article, these drones have already been issued and utilized in limited number. In September 2020 they were used in exercises by Russian ground forces at a military base in South Ossetia, a breakaway region of Republic of Georgia. That exercise and others revealed that quadcopters, while a valuable reconnaissance asset, have short range and time of flight and are vulnerable to jamming and ground fire. Still, quadcopters should prove valuable in urban combat and scouting ahead in mountainous terrain. It was also noted that the system is unpopular with dismounted soldiers who have to tote it for long distances in addition to the basic required kit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Based upon Ministry of Defense information, the number of state-of-the-art unmanned aerial vehicles in the ground forces has increased 70-fold as compared to 2012, when their mass purchases began.”

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, “С дроном в разведку: стартует массовое оснащение армии квадрокоптерами (Reconnaissance by drone: Large issue of Quadcopters to Ground Force in 2021),” *Izvestia* (pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 15 January 2021. <https://iz.ru/1111609/anton-lavrov-roman-kretsul/s-dronom-v-razvedku-startuet-massovoe-osnashchenie-armii-kvadrokopterami>

Mass delivery of quadcopter-unmanned aerial vehicles for the ground forces will begin this year. The small, light aircraft will help the troops accomplish combat missions and daily tasks. They will augment the 2,000 fixed-wing drones deployed in the units right now. Although these quadcopters have shortcomings, they can turn out to be especially useful in reconnaissance. Until recently, inexpensive commercial UAVs were portrayed as a weapon of the guerrillas. In particular, extremists used them in quantity during engagements in Syria and Iraq.

The delivery of quadcopters to the troops will begin this year. They will be issued to reconnaissance companies and battalions. The new drones will be used for combat and in daily activities. For example, they can observe the conduct of drills and the unit’s area.

In 2019, the army conducted an experiment on the use of small copters. The majority of them were sent to Eastern Military District units. Several sets of items were also transferred to the other military districts. The test results were announced as successful at the end of last year.

The experiment ascertained that the UAVs have a shorter range and flight duration and are more vulnerable to the impact of electronic warfare systems and fire from the ground than the UAVs that are in the inventory. However, they can take off and land on any area and are capable of hovering over the same location for a long time, are simple to control, and are reasonably priced.

In September of last year, the Ministry of Defense reported on first use of quadcopters at reconnaissance subunits’ exercises of the 4th Military Base in South Ossetia. They used the drones to adjust fire and conducted an assessment of the targets’ destruction. The UAVs came in handy for both the riflemen and the tank crewmen.

The Eastern Military District Railroad Troops Brigade used them for other tasks. During the fall exercises, they employed the quadcopter for the rapid and precise determination of the locations of the destruction of a railroad track by an enemy saboteur-reconnaissance team and for the assessment of the complexity of the impending work.

“Small quadcopters can be used in reconnaissance,” Colonel Valeriy Yuryev, the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Union of Airborne Troops, stated. “One can effectively launch them from command posts or from vehicles on the march. But the drone turned out to be unnecessary weight for dismounted reconnaissance teams. We need to test the UAVs at exercises of various levels. We also should not forget that everything is not exactly the same in maneuvers as in actual combat. Active countermeasures from the enemy occur and strikes are conducted against the launch sites.

Not only regular armies but also terrorists assessed the utility of small quadcopters in military affairs. During the defeat of their groupings in Syria and Iraq, dozens of Chinese-made quadcopters were seized from the extremists’ bunkers. The guerrillas used them to conduct reconnaissance and attack targets. Small improvised bombs were suspended under the unmanned aerial vehicles. They managed to inflict losses to personnel, disable equipment, and even to blow up munitions dumps.



Russian Coastal Defense Division Forming to Protect Chukotka Peninsula and Northeast Entry to North Sea Route

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestia*, a Russian Coastal Defense Division will protect the northeast entry into Russia's Arctic northern sea route. The Northern Fleet controls the western approaches to Russia's northern sea route through most of its Arctic coastline and waters. The article indicates the dividing line between the Northern and Pacific fleets' areas of responsibility is Wrangel Island. The United States disputes Russian claims to much of the Arctic Ocean and northern sea route as national waters, stating that they are international waters not under Russian jurisdiction. The weakest Russian control of this vast area has been the northeast entry point. The establishment of a coastal defense division is designed to strengthen Russian claims in this area. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Ministry of Defense is creating a coastal defense division on Chukotka Peninsula. The first regiment, which has gone on alert duty, was formed at the end of last year. The formation will begin to patrol the coast and will be issued everything needed to repel an amphibious assault. The new unit’s area of operation will extend along the Northern Maritime Route right up to Wrangel Island. The formation should provide safer navigation in the region.”

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, “Нужен берег чукотский: северо-восток России защитит новая дивизия (New division protects northeast Russia’s Chukotka shores),” *Izvestia* (pro-Kremlin daily), 4 February 2021.

<https://iz.ru/1120276/roman-kretcul-anton-lavrov-aleksei-ramm/nuzhen-bereg-chukotskii-severo-vostok-rossii-zashchitit-novaia-diviziia>

The Ministry of Defense is creating a coastal defense division on Chukotka Peninsula. The first regiment, which has gone on alert duty, was formed at the end of last year. The formation will begin to patrol the coast and will be issued everything needed to repel an amphibious assault. The new unit’s area of operation will extend along the Northern Maritime Route right up to Wrangel Island. The formation should provide safer navigation in the region.

Sources in the Military Department told Izvestiya that the formation of the division began at the end of last year. The first coastal defense regiment has already been deployed on Chukotka. Monitoring the coast along the Northern Maritime Route is its important mission. The unit that is being formed in the region, where snow lies and strong winds blow for nine months in the year, will get special equipment - snowmobiles, modular life support systems, and the mobile field kitchen all-terrain vehicles. When the division will be completely manned and ready to perform its mission has not been announced.

Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu discussed the creation of a division on Chukotka in 2016. Unique subunits would use four and six-wheeled ATVs to patrol the coast and to prevent the landing of saboteurs. In the event of a large-scale enemy amphibious assault, the arctic infantry would rapidly advance to the threatened axis and join the battle from the march. In December 2020, the Defense Minister reported on the formation of the first regiment in the region. xxxx

According to military expert Vikton Murakhovskiy, “The division will be able to cover the Air Defense facilities, which are deployed in the region. But the main mission is to support navigation along the Northern Maritime Route. The transit of some Northern Fleet ships to the Pacific Ocean along this route was part of the “Vostok-2018” Exercises. This is a major strategic mission for the Navy, which has four fleets. It is important to have a formation on Chukotka, which is capable of providing both defense and the coverage of this axis.”

According to Admiral Valentin Selivanov, the former Chief of the Russian Navy Main Staff, with the creation of the division on Chukotka, navigation along the Northern Maritime Route will become safer. “A division - is the most powerful tactical formation, which is capable of operating independently. It can accomplish various missions. Foreign vessels, especially military ships, cannot sail along the Northern Maritime Route without Russia’s authorization. If some vessel violates this rule, our servicemen will be able to board it from a helicopter or from small craft and conduct an inspection.

...

Chukotka has once again become a center of military activity in the country’s northeast during the last five years. The renovation of Ugolnyy Airfield in Anadyr supports all types of aircraft and helicopters. They not only provide the defense of the borders but are also involved in the supply of the more remote garrisons.

...

In December of 2020, the Ministry of Defense reported on the initiation of permanent combat alert at Anadyr by Naval Aviation MiG-31BM fighter-interceptors from the aviation regiment on Kamchatka. UAV subunits with “Orlan-10” and “Forpost” drones have also been performing alert duty at Ugolnyy for several years. They permit the monitoring of not only the peninsula but also its coastal waters.

A composite army aviation detachment has been located on Kamchatka for five years. Mi-8 And Mi-26 transport helicopters assist in the supply of the subunits on Mys Shmidta and on Wrangel Island. They have tested the latest arctic modification of the Mi-8AMTSh-VA, which was specially developed for operation in the most difficult conditions of the Far North.

Russia has been actively strengthening the Navy’s coastal forces in recent years. The naval infantry formation has been reorganized and transformed into rapid reaction troops, which are capable of operating throughout the entire world. They are upgrading the Coastal Missile-Artillery Troops from the obsolete “Redut” and “Rubezh” complexes to the latest “Bastion” and “Bal” complexes. Furthermore, state-of-the-art battalions are being formed and the coastal missile regiments are being transformed into full-fledged brigades.



Innovation in the Russian Military

OE Watch Commentary: There is an expression in the Russian military that goes “no good initiative goes unpunished.” It is always delivered in the context of that ironic foxhole humor shared by military members worldwide. However, things may be changing and in a particular general staff fashion. In a recent article in the Russian Ministry of Defense’s *Военная Мысль*, senior military theorist Dr. General-lieutenant V.V. Trushin exhorts a change in Russia’s military culture to develop more “creative approaches” and “innovation” in operational art and planning. In accordance with the practice of Russian military science—ultimately the framework for change and transformation in the armed forces—Trushin’s article provides a foundational historical analysis of Russian and non-Russian military events. His examples of successful innovations in operational planning and execution range from Suvorov in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787-92 to Napoleon when he was still a captain at Toulon to Zhukov and Popov in the Second World War. He ends by praising the creativity of Syria’s General Suheil al-Hasan in the current conflict.



Emblem of the Russian Ministry of Defense.
Source: Public Domain

According to the article, the development of initiative and innovation is aimed at “commanding generals and commanders at all levels.” Unlike in the U.S. Army, which rotates individuals through many specialties, including command, Russian commanders stay close to their military track. Additionally, the purpose of initiative is noted to be specifically to “accomplish the combat mission with fewer forces, minimal losses, and short timelines,” not to accomplish the mission in a broader way that involves empowering the total force. The approach to develop this focused initiative is to master and apply “the requirements of regulations.” This last bit is not mere phraseology. The Russian outlook on tactics is a very deliberate and binding system. It is intended to be uniformly mastered by all at the tactical levels, which go through the division. This tactical reliability provides a common operational foundation and allows operational flexibility in planning and execution. Within that context and also the consolidating nature of command and control developments, Trushin’s notion of command initiative can be seen as an aspirational enhancement to command leadership in combat and not necessarily a revolution to the concept of mission command in army affairs overall. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**

“Each commander must be the enemy of the template, all the more so such templates and such plans that are well known to the enemy.”

Source: V.V. Trushin “О творческом подходе к управлению войсками (силам) (The Innovative Approach to Command and Control of Troops (Forces)),” *Военная Мысль* (The Russian Ministry of Defense’s journal of military theory), No. 8 2020, p. 6.

The nature of modern military conflicts requires from commanding generals and commanders at all levels an innovative approach toward the management of combat operations and the command and control troops (forces) during those operations. We must admit, however, that this requirement is not properly understood by some military leaders. In their opinion, the command and control of troops (forces) in combat is not conducive to the manifestation of creativity, and in modern combat they simply have no time to engage in it, since all efforts should be directed toward the execution of the task assigned, primarily using reliable and proven methods.



Russia Strengthens Ties with Loyalist Christian Militias in Syria's Hama Province

OE Watch Commentary: Leaders of the Russian military campaign in Syria are exploiting socio-cultural linkages to local Christian Orthodox communities to increase its influence in the country. Prior to Russian intervention, the Syrian regime, with assistance from Iran, was able to portray itself as the defender of minorities against the mostly Sunni rebellion. Russia's entry into the conflict and its self-portrayal as the defender of Christians in the Middle East has made Russia an attractive patron to Syria's Christian communities. The relationship is synergistic, as several Christian militias have proven to be effective and reliable throughout the conflict. As highlighted in the first accompanying article, from the independent Lebanese news site *al-Modon*, Russian military leaders' cultivation of ties with loyalist Christian militia seems to bypass the Syrian regime entirely, raising questions about Russia's preference for dealing with communal leaders over going through the labyrinth of corruption in the Syrian regime.

Noteworthy in this regard are the blossoming ties between Russian military leadership and militia leaders in Christian towns in the central province of Hama. Russian military-religious delegations have been consistently visiting central Hama's Christian communities since 2019, and Russian connections to the local National Defense Forces (NDF) militias have strengthened. Nabeul al-Abdullah, the head of the NDF in the town of al-Suqaylabiyah (Saqalbiyah), and Simon al-Wakil, his counterpart in the nearby town of Mahardah (Muhardeh), both meet regularly with top Russian military leadership in Syria. As the passage from the *Zaman al-Wasl* Syrian opposition news website describes, the two leaders were recently invited to a ceremony honoring Roman Filipov, the Russian fighter pilot whose plane was shot down by Turkish jets in 2018.

Al-Suqaylabiyah is a town of nearly 20,000 residents, located in Syria's al-Ghab plain, a fertile depression fed by the Orontes River that divides Sunni Idlib Province from the Shia Alawite-majority coastal mountains. The town's location near the frontline with Turkish-backed Sunni rebels in Idlib gives added meaning to Russia's use of Christian symbolism in establishing a partnership with local warlords. Last summer, a Russian delegation agreed to help build a replica of the Hagia Sophia in al-Suqaylabiyah, as a purported response to Turkey's decision to revert the original in Istanbul from museum to mosque. The church is to be built on land donated by Nabeul al-Abdullah, the head of the local NDF. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“The delegation was headed by the priest of the Hmeimim base, Father Michael, as well as officers from the Special Forces...”



Al-Ghab Plain Viewed from Al-Suqaylabiyah.

Source: s.i.dahir, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%A8_%D9%85%D9%86_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9_-_panoramio.jpg, Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0



Continued: Russia Strengthens Ties with Loyalist Christian Militias in Syria's Hama Province

Source: (Russia Protects Eastern Christians and Builds a 'Hagia Sofia' in al-Suqaylabiyah)," *al-Modon* (pro-Syrian opposition, independent Lebanese news website), 27 July 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/1luxsvml> روسيا تحمي مسيحيي المشرق وتبني آيا صوفيا في السقيلبية

According to the information, a military delegation from the Russian Hmeimim base met with officials in the National Defense militia, including Nabeul al-Abdullah and Simon al-Wakil, in the city of al-Suqaylabiyah. According to the National Defense militia's page, the delegation visited a number of Christian schools and churches and met religious figures in a tour organized by al-Abdullah for the delegation in al-Suqaylabiyah. Visits of Russian officers and clerics to the city have been taking place since the beginning of this year, which has sparked a lot of speculation and analysis in the Syrian opposition press and the Russian press alike, about Moscow's crumbling relations with the Syrian regime and its preference for supporting local militias...

The Christian towns and villages in Hama, which are relatively close to Idlib Province, have always had a Russian presence to protect Christians. In recent years, pictures and videos have spread of Russian humanitarian aid being distributed there, in parallel with disagreements between humanitarian organizations run by Asma al-Assad and others run by Christian activists like that of media figure Maggy Khouzam, who accused the regime at the time of subservience to Shiite Iran at the expense of properly protecting minorities...

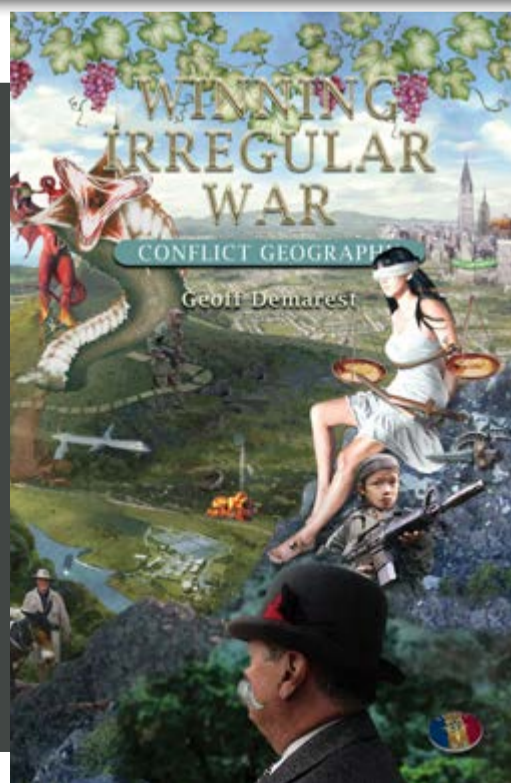
Source: (Russia Intensifies Meetings with Christian Militia Leaders in Rural Hama)," *Zaman al-Wasl* (Syrian opposition news website), 9 February 2021. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/134615/> روسيا تُكثف اجتماعاتها مع قادة ميليشيات مسيحيين في ريف حماة

On Monday, Russian forces at the Hmeimim base, led by General Dmitry Valerievich Glushenkov, honored the leaders of Russian-supported "National Defense" militias from cities in the northwestern countryside of Hama, in addition to the commander of a new military formation established by Russia in Syria...

A few days before this, a Russian Christian religious delegation from the Hmeimim air base visited the farm of Nabeul al-Abdullah, the commander of the "National Defense" militia in the city of al-Suqaylabiyah. The delegation was headed by the priest of the Hmeimim base, Father Michael, as well as officers from the Special Forces. The Russian delegation inspected construction work on the (Hagia Sophia) Church, the foundation stone of which was laid last July, with the support of the Russian Duma...

On January 28, the commander of the Russian forces in Syria invited Nabeul al-Abdullah and Simon al-Wakil, leaders of the National Defense militias, to a ceremony held at Hmeimim base, to inaugurate a memorial to the Russian pilot (Roman Filippov) who was killed in February 2018, while on a sortie to carry out airstrikes in the Idlib area...

In the middle of January this year, officers of the Russian Special Forces met with an Iranian general operating in the western Hama countryside. The meeting was hosted by Nabel al-Abdullah, commander of the National Defense militia, at his headquarters on his private farm on the outskirts of al-Suqaylabiyah, to celebrate the New Year. It was preceded two weeks earlier by a meeting in the city of al-Suqaylabiyah bringing together the commander of the Russian Forces in Syria, Aleksandr Chuyko, and the commander of the 25th Division of the Russian army, with al-Abdullah and other militia leaders and officials of the Christian community in the region.



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

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



Challenges Ahead for Turkish Air Force

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying report from *edam.org.tr*, an independent Turkish think tank based in Istanbul, evaluates Turkey's removal from the F-35 fighter jet program and how this will impact Turkey's airpower over the next decade. Specifically, the report discusses how Turkey's loss of the F-35 will leave it without a next-generation fighter jet and curtail the fighting capabilities of the Turkish Air Force (TAF).

The report's main finding is that TAF will face serious military-technological challenges well beyond the next decade if Turkey does not acquire a next-generation stealth fighter jet. To mitigate these challenges, the report makes several observations for decision-makers to consider.

First, a return to the F-35 program seems to be essential to maintain TAF air superiority in coming years and Turkey should try to find a way to rejoin the program.

Second, TAF relies on fourth-generation F-16s and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in its cross-border operations. Considering the trends among regional players in acquiring more technologically advanced fighter jets, Turkey should also look for interim solutions and alternatives to the F-35 so that TAF continues to maintain its advanced fighting capabilities.

Third, the F-35 fighter jet has the potential to play an important role in detecting enemy ballistic missile activity with its ability to infiltrate enemy airspace and its powerful detection sensors. Exclusion from the F-35 fighter jet program and inability to acquire next-generation fighter jets immediately from elsewhere will create defense challenges for Turkey against the ballistic missile capabilities of regional rivals.

Fourth, the idea that Turkey will be able to replace fifth-generation fighter jet capabilities with UAVs is not well-founded because UAVs will not be able to replace or replicate these capabilities.

Fifth, Turkey's plan to develop its first indigenous stealth fighter jet (TF-X National Combat Aircraft) is unlikely to show any significant technological progress in the next two decades because it has not moved beyond the preliminary design phase, with no engine options to power the aircraft. Turkish decision-makers should keep this reality in mind while assessing Turkey's airpower capabilities.

Sixth, Turkey's indigenous amphibious assault ship TCG Anadolu has been configured as a light aircraft carrier capable of operating the F-35B aircraft, so decision-makers should consider the implications of being removed from the F-35 program on other defense projects when considering their options.

Finally, the article argues that the political-military decision-makers should pay attention to the deficiencies in air defenses of Turkish military bases abroad in the context of advanced technological capabilities in new fighter jets. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon Turkish.

Source: Robert Sullivan, via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Dynamics_F-16_Fighting_Falcon_Turkish_\(remix\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Dynamics_F-16_Fighting_Falcon_Turkish_(remix).jpg), Attribution: Public Domain, US Air Force

“Turkey’s fifth generation National Combat Aircraft will not be entering the inventory or creating a meaningful deterrence over the next two decades... if no interim solution is found, Turkish air power will fall behind trends in the world.”



Continued: Challenges Ahead for Turkish Air Force

Source: “Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Türk Hava Gücünün En Zor On Yılı: Hava Harp Trendleri, Tehdit Ortamı Analizi ve Türk Hava Kuvvetleri’nin 5. Nesil Geleceği (The Hardest Decade of Turkish Air Force: Air Warfare Trends, Threat Environment Analysis and the 5th Generation Future of the Turkish Air Force),” *edam.org.tr* (an independent Turkish think tank based in Istanbul), 18 January 2020. <https://edam.org.tr/turk-hava-gucunun-en-zor-on-yili-hava-harp-trendleri-tehdit-ortami-analizi-ve-turk-hava-kuvvetlerinin-5-nesil-gelecegi/>

The Turkish Air Force and Turkey’s air warfare capabilities face a serious test over the next 10-20 year. At the heart of this test is advanced technological problems... when regional armament trends are taken into consideration, for the Turkish Air Force to survive the critical geopolitical challenges with a 4th generation [fighter jet] will not be easy.

...

...the Turkish Air Force currently relies heavily on 4th generation F-16s as a fixed-wing combat platform... the 5th generation F-35 Joint Strike Aircraft was going to be included in the inventory, but now it is not possible due to the purchase of the S-400 ... from the Russian Federation. Turkey’s fifth generation National Combat Aircraft will not be entering the inventory or creating a meaningful deterrence in the next two decades... In summary, if no interim solution is found, Turkish air power will fall behind trends in the world.

...

Regional armament patterns need to be carefully examined...

Another source of threat to the Turkish Forces is from ballistic missiles... especially... in the Middle East. Besides Iran, which is traditionally a source of ballistic missile threat, there are intelligence indications that the Syrian Arab Armed Forces are ... strengthening their ballistic missile capabilities.

...

In addition to the ballistic missile threat, the deployed Turkish Armed Forces and military bases abroad increasingly require a serious air defense system...

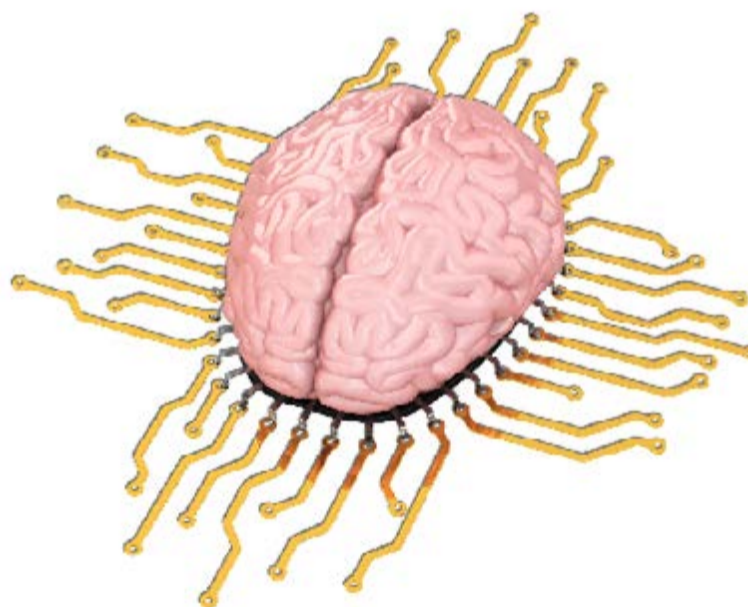
...

A return to the F-35 project...is essential. Although we have analyzed the ‘why’ of the said return..., the solution on ‘how’ to make the return requires a diplomatic assessment...

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/>

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.





The Future of the Turkish Air Force's 5th-Generation Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: The inventory of the Turkish Air Force (TAF) includes 240 F-16s, 20-30 F-4 Phantoms modernized by Israel, E-7s, tankers, and ISR support aircraft, creating a formidable deterrent and combat force in the region. With the help of its armed drones, this force has achieved significant successes in the past year against Russian forces in Syria, Emirati and Russian forces in Libya, and in support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It has shown its ability to influence the outcomes of conflicts in the Middle East and beyond.

As the following excerpted report from the Istanbul-based independent think tank *Ekonomi ve Dış Politika Araştırmalar Merkezi* discusses, Turkey has been developing its own 5th-generation fixed-wing combat aircraft for delivery in 2030. Even then it will be a while, probably until 2040, before a significant number of these enter the TAF inventory to create a significant deterrent force. Originally, Turkey was part of the 5th generation F-35 program, which would bridge the gap in terms of 5th-generation capabilities until 2030-2040. However, Turkey's removal from the F-35 program due to its purchase of Russian S-400s creates a decades-long capability gap. The author of the first accompanying passage calls this "a techno-generational problem" that will cause a serious challenge for the TAF over the next decade. Meanwhile, armed forces in the region--such as those of Israel, Egypt and Greece--are investing heavily in modernization or acquiring new 5th-generation combat aircraft. Neighboring Greece is modernizing its F-16s and trying to obtain F-35s.

In this context, the TAF has had to take some steps to maximize its capabilities. It appears that it has decided the most realistic and economical way to bridge this gap is to modernize the F-16s in its inventory. As the second passage discusses, Turkey's F-16 Block 30s are undergoing serious structural modernization as part of the ÖZGÜR [FREEDOM] project, which entails 35 F-16 Block 30 planes being updated with national avionics and nationally developed software. Some of the most noteworthy modernization upgrades include an inertial navigation system, a national IFF (friend and foe identification system), and the ASEA radar (airborne search/track/fire/control radar) by Turkey's defense giant ASELSAN. With these upgrades, the life of the F-16 Block 30s will be extended by 20 years (or 4000 flight hours). Once the F-16 Block 30s are modernized, the Block 40s and 50s will undergo the same modernization updates. In this way, the TAF aims to mitigate the capability gap between platforms so that it can continue to affect outcomes of conflicts as it has in and around the Middle East. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“The Turkish Air Force and Turkey’s air combat capabilities face a serious challenge over the next 10-20 years.”





Continued: The Future of the Turkish Air Force's 5th-Generation Capabilities

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Türk Hava Gücünün En Zor On Yılı: Hava Harp Trendleri, Tehdit Ortamı Analizi ve Türk Hava Kuvvetleri'nin 5. Nesil Geleceği (The Turkish Air Force's Toughest Decade: Air Combat Trends, Threat Environment Analysis and the Future of the Turkish Air Forces' 5th Generation [Capabilities]),” *Ekonomi ve Dış Politika Araştırmalar Merkezi* (EDAM- Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Research, an independent think-tank based in Istanbul), January 2021. https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/CAN_Turk-Hava-Gucu-TR.pdf

The Turkish Air Force and Turkey's air combat capabilities face a serious challenge over the next 10-20 years. The challenge is based categorically on a techno-generational problem. Considering the regional weaponization trends, and the fact that the Turkish Air Forces are limited to 4th generation capabilities, it will not be easy for Turkey to overcome the critical geopolitical challenges it faces.

Currently, many air forces in the world (e.g. UK, US, Israel) are flying 5th generation platforms (e.g. F-35). Some other air forces are making purchases to achieve some mid-range solutions referred to as 4.5 or 4++ generation platforms (e.g. Greece [Rafale], Egypt [Su35]). Yet some other countries who are producers and operators of the 4.5 generation platforms are relying on these mid-range solutions to plan for their 6th generation air force for the 2040s (e.g. France and Germany with their 6th generational projects and Sweden with its Tempest Project under London's leadership).

While these trends are being observed around the world, the Turkish Air Force currently relies mainly on the 4th generation F-16s as a winged combat platform (the lesser numbered modernized F-4 2020s are close to the end of their life). Under normal circumstances, the 5th generation F-35 Joint Combat Plane was to enter our inventory; but due to the purchase of S-400 strategic SAM systems, this capability will not be achieved. Turkey's other 5th generation project, the National Combat Plane, will only start creating a meaningful deterrent force sometime will be between 2030 and 2040. In sum, unless a solution is found, the Turkish Air Force may fall behind global trends.

Source: “F-16 Block 30'lara 20 yıl ek ömür (F-16 Block 30's get an additional 20 years of life),” *YouTube/Tolga Özbek* (an independent Turkish defense / air force expert), 1 February 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXhav4X0q0w>

Turkish F-16 Block 30s are being structurally modernized....

...Those that have exceeded 7000 flight hours are being modernized.... The goal is to add another 4000 flight hours to the plane's life. This is equivalent to about 20 years of life. So this modernization enables Turkish F-16 Block 30's to be used until 2041. This means that until the national combat plane enters the force in 2030, and their number increases until 2040, the Block 30's will be able to bridge the gap.

What about the systems? This is where the ÖZGÜR project comes in. It is a serious modernization project that targets the avionic modernization of the planes. The cockpit is changed, an inertial navigation system is installed, national IFF system [identification friend and foe], and the ASELSAN ASEA radar is installed. This radar can follow multiple targets at once and convey images to the pilot so that he is aware of all the planes around it....

The Block 40s and Block 50s, will also eventually be modernized under the ÖZGÜR project.

Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley
with Lester Grau

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

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



A Turkish Perspective on Open Source Intelligence in the Digital Age

OE Watch Commentary: Information is a key domain in competition and conflict. The digital age is transforming the collection and dissemination of information, specifically open source intelligence, as discussed in the accompanying article written by a leading Turkish defense expert and published by *Anadolu Ajans*, Turkey's state-run news agency. With the rise of social media platforms, footage from smartphones and drones, as well as imagery from commercial satellites, militaries and governments no longer control the raw intelligence that is collected, assessed, and disseminated from battlefields. Some countries have banned or limited smartphones and selfies from the battlefield, but this is not easy given the rise of wars involving proxies, paramilitaries, and private contractors and the civilians among them. Furthermore, a force may also lack all the information it needs to have the advantage in waging its preferred way of war and to avoid being manipulated by its adversary. The author argues that this new reality requires the field of open source intelligence to adapt to a new strategic environment where private companies, think tanks, and research institutes are included in the process. Intelligence gathered by commercial satellites and private think tanks, which utilize a variety of social media platforms, may provide critical insight. He points out that some nations have already started outsourcing some of their research activities to emerging open source intelligence providers and concludes by saying "any nation that lags behind along this path will have to fight, sooner or later, with bows and arrows against gunpowder." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Contemporary open source intelligence trends are driven not by governments but private intelligence companies, think tanks, and research institutions...”



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Continued: A Turkish Perspective on Open Source Intelligence in the Digital Age

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Re-thinking open-source intelligence in the information age and digital change,” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey’s state-run news agency), 28 January 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-re-thinking-open-source-intelligence-in-the-information-age-and-digital-change/2125883>

...With the digital age on the rise, the world of intelligence has been undergoing profound change. Technology and growing interconnectivity remain at the epicenter of this reshuffle

...The first thing to grasp is the internet, social media, and similar platforms, and their roles in harvesting raw intel from battlegrounds.

At present, every single armed conflict has an ‘internet front’ and an information geopolitics dimension, – or the ‘infosphere’ – where the war continues to be fought by other means. This front is also an intelligence arena for gathering data, analyzing information, and manipulating the adversary.

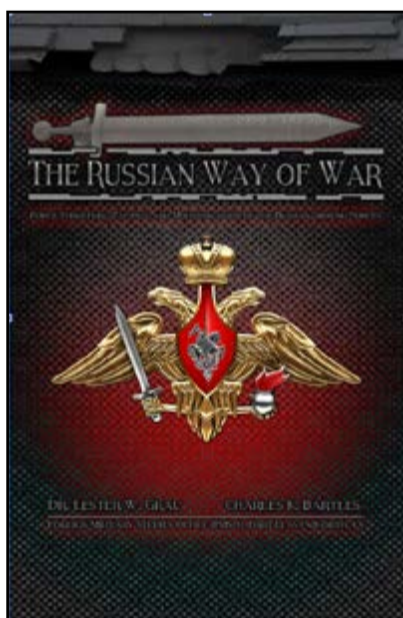
The introduction of smartphones and social media to war zones marked the belle époque of open-source intelligence (OSINT) gathering for analysts. A few years ago, regular personnel and private military contractors connected to the Russian campaign in eastern Ukraine offered, unintentionally, many hints about their geo-locations and combat mission characteristics as well as the delivery of weapons to the proxies on the ground. Likewise, the Syrian Arab Army personnel’s social media posts have long helped us identify arms, units, and key commanders during the Assad forces’ campaigns. Such trends now pertain to nearly all conflicts in every corner of the world.

...While military forces around the world are struggling to keep their secrets -- while fighting actual wars in the meantime -- they have a tough uphill battle ahead of them. Selfie bans can work for elite units and their highly-trained and well-disciplined elements. Yet, hybrid warfare incorporates a large number of proxies, private military contractors, and paramilitaries. Dictating a digital discipline on these formations would not be easy.

.. the trends in drone proliferation and their implications for social media must also be carefully watched. ... Another revolutionary change in OSINT remains in imagery intelligence through commercial satellites. Today, think tanks, private intelligence firms and even journalism benefit from satellite imagery when assessing high-value geopolitical issues such as Iran-harvested militancy close to the Golan Heights or North Korean missile sites.

...Contemporary open-source intelligence trends are driven not by governments but private intelligence companies, think tanks, and research institutions... Some nations’ intelligence and foreign and security policy offices have already started outsourcing some of their research activities to emerging OSINT providers and analysts.

When defining a nation’s intelligence community or strategic community, one must now count non-governmental parts of it too. And, any nation that lags behind along this path will have to fight, sooner or later, with bows and arrows against gunpowder.



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

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

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Russia's "Pole-21" Electronic Warfare System's Role in Defeating UAVs

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, a large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper, discusses the fielding of Russia's Pole-21 electronic warfare (EW) system. Unlike most EW systems, which are typically mounted on a vehicle (truck, aircraft, ship, etc.), the Pole-21 is a stationary system that consists of multiple emitters, usually mounted on civilian infrastructure, such as cellular phone towers. The Pole-21's emitters are designed to impede unmanned aircraft, cruise missiles, and other high-precision weapons by jamming global navigation systems such as GPS, GLONASS, and BeiDou. The Pole-21's dispersed layout allows GPS jamming over hundreds, or even thousands of square kilometers, depending upon configuration. This dispersed configuration not only provides resiliency from kinetic targeting, but also is valuable for disrupting UAV operations.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, a weekly military newspaper published by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, which is a large-circulation daily centrist newspaper that is occasionally critical of the Russian government, explains that most UAV software is configured to have UAVs fly away from areas where GPS jamming interferes with the UAV's GPS reception so the UAV may again acquire a GPS signal and ascertain its position. The Pole-21 is particularly effective against loitering munition-type UAVs employed in the recent Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict because, once turned on, it jams a large area, possibly preventing the UAV from gaining a GPS signal and eventually crashing.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Yezhenedelnik Zvezda*, a Russian website with geopolitical and Russian military news that is part of the Zvezda media group owned by the Russian Ministry of Defense, explains that the Russian strategy for defeating UAVs does not just include the Pole-21, and other electronic warfare systems, but is instead a combined effort that involves a network of electronic warfare, signals intelligence, air defense, and nuclear, chemical, and biological defense (particulate smoke), systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Pole-21 simultaneously incorporates means of electronic reconnaissance and electronic suppression of satellite navigation systems...The system’s capabilities make it possible to prevent the use of many types of high-precision weapons, including foreign-made unmanned vehicles. Moreover, it not only can suppress satellite navigation system signals, but also cause geolocation errors. This is a territorially-distributed system that can increase its capabilities and cover significant sections of terrain. The system is designed to be used in close interaction with air defense and missile defense systems.”



Continued: Russia's 'Pole-21' Electronic Warfare System's Role in Defeating UAVs

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Krezul, “Русское «Поле»: комплекс защитит Сибирь и Урал от дронов и ракет (The ‘Pole’ system will protect Siberia and Urals against UAVs and missiles),” *Izvestiya* (pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 1 February 2021. <https://iz.ru/1118768/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/russkoe-pole-kompleks-zashchitit-sibir-i-ural-ot-dronov-i-raket>

...This year, a grouping of Pole-21 electronic suppression systems will be deployed in the Urals and Siberia, sources in the Defense Ministry told *Izvestiya*. Last year, Lieutenant General Yuriy Lastochkin, chief of the Electronic Warfare (EW) Troops, explained that modern systems make it possible to disrupt the precision navigation systems of guided weapon carriers and reduce the probability of strikes against our country's critically important industrial and defense infrastructure facilities. The Pole-21 belongs precisely to this type of armament. Yet, unlike conventional EW systems, this one is built on the distributive principle. It uses not one or several units, but up to 100 jamming transmitters that are deployed at great distances from each other. Each of them can be controlled, activated, and switched off remotely when necessary. This makes it possible to cover a vast area of hundreds of square kilometers with dense jamming.

The performance and technical specifications of the Pole-21 system are not being disclosed. But, according to open publications, the export version of the station suppresses all three main foreign satellite navigation systems: the American Navstar (better known by the GPS designation), the European Galileo, and China's BeiDou. The jamming area of a single system may reach 150 by 150 km. One station alone is sufficient to suppress conventional GPS receivers at a distance of up to 25 kilometers. Nowadays, such receivers are used not only on smartphones, but also in commercial and military UAVs, as well as in high-precision weapons.

“The Pole-21 simultaneously incorporates means of electronic reconnaissance and electronic suppression of satellite navigation systems,” military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told *Izvestiya*. “The system's capabilities make it possible to prevent the use of many types of high-precision weapons, including foreign-made unmanned vehicles. Moreover, it not only can suppress satellite navigation system signals, but also cause geolocation errors. This is a territorially-distributed system that can increase its capabilities and cover significant sections of terrain. The system is designed to be used in close interaction with air defense and missile defense systems.”...

The first series-produced model of the Pole-21 was accepted into service in 2016. The Defense Ministry reports that such systems have already been sent to several EW units in the Eastern Military District (VVO) and the 201st Russian Military Base located in Tajikistan. The press service of the defense department reported the arrival in the VVO of the already modernized Pole-21M model last year, but did not disclose details of the changes made to it...

“The uniqueness of the Pole-21 system lies in its configuration. As it has already been said above, it employs several dozen relatively small low-power jamming transmitters instead of several items with high-power signal strength. Therefore, the Pole covers hundreds of kilometers at once. Also, thanks to the advanced command and control system, the “Product 21” operators can analyze the situation and opt to use only a certain group of the transmitters, rather than all of them at once. This approach helps to avoid unmasking the Pole’s entire operational range. At the same time, the UAV will no longer be able to fly several kilometers back and try to reconnect with its satellite navigation systems...”



Continued: Russia's 'Pole-21' Electronic Warfare System's Role in Defeating UAVs

Source: Alexey Ramm, “Электронное «Поле» против дронов-убийц (Electronic ‘Pole’ Against Kamikaze-UAVs),” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* Online (weekly military newspaper published by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* a daily centrist newspaper that is occasionally critical of the Russian government), 4 December 2020. https://nvo.ng.ru/nvo/2020-12-04/1_1120_karabakh.html

...Until recently, the Pole-21 was one of the most closely guarded electronic warfare systems in the Russian Armed Forces. The first information about the Pole appeared in the fall of 2016. At the present time, the “Product 21” is already entering the inventory en masse. There are several dozen compact transmitters in the Pole-21 composition. They are installed on high stationary facilities, such as cellular communication towers. The Pole’s mission is to combat satellite navigation systems. One such system can shut down an area of 150 by 150 km. As the Russian Defense Ministry’s information reports indicate, “the Pole-21 is designed to protect strategically important facilities from cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and guided aerial bombs.”...

Satellite navigation systems’ electronic jamming assets have long been present in the arsenal of the Russian Armed Forces. Their development began back in the early 2000s. And the first test of such EW assets took place in the course of the Zapad-2009 exercises. The R-330Zh Zhitel, is one of the most renowned Russian “anti-GPS” systems. The operational principle of satellite navigation suppression systems is quite simple.

The transmission of the simplest signal from the satellite to the transmitter is what is laid in the basis of the GPS, GLONASS, Beidou, and other systems. Therefore, a slightest deviation from the set frequency, even for milliseconds, will lead to the loss of precision. The signal transmission is conducted in a rather narrow range, according to open data -- in 1575.42 MHz [L1 Band] and 1227.60 MHz [L2 Band]. Therefore, the operation of modern jammers is aimed precisely at blocking it. With a sufficiently powerful noise disturbance, it is not too big of a challenge to suppress this range. However, modern unmanned aerial vehicles have learned to circumvent these systems. The EW systems need to emit a very powerful signal. But its operational range is relatively small. Therefore, having lost contact with satellite navigation systems, the UAV flies back for several kilometers. And as such, it exits the operational range of EW stations and restores the navigation system’s operation.

The uniqueness of the Pole-21 system lies in its configuration. As it has already been said above, it employs several dozen relatively small low-power jamming transmitters instead of several items with high-power signal strength. Therefore, the Pole covers hundreds of kilometers at once. Also, thanks to the advanced command and control system, the “Product 21” operators can analyze the situation and opt to use only a certain group of the transmitters, rather than all of them at once. This approach helps to avoid unmasking the Pole’s entire operational range. At the same time, the UAV will no longer be able to fly several kilometers back and try to reconnect with its satellite navigation systems...The main problem of the Pole-21 is its lack of mobility. This, in fact, is a stationary system. It is an optimal asset for protecting military bases, strategic missile positions, and important industrial and military facilities. Small-sized transmitters must be installed, mounted, and plugged in. And this takes quite a long time. Therefore, in the Russian Armed Forces, the Pole-21 operates in conjunction with the new-generation Silok EW mobile system.

“A new way of protecting ground sites against hostile UAVs was practiced during an exercise in the Central Military District. Air defense subunits trained for the first time to engage UAVs in concert with electronic warfare, signals intercept, and aerosol countermeasures teams. More than 500 personnel and about 50 items of military equipment were involved. Taking part in this integrated air defense exercise were the crews of Pole-21, Zhitel, and Svet-KU electronic warfare and jamming stations, TDA-3 thermal smoke generators, Podlet-K1 and Niobiy radar stations, and Tor-M1 and Pantsir-S SAM system vehicles.”



Continued: Russia's 'Pole-21' Electronic Warfare System's Role in Defeating UAVs

Source: Aleksandr Grigoryev, “«Великая русская стена»: беспилотники утыкаются в завесу из огня и импульсов (‘The Great Wall of Russia’: UAVs Encounter a Shroud of Fire and Pulses),” *Yezhenedelnik Zvezda Online* (Russian website with geopolitical and Russian military news, part of the Zvezda media group owned by the Russian Ministry of Defense), 13 January 2021. <https://zvezdaweekly.ru/news/2021111126-9nttJ.html>

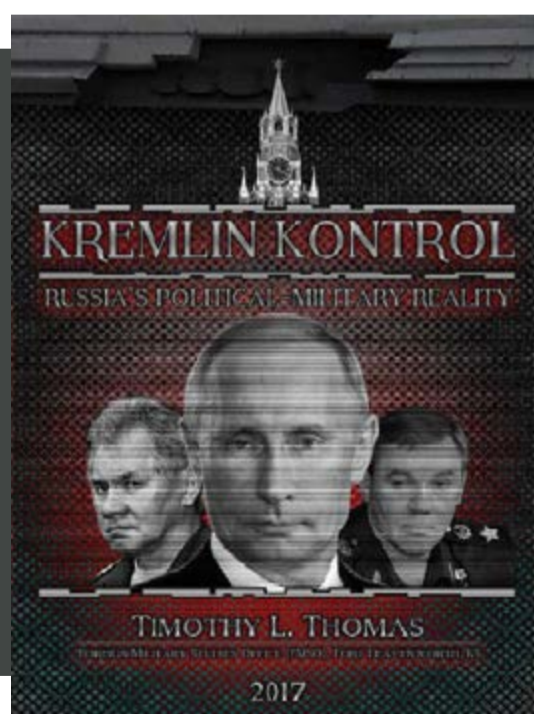
From the first days of the incoming year of 2021, Russia's forces have been busy assimilating the latest weaponry and equipment and combining that with applying new methods of warfare. It is a fact of the times that in the very near future the course and the outcome of modern-day warfare will be largely determined by unmanned aviation. But to every force there is a counter, and all of Russia's military districts are now practicing ways of protecting forces and ground infrastructure against enemy unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). At the same time they are refining techniques for using their own UAVs during combat training, and increasing the flying hours of their metallic reconnaissance scouts.

A new way of protecting ground sites against hostile UAVs was practiced during an exercise in the Central Military District. Air defense subunits trained for the first time to engage UAVs in concert with electronic warfare, signals intercept, and aerosol countermeasures teams. More than 500 personnel and about 50 items of military equipment were involved. Taking part in this integrated air defense exercise were the crews of Pole-21, Zhitel, and Svet-KU electronic warfare and jamming stations, TDA-3 thermal smoke generators, Podlet-K1 and Niobiy radar stations, and Tor-M1 and Pantsir-S SAM system vehicles. Takhion and Orlan-10 UAVs flying at low and extreme low altitudes acted as the enemy in the air

Three tactical episodes were played out during the hands-on practice at a training ground in Chelyabinskaya Oblast. First, the signal intercept crews detected the control frequencies of UAVs being made ready for takeoff, and transmitted this data to a command post. The electronic warfare specialists then jammed the UAVs' communication and navigation channels, thereby preventing them from taking to the air.

In the second episode aerosol countermeasures teams concealed and protected the location and air defenses in the visual and infrared spectrums, using the thermal smoke generating capabilities of a TDA-3 vehicle. In the concluding phase of the exercise drones were detected and hypothetically destroyed by the crews of the Tor-M1 and Pantsir-S SAM systems. Every last drone was “shot down” with electronic [simulated] launches at altitudes from 350 to 3,000 meters at ranges of up to 12 kilometers.

“Russia is getting better at taking down enemy UAVs. That could have serious implications for the United States as it makes more use of unmanned aircraft ... The proliferation of jammers and Russia's prowess in using them could threaten the American military's fleet of UAVs. US UAVs are becoming more autonomous. But they will always need some kind of radio link in order to transmit data. That's one weakness Russia exploits.”



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

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



Russian UAV Organization and Developments

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the official newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense, features an interview with Denis Fedutinov, the editor-in-chief of *Unmanned Aviation* magazine. Fedutinov discusses the changing character of warfare, UAV use in the Russian Armed Forces, and mentions that Russia is developing strike UAVs, and prototypes have been field tested in Syria. The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, a weekly military newspaper published by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* a large-circulation daily centrist newspaper that is occasionally critical of the Russian government, explains how UAVs are organized in the various branches of service that comprise the Russian Armed Forces.

Of particular interest, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* states that the UAV company in a combined-arms brigade or division consists of two platoons. The first is the short-range platoon, equipped with Orlan-10 and/or Takhion-4 UAVs. The second platoon is a close-range [ближнего действия] platoon, equipped with Granat-1, 2, 3, and 4, Zastava, Takhion, and/or Eleron UAVs. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, a pro-Kremlin daily newspaper, states that although Russia has tested the Lancet loitering munition UAV, or ‘kamikaze UAV’ as usually referred in the Russian mass media, in Syria; and strike UAVs are in development, Russia is having production difficulties due to a lack of suitable domestically produced motors and engines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Screen shot from defense manufacturer's promotional film of Lancet loitering munition UAV.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19ftPRP6stc>

“[Strike UAVs] such as “Altius”, “Orion”, “Forpost”, and others are being developed in Russia. A portion of them have already completed certain phases of tests, which have confirmed the embedded characteristics. What is more, some of the previously mentioned UAVs were successfully employed in the operations of the Russian Armed Forces contingent on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic...”

- Denis Fedutinov, Editor-in-Chief of “Unmanned Aviation” Magazine



Lancet loitering munition UAV.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/ARMY-2019-Exhibition-pavilions/1-HwGLLZC/0/3a7de479/X2/Army2019Pavilions-071-X2.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Continued: Russian UAV Organization and Developments

Source: Alexander Tikhonov, “Беспилотники набирают высоту. И вес (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Are Gaining Altitude. And Weight),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online* (official newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense), 12 February 2021. <http://redstar.ru/bespilotniki-nabirayut-vysotu-i-ves/>

Deliveries of complexes with reconnaissance-strike UAVs to the Russian Armed Forces - are a new step in the development of domestic unmanned aviation. The fragmentary employment of complexes with unmanned aerial vehicles is receding into the past. Already today UAVs, besides reconnaissance and surveillance in real time, are accomplishing EW missions and are capable of employing various aircraft weapons. There is a reason why the RF Ministry of Defense leadership is paying careful attention to the development of unmanned aviation and deliveries of new complexes with UAVs to the troops (forces). Today our interlocutor is Denis Fedutinov - a leading Russian expert in the unmanned aerial vehicle sphere and the Editor-in-Chief of “Unmanned Aviation” Magazine. Our conversation is about the present and near future of a number of domestic and foreign complexes with unmanned aerial vehicles...

Recent military conflicts are characterized by the increasingly frequent employment of unmanned aerial vehicles. They have already become an integral element of combat operations. Denis Vyacheslavovich, list the missions, which UAVs are accomplishing on the battlefield, more precisely above it.

The role of unmanned aviation systems in the achievement of victory over the enemy is increasing at the present time. The product list of the systems that are being used, and also their functional capabilities - they are supporting not only the conduct of reconnaissance, including in real time, but also the guidance of precision-guided weapons, and the accomplishment of signals intelligence and electronic warfare missions...The use of unmanned aerial vehicle complexes in conjunction with traditional weapon systems and military equipment that are controlled by man increases the troops' combat capabilities and simultaneously reduces personnel losses. The listed facts determine the high interest, which is being displayed by the armed forces of many of the world's countries, to equip them with similar equipment. There is reason to believe that the trend will be maintained in the future and unmanned aircraft will occupy a more substantial percentage among the total amount of weapons and equipment that are being employed.

What is the state of affairs in domestic unmanned aviation?

Domestically-manufactured unmanned aerial vehicles have already long since become an integral part of any Russian Federation Armed Forces combat training events and also of the accomplishment of combat and peacekeeping operations. Over the course of the last decade, the Russian Military Department has systematically purchased in substantial numbers the UAVs that have been developed by Russian companies to equip the Armed Forces with them. We are primarily talking about close and short operating range UAV systems. But, of course, not only about them.

How do matters stand with the development of strike UAV systems?

Such complexes such as “Altius”, “Orion”, “Forpost”, and others are being developed in Russia. A portion of them have already completed certain phases of tests, which have confirmed the embedded characteristics. What is more, some of the previously mentioned UAVs were successfully employed in the operations of the Russian Armed Forces contingent on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic...

“The UAV company in a combined-arms brigade or division consists of two platoons. The first is the short-range platoon, armed with the Orlan-10 and Takhion-4. The second platoon is a close-range platoon, and its main weapons are the Granat-1, 2, 3, and 4, Zastava, Takhion, and Eleron.”

-Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy



Continued: Russian UAV Organization and Developments

Source: Aleksey Ramm, “Куда летит беспилотная авиация (Where Unmanned Aviation is Flying: The Armed Forces are Increasingly Interested in UAVs), *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* Online (weekly military newspaper, sometimes critical of Russian government policies) 21 January 2021. https://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2021-01-21/1_1125_aviation.html

...All the branches of Russia's armed forces currently have UAV aviation, the most numerous fleet being with the Ground Troops. The precise number is not disclosed, but one can assume it is more than 1,500. The Orlan-10 family of UAVs, and also the Granat, Eleron, and Takhion, form the backbone of the Ground Troops' fleet. Motorized rifle and tank brigades and divisions have UAV companies as part of their standard establishments, and similar subunits are being formed within the recently created separate reconnaissance brigades.

The UAV company in a combined-arms brigade or division consists of two platoons. The first is the short-range platoon, armed with the Orlan-10 and Takhion-4. The second platoon is a close-range [близнего действия] platoon, and its main weapons are the Granat-1, 2, 3, and 4, Zastava, Takhion, and Eleron. Note that UAV companies in Airborne Troops divisions and brigades and also naval infantry units are organized along similar lines. Although the UAV subunits are now generally established in the Airborne Troops, in the black beret brigades and regiments the companies and platoons are still in the formative stage. For example, UAVs are already part of the 61st (Northern Fleet) and 40th (Pacific Fleet, Kamchatka) Naval Infantry Brigades.

Artillery, engineer-sapper, missile, reconnaissance, and even railway brigades also have UAV subunits, which are primarily nearby-operations separate platoons. For example, engineers use UAVs to survey mine fields and enemy fortifications, railway troops to assess the condition of the track and also the extent of damage to bridges and other infrastructure. While missile brigades use UAVs to select suitable positions for Iskander systems, and also to guard them. UAV subunits in artillery brigades have a fairly interesting organizational structure. Apart from Orlan-10 platoons, they have teams with the latest Orlan-30 UAVs and also platoons for artillery UAV reconnaissance. The UAV subunits in the newly formed Airborne Troops artillery brigade are expected to be organized in the same way...

Several UAV squadrons, both separate and as part of aviation regiments, have been formed within the Aerospace Forces. Until recently the UAV units and subunits in the Aerospace Forces only operated the Forpost family of UAVs, but the fleet is now being augmented by the Orlan-10. As announced in the fall of last year by the Defense Ministry, a separate aviation squadron has been formed to support operations at the Plesetsk airfield and alongside its helicopters and aircraft are Orlan-10 UAVs. The UAVs' mission is to ensure the security of rocket launches from Plesetsk.

But it is the Navy that can boast of the most original way of organizing its UAV aviation, for only it has separate UAV regiments. These are armed with the Forpost family of UAVs and the ubiquitous Orlan-10. Note that the latter operate not only from land. Orlan teams have been based on board Russian Navy corvettes and frigates since 2018. The first naval UAV regiment was formed at the Northern Fleet and another such unit is now expected to appear in Crimea (according to other reports, it is already in existence). Separate Forpost UAV squadrons also make up part of several Naval Aviation regiments, in particular the 689th Fighter Regiment in Kaliningrad and the 318th (Crimea) and 71st (Kamchatka) Composite Aviation Regiments. The Navy's UAV regiments and squadrons work not only to benefit surface ships and submarines. They also support hostilities by separate artillery and coastal missile and artillery brigades, and also coastal defense units...

“Our key problem is the lack of our own domestically produced engines. Both electric engines, for small vehicles, as well as internal combustion engines -- for the large ones. We need units with five to 150 horsepower capacity...There are experimental models, but none in serial production. The second problem is the creation of small munitions...As for the loitering munition UAVs, they are already being used in Syria, although these are individual models. It is necessary to determine which models exactly should be put into serial production.”

-Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy



Continued: Russian UAV Organization and Developments

Source: Anton Lavrov, “Небесное дело: на какие беспилотники делает ставку Минобороны (Celestial Affair: The UAVs the Defense Ministry Relies Upon), *Izvestiya* Online (pro-Kremlin daily newspaper) 13 December 2020. <https://iz.ru/1098861/anton-lavrov/nebesnoe-delo-na-kakie-bespilotniki-delaet-stavku-minoborony>

...In three different conflicts this year, it was precisely the attack UAVs that played the key role, military expert Vladislav Shurygin told *Izvestiya*. “With their help, Turkey managed to slow down the Syrian government’s offensive in Idlib,” the specialist reported. “In Libya, they helped to reverse the situation and to push Haftar’s troops away from Tripoli. And just recently we observed their employment in the battles for Nagorno-Karabakh. The experience of this conflict will be studied especially actively both abroad and in Russia, the expert believes. This is the first-time kamikaze UAVs were employed in such numbers. They demonstrated their high effectiveness even against a standing army, equipped not only with armored vehicles and artillery, but also with full-fledged low- and medium-range air defense systems,” Vladislav Shurygin concluded.

This week, Sergey Chemezov, the head of Rostec, told the media that the Lancet light loitering kamikaze UAVs, created by the Kalashnikov Concern, had been tested in Syria. The head of the state corporation also announced that the 200 kg Korsar medium-size UAV, which is currently at the test phase, will have a strike function as well... “Our key problem is the lack of our own domestically produced engines. Both electric engines, for small vehicles, as well as internal combustion engines -- for the large ones. We need units with five to 150 horsepower capacity,” military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told *Izvestiya*. “There are experimental models, but none in serial production. The second problem is the creation of small munitions. For a long time, the matter was not attended as there was no demand for it, but a number of enterprises have been working in this direction in recent years. Something has already been manufactured, and is being used in Syria. However, in other areas, we still have to wait. As for the loitering munition UAVs, they are already being used in Syria, although these are individual models. It is necessary to determine which models exactly should be put into serial production.

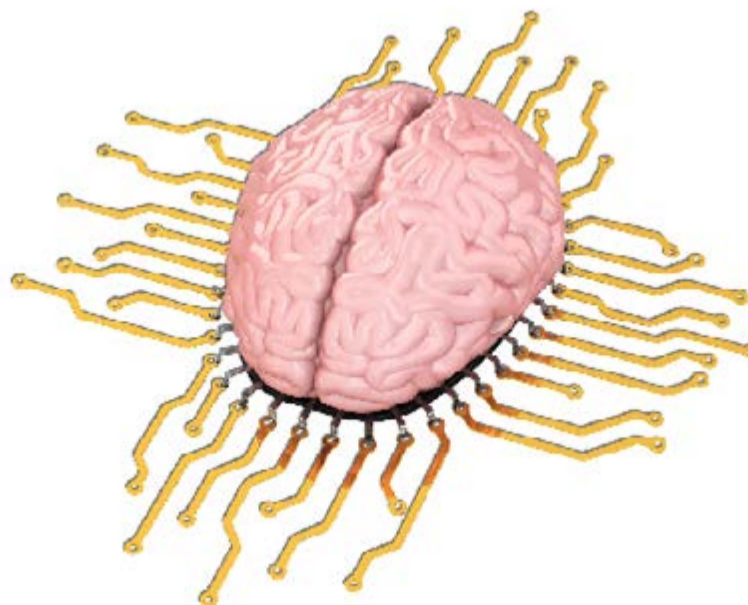
...We do not have a high altitude and lengthy flight duration strategic long-range unmanned aerial vehicle, the likes of the American Global Hawk. So far, we do not know of any research and development projects in this area either. Maybe it is no longer considered to be important, the expert said... “As far as the employment of tactical-class unmanned aerial vehicles and their availability in the troops are concerned, things are in order,” Viktor Murakhovskiy believes. “There is a company of unmanned aerial vehicles in each of the Ground Troops brigades, and they are also present in the naval infantry and coastal troops of the fleet. In Syria, we are able to deploy 50 to 70 UAVs in various regions of the country simultaneously...

According to the Defense Ministry data, Russia has over 2,000 small reconnaissance UAVs in its inventory with advanced capabilities. A family of complex and heavy unmanned aerial vehicles weighing over a ton is being developed. Yet the niche of medium-size vehicles, weighing from 100 to 1,000 kg, remains nearly unoccupied. It is the very area, which offers the possibility to develop new attack and multipurpose vehicles with great combat potential more quickly and cheaper...

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/>

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.





Azerbaijan's Post-War Exercise with Turkey

OE Watch Commentary: The Armed Forces of Azerbaijan have typically carried out at least one joint military exercise a year with the Turkish armed forces for the past few years. The accompanying excerpted articles report on the most recent joint Azerbaijani-Turkish exercise and they provide a look at how this security cooperation relationship continues to develop following the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh War.

The article from *Kavkazskiy Uzel*, an independent Russian-language website with news from the Caucasus, reports on the Turkish government's announcement of "large-scale military exercises from 1-12 February in the city of Kars (located near the border with Armenia)." The article notes how "tankers, artilleryman, snipers and special forces personnel will work out combat skills" and that "the goal of the exercise is strengthen cooperation and improve coordination in joint operations as well as check the combat readiness of soldiers, including operating in winter conditions." The article includes a couple of interviews with military analysts who commented on the exercise, included one who stated that it "is a message that Azerbaijan and Turkey are ready to jointly respond to challenges and threats." Another analyst stated "the conditions in which the exercises are taking place, as well as the units involved, point to the development of offensive operations in mountainous terrain" and that "the location of the exercises is not related to military-strategic goals of the two sides." Instead, he says that "Kars could have been chosen because Azerbaijan is still preparing to liberate cities."

The article from *Trend*, a news agency based in Azerbaijan, also reports on the recent exercise and it notes that it involved "units from the Separate Combined Arms Army" from Azerbaijan and that they "worked on tactical-special tasks of combat engineering support in difficult conditions." The article also points out how "a lot of attention was paid to the use of tank bridge layers, clearing engineering vehicles and engineering ordnance." Overall, the exercise provides another example of how the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey continue to carry out security cooperation and how Azerbaijani armed forces continue to prepare for operations in mountainous terrain and deal with engineering tasks that come with it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



An armored engineering vehicle (IMR) used by the Moscow Military District to fight wildfires in the Moscow Region's Lukhovitsky district.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIAN_archive_734015_Wildfires_in_Moscow_Region%27s_Lukhovitsky_district.jpg, Attribution: CC BY 3.0

“A lot of attention was paid to the use of tank bridge layers, clearing engineering vehicles and engineering ordnance.”

Source: “Военные эксперты сочли учения Азербайджана и Турции связанными с Карабахом (Military experts have considered the exercises of Azerbaijan and Turkey are connected with Karabakh),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (an independent Russian-language website with news from the Caucasus), 29 January 2021. <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/359201/>

...Turkey announced large-scale military exercises from 1-12 February in the city of Kars (located near the border with Armenia)... Tankers, artilleryman, snipers and special forces personnel will work out combat skills. The goal of the exercise is strengthen cooperation and improve coordination in joint operations as well as check the combat readiness of soldiers, including operating in winter conditions...

For the Azerbaijani military, the importance of joint exercises with Turkey is connected to borrowing experience from Turkish forces, explained Shahin Hajiyev, a military analyst...According to (Hajiyev), holding the exercises three months after the end of the fighting in Nagorno Karabakh is a message that Azerbaijan and Turkey are ready to jointly respond to challenges and threats...

Previous large-scale joint exercises were carried out by Turkey and Azerbaijan in 2020: from July 1 to August 10. The exercises took place in Baku, Nakhichevan, Ganja, Kurdamir and Yevlakh, with the ground and air forces of both countries involved...

The conditions in which the exercises are taking place, as well as the units involved, point to the development of offensive operations in mountainous terrain, said military analyst Alexander Perendzhiyev...“The location of the exercises is not related to military-strategic goals of the two sides, he added...“Kars could have been chosen because Azerbaijan is still preparing to liberate cities”...



Continued: Azerbaijan's Post-War Exercise with Turkey

Source: “Военные эксперты сочли учения Азербайджана и Турции связанными с Карабахом (Military experts have considered the exercises of Azerbaijan and Turkey are connected with Karabakh),” *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (an independent Russian-language website with news from the Caucasus), 29 January 2021. <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/359201/>

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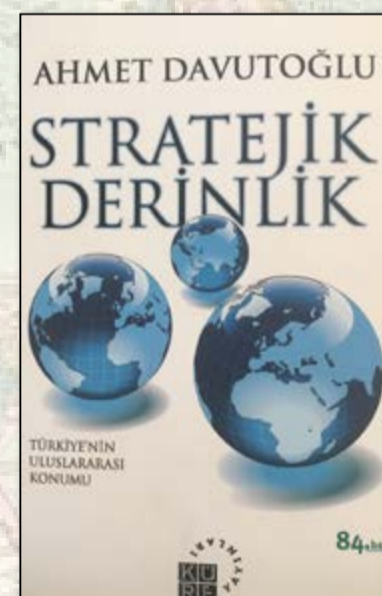
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Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's “Strategic Depth” Foreign Policy Doctrine

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>



China's Concept of "Intelligentization": Self-Teaching Systems

OE Watch Commentary: China has been aggressively striving to become the leader in artificial intelligence (AI). According to the following article published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of China's Central Military Commission, AI will usher in the era of "intelligentized warfare." The authors of the article offer some interesting ideas and analyses on what they believe intelligentized warfare means. First, they compare it to today's "informatized warfare." While informatized warfare is network-centric and relies on an information connection of some sort, intelligentized warfare is cognitive-centric and relies on calculation and intelligence. The authors argue that intelligentized warfare will "exceed firepower, mechanical power, and information power." At the same time, they are not saying that intelligentized warfare will replace informatized warfare. Rather, the age of intelligentized warfare will combine mechanized, informatized, and intelligentized operations to pursue military objectives.

The age of intelligentized warfare will bring in unmanned, autonomous systems. The authors outline three developmental stages that they envision unmanned systems going through. First, manned systems will be primary, while unmanned systems will be secondary. Second, reversing roles, manned systems will be secondary and unmanned systems will be primary. In the third stage, man will make the rules, but actions will be carried out autonomously.

	Informatized Warfare	Intelligentized Warfare
Type of warfare	Network-centric	Cognitive-centric
Core or central idea	Connection	Calculation
Leading force	Information	Intelligence
Goal	To gather energy with networks and release energy with networks	To drive capabilities with intelligence and control capabilities with intelligence.
Form of operations	It uses system of systems for local (operations), the network for discrete (operations), and uses fast to control slow (operations).	It is a "concentrated manifestation of the integrated development of mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization

Chart.

Source: Made by author, using information from the article.

The article also shows the importance China puts on developing capabilities in machine learning and deep learning. While the authors do not mention this specifically, they allude to it by explaining that the biggest difference between intelligentized and informatized warfare is that intelligentized weapons and equipment will improve themselves while in use. In other words, the more combat experience the systems acquire, the more information they accumulate and therefore the more improvement will be seen in their functionality. "Deep learning" is a type of machine learning that processes information through an artificial neural network, which is similar to the human brain. It learns through experience. The authors explain that in the age of intelligentized warfare, the weapons or military equipment systems' ability to program themselves will determine their overall combat strength. Therefore, according to the authors, more focus needs to be put on developing their self-programming capability, rather than focusing on designing and developing traditional weapons and equipment. Doing so, they say, will bring China into the age of intelligentized warfare. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“In the future, “intelligence dominance” will become a new type of dominance or power of control that has a huge strategic impact on the overall warfare. Once we lose “intelligence dominance,” other dominances will be quickly weakened.”

Source: Zhao Xiaokang and Zhang Wei, “智能化带来战争新变化 (Intelligentization Brings About New Transformation in Warfare),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (the official newspaper of the People's Republic of China's Central Military Commission), 7 January 2021. <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0107/c1011-31992241.html>

As the pace of military intelligentization accelerates, the world's major military powers have started competing for "intelligence power" in the military field. In the future, "intelligence dominance" will become a new type of dominance or power of control that has a huge strategic impact on the overall warfare; once we lose "intelligence dominance," other dominances will be quickly weakened.

...Informatized warfare is network-centric warfare; its core is "connection," the leading force is information, and it seeks to gather energy with networks and release energy with networks; it uses the system of systems for local, uses the network for discrete, and uses fast to control slow. Intelligentized warfare is cognitive-centric warfare; its core is "calculation," the leading force is intelligence, and the weight that intelligence accounts for will exceed firepower, mechanical power, and information power. What it pursues is to drive capabilities with intelligence and control capabilities with intelligence.

Unmanned (technology) is a concentrated manifestation of the integrated development of mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization. In the age of intelligentization, the development of "unmanned" technology will undergo three stages: "manned as primary and unmanned as secondary," "manned as secondary and unmanned as primary," and "rules with a man and actions without a man."

...Meanwhile, the AI-based unmanned technology will gradually expand to other domains such as cyber attack and defense, electronic countermeasure, multisource sensing, correlation proofing, person tracking, public opinion analysis, and infrastructure management and control.

... biggest difference between intelligentized weapons and equipment and other weapons and equipment lies in that while serving as weapons, they will also improve themselves. With the accumulation of real combat experience, they will continue to learn and improve and integrate these advantages and methods for responding to situations in a highly efficient manner so that they will perform even more outstandingly in warfare. The unique nature of intelligentization has resulted in the core combat power of intelligentized warfare, mainly led by intelligentized weapons and intelligentized units, to possess very strong self-learning and self-growth characteristics. The age of intelligentization must abandon the traditional weapons and equipment development model from requirements, design, and R&D to application and maintenance and adopt the new iterative systems engineering model of the Information Age so that the intelligent weapons and intelligent units can gradually grow in the process of uninterrupted iteration and complete the generation of "intelligent combat power."



China's Next Step in Modernization: Developing Effective Integrated Joint Operations

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China underwent a massive restructuring from the end of 2015 to 2020, in part intended to develop the necessary structure to support informatized, integrated joint operations. Now that the restructuring is reportedly complete, there has been much talk about joint operations and what should be done to ensure the PLA is capable of carrying out such operations. The following article excerpts, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission, and Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, address this topic. Both articles discuss the importance of integrated joint operations, current weaknesses in the PLA, ways to overcome some of the weaknesses, and what is being done.

According to *Jiefangjun Bao*, even though the army has done a lot of work toward joint training for joint combat, there are still gaps and weaknesses. For example, the army still lacks experienced, qualified, and knowledgeable army personnel. Also, basic doctrine is lacking. *SCMP* points out that the different systems, such as intelligence systems, are not compatible. This has caused disruptions in military operations. In some cases, units are still using old systems to train their combat forces. In a move to push forward, according to *Jiefangjun Bao*, Chinese President Xi Jinping recently urged the PLA to begin “deepening joint training for joint combat, adhering to joint training to guide the training of services and branches, and supporting joint training with the training of services and branches.” All the “nodes” need to be able to work together seamlessly and personnel need to have a firm understanding of each of the other units.

SCMP explains that the PLA has already begun its training program by cross-training military officers. For example, army officers were deployed to navy vessels. Air force officers were supporting PLA Strategic Rocket Force units. Improving the PLA's ability to conduct joint operations is seen as necessary for what the country views as its most likely combat scenarios: namely, according to *SCMP*, “a potential campaign against Taiwan,” which “would aim to ‘kill with a single hit.’” The PLA improving its capabilities to conduct joint combat operations is viewed as the best way to fight and win future battles. According to *SCMP*, possessing these capabilities also serves as an “effective deterrent.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“if joint operational capabilities are not superior enough, one will be defeated in the system-of-systems confrontation.”

Source: “Liu Haitao, “联战联训，把联合作战能力提上来 (Joint Training for Joint Combat to Improve Joint Operational Capabilities),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 13 January 2021. http://www.81.cn/yw/2021-01/13/content_9966907.htm

Joint Training for Joint Combat to Improve Joint Operational Capabilities

The mobilization order for start of training in 2021 that Chairman Xi issued to the entire army not long ago emphasizes “deepening joint training for joint combat, adhering to joint training to guide the training of services and branches, and supporting joint training with the training of services and branches.” This mobilization order once again highlights the great significance of system-of-systems troop training and joint training to fighting and winning future wars.

Integrated joint operations will be the basic form of future warfare. On tomorrow's battlefield, there will be fewer and fewer single-handedly close-combat engagements, which will be replaced by system-vs-system and systems-vs-systems confrontations with features of informatization and intelligentization.

...if joint operational capabilities are not superior enough, one will be defeated in the system-of-systems confrontation.

... To accelerate the realization of transforming and upgrading military training and to comprehensively enhance the level of training and the ability to fight and win, we must adhere to system-of-systems troop training and seek combat power from joint training for joint combat. Our army's future operational patterns are integrated joint operations under the unified command of the joint operational command structure.

In recent years, our army has done a lot of work in joint training for joint combat, but there are still certain gaps and the approach of system-of-systems training has not completely been formed. Some joint operations lack solid basic doctrine as well as the intellectual support of joint training for joint combat. Some joint training is not often carried out, and when it is carried out, “the gong rings but the drum beat is not uniform;” Some have failed to integrate new equipment and new-quality fighting force into the system-of-systems training, and the overall effectiveness of joint training is not strong enough. There are also information system links that are not fully opened through, and node control is not flexible and highly efficient enough. To solve these problems, there is no other way but to adhere to joint efforts as the key link, to develop the joint training system of systems with our army's characteristics, and to accelerate the enhancement of integrated joint operational capabilities.

...Only when artillery units communicate more with radar units, landing units understand more about the situation of naval vessel units, and UAV units get more familiar with the characteristics of Army Aviation units can they fight the battle with joint efforts effectively.

The most effective means [to conduct] joint training for joint combat is to use the “enemy” for troop training by carrying out confrontation between Red and Blue [Forces] and system-of-systems confrontation. ...This requires us to build an excellent “Blue Force” of joint operational training, shift the training to the integrated joint confrontation based on the network information system of systems, and truly contribute to the highly integrated battlefield situation, command decision-making, and firepower strike system of the “Red Force” through confrontation, so as to train each operational platform and system to become superior and accelerate the enhancement of the joint operational capabilities.



Continued: China's Next Step in Modernization: Develop Effective Integrated Joint Operations

Source: Liu Zhen, "China's Military 'Prepares for War' With Joint Operations, Cross Training," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong-based news outlet owned by Alibaba), January 24, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3118969/chinas-military-prepares-war-joint-operations-cross-training>

A five-year overhaul of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which ended last year, saw the restructuring of the command chain to make cross-service combat a basic approach for future operations.

To help develop commanders and staff for joint operations, the PLA began its 2021 training programme by deploying army officers on naval vessels and seconding air force officers to the army's rocket units, PLA Daily reported on Tuesday.

Yue Gang, a retired PLA senior colonel said improving joint operation capabilities was necessary for the most likely combat scenarios for the Chinese military, such as a potential campaign against Taiwan that would aim to "kill with a single hit", he said.

"Even if war never breaks out, the PLA has to be trained to that level, so it can serve as an effective deterrent," he said.

Observers say the PLA's joint operation capabilities were ripe for improvement.

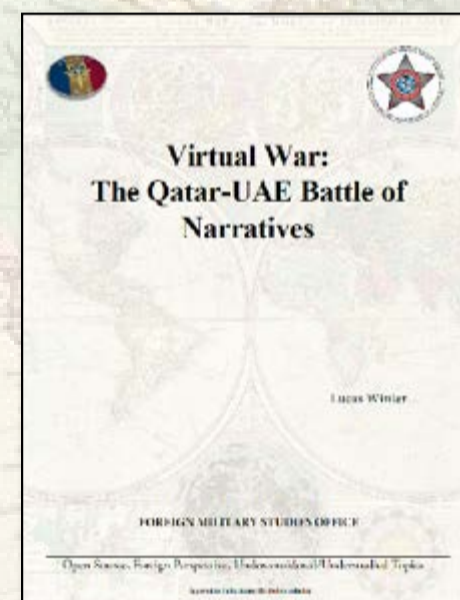
In an exercise several years ago, a joint army-navy landing force failed to complete a mission after suffering an information delay caused by the two branches using different intelligence distribution systems, according to South Sea Fleet Captain Colonel Yang Yang.

VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

May 2020

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



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



President Xi issues 2021 Training Mobilization Order

OE Watch Commentary: At the beginning of January 2021, President Xi as chairman of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) signed a training mobilization order for the armed forces for the new year. According to the *People's Liberation Army Daily*, the order includes the People's Armed Police Force, the paramilitary force now under CMC command. The order reiterates training issues and problems addressed in a November 2020 CMC Military Training Conference focused on strengthening military training. The training conference proposed numerous solutions to the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) training problems. While President Xi assessed that the PLA had made some progress with military training and education reforms in the past two decades, many training and education problems persist, inhibiting combat capabilities and the ambitious military modernization plan. Conference proposals included high-level direction to impose training uniformity, improved training support for multi-region and long-distance training, upgrading regional training bases, training for a unit's operational mission, integrating high tech to improve training, and combining real and simulation training.

The training mobilization order establishes this year's training objectives addressing problem areas discussed in the training conference. Training will continue to stress actual combat, employing realistic combat conditions. This ongoing reform addresses the PLA's lack of recent combat experience and prepares the PLA to win conflicts. Actual combat training includes confrontation training and training towards unit operational missions.

Training this year will focus on joint operations training, including joint command and joint specialized training to improve the development of integrated joint operations capabilities. The PLA intends to strengthen the use of science and technology in training, including training with new equipment. This includes simulation, as well as network and electromagnetic confrontation. Training will also support the system of systems operations, which represents the integration of the command information system with forces and equipment that will provide the foundation of an integrated joint operations capability. Similarly, training will support integration of operational system of systems, which is a modular integrated task force with an ability to reconfigure to meet changing operational requirements. The PLA usually refers to joint or service operational system of systems as campaign-level formations or tactical-level formations.

The PLA also intends to enhance training regulations, promote training innovation, strengthen training supervision and planning, and improve training evaluations. Another major reform is trying to integrate military academies with unit training to create a synergistic effect to improve problems in both military education and training. **End OE Watch Commentary (McCauley)**

“The commanders and troops of the whole army should resolutely implement the decision-making instructions of the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission.... and welcome the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China with outstanding achievements.”

Source: “Xi Jinping signs the Central Military Commission Order No. 1 of 2021 -

Issues a training mobilization order to the whole army (习近平签署中央军委2021年1号命令 - 向全军发布开训动员令),” *People's Liberation Army Daily* (official PLA newspaper), January 5, 2021. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2021-01/05/content_279778.htm

Beijing, January 4th. Today, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, President of the State, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission signed the Central Military Commission Order No. 1 of 2021, issuing a training and mobilization order to the entire army. The full text is as follows:

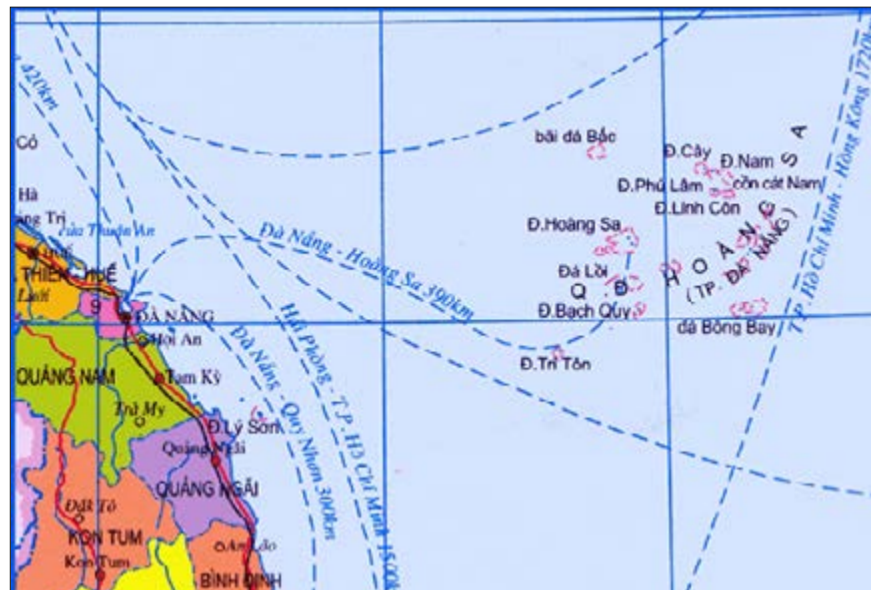
In 2021, the entire military must adhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Strengthening the Army, implement the military strategy of the new era, implement the spirit of the Central Military Commission's Military Training Conference, and strengthen the party's leadership over military training. Prepare for war, deepen the transformation of military training, build a new military training system, and comprehensively improve the level of combat training and the ability to win.



Vietnamese Advisor Recalls Battle of the Paracel Islands with China

OE Watch Commentary: China secured control of the Paracel Islands on 19 January 1974 when the then South Vietnamese government was unable to defend the island from Chinese attack. Vietnam’s loss in the Battle of the Paracel Islands still resonates today among Vietnamese. The excerpted 19 January article in *thannhien.vn*, a Vietnamese-language newspaper with a focus on social issues, reflects how memories of that battle are rekindled on the anniversary of that battle.

The article was written by Trần Văn Thọ, a Tokyo-based former Vietnamese economic advisor to the Japanese government. Thọ was a 25-year old student in Japan when the 1974 battle occurred. In the article, he discussed how China carefully curates narratives about wars it has conducted in its borderlands, including the Battle of the Paracel Islands, which Vietnamese call Hoang Sa. Thọ also noted a Japanese professor close to him had also visited China’s Hainan Island and told Thọ about China’s memorial for the 1974 battle, which referred to Chinese soldiers as martyrs and heroes and, according to Thọ, included numerous fabrications about Chinese self-defense in the battle. Thọ nevertheless recognized that although it was at Vietnam’s expense, China was succeeding in passing on a legacy of its battle achievements to future generations in China.



hoang-sa.
Source: Vietnamese Government, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-hoang-sa.png>, Attribution: CC x 2.0

Throughout much of the article, Thọ analyzes China’s ways of memorializing the Battle of the Paracel Islands and notes the importance of Vietnam doing the same—creating its own narratives. This is especially important in regards to the forty-seventh anniversary of South Vietnam’s inability to withstand China’s assault on the Paracel Islands—China’s first stake in the South China Sea islands. Thọ laments that Vietnam is not doing enough to clarify the true history from Vietnam’s perspective to justify its sovereignty over the Paracel Islands. Thọ’s article, therefore, highlights how in Southeast Asia history is among the most important ways that countries inspire their citizens to claim sovereignty in the South China Sea and to justify their claims over territory legally and through popular opinion. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The invader not only distorted the truth, but also desired to forever pass on the story of the ‘achievements’ of the invasion through memorials.”

Source: “47 năm ngày Trung Quốc cưỡng chiếm Hoàng Sa: Kẻ xâm lược nguy tạo ký ức như thế nào? (47 Years Since China Conquered Hoang Sa: How is the Invasion Remembered?).” *thannhien.vn* (Vietnamese language newspaper), 19 January 2021, https://thannhien.vn/thoi-su/47-nam-ngay-trung-quoc-cuong-chiem-hoang-sa-ke-xam-luoc-nguy-tao-ky-uc-nhu-the-nao-1331507.html?utm_source=cocococ&utm_medium=ccnews

On this day 47 years ago our Hoang Sa was suddenly captured by China through force. Few people know well what China did then. We all know that the invasion of our territory by China was propagated to its people as a self-defense war. Having the opportunity to read what they disseminate and propagate about the Hoang Sa event, I cannot help but be surprised at the very blatant fabrication.

In 2012, I held a Vietnam-China intellectual dialogue in Tokyo and invited Professor Ishii to speak. He visited the Vietnam-China border and wrote a chapter about the war in 1979. Particularly regarding the Hoang Sa incident, he visited Hainan province because he heard China built a memorial area for martyrs in the battle.

The invader not only distorted the truth, but also desired to forever pass on the story of the ‘achievements’ of the invasion through memorials. Has our efforts to clarify history and justify sovereignty been enough?



Defense Expenditures in India

OE Watch Commentary: The Indian government’s defense expenditures have notably increased over the past few years, including the Indian armed forces making a number of fast-track acquisitions of weapons and equipment in response to the 2020 border clashes with China. The accompanying excerpted articles report on recent developments with defense expenditures and acquisitions; and they show how this continues to take shape.

The article from *The Wire*, an independent English-language news website, looks at defense spending issues in India. The author states that “India’s military faces a massive financial predicament in the fiscal year 2021-22 as it remains locked in a costly faceoff with China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.” In addition, “all three services are believed to have already executed emergency purchases of over \$2 billion since June 2020 to plug enduring equipment and ammunition shortages, adversely upsetting budgetary calculations.” The author goes on to note how the “military’s financial demands come at a time when India is deep in recession, following the serious financial downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic” and that the issue goes back a couple of years when the then defense minister “declared in July 2018 that there was neither a shortage of funds nor of ammunition.” He mentions that this statement “was in direct contrast to the Defence Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence (SCoD) that had publicly affirmed a shortage of funds for the military.”



Indian Ministry of Defence.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Ministry_of_Defence-1.jpg, Attribution: Public Domain

The article from *Force*, a defense and security news website from India, reports on a recent agreement by the Indian government to acquire a new unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The article mentions that “the Indian Army has awarded an approximately \$20 million contract for undisclosed quantities of a high-altitude variant of ideaForge’s SWITCH UAV which will be delivered over a period of 1 year” and that this was a “fast-track procurement.” It goes on to note that the UAV “can be deployed at high altitude and harsh environments for day and night surveillance” and that “it is man-portable and has the highest time on target compared to any other UAV in its class.” At \$20 million, this acquisition is cheaper and scheduled to be delivered faster than some of the purchases made in the past year in response to the border clashes with China (see: “The Indian Army’s Shopping List,” *OE Watch*, September 2020). While it remains to be seen how the Indian economy will continue to impact defense expenditures for the coming year, the contract for the surveillance UAV provides an example of continuing acquisitions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“This Fixed Wing VTOL (Vertical Take-off and Landing) UAV can be deployed at high altitude and harsh environments for day and night surveillance in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions”

Source: “Amit Cowshish, “India’s 2021-22 Defence Budget Needs Honest Financial Reckoning, Not Empty Rhetoric,” *The Wire* (independent English-language news website), 9 January 2021. <https://thewire.in/security/india-defence-budget-military-spending-honest-recokoning>

India’s military faces a massive financial predicament in the fiscal year 2021-22, as it remains locked in a costly faceoff with China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

To meet this forbidding challenge, that shows no sign of abating, all three services are believed to have already executed emergency purchases of over \$2 billion since June 2020 to plug enduring equipment and ammunition shortages, adversely upsetting budgetary calculations...

The military’s financial demands come at a time when India is deep in recession, following the serious financial downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though some green shoots are visible in the economy, these are unlikely to shore up government revenues in the coming fiscal in any substantial measure...

Totally disregarding reality, then defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman had unbelievably declared in July 2018 that there was neither a shortage of funds nor of ammunition, when there was a paucity of both. The minister’s optimism, in fact, was in direct contrast to the Defence Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence (SCoD) that had publicly affirmed a shortage of funds for the military...

Source: “Indian Army Signs Contract with ideaForge to procure SWITCH UAV,” *Force* (defense and security news website from India), 14 January 2021. <http://forceindia.net/indian-army-signs-contract-ideaforge-procure-switch-uav/>

The Indian Army has awarded an approximately \$20 million contract for undisclosed quantities of a high-altitude variant of ideaForge’s SWITCH UAV which will be delivered over a period of 1 year.

ideaForge won this contract after it emerged as the only vendor that qualified the operational requirements in an evaluation done in real-world conditions, for a fast-track procurement...



Indonesia Female Suicide Bomber Details Inter-Generational Radicalization

OE Watch Commentary: Female suicide bombings have become increasingly rare among jihadist groups in recent years. Among the only groups consistently employing them is Boko Haram, but extremely little is known about its female suicide bombers' profiles and whether or not they self-detonate or are arrested beforehand, according to scholarly research on the subject by West Point's Combating Terrorism Center. In contrast, the excerpted 15 January article in Indonesian-language for *benarnews.org*, which is affiliated with Radio Free Asia and covers sensitive issues, detailed the radicalization of an Indonesian female suicide bomber.

According to the article, this teenage female suicide bomber, Rezky Fantasya Rullie, came from a family of jihadists. Her parents both committed suicide bombings at a church in Jolo, Philippines during Sunday mass in January 2019, which killed 23 people. That bombing was recently discussed in a 27 January article for the Filipino website *rappler.com*, which covers terrorism in the country. Following the deaths of her parents, Rullie began living with a bomb-maker, whose bomb killed 15 people at another Jolo church in August 2020. That incident was described in the mainstream Indonesian publication, *jakartapost.com*. However, the excerpted article states that the bomb-maker was also the nephew of Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, who himself was an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) commander in the Philippines as well as senior Abu Sayyaf leader. Consistent with this, the article noted Rullie herself was captured by the Philippines' security forces alongside two Filipino women who had groomed her for a suicide bombing operation and were married to Abu Sayyaf members.

The article also discusses how Indonesian Consul General in the Philippines, Dicky Fabrian, was invited by commander of the Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom), Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan, to meet Rullie and confirm she was Indonesian. Rullie explained how she came to live in the mountainous areas near Jolo and how she was forcibly married to a suicide bomber. The article, therefore, indicated Rullie's radicalization was largely involuntary and the product of the environment into which her parents brought her. It also stated that the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia resolved to conduct patrols in their border regions, especially maritime areas, to prevent terrorists from crossing from one country to another, as occurred with Rullie and her parents. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Local officials said that Rullie herself was groomed by them to become a suicide bomber.”

Source: “Terduga Pelaku Bom Asal Indonesia Mengaku Dipaksa Orangtua Bergabung ISIS (Alleged Indonesian Bomber Claims Parents Forced Her to Join ISIS),” *benarnews.org* (Affiliated with Radio Free Asia), 15 January 2021. <https://www.benarnews.org/indonesian/berita/pembom-asal-indonesia-mengaku-dipaksa-ortu-gabung-isis-01152021211708.html#:~:text=Video-,Terduga%20Pelaku%20Bom%20Asal%20Indonesia%20Mengaku%20Dipaksa%20Orangtua%20Bergabung%20ISIS,diri%20untuk%20misi%20bunuh%20diri.&text=Polisi%20memeriksa%20lokasi%20ledakan%20bom,Filipina%20selatan%2C%2027%20Januari%202019>

Pearson, Elizabeth. “Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Question of the Female Suicide Bomber.” In Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa’s Enduring Insurgency, edited by Jacob Zenn. West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2018

Source: “At least 23 dead in Jolo Cathedral bombing,” *rappler.com* (Indonesian website covering terrorism in the country), 27 January 2021. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/jolo-sulu-cathedral-bombing-january-27-2019>



Continued: Indonesia Female Suicide Bomber Details Inter-Generational Radicalization

Source: “Twin bombings kill 15, wound scores in Philippine south.” *jakartapost.com* (mainstream Indonesian news), 24 August 2020. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2020/08/24/twin-bombings-kill-15-wound-scores-in-philippine-south.html>

A young Indonesian woman who was arrested in the southern Philippines while preparing a suicide bomb mission claimed that her parents forced her to join ISIS. Rezky Fantasya Rullie, who is thought to be in her teens or in her early 20s, was granted permission to meet Indonesian Consul General Dicky Fabrian, said Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan, commander of the Western Mindanao Command, who was also present at the meeting.

Rullie’s parents killed themselves in twin bomb attacks on a church on Jolo Island in the southern Philippines two years ago. Local officials said that Rullie herself was groomed by them to become a suicide bomber. Last October, Philippine troops arrested Rullie with two Filipinos who were suspected of preparing a suicide attack and who were married to members of the Abu Sayyaf, a pro-ISIS militant group based in the southern Philippines.

The conversation between Fabrian and Rullie covered her personal life. Rullie is believed to have been under the guardianship of Mundi Sawadjaan, a bomb maker who was behind another bomb attack near the same church that left 15 people dead in August, local officials said. Mundi is the nephew of Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, an ISIS commander in the Philippines and a senior Abu Sayyaf leader.

According to Vinluan, Indonesia’s consul general said that Jakarta had committed to deploying more assets to guard the common borders between neighboring countries that were easily breached in the fight against terrorism. The Philippines and neighboring countries Indonesia and Malaysia have been conducting joint patrols to secure their maritime borders from militants and piracy under a trilateral cooperation agreement.



Aftermath of the Jolo Cathedral bombings.

Source: Albert Alcain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aftermath_of_the_Jolo_Cathedral_bombings.jpg, Attribution: CC x 2.0



A Young Singaporean Radical's Disrupted Road to Militancy

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 January, Singapore's reputed mainstream publication *straitstimes.com*, detailed the radicalization process of a 16-year old Singaporean. According to the article, the youth, who was a Christian of Indian descent, was planning to attack Muslims with machetes at two mosques. He was, however, detained prior to the plot under Singapore's Internal Security Act. The two mosques he planned to attack were among the best known in Singapore. If the attack had succeeded it might have had a significant impact.

The article refers to Singapore's Internal Security Department, which stated that the youth originally watched Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) videos. He then became enraged after watching an ISIS video from Libya where ISIS beheaded Ethiopian Christians. One year later, in 2019, he read Brentan Tarrant's manifesto and watched Tarrant's live-streamed mass shootings at two New Zealand mosques. Another year later, he read about a Tunisian who stabbed worshippers at Notre Dame basilica in France. This convinced him of the need to defend Christians in Singapore by killing Muslims, who he believed had higher fertility than Christians.



Masjid Yusof Ishak.

Source: Ronggy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Masjid_Yusof_Ishak.jpg, Attribution: CC x 2.0

Once he began engaging in reconnaissance and online research about the two mosques he intended to target, he sought to purchase a gun and went so far as to acquire a tactical vest that he adorned with symbols that Tarrant wore. However, the article notes Singapore's strict gun control measures meant he could only acquire knives, not guns, after which he began watching Youtube videos about slashing. Some time during this preparation, and after he began drafting a manifesto, the Internal Security Department received intelligence tips about his activities and preemptively arrested him. The article states that because he was considered an imminent security threat, he became the youngest individual to have ever been detained on terrorism charges in Singapore.

The article's presentation of the steps of this youth's radicalization demonstrate several key trends. First, the youth was heavily radicalized on the internet; was influenced by ISIS, albeit not to attack on behalf of ISIS but to attack Muslims whom he conflated with ISIS. Second, he sought to become a "copycat" killer, with Tarrant as his main example. Third, he also does not appear to have had a close relationship with his parents, which, according to a separate 31 January article for Singapore-based *Channel News Asia*, is a contributing factor to youth extremism. Although the article does not state how the Internal Security Department discovered the youth's preparations, there was a significant online and offline trail that he left behind. This reflects how lone attackers may be more difficult to detect than larger cells, but they often make errors that can enable security forces to detect them, as occurred in this case. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The secondary student was found to have made detailed plans and preparations to conduct terrorist attacks using a machete against Muslims at two mosques.”

Source: “How a Sec 4 student who planned to attack mosques in S’pore was radicalised within months,” *straitstimes.com* (mainstream publication Singapore), 28 January 2021. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/how-a-sec-4-student-who-planned-to-attack-mosques-in-s-pore-was-radicalised-within-months>



Continued: A Young Singaporean Radical's Disrupted Road to Militancy

Source: "Parents can help steer youth away from online radicalisation," *channelnewsasia.com* (Singapore based news service that sees itself as an alternative to western media on the Pacific region), 31 January 2021. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/parents-help-steer-youth-away-online-radicalisation-14078080>

A 16-year-old Singaporean boy planning a terror attack on Muslims at two mosques was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) last month. A Protestant Christian of Indian ethnicity, he is the first detainee to be influenced by far-right extremist ideology and the youngest person detained under the ISA for terrorism-related activities to date. The secondary student was found to have made detailed plans and preparations to conduct terrorist attacks using a machete against Muslims at two mosque.

Here are details of how he became radicalised and his plans, released by the ISD. In late 2019, he viewed propaganda videos of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) while surfing for violent materials and became angry after viewing a video showing the execution of Ethiopian Christians in Libya. In late 2019, his interest was piqued by an image of Christchurch attacker Brenton Tarrant's rifle online. The anti-Muslim aspect of Tarrant's ideology resonated with him. 2020 The turning point was the terror stabbings on Oct 29 last year in the Notre-Dame basilica in Nice, France, by a 21-year-old Tunisian national, which left three people dead.

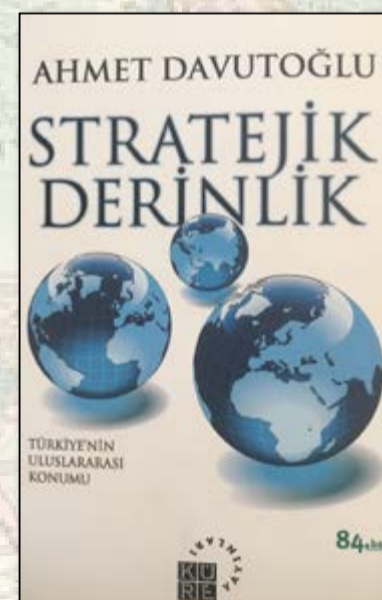
After searching for firearms online, he realised it would be difficult to get one, given the strict gun-control laws. He settled on a machete as his weapon. He also watched YouTube videos on how to attack using a machete and was confident of hitting the arteries of his targets by randomly slashing at the neck and chest areas. In November, he bought a tactical vest online, and planned to adorn it with right-wing extremist symbols, which Tarrant wore. In November, he prepared two documents, which he intended to disseminate prior to his attacks.

After ISD received intelligence about a Singapore-based individual expressing a desire to attack Muslims here, it identified the student. Given the specific nature of his plans, he was assessed as posing an imminent security threat. He was issued an order of detention on December 23, and is the youngest person to be detained under the ISA to date.

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>



Tensions Escalate between Kurds and the Syrian Regime

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying articles provide insight into the reasons behind the recently escalating tension between the Kurds and the Syrian regime in northern Syria. As the first article from *al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East, discusses, Damascus is encouraging Arab tribes to escalate their violence against the Kurds to undermine the self-declared autonomous Kurdish Administration's control over the region. In addition, as per an interview of a Kurdish official published in *Hawarnews.com*, pro-Kurdish news site closely monitoring developments in northern Syria, the Syrian regime has also increased the presence of pro-Iranian militias in some Kurdish areas. These pro-Iranian militias and the provocations of Arab tribes by the Syrian regime creates instability in northern Syria, which endangers the safety and security of American forces stationed there.

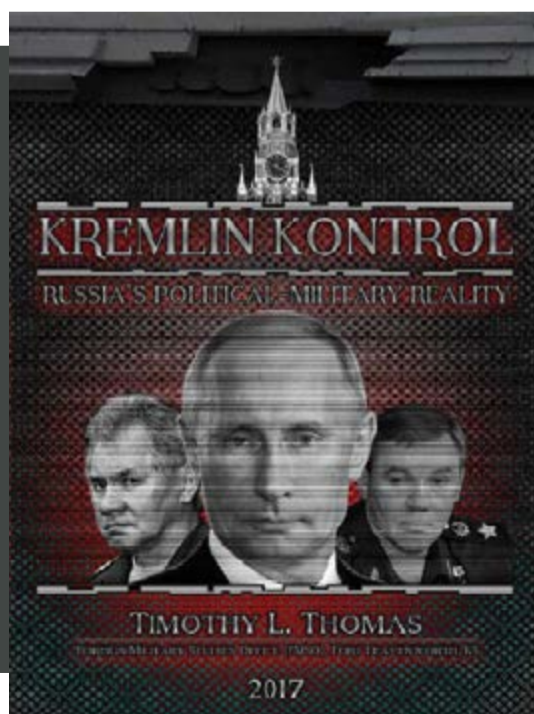


Press conference by the spokesman of the SDF, Kino Gabriel (center).
Source: VOA, via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forces_d%C3%A9mocratiques_syriennes_22_janvier_2018.jpg, Attribution: CC-PD-Mark|PD VOA

The article also discusses some other possible triggering factors. For example, Turkey and the Syrian regime might have brokered a deal to weaken the Kurds because the perception is that the new US administration is likely to increase support for the Syrian Kurds who both Damascus and Ankara see as a threat. Another incentive for Russia-backed Damascus to cooperate with Ankara is the prospect of ending the US military presence in Syria. The author also points out that some have argued that the Kurds might have escalated the tension to clear the remnants of regime forces from Hasakah and Qamishli. However, Kurdish officials stated that the regime escalated the situation and Kurds seized the opportunity to fully take the control of both cities. The tensions seem to be diffused for now. Both sides engaged in a dialogue with Russian mediation in the past, but this time around Russia shows no indication that it will mediate to find a sustainable solution. In fact, when Kurds wanted to send a delegation to Damascus for a dialogue, Russia refused to provide security guarantees to the Kurdish delegation.

The Kurdish official interviewed by *Hawarnews.com* states that Kurds have been in touch with Russians to de-escalate tensions. While Russian mediation in some areas stabilized the situation locally, no progress has been made on long-term solutions. The Kurdish official claims that behind these attacks is a coordinated strategy by the Syrian regime and Turkey to undermine territorial control of Syrian Kurds in northern Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“Damascus is inciting Arab tribes against the Kurds to undermine the autonomous administration and make the region less secure for the Americans.”



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

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/fms0-books/197266/download>



Continued: Tensions Escalate between Kurds and the Syrian Regime

Source: Fehim Tastekin, “How Turkey fits in regime-Kurdish showdown in Syria,” *al-Monitor* (a news site with analysts from the Middle East), 4 February 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2021/02/turkey-syria-damascus-kurds-escalation-where-ankara-stands.html>

The fragile ties between Damascus and the Kurdish-led autonomous administration in northern Syria have seen a dangerous escalation...

...

Kurdish sources told Al-Monitor that the Russians did little to mediate in the crisis and declined to provide a security guarantee to a delegation the Kurds wanted to send to Damascus...

...Intelligence contacts between Turkey and Syria make sense in the context of the common threat the two sides perceive from Kurdish autonomy, but they are unlikely to have advanced that much yet, he said.

...According to the Syrian daily al-Watan, senior Turkish intelligence and military officials held talks in Damascus Dec. 29. Meeting on the same day, the Turkish and Russian foreign ministers discussed the strategic town of Ain Issa, which Turkish forces had been shelling for weeks...

The Kurds also float a scenario whereby the Russians are making use of the Turkish threat to compel the Kurds to cede territorial control to the government, while Damascus is inciting Arab tribes against the Kurds to undermine the autonomous administration and make the region less secure for the Americans. In other words, Damascus is trying to deter the Americans as much as possible as Washington becomes more protective of the Kurds under new President Joe Biden.

...

The final scenario has to do with Turkey. The argument goes that Turkey’s prospects of mounting a fresh military offensive or expanding Operation Peace Spring on the eastern bank of the Euphrates have dimmed after Biden’s victory... Turkey was believed to also eye the Derik area on the border, which US forces use as a supply route from Iraq to Syria. The new reality, however, is forcing Ankara to abandon such plans and seek cooperation with Damascus instead to crush the Kurdish self-rule.

From Damascus’ point of view... Another incentive to cooperate with Ankara would be the prospect of ending the US military presence in Syria. Although reconciling Turkish and Syrian interests remains a tall order, observers do not rule out the possibility of a pragmatic Turkish-Syrian understanding against Kurdish-held areas to the east of the Euphrates. A destabilized northeastern Syria might curb the Americans’ incentives to stay in the region, which would serve the interests of both Damascus and Ankara.

Source: “Çiya Kurd: Provokasyon encama hevkarîya hikumeta Şamê û dewleta Tirk e (Çiya Kurd: The provocation is the result of cooperation between the government of Damascus and the Turkish state),” *Hawarnews.com* (a pro-Kurdish news site closely monitoring developments in northern Syria), 30 January 2021. <https://www.hawarnews.com/kr/roportaj/ciya-kurd-provokasyon-encama-hevkarîya-hikumeta-sam-dewleta-tirk-e-r181.html>

Bedran Çiya Kurd stated that they did not meet with Damascus... and instead met with Russia, “Russia should fulfill its responsibilities and end the provocations.”

...

According to available information, the Damascus government has increased its power in the region. It especially increased the Fatimiyun Battalion affiliated with Iran.

...

The Damascus government and the Turkish state are collaborating. On one hand, the Turkish state makes threats, while on the other hand, the Damascus government carries out attacks. They want to continue the attacks on the region from all directions.



Zuljanah: Iran's New Solid-Fuel Rocket

OE Watch Commentary: Iran's satellite launch program is of increasing policy concern in the United States and Europe because of the applicability toward ballistic missiles of the technology used to launch satellites. At issue is a legal loophole: Prior to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the United Nations viewed satellite launches through the lens of the nuclear program, but the Iran nuclear deal changed legal interpretation. Rather than ban rockets with the capability to carry nuclear warheads, Annex B of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which enshrined the JCPOA into the UN system, "call[ed] upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology." The Iranian government has argued that it designs its rockets to carry satellites and not warheads and that therefore they are legal.



1 February 2021 launch of the Zuljanah three-stage "satellite carrier" from the Imam Khomeini Space Base in Semnan, Iran.

Source: Fars News Agency, https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1399/11/14/13991114000857_Test_PhotoN.jpg

The latest Iranian rocket test described in the excerpted article from the *Fars News Agency*, a service with close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, may further raise concerns about the dual-purpose potential of Iran's rocket program. While previous Iranian rockets such as the Simorgh and Qiam were liquid fueled, the Iranian military described the Zuljanah rocket as solid fueled, at least in its first two stages. A shift to solid-fuel rockets would be significant for Iran because it allows for both easier fuel storage and more compact rockets. While multi-stage rockets are useful for launching satellites or other payloads into orbit as they enable the rocket to shed deadweight once the fuel is expended, the technology is also necessary for an intercontinental ballistic missile should Iranian authorities end their own self-imposed moratorium on developing missiles with a range of more than 2,000 kilometers (1250 miles).

At 84 feet, the Zuljanah is about one-quarter the size of the Saturn V, which was 363 feet tall, and slightly less than one-third the size of the SpaceX Heavy Falcon, which is 230 feet tall. The Zuljanah's 200-kilogram payload would be sufficient in theory for a nuclear warhead; the W80 low-to-intermediate yield nuclear warhead produced by the United States in the late 1970s weighs only 110 kilograms. It is not clear, however, that Iranian engineers could build such a compact warhead even if they wanted to.

While much of the policy concern about Iran's satellite launch ambitions may be theoretical, the biggest immediate concern should the Zuljanah be successful is the Iranian military's claim that it operates from mobile launchers. This will in turn raise suspicion about Iranian intentions, given that the mobility of launchers is not generally a concern when launching civilian satellites. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Zuljanah can be launched from a mobile launch pad”

Source: “Zuljanah’ Dastavarad-e Jadid Faza-ye Keshavar ba Qadratmandtarin Motor Sokht Jamid (‘Zuljanah’ the Country’s Newest Space Achievement Equipped with the Most Powerful Solid Fuel Engine),” *Fars News Agency* (News agency with close ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), 2 February 2021. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/13991114000994>

Zuljanah, a three-stage solid fuel satellite, is the latest space achievement of the country in the field of indigenous satellites. The Space Group of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics announced news of its launch from Imam Khomeini Space Base in Semnan yesterday. The Zuljanah was first mentioned in February 2020, and after the unsuccessful launch of the Zafar satellite by the Simorgh rocket, the minister of Defense announced the launch of this satellite carrier this year....

The Zuljanah is 25.5 meters long, weighs 52 tons, and has three stages. The first and second stages have 1.5 meter-diameter solid fuel engines with a capacity of 75 tons (expandable to 100 tons) and a third-stage liquid fuel engine. With a diameter of 1.25 meters, the engine of the third stage of this satellite is in fact the same as the engine of the second stage of the Safir rocket.

The Zuljanah uses solid fuel in its first and second stages, unlike the Safir, Simorgh and Ghased satellite launchers that use liquid fuel in their first stage.... The Zuljanah is able to carry 200 kilograms of cargo, which can place one or more satellites with a total weight of 200 kg into orbit up to 500 kilometers above earth. Another feature of Zuljanah is that it does not need a fixed base for launching and it can be launched from a mobile launch pad from anywhere in the country.



Iran: Enemies Will Be Destroyed with Missile Power

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian military has made its missile program a pillar of its asymmetrical warfare program. While Iranian small boats and unmanned aerial vehicles can counter adversaries at short and medium ranges, Iran's vulnerability has long been confronting adversaries operating outside the range of its boats and planes. Crudely put, while U.S. or other aircraft carriers operating in the Persian Gulf might be vulnerable to various Iranian platforms, the same aircraft carriers operating in the northern Indian Ocean would effectively be immune from Iranian attack simply because they were out-of-range. Iran's missile program may slowly be eroding the immunity born of distance, however.

In the excerpted article from *Mashregh News*, an outlet close to Iran's intelligence and security apparatus, Mohammad Bagheri, chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, announces the latest iteration of annual military exercises. The exercises included the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' successful launch of missiles at targets more than 1100 miles away in the northern Indian Ocean. However, while Iranian television showed footage of both the launch and the alleged destruction of targets, the Iranian press often doctors or misrepresents coverage to exaggerate success or cover up failure. Nevertheless, the missile test does elucidate an increasingly important element of Iranian deterrence, one Bagheri underlined when he threatened to use Iran's evolving missile power to strike not only at an adversary's naval ships, but also its maritime trade. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



A Missile Launch During the Great Prophet-15 Exercises.
Source: Mizan Online, https://www.mizanonline.com/files/fa/news/1399/10/27/2938354_122.jpg

“They have maritime trade which can targeted and destroyed by missiles.”

Source: “Entekhab-e Ahdaf Razmayesh Payambar ‘Azam-15 dar ‘Amagh 1500-kilometer Aghiyanos-e Hind Mo’anandar Ast” (The Choice of Targets in the Great Prophet-15 Exercises 1800 Kilometers Away in the Indian Ocean is Significant), *Mashregh News* (outlet close to Iran's intelligence and security apparatus), 16 January 2021. <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/1168797>

Major General Mohammad Bagheri, chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, spoke on the sidelines of the final stage of the 15th Great Prophet Exercises of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which were held in the general region of the central desert of Iran, and said: “The exercises of the past 15 days and the upcoming five days, which are intensive and almost conducted almost simultaneously, show the extraordinary readiness of the armed forces in all dimensions of land, air, sea and air and missile defense.”

...General Bagheri described the choice of targets at a distance of more than 1,800 kilometers south of the Oman Sea and in the Indian Ocean as meaningful and said, “If the enemies of Iran have malicious intent toward our national interests, they have maritime trade which can targeted and destroyed by missiles.... Although we do not intend to carry out any attack, if the adversary acts with bad intentions towards our country, he will be attacked with Iran's missile power in the shortest time possible.”



Iran: Reconstruction and Overhaul of Helicopters

OE Watch Commentary: Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran exploited a huge Iranian vulnerability. Under the shah, imperial Iran had invested billions of dollars in a top-shelf military replete with platforms purchased from the United States. After the 1979 Revolution and the new Iranian regime's seizure of the American hostages, the Iranian government was unable to get its purchases delivered or spare parts to operate existing aircraft. While the Islamic Republic ultimately survived the Iraqi onslaught, the lasting strategic lesson for the Iranian government was that it needed an indigenous capability to produce and upgrade existing platforms. Often, Iranian officials discuss their ability to upgrade jetfighters like the F-14s, which Iran still flies almost a half century after their purchase. In the excerpted article from the *Iranian Labour News Agency*, a semi-official outlet that began covering labor issues but now also covers general news and defense, Second Brigadier General (equivalent to an O-7) Yousef Ghorbani, commander of the Army Air Force, discusses Iran's success at overhauling and upgrading Iran's substantial helicopter fleet. For Iran, this is an important capability both because its helicopter fleet is its military's workhorse and because of the harsh environments in which its helicopters must operate. As the Iranian military increases its Makran Coast operations along the Gulf of Oman, it must rely on helicopters to compensate for the lack of roads and difficult terrain. Ghorbani also noted that night vision capabilities are becoming more standard for Iranian helicopters, which shapes the operational environment because it signifies an important domestic capability for a key regional adversary, as well as possibly its anti-American proxies, such as Lebanese Hezbollah and the Houthi militias in Yemen, with whom Iran often shares technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Iranian Army Helicopters prepare to conduct COVID-19 Disinfection Flights, March 2020.
Source: Jam News, <https://media.jamnews.com/medium1/1398/12/25/JamNewsImage21162007.PNG>

“Last year, we succeeded in overhauling 40 helicopters”

Source: “Bazsazi va Overhawl-e Balgerdha ba Talash-e Motakhasasan-e Havaniruz” (Reconstruction and overhaul of helicopters with the efforts of aviation specialists), *Iranian Labour News Agency* (a semi-official outlet that began covering labor issues but now also covers general news and defense), 5 February 2021. <https://www.ilna.news/ش-ال-ت-اب-اه-در-گل-اب-ل-اه-رو-ای-زاس-ز-اب-3/1034075-ی-س-ای-س-ش-خ-ب-زورین-اوه-ن-اص-ص-خ-تم>

Second Brigadier General and Pilot Yousef Ghorbani, commander of the Army Air Force, stated at the end of the overhaul of seven attack, reconnaissance and transport helicopters conducted at the First Air Base of Kermanshah, “Last year, we succeeded in overhauling 40 helicopters, which shows the knowledge and expertise of the native forces of this land.” Brigadier General Ghorbani said, “From zero to 100 percent reconstruction and overhaul of helicopters is done with the efforts of aviation specialists and we have reached complete self-sufficiency in this field.” He also spoke about the night vision system: “This system used to belong to several countries, but today it has reached the stage of indigenous development with the capable hands of knowledge-based companies and aviation employees, and we can operate flights now during the day and night.”



Growing Iranian Influence Near the Border with Israel in Southwest Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian influence continues to grow in the western half of Syria's Daraa Province, near the border with Israel. The eastern half of the province is largely under the control of the Russia-backed 8th Brigade, an umbrella formation that brings together former rebels who entered into Russia-brokered "reconciliation" agreements with the Syrian regime in 2018. This brigade is led by a former rebel leader named Ahmed Al-Oda and nominally operates under the command of the Russia-controlled 5th Corps of the Syrian military. In Daraa's western half and the adjacent province of Quneitra, near the border with Israel, Russian influence is limited. Iranian influence, in contrast, is significant and continues to grow. As noted in the first accompanying excerpt, from the Qatar-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, Iran's leverage in Daraa comes not only from the presence of militias linked to Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran's Quds Force, but also from close relations with high-level officers in the Syrian security and military institutions, particularly the Syrian Army's 4th Division and the local branches of Syria's two main military security agencies, the directorates of Military Intelligence and Air Force Intelligence.



Daraa Province Location.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daraa_in_Syria_2016.svg, Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0 DE

The 4th Division, which is controlled by Bashar al-Assad's brother Maher, is an elite unit in the Syrian Army. Its relationship with Iran blossomed early in the Syrian conflict, after Iran was the sole country to provide the Assad regime with substantial military assistance. With Russia's 2015 entry into the Syrian battlefield, high-ranking officers and warlords throughout the Syrian loyalist universe shifted from Iranian to Russian patronage. There is no indication of such a shift in the 4th Division's upper echelons, particularly insofar as their activities in Daraa are concerned, which are regularly characterized by opposition media as tightly aligned with Iranian interests. Over the past year, the 4th Division has increased its presence in the western half of Daraa, emerging as the main fulcrum of Syrian army presence there. As reported in the second passage, also from *al-Araby al-Jadid*, the 4th Division continues to reinforce its positions in the western parts of the province, intending to consolidate its control over reconciled communities that remain resistant to joining either it or a node of the Hezbollah-run militia network.

Last November, Major General Abdel Salam Mahmoud was appointed as the head of the Air Force Intelligence directorate for Syria's southern provinces (Daraa, Sweida, and Quneitra). According to the accompanying excerpt from the Syrian opposition news website *Zaman al-Wasl*, the appointment was made at Iran's behest. The article notes that Mahmoud secretly visited Tehran immediately before assuming his new duties, though the claim is uncorroborated and attributed to an anonymous source. Yet there is reason to believe a close connection: Mahmoud is a native of the now-vacated Shiite town of al-Fu'ah, in rebel-controlled Idlib Province. In Syria, adherents of the religious practices and beliefs associated with Iran ("Twelver Shiites") represent a mere 1% of the pre-war population. Those in positions of influence, such as Mahmoud, can be expected to be among Iran's most reliable Syrian allies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“Among the issues that raise concern for many parties is the direct Iranian presence or through local proxies in southern Syria...in addition to Iranian penetration of regime forces, especially the 4th Division and the military security apparatus...”



Continued: Growing Iranian Influence Near the Border with Israel in Southwest Syria

Source: مؤشرات حراك روسي أردني لاحتواء النفوذ الإيراني في درعا
(Indications of Russian-Jordanian Moves to Contain Iranian Influence in Daraa),” *al-Araby al-Jadid* (prominent, Qatari-aligned daily), 5 November 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/ovy4wewd>

Among the issues that raise concern for many parties is the direct Iranian presence or through local proxies in southern Syria. The data indicate that the recruitment of Iranian militias in southern Syria continues secretly and openly, whether by offering financial inducements or security guarantees... This in addition to Iranian penetration of regime forces, especially the 4th Division and the military security apparatus. The Observatory stated that the recruitment and “Shiitization” of young men and women is carried out through entities belonging to Iran and Hezbollah, such as the Al-Areen Brigades, affiliated to the 313 Brigade located in northern Daraa, in addition to centers in Saida, Dael and Izraa. The new recruits undergo training courses in the Lajat area, east of Daraa, and close to the borders with the occupied Syrian Golan in Quneitra Province. They attract young men fleeing the regime’s security services because of compulsory and reserve service.

Source: الفرقة الرابعة الموالية لإيران تنتشر بريف درعا وتعتقل مدنيين
(The Pro-Iran 4th Division Deploys in Rural Daraa and Arrests Civilians), “*al-Araby al-Jadid* (prominent, Qatari-aligned daily), 23 January 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/j7fdxby6>

Units from the Syrian regime’s 4th Division deployed in the western countryside of Daraa Province, in southern Syria, today (Saturday), following meetings held by the division’s officers with local delegates, in which they demanded the handover of dozens of wanted men to the regime...

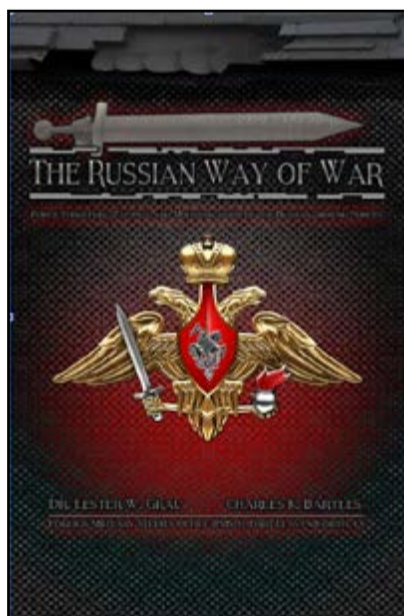
These moves came two days after the 4th Division brought in large military reinforcements to its sites in Daraa Province last Thursday, including dozens of vehicles, tanks and trucks loaded with military and logistical equipment, and personnel from the capital, Damascus. It is likely that the reinforcements came in order to carry out a major security campaign that the pro-Iranian 4th Division is preparing to launch in Daraa, especially its western countryside...

Source: الأسد يسند المسؤولية الأمنية جنوب سوريا لضابط مقرب من إيران
(Assad Assigns Security Responsibilities in Southern Daraa to Officer Close to Iran),” *Zaman al-Wasl* (Syrian opposition news website), 20 November 2020. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/132163/>

Zaman al-Wasl learned that the Assad regime decided to appoint Major General Abdel Salam Mahmoud deputy director of the Air Force Intelligence Department, in charge of the security files in southern Syria’s three provinces: Daraa, Sweida, and Quneitra.

A private source confirmed that the appointment of Mahmoud, who comes from the town of al-Fu’ah in Idlib’s countryside, came at the request of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The source notes that the officer, who belongs to the Shiite sect, visited Tehran secretly for several days before starting his duties as a security official in charge of southern Syria.

The source attributed the support of the Revolutionary Guards in particular and the Iranian government in general to Major General Abd al-Salam Mahmoud. In addition to his sectarian affiliation, he is one of the senior security figures in the Air Force Intelligence who spilled Syrian blood, especially as the longtime head of the terrifying Investigations Branch of the Air Intelligence Administration Stationed at Mazzeah airport from 2010 to 2019, when he was appointed as deputy director of the administration, under the command of Major General Ghassan Ismail, after the retirement of the former director of the administration, Major General Jamil al-Hassan.



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

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

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Continued Growth and Development in Domestic High-Tech Military Industries of Saudi Arabia and the UAE

OE Watch Commentary: Among the most consequential military trends in the Middle East is the indigenous development and production of autonomous weapons systems and other platforms relying on new technologies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been at the forefront of developing these capabilities, focusing on the localization of ownership and production in their defense industries, while at the same time investing extensively in new technologies associated with the “Fourth Industrial Revolution.” To foster and grow their domestic high-tech military industries, each of the two countries has in recent years established a new entity: the EDGE conglomerate in the UAE and the Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) in Saudi Arabia (see: “Saudi Arabia and the UAE Streamline Military Industry,” *OE Watch*, January 2020). EDGE was formed in late 2019, as a merger of the UAE’s main defense manufacturers. SAMI was established in 2017 as the main vehicle for achieving the Saudi Vision 2030 goal of localizing 50% of Saudi military spending by 2030.

The accompanying articles, from local English-language publications, highlight recent developments in Saudi and Emirati efforts to grow their domestic military industries. The first passage, from the EDGE website, reports that last December it became the first Middle Eastern weapons company to rank among the 25 largest defense companies in the world, according to an annual list published by the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)*. In the second passage, from the English-language Emirati daily *The National*, EDGE’s CEO explains how the Coronavirus pandemic has further underlined the importance of localizing production, given the ruptures it has caused in the global supply chain. Last summer, the UAE established the Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC). The council’s director general is also EDGE’s CEO, and its research is likely to feed into priority sectors for EDGE. As reported in the third accompanying passage, also from *The National*, the ARTC’s priorities are “autonomous robotics, advanced materials, cryptography, digital security, directed energy, quantum computing and secure systems.”

The final accompanying passage, from the Saudi English-language daily *Arab News*, comes from a January 2021 interview with SAMI’s CEO. In it, he alludes to SAMI’s recent acquisition of the Advanced Electronics Company (AEC), a maker of high-tech military equipment that was previously a Saudi-foreign joint venture. He mentions SAMI’s goal of becoming “among the top 25 defense companies in the world by 2030” and explains that it intends to do so by focusing on specific sectors, including “defense electronics.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“Advanced technologies have enabled us to thrive, be bold, agile and disruptive in an era of hybrid warfare...”



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (2017).

Source: lawepw [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Riyadh,_Saudi_Arabia_\(2048x1367\)_36864830374.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Riyadh,_Saudi_Arabia_(2048x1367)_36864830374.jpg), Attribution: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Continued: Continued Growth and Development in Domestic High-Tech Military Industries of Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Source: “EDGE First in Middle East to be Ranked Among Top 25 Military Companies in the World,” *EDGE Group*, 9 December 2020. <https://edgegroup.ae/news/559>

Marking its first year, EDGE, the UAE’s advanced technology group for defence and beyond, was ranked among the top 25 military suppliers in the world by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a think tank that specialises in data analysis of military expenditure and arms trade among other peace and security related matters... Commenting on the new data released, H.E. Faisal Al Bannai, CEO and Managing Director, EDGE said... “Advanced technologies have enabled us to thrive, be bold, agile and disruptive in an era of hybrid warfare. As we continue to build the UAE’s sovereign capabilities and develop partnerships for export growth, we remain excited about what the future holds”.

Source: “UAE’s Edge eyes chips and drones for charting a post-Covid course,” *The National* (prominent Emirati English-language daily), 30 September 2020. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/uae-s-edge-eyes-chips-and-drones-for-charting-a-post-covid-course-1.1084965>

To that end, Edge is looking to localise production of a greater number of component parts and the platforms that enable autonomous vehicles and drones, he said... “Those who control the skies control the military landscape,” Mr Al Bannai said. Given the UAE’s relatively small population of less than 10 million, “drones and autonomous capabilities are a strategic need for our future”.

Source: “Abu Dhabi’s new Advanced Technology Research Council approves seven R&D priorities,” *The National* (prominent Emirati English-language daily), 18 August 2020. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/technology/abu-dhabi-s-new-advanced-technology-research-council-approves-seven-r-d-priorities-1.1065354>

The seven priorities set out by the council are: autonomous robotics, advanced materials, cryptography, digital security, directed energy, quantum computing and secure systems.

Source: “INTERVIEW: Head of SAMI explains how he wants to build Saudi Arabia’s defenses through homegrown industry,” *Arab News* (prominent Saudi English-language daily), 10 January 2021. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1790031/business-economy>

SAMI was set up with five main divisions: Aeronautics, land systems, defense electronics, weapons and missiles, and emerging technologies. One of its main mandates — under the regulatory supervision of the General Authorities for Military Industries — is to support research and development of new defense technology. The aim is for SAMI to be ranked among the top 25 defense companies in the world by 2030, and the acquisition of AEC has given it a big push in that direction, taking many years off the timescale toward that goal... The deal also brings AEC under the umbrella of the Public Investment Fund (PIF) — the Kingdom’s sovereign wealth fund and owner of SAMI — and the multibillion-dollar resources the PIF has... Abukhaled recognizes that there are limitations as to the kind of equipment and systems the Kingdom will be able to manufacture on its own. “To design and manufacture very sophisticated fifth-generation fighter jets, for example, isn’t going to happen in the near future. It’s a huge amount of investment,” he said. “But I think I’d turn the question around and ask what kind of things we can’t make. There are so many things that can be done immediately. Maintenance, repair and overhaul for example, UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), defense electronics, land systems — all these are feasible now”... Such ambitious plans are now feasible because Saudi Arabia has a cadre of well-trained and experienced engineers who have learned their skill at some of the biggest international defense companies, and are ready to apply those skills at home.



South Africa: Too Many High Ranking Officers, Too Little Money

OE Watch Commentary: According to the South African Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is top heavy with generals and admirals. As the excerpted accompanying article from South African Trade Publication *DefenceWeb* notes, there is one general, admiral, or equivalent official for every 184 personnel in the DoD/SANDF, a ratio far greater than those of most Western militaries. Furthermore, out of the country's more than 400 generals, only 97 are assigned to combat or intelligence services.

This imbalance has its roots in the precursor to the SANDF, the SA Defence Force (SADF). As a result, the present day military now has numerous situations where a post previously headed by a colonel with a small staff is now headed by a general with a large staff.

The problems of a top-heavy military are compounded by SANDF's shrinking budgets over the past years, a casualty of the country's economic troubles. A military already constrained by funds must allocate a disproportionate amount to high-ranking officers. As a result, other priorities, such as training, facilities, maritime security, and even personnel end strength can suffer. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



South African soldier.

Source: MONUSCO Photos/Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/10/FIB-training-03_%289314147732%29.jpg

“... rank inflation poses “a major risk” to a sustainable DoD as far as personnel strength and costs are concerned.”

Source: “SANDF is top-heavy with generals – Parliamentary research report,” *DefenceWeb* (a South African trade publication), 3 February 2021. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/sandf-is-top-heavy-with-generals-parliamentary-research-report/>

A partial answer comes from respected military analyst Helmoed Heitman. He is quoted as telling a Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) meeting rank inflation poses “a major risk” to a sustainable DoD as far as personnel strength and costs are concerned. This phenomenon dates back to the then SA Defence Force (SADF), forerunner of the SANDF in what is now democratic South Africa.

There are similar examples in the SA Air Force (SAAF) from a brigadier (before the new rank system was introduced) handling personnel matters to a brigadier general in each of the Air Office and Air Command, this despite a centralised Human Resources Division. The SA Navy (SAN) also has many senior admirals for a relatively small navy with limited vessels.



Uganda: Museveni's Strategic Use of Violence to Retain the Presidency

OE Watch Commentary: The lead-up to the January 2021 election that saw Yoweri Museveni reelected as President of Uganda, a role he has held since 1986, was at times violent. At least seven individuals were killed and many more injured. That period was also marred by repeated harassment and intimidation of the main opposition leader, Bobi Wine, and his supporters by members of the security forces. However, as the excerpted accompanying article from *African Arguments*, a pan-African news platform from the Royal African Society, reports, Museveni was careful not to promulgate so much violence as to enrage international backers to the point they would no longer support him. Still, despite his efforts, there has been some blowback.

Museveni's experience with previous elections helped him learn the limits as to how far he can push. The 2006 arrest of the opposition candidate on fabricated rape charges and the arrest and torture of Bobi Wine in 2018 led to large protests in Uganda and strong condemnation outside the country. This time by clamping down early on opposition supporters, containing the flow of negative information by moving violent repression to areas less prone to press coverage, and spreading money around, Museveni was probably able to lessen some of the blows to his image. That there was still oppression, violence, and intimidation during this recent election is not in doubt, and the anger among Ugandans against what he did is strong. However, he remains in power and even appears to be grooming his son, a former Special Forces commander, to succeed him as president.



Ugandan soldiers serving as peacekeepers in Somalia.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/14905611398/in/photolist-oHa9XY-7zVhGo-7zV66Y-9BX4QJ-7b3hFt-9BxwRY-8r8Njr-8rbVs9-7dhSbx-7dmKSL-7Mv6cx-bmv8eT-QUStmX-7dhSuv-79kmJJ-79v6Th-79JKW-oyXkrf-9Bxwsd-7zV4j7-zqJWEF-787Ys-eciXpL-7dmD95-bmUfFJ-7dmG6J-pQc8g5-rKs5J5-7zRj5B-Tz1gLu-9CABEy-9BX5Aq-7avm1T-7zV48S-7zV4Dy-gH2oeA-7XnqjD-e1Y1rB-bsU4oe-7dml3y-7dmKGS-7dmDLq-7dmH4Q-r5MCe1-7dmJ9N-Ka9dLd-9BU5pZ-dADqDX-9BX33s-23uU3iL, Attribution: Public Domain

Despite Museveni's repressive actions, Uganda so far remains stable in a region that is often in turmoil. With foreign businesses investing in Kampala, and Western diplomats periodically calling for Ugandan soldiers to serve as peacekeepers, an action that is economically beneficial to the Ugandan government, it is to Museveni's benefit to control the intensity and duration of his military's brutal repression so as not to overly offend these foreign interests. However, it is uncertain if his attempt this time to strategically use violence for political gain went too far. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Repeated arrests and office raids are part of a strategy designed to project control without overly provoking domestic or international criticism.”

Source: Kristof Titec and Anna Reuss, “How Museveni mastered violence to win elections in Uganda,” *African Arguments* (a pan-African platform for news from the Royal African Society), 19 November 2020. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/11/how-museveni-mastered-violence-to-win-elections-in-uganda/>

Repeated arrests and office raids are part of a strategy designed to project control without overly provoking domestic or international criticism.

A key strategy of the Museveni regime is to clamp down as early and consistently as possible. Even from early in the election campaign, police will violently break up opposition events, raid or close their party offices, and arrest their leaders for brief periods – as happened yesterday.

Another part of this tactic is to take violent repression out of the main centres of attention. Instead of targeting high-level figures, the NRM focuses attacks on and abductions on opposition figures with lower profiles or outside Kampala. These actions attract less media attention but no less effectively spread the message of dominance at the grassroots.

The regime has also used money to attract support, particularly among the youth. President Museveni hands out brown envelopes full of cash to individuals and associations around elections, while candidates spend tens of thousands of dollars in the course of their campaigns. While effective and now expected among the electorate, limitless patronage is not without risks. In 2011, the plundering of state coffers for campaign spending saw inflation skyrocket after the elections.



Nigeria: Governor Wants Mercenaries to Combat Boko Haram

OE Watch Commentary: The idea of hiring mercenaries to combat Boko Haram is not new. However, as the excerpted accompanying article from the South African non-profit think tank *Institute for Security Studies* notes, Nigeria's Borno State governor has called on the government to hire mercenaries to combat the terrorist organization. Whether the government's inability to defeat Boko Haram is due to issues with its military's training, leadership, or materiel is not described. However, the article is clear that there is widespread concern among the region's population that the government alone is not up to the job.

Mercenaries have long been employed in African nations. Nigeria most recently used mercenaries to stop Boko Haram attacks before the 2015 elections. Before that, from 1967 to 1970, both Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra brought in mercenaries. However, despite the previous use of these guns for hire, Nigeria's current president, Muhammadu Buhari, has condemned their use. Given the African Union's Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, which Nigeria ratified, it appears that at least at the national level there is little appetite for engaging their services.

Interestingly, as the article points out, the 2015 contingent of mercenaries had significant success in reclaiming territory from Boko Haram. Reportedly, the South African mercenaries employed a doctrine known as "relentless pursuit." Unfortunately for the Nigerians, when the mercenaries left over nonpayment of their services, some of the gains against Boko Haram were erased. However, their achievements before leaving are one of the reasons the Borno State governor is calling once again for private military contractors to return to Nigeria. The ongoing success of mercenaries in neighboring Cameroon, along with serious concerns regarding their costs and possible human rights violations, provides points both for and against their use in Nigeria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Are mercenaries needed to assist Nigerian soldiers, such as those pictured here, in their effort to combat Boko Haram?

Source: USAFRICOM/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/50111205042/in/photolist-2jma2pQ-diWZMK-2eJhvgH-diX4oH-diWZAr-7eBNui-2gJexQb-fffJot-e3yuMp-2hCnNT5-26k4pWK-eMTwa3-JdKQnW-23ADbY5-2hCnSXT-2epyJUw-2hCjWzk-2hCjWNm-diX24D-diWZHV-7ZkExZ-7eBNwv-diX4yp-diX4tn-2hCokVA-23wouWo-diWXYU-7XPCT4-7XDnRN-diX2oQ-diWYzm-8uNPNs-7XA9IX-diWYKo-7XSWuo-7XPzUg-7XDo5U-7XDnYu-7XDo3q-87zH7W-diWY7m-2hCjWAh-2hCoQ4q-epw7qP-23ApooY-24ZvUWZ-26hNdn5-7ZeuSt-7Zi1gw-7ZetsF>, Attribution: CC BY 2.0

“A Nigerian governor’s call for mercenaries to support the counter-insurgency revives questions about a controversial practice.”

Source: Teniola Tayo, “Soldiers for Rent in the Boko Haram Crisis,” *Institute for Security Studies* (a South African non-profit think tank emphasizing security related issues), 8 February 2021. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/soldiers-for-rent-in-the-boko-haram-crisis>

A Nigerian governor’s call for mercenaries to support the counter-insurgency revives questions about a controversial practice.

The profit-driven motivations of mercenaries and the companies hiring them should never be underestimated, and their private contractor status also makes it difficult to hold them accountable. There are allegations that mercenaries have also been recruited by Boko Haram.

Mercenaries have a rich and chequered history in Africa including in countries like Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Libya and Sierra Leone. Experience has repeatedly shown the dangers of resorting to these fighters. Still, they have enduring appeal to some African governments, most recently in Mozambique.

Whether mercenaries should again be recruited in the war against Boko Haram remains a valid question. Victory in the war against extremism in the Lake Chad Basin has been slow to materialise and attacks are recorded weekly. South African mercenaries appear eager to return to the region, with the Conella representative saying, ‘We would like to come back and finish the work that we started in Nigeria.’



Mexico Arrests Police Accused of Human Rights Abuses



On Federal Police day, former president Enrique Peña Nieto performs a review of the Mexican Federal Police, 2018.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Presidential_review_of_Mexican_Federal_Police,_on_2018_Federal_Police_Day.jpg
Attribution: Wikimedia Commons

OE Watch Commentary: Mexico has arrested 12 police officers allegedly involved in a recent massacre of Central American migrants. According to *Infobae*, a center to center-left Argentine news outlet with excellent regional reporting, the burned bodies of 19 migrants turned up in Tamaulipas state near the U.S. border. The article states that this area is well known for intense fighting between Mexico's Zetas and Gulf cartels. Further, *Infobae* notes that in the past, Mexican police have collaborated often with criminal groups, such as a massacre of 43 students in the southwestern city of Iguala in 2014. *Animal Político*, a popular investigative outlet in Mexico, speculates that this incident could prove further collaboration between police and Mexican cartels. It reports that Mexican authorities, including the Interior Minister, vowed to crack down on official impunity. This particular case will be a major test of Mexico's ability to root out impunity in its police and armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Berg)**

“President Andrés Manuel López Obrador promised when he came to power in December 2018 to end the murders and kidnappings committed by authorities, but the links between the security forces and organized crime have proven difficult to eliminate.”

Source: “Arrestaron a 12 policías implicados en la masacre de Tamaulipas que dejó 19 cadáveres calcinados (They arrested 12 policemen involved in the Tamaulipas massacre that left 19 burned corpses),” *Infobae* (Argentine center to center-left news outlet with excellent regional reporting), 3 February 2021. <https://www.infobae.com/americas/mexico/2021/02/03/arrestaron-a-12-policias-implicados-en-la-masacre-de-tamaulipas-que-dejo-19-cadaveres-calcinados/>

If the participation of law enforcement officials is confirmed, the case would evoke the kidnapping and apparent massacre in 2014 of 43 students in the southwestern city of Iguala by corrupt police officers who collaborated with a drug gang...President Andrés Manuel López Obrador promised when he came to power in December 2018 to end the murders and kidnappings committed by authorities, but the links between the security forces and organized crime have proven difficult to eliminate.

Source: “Fiscalía de Tamaulipas reconoce participación de policías estatales en masacre de Camargo: hay 12 detenidos (Tamaulipas Prosecutor's Office recognizes the participation of state police in the Camargo massacre: there are 12 detainees),” *Animal Político* (a well read investigative outlet in Mexico), 2 February 2021. <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2021/02/fiscalia-tamaulipas-policias-estatales-masacre-camargo-detenidos/>

The prosecutor indicated that they believe that the agents altered the crime scene, since there were no casings and ammunition that matched the shots that the attacked pickup truck received. In addition, contradictions were detected between the police report and the interviews with the agents...The massacre occurred weeks after the president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, assured the country that the human rights of migrants are no longer violated in Mexico. The Secretary of the Interior, Olga Sánchez Cordero...predicted that in this case there would be no impunity.



Colombia Creates Elite Commando Unit to Combat Venezuela-Based Rebels

OE Watch Commentary: Colombian President Iván Duque recently announced the creation of a new elite commando unit within the country's armed forces, slated to begin operations in May 2021. The stated purpose of the unit is to fight drug trafficking organizations and Marxist rebels based out of neighboring Venezuela. As reported by *Noticiero Digital*, a well known center to center-right leaning Venezuelan media outlet, Duque stated that these groups are “protected” by Nicolás Maduro's government in Venezuela. According to the article, Colombian intelligence estimates that approximately 1,400 members of armed groups operate out of Venezuela, conducting cross-border operations in Colombia. An article in *La Jornada*, a popular and generally left-leaning Mexican daily with reporting throughout Latin America, notes that Duque singled out guerrilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in his announcement. Despite the Colombian government signing a peace accord with the FARC in 2016, dissident members of the group remain active; the ELN, moreover, was not a party to that agreement. As one of the most capable armed forces in the region, Colombia's decision could shape the operational environment if its new commandos are able to add serious weight to the fight against transnational guerrilla groups. Duque did not say whether the elite unit would carry out cross-border missions or operate within Colombia only.

End OE Watch Commentary (Berg)



The FARC's coat of arms, featuring a shield and the Colombian flag along with its revolutionary symbols..

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Armed_Forces_of_Colombia#/media/File:Escudo_Oficial_de_las_Fuerzas_Armadas_Revolucionarias_de_Colombia_-_FARC-EP.png, Attribution: Wikimedia Commons

“According to Colombian military intelligence, there are about 1,400 members of Colombian armed groups in Venezuela, who travel on both sides of the border. “There is no refuge here, wherever the criminals are, justice has to come,” Duque warned.”

Source: “Colombia crea comando élite para combatir guerrilleros y narcos ‘protegidos’ por Maduro (Colombia creates elite command to fight guerrillas and narcos ‘protected’ by Maduro),” *Noticiero Digital* (well-known center to center-right Venezuelan media outlet), 8 February 2021. <https://www.noticierodigital.com/2021/02/colombia-crea-comando-elite-para-combatir-guerrilleros-y-narcos-protegidos-por-maduro/>

According to Colombian military intelligence, there are about 1,400 members of Colombian armed groups in Venezuela, who travel on both sides of the border. “There is no refuge here, wherever the criminals are, justice has to come,” Duque warned... Colombia has constantly denounced that Venezuela shelters Colombian rebels, something that the Chavista administration has denied and calls “fake news.”

Source: “Colombia crea comando élite para combatir guerrilleros de las FARC (Colombia creates elite command to fight FARC guerrillas),” *La Jornada* (popular and left-leaning Mexican daily with reporting throughout Latin America), 8 February 2021. <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/02/08/mundo/colombia-crea-comando-elite-para-combatir-guerrilleros-de-las-farc/>

Among the “high value targets” the president cited former FARC guerrillas who broke away from the 2016 peace agreement such as Iván Márquez, Jesús Santrich, Hernán Darío Velásquez, known as ‘El Paisa’, Henry Castellanos, alias ‘Romaña’, among others. Also on the list are members of the National Liberation Army (ELN), the last recognized active guerrilla in Colombia, and of the Clan del Golfo, the country's largest drug gang.

Brazil's Open Border Policy Runs into Steadfast Peru



Brazilian officer 2nd Jungle Brigade discussing border security operation in the Amazon, 2016.
Source: Dodge Billingsley, Attribution: permission of photographer (Dodge Billingsley)

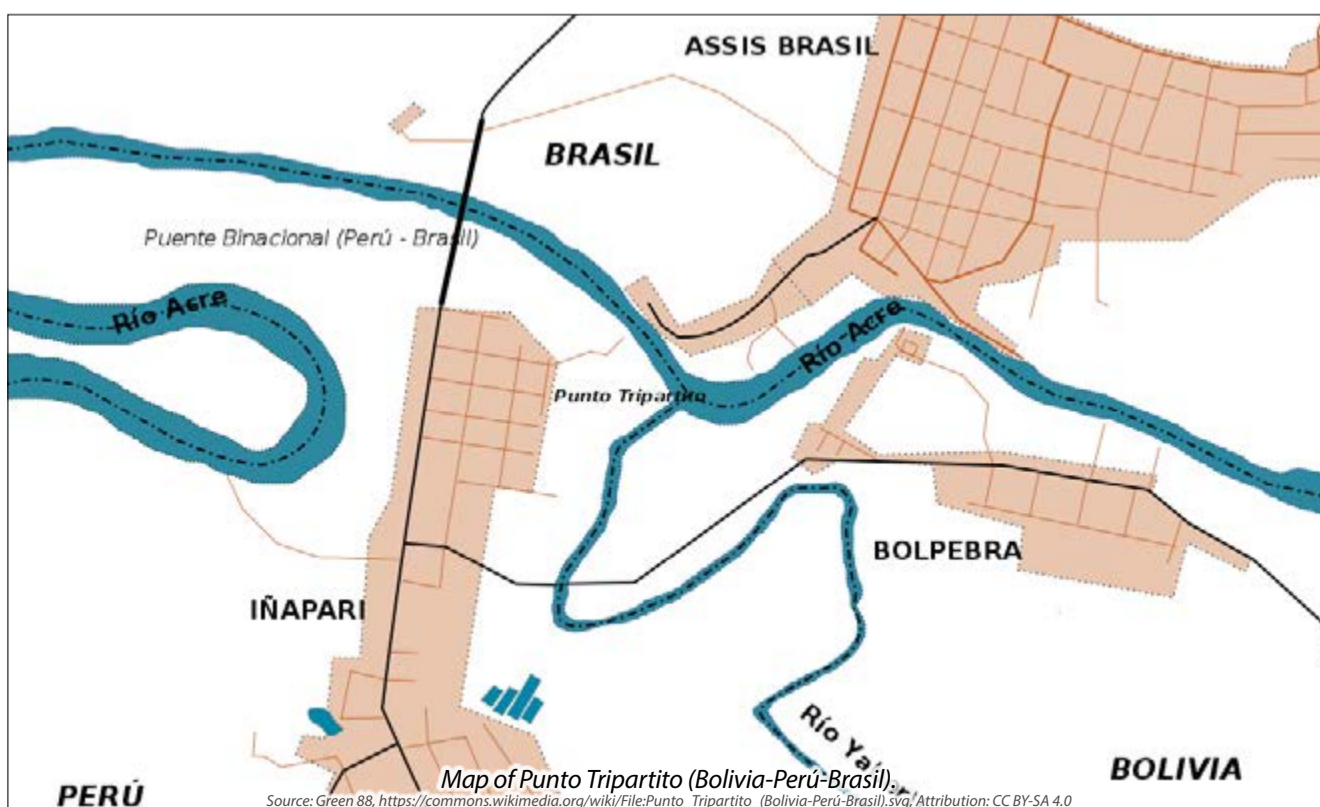
OE Watch Commentary: Brazil's open border policy has been challenged in recent years with waves of immigrants from around the Americas. For a variety of reasons hundreds of these foreigners are currently seeking to leave Brazil for other destinations, including the United States and Canada via the small border town of Assis Brasil in the Brazilian state of Acre. Unfortunately they have not been allowed to enter Peru due to COVID restrictions in place by Peru for nearly a year.

According to the excerpted article from *Globo*, one of Brazil's leading daily news sources, there are more than 500 immigrants, comprised of mainly Haitians and Venezuelans, trying to cross the border and enter the Peruvian city of Iñapari. The majority are being housed at two nearby schools that have been turned into temporary shelters. The rest are camped out on Integration Bridge connecting the two countries. The article points out that the situation escalated

when some of the refugees tried to circumvent the checkpoint and sneak or force their way into Peru, which, after Columbia, hosts more Venezuelan refugees than any other country in South America.

These developments have only exacerbated the tension between Peruvian and Brazilian authorities at the triple border point between Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil. This is also the latest in a long history of transnational migration between Peru and Brazil at this location. For years, an Army Special Border Platoon has been permanently deployed to the Assis Brasil corridor to assist in border security.

This border episode also highlights the struggle between federal and local policy in Brazil regarding its open border stance and the pressure it puts on border states that bear the burden of implementing the policy (see "Brazil's Migrant Problem," *OE Watch* March 2019 and "Coronavirus Challenges Brazil's Federal Open Border Policy," *OE Watch*, April 2020). When people in transit get stuck at these border locations they become the responsibility of the state, in this case Acre. The appearance of the federal Minister of Citizenship in Assis Brasil seems to indicate that there will be a unified response to the impasse with Peru, which would alleviate some of the pressure put on the local government of Acre. At the same time, Brazil is concerned about immigrants from Peru entering Acre. According to a second excerpted article from *UOL Noticias*, an independent Brazilian news organization, personnel from the National Public Security Force were being sent to Acre to help stop any immigration from Peru into Brazil. Due to ongoing COVID concerns and policies, there is no end in sight for the border standoff. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**





Continued: Brazil's Open Border Policy Runs into Steadfast Peru

Source: “No AC, Ministério da Cidadania analisa situação de imigrantes e se reúne com governo peruano para tratar sobre fronteira fechada (In Acre, Ministry of Citizenship analyzes the situation of immigrants and meets with the Peruvian government to deal with the closed border),” *Globo* (Privately held Brazilian media conglomerate), 19 February 2021. <https://g1.globo.com/ac/acre/noticia/2021/02/19/no-ac-ministerio-da-cidadania-ve-situacao-de-imigrantes-e-se-reune-com-governo-peruano-para-tratar-sobre-fronteira-fechada.ghtml>

On Sunday (14), about 400 immigrants left the shelters they occupied in Assis Brasil and concentrated on the Integration Bridge, on the border with Peru. The immigrants tried to leave the country, but were stopped by the Peruvian authorities. On Tuesday (16), the immigrants faced the Peruvian police and invaded the city of Iñapari, on the Peruvian side of the border. After confrontation, the group was reunited by the Peruvian police and sent back to Assis Brasil. Part of the group agreed to return to the shelters provided by the city, but some immigrants continue to occupy the Integration Bridge.

The National Secretary of Social Assistance, of the Ministry of Citizenship, Miguel Ângelo Gomes, was this Friday (19th) in Assis Brasil, a city in the interior of Acre that borders Peru, to see up close the situation of immigrants who are in the municipality of Acre and try to cross the border to leave Brazil.

Of the more than 500 foreigners who are in the municipality, most of them Haitians, at least 80 of them still occupy the Integration Bridge, since Sunday (14). The immigrants tried to leave the country, but were stopped by the Peruvian authorities. The border on the Peruvian side is closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

... according to the Government Agency of Acre, the Peruvian authorities informed that the country is evaluating a way to open the border to free the passage of immigrants, but that, for now, the border on the Peruvian side remains closed.

... The Peruvian manager also said that the situation worsened after foreigners tried to cross the border without authorization.

... the Ministry of Citizenship will help the state and the municipality to confront what it called a humanitarian crisis on the border. “We came to see the reality and listen to the demands of the city, which is at the forefront of this situation. With the detailed report, we will expedite aid within what urgency allows.”

State supports while federal aid does not arrive

The mayor of Assis Brasil, Jerry Correia, said from G1 that the federal government is expected to understand ‘once and for all the gravity of this situation.’ ... To immediately announce [a federal government] a plan for the removal of these [immigrants], taking them to their destinations and creating a structure in Assis Brasil, which only the federal government is able to create, through the Armed Forces. you can have an idea. Yesterday we served 520 meals at lunch in the two shelters and on the bridge and another 520 at dinner. We have about 300 people in both shelters “, he said.

On Thursday (18), the secretary of Snas participated in a meeting at Seasdhm with several state representatives. On the same day, the National Force began to operate in the city after a decree authorizing reinforcement in the city.

The mayor of Assis Brasil once again said that the city does not only need resources for assistance, but rather a plan to resolve the situation that has been going on for more than a year.

Assis Brasil is the city with the highest contamination rate at Covid-19 in Acre. According to the bulletin of the Health Department of Acre (Sesacre) this Friday (19), there are 1,377 cases for every 10,000 inhabitants in the city. Across the municipality, there are 1,038 confirmed cases and 12 deaths.

This Thursday (18), in addition to the police officers from the Military Police riot battalion and the Special Border Group (Gefron), more than 12 National Force soldiers arrived in the region to reinforce security and more than 20 federal highway police officers.

A decree from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, published on Thursday, authorized the use of the National Force in Acre, in support of police forces in the state. The authorization is valid for 60 days and can be extended. The determination establishes that the National Forces must assist “in the activities of exceptional and temporary blocking the entry of foreigners into the country, on an episodic and planned basis”.

These are two situations that cause the number of immigrants to grow in the city of Assis Brasil; the first, that of immigrants who entered Brazil between 2010 and 2016 in search of a better life and, with the pandemic crisis, try to leave the country to continue their journey to Mexico, Canada, the United States and other countries.

The second is that Peru, even blocking the passage for the entry of immigrants, allows them to leave for the Brazilian side, so it is a gateway for Venezuelans.

...



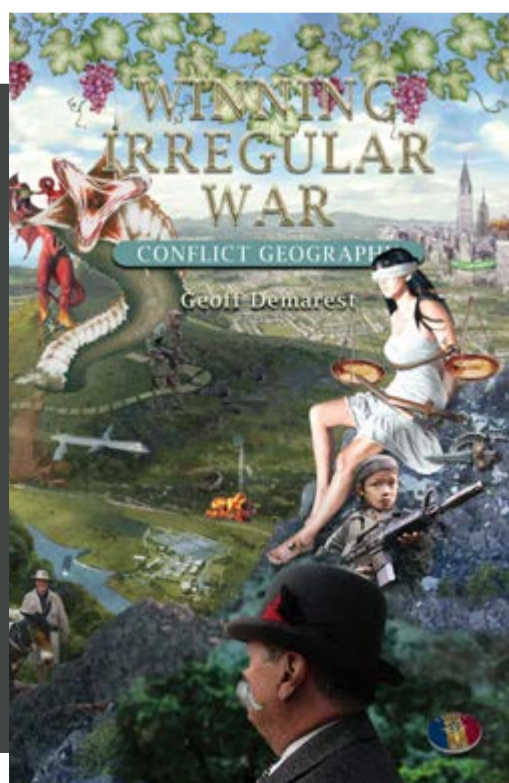
Continued: Brazil's Open Border Policy Runs into Steadfast Peru

“On Sunday (14 February), about 400 immigrants left the shelters they occupied in Assis Brasil and concentrated on the Integration Bridge, on the border with Peru. The immigrants tried to leave the country, but were stopped by the Peruvian authorities. On Tuesday (16 February), the immigrants confronted the Peruvian police and invaded the city of Iñapari, on the Peruvian side of the border. After confrontation, the group was apprehended by the Peruvian police and sent back to Assis Brasil. Part of the group agreed to return to the shelters provided by the city, but some immigrants continue to occupy the Integration Bridge.”

Source: “Força Nacional atuará para bloquear entrada de estrangeiros no Acre (National Force will act to block foreigners from entering Acre),” UOL Noticias (center, center-right media outlet owned by Grupo Folha), 18 February 2021. <https://noticias.uol.com.br/ultimas-noticias/agencia-brasil/2021/02/18/forca-nacional-reforca-fronteira-no-acre.html>

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security published in the Official Gazette today (18), an order authorizing the use of the National Security Force in support of the government of Acre, in the “activities of exceptional and temporary blockade of entry into the country foreigners “. According to the ordinance, the measure has an “episodic and planned” character, lasting 60 days, as of today. If necessary, this period, which initially ends on April 18, may be extended.

It will be up to the government of Acre to provide the logistical support necessary for the operation. The contingent must follow the planning defined by the National Force board, linked to the Ministry of Justice.



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

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



Argentina Worried about Foreign Vessels in the South Atlantic

OE Watch Commentary: The Foreign Ministry of Argentina recently expressed “grave concern” over the presence of foreign vessels in the South Atlantic, including the USS Greenville, which had been operating, along with British air support, near the disputed Falklands Islands. Even though the submarine did not enter Argentine waters, notes *La Nación*, a center to center-right Argentinian daily newspaper with reliable reporting on the Southern Cone, the event led to speculation in Argentina about Western powers sending a political message. The article mentions that days earlier, the United States Coast Guard Stone, its most modern ship to date, did not moor near Argentina during a multi-country exercise intended to deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. The *La Nación* article speculates that this operation, despite its potential to contribute to increased maritime safety, was scuttled due to disagreement between the two governments. The outlet *CNN en Español* (a Spanish-language offshoot of the popular US media company) reports that the Argentine Foreign Ministry reprimanded the vessels as threatening the “nuclear free” status of the South Atlantic region. The episode indicates a desire by the current Argentine government to reassert its historical sovereignty claims over waters in the South Atlantic, a sensitive issue that has led Argentina to question the right of passage for U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships. **End OE Watch Commentary (Berg)**



Starboard view of the USS Greenville, a US Navy Los Angeles Class attack submarine.
Source: <https://nara.getarchive.net/media/a-starboard-bow-view-of-the-us-navy-usn-los-angeles-class-attack-submarine-29c72d>
Attribution: US National Archives Public Domain

“Former Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie referred to the situation saying that it aroused “great concern” in the Government and attributed it to a clear message from the US to the country.”

Source: “Tensión por el submarino: ‘Fue un muy claro mensaje por parte de Estados Unidos,’ dijo Jorge Faurie (Tension over a submarine: ‘It was a very clear message from the United States,’ says Jorge Faurie),” *La Nación* (one of Argentina’s center to center-right daily newspapers with reliable reporting on the Southern Cone), 13 February 2021. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/politica/jorge-faurie-nid2601336>

Former Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie referred to the situation saying that it aroused “great concern” in the Government and attributed it to a clear message from the US to the country, “for not having allowed,” days ago, the Stone of the US Coast Guard to enter Argentine waters... According to the former foreign minister, despite the fact that both the national government and the United States agreed that the Stone did not enter for ‘logistical’ reasons, he argued that the event responded to political motivations.

Source: “Argentina expresa preocupación por la presencia de un submarino de EE.UU. que opera en el Atlántico Sur con apoyo Británico (Argentina expresses worry about the presence of an American submarine operating in the South Atlantic with British Support),” *CNN en Español* (a Spanish-language offshoot of the popular US media company), 12 February 2021. <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2021/02/12/argentina-preocupacion-submarino-ee-uu-atlantico-sur-apoyo-britanico/>

The Argentine authorities maintain, “The presence of ships capable of carrying and using nuclear weapons in the South Atlantic contradicts Resolution 41/11 of the United Nations General Assembly (Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic). It adds that this provision calls for respecting that region ‘as a zone of peace and cooperation.’”