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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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

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ON THE COVER:

Member of Brazil's Police Battalion for Special Operations (BOPE) surveilling a favela.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1_Equipam_01.jpg

OEWATCH

*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE
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China Engaging in Cognitive Warfare Campaign to Gain Regional Support

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

China has been spreading disinformation about the United States in a clear effort to gain regional support toward its end-goals, one of which is to reunify with Taiwan. The following articles' from non-Chinese, foreign perspective sources offer insight into China's activities, described as a cognitive warfare campaign to discredit U.S. society and its system of government. The first article, published by *Radio Free Asia*, a private nonprofit corporation that broadcasts news and information to listeners in Asian countries, talks about images and videos that had been doctored and captioned to mislead the public. The images and videos first appeared in Chinese social media earlier this year. While the images were actually of a series of deadly prison riots in Ecuador, they were captioned to mislead the public into believing they were of "American blacks and whites in California killing Chinese." According to the article, similar images and videos began showing up in other regional countries, such as Russia and Thailand, spreading anti-American sentiment among the populations. The article explains that the goal was to reduce regional support for the United States.

The second article, published by *Taipei Times*, part of Taiwan's state-owned Central New Agency, discusses a recent study conducted by the Information Operations Research Group (IORG), a Taiwan-based non-governmental research organization. According to the article, the IORG concluded that China is trying to convince the Taiwanese public that an authoritarian system is preferable to a democratic one by spreading misinformation about the United States through Taiwan's social media, television programs, YouTube, and others. More than just an example of information warfare, this activity fits squarely with China's strategic security perspective of three, interlinked battle domains: a physical/natural domain, made up of land, air, sea, and outer space, an information domain that consists of the cyber and electromagnetic space, and the cognitive domain of psychological and/or political operations. Chinese theorists argue that, whereas in the age of mechanization, dominating one or more of the physical domains was enough to claim a victory, in the current age of information technology, victory is not possible without achieving a political and/or psychological victory.

“China’s disinformation and cognitive warfare campaign is aimed at convincing people that authoritarianism is better than democracy... It is a competition between China and the West.”

Source: Jane Tang, “China’s Information Warfare and Media Influence Sow Division in Thailand,” *Radio Free Asia* (private nonprofit corporation that broadcasts news and information to listeners in Asian countries), 13 May 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/thailand-infowars-05132021072939.html>

By the time video scenes of a brutal prison riot in Ecuador earlier this year reached Asia, the video’s caption had been changed and read, “American Blacks and Whites in California Killing Chinese,” and the clip went viral.

Lilly Lee, an independent researcher who has been following Chinese Communist Party (CCP) information warfare, pointed out that the dissemination of distorted information fits two main themes of recent CCP information warfare. China seeks to fortify the narrative that the Chinese governing model is better than that of Western democracies during the pandemic, and it works to manipulate recent hate crime incidents against Asians in America – widely covered in the U.S. media – to promote China as the power best suited to maintain world order.

In CCP information warfare, whether the message is to smear the U.S. as a chaotic country or to praise China, all push a broader narrative that serves the party: “Democracy is not a good way to rule the people in a country,” she said.

Source: Yu-fu and William Hetherington, “Group Sounds Alert on China’s Cognitive Warfare,” *Taipei Times* (part of Taiwan’s state-owned Central New Agency), 21 October 2020. <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/10/21/2003745531>

China is trying to convince Taiwanese that an authoritarian system is preferable to democracy, the Information Operations Research Group (IORG) said at a conference yesterday.

China has been employing Taiwanese sympathetic to its “united front” tactics to help spread disinformation about democracy and Taiwanese society through social media, television programs, YouTube and by other means, the group said at the conference to promote public awareness of China’s cognitive warfare campaign.

China’s disinformation and cognitive warfare campaign is aimed at convincing people that authoritarianism is better than democracy, National Chengchi University assistant professor Huang Jaw-nian (黃兆年) said.

“It is a competition between China and the West,” Huang said.

“China seeks hegemony — it wants to gain approval through ideological and cultural dominance,” he said, adding that Beijing hopes to change the world’s perception of it through the flow of people and money.

Chinese PLA Showing Signs of Possible Escalation in Sino-Indian Border Dispute

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

In the ongoing Sino-Indian Border dispute, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been upgrading its capabilities, reinforcing its positions, and rotating troops in areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. The first article, published in *Global Times*, an English-language Chinese publication sponsored by *People's Daily*, explains that an unidentified unit affiliated with the PLA's Xinjiang Military Command recently replaced its outdated artillery with at least 10 PHL-3 long-range multiple rocket launchers. The PHL-3 is a 12-round, 300 mm Multi-Launch Rocket System that was developed by China North Industries Corporation. According to the article, the rocket systems will be advantageous in the high-altitude plateau regions because they offer wider coverage capability with concentrated firepower from a safe distance. They also enhance the PLA's all-weather combat capability. Eight vehicles, which observers said might provide command and communications support, are also believed to have been included in the unit's upgrades.

The second article, published in *Times of India*, an Indian English-language daily newspaper, explains that the PLA is rapidly converting its "temporary structures, ammunition dumps, helipads, and surface-



Chinese PHL-03 300mm long-range multiple rocket launcher.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PHL-03_Multiple_rocket_launchers_20170902.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

to-air missile positions, which it had set up last year within 25 to 120 kilometers of the LAC, into permanent positions.

While China's reporting of these upgraded weapons systems could be considered a show of force, the deployment of these systems challenges the status quo along the disputed border with India.

“China is now further reinforcing its military positions and rotating troops in the ‘depth areas’ along the Line of Actual Control in a clear signal that it has no intent to de-escalate anytime soon.”

Source: Liu Xuanzun, “New Rocket Launcher System Delivered to PLA’s High-Altitude Plateau Unit,” *Global Times* (English-language Chinese publication sponsored by *People’s Daily*, the daily newspaper of the CPC Central Committee), 10 May 2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202105/1223012.shtml>

A unit affiliated with the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Xinjiang Military Command deployed in a high-altitude plateau recently replaced its outdated artillery with digital, long-range heavy rocket artillery, greatly enhancing its all-weather combat capability in the border region.

The unidentified unit, currently deployed in a snow-covered region at an elevation of more than 5,200 meters, recently received delivery of a batch of new self-propelled heavy rocket launchers, which are highly mobile, fast-reacting, highly accurate, very deadly and jamming-resistant, China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Saturday.

They will be deployed for missions like fast deployment, seizing and control of key regions, and group assault in many types of terrains, including high-altitude terrains and deserts as well as close to rivers and lakes, under all weather conditions, the report said.

Source: Rajat Pandit, “Year After Pangong Clash, China Reinforces Positions, Rotates Troops Along LAC,” *Times of India* (An Indian-English-language daily newspaper and the third largest newspaper in India), 5 May 2021. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/year-after-pangong-clash-china-reinforces-positions-rotates-troops-along-lac/articleshow/82396364.cms?frapp=yes&from=mdr>

A year after Indian and Chinese soldiers first clashed on the north bank of Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, China is now further reinforcing its military positions and rotating troops in the “depth areas” along the Line of Actual Control in a clear signal that it has no intent to de-escalate anytime soon.

With the harsh winter having receded, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is fast converting the temporary structures, ammunition dumps, helipads and surface-to-air missile positions it had set up last year in the “depth areas”, ranging from 25 to 120-km from the LAC, into permanent positions now.

“There is no fresh accretion of PLA troops on the frontlines in eastern Ladakh. But China continues to maintain sizeable forces in the areas to the rear of the friction points, while it reinforces military positions all along the frontier in the region,” said a senior officer on Tuesday...

China's Aid to Indonesian Submarine Retrieval Improves Trust

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

On 21 April, an Indonesian submarine sunk off the coast of Lombok leading to the deaths of all 53 people on board. The excerpted Indonesian-language article on 5 May for *kompas.com*, an Indonesian language publication with a pro-army perspective and a national readership, discussed Chinese naval support to Indonesia to lift the submarine from the ocean floor. According to the article, China offered condolences for the victims and promised to join the international effort to retrieve the three parts of the submarine that broke apart and are now 800 meters deep on the seafloor.

The article also notes that only one year ago a Chinese underwater drone was discovered in the sea near Sulawesi, which is not far from the Lombok Strait. The drone was suspected of mapping maritime routes to Australia. Nevertheless, this has not dampened Indonesian interest in collaboration with the Chinese navy, as it welcomed Chinese support to retrieve the submarine after the Malaysian, Australian, and Singaporean navies had completed their work to locate it on the seafloor. Further, Indonesia has begun conducting joint naval drills near Jakarta with China that coincided with the submarine rescue and were part of the People's Liberation Army's annual training program.



Submarine KRI Nagapasa, Indonesian Navy.

Source: Indonesian Navy, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Submarine_KRI_Nagapasa,_Indonesian_Navy.jpg, CC x 2.0

Another 9 May article from Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*, which asserts its editorial independence but is known to defer to Chinese authorities on its reporting, noted that Indonesians were suspicious of China's first ever international submarine recovery mission in Indonesia. The article acknowledged that Chinese and Indonesian navies have already had disputes over fishing rights in waters claimed by China but that currently host Indonesian fishers. Despite this, the article stated that the joint training program and China's support to retrieve the submarine would improve trust-building between the two countries' navies.

“The Indonesian navy said that three Chinese ships, including the rescue ship Yongxingdao 863, were expected to join the rescue operation.”

Source: “Bantu Angkat Bangkai Kapal Selam KRI Nanggala-402, China Kerahkan 3 Kapal (Assistance to Lift the Wreckage of the KRI Nanggala-402 Submarine, China Deploys 3 Boats),” *kompas.com* (Indonesian language newspaper with pro-army perspective), 5 May 2021. <https://www.kompas.com/global/read/2021/05/05/215739470/bantu-angkat-bangkai-kapal-selam-kri-nanggala-402-china-kerahkan-3-kapal?page=all>

The Chinese Ministry of Defense announced that it sent a naval ship to the Lombok Strait to help lift the wreckage of the KRI Nanggala-402. The submarine's position was discovered on April 25 after disappearing for several days while conducting torpedo firing drills in the ocean waters north of Bali. KRI Nanggala-402 is confirmed to have sunk and broken into three parts with the wreckage now more than 800 meters deep.

The Chinese Ministry of Defense confirmed that it would join the international rescue effort after offering “profound condolences” to the victims. At the end of last year, the Indonesian military revealed an underwater drone allegedly belonging to China that was found by fishermen from Selayar Island. The assistance of the three Chinese naval ships was deployed after ships from Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia left the location after the KRI Nanggala-402 was found.

Source: “China, Indonesia hold joint naval exercises near Jakarta,” *South China Morning Post* (Independent newspaper owned by Alibaba Group), 9 May 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3132821/china-indonesia-hold-joint-naval-exercises-near-jakarta>

China and Indonesia conducted joint naval exercises in waters off Jakarta, as the two countries work to improve trust and cooperation amid tensions in the South China Sea.

The exercises came just a week after Beijing announced it was sending three rescue ships, including one with a manned submersible capable of descending 10,000 metres (33,000 feet), to help recover the Indonesian submarine that sank late last month with the loss of all 53 crew members.

It was the first time China had joined an international submarine recovery mission. Observers said the operation would provide the PLA with valuable experience, though China's involvement was greeted with some suspicion in Indonesia and the West regarding its true intentions.

India Competing with Chinese and Pakistani Security Cooperation in Central Asia

By Matt Stein
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted articles look at India's recent security cooperation efforts in Central Asia vis-à-vis China and Pakistan and provide some context for how India might continue to work with the region. The article from *Force India*, an independent website with a focus on defense news in India and South Asia, mentions one of the early Indian efforts in the region. Specifically, "after the India-Pakistan Kargil war of 1999, India expressed an interest in acquiring the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan" and how "the Indian thinking was that through Ayni, Indian Air Force would be able to carry out aerial surveillance of northern Afghanistan, Pakistan and China." The article also notes how despite the investment of "USD 70 million in refurbishing the base," the Tajik government "has repeatedly refused [to allow] India to operate from the base, primarily out of Russian pressure."

The article goes on to highlight some of the recent security cooperation with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, including exercises, which have focused on "counterinsurgency and counterterrorism." It ultimately notes how India's trade with the region in 2021 "amounted to USD 2 billion," but that "according to the 2018 data" China's trade with the region totaled "USD 41.7 billion." It also points out how "China today accounts for about 18 percent of the total military purchases by Central Asia as compared to about 1 percent at the beginning of the last decade." This is in addition to China carrying out "several joint military exercises with Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces" in 2019. In spite of China's achievements in the region, the article ends by stating that "if India can hold its ground, it can build on its historic goodwill to create a cooperative niche for itself in the region."

The article from *Dawn*, an independent English-language newspaper from Pakistan, reports on the recent visit by Pakistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, to Tajikistan. The article quoted Qureshi as saying that "both he and his Tajik counterpart were satisfied by the trajectory of defense cooperation and relations between the two countries and

“Given the proximity of the area to Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, the Indian thinking was that through Ayni, Indian Air Force would be able to carry out aerial surveillance of northern Afghanistan, Pakistan and China”



Rajput regiment parade on Rajpath, New Delhi.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Army-Rajput_regiment.jpeg, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

there are great opportunities in the future." The article also mentions how the foreign minister "also met with Tajikistan's Defense Minister Colonel General Sherali Mirzo" and that the two "agreed to work together to defeat extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and cross-border crime." This article only reports on security cooperation between Pakistan and one of the Central Asian states, but it represents the level of security cooperation Pakistan carries out with the region, largely limited to exchanges and various training programs. Joint military exercises take place, but only periodically, not annually like India does with forces from the region.

For a number of years the Indian government's security cooperation with the Central Asian states appeared to be largely aimed at countering Pakistan vis-à-vis Afghanistan. While ongoing security

cooperation shows that remains a factor, it appears that India is looking more closely at Chinese activity in the region, which could impact Indian efforts going forward.

Source: Smruti D, "India and the BRI | The Great Game Redux," *Force India* (an independent website with a focus on defense news in India and South Asia), 6 May 2021. <http://forceindia.net/feature-report/great-game-redux/>

...After the India-Pakistan Kargil war of 1999, India expressed an interest in acquiring the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan. Given the proximity of the area to Pakistan, Afghanistan and China, the Indian thinking was that through Ayni, Indian Air Force would be able to carry out aerial surveillance of northern Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. In 2002, it got some rights to place Indian Air Force personnel at the base...So far India has also spent USD 70 million in refurbishing the base...However, despite the investment and presence of its personnel, Tajikistan has repeatedly refused India to operate from the base, primarily out of Russian pressure...

India undertakes several military exercises with Central Asian countries. The most recent one took place in April this year, where Special Forces from India and Kyrgyzstan participated in the eighth edition of Khanjar exercise in Bishkek...

The same month, India also hosted the defence minister of Kazakhstan Lt Gen. Nurlan Yermekbayev...Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner. The total bilateral trade between the two countries amount to USD 1.2 billion. Indian and Kazakh forces also participated in a joint military exercise for counterinsurgency and counterterrorism called Ex KAZ-IND. Kazakh troops are deployed along with the Indian battalion in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The two nations have also been cooperating in the field of space communication system satellite, KazSat-2R.

Continued: India Competing with Chinese and Pakistani Security Cooperation in Central Asia

Continued Source: Smruti D, “India and the BRI | The Great Game Redux,” *Force India* (an independent website with a focus on defense news in India and South Asia), 6 May 2021. <http://forceindia.net/feature-report/great-game-redux/>

Just a month before these two events, India hosted troops from Uzbekistan for the second edition of India-Uzbek joint military exercise, Dustlik-II, that were performed in Uttarakhand...

As of 2021, India’s total trade with CAR amounted to USD 2 billion. Chinese trade turnover with CAR, on the other hand, according to the 2018 data by China’s customs service, was USD 41.7 billion...According to a report by ORF (the Observer Research Foundation), China has been swiftly increasing its presence in Central Asia’s security sector. The report stated, ‘China today accounts for about 18 per cent of the total military purchases by Central Asia as compared to about 1 per cent at the beginning of the last decade.’

China also undertakes several bilateral military exercises with the CAR countries. In 2019, China undertook several joint military exercises with Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces...The important thing here is sustaining power. If India can hold its ground, it can build on its historic goodwill to create a cooperative niche for itself in the region...

Source: “Pakistan, Tajikistan to tap unexplored areas in bilateral ties: FM Qureshi,” *Dawn* (an independent English-language newspaper from Pakistan), 31 March 2021. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1615652>

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Wednesday that there were a lot of opportunities present in furthering relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan in different avenues and stressed the need for greater cooperation between the two countries.

The foreign minister was addressing a press conference with his Tajik counterpart, Sirajuddin Mehruddin, at Tajikistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dushanbe as part of his visit to attend the 9th Heart of Asia — Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference.

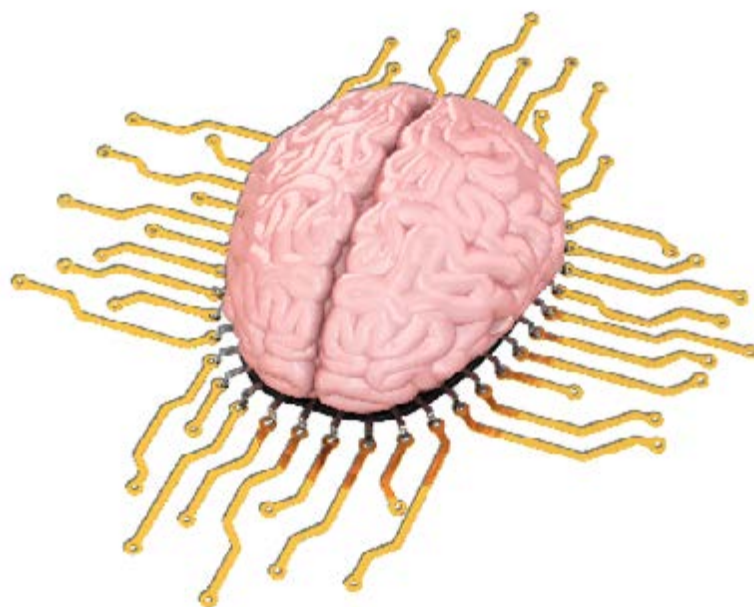
...The foreign minister said both he and his Tajik counterpart were satisfied by the trajectory of defence cooperation and relations between the two countries and there are great opportunities in the future...Qureshi noted that Pakistan had trained many military officers and senior diplomats of Tajikistan “and we will welcome more officers coming to Pakistan”.

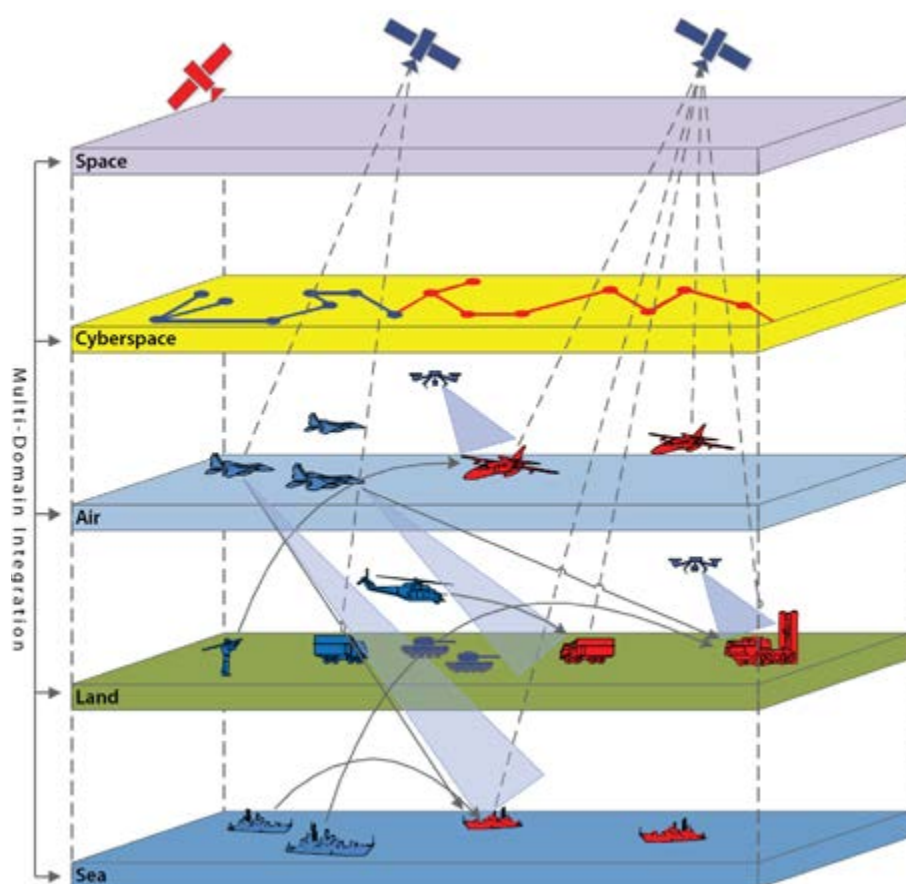
He also met with Tajikistan’s Defence Minister Colonel General Sherali Mirzo. “We agreed on need to work together to defeat extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking and cross-border crime.”...

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.





A standard multi-domain structure of a NATO joint forces operation by 2025-2040.

Source: Translation of graphic from *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskiye Sily: Teoriya i Praktika*, <https://vva.mil.ru/upload/site21/Ndz0E2BEpk.pdf>

Rare Glimpse into Russian Armed Forces' View of Multi-Domain Operations

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian mass media has said relatively little about the United States Army's Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) concept. The accompanying excerpted article from the *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskiye Sily: Teoriya i Praktika*, the military journal of the Russian Aerospace Forces, is an exception. The article, written from the perspective of Russian Aerospace Forces' officers, envisions how an integrated massive air strike (IMAS) could be accomplished within the context of MDO. Interestingly, the authors believe that an IMAS/MDO is replacing the United States' purported "Prompt Global Strike" concept. Of particular interest in the article is how the Russian Armed Forces view the MDO concept and its future capabilities (as seen in the accompanying graphics) and required Russian actions to counter MDO.

“The concept of an [integrated massive air strike] IMAS application as part of a multi-domain operation has replaced the “prompt global strike” concept with the prospect of achieving global supremacy by super-effective non-nuclear weapons capable of inflicting lightning strikes against objectives of the opposing side’s nuclear missile forces.”

Source: V.I. Stuchinskiy and M.V. Korolkov, “Обоснование боевого применения авиации для срыва интегрированного массированного воздушного удара в многосферной операции противника (The Aviation Battle Application Justification to Disrupt an Integrated Massive Air Strike in an Enemy Multi-Domain Operation),” *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskiye Sily: Teoriya i Praktika* (military journal of the Russian Aerospace Forces), December 2020. <https://vva.mil.ru/upload/site21/Ndz0E2BEpk.pdf>

With the development of high-tech weapons, local wars and armed conflicts are currently taking on a more dynamic and effective character. New military technologies make it possible to reduce spatial, time, and information breaks between headquarters and fighting units. Impact on the enemy is planned using new combat operation methods in the following five domains: ground, sea, air, space, and cyberspace.

Operations and combat actions will be executed through the combined efforts of troop formations of all branches and combat arms under a unified command. The United States, by failing to extend the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, has created favorable conditions for developing and deploying this type of offensive weapon in Europe and the Asia-Pacific Region, which poses a direct threat to the military security of the Russian Federation...The search for types and methods of effective combat operations of Russian Armed Forces groups, in both local wars and armed conflicts, is an urgent task. The likely area of focus for accomplishing this task involves developing a new approach to counteracting possible Western aggression through the comprehensive use of forces and assets of all branches in order to execute a wide range of assigned missions.

The North Atlantic Alliance has developed the most prospective type of NATO joint forces application, the “multi-domain operation”. This operation’s planned execution involves a unified reconnaissance-information space and uses the advantages of the mutual use of the capabilities of the various armed forces branches and combat arms. Under the conditions of the new NATO joint forces combat application concept, executing basic air operation missions (during the initial stage of a multi-domain operation) will not involve massive aviation missile strikes as the main method for aviation and cruise missile application during the air offensive operation, with the purpose of said method being the simultaneous fire destruction of the enemy in a wide area. Instead, this will involve an integrated massive air strike (IMAS) which is a coordinated massive attack for purposes of creating conditions, for subsequent decisive actions on the part of NATO joint forces, which will enable them to achieve subsequent operational and strategic objectives. The concept of a IMAS application as part of a multi-domain operation has replaced the “prompt global strike” concept with the prospect of achieving global supremacy by super-effective non-nuclear weapons capable of inflicting lightning strikes against objectives of the opposing side’s nuclear missile forces.

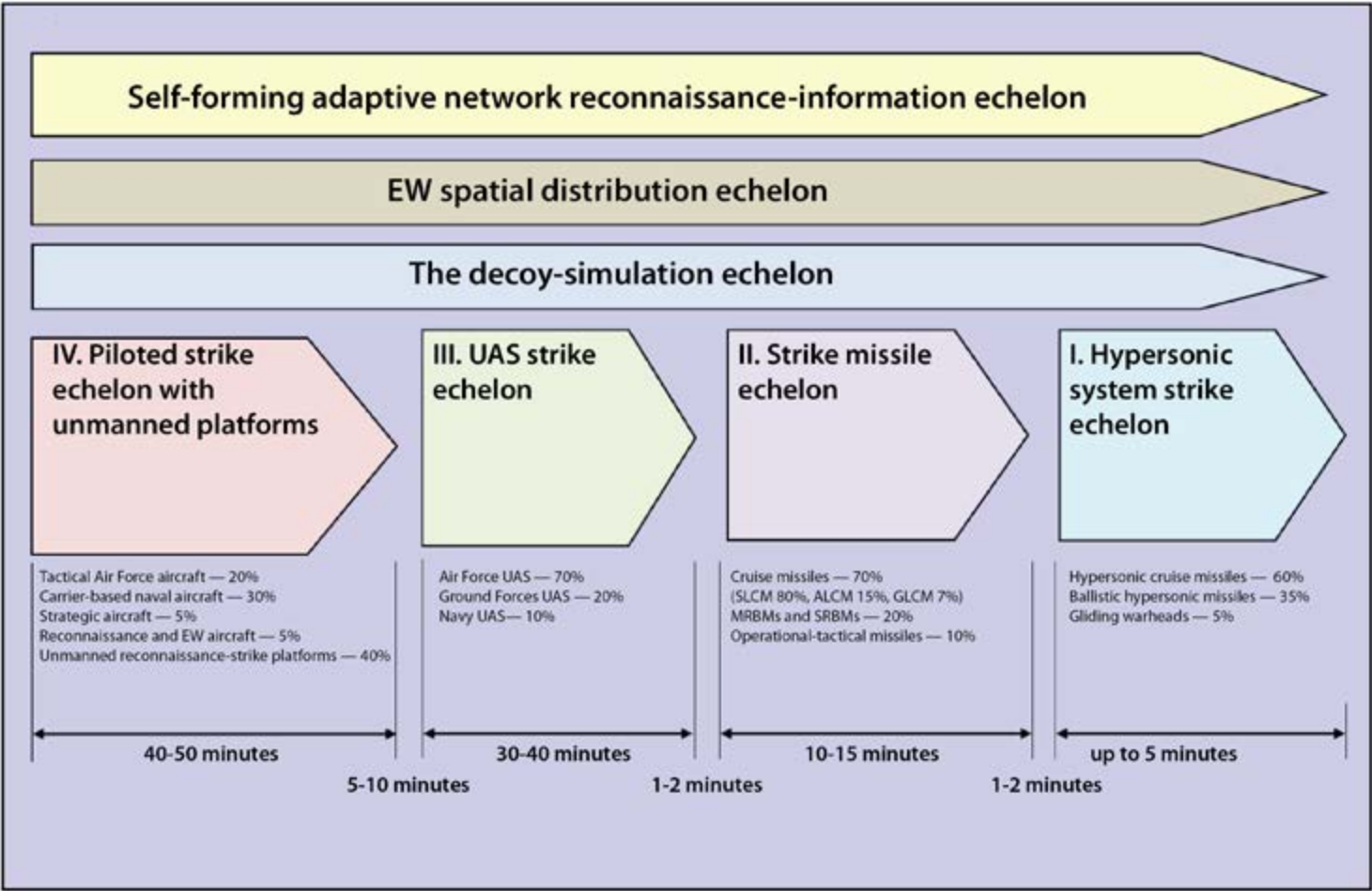
Continued: Rare Glimpse into Russian Armed Forces’ View of Multi-Domain Operations

“An analysis of the MDO concept has shown that a multi-domain operation is a complex type of NATO joint forces combat application. Therefore, an effective counteraction to such an operation is the most important operational and strategic mission, which requires mobilizing the efforts of all service branches and combat arms in the theater of operations.”

Source: V.I. Stuchinskiy and M.V. Korolkov, “Обоснование боевого применения авиации для срыва интегрированного массированного воздушного удара в многосферной операции противника (The Aviation Battle Application Justification to Disrupt an Integrated Massive Air Strike in an Enemy Multi-Domain Operation),” *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskiye Sily: Teoriya i Praktika* (military journal of the Russian Aerospace Forces), December 2020. <https://vva.mil.ru/upload/site21/Ndz0E2BEpk.pdf>

The brevity of future wars predetermines a compression of the timeframes for executing immediate and conclusive missions in order to achieve the objectives of an enemy multi-domain operation, which, in turn, results in a reduction in the time involved for introducing the enemy’s first combined arms group echelon in the main strike sector in relation to achieving the goals of an integrated mass air strike. An IMAS can be a coordinated massive strike against the opposing side’s most important critical objects, with this being executed in the initial multi-domain operation stage to create the conditions for subsequent decisive actions executed by the NATO joint forces group to execute the final mission...

An analysis of the MDO concept has shown that a multi-domain operation is a complex type of NATO joint forces combat application. Therefore, an effective counteraction to such an operation is the most important operational and strategic mission, which requires mobilizing the efforts of all service branches and combat arms in the theater of operations. Countering an enemy multi-domain operation requires the integration of all involved forces and assets into a unified intelligence-information space and also an increase in the integrated efforts of the forces and assets of the entire grouping of troops...



A possible space-time construction of an integrated massive air strike by NATO joint forces by 2025-2040.

Source: Translation of graphic from *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskiye Sily: Teoriya i Praktika*, <https://vva.mil.ru/upload/site21/Ndz0E2BEpk.pdf>

Russia Stands Up Another Motorized Rifle Division in the Southern Military District

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, a large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper, discusses Russian plans to upsize the 20th Motorized Rifle Brigade to the 20th Motorized Rifle Division. This is the second new motorized rifle division for the Southern Military District (SMD) in as many years, as the 19th Motorized Rifle Division was formed in 2020. Although Russia has increased its force structure in recent years by converting a few brigades into divisions, Russia does not appear to be increasing the number of personnel on active duty in the Ground Forces. As a result, the only way that the Russian Ground Forces can create these new divisions is through a combination of creating divisions that are missing one or more maneuver regiments and lowering unit manning levels throughout the Ground Forces. This increase of force structure and lowering of unit manning levels may appear to roll back the previous decade's New Look military reforms, but this is not the case. Before the New Look reforms, most Ground Forces' unit manning levels were well below 50%. In addition, the equipment was old and often not well maintained. Today, Russia's personnel and equipment readiness levels are much higher. Before the New Look reforms, a regiment and brigade might have been able to form one battalion tactical group (BTG), now most regiments and brigades can field two BTGs. It is likely that high-readiness Ground Forces units will not be impacted by current reforms, but most other Ground Forces units will see a drop in personnel manning. This reduced manning will probably not drop below 70%, the percentage generally believed to still be sufficient for a unit to be capable of accomplishing standard combat missions.

The *Izvestiya* article is also interesting because it quotes Russian military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy, whose comments shed some light on Russian military thinking regarding the relationship between Ground Forces' divisions and brigades. Although it would appear that a motorized rifle brigade is approximately the equivalent to a motorized rifle regiment (as both units have three motorized rifle battalions and one tank battalion), it is clear from Murakhovskiy's comments that a motorized rifle brigade, in the Russian view, is seen as having capabilities more on par with a motorized rifle division than a regiment. This thinking is likely due to some of the key enablers for combined arms combat against a technically sophisticated adversary (e.g., electronic warfare, UAVs, etc.), which exist in both the divisions and brigades but are not found in the division's subordinate regiments.

“Nuclear power status and possession of a strategic nuclear deterrent are not actually any guarantee against military provocation or even aggression against Russia, so there have to be sufficiently potent general-purpose forces.”

The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the official newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense, features commentary from Russian Defense Minister, General Sergey Shoygu about the reasoning for increased conventional military capabilities in the SMD. For a period of time in the 2000s, there was only one combined arms army (CAA) in the SMD, now there are three—the

Source: Roman Kretsul, Aleksey Ramm “А теперь «20-я»: легендарное гвардейское соединение вернется в строй 20-й гвардейской мотострелковой дивизии (And Now the 20th: Legendary Guards Formation Back in the Order of Battle),” *Izvestiya* (a large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 25 April 2021. <https://iz.ru/1156655/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/teper-20-ia-legendarnoe-gvardeiskoe-soedinenie-vernetsia-v-stroi>

The Defense Ministry is reinforcing the country's southern frontiers with motorized rifle units, sources in the military tell Izvestiya. According to them, the army is planning to revive the legendary 20th Guards Carpathia-Berlin Motorized Rifle Division and its units will be stationed in Volgograd and Kamyshin...Our sources say that it will be incorporated into the 8th Guards Combined-Arms Army. The organizational structure and manning levels are now being decided...The Defense Ministry has decided to relocate airborne assault troops in order to make room for it. The 56th Separate Guards Airborne Assault Brigade is currently based in the city of Kamyshin but, as Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu announced previously, it is about to be restructured into a regiment and moved to Crimea. Izvestiya's sources commented that the garrison space thus vacated will be taken over by units of the newly formed 20th Guards Division.

The 19th Motorized Rifle Division was recreated last year as part of the 58th Army and there are plans to form a new division in 2021, the Southern Military District's commander, General of the Army Aleksandr Dvornikov, announced earlier...The 20th Division is famous as a kind of production line for senior military commanders. For example, in the 2000s it was led by Colonel General Sergey Istrakov, now a deputy chief of the General Staff; Colonel General Gennadiy Zhidko, now commander of the Eastern Military District; and Colonel General Aleksandr Lapin, currently commanding the Central Military District.

Unlike a brigade, a division is a fully fledged formation that can pursue operational-tactical objectives in its own right, military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya. “To do this it doesn't need any extra reinforcement, especially in logistics or artillery and air defense support,” he commented. “It has enough of everything in its standard complement. So a division is not only a larger but also a more self-sufficient formation than a brigade. At the conclusion of exercises in Crimea, the defense minister pointed to growing threats on the southwest strategic front, including that NATO is involving nonmember states like Ukraine and Georgia in its activities. In order to successfully counter such dangers, alongside developing new weapons systems we also need to update the structure of our forces and have sufficient troops and assets so that nobody is tempted to provoke or show aggression to Russia with conventional weapons. We remember that kind of provocation, for example Georgia's attack on our peacekeepers in 2008. Nuclear power status and possession of a strategic nuclear deterrent are not actually any guarantee against military provocation or even aggression against Russia, so there have to be sufficiently potent general-purpose forces.”

Continued: Russia Stands Up Another Motorized Rifle Division in the Southern Military District

58th CAA (Vladikavkaz), the 49th CAA (Stavropol), and the 8th CAA (Novocherkassk). Shoygu outlines some of the reasoning behind these increases in capabilities, generally relating to Ukraine and NATO. An interesting aspect of both articles is the Russian means of responding to and deterring NATO. It is clear that large formations, such as brigades and especially divisions, are seen as the primary means of conventional deterrence. Although battalion tactical groups have been the primary means of Russian conventional force projection in recent local conflicts, Russian thinking about conflict with NATO involves brigades, divisions, and combined arms armies, not a mass deployment of various battalion tactical groups.

“The attempts of NATO to hamper normalization are forcing us to take symmetrical strategic deterrence measures and to expand the capabilities of the troops of the Southern Military District.”



Great Emblem of the 8th Guards Combined Arms Army.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_emblem_of_the_8th_Guards_Combined_Arms_Army.svg, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

Source: Aleksandr Tikhonov “Принимаем симметричные меры стратегического сдерживания (We are Taking Symmetrical Strategic Deterrence Measures),” *Krasnaya Zvezda* (newspaper of the Russian Ministry of Defense), 21 April 2021. <http://redstar.ru/prinimaem-simmetrichnye-mery-strategicheskogo-sderzhivaniya/>

A session of the Collegium of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense was held in Moscow. It took place at the military establishment's National Command Center under the leadership of Russian Federation Minister of Defense, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu...Transitioning to the review of the progress of the fulfillment of the operational plans for the Southern Military District in accordance with the president's edicts and his tasking based on the results of the meetings at Sochi, the minister of defense focused the attention of the attendees on the military and political situation that had evolved in the Southwestern Strategic Direction. Based on the assessment of the head of the Russian military establishment, the situation remains complicated, which is largely due to the attempts of a number of foreign states to expand their military presence along Russia's southern and western borders.

“The destructive course of the military and political leadership of Ukraine is being continued, as the leadership strives to destabilize the situation in the Donets Basin,” noted General of the Army Sergey Shoygu. “The United States and NATO are continuing to conduct provocative activities in the airspace and maritime regions of the Black Sea.” The minister also cited the unstable state of affairs in a number of countries of the Middle East and the Transcaucasus.

“The attempts of NATO to hamper normalization are forcing us to take symmetrical strategic deterrence measures and to expand the capabilities of the troops of the Southern Military District,” said General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, and he offered some statistics and facts relating to the results of work in this area. Thus, last year as part of combat staff improvements, 54 organizational activities were conducted. Of these the main event was the formation of yet another motorized rifle division.

Simultaneously, the uninterrupted rearming of the district is underway. “In 2020 the troops received more than 3,000 pieces of modern weapons and military equipment, and the share of modern weapons and military equipment in the military units and formations has reached 70 percent,” reported General of the Army Sergey Shoygu....

Russia's Use of, and Defense Against, Loitering Munitions



Lancet loitering munition UAV.

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

By Charles Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The use of loitering munitions in the recent Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict has aroused great interest in Russia. The accompanying excerpted article from *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, the military journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense, discusses the future of loitering munitions, or in Russian parlance “kamikaze drones.” The article outlines how the use of loitering munitions is ideal for situations where small groupings of forces are employed with no systematic air defense. 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, discusses how Russia may have employed such a loitering munition in Syria and potential uses of loitering munitions, such as for airspace closure. The accompanying excerpted articles from *Materialno-Tekhnicheskoye Obespecheniye*, the logistics journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense, shows how UAVs in general, and loitering munitions in particular, are being considered by not only combat arms personnel, but also by the logisticians. It is clear from the articles that if loitering munitions are the future of warfare, Russian forces are already considering the implications and possible solutions to ensure they will be able to sustain the warfighter.

“In the authors’ opinion, their [loitering munitions] massive employment permits taking a giant step toward a new, state-of-the-art, ‘smart,’ remote, precision, relatively inexpensive, and bloodless war.”

Source: A. Kalistratov “Камикадзе» XXI Века: Барражирующие боеприпасы — новое средство вооруженной борьбы (Kamikaze of the 21st Century: Loitering Munitions Are a New Means of Armed Warfare),” *Armeyskiy Sbornik* (military journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense), April 2021. <http://army.ric.mil.ru/upload/site175/48u5oj4kCF.pdf>

The mass media literally abounds with laudatory articles about results of combat employment of so-called ‘loitering munitions’ in military conflicts of recent years. In the authors’ opinion, their massive employment permits taking a giant step toward a new, state-of-the-art, ‘smart,’ remote, precision, relatively inexpensive, and bloodless war. Indeed, they fully conform to the nature of the majority of modern military conflicts being waged in local geographic areas in which, as a rule, extremely limited forces are employed, combat operations are conducted focally and sporadically over a large area, and where there is no place to employ large military formations armed with state-of-the-art weapons covered by a “multilayer” air defense system...Under these conditions loitering munitions proved effective in point destruction of the command and control system infrastructure, artillery and tanks at firing positions, air defense targets, and the enemy rear and lines of communication...

The operator detects and identifies the target, makes the decision to engage, give the command to dive, and guides the munition precisely to the target (if it is not equipped with a homing head)...In the near future the majority of these functions can be assumed by onboard artificial intelligence. It will move the munition to the loiter area, determine the optimum procedure for doing this, detect and evaluate the target independently in accordance with the “line of priorities,” evaluate the target, and then destroy it by permission of the operator or command and control facility artificial intelligence.

The advantages of loitering munitions are the capabilities of finding desired targets over a lengthy time, or waiting in the air for their appearance; delivery of precision strikes; extremely low vulnerability to state-of-the-art aircraft and air defense missiles... This is confirmed by the experience of fighting in Karabakh. Effective air defense weapons as Strela-10, Osa-AKM, and a variant of the S-300 proved ineffective-- for example, due to the absence of an infrared signature from the electric motors’ loitering munitions, it was not possible for the homing heads of man-portable air-defense systems to lock onto loitering munitions...The disadvantages of loitering munitions are low speed and flight altitude; dependence on maintaining continuous electro-optical communication with the command and control facility operator; dependence of some systems on satellite navigation; possibility of electronic warfare interfering with command and control...

Continued: Russia's Use of, and Defense Against, Loitering Munitions

“The trial use by the army of loitering munitions in Syria can be seen as a positive sign for our manufacturers, and it indicates a transformation in the Russian military's position regarding a type of weapon that is new to it.”

Source: Darya Lyubovik, “Удар «Ланцетом» (Strike of the ‘Lantset’),” *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), 22 April 2021. https://nvo.ng.ru/nvoweeek/2021-04-22/1_1138_drones.html

The Lancet is a brand-new loitering munition which the Russian military is actively employing for pinpoint missions to destroy infrastructure and hardware of the banned ISIS terrorist organization. Rossiya-1's Vesti Nedeli program has broadcast the first footage of one of these flying robots being used in the Syrian Republic, in which it hits a moving jeep and machine-gun nest. The Lantset is the first serial-production weapon at the Russian army's disposal that can not only destroy individual targets but also operate in a swarm, creating an aerial minefield.

Kamikaze drones played a starring role in the recent fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh: Azerbaijan's army made extensive use of Israeli-made unmanned vehicles. They were such an outstanding success that several countries without air forces of their own seriously believed that drones will let you wage war to great effect without risking your own soldiers' lives. Russia's Lancet, made by the ZALA Aero company (part of the Kalashnikov group in the Rostec state corporation) is one such drone. Aerodynamically, it is configured as a pair of X-shaped fins. This makes it compact in size and more stable than a conventional aircraft configuration when diving or maneuvering. It has a television transmitter for sending target images and confirming a successful engagement.

ZALA Aero chief designer Aleksandr Zakharov points out that kamikaze drones can not only hit ground targets with surgical precision but be used against aerial targets as well. The Rossiya-1 report showed an “aerial minefield:” several Lantsets took up position for patrolling and when a hostile drone appeared rammed it, blowing it up with their three-kilogram warheads. The footage included computer graphics in which a drone similar to the Turkish Bayraktar was destroyed. “They fly at about 150 kph and we can easily get that to 300 kph when diving,” Zakharov said, commenting on the video clip...

Leading unmanned aviation expert Denis Fedutinov commented to Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye... “The trial use by the army of loitering munitions in Syria can be seen as a positive sign for our manufacturers, and it indicates a transformation in the Russian military's position regarding a type of weapon that is new to it,” he emphasized.

Source: Colonel Sergey Viktorovich Shishkov, Lieutenant Colonel Yuriy Nikolayevich Borshchin, and Igor Kolesnikov, “Как Защититься от Дронов-«Камикадзе» Часть I (How to Defend Against Kamikaze Drones Part I),” *Materialno-Tekhnicheskoye Obespecheniye* (logistics journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense), April 2021. <http://mto.ric.mil.ru/upload/site193/2BSnkrjCJ6.pdf>

Subunits of the Material-Technical Support (MTO) Troops currently hold one of the leading positions in increasing the combat readiness of Defense Ministry formations, units, and organizations and strengthening the defense capability of Russia as a whole. MTO subunits meet troop needs for arms and military equipment, missiles, munitions, fuel, food, and other kinds of supplies necessary for day-to-day life and combat activities. Reserves of equipment and supplies are established both at military unit permanent stationing locations as well as in the field.

It is obvious that by taking advantage of sabotage teams or precision-guided munitions (PGMs), the enemy will take all steps to prevent effective support of our troops with supplies. These teams can use small UAVs not only for reconnaissance, but also for engaging targets. These articles have small dimensions and can be imperceptible to personnel...where a small UAV is making a television film of fueling organized under field conditions...The boundary among PGMs, UAVs, and robotic complexes is fading...

Source: Colonel Sergey Viktorovich Shishkov, Lieutenant Colonel Yuriy Nikolayevich Borshchin, and Igor Kolesnikov, “Как Защититься от Дронов-«Камикадзе» Часть II (How To Defend Against Kamikaze Drones Part II),” *Materialno-Tekhnicheskoye Obespecheniye* (logistics journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense), May 2021. <http://mto.ric.mil.ru/upload/site193/d5VauJv52T.pdf>

For effective detection and combat against small enemy UAVs, a system can be developed based upon item 9S482M7 [a modernized air defense battery command and control vehicle mounted on a BTR-80 chassis], which permits processing of large streams of information from various sensors and will work in conjunction with tactical air defense command and control systems...

Thus, anti-small UAV systems will be able to reduce the threat of attack on logistic units, storage depots, evacuation and repair, road commandant activities, motor transport units, supply regiments, missile storage bases, rail brigades, as well as material-technical support brigades...

Russian Generals Poised to Play Larger Political Role

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Some thirty years ago, the top military officer in the USSR, General Dmitry Yazov, played a key role in the failed attempt to seize power and turn back political reforms in the Soviet Union. Two years later, key Russian military leaders played an important role in resolving the constitutional crisis between the executive and legislative branches. Since then, senior Russian military personnel have avoided becoming directly involved in politics—at least while still in uniform. However, as the brief excerpt from the moderate news source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* suggests, Russian generals may soon be enlisted to help strengthen the Kremlin’s chief political party.

The article asserts that “Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov, Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation and Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate (GVPU) of the Russian Armed Forces, nominated his candidacy for the preliminary vote of United Russia.” The author reminds readers that “on 30 July 2018, by decree of President Vladimir Putin, the GVPU was created, intended ‘to organize military-political work in the Armed Forces aimed at implementing state defense policy.’” Therefore, as the article states, since “political activity in the army and navy...is no longer prohibited...the chief political worker general is ready to work for the ruling party.”

While a final decision has yet to be made regarding the participation of senior military personnel within the electoral process, the article claims that “the likelihood of Kartapolov’s participation in the campaign is high.” Russian parliamentary (Duma) elections are scheduled for mid-September 2021, and the United Russia party’s weakened reputation could use a powerful boost. The article quotes Kartapolov who recently stated that, “it is important that the United Russia party is treated in our country in the same way as the Armed Forces. And 90% of the citizens of our Motherland trust the Armed Forces.” Allowing active-duty generals to campaign for United Russia may help at the polls, but aligning so closely with the current political leadership could ultimately weaken public support for the Russian military or increasingly make the Kremlin beholden to the military’s political support.



Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov.

Source: mil.ru, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrey_Kartapolov,_2018.jpg, CCA 4.0

“That is, political activity in the army and navy, as it were, is no longer prohibited. And the chief political worker general is ready to work for the ruling party...”

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Предвыборное наступление единороссов возглавят генералы (Generals will lead the pre-election offensive of United Russia),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Russia based moderate news source), 29 April 2021. https://www.ng.ru/armies/2021-04-29/1_8142_generals.html

The active military will take part in the United Russia (ER) campaign for the elections to the State Duma. As the Moscow branch of the party reported on VKontakte, Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov, Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation and Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate (GVPU) of the RF Armed Forces, nominated his candidacy for the preliminary vote of United Russia. In modern Russia, the acting deputy head of the military department for the first time aspires to the seat of a parliamentarian.

After the collapse of the USSR and the ban on the activities of the Communist Party in the army, many officers, according to the legislation of the new Russia, became deputies from various political organizations and parties. But they stopped their military service during their term in the State Duma.... But on 30 July 2018, by decree of President Vladimir Putin, the GVPU was created, intended “to organize military-political work in the Armed Forces aimed at implementing state defense policy.” That is, political activity in the army and navy, as it were, is no longer prohibited. And the chief political worker general is ready to work for the ruling party....

...But the likelihood of Kartapolov’s participation in the campaign is high, since the regional organization of United Russia announced the general’s involvement in the primaries. And observers believe that the general has already started his campaign activities. The media reported that on April 30, General Kartapolov will take part in the military-patriotic forum of the Ural Federal District “Feat of Generations” in Tyumen. Indirectly, Kartapolov has already stated his position to journalists. “It is important that the United Russia party is treated in our country in the same way as the Armed Forces. And 90% of the citizens of our Motherland trust the Armed Forces. And the main thing is that all citizens love our country as we, the military do,” the deputy minister said....

Russian Analysts Reevaluating UAV Successes in Regional Conflict

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Russian analysts continue to examine the factors which led to the Azeri victory over Armenian forces in and around Nagorno-Karabakh late last year. Initially, many Russian observers attributed much of the Azeri success to Turkish and Israeli strike UAVs, which helped the Azeri military destroy Armenian weapon systems (see for instance, *OE Watch*, December 2020 “Early Lessons-Learned from Nagorno Karabakh”). However, as the excerpt from the popular privately owned military weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* indicates, some Russian analysts are now modifying their assessments on the overall effectiveness of strike UAVs during this conflict.

The article interviews military journalist, Viktor Baranets, who, quoting a high-level Armenian officer, asserts that during the conflict, “the [Turkish] Bayraktars stopped bombing for a whole four days.” Quoting another source, Baranets suggests that the “Russians with their electronic warfare (EW) systems” were responsible for grounding the UAVs. He goes on to claim that the delay in using the Bayraktars did not last long since “the Turks managed to find an antidote and install electronic warfare protection.” According to Baranets, “this countermeasure

worked for about two days,” when “unknown electronic warfare devices again started making the Bayraktars land or go astray.”

Responding to a question about the apparent weakness of “Soviet-era and Russian air defenses operating in the conflict zone,” Baranets claims that this is false and is “part of the information war that inevitably accompanies a hot war.” Moreover, he asserts that “13 to 15 of these machines [Bayraktars] came down in Nagorno-Karabakh,” and that “exactly half of the drones downed... were hit by Pantsirs [AD system].” The others were presumably downed by Russian EW assets. As the chief supplier of armaments to Armenia, Russia may have a vested interest in touting the capabilities of its weapon systems.

“The fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh died down as suddenly as it erupted, but the talk of Turkish Bayraktar TB2 strike drones delivering victory to Azerbaijan continues to this day.”



Pantsir-S1 Air Defense system.

Source: <http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/459>, CCA-SA 4.0

Continued: Russian Analysts Reevaluating UAV Successes in Regional Conflict

Source: Oleg Falichev, “Ловушка для Байрактаров (Bayraktar Trap) *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (popular privately owned military weekly),” 27 April 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/61894>

Interview by Oleg Falichev with military expert Colonel (Retd) Viktor Baranets... Why the Much-Vaunted Turkish Drones Could not Operate for Four Days Over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh died down as suddenly as it erupted, but the talk of Turkish Bayraktar TB2 strike drones delivering victory to Azerbaijan continues to this day. Is it true and can we regard the Bayraktar as a kind of wonder weapon that on any sector of the front and in any circumstances guarantees a win? Colonel (ret'd) Viktor Baranets, a member of the Defense Ministry's Public Council, answers these and other questions from VPK.

[VPK] Viktor Nikolayevich, the Bayraktar TB2 is a Turkish operational-tactical medium-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle with long endurance. It can remain on duty in the air for more than 12 hours and strike fast when targets are found. It has hardpoints for four UMTAS laser-guided antitank missiles or Roketsan MAM-C and MAM-L gliding guided precision bombs which can hit targets from up to 8 km away while the missiles have a range of up to 14 km. It's true to say that these are good specifications. But do you think that the praise for the Bayraktars has been excessively partisan? And in particular, is it wrong to say that they successfully dealt with the Pantsir gun and SAM system?...

...[Baranets] It has to be said that the Azeris, helped by Turkish specialists, were focused and businesslike. They began to steadily destroy the targets. But that it was hard to counter this in any way is untrue. And here is why. Without doubt, major damage was inflicted on the Armenians. But few at the time noticed something said by a former first deputy chief of the Armenian Armed Forces General Staff, Lieutenant General Tigran Khachatryan, which was that after the initial flights something wondrous happened to the UAVs. The Bayraktars began to either majestically hit the ground or fly into Armenian territory. And then Khachatryan said something simply sensational. He pointed out that the Bayraktars stopped bombing for a whole four days.

[VPK] Why?

[Baranets] This was quite a mystery to me as well. What was actually going on during those four days? ...According to his information, the Bayraktars' electronic brains were affected by a powerful force... it was those damned Russians with their electronic warfare systems, luring the UAVs over to the Armenian side....

[VPK] But then the flights resumed ...

[Baranets] They did, but not for long. It turned out that the Turks managed to find an antidote and install electronic warfare protection. This countermeasure worked for about two days, until unknown electronic warfare devices again started making the Bayraktars land or go astray, by hijacking their radio channels. After that the truce entered force.... We can conclude that from 13 to 15 of these machines came down in Nagorno-Karabakh....

[VPK] So the disparagement of the Soviet-era and Russian air defenses operating in the conflict zone was premature? They did their job?

[Baranets] They certainly did. But we should be relaxed and even-handed with that kind of reporting. It's all part of the information war that inevitably accompanies a hot war.

Bayraktars can be easily destroyed in two ways, with electronic warfare assets and antiaircraft missiles. So, exactly half of the drones downed in Nagorno-Karabakh were hit by Pantsirs....

Amphibious Landing Force Upgraded in Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

Russia is addressing its aging amphibious landing craft fleet by giving priority to upgrades of its Arctic capability, underscoring Russia's anticipation of the growing importance of the Northern Sea Route. According to a recent article in the *Independent Barents Observer*, an independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English, which is now blocked in Russia, all the Russian fleets have provided amphibious lift to Syria. This near constant use has had an impact on the aging amphibious landing ships, many of which were built in Poland during the Cold War. Repair and refitting of the current vessels is ongoing, but state-of-the-art vessels are also entering the naval inventory. According to the *Observer*, which closely monitors Russia's Northern Fleet, the Pyotr Morgunov has joined the Ivan Gren, which was the first of at least four new large amphibious landing ships. A third should also join the Northern Fleet in 2023. In 2010, Russia contracted to purchase two Mistral class amphibious landing ships from France. France cancelled the order after Russia seized the Crimea. The Ivan Gren class vessels are much smaller than the Mistral class amphibious landing craft, which displace 10,000 more tons and carry 16 helicopters.



The Pyotr Morgunov has joined the Northern Fleet.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

“The landing ship is able to carry up to 300 marines, alternatively 13 tanks, 36 armored personnel carriers, or 30 trucks. It can also carry two Ka-29 transport and attack helicopters, alternatively one Ka-52K attack helicopter.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Brand new large landing ship sails into home port of Severomorsk,” *The Independent Barents Observer* (an independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English now blocked in Russia), 2 February 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2021/02/brand-new-large-landing-ship-sails-home-port-severomorsk>

Early in the morning of the 1st of February, the 135-meter-long ship sailed into the Kola Bay and moored on the waterfront of the Northern Fleet headquarters in Severomorsk. On board was a crew of about 100 men.

The Pyotr Morgunov is the newest vessel in the powerful Russian fleet, and the second large landing ship of Project 11711. It follows its sister ship Ivan Gren that was incorporated in the Northern Fleet in 2018. Both vessels were built at the Yantar yard in Baltiisk. The landing ship is able to carry up to 300 naval infantry, alternatively 13 tanks, 36 armored personnel carriers, or 30 trucks. It can also carry two Ka-29 transport and attack helicopters, alternatively one Ka-52K attack helicopter.

The Pyotr Morgunov and Ivan Gren significantly contribute to an upgrade of the Northern Fleet's troop transportation capability. Before that, the Northern Fleet had four landing ships Kondopoga, Aleksandr Otrakovskiy, Greogiy Pobedonosets and Olenegorskiy Gornyak, all of them built in the period from 1976 to 1985. The 43-year-old Olenegoskiy Gornyak rejoined the Northern Fleet in 2019 after a five-year refit.

Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

According to pro-government news service *Izvestia*, the Northern Sea Route will have an effective missile defense against hostile vessels. According to the excerpted article, more improved Bal anti-ship missiles will be stationed in the Arctic. The Bal is a sea-skimming subsonic missile that reportedly flies 10-15 meters above the sea surface, drops down to 3-5 meters above the surface on final attack and strikes the target horizontally and explodes after penetrating the ship. It uses inertial guidance, satellite observation, and homing radar. The Bal will augment the Bastion system already in use in region since 2018.



The Bal anti-ship missile system.

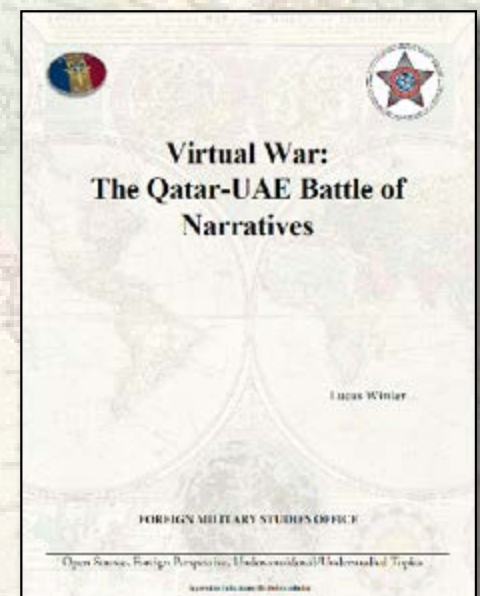
Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

“The decision has been made to deploy the latest Bal coastal missile systems in the Arctic. They will be stationed along the entire Northern Sea Route. In conjunction with the Bastion systems already in the region, they will take control of practically the entire Arctic coastline. In expert opinion, this growth in defensive firepower will make navigation there much more secure.”

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>

Continued: Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in Arctic

Source: Roman Kretsul and Aleksy Ramm, “Дали «Бал»: Севморпуть получит новые береговые комплексы (Further on the Bal. Northern Sea Route to get new Coastal Missiles),” *Izvestia* (pro-government news service), 7 April 2021. <https://iz.ru/1147518/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/dali-bal-sevmorput-poluchit-novye-beregovye-kompleksy>

The decision has been made to deploy the latest Bal coastal missile systems in the Arctic. They will be stationed along the entire Northern Sea Route. In conjunction with the Bastion systems already in the region, they will take control of practically the entire Arctic coastline. In expert opinion, this growth in defensive firepower will make navigation there much more secure.

The first systems have already begun combat alert duty on Franz Josef Land. Subunits of coastal missile forces will be deployed later in other regions. At an end-of-year collegiate session late in 2020, Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu reported that the armed forces now have 74 percent of the required number of Bal and Bastion systems. He also pointed out that the Ministry is steadily growing the infrastructure in the Arctic. “The military base on Ostrov Zemlya Aleksandry [island] is now completely furnished. This is the world’s only facility on a latitude of 80 degrees north. In all, it has 334 buildings and structures. The runway at the Nagurskaya airfield has been extended to 3.5 kilometers.”

The Bal coastal missile system was commissioned in 2008. It is designed to protect coastline and straits, and also to provide cover for naval bases. It fires subsonic missiles singly or in salvos of up to 32. After reloading (which takes 30-40 minutes), the system is ready to fire a second salvo. The Bal is a mobile system based on the MZKT-7930 chassis, consisting of two self-propelled command posts, up to four launchers with eight Kh-35/Kh-35U cruise missiles each, and also transporter-loader vehicles. It has an effective range of more than 120 kilometers, and is equipped with night vision devices and modern instrumentation. Thanks to a brand-new navigation system, the Bal can quickly change launch positions. Deployment time is only 10 minutes.

“This is the latest stage in the deployment of our Arctic group of forces,” military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya. “This means not just technologies for being aware of the situation in the air, on the surface, and under the water, but also positioning the firepower. Clearly, we’re not going to invoke it in international waters but our territorial waters must be reliably protected, including by such potent systems as the Bal. The Northern Sea Route passes through international and territorial waters and we’re not going to allow anyone, especially warships, unfettered access to our territory. For merchant ships there are certain rules, and they can register to proceed into territorial waters in certain circumstances. But penetration by warships, especially in the event of military conflict, will be interdicted, that’s 100 percent.”

...

The Bal is not the first weapon to be stationed along the Northern Sea Route. A battery of Bastions [mobile Russian coastal missile defense system] was deployed on Ostrov Kotel’nyy in 2018. Kotel’nyy is the largest of the New Siberian Islands, situated between the Laptev and East Siberian Seas.

...

In recent years Russia has been actively reinforcing the Navy’s coastal forces, especially the missile and artillery forces, which are upgrading from the obsolete Redut and Rubezh to the latest Bastion and Bal systems. Furthermore, modern battalions are being formed and coastal missile regiments are being reorganized into full-fledged brigades.

Large-scale deliveries to units of the new coastal missile systems began in 2015, and the first to receive them was the Pacific Fleet’s 72nd Separate Coastal Missile Brigade. One of its Bastion batteries was deployed to Iturup Island and a Bal battery went to Kunashir Island in November 2016.



Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Source: www.kremlin.ru, via Wikimedia, [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Recep_Tayyip_Erdogan_\(2020-03-05\)_03.jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Recep_Tayyip_Erdogan_(2020-03-05)_03.jpg), CCA-4.0

Turkish-Russian Relations Possibly Diverging

By Ihsan Gündüz
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey and Russia have been on opposing sides of multiple conflicts in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and North Africa, and their continued working relationship might be diverging over competing regional interests. As the accompanying article from *al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East points out, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had hoped for a different trajectory for Turkish-Russian relations while cozying up to Russia at the expense of his Western allies. The article states that Erdoğan expected to establish relationships in a broad range of areas, including military cooperation and energy projects, to gain leverage in Turkey's relations with European

countries and the United States. A retired Turkish Ambassador told the article's author that current Russian-Turkish relations are not institutionally established and well defined. They are rather based on the Turkish President's and his Russian counterpart's personal and transactional relationships. The author also claims that Turkey's Russia-dependent foreign policy is on the verge of collapse and cites Russia's obstruction of Turkey's plan in Syria despite Turkey's limited gains there. Turkey's current effort to repair relations with its Western allies and Egypt is another indication of a failing Russia-dependent foreign policy.

The article notes that the latest friction point between Turkey and Russia is over Turkish support for Ukraine, including supporting Ukraine's efforts to join NATO as well as the sale of Turkish-made drones to Ukraine. Additionally, the joint statement following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to Turkey stressing the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Turkey's commitment to seeing occupied Ukrainian territories freed from Russian occupation did not sit well with Russia. Following the aforementioned visit, the Russian Foreign Minister called on Turkey and other countries to refrain from feeding into "militaristic sentiment" in Ukraine. Russia also restricted the number of flights to Turkey in a blow to the already battered Turkish tourism industry. One of Turkey's leading experts on Russia told the author that the flight restriction was a reaction to Zelensky's visit to Istanbul and the Erdoğan's remarks on the situation in Crimea. Current economic and military projects maintain Turkish-Russian relations but they may not be sustainable in the long run.

“The partnership of convenience... between Turkey and Russia is gradually reverting to the traditional rivalry between the two countries over diverging regional interests.”



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>

Continued: Turkish-Russian Relations Possibly Diverging

Source: Semih Idiz, “Turkish-Russian ties marked more by rivalry than cooperation today,” *al-Monitor* (a news site with analysts from the Middle East), 26 April 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/turkish-russian-ties-marked-more-rivalry-cooperation-today>

The partnership of convenience — some call it a transactional partnership — between Turkey and Russia is gradually reverting to the traditional rivalry between the two countries over diverging regional interests.

The crisis in Ukraine, which comes on the heels of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, has resulted in mutual suspicions surfacing again.

Turkey and Russia back opposing sides in these conflicts. The same is true in Libya and Syria where they are also at odds over a number of issues.

...

[Turkish President] was keen on a wide-ranging relationship, from military cooperation to vast energy projects, in order to counterbalance the losses Turkey had been incurring from its worsening ties with the West.

Many believed the personal relationship Erdogan built with Russian President Vladimir Putin and their shared dislike of the West would help facilitate his vision.

...

Retired Ambassador Yusuf Buluc... “Turkey and Russia relations are not necessarily governed by a well-defined and institutionally established policy; at least not at its Turkish end,” he added.

...Nevertheless, Erdogan believed that developing ties with Russia to the maximum degree possible would provide Ankara with leverage against the United States and Europe after Turkey’s ties with them took a nosedive.

What he ended up with, however, is a Russia that ultimately obstructed his plans in Syria and Libya. The limited gains Russia allowed Turkey, especially in Syria, in order to appease it do not alter this fact.

...

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov set the record straight in October 2020...

“We have never considered Turkey our strategic ally,” Lavrov said at a meeting with Russian media representatives.

...

Turkey’s strong backing for Ukraine has ruffled more feathers in Moscow where there are already grumblings over the sale of Turkish-made military drones to Kyiv.

Hosting President Volodymyr Zelensky in Istanbul on April 10, Erdogan promised “unconditional support” for Ukraine’s struggle to maintain its territorial integrity...

Ankara also vowed to continue supporting Ukraine’s bid to join NATO.

Following Zelensky’s Istanbul visit, Lavrov called on all countries — although he went on to name Turkey only — to weigh the situation well and refrain from feeding what he referred to as “militaristic sentiments” in Ukraine.

...

Hakan Aksay, Turkey’s leading expert on Russia, believes Moscow’s decision [to restrict the number of flights to Turkey] was a reaction to the results of the Erdogan-Zelensky talks in Istanbul, as well as Erdogan’s remarks regarding Crimea.

...

In many ways, the relative benefits to Turkey from cooperating with Russia in Syria have reached their limits.

Iran Wants to Be a Nanotech Leader

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

The Iranian government increasingly seeks to brand itself as a nanotechnology powerhouse. It hosts annual international nanotechnology exhibitions, encourages university nanotech programs, and regularly reports on the latest nanotech developments—everything from sunscreen to automobile parts. While the Iranian presence on the world’s nanotech stage is relatively small and overlooked for military applications, it is growing and has a notable client list.

The accompanying excerpt of an interview with Sayyid Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, a parliamentarian from Mashhad who serves as the Parliament’s Vice President, by the *Fars News Agency*, an outlet close to Iran’s Defense Ministry, outlines the latest developments in the Iranian nanotech sector. Hashemi claims that Iran has surpassed Europe in the sector and enjoys a six percent global share in the nanotech market. Saeed Sarkar, Secretary of Iran Nanotechnology

Innovation Council, has previously stated that Iran exports nanotech to 49 countries. Major clients include China, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, and Azerbaijan has become an importer of Iranian nanotech-coated radiators over the past year. Hashemi announced his ambition to raise nanotech exports to more than \$1 billion over the next five years.

“The important requirement is budgetary support tailored to the nanotech programs.”

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the excerpted article, however, is the open airing of frustrations from those involved in the nanotech sector that the Iranian

government does not adequately invest in field. That the Iranian government lags in investments contradicts much of the Iranian government’s public relations about the field as well as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s pronouncement that Iranian investment in nanotechnology should equal two percent of the total global investment made by all countries in the field.

Source: “Iran Qavi, Iran Daneshbanian Ast (Iran is Strong, Iran is Knowledge-Based),” Fars News Agency (media outlet close to Iran’s defense ministry), 24 April 2021. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14000204000027>

Despite the current situation [sanctions], Iran ranks fourth in the world in the field of nanotechnology production after China, India, and the United States. In fact, Iran is one of the top countries in the field of nanotechnology and scientific power, although researchers and those active in this field have complaints from officials and face challenges to develop this technology further. In this regard, we talked with Sayyid Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, the first vice-president of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and received responses from the First Vice-President of the Islamic Consultative Assembly regarding the country’s scientific progress in the field of nanotechnology and the need for more government action and cooperation in this area....

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>

Iraq Poised to Become Increasingly Dependent on Iran for Electricity

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Decades of sanctions, war, and corruption have eroded Iraq's electrical grid. While both the United States and Iraq have invested billions of dollars into Iraq's grid, Iraq's rapidly expanding population—more than 40 percent of Iraqis were born after 2003—and a flood of energy consuming appliances and technologies have left Iraq perennially short on capacity. During the previous U.S. administration's "maximum pressure" campaign, Iraqi authorities negotiated an exception so that they could purchase Iranian gas and electricity. The proceeds were deposited into an escrow account in the Iraqi Central Bank from which Iran could then debit expenses for Iranian purchases made in Iraq. U.S. authorities saw the Iranian electricity purchases as necessary to fulfill Iraq's needs

“These companies are ready to provide favorable electrical services to Iraq.”

in the short term but sought to augment Iraq's ability to capture flared gas in the medium term to enable Iraq to become more self-sufficient. As sanctions unwind, Iran seems to be positioning itself to augment again Iraq's power dependence upon it. The excerpted article from the state-run Iranian *Islamic Students News Agency* covers the visit between Iraqi Electricity Minister Majid Mahdi Hantoush and Iranian Deputy Energy Minister Mohammad Hassan Motavallizadeh to discuss upgrading the network and connections between the two countries. Iraj Masjedi, an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force veteran who now serves as Iran's ambassador in Baghdad, tweeted that the trip is meant to cement further energy cooperation between the neighboring states.

Source: “Sharkatha-ye Irani Amadeh Ara’e Khodmat-e Barqi beh Iraq Hastand (Iranian Companies Ready to Provide Electrical Services to Iraq),” *Islamic Students News Agency* (State-run news agency), 3 May 2021. <https://www.isna.ir/news/1400021309173>

Referring to the capacities and capabilities of Iranian electric companies, a spokesman for the electricity industry said, “These companies are ready to provide favorable electrical services to Iraq.” The Iraqi Minister of Electricity [Majid Mahdi Hantoush] visited to see the capabilities of the Electricity Industry Monitoring Center and the progress of Iran’s electricity industry in network intelligence in order to reduce outages and control consumption. After this visit, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, spokesman for the electricity industry, said in a video message: “Today, the Iranian Electricity Industry Monitoring Center is hosting the Iraqi Minister of Electricity. The purpose of this meeting is to present our country’s experiences in reducing electricity network losses in the last five years.” He stated that presenting our country’s experiences on smart grid intelligence was another goal of this meeting, and said, “Providing engineering services to Iraq is another goal of the meeting, given the excellent potential of equipment suppliers, contractors and consultants.”



China's cyber policy appears to have three vectors—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—that dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>

Iran Unveils New Drone Defense Technology

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Drones are increasingly a central part of Iran's military strategy. Over the past decade Iranian military industries have greatly expanded the country's drone fleet, unveiling a number of models with both surveillance and attack capabilities. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the regular military, and Iran's paramilitary law enforcement forces now count drones in their arsenals. Iranian authorities also claim expanded ranges, incorporated GPS guidance, and increased stealth characteristics. While both the Iranian press and defense officials regularly exaggerate their military capabilities, Iranian forces and their proxies have demonstrated significant capabilities by using drones against targets in Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen.

The current announcement of new platforms as per *Kayhan*, a conservative broadsheet whose editor the Supreme Leader himself appoints, suggests that Iranian authorities have moved to fill a gap in the Iranian arsenal. The article and the unveiling, timed to coincide with Iranian Army Day, suggests that Iranian leaders now prioritize the ability to jam and counter advanced UAVs and to miniaturize platforms so that they can be easily deployed.

The excerpted announcement also highlights a desire to integrate artificial intelligence into Iran's drone doctrine. The article claims the ability to network a swarm of suicide drones autonomously to identify and strike separate targets. If true, this would significantly



New drone and drone defense systems unveiled by the Iranian Army Ground Forces on 25 April 2021.

Source: <http://cdn.pana.ir/Media/Image/1400/02/05/637549422385012552.jpg>

advance Iran's current UAV capability. However, many other Iranian claims surrounding artificial intelligence appear focused more on repeating jargon for the domestic audience and less based on true acquisition and current ability to field these top technologies.

“They unveiled suicide drones capable of conducting joint operations.”

Source: “Ravanmaye az Dastavardha-ye Jadid Niru-ye Zamini Artesh (Unveiling the New Achievements of the Army Ground Forces).” *Kayhan.ir* (Conservative newspaper who's editor is appointed by the supreme leader), 26 April 2021. <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/215587/> *شتر-ای-ن-ی-م-ز-ی-ور-ی-دی-ج*

The ceremony of unveiling and releasing the new achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army Ground Forces' Self-Sufficiency Research and Jihad Organization was held yesterday (Sunday) in the presence of Admiral Habibollah Sayari, Deputy Coordinator of the Army and Brigadier General Kiomars Heydari, commander of the Army Ground Forces at the Army Ground Forces' Self-Sufficiency Research and Jihad Organization....

For the first time, the Army Ground Forces' Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization unveiled suicide drones capable of conducting joint operations with 10 aircraft within a radius of 250 miles. These drone systems have a range of between 25 and 250 miles and can be guided from a ground station and, along the way, each is able to destroy the intended target. The warhead of these systems ranges from 11 pounds to 33 pounds. These are UAV systems which use artificial intelligence, and they have the ability to provide information online, network, and relay information to each other. Other achievements of the Army Ground Forces were unveiled at the ceremony, which are as follows:

1. *UAV Portable Wave Radio Detection Systems: This system has the ability to detect, detect and disrupt air surveillance radars on a variety of UAVs, helicopters and fighter jets to deal with a variety of surveillance and guidance radar threats. This system is completely indigenous and is based on internal technologies.*
2. *UAV Portable Laser Detection: These are able to detect laser-guided weapons and airborne threats, warning against enemy short-range air defense systems....*
3. *The Ranesh ["Drift"]-1 Multi-purpose micro-turbojet engine....*
4. *The Tiam-1400... A UAV self-defense system for detecting and jamming the signals of enemy radars and air surveillance....*
5. *Total Flight artificial intelligence-based network flight system....*
6. *"Taha 1400"; UAV radar interceptor system*
7. *Advanced ground-based disruptive systems*



Nigerian army demonstration. Boko Haram has overrun several military bases, in the process acquiring weapons and equipment such as Land Rovers outfitted for combat.

Source: VOA/Nicolas Pinault/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigerian_Army_Boko_Haram_demonstration.jpg

Boko Haram Overrunning Nigerian Military Bases, Growing Weapons Cache

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Boko Haram's hit-and-run tactics on military bases are paying off. As the accompanying excerpt from the South African defense industry trade publication *DefenceWeb* notes, these operations, sometimes entailing 15 or so gun trucks, have enabled the terrorist group to accumulate a significant cache of arms and ammunition. Non-lethal materiel, such as gasoline, uniforms, and communications equipment are also often part of the haul.

Boko Haram has also been able to seize several larger pieces of military hardware. Following a 25 April attack on a Nigerian army base, the terrorist group displayed its captured armament, including armored vehicles and a variety of Toyota Hilux trucks configured for military use. According to the article, Boko Haram has been able to overrun this and other military bases with relative ease, killing numerous soldiers in the process.

Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, countries in the Lake Chad Basin region, have spent heavily to defeat Boko Haram and its aligned terrorist organization, the Islamic State West Africa Province. Nigeria alone has spent billions of dollars to acquire arms. Unfortunately, as the article points out, a significant portion of these weapons continue to wind up in the hands of the terrorists. Unless this hemorrhaging of weapons to the enemy can be stopped, Boko Haram's strength will continue to increase ensuring an already long conflict will be prolonged even further.

Source: Olusegun Akinfenwa, "Boko Haram's growing arms stockpile: A great concern for Lake Chad Basin region," *DefenceWeb* (a South African defense industry trade publication), 11 May 2021. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/national-security/boko-harams-growing-arms-stockpile-a-great-concern-for-lake-chad-basin-region/>

In the early 2010s, when Boko Haram started its hit and run attacks on military bases and personnel, it was hard to imagine that the daredevil group would one day become emboldened enough to start taking the battle to the Nigerian Army's gate, as it is being currently witnessed.

It remains a mystery how the terrorists gain access to military formations and carry out their dastard acts unhindered and undetected. Also, it is difficult to quantify the true scope and scale of weapons the extremists have seized, given how militaries in the region have been accused of understating the enormity of terrorists' attacks. In 2015, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari claimed that Boko Haram had been technically defeated and could no longer carry out conventional attacks on security forces or population centres. But the current situation says completely otherwise.

It cost a lot to train a soldier to his or her first operational assignment. Seeing the Nigerian soldiers being killed in their numbers on a regular basis means a huge loss for the country. It has also greatly affected the trust of civilians in their army, considering how it appears that the military is helpless and weak.

While the current situation is worrisome enough, the long term effects could be much more alarming if the forceful acquisition of military weapons by insurgents continues. Already there are devastating humanitarian crises in the region, including tens of thousands of deaths, millions of forced migrations, life-threatening hunger and other issues caused by armed conflicts.

“In the early 2010s, when Boko Haram started its hit and run attacks on military bases and personnel, it was hard to imagine that the daredevil group would one day become emboldened enough to start taking the battle to the Nigerian Army's gate, as it is being currently witnessed.”

France Balancing Stability with Support for Democratic Change in Chad

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

France faces a dilemma in its former colony with the death of long-term Chadian President Idriss Déby. As *African Arguments*, a scholarly nonpartisan publication from the Royal African Society reports, France is concerned that Déby's death may lead to further instability in the Sahel, a region already plagued with insurgencies, rebellions, narcotrafficking, and environmental degradation related to global warming. Thus, France was initially very supportive of Déby's son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, being installed as Chad's new president for an 18-month transitional period as it offers the stability that goes with continuity. However, this proposed 18-month transitional period goes against Chad's constitution, which calls for an election in 90 days. With cries from the local populace and elsewhere for democratic rule to be implemented, France found itself in the awkward position of deciding how much to support continuity and stability, which would help in the fight against terrorism, versus supporting the constitution and democracy.

France has a decades long relationship with the Déby family, but with Chadians protesting the way Déby's son was given the presidency, along with rising anti-French sentiment across much of the Sahel, France has decided to soften its initial stance. According to the article Macron recently called for "a civilian national unity government that



Operation Barkhane, led by French troops, to combat Islamic terrorists in the Sahel is headquartered in Chad. Pictured here is a French armored vehicle burning after it was attacked in Mali.

Source: VOA/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burning_VBCI_in_Gao.jpg

should lead to elections within an 18-month delay." It is not what the Chad constitution states should happen, nor does it necessarily provide for long-term continuity, but at least for now, it is France's answer to a political dilemma with direct security implications in Chad and the region.

“Following Déby's sudden demise, it was soon clear that France's strategy is to prioritize continuity at all costs. At the funeral on 23 April, Macron insisted that “France will not let anybody put into question or threaten today or tomorrow Chad's stability and integrity.”

Source: Kyrre Berland and Chris Brew, “Chad: France firmly backs continuity, but will the people?” *African Arguments* (a scholarly nonpartisan publication from the Royal African Society), 28 April 2021. <https://africanarguments.org/2021/04/chad-france-firmly-backs-continuity-but-will-the-people/>

Following Déby's sudden demise, it was soon clear that France's strategy is to prioritize continuity at all costs. At the funeral on 23 April, Macron insisted that “France will not let anybody put into question or threaten today or tomorrow Chad's stability and integrity”.

On 27 April, however, Macron shifted France's position. In a statement with AU Chair Félix Tshisekedi of the DR Congo, the two leaders called for “a civilian national unity government that should lead to elections within an 18-month delay”. They condemned political repression and violence against civilians. This is still not what the constitution mandates, but in softening its unwavering support for army, France may be hoping that the Chadian citizens will forget its role in bolstering and legitimizing the military council. The AU could see this as an opportunity to score a diplomatic win and position themselves on the side of a civilian transition.

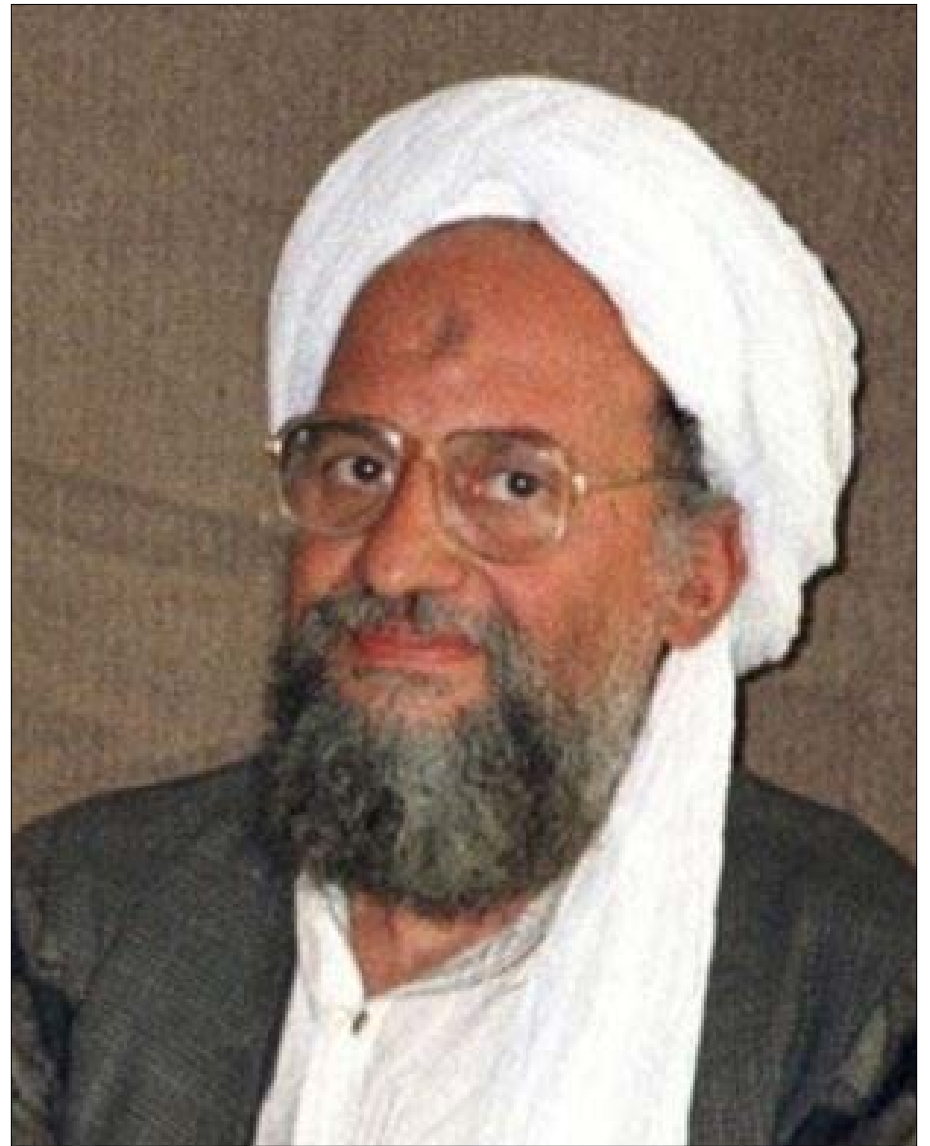
Maintaining internal security will also be a challenge. Chad's military council has rejected the possibility of talks with FACT, which has vowed to lay siege on N'Djamena. To protect the regime, reports have emerged of Chadian troops being ordered to return home, a move that could drastically alter counter-insurgency operations and potentially lead to the collapse of the Chadian front against Islamist insurgencies.

Al Qaeda's Transformation and Future: Still in Europe's Thoughts and Nightmares

By Karen Kaya
OE Watch Commentary

Much has been written about how Al Qaeda (AQ) is a shadow of its former self and how the end of the war against the terrorist organization is in sight. However, some leading European observers do not think this is the case. The excerpted article by a researcher from a top European think-tank, the *Barcelona Center for International Affairs* claims otherwise. The author provides a useful summary of the decades-long transformation of AQ, which enables it to survive, adapt and thrive despite the predominant focus on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its affiliates. In addition, it is a gloomy assessment of the status of fighting Sunni violent extremist groups, as well as a pessimistic outlook for the future. The author notes that in the 20 years since 9/11, the number of jihadists in the world has at least doubled, if not tripled. He states that AQ has survived the death of Bin Laden, the Arab Spring and the rise of ISIS, and attributes the group's resilience to two critical and strategic moves by the organization: transforming itself into a decentralized global network and increasing its fronts where its branches can wage local 'jihad.'

According to the author, the first change, evolving from a hierarchical and centralized organization to a decentralized global network, took place gradually as a result of the counter-terrorism efforts to destroy the group, which limited its communication capabilities. This took place at a time when the AQ brand was consolidated as the main global jihadist organization, and led AQ to alliances with local jihadists, giving birth to local franchises such as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). These alliances and local franchises enabled the "parent organization" to have branches in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, while giving the local groups prestige, finance and visibility due to their "Al Qaeda" label. In addition, given the conflicts in Libya, Syria, Mali, Iraq and Yemen, AQ gave strategic autonomy to local franchises, enabling them flexibility to benefit from these situations of instability. The second change is that AQ focused more on expanding locally in the last decade, and less on transnational terrorism. Instead of focusing on the United States and its allies, it focused on expanding in certain conflict zones. The author writes AQ's "objective is now to



Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Source: Hamid Mir via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ayman_al-Zawahiri_portrait.JPG

Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0

fight against the 'close enemy,' ...or regimes that are 'falsely Muslim.'" He closes by claiming AQ is more active than ever, and that eradicating the organization remains elusive. Regardless of perspectives that write off AQ, it remains at the top of the list of some critical European analyses.

“Thus, ten years after the death of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda demonstrates its resilience and capacity to adapt. Through a decentralized global network and a multitude of local franchises, the group remains more active than ever.”

TERRORISM, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: Al Qaeda's Transformation and Future: Still in Europe's Thoughts and Nightmares

Source: Moussa Bourekba, "Al Qaeda after Bin Laden: decentralization and adaptation," *Barcelona Centre for International Affairs* (CIDOB- a top European independent think-tank based in Barcelona), May 2021. https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/opinion/cidob/2021/al_qaeda_despues_de_bin_laden_descentralizacion_y_adaptacion

Al Qaeda has survived the so-called war on terror. A decade after the assassination of Osama Bin Laden and two decades after 9/11, the organization is still active and operating as a decentralized global network.

...Neither the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq, nor the assassination of Osama Bin Laden meant the end of the jihadist organization. In the two decades since 9/11, the number of jihadists in the world has doubled or even tripled. What's more: AQ has survived the death of its founder, the so-called Arab springs and the rise of the Islamic State. How to explain? In large part, AQ's resilience is due to two strategic changes initiated by its founder and meticulously implemented by his successor, Ayman al Zawahiri: the transformation of the organization into a decentralized global network and, as a consequence, the proliferation of fronts different where the different branches of the group can wage a local "jihad".

The first strategic change has to do with the structure of the organization: AQ went from being a hierarchical and centralized organization to a decentralized global network. After 9/11 2001, a surprising combination of factors led to this gradual change: on the one hand, counter-terrorism efforts to end Al Qaeda considerably restricted the acting and communication capabilities of the terrorist organization's top brass. On the other hand, the Al Qaeda "brand" was consolidated as the main jihadist organization worldwide. Hence, alliances were woven between Bin Laden's organization - turned into central Al Qaeda - and other jihadist organizations to give birth to local franchises. Thus, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was formed from the group led by Abu Musab al Zarqawi (2004), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) from the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (2007) and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from the merger between the Saudi and Yemeni branches of the organization (2009). In this way, the parent organization was able to have effective relays in Africa, the Middle East and Asia while various local groups gained visibility, prestige and finances thanks to the "Al Qaeda" label.

Implemented a few years before bin Laden's death, the decentralization strategy also became a priority for Ayman al Zawahiri, his successor. In a context marked by the US withdrawal from Iraq, the Arab springs and the subsequent conflicts in Libya, Syria, Mali, Iraq and Yemen, it was a question of giving sufficient strategic autonomy to local franchises so that they could react with some agility and benefit from these situations of instability. Thus, in 2012 AQIM, together with Ansar Eddine, took control of Northern Mali. A month later, the Somali jihadist movement Al Shabaab swore allegiance to Al Qaeda. In 2013, the Al Nusra Front - in the midst of the fight against the Syrian regime - made its affiliation to Al Qaeda official...

The second change, resulting from this dynamic of decentralization, is related to Al Qaeda's own strategy: in the last decade, the organization focused more on expanding locally and less on transnational terrorism. In the 1990s, and with more intensity in the 2000s, transnational terrorism was a priority for Bin Laden's organization: the attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam (1998), New York (2001), Madrid (2004) and London (2005) are examples of the long series of large-scale attacks planned or inspired by Al Qaeda and directed against Western countries and interests. The objective was the withdrawal of the "distant enemy" (the United States and its allies) from Muslim lands. Instead, in the last decade, the group led by Al Zawahiri has been more dedicated to expanding in certain conflict zones; the objective is now to fight against the "close enemy", that is to say against the regimes "falsely Muslim".

Through alliances with local leaders and jihadist groups - such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, Ansar Dine and local groups in Mali, or Al Shabaab in Somalia - AQ pursues different strategic objectives such as territorial control (Syria and Yemen), the establishment of a proto-caliphate (Mali) or planning terrorist attacks (Somalia and Kenya). Their strategy is less about exporting violence to the West and more about establishing their franchises locally, earning the trust of local leaders and populations, and ultimately managing territories. We have even seen cases, such as Syria, where the leader of the Front al Nusra declared that he did not intend to attack the West and prioritized his strategy of territorial expansion. In this way, and despite the fact that AQ lost dozens of senior managers of the organization in recent years, the group has more than ten local franchises in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and has tens of thousands of jihadists. with significant destabilization capabilities.

...

Thus, ten years after the death of Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda demonstrates its resilience and capacity to adapt. Through a decentralized global network and a multitude of local franchises, the group remains more active than ever. Against this background, and in a context marked by the US will to close the "war on terror", the eradication of the organization increasingly resembles an impossible dream.

TERRORISM, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

ISIS-Linked Militants in Mozambique Recruiting Youth with Fraudulent Business Loans



Mocimboa da Praia, VOA Português.

Source: Venâncio Miguel, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mocimboa_da_Praia,_VOA_Portugu%C3%AAs.jpg, CC x 2.0

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

On 5 April the Portuguese-language publication *jornaltornado.pt*, which attempts to be ideologically neutral, published the excerpted article by former Portuguese Socialist Party politician Paolu Casaca. In the article, Casaca discussed the ongoing violence by fighters in northern Mozambique loyal to ISIS operating under the moniker of al-Shabaab, not to be confused with the better known Somalia-based terrorist group of the same name. In the article, Casaca assessed the reasons why the Mozambican jihadists had succeeded in financing and recruiting so rapidly.

The article suggested that the ISIS-loyal fighters began obtaining funding from illegal networks that smuggle ivory and diamonds from within the East Africa region and timber from China that arrived at Mozambican ports. In turn, the group's leaders used that money to recruit youth at mosques and Islamic schools by offering loans for purchasing fishing boats, small shops, or building tools that recruits could use to start their own businesses. This enabled the Mozambican al-Shabaab leadership to build an increasingly widespread movement. The article claimed, however, that before major attacks, those who received a loan were required to sell their businesses and equipment and provide their profits to the leadership to fund future attacks. Anyone who disobeyed these orders would be killed. Such claims are consistent with another 6 April article in Portuguese-language *omrmz.org*, which is a nonprofit publication in Mozambique that covers rural affairs. It found from interviews with al-Shabaab members that the group's leaders recruited youth living in a state deprivation and therefore willing to take any support the leaders could provide.

The *jornaltornado.pt* article concludes that the dual factors of ideological indoctrination and financing in northern Mozambique are part of a broader phenomenon that must be tackled in order to defeat the ISIS-loyal fighters in the country. In a country like Mozambique that is already fragile, Casaca argues that ignoring these factors is a recipe for failure.

“The first leaders of al-Shabaab began to recruit young people at their mosques and madrassas by offering investment loans.”

Source: “Jihad avança em Moçambique (Jihad advances in Mozambique),” *jornaltornado.pt* (local Portuguese language publication considered neutral), 5 April 2021. <https://www.jornaltornado.pt/jihad-avanca-em-mocambique/>

A report by an international organization specializing in the study of the relationship between crime and terrorism (The Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, which uses the English-language acronym GIATOC) in October 2018 already predicted an evolution of jihad in Mozambique very similar to the one that has been validated. The plundering of natural resources, especially wood smuggled to China, but also ivory from illegally slaughtered elephants and diamonds, and the drug and refugee trafficking that flourished even before the start of jihad, was a good breeding ground for financing the jihadist network. Ideological indoctrination began with the arrival of Somali jihad refugees in 2006, when the jihadists no longer directly controlled Mogadishu. The jihadists known as ‘al-Shabaab’ were also known by the same name in Mozambique.

The recruitment method followed was already based on microcredit: the first leaders of al-Shabaab began to recruit young people at their mosques and madrassas by offering investment loans. These loans could be invested in any sector of interest and all new sect adherents moved into business. Some bought new boats for fishing, some started small shops selling food and consumer goods, and others settled into auto repair or the sale of building materials or power tools. When the time came, recruits were required to sell the acquired assets, presumably to finance the attacks. Those who disobeyed were punished.

Jihadist indoctrination is the essential element to take into account before the phenomenon increases. Jihad in Mozambique is also the result of a state of extreme fragility of Mozambique.

“Caracterização e organização social dos Machababos (Characterization and social organization of Machababos),” omrmz.org (non-profit publication in Mozambique that covers rural affairs), 6 April 2021. <https://omrmz.org/omrweb/publicacoes/or-109/>.

The messianic promise of social order combined with the distribution of concrete benefits – food, clothing, and protection – had a seductive effect on vulnerable populations, especially in a scenario of violence, great social precariousness, and food insecurity.

TERRORISM, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Most Lethal Police Operation in Rio de Janeiro's History Comes with Significant Cost



A member of Brazil's elite Police Battalion for Special Operations (BOPE) surveilling a favela.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1_Equipam_01.jpg

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Rio de Janeiro has long suffered from the violence wrought by Brazil's drug trade, where traffickers often operate from the city's peripheral favela communities. In May, a police operation targeting the neighborhood of Jacarezinho, located in the city's North Zone, resulted in the death of 25 people, according to *O Globo*, one of the country's top media outlets, generally considered to be conservative in its political orientation. The article's author notes that this operation,

a shootout that lasted nine hours, is the most lethal operation in the city's history. Jacarezinho is a frequent target of raids because police consider it to be part of the headquarters of Brazil's Comando Vermelho (Red Command), one of the country's main criminal organizations. The police cited concern about teenage recruitment into the drug trafficking trade as the rationale for the raid, the article notes. Meanwhile, the well-known British, publicly owned media outlet *BBC Brasil*, revises the death toll upward to 28 individuals. The casualty list was stark: one police officer and the rest either civilians or traffickers. The raid occurred under a June 2020 Supreme Court ban on favela raids. The ban was issued to prohibit raids and further violence during the pandemic. However, the city of Rio could apply for special exceptions in order to continue raids on a case-by-case basis. This raid must have qualified, therefore, as fitting under the "extraordinary circumstances" clause of the prohibition. Predictably, it has brought further scrutiny of the police when many expected that these types of incidents would cease.

According to the local analysts, such a violent raid frays police-community relations. Ultimately, this ultimately can make Brazil's counternarcotics strategies and operations in the region even more difficult to undertake.

“This is not a public security policy. Producing these violently armed incursions and causing so many deaths is not public safety, quite the contrary. Security protects the lives of everyone.”

Source: “Operação policial com 25 mortes no Jacarezinho é a mais violenta da história do Rio de Janeiro (Police operation with 25 deaths in Jacarezinho is the most violent in the history of Rio de Janeiro),” *O Globo* (one of the country's top media outlets, generally considered to be conservative in its political orientation), 6 May 2021. <https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2021/05/06/operacao-policial-com-25-mortes-no-jacarezinho-e-a-mais-violenta-da-historia-do-rj.ghtml>

This is not a public security policy. Producing these violently armed incursions and causing so many deaths is not public safety, quite the contrary. Security protects the lives of everyone, be they accused people, accused and not yet proven criminals, but accused of committing a crime, and everyone else...Rio de Janeiro does not have a public security policy.

Source: “Jacarezinho: o que se sabe sobre operação policial que deixou 28 mortos no Rio (Jacarezinho: what is known about the police operation that left 28 dead in Rio),” *BBC Brasil* (the Brazilian presence of the well-known British, publicly-owned media outlet), 6 May 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-57015948>

Thursday's operation in Jacarezinho took place despite a decision by the STF (Supreme Federal Court) that suspended, since June 2020, police operations in Rio de Janeiro's favelas during the pandemic. The decision allows for actions only in “absolutely exceptional cases.” For this, agents need to communicate to the Public Prosecutor's Office the reason for the operation. According to...[a] report in early April, the STF's ban on operations in favelas reduced the number of deaths by security officers in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region by 34% in 2020. It was the first fall recorded since 2013.

Colombia Rocked by Sustained, Countrywide Protests

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Colombia has been seized by debilitating, nationwide protests that show no signs of abating. While the original impetus for protests was a tax proposal aimed at closing a yawning budget deficit, *CNN Español*, the Spanish-language version of the well-known U.S. media outlet notes, the protests have morphed to take on a life of their own. Several protestors cited COVID-19 lockdowns, a lack of vaccine, and inequality as enduring reasons for protests that have shut down much of the country for weeks.

The situation between police and protestors has escalated significantly, *BBC Mundo*, the Spanish-language version of the British, publicly owned media outlet reports. Police stand accused of killing dozens of protestors, while protestors have set fire to numerous police stations around the country. The administration of President Iván Duque has attempted to engage in dialogue with the protestors, but differences ended talks early and protestors engaged in a national strike, the article notes. The countrywide protests contribute to further instability in one of the largest countries and closest U.S. partners in the region, already reeling from the Venezuelan migration crisis and



Colombians have come out in massive numbers to protest the government of President Iván Duque.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marcha_7_de_abril.jpg

COVID-19. Most immediately, the protests will likely contribute to greater demands for police reform. Colombia's National Police are one of the most capable in Latin America, and one of the principal forces in the battle against the country's guerrilla groups.

“Behind the clashes...there seems to be, among other things, a deep mistrust of the other on both sides and an antagonistic view of what is happening in Colombia.”

Source: “Lo que dejan 10 días de protestas en Colombia (What 10 days of protests left in Colombia),” *CNN Español* (the Spanish-language version of the well-known US media outlet), 7 May 2021. <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2021/05/07/protestas-colombia-lo-que-dejan-nueve-dias-de-protestas-en-colombia-orix/>

The protesters haven't tired. Ten days have passed since people took to the streets peacefully to demand from the government not only the withdrawal of the controversial tax reform, which was achieved after five days of protests last Sunday. The demonstrations have now become a popular display of broader anger...Neither the rain in many cities, nor the unfortunate violence that has occurred in some demonstrations, has overshadowed the social protest. Thousands continue to attend despite a third spike in coronavirus infections, even as national authorities and even the Pan American Health Organization have warned that hospitals could be “dangerously full” in the near future.

Source: “Protestas en Colombia: por qué el choque entre manifestantes y policías es tan profundo (Protests in Colombia: why the clash between protesters and police is so deep),” *BBC Mundo* (the Spanish-language version of the British, publicly-owned media outlet), 6 May 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-57016978>

According to the NGO Tremors, there have been 1,500 attacks against the civilian population. Official figures estimate that at least 24 civilians and one policeman have died during the clashes that have occurred after each day of protests and that have overshadowed the massive peaceful marches calling for a more just, equal, and peaceful country. Behind the clashes...there seems to be, among other things, a deep mistrust of the other on both sides and an antagonistic view of what is happening in Colombia.

El Salvador's President Consolidating Power After Election



President Nayib Bukele gives his first speech as President of El Salvador.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nayib_Bukele_Traspaso_de_Mando.jpg, PresidenciaSV

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

After his party won a qualified majority in recent legislative elections, El Salvador's President, Nayib Bukele, is using his greater influence to rid the government of obstacles to his administration. According to an article in *El Tiempo*, a popular Colombian daily generally described as politically centrist, during the legislature's first session after taking office, the body, under the control of Bukele's New Ideas Party, voted to remove five judges from the country's Supreme Court, as well as the country's independent Attorney General. Simultaneously, El Salvador's police escorted their replacements to the legislature, prompting immediate cries of a slide toward authoritarianism, the article notes. The article also says that before winning a qualified majority in legislative elections, Bukele had fought with the country's Supreme Court over multiple regulatory maneuvers related to the coronavirus pandemic. The new Salvadoran Congress followed these changes to the country's institutions by amending tax laws to withdraw certain benefits from local media outlets, according to an article in *El Universo*, a large Ecuadorian daily described as politically independent. The article states that Bukele has long been critical of several local newspapers. These moves weaken democratic governance and anti-corruption efforts in the region and could serve as an additional point of instability in Central America.

“Parliament removed from office five members of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court and their alternates. The replacements were immediately appointed, who, escorted by the police, arrived at the Palace of Justice to assume their functions.”

Source: “El Salvador: destitución de jueces enciende alarmas por autoritarismo (El Salvador: dismissal of judges sets alarm bells for authoritarianism),” *El Tiempo* (a Colombian daily with the highest circulation in the country, generally described as politically centrist), 3 May 2021. <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/latinoamerica/el-salvador-presidente-bukele-destituye-magistrados-y-al-fiscal-585396>

The new Congress of El Salvador, dominated by the allies of President Nayib Bukele, took office this Saturday and dismissed judges at odds with the president and the attorney general, in a decision considered by the international community as an attempt to concentrate power. Parliament removed from office five members of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court and their alternates. The replacements were immediately appointed, who, escorted by the police, arrived at the Palace of Justice to assume their functions. On the other hand, more than twenty Salvadoran social organizations and business unions denounced...the “usurpation” of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice and ignored the lawyers elected by the Legislative Assembly to occupy the magistrate positions.

Source: “Congreso de El Salvador retira a periódicos locales ciertos beneficios fiscales (El Salvador's Congress withdraws certain tax benefits from local newspapers),” *El Universo* (a large Ecuadorian daily described as politically independent), 5 May 2021. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/internacional/congreso-de-el-salvador-retira-a-periodicos-locales-ciertos-beneficios-fiscales-nota/>

The Legislative Assembly of El Salvador, with a pro-government majority, withdrew on Wednesday some tax benefits that the printing law gave to printed newspapers, criticized on various occasions by the Government...The government of Nayib Bukele and his New Ideas Party deputies have repeatedly criticized the country's main newspapers, La Prensa Gráfica and Diario de Hoy, for their publications...The voted proposal was introduced by dispensation of procedure, which allows the decrees to be approved without going through an analysis in the respective commissions made up of deputies from each political party in Congress.

Turkey Builds on Regional Deployments, Successfully Tests Two New UAVs



Turkish Bayraktar Akıncı UAV.

Source: armyinform.com.ua, via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_Ak%C4%B1nc%C4%B1_UCAV.jpg, . CC-BY-4.0

By Ihsan Gündüz
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey's successful deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in regional conflicts and its ongoing development of two more advanced models highlight the central role that UAVs will have in strengthening Turkey's defense posture in the region. In April, Turkey successfully tested two armed UAVs named Akıncı, a twin-engine medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV and Aksungur, another medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV. The first article from *Anadolu Ajansı*, Turkey's state-run news agency, states that the most critical part of the successful tests was the combination of Turkish-made platforms and ammunition that these indigenously made UAVs used. Akıncı, manufactured by the Turkish defense company Baykar, was tested with MAM-T munitions, the latest version of Roketsan's MAM munition series specifically designed for Akıncı. Aksungur, manufactured by Turkish Aerospace Industries, successfully used the KGK-SİHA-82 glide bomb, developed by TÜBİTAK SAGE (Turkish Defense Industries Research and Development Institute). The successful test of these weapons represents a significant advance in the capabilities of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in the near future and is another major milestone towards an independent Turkish defense industry. Compared to the currently operational Turkish UAVs Baykar TB-2 and Anka, these two

UAVs are superior in terms of their mission system, weapons capacity, and airtime.

The second article, written and posted in the Yetkin Report, a blog by leading Turkish security expert Murat Yetkin, states that it is unclear whether UAVs completely revolutionized war fighting, but acknowledged that the way Turkish-made UAVs have been used has brought about a significant shift in warfare in the region. To understand this shift, the article analyzes the use of Turkish UAVs in Idlib, Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh. The article also analyzes the role of UAVs in Turkey's claim to become a regional power and looks at this claim from two dimensions. First, an effective deployment of Turkish-made UAVs in military ventures within and beyond Turkey's borders gives Turkey a competitive advantage in this claim. Second, exporting UAVs has given Turkey an opportunity to advance its military-technical cooperation with other countries and to use UAVs and defense cooperation as a tool for its foreign policy.

“Both drones are capable of flying longer durations, carrying more payload and weapons, compared to their predecessors Anka and Bayraktar TB2.”

Continued: Turkey Builds on Regional Deployments, Successfully Tests Two New UAVs

Source: Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Akıncı ve Aksungur testleri: Türk SİHA yetenekleri yeni bir aşamaya geçiyor (Akıncı and Aksungur tests: Turkish UAV capabilities are moving to a new stage),” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey’s state-owned news agency), 28 April 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/akinci-ve-aksungur-testleri-turk-siha-yetenekleri-yeni-bir-asamaya-geciyor/2223020>

The most critical issue that draws attention in these tests is the combination of platform and the ammunition used... Akıncı, produced by Baykar, was successfully tested with MAM-T, the last and heaviest version of Roketsan’s MAM (mini smart ammunition) series. In another test, Aksungur, manufactured by TUSAŞ, successfully used the KGK-SİHA-82 bomb. These show the building of game-changing military capacity in the near future.

...

The KGK-82 series used by Aksungur in its tests is based on the transformation of unguided MK-82 bombs into “smart bombs” with hit sensitivity below 10 meters, with the addition of winged guidance kits (INS and GPS based guidance systems).

...

Finally, of course, let’s point out that systems such as Akıncı and Aksungur mean much more than the MAM-L and KGK-SİHA-82 tests. For example, payload configurations (such as sonobuoy and magnetic anomaly detectors) suitable for Aksungur’s naval patrol and submarine warfare concepts can offer very attractive options for the Turkish Naval Forces and Turkey’s defense exports. Similarly, Akıncı’s SOM cruise missile carrying capacity has the potential to equip the system with “deep strike” capability against high-value targets.

Source: Arda Mevlütoğlu, “Türkiye’nin SİHA deneyimi: Devrim mi, dönüşüm mü? (Turkey’s armed drones: Revolution or transformation?),” *Yetkin Report* (blog of veteran Turkish Journalist Murat Yetkin), 2 May 2021. <https://yetkinreport.com/2021/05/02/turkiyenin-siha-deneyimi-devrim-mi-donusum-mu/>

In the last days of April, two important developments took place in the Turkish defense industry. First, on April 22, Akıncı drone, which is being developed by Baykar Defense Company, fired precision-guided munitions for the first time...

The second development was... that the Aksungur drone developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) released a long-range precision-guided bomb...

...Both drones are capable of flying longer durations, carrying more payload and weapons, compared to their predecessors Anka and Bayraktar TB2; therefore, their introduction to service means Turkey is entering a new league of drone warfare...

Did armed drones really change the rules of the “game”? It is difficult to give an exact “yes” answer to this question. However, it seems possible for armed drones to trigger some important changes...

As for the role of armed drones playing a significant role in Turkey’s desire to become a regional power, it seems that this issue has two dimensions. The first is that Turkey effectively uses drones in its military activities within and beyond its borders. We have seen the most obvious example of this in Syria and Libya. The second is the development of military-technical cooperation with the export of drones, and therefore the use of the defense industry as a foreign policy instrument: Turkey has exported Bayraktar TB2 and Anka drones to Qatar, Ukraine, Libya, Azerbaijan and most recently to Tunisia. These sales play important roles to strengthen military-strategic relations with the purchasing countries. It can be said that such export moves are important reflections of the security-oriented foreign policy followed by Turkey in recent years.

Kenya Addressing Its Diverse Security Requirements by Bolstering Nascent Small Arms Production

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

As the accompanying excerpt from the South African trade publication *DefenceWeb* notes, Kenya just opened a small arms factory producing 9 mm pistols and 7.62 mm assault rifles. President Kenyatta noted that besides enhancing Kenya's self-reliance in defense materiel production, this focus on small arms manufacturing aligns with Kenya's diverse security requirements. Kenya relies more on soldiers with small arms than on heavy equipment or technology. Its military missions range from anti-terrorism operations against al-Shabaab to the military's numerous foreign peacekeeping operations. President Kenyatta further explained that in addition to lowering the cost of weapons acquisition for the security forces, manufacturing at home helps free the country from complex approval processes foreign nations have in place regarding arms exports.

Kenya already had a modest defense industry before this latest factory opening, though without nearly enough output to meet its various and increasing needs. However, spurred on in part by the country's success in manufacturing personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic, greater emphasis was placed on changing from weapons importer to weapons manufacturer. Now, it has an even loftier goal than just self-sufficiency in manufacturing weapons. While this new small arms facility is a nascent step in that direction, the eventual export of these arms could have a niche in local and global markets that look for alternatives to bigger players in the industry.



Kenya plans to replace the imported small arms its soldiers use with ones manufactured in country.

Source: U.S. Army Africa/Flickr/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Counter-IED_training,_Nairobi,_Kenya,_April_2011_-_Flickr_-_US_Army_Africa_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Counter-IED_training,_Nairobi,_Kenya,_April_2011_-_Flickr_-_US_Army_Africa_(2).jpg), CC BY 2.0 Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.5

“Kenya has identified a compelling urgency to create domestic production and this also applies to the security sector equipment in order to free our country from the vagaries of international supply chain systems.”

Source: “Kenya opens new small arms factory,” *Defenceweb* (a South African trade publication), 13 April 2021. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/kenya-opens-new-small-arms-factory/>

“As with pharmaceuticals, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and medical equipment generally, Kenya has identified a compelling urgency to create domestic production and this also applies to the security sector equipment in order to free our country from the vagaries of international supply chain systems,” he said.

The factory draws 60 percent of its input from local sources, the Kenyan Presidency said. Kenyatta said the country seeks to enhance self-reliance in security through local production of equipment and technologies in line with the Big 4 Agenda and Vision 2030 programmes.

Through the arms factory, the President said Kenya plans to create a weapons manufacturing surplus that will transform the country into an exporter of security equipment. “This will not only boost our balance of trade position, it will also create employment for thousands of Kenyans, in addition to creating a skills and technology environment that will drive transformation in civilian industries,” he said.



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>

Lebanese Army Faces Complex Threat Landscape Amidst Declining Morale



Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces Gen. Joseph K. Aoun Participates in an Armed Forces Full Honors Wreath-Laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Source: Department of Defense Flickr Account, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/arlingtonnatl/28155179977>

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

The Lebanese army faces an increasingly challenging operational environment, as noted in the accompanying excerpts from *al-Sharq al-Awsat* and the Emirati-aligned daily *al-Arab*. Domestically, crime is on the rise; outlaws are increasingly shooting back at military patrols, often with heavy weapons; street protests have broken out in recent months and seem likely to recur; ISIS cells continue to pose a latent threat; the trade in amphetamine-type stimulants and other illicit substances is flourishing; and, the potential spillover from armed conflict in neighboring countries persists.

Against that background there is concern that the current economic meltdown in Lebanon is sapping morale in the Lebanese Army. Although there are no studies or publications documenting disgruntlement among Lebanese service members, there is plenty

of reported anecdotal evidence. The decline in purchasing power is clear, as laid out in the accompanying article from the influential Saudi pan-Arab daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, which explains how joining the military was once a path to financial security but now barely qualifies as a means of subsistence, at least at the lower ranks. Many Lebanese have taken on second jobs to make ends meet, but members of the military are forbidden from doing so.

As the excerpt from the Qatar-aligned *al-Araby al-Jadid* describes, last March, the head of the Lebanese Army, General Joseph Aoun, warned of sinking morale among the troops. A report in the pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar* claims that General Aoun held meetings with foreign defense attaches to request financial assistance. Saudi Arabia has considered providing assistance, yet is hesitant to do so until something is done to address the presence of Hezbollah agents in the Lebanese military. General Aoun, according to the article, considers the idea of Hezbollah infiltration an exaggeration premised on the fact that many service members have Hezbollah supporters in their family; this is to be expected, given Lebanese demographics and Hezbollah's popularity among Lebanon's Shiite community, but hardly a sign of Hezbollah infiltration of the military.

The provision of material aid to the Lebanese military thus remains tied up by regional competition and domestic political dysfunction. A more radical solution, recently floated by the deputy speaker of the Lebanese parliament, is to hand control of the Lebanese political system to the military. Yet there is no constitutional provision for such a move, according to a political analyst cited in the article from the Russian-government news agency *Sputnik Arabic*. Furthermore, he notes, the army's role is to protect the very sectarian-based political system it is being asked to upend. For now, the scenario is considered unlikely.

“Do you want an army or not? Do you want a strong and steadfast institution, or not?”

Source:

Deteriorating living conditions for Lebanese army officers and members,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 11 March 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/wpue9wdp>

Many were once envious of military men, given their entering the institution as soldiers with a monthly salary of about \$800, not to mention the future ranks and compensation that awaited them and are calculated every three years, as well as a retirement that lasts for decades and can be transferred to his widow or a single or divorced daughter. Now, military men across the ranks moan about their difficult situation. The Lebanese army numbers 74,000 men... [and] the number of army officers is about 5,000. A lieutenant, the lowest-ranking officer, now earns \$227, while the highest-ranking brigadier, the Major General, earns \$805... The sources added: “what makes matters worse is the request of the army to accomplish many tasks in this situation, even tasks that must be performed by other security agencies.”

Source:

Lebanon's economic collapse is putting pressure on the army and security forces,” *al-Araby al-Jadid* (influential Qatari-aligned daily), 9 March 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/5uwwfy68>

In unusually frank comments, the Armed Forces Commander General Joseph Aoun said his warnings that physical and moral pressure on soldiers might lead to an “explosion” had fallen on deaf ears... On Monday, Aoun said: “The military are suffering and starving like the people.” He asked, “Do you want an army or not? Do you want a strong and steadfast institution, or not?” The value of the basic monthly salary of a soldier or policeman has declined from about 800 dollars to less than 120 dollars at present... Some officials warn that security forces will find it difficult to contain the unrest... The army, its commander, and the caretaker interior minister denied recent local media reports that economic

Continued: Lebanese Army Faces Complex Threat Landscape Amidst Declining Morale

Continued Source:

الانهيار الاقتصادي في لبنان يضغط على الجيش وقوات الأمن

Lebanon's economic collapse is putting pressure on the army and security forces," *al-Araby al-Jadid* (influential Qatari-aligned daily), 9 March 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/5uwwfy68>

difficulties had prompted soldiers to flee from service. However, three security sources told Reuters that the mounting pressure on the lower-ranking military is already raising fears that the soldiers will flee. A member of the security forces, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that he wanted to leave after many years of service because he was no longer able to pay rent. He added that he knows three others who have deserted, an act punishable by law, expressing his fear that military commanders will refuse if he submits a request to leave.

Source:

السعودية تشتترط إبعاد حزب الله عن الجيش لتقديم مساعدات

Saudi Arabia conditions aid on removing Hezbollah from the army," *al-Akhbar* (pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily), 28 April 2021. <https://al-akhbar.com/Politics/305038>

A meeting took place far from media attention, between the Armed Forces Commander General Joseph Aoun and the Saudi ambassador to Lebanon Walid al-Bukhari, focused on aid requested by the army "from brotherly and friendly countries to Lebanon." It came after a meeting held by army leadership with a large number of military attaches in Arab and foreign embassies, which was also devoted to presenting the army's list of requests for support from these countries.

According to the information, the Saudi ambassador conveyed to General Aoun greetings from the Saudi leadership and that the Kingdom will study ways of assisting the army in various forms. Among them is the reactivation of part of the grant that was planned during the days of King Abdullah and canceled after the outbreak of the Yemen war, in addition to providing direct material support to feed the military support fund.

But al-Bukhari explained to the army commander that the problem facing the assistance was that the army was still "teeming" with Hezbollah supporters who were interfering in the work of the military institution against orders. The army commander responded to him that Hezbollah does not have operatives inside the army, and that everyone knows that Hezbollah cannot interfere in the work of the army, nor in the formations of its officers and soldiers. Aoun continued: "But the idea repeated by many, including Western parties, cannot be addressed, as some of the demands speak about officers and soldiers just because they have relatives in Hezbollah. It is difficult to overcome in any Shiite family in Lebanon."

Source:

هل يقبل اللبنانيون مقترح تسليم السلطة للجيش؟

Do the Lebanese accept the proposal to hand over power to the army?" *Sputnik Arabic* (Russian news agency), 21 April 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/ceudby4r>

Lebanese Deputy Speaker, Elie Ferzli, called for the handover of power in all its institutions, without exception, to the army, for a transitional phase, in order to stop the state of decay and the general chaos that Lebanon is going through... Lebanese political analyst Michael Awad... stressed that the constitution does not give the military any role or status other than its mission to protect the political system, with its sectarian and confessional formations and political loyalties.

Source:

الجيش اللبناني متخوف من آثار الأزمة الاقتصادية... ويخشى الأسوأ

Lebanese Army is afraid of the effects of the economic crisis ... and the worst," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 6 May 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/ykfhdn24>

The source says that "the army is being pressed ... and it has a big task in front of it, ranging from controlling the borders and internal security to confronting the threat of Israel and terrorism." He added to it a great burden represented by the distribution of aid intended for citizens, as well as its participation in the process of assessing damage to the Beirut port after the explosion and removing the rubble. The security source considers that if the conditions become more difficult, the situation will be more difficult for the army. For this reason we intensify our security work, he added, but social stability is essential, and hunger makes people more susceptible to breaking the law.

Source:

الجيش اللبناني يواجه استنزافاً على جبهات متعددة

The Lebanese army is facing attrition on multiple fronts," *al-Arab* (Emirati-aligned daily), 29 March 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/kf66n6dx>

In the midst of this, the Lebanese army finds itself in a confrontation with an angry street... Lebanese political circles have warned that there is a move to strike the image and prestige of the army, noting that a remarkable phenomenon has been recorded in recent weeks, represented by successive attacks on army personnel during raids on wanted persons, especially in areas affiliated with Hezbollah. The circles indicate that the most dangerous thing in these attacks is the militants' use of various types of weapons, including advanced weapons, against the army...

Temporary Reprieve in Somalia from Election Crisis and Violent Protests



President Farmaajo has decided not to postpone Somali elections.

Source: Villa Somalia/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mohamed_Abdullahi_Mohamed_\(2020-07-22\)_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mohamed_Abdullahi_Mohamed_(2020-07-22)_(cropped).jpg)

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

After initially declaring elections would be postponed for two years, a decision that was met with violent protests, President Farmaajo of Somalia has changed his mind and now says they can occur sooner. As the accompanying excerpted article from *The East African*, part of a Kenyan independent media group, explains, this announcement has brought calm to Mogadishu. Additionally, this could mean the political crisis, or at least that part related to election timing, might be resolved.

Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who lost the 2017 presidential election, and his allies in two of Somalia's federal states, Jubaland and Puntland, are opposed to universal suffrage. Instead, they prefer a system where clans elect delegates who in turn choose the president. According to the article, Farmaajo is calling their bluff by having elections based on their terms, for it is likely Farmaajo will still win.

For the past few decades, attempts to have a one person-one vote electoral system have been called off due to security concerns or a lack of political determination. Thus, once again Somalia is turning to indirect elections. However, the article is hopeful that the outcome this time will eventually lead to a weakening of the clan-based politics that has bred so much instability in the country and, in turn, lead to a change where leaders are held accountable. The article also goes on to warn the international community to brace for the long haul, especially if Farmaajo wins because his competitors will likely reject the results.

“Somalia either goes back to clan politics — which bred the instability that turned the country into a haven and frontline for international terrorism — or adopts a system that demands accountability from disposable leaders.”

Source: “Farmaajo’s flip flop is a band-aid, saves situation for now,” *The East African* (part of a Kenyan independent media group), 3 May 2021. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/oped/editorial/farmaajo-s-flip-flop-is-a-band-aid-3385806>

The contest at hand is between the old and the new. Somalia either goes back to clan politics — which bred the instability that turned the country into a haven and frontline for international terrorism — or adopts a system that demands accountability from disposable leaders.

The opposition to Farmaajo’s extension of his tenure should not be seen through the prism of constitutionalism but rather vested interests. Since September 2020, the deadlock in Mogadishu has been about the electoral system. While the new constitution provides for one man one vote, a number of actors prefer the clan-based system in the hope that they will manipulate the election.

All international actors should unite around a common objective of ensuring the elections are transparent to the extent that they possibly produce a result that represents the aspirations of the people. Otherwise Farmaajo’s concession this week will all be in vain.

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>