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Understanding Chinese UAV Group-Style Operations

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) “group-style operations” have now entered the battlefield training phase, according to the following excerpted article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission. The article explains these UAV operations are considered “novel” and “practical” and have “great operational potential and application prospects.” However, there is no conceptual description or definition of these types of operations. As a result, the authors have set out to develop a better understanding of the three primary categories of UAV group-style operations, namely UAV fleet, cluster, and swarm operations, in hope that a better understanding will give China an overall advantage in UAV operations.

In short, UAV fleet operations are the most basic group-style operations. Their style and methods of operation are most closely associated with the style of warfare that would fall under mechanized

warfare. UAV cluster operations are most closely associated with informatized warfare in that they rely on network intercommunication systems and have system-of-systems operations capability. Finally, UAV swarm operations fall under intelligentized operations. As such, they are generally fully autonomous, self-taught, and highly adaptable. (See: “China: New Concepts in Unmanned Combat,” *OE Watch*, October 2020). While UAV fleet and cluster operations are underway, UAV swarm operations are still on the horizon. The authors argue that it is important to have a firm understanding of the three types of group-style operations. The goal is to integrate the development of the three group-style operations, to stay on top of ongoing research of UAV fleet operations and UAV cluster operations, and ultimately to seize the initiative in UAV swarm technology and operational applications. (Refer to the following chart for more comparisons between the three group-style UAV operations).

“In particular, we should pay a great deal of attention to the UAV “swarm” operation, which is an operational mode that may disrupt traditions.”

Source: Ding Zaiyong, Yang Xiaoling, and Hao Weichuan, “军事论坛 | 群式作战，演绎无人战场新图景 (Group-Style Operations Reveal a New Unmanned Battlefield Scene),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 20 May 2021. https://www.81.cn/l/2021-05/20/content_10037378.htm

At present, the group-style operations of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have entered the phase of battlefield practice from conceptual research. This indicates that the development of new types of UAV combat modes is becoming increasingly mature. Group-style UAV operations are manifested, in general, as UAV fleet operations, UAV cluster operations, and UAV “swarm” operations. Since there is no systematic and authoritative concept description of the three in China and abroad, it is very easy to cause concept confusion, which is not conducive to the in-depth study of the group-style operations of UAVs. For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish and analyze the concepts of the three to understand them clearly, thereby deepening the understanding and grasp of the characteristics and laws of UAV operations.

Group-style UAV operations are a novel and practical operational mode and have great operational potential and application prospects. In particular, we should pay a great deal of attention to the UAV “swarm” operation, which is an operational mode that may disrupt traditions. Correct recognition of UAV

fleet operations, UAV cluster operations, and UAV “swarm” operations is an important basis and necessary prerequisite for accelerating the integrated development of mechanization, informatization, and intelligentization of group-style UAV operations. In actual combat, we should not only pay attention to the application research of UAV fleet operations and UAV cluster operations but also should be ahead of the pack and conduct research on UAV “swarm” technology and operational application. Only by planning ahead can we seize the initiative well.

	UAV Fleet Ops	UAV Cluster Ops	UAV Swarm Ops
Combat Power Generation Mode	Mechanization	Informationization	Intelligentization
Level of Operations	Low	Medium	High
Precision	Low precision	Medium precision	High precise
Operational Attributes	Quantity and scale	Unification (joint)	Intelligence (disrupting traditions)
Similar to...	Manned aircraft fleet	Network interconnection	Biological simulation (i.e.: social insects).
Characteristics & Organization	Superimposition effect. Consist of 3+ UAVs organized into an operational group.	An aggregate of systems and individuals.	Self programming. Constantly improving. Intelligent warfare.
Advantages	Group construction is relatively simple. Conducive to centralized management. Highly efficient carrying out simple tasks.	High task coordination efficiency. Stronger operational flexibility. Stronger ability to execute distributed operational tasks. Relatively strong group expandability.	Highly efficient at task coordination. Strong operational flexibility. Strong capability in executing distributed operational tasks. Strong group expandability. Strong battlefield adaptability.
Disadvantages/Weaknesses	Weak task coordination. Weak at executing distributed operational tasks. Limited expandability of groups. Weak battlefield adaptability.	Information level requirements are high. Airframes are complex. Weak anti-electronic jamming capability.	Requires a large number of UAVs. High requirements for biological simulation technology research (i.e.: social insects). Subject to a lot of influence brought by background C2.
Applications	Ideal for concentrated fire strikes.	Usually executes operational tasks based on operational effects (i.e.: systems of systems operations).	Usually executes asymmetric offset operational tasks.

Source: Chart made by author using information from the article

Capstone Electronic Warfare Exercise Held for Students at Chinese Defense Tech Powerhouse

By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

The Chinese government publication *China Military News Online* recently reported that the School of Electronic Warfare at the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT) held a capstone exercise for graduating students that highlighted China's growing emphasis on electronic warfare. While few specifics were provided, coverage of this year's exercise and previous iterations depicted students using a wide range of systems to carry out electronic surveillance, jamming and counter-jamming, as well as tests of basic skills, such as establishing command posts and setting up systems, dispersal, and concealment. This includes camouflage as well as multi-spectral smoke launchers and mobile high-power jammers and tactical field systems to protect command posts. This year introduced new elements, including "datalink countermeasures" and emphasized disrupting the web of an enemy's datalinks and sensors that form the basis of modern warfare.

Conflicts in Syria, Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh have recently highlighted the growing threat of UAVs against modern surface-to-air systems and ground forces, making developing countermeasures a priority for the People's Liberation Army (PLA). As mentioned in the excerpt below, the exercise, therefore, placed heavy emphasis on countering UAVs. State TV coverage of the exercise showed use of

UAVs ranging from small quadcopters to jet-assisted take-off, medium-altitude UAVs to test signal source detection and jamming skills.

The PLA has begun incorporating larger-scale and more realistic electronic warfare exercises or making it a more regular component of exercises in recent years. In 2019 for example, the PLA Air Force announced a new annual training exercise focused on electronic warfare called Qingdian (See: "New PLA Air Force Training Exercise Focuses on Electronic Warfare," *OE Watch*, December 2019).

The fact that NUDT is hosting the exercise is also significant. NUDT is at the center of the PLA's development of advanced technologies and concepts of operations. Top military scientists associated with its robotics and hypersonic cruise missile programs are based there and graduates of the school have gone on to major positions, including General Li Shangfu, Director of the Central Military Commission's Equipment Development Department, China's top body for directing military tech programs. The graduates of this program are likely to go on to significant roles in the PLA, bringing away lessons from this series of capstone exercises.

“Anti-UAV electronic countermeasures and datalink countermeasures were also integrated into the operational system acted as a major combat force for the first time.”

Source: “初试锋芒！国防科大学员在无形战场书写‘毕业答卷’ (The First Real Test! NUDT students fill out their ‘diplomas’ on the formless battlefield)” *China Military News Online* (Chinese government publication), 14 July 2021.
http://www.81.cn/jx/2021-07/14/content_10061687.htm

Recently, the School of Electronic Warfare at the National University of Defense Technology held a tactical exercise called “Countermeasures-2021” (DK-2021; DK here stands for Duikang [对抗], or countermeasures in Chinese) with two components begun simultaneously in central and eastern areas of Anhui province in eastern China. More than 600 graduating students organized into mixed units for the week-long exercise, which featured the full spectrum of realistic combat electronic warfare exercises...

Elements simulated in this a ‘Red vs Blue’ opposing force exercise included countermeasures targeted at communications, radar and optical sensors and jamming against UAVs and datalinks deployed in different places and implemented simultaneously.

Various electronic countermeasures such as communication countermeasures, radar countermeasures, and photoelectric countermeasures were used throughout the exercise. Anti-UAV electronic countermeasures and datalink countermeasures [数据链对抗] were also integrated into the operational system acted as a major combat force for the first time.

This exercise also featured an indigenously-developed “anti-UAV electronic countermeasures combat research platform” as the basis of an anti-UAV electronic countermeasure unit to help students understand the utility of unmanned warfare and electronic countermeasures in actual combat.

Much of the equipment used in this exercise for realistic training was new and had only recently been delivered to NUDT. Faced with new equipment types that they had never used or even seen before, and in discussion with their instructors and squad leaders, the students were forced to rely on the knowledge gained during their coursework, and draw on both the foundational theories they had learned and their hands-on experience to deploy the equipment and begin detection operations. The exercises helped emphasize that only by flexibly using what they have learned in class can they better adapt to the realities of the battlefield.

A Chinese Concept of “Cognitive Confrontation” In Future Warfare

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

The topic of cognitive warfare is of increasing interest among Chinese military thinkers, especially as China strives to pave the way toward the era of “intelligentization.” Intelligentization is a concept of applying the machine speed and processing power of artificial intelligence to areas such as military planning, operational command, and decision support. A recent article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission, talks about “cognitive confrontation,” which the authors describe as “a battle of wits and attacks on the mind.” According to the article, in the era of intelligentized operations, “cognitive confrontation” will take place within the three major battle domains (see diagram below).

The authors explain that “the essence of cognitive confrontation is knowledge confrontation and intelligence competition.” While in the past, under mechanized operations, who destroys whom in the kinetic

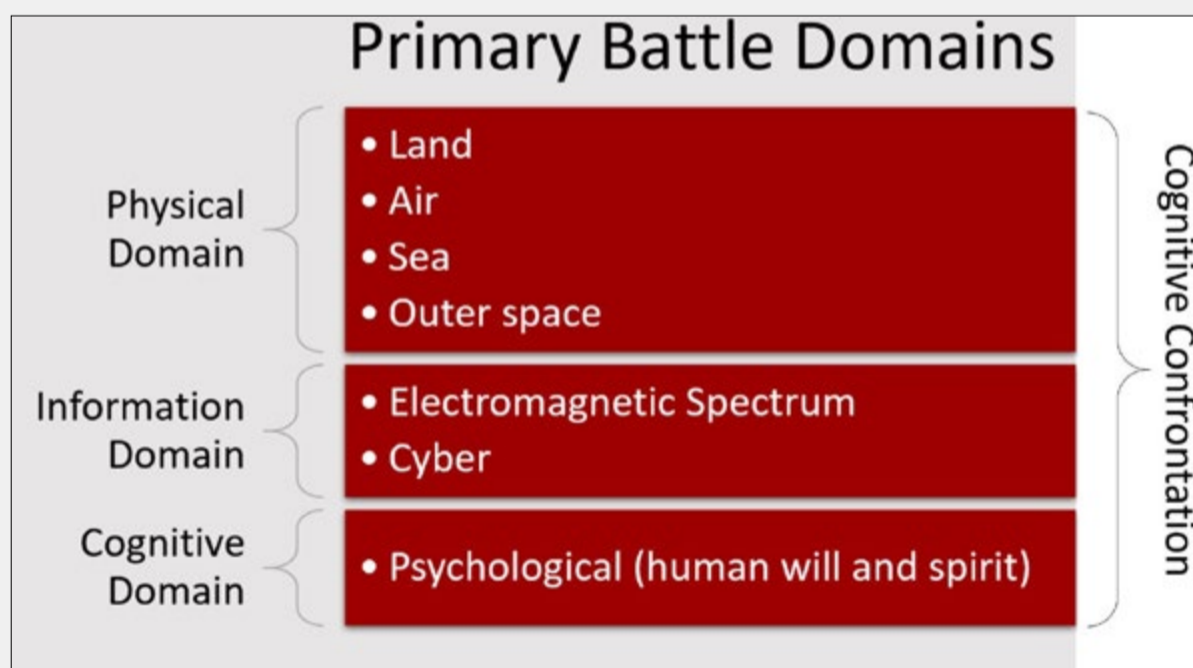
sense was enough to determine the final victor in a battle, under intelligentization, warfare will expand to soft infiltration, which will be used to affect military and civilian morale. Additionally, cognitive measures will be employed to “harass the enemy’s command decision-making.” While they do not offer specifics on how this will be accomplished, the authors explain that under intelligentization, the physical domain will gradually merge with the information domain, with cyber operations being at the core. Cognitive confrontation, such as cyberattacks and control over public sentiment will then become the focal point in the operations.

“Cognitive Confrontation Is a Battle of Wits and Attacks on the Mind.”

Source: “Li Shihua, Zhang Zhichang, and Cao Xinhua, “战场态势瞬息万变 警惕智能化作战新挑战 (The Battlefield Situation is Changing, Presenting New Challenges in Intelligentization),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 18 May 2021. http://www.81.cn/l/2021-05/18/content_10036359.htm

Cognitive Confrontation Is a Battle of Wits and Attacks on the Mind...

In the age of intelligentization, artificial intelligence-based confrontations belong to the category of cognitive confrontation, mainly including three major domains: cognitive confrontations in the physical space, virtual space, and the world of the human spirit. The essence of cognitive confrontation is knowledge confrontation and intelligence competition. For the two sides engaged in combat, their full understanding, profound comprehension, and rapid reaction to the operational environments, threats, targets, and opponents and their cognitive levels and capabilities for the analysis, judgment, decision-making, and the will of the operational situations will directly influence combat implementation, campaign organization, and strategy decision-making, which influences the trends and outcome of wars. The perspective on victory or defeat in intelligentized warfare has expanded from “hard kill contending for battlefield space and focusing on annihilating the enemy’s organic forces” to “soft infiltration affecting military and civilian morale as well as cognitive games harassing the enemy’s command decision-making.” Cognitive confrontation in human warfare will escalate from intelligence competitions and knowledge confrontations between people to confrontations between people, between people and machine AIs, and between machine AIs. With the gradual integration of operations between virtual space and physical space, and cyberspace as the core domain of “intelligentized operations,” cognitive confrontations such as cyberattack and defense and public sentiment control will become the focal point of the struggle between the two sides in operations.



China’s vision of the primary battle domains.
Source: Designed by the author, Attribution: Public Domain

Chinese Icebreaker Enters the Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

China continues to demonstrate a great deal of interest, and presence, in the Arctic. According to the following excerpted article from *The Independent Barents Observer*, a Norway-based English- and Russian-language online newspaper, China's second medium-duty icebreaker, the Xue Long 2, has embarked on its first Arctic expedition. Chinese officials quoted in the article claim the purpose

of the voyage is to study climate change-related issues. According to the Chief of China's State Oceanic Administration, "protecting the Arctic environment is a common responsibility and China will make its contribution to this." The article mentions how the chief "also stressed that China sees itself as "a near-Arctic state."

“China sees itself as ‘a near-Arctic state’ and it will “actively participate with wisdom and strength to future protection and development.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, "New Chinese Icebreaker sets course for Arctic", *The Independent Barents Observer* (Norway based English and Russian language news website), 16 July 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/arctic/2020/07/new-chinese-icebreaker-sets-course-arctic>

The 122-meter-long vessel left its home port of Shanghai on 15th July and sailed towards the north. It is the first Arctic expedition of the vessel that entered service in 2019. Earlier this year, the ship completed a voyage to the Antarctica.

According to Xinhua news agency, the expedition is organized by the Chinese Ministry of Natural Resources and the ship is expected back in Shanghai in late September. The voyage is expected to cover 12,000 nautical miles. The researchers on board the ship will conduct studies of the biological diversity of Arctic ecosystems, including the acidification of waters and pollution in areas such as the Chukotka plateau, the Canadian basin and central parts of the Arctic Ocean.

According to Xinhua, the expedition will help expand the research knowledge of China about climate change in the Arctic and prepare the ground for a solid foundation for more efficient reaction to global climate change. The "Xue Long 2" is owned and managed by the Chinese Polar Institute. The institute has been instrumental in all of the country's previous ten research expeditions to the Arctic. Until now, it has been sister ship "Xue Long" (Snow Dragon) that has sailed on the Chinese Arctic expeditions that have proceeded along Russia's Northern Sea Route, across the central Arctic Ocean and through Canada's Northwest Passage.

In a comment made during the Arctic Circle China conference in 2019, Wang Hao, Chief of China's State Oceanic Administration, underlined that "protecting the Arctic environment is a common responsibility and China will make its contribution to this." He also stressed that China sees itself as "a near-Arctic state" and it will "actively participate with wisdom and strength to future protection and development." Wang Hong spoke at an event with more than 500 participants from some 30 countries, the largest conference ever in China exclusively with an Arctic focus.

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>

Xi Jinping Delivers Speech on Centenary of Chinese Communist Party's Founding

By Peter Wood
OE Watch Commentary

1 July 2021 marked the centenary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Speaking at Tiananmen at an event commemorating the event, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping outlined the CCP's successes in leading China and reiterated his vision for China's future.

Notable highlights, excerpted below, emphasize his particular focus on three central areas: the continuing supremacy of the CCP, further developing China's armed forces, and achieving full reunification of China through extending PRC rule over Taiwan.

In particular, Xi highlights the need for "greater capacity and more reliable means for safeguarding our national sovereignty, security, and development interests." China has already significantly expanded its naval, air, ground and missile forces over the past 20 years and Xi's continued emphasis indicates this is unlikely to slow. Within this broader growth of capabilities and expanded units, forces that would be critical to an amphibious invasion of Taiwan such as People's Liberation Army (PLA) Ground Force amphibious units and PLA Navy Marine Corps as well as the supporting transports are seeing significant growth.

While there are no policy shifts announced in this speech, consistency in its attention to these three areas itself is noteworthy, as China faces other challenges in the form of COVID-19, natural disasters, and significant economic development issues that might otherwise have resulted in a shifting of priorities. As Xi makes clear, economic development is only one half of his vision of a strong China; it must also be accompanied by a strong military fully capable of defending what it regards as core interests.



Xi Jinping portrait 2019.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi_Jinping_portrait_2019_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi_Jinping_portrait_2019_(cropped).jpg), Kremlin.ru https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Attribution:CC_x_4.0

“We will elevate our people's armed forces to world-class standards so that we are equipped with greater capacity and more reliable means for safeguarding our national sovereignty, security, and development interests.”

Source: 习近平: 在庆祝中国共产党成立100周年大会上的讲话 (Xi Jinping: Speech at a Ceremony Marking the Centenary of the Communist Party of China), *Xinhua* (Chinese State News Agency), 15 July 2021. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-07/15/c_1127658385.htm

Today, the first of July, is a great and solemn day in the history of both the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese nation. We gather here to join all Party members and Chinese people of all ethnic groups around the country in celebrating the centenary of the Party, looking back on the glorious journey the Party has traveled over 100 years of struggle, and looking ahead to the bright prospects for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation...

We must uphold the firm leadership of the Party. China's success hinges on the Party. The more than 180-year-long modern history of the Chinese nation, the 100-year-long history of the Party, and the more than 70-year-long history of the People's Republic of China all provide ample evidence that without the Communist Party of China, there would be no new China and no national rejuvenation....

We must accelerate the modernization of national defense and the armed forces. A strong country must have a strong military, as only then can it guarantee the security of the nation. Through its own experiences with violent struggle the Party came to recognize the irrefutable truth that it must command the gun and build a people's military of its own. The people's military has made indelible achievements on behalf of the Party and the people. It is a strong pillar for safeguarding our socialist country and preserving national dignity, and a powerful force for protecting peace in our region and beyond.

On the journey ahead, we must fully implement the Party's thinking on strengthening the military in the new era as well as our military strategy for the new era, maintain the Party's absolute leadership over the people's armed forces, and follow a Chinese path to military development. We will take comprehensive measures to enhance the political loyalty of the armed forces, to strengthen them through reform and technology and the training of competent personnel, and to run them in accordance with the law. We will elevate our people's armed forces to world-class standards so that we are equipped with greater capacity and more reliable means for safeguarding our national sovereignty, security, and development interests.

Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China. It is also a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. We will uphold the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, and advance peaceful national reunification...No one should underestimate the resolve, the will, and the ability of the Chinese people to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia Practices Area Denial in Gulf of Finland

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin daily newspaper *Izvestiya*, discusses Russian plans to practice closing the Gulf of Finland by way of a combination of naval mines and coastal defense missile systems. According to *Izvestiya*, this exercise, which is part of the larger Zapad-2021 strategic exercise, will involve the placement of the Bal and Bastion coastal defense missile system on Kotlin Island (near Kronstadt) for the first time. (For more on the Bal and Bastion coastal defense missile system, see: “Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in the Arctic,” *OE Watch*, June

2021). The article also points out how with the deployment of these missile systems, “it will be possible to cover the entrance to the Gulf of Finland,” specifically, “this completely protects the country’s second-largest city from a possible strike from the sea.” Ultimately, while western military analysts focused on operational aspects of Zapad-2021, Russian coastal defenses protecting Saint Petersburg received an upgrade.

“The Defense Ministry will soon conduct major exercises with the Leningrad Naval Base coastal troops dedicated to the defense of Saint Petersburg from the sea. Drilling the laying of a minefield in the Gulf of Finland will be one of the elements of these exercises. The minefield laying will be simulated by Baltic Fleet ships. At the same time, the latest Bal and Bastion systems will be deployed on Kotlin Island near Kronstadt for the first time. Experts note that this will allow the entire Gulf of Finland to be completely blocked for possible adversaries”

Source: Anton Lavrov and Anna Cherepanova, “С «Бала» на корабль: Минобороны отрабатывает перекрытие Финского залива (From ‘Bal’ to Ship: Defense Ministry to Rehearse Blocking Gulf of Finland),” *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 27 July 2021. <https://iz.ru/1198466/anton-lavrov-anna-cherepanova/s-bala-na-korabl-minoborony-otrabotaet-perekrytie-finskogo-zaliva>

The Defense Ministry will soon conduct major exercises with the Leningrad Naval Base coastal troops dedicated to the defense of Saint Petersburg from the sea. Drilling the laying of a minefield in the Gulf of Finland will be one of the elements of these exercises. The minefield laying will be simulated by Baltic Fleet ships. At the same time, the latest Bal and Bastion systems will be deployed on Kotlin Island near Kronstadt for the first time. Experts note that this will allow the entire Gulf of Finland to be completely blocked for possible adversaries. These exercises of the Leningrad Naval Base will become part of the preparations for the largest strategic maneuvers this year -- Zapad-2021...

In June, Baltic Fleet Commander Admiral Aleksandr Nosatov announced that coastal missile units in Leningradskaya and Kaliningradskaya Oblasts received Bal and Bastion mobile coastal missile systems. The missilemen have already begun combat training. During the upcoming exercise, the fleet will practice laying minefields in the area of Moshchnyy Island or Gogland Island under the cover of missile systems, military historian Dmitriy Boltenkov assumed...

With the deployment of the latest Bal and Bastion missile systems on Kotlin Island, it will be possible to cover the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, starting from Hanko and Masuria. This completely protects the country’s second-largest city from a possible strike from the sea. Given the importance of Saint Petersburg nowadays, it is not difficult to understand how important such exercises are, Dmitriy Boltenkov concluded...

In recent years, Russia has been actively improving defenses in the Baltic Sea and strengthening coastal forces of the fleet, including missile and artillery troops. They are being rearmed from the obsolete Redut and Rubezh to the latest Bastion and Bal systems. The crews of Bal and Bastion coastal missile systems became part of the Leningrad Naval Base in the end of last year. Modern coastal missile systems are deployed in Kaliningradskaya Oblast as well.

The Bal coastal missile system was delivered to the Baltic Fleet in 2008. It is designed to protect the coast and straits, as well as to cover naval bases. The Bal system is capable of firing single missiles and salvos of up to 32 missiles. After reloading (which takes 30-40 minutes), the coastal missile system is ready to fire a second salvo. The mobile Bal is built on MZKT-7930 chassis and includes up to two self-propelled command posts, up to four launchers with eight Kh-35/Kh-35U cruise missiles each, as well as transporter and reloading vehicles. Its operating range reaches 260 km. Thanks to the latest navigation system, the system can quickly change launch positions and can be deployed in just 10 minutes.

The unique Bastion system, with 24 Yakhont supersonic missiles, was adopted in 2010. It is capable of hitting targets at a distance of up to 600 km. Due to the radar homing head, these missiles can hit not only ships but also ground targets with particular accuracy...

Continued: Russia Practices Area Denial in the Gulf of Finland

Continued Source: Anton Lavrov and Anna Cherepanova, “С «Бала» на корабль: Минобороны отработает перекрытие Финского залива (From ‘Bal’ to Ship: Defense Ministry to Rehearse Blocking Gulf of Finland),” *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 27 July 2021. <https://iz.ru/1198466/anton-lavrov-anna-cherepanova/s-bala-na-korabl-minoborony-otrabotaet-perekrytie-finskogo-zaliva>



300P Bastion-P coastal defense missile system.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/100th-anniversary-Southern-Military-District/i-7NGcQ9x/0/8053e00d/X2/100RostovonDon5May2018-45-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Bal-E coastal defense missile system.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2015/i-Bmxs6QC/0/fee5e83e/X2/MAKS2015part6-28-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

The Russian Ground Forces Improve Army-Level Communications

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian Ground Forces have made great efforts to modernize communications at all levels. The R-149MA1 command-staff vehicle is the latest communications suite at the battalion level, while the APE-5 mobile command post vehicle is the latest equivalent at the brigade and division levels. (See: “The Russian Ground Forces’ New Command and Control Vehicles,” *OE Watch*, August 2021). The accompanying excerpted article from *Armeyskiy Standart*, a Russian website featuring military news, discusses Russian Ground Forces communication modernization at the next echelon, the Army level. At this level, communications are now provided by the Redut-2US

multi-purpose mobile communication complex, a five-vehicle system that supports videoconferencing, data retransmission, telephone communications, automated command-and-control systems, and is capable of interfacing with legacy communication technologies (Soviet-era systems). A major component of the Redut-2US, is the R-431AM Radio Relay Station. As described by *Armeyskiy Standart*, the R-431AM is much more capable than the previous system, reportedly providing multi-band, jam resistant communications with considerably more bandwidth.

“What are the main advantages of the R-431AM? This is a fully autonomous digital telecommunications system that uses modern communication technologies and makes it possible to interact with earlier command and control systems. Whereas previously it was necessary to deploy a full-scale communication node, which was time-consuming and detectable by enemy reconnaissance devices, now one compact modular unit operates in field systems.”



R-431AM Radio Relay Station.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/ARMY-2018-Static-part-3/i-zDtsnmL/0/c9e5fc31/X3/Army2018part5-055-X3.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

Continued: The Russian Ground Forces Improves Army-Level Communications

Source: Peter Nikolayev, Полевой универсал: Система связи армейского звена управления вышла на новый технический уровень (Universal Fielder: The Communication System of The Army-Level of Command Level Has Reached a New Technical Level), *Armeyskiy Standart* (Russian website featuring military news), 12 July 2021. <https://armystandard.ru/news/2021791050-fBhhH.html>

...Up to the beginning of the 2010s, the field communication system was based on analogue hardware. Time-tested and reliable in the field, but clearly outdated compared to the equipment that the communication troops of a number of foreign armies had at their disposal. By and large, that was still the Soviet level of almost the 1970s, so it was finally decided to take up the introduction of digitization in the communications troops...Digitization is an important step, but it is not enough for army conditions. The configuration of the field communication hub itself was also supposed to become modern. We chose the modular option as the most effective: depending on the tasks to be performed, change the content, starting from a certain base.

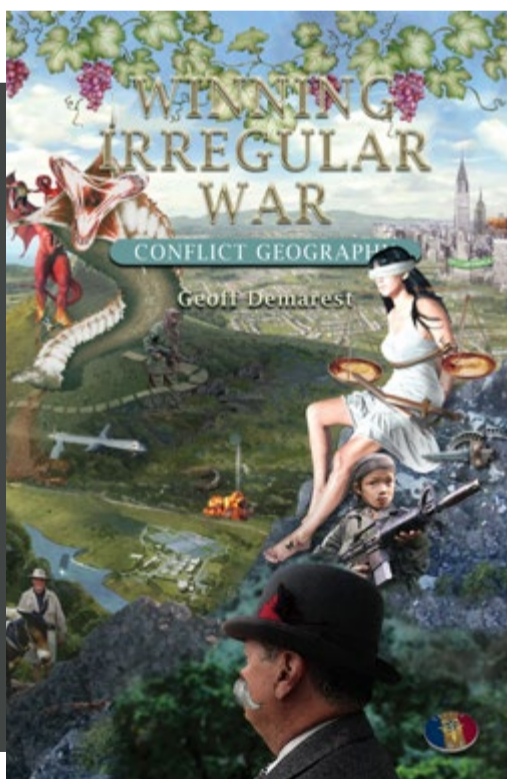
The development began in 2009 as part of the R&D carried out by the Redut-2US company. The ultimate goal was to achieve a significant increase in the capacity of stations and reduce the number of hardware communications with a simultaneous increase in the number and quality of communication services provided, plus a reduction in deployment time. The testing of the new products proposed by designers and production workers was carried out without any loss of time during tactical and operational-tactical exercises in the field. A real breakthrough in the Redut-2US telecommunications system that was created was the R-43IAM digital radio relay station (antenna module).

In fact, this is the main basic link, for which, if necessary, four model additions are provided. These are three comprehensive communications hardware types: the P-260-O, P-260-U (nodal), and P-260-T (transit), as well as the P-261 communication control hardware. What are the main advantages of the R-43IAM? This is a fully autonomous digital telecommunications system that uses modern communication technologies and makes it possible to interact with earlier command and control systems. Whereas previously it was necessary to deploy a full-scale communication node, which was time-consuming and detectable by enemy reconnaissance devices, now one compact modular unit operates in field systems.

At the same time, it is quite self-sufficient: it supports the construction of multi-interval high-speed radio relay and fiber-optic communication lines and the organization of a broadband wireless access network with a capacity of up to 200 subscribers with a data transfer rate of up to 37 megabits per second. That is, it fully meets the needs of the “regiment-brigade-army” link.

The speed of digital information transmission is impressive: it is an order of magnitude higher than that of its predecessors from the analogue series — up to 155 megabits per second (1920 channels of audio frequency) simultaneously in four directions. At the same time, the R-43IAM can function both under normal conditions and under difficult jamming conditions — secure telephone communication for officials from the control center operational staff will be reliable and of high quality...A characteristic visual sign: an antenna-mast device 32 meters in height...Hence the impressive communication range — up to 15-55 km, depending on the frequency range and transmission speed, in conditions of direct radio visibility. Broadband wireless access is up to 30 km.

It is also important that the R-43IAM and modular hardware are able to easily connect to the Unified Telecommunications Network of Russia: public networks, dedicated networks, technological networks, special-purpose communication networks, and other information transmission networks using electromagnetic systems. This relates to opportunities for increasing mobilization readiness...



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>

Russia Expanding Footprint in Africa



Putin with South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa.

Source: Government of South Africa/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/governmentza/48947173896/in/photolist-2hzi4vj-2hzh2e-2hzkDc9-2hzjDKK-2hzjEb4-2hzkDX7-2hzHdRt-2hzEqpD-2hzkHau-2hzUJLu-2hzjGJT-2hzkEQ-2hzkEsA-2hzgUGm-2hzjG1G-e7ZzHH-2hzkJ1C-2hzgWkm-2hzkKmJ-2hzkJPM-2hzjJHq-2hzjKgp-8UYytn-2kNgX79-2hczLX3-7FHvkj-22rMwt-2fx3xYf-5BLiYj-58JLko-2jbTAbz-HA2GUX-2j27Zpa-XWCDsV-eMTGcQ-QKb5Vz-9NxpGY-GEosm9-2baSZFZ-FGdxX1-2Z54Uf-scT38q-2kKZF9Q-2iQjdgB-2ii9GtV-58JL9G-2kJjM8z-HA2J3t-2iw6Z2Y-FVJSEZ>
Attribution: CC BY-ND 2.0

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Prior to the early 1990s, especially during the Cold War, the Soviet Union was heavily involved in Africa. Then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, foreign aid and other types of involvement generally came to an end. However, as the excerpted article from the South African news publication the *Daily Maverick* notes, beginning with Putin's 2006 visit to the continent, Russia began reengaging in Africa, including economic, diplomatic, and military cooperation with several countries. While Russia's involvement in Africa is still dwarfed by that of China, its uptick in activity has become progressively more

pronounced in recent years. Related to this, articles regarding Russia's activities are relatively rare in African news publications, especially when compared to those regarding China in Africa, which tend to be regular features.

Particularly noticeable with regards to Russia in Africa has been its defense-related sales. Between 2016 and 2020, Africa was the destination for 18 percent of Russian arms exports. Since 2014, Russia's state-owned Rosoboronexport, which provides military products and services, has signed bilateral agreements with Mali, Niger, Angola, and several other countries. Also involved, although the article does not mention them by name, is the Wagner Group, a private Russian paramilitary group with ties to the Kremlin. Wagner's mercenaries have been active in a handful of African nations, especially the Central African Republic, where they reportedly fought rebels seeking to overthrow the government. These Russian-led military initiatives are frequently tied to its business initiatives, such as an agreement to construct two nuclear power plants in Nigeria while also committing the Wagner Group to confront Boko Haram in the northeast part of the country.

Plans are now underway for the 2022 Russia-Africa summit. It is expected that hundreds of politicians and businesspeople will attend, reflecting Russia's growing presence on the continent. As Putin seeks to rebuild Russia's global stature and get past the sanctions the West placed on his country for the Ukrainian conflict, he is looking at Africa. However, the article questions whether he will adopt a new strategy for Africa at the summit or continue with the current one.

“Vladimir Putin has placed a high premium on rebuilding Russia's stature as a global power, and these efforts extend to Africa.”

Source: Cayley Clifford, “The Bear is back: Russian re-engagement with Africa is picking up with Putin in the driving seat,” *Daily Maverick* (a South African news publication), 7 July 2021. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-07-07-the-bear-is-back-russian-re-engagement-with-africa-is-picking-up-with-putin-in-the-driving-seat/>

Vladimir Putin has placed a high premium on rebuilding Russia's stature as a global power, and these efforts extend to Africa. He first visited the continent in 2006, promising \$1bn in investments and making a clear declaration of Russian interest.

Russia also has clear economic motives when it comes to natural resources. Although it boasts some of its own mineral wealth, Russia's natural resources are difficult to extract, making it easier to import them instead. Notable developments are taking place in Zimbabwe (platinum group metals), Angola (diamonds), and Namibia (uranium).

Conversely, while Putin has named Africa a foreign policy priority, it is not number one on the list. “In terms of overall economic ties, Russia still does much more trade with Europe and Asia than with Africa,” Alexandra Arkhangelskaya, researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for African Studies, told SAIHA. This was due to its geographic location, she said.

And while much attention is paid to Russian movements on the continent, it's difficult to compare Russian engagement with Africa's traditional partners like the US, UK and France, or with emerging powers like China, whose involvement dwarfs that of Russia. Interest from Turkey, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and others also means African countries can now pick and choose who they would like to partner with. These decisions are informed by a complex web of priorities.

Russia Facing Problems Developing Arctic Military Communications System

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

The following is an extract from a larger article in the Russian General Staff monthly publication *Voyennaya Mysl*. Although the Russian military has developed communications equipment specifically for Arctic military needs, developing a nationwide system of Arctic communications has some special challenges. Polar orbits, particularly sun-synchronous orbits, are expensive and decay quicker than conventional orbits. Continual thawing and freezing causes soil

and permafrost shifts that damage communications infrastructure. Developing the infrastructure to communicate effectively in the Arctic will be expensive and require constant upkeep. (For an article and map of the Arctic fiber-optic cable, see: “Developing Arctic Connectivity,” *OE Watch*, July 2019). Nevertheless, this sober Russian analysis is in keeping with their serious focus on Arctic development and will be useful in realizing their objectives.

“Fiber-optic cable could allow foreign states to create a database of acoustic noise spectrograms of underwater and surface facilities of the Russian Navy. This database will make it possible to identify and track . . . facilities in Russia’s territorial waters and in the waters of the world’s oceans equipped with fiber-optic lines. . .”

Source: N. A. Ivanov, S. A. Ivanov and G. Yu. Starodubtsev, “Проблема инфотелекоммуникационного развития Арктической зоны России (The Problem of Info-communication Development of Russia’s Arctic Zone),” *Voyennaya Mysl* (Russian General Staff monthly) 1 July 2021, pages 88-94. <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/upload/site178/pdj6wywh3M.pdf>

The strategic importance of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation (RF) is due to the huge reserves of mineral resources, the efficiency of transport routes, advantages in the military-strategic sphere, and growing claims to the waters from “Arctic” and “non-Arctic” states. IT development of the Arctic zone will speed up the process of assimilation of the region and economic development, and increase the country’s defense capability and the status of the Russian Federation on the world stage....

From a technical point of view, the signs of the problem of info-communication development of the Arctic zone of Russia are:

Most communication and automation equipment is not purpose-built for the conditions of the Arctic zone.

The use of artificial Earth satellites placed in geostationary orbit is difficult or even impossible for most of the Arctic zone.

Radio communication, especially using the range up to 30 MHz, is not effective in the Arctic zone due to specific effects affecting the propagation of radio waves.

Copper wire communication will not provide the required throughput, and the construction of ground lines on permafrost reduces their reliability to an unacceptable level.

Laying fiber-optic cable lines across rivers and seas have their own special problems and during the thaw, there is considerable soil movement by soil and permafrost which can destroy fiber-optic cable. In addition, low temperatures significantly affect the quality of the system’s optical couplers and connectors.

Power supply to fixed and mobile communications equipment requires the development of Arctic-ready technical solutions.

Melting and shifting soil and permafrost threatens the stability of antenna-feeder devices, mast structures, and grounding devices. Antenna and mast icing can cause their collapse, break feeder cables, and freeze liquids in hydraulic systems.

The lack of a fully-developed navigation system makes it difficult to use radio relay and tropospheric communication lines.

The lack of an extensive road infrastructure and carrying capacity limits the ability to maneuver forces and assets and repair info-communications.

Fiber-optic cables can act as spatially-distributed converters of acoustic or vibration signals. Foreign states many monitor space, water and moving objects using coherent reflectometers with the fiber-optic signals. Coherent reflectometers are rapidly developing; in a short period of time the guaranteed length of the controlled area has increased from 40 to 75 kilometers. Together with self-learning neural networks, reflectometers make it possible to register and later identify objects that generate a vibrational disturbance of the surrounding space. The route of fiber-optic lines laid along the Northern Sea Route pertains to an extended section of the Russian sea area in the Arctic and Pacific Oceans.... Fiber-optic cable could allow foreign states to create a database of acoustic noise spectrograms of underwater and surface facilities of the Russian Navy. This database will make it possible to identify and track ...facilities in Russia’s territorial waters and in the waters of the world’s oceans equipped with fiber-optic lines....

Navigation of ships in a constantly changing environment requires a stable, high-speed information flow for the interaction of services that ensures the safety of navigation, and also increases the efficiency of logistics and the attractiveness of using the Northern Sea Route and the region as a whole. A matrix developed taking into account the existing and planned infrastructure for mining, logistics, navigation, shipping, and so on will make it possible to determine the optimal location of potential centers of information gravity, systematize the placement of large info-communication hubs, and link them with Russia’s existing public communication network....

Russia Warns Turkey to Remain Neutral in the Black Sea

By Ihsan Gündüz
OE Watch Commentary

On 20 July 2021 Russia issued a statement highlighting that external powers are escalating tension in the Black Sea. The statement came shortly after NATO concluded its “Sea Breeze” multinational exercise co-hosted by Ukraine and the United States. It also coincided with the 85th anniversary of the “Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits” regulating the transit of warships in and out of the Black Sea. The accompanying excerpted article from *Gazete Duvar*, an independent Turkish-language news site, analyzes the messages that Russia is sending to Turkey with its statement, particularly regarding any possible U.S. naval activity in the Black Sea.

First, the author claims that “the reason Russia issued this statement was the military exercise NATO carried out in the Black Sea.” Also, the author points out that while it is “not the first time NATO has conducted exercises in the Black Sea,” it is the first time that “14 non-NATO states participated in the exercise, alongside NATO members.” Second, the author states that “according to Russia, the importance NATO is attaching to Ukraine and by making it co-host the exercises could be a message towards an initiative regarding Crimea” and that “Moscow, in a sense, believes it is being tested and its reaction is being checked.”

The author goes on to discuss what she sees as “two important subtexts in Russia’s message to Turkey.” The first “is the security of the Black Sea and the reference to Montreux” and that “Turkey holds particular importance with regards to the security of the Black Sea in accordance with its control of the straits.” The second subtext is that “Russia reminds us of its stance towards the Canal Istanbul issue” and that “there is no alternative to the Montreux Convention.”

It is worth remembering that under the Montreux Convention, Turkey controls access to the Black Sea through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus Straits and that it limits the amounts of aggregate tonnage, types of warships passing through the straits, and the number of days warships belonging to non-littoral states may remain in the Black Sea. Essentially, it gives Turkey the ability to limit U.S. (and any other non-littoral state’s) naval activity in the Black Sea (see: “Turkey Views Treaty as Important to Limiting U.S. Naval Activity in the Black Sea,” *OE Watch*, May 2021). As for Canal Istanbul, it is a planned project to build an artificial sea-level waterway connecting the Black Sea to the Marmara Sea, which would create a way to by-pass the Montreux Convention. Lastly, the author believes that the overall message of the statement is that “Russia is warning Turkey to maintain its neutrality.”

“With regards to both the Canal Istanbul debates and the recent NATO exercise, Russia is warning Turkey to maintain its neutrality [in the Black Sea].”



Russian Black Sea Fleet amphibious landing exercise as a part of the combined military exercises near the coast of the Crimean peninsula.

Source: Defense Ministry of Russian Federation, via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_Black_Sea_Fleet_amphibious_landing_exercise_as_a_part_of_the_combined_military_exercises_near_the_coast_of_the_Crimean_peninsula,_2012.jpg, Attribution: CC-BY-SA-4.0

Continued: Russia Warns Turkey to Remain Neutral in the Black Sea

Source: Mühdan Sağlam, “Moskova’dan Ankara’ya mesaj: Karadeniz’deki gelişmeleri izliyorum (Message from Moscow to Ankara: I follow the developments in the Black Sea),” *Gazete Duvar* (an independent Turkish language news site), 28 July 2021. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/moskovadan-ankaraya-mesaj-karadenizdeki-gelistmeleri-izliyorum-makale-1529771>

On July 20, 1936, the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits was signed... on 20 July 2021, on the anniversary of that agreement, Russia issued the following statement:

“Regarding the systematic escalation of the situation in the Black Sea... we believe that the task of ensuring the strict implementation of the provisions of the Montreux Straits Convention is quite up-to-date. Turkey, which has the right to control the passage of warships through the straits, plays a special role in this regard. We will continue to monitor the situation closely as to how the provisions of the agreement are implemented in practice, including limiting the maximum total tonnage during transit as well as the maximum tonnage of warships of non-coastal countries in the Black Sea and the length of their stay in the region.”

The date Moscow issued this statement was no coincidence...

The reason Russia issued this statement was the military exercise NATO carried out in the Black Sea. It’s not the first time NATO has conducted exercises in the Black Sea. Named “Exercise Breeze,” those exercises have been held annually since 1997. This year, however, 14 non-NATO states participated in the exercise, alongside NATO members...

Historically, the Black Sea is an important location for Russia. Moscow monitors the developments there as closely as other coastal countries. But the main factor is Crimea, which has led Russia to issue tough statements and engage in counter-exercises. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014... According to Russia, the importance NATO is attaching to Ukraine and by making it co-host the exercises could be a message towards an initiative regarding Crimea.

...Moscow, in a sense, believes it is being tested and its reaction is being checked. It is understandable so far, but why did Russia warn Turkey?

There are two important subtexts in Russia’s message to Turkey. The first is the security of the Black Sea and the reference to Montreux. Turkey holds particular importance with regards to the security of the Black Sea in accordance with its control of the straits...

In the second part of the text, Russia reminds us of its stance towards the Canal Istanbul issue. It is highlighted in the text that there is no alternative to the Montreux Convention...

...Russia has the impression that NATO is preparing Ukraine for NATO membership through Turkey. The increased arms trade between the two nations supports this argument...

With regards to both the Canal Istanbul debates and the recent NATO exercise, Russia is warning Turkey to maintain its neutrality... In short, Moscow is sending the message that it is not taking the line of least resistance. What it says is: “I know my rights. I’ve taken over Crimea and I won’t allow anything else happen over there. Ankara should be careful regarding the situation in the Black Sea.”



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/ml/fmso-books/197266/download>

Evidence of Staffing Troubles for Russian Military-Political Officers

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

In July 2018, the Russian Ministry of Defense reintroduced the Main Military-Political Directorate (MPD) within the Armed Forces. This organization is charged with organizing political-military instruction, as well as helping maintain morale and discipline within the ranks. While it may be premature to draw firm conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the MPD, a recent article from the independent, pro-business source *Kommersant* suggests that there may be problems with MPD staffing and oversight.

The article describes a recent court case where a “deputy regiment commander for military-political work was dismissed,” after he was found to have failed to “conduct classes on general military-political training” with the regiment’s personnel. This omission came to light after a conscript murdered three fellow servicemen in November 2020. The subsequent investigation revealed that the MPD officer

had merely submitted reports stating that “law and order classes” were recorded as completed, without conducting the training. In his defense, the officer argued that “he had no time to talk with conscripts, study their moral and soldier qualities, and ‘examine their psychological compatibility,’ since the command loaded him with other tasks.” The defense lawyer pointed out that the MPD officer was “not a psychiatrist,” but rather had served as a pilot.

The article states that “the colonel’s dismissal was insisted on by the Deputy Minister of Defense - Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces Andrei Kartapolov.” The removal of this officer might indicate that the MPD is serious about conducting more robust political-military instruction within the ranks. It might also suggest that there are continued problems with staffing and training personnel to carry out the MPD mission.

“Colonel Yevgeny Utkin, deputy regiment commander for military-political work, was dismissed for ‘failing to conduct military-political training’ by the decision of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.”

Source: Oleg Mukhin, “Замполита наказали за тройное убийство (Zampolit punished for triple murder),” *Kommersant* (independent, pro-business source), 19 July 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4908689>

As it became known to Kommersant, the Ministry of Defense has identified the culprit in “creating the prerequisites” for the triple murder committed by private Anton Makarov at the Voronezh airfield in November 2020. Colonel Yevgeny Utkin, deputy regiment commander for military-political work, was dismissed for ‘failing to conduct military-political training’ by the decision of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. He tried twice to challenge his dismissal in court, urging to punish the military registration and enlistment office and the immediate commanders of Private Makarov for the lack of “psychological work,” but he lost the case....

...The colonel’s dismissal was insisted on by the Deputy Minister of Defense - Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces Andrei Kartapolov, as well as the command of the Western military districts and regiments. As stated in the materials of the court, on November 10, the day after the massacre, an explanation was taken from Colonel Utkin. In it, the colonel said that he did not conduct classes “on general military-political training” with the regiment’s personnel....

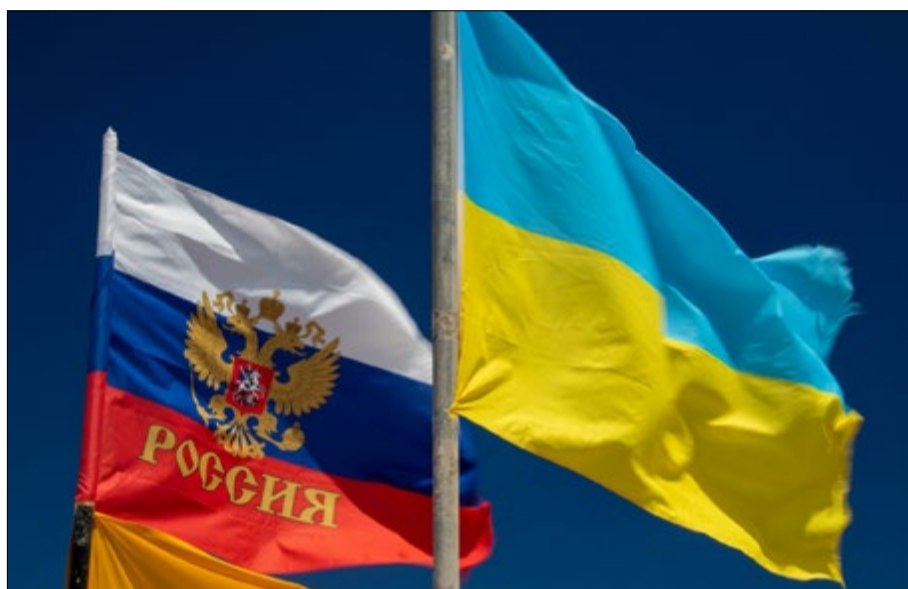
The “law and order classes” presented by the colonel were carried out “formally...” In his defense, Colonel Utkin stated that he had no time to talk with conscripts, study their moral and soldier qualities, and ‘examine their psychological compatibility,’ since the “command loaded him with other tasks.”

The lawyer Victoria Dorofeeva, representing the interests of the officer, stressed that the conclusion about the need for dismissal contradicts the positive description of the colonel....

“Yevgeny Borisovich is not a psychiatrist, does not have the appropriate education and was not empowered to conduct psychological testing of the regiment personnel. He is a pilot by education,” said Ms. Dorofeeva, noting that Private Makarov, according to all the conclusions of psychologists, was fit for military service.

But the court ultimately considered that the military-political training test reports submitted by the officer were only “formally reflected on paper,” and that “no effective measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law had been worked out.”

Russian Military Studying Putin's History of Ukraine



Flags of Russia and Ukraine.

Source: <https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=280507&picture=flag-of-russia-and-ukraine>
Public Domain

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

In mid-July, President Putin published a long historical article on the Kremlin website, where he spelled out his view toward Russian-Ukrainian relations. As the first excerpt from the official news agency TASS points out, Putin again asserted “that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, a single whole.” He went on to blame “Western authors” for the current deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations, claiming that “Ukraine is being dragged into a dangerous geopolitical

game, the goal of which is to turn Ukraine into a barrier between Europe and Russia, into a bridgehead against Russia.”

The second brief excerpt comes from the mostly independent source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and describes how Putin's historical article will become mandatory reading for those serving in the Russian military. The author points out that the “system of military-political work (MPW) has been operating for several years,” and similar to its Soviet predecessor, “the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense believe that this strengthens the morale of the army, and therefore serves the cause of defending the Fatherland from enemies.” He posits that “it is not yet clear how much MPW training time will be spent studying Putin's article, but apparently at least three training hours.”

“I said that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, a single whole.”

The author goes on to explain that according to the “order of the Minister of Defense No. 95 (signed on February 22, 2019), knowledge on all topics studied by the MPW is checked during control checks ‘in the form of a credit with an assessment or testing.’” He stresses that “this provision is especially important for officers, warrant officers and contract soldiers, for whom the amount of their salary is directly related to the results of military labor.” Besides the possible monetary benefit, this training, according to the author, “forms in servicemen the political knowledge and ideological attitudes necessary for the leadership of the state.” Studying Putin's latest treatise could also prove valuable in the event of a wider conflict with Ukraine.

Source: “Статья Владимира Путина, ‘Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев’ (Vladimir Putin, ‘On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians’),” TASS (official news agency), 12 July 2021. <https://tass.ru/politika/11884999>

Recently, answering a question about Russian-Ukrainian relations during the Direct Line, I said that Russians and Ukrainians are one people, a single whole. These words are not a tribute to some conjuncture, current political circumstances. I have spoken about this more than once, this is my conviction. Therefore, I consider it necessary to state my position in detail, to share my assessments of the current situation.

Let me emphasize right away that I perceive the wall that has emerged in recent years between Russia and Ukraine, between parts of, in fact, one historical and spiritual space, as a great common misfortune, as a tragedy. These are, first of all, the consequences of our own mistakes made in different periods. But also the result of the purposeful work of those forces that have always sought to undermine our unity. The formula that is used is known from time immemorial: divide and conquer....

Step by step, Ukraine was being dragged into a dangerous geopolitical game, the goal of which is to turn Ukraine into a barrier between Europe and Russia, into a bridgehead against Russia.

...Western authors of the “anti-Russia” project set up the Ukrainian political system in such a way that presidents, deputies, ministers change, but there is a constant orientation towards separation with Russia, towards enmity with it.

...I am convinced that the true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible precisely in partnership with Russia.

Continued: Russian Military Studying Putin's History of Ukraine

Source: “Статья Владимира Путина, ‘Об историческом единстве русских и украинцев’ (Vladimir Putin, ‘On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians’),” TASS (official news agency), 12 July 2021. <https://tass.ru/politika/11884999>

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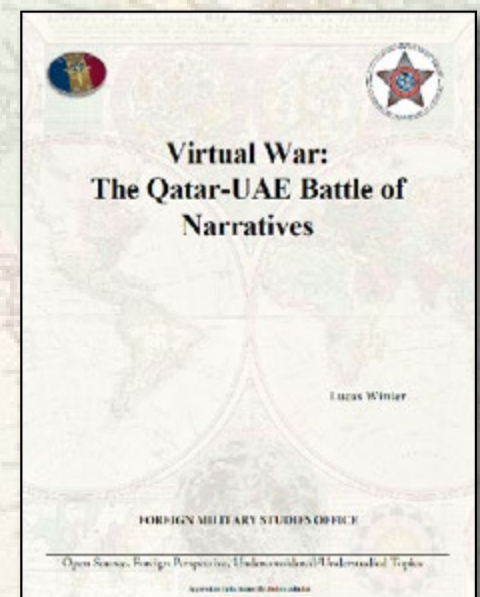
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VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

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>

Russia Pushing to Classify Reporting on the Military

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

There's little question that the Russian military has improved its combat capabilities over the past several years. Alongside this enhanced military readiness, however, have been measures to classify reporting on military topics. The first excerpt from the pro-business source *Kommersant* describes a draft law that would severely restrict any "information about the passage of citizens military service, procurement, and 'the moral and psychological climate in the troops.'" While this draft legislation has yet to become law, it does reflect the growing trend to restrict writing on military topics—especially any negative reporting.

The second excerpt from the official news agency *Interfax* describes a recent assessment by the "Moscow City Military Prosecutor" regarding crime in the ranks. According to this official, "the number of cases of beatings and manifestations of hazing in the troops of the Moscow region again increased." This official also "noted 'a number of negative tendencies' regarding officers' crimes, asserting that there's been an increase in fraud..., malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery." Should the draft legislation described above become law, reporting on military problems like crime in the ranks could become classified.

“In the situation with officers’ crime, the prosecutor also noted “a number of negative tendencies: ..the number of frauds committed by them, malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery have increased.”

Source: “ФСБ составила список военных сведений, которые иностранцы могут использовать против РФ (The FSB compiled a list military information that foreigners can use against the Russian Federation),” *Kommersant* (pro-business source), 19 July 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4908950>

The FSB has developed a draft list military information that foreign states, organizations or citizens can use against Russia. Among them there is information about the passage of citizens military service, procurement and “the moral and psychological climate in the troops....”

Source: “Военный прокурор сообщил о росте дедовщины в московском регионе (The military prosecutor reported on the growth of hazing in the Moscow region),” *Interfax* (official news agency), 4 August 2021. <https://www.interfax.ru/moscow/782501>

After a significant decline in hazing in 2021, the number of cases of beatings and manifestations of hazing in the troops of the Moscow region again increased, Moscow City Military Prosecutor Vladislav Prihodchenko told Interfax. He added that “these crimes make up only 6% of the total number of recorded criminal acts.”

According to him, “the greatest propensity” to assault and hazing, “was shown by the soldiers and sergeants doing military service by conscription.”

In the situation with officers’ crime, the prosecutor also noted “a number of negative tendencies: ...the number of frauds committed by them, malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery have increased.”

“For example, the head of a medical company of one of the military units deployed in the Moscow region was convicted of six episodes of petty bribery.” He also noted the growth of corruption in the region and linked it with bribery in military enlistment offices....

Georgian Defense Minister Offers Modernization Plan in Face of Russia Threat

By Dodge Billingsley
OE Watch Commentary

Without mentioning Russia once, Georgian military analyst Irakly Aladashvili, who writes prolifically on Georgian security, analyzed a recent Defense Ministry plan to repel military threats “that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades.” According to the analysis featured in the excerpted article by Georgian private weekly *Kviris Palitra*, the Georgian military, now back from “the 12-year Afghanistan epic,” should put all its resources into building up the armed forces because “We know that no one else will die for Georgia. This was made obvious during the August [2008] war and has been confirmed many times during the last 13 years.”

According to the article, Georgia’s defense modernization program can be split into five categories: anti-tank, air defense, increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in a strike capacity, increased mobility of artillery and mortars, and mine warfare and engineering. It is important to note that the article was published during Exercise

Agile Spirit 2021, a long running biennial military exercise with NATO and U.S. military forces. Among the training that the Georgian military received from NATO and U.S. personnel was resistance warfare in the face of an overwhelming military attack. So again, without mentioning Russia by name, the article alludes how many in Georgia believe they cannot hope to withstand a dedicated invasion of Russian forces or to count on allies to come to their aid. Thus, the defense modernization has to work. The author is clear, “There is no other solution.”

“... It is time to pay special attention (including financially) to repelling the specific military threats that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades ...”

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<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/oe-watch-issues>

Continued: Georgian Defense Minister Offers Modernization Plan in Face of Russia Threat

Source: Irakly Aladashvili, “5 მიმართულება 10 წელიწადში ქართული არმიის გასაძლიერებლად... (5 directions to strengthen the Georgian army in 10 years ...),” Kviris Palitra (Private Weekly newspaper published from Tbilisi), 30 July 2021. <https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/samkhedro-thema/80655-5-mimarthuleba-10-tselitsadshi-qarthuli-armiis-gasadzliereblad.html>

“The Ministry of Defense has published a list of the main priority areas that should be developed in the Georgian Army by 2030 ...”

Anti-armor capability, air defense, unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance and strike capability, increasing the mobility of artillery and operational mining - these are the 5 main areas where the defense forces must succeed in the next 10 years ...

“Obviously, it is important to make optimal and rational use of the available resources, therefore, we have written a plan in all these priority areas, according to which the resources will be allocated for the next 10 years.

Focus, by age, on each major and general priority. Accordingly, we have developed a timeline for supporting the Defense Forces’ 2030 priorities. In general, we will be able to replace the existing Soviet weapons systems with modern weapons systems that meet the current requirements of the Defense Forces. It is noteworthy that we have already started working on each priority area.

In connection with the anti-armor direction, it is planned to purchase “javelins” from the USA; In the field of air defense, the procurement process and the strengthening of our troops will take place over the next ten to six years. For the development of intelligence capability, our special focus is on the development of operational and tactical unmanned reconnaissance and combat aircraft, as well as radio-electronic reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities.

To ensure quality and adequate volume, we start local production, therefore, we are actively cooperating with South African-Polish companies. We plan to sign a contract with them this year and we will start releasing it next year. In the direction of artillery development, from 2024 it is planned to develop Georgian-made mortars, as well as to purchase foreign-made artillery equipment.

Our fifth priority is the development of engineering mobility and countermeasures. “In this regard, the Defense Forces will focus on strengthening the areas of special operations, as well as strengthening management and control, communications and information systems,” - said Defense Minister Juansher Burchuladze.

The plan is really ambitious and strengthening the Georgian army, focusing on the priorities mentioned by the Minister of Defense was needed a long time ago, even before the August 2008 war, but the implementation of this ten-year plan is already a great effort from a state in difficult political, economic and pandemic conditions. Most importantly, it requires billions of GEL. However, there is no other solution. We know that no one will die for Georgia. This was made obvious during the August [2008] war and has been confirmed many times during the last 13 years.

The already banal phrase - those who do not take care of their army, will have to feed someone else’s army - is still relevant and therefore the only defender of the country - the Georgian army needs to strengthen its combat capability given the constant military-political threats in the world and especially in our difficult region.

In addition to the five priority areas, there are areas whose strengthening also did not bother the Georgian army - even the upgrading of armored vehicles, but since the country has chosen a total defense strategy as a priority, it is clear that in the near future it will be vital to defeat the enemy. - Massive attack with Georgian tanks.

None of these five priority areas is unfulfilled. The third generation of American “javelins”, which can be used with great success to blow up tanks and other armored vehicles, have been in the arsenal of the Georgian army for several years and their number will increase in the future.

Purchasing air defenses is a more expensive pleasure, but strengthening the air defenses of Georgian infantry units with Stinger-type or similar portable anti-aircraft missile systems to protect against low-altitude enemy aircraft and helicopters - real defense.

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) capable of carrying out point-to-point air strikes in addition to their reconnaissance functions has long been a reality, so their acquisition and even serial assembly on the ground is not a difficult task.

No one disputes that artillery units should change their firing position immediately after the volley (it did not happen so often during the August war, which had several tragic consequences for Georgian artillerymen). However, it is clear that towed artillery is much more expensive.

Mobility of Georgian artillery will increase significantly after the mass integration of the self-propelled 120 mm mortar “Didgori Warrior” among Georgian infantry brigades. As for the operative arrangement of minefields in the directions of the opponent’s attacks, this is not new either, and it is relatively cheap when acting with total defense tactics.

For the Georgian army, the 12-year Afghan epic is over and it is time to pay special attention (including financially) to repelling the specific military threats that have been threatening Georgian soil for decades ...

Iran Announces Ultra-Long Range Drone

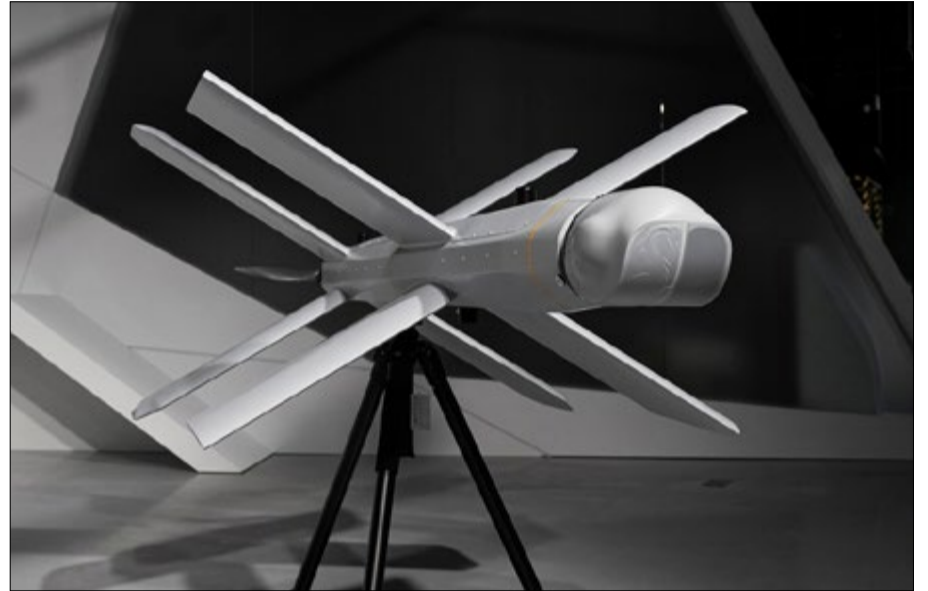
By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Since using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in 1985 during the Iran-Iraq war, drones have increasingly become a pillar of Iran's force projection, conducting surveillance and offensive military strikes. Drone flights regularly monitor Persian Gulf shipping traffic, for example, and Iran has proven its ability to use drones with great accuracy and increasing ranges against both Saudi Arabia and targets in Iraq. Iran's provision of drone technology to proxies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon give it plausible deniability on other strikes.

Nevertheless, Iranian military leaders often exaggerate their UAV capabilities, as in other areas. There is little evidence, for example, that Iran successfully reverse-engineered the RQ-170 it recovered inside Iran in December 2011. Nor is there evidence that Iranian drones were useful in the battle to liberate Ramadi from the Islamic State as Iranian authorities claimed (see: "Iran: Were Iranian Drones Useful in the Battle for Ramadi?" OE Watch, February 2016). Likewise, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) claims that it had extended its drone range to 1,865 miles (see: "Iran: Revolutionary Guard Brags of New Range to UAVs," OE Watch, October 2015) appears more

“We have drones flying 4,350 miles.”

aspirational than real. So, too, does the most current IRGC claim made in the accompanying excerpted article from the Defense Ministry's official news service that more than doubles the range attributable to Iranian drones. Importantly, the article, which was included later that same week in a Defapress list of the most important military and defense stories, did not include drone model names or other details. In contrast, Iranian officials say that they have limited their ballistic



The Russian-made "Lancet-3" drone which Iran claims to have.

Source: Defapress.ir, https://defapress.ir/files/fa/news/1400/4/2/1359688_150.jpg

missile ranges to 1,250 miles (see: "IRGC: Iran can Extend Ballistic Missile Range," OE Watch, February 2019) and so it is curious that they would claim such an extended range for their UAVs.

That said, even if the claim to a 4,350-mile drone is aspirational, as Iran invests heavily in such technology, it is likely only a matter of time before Iran develops a high-endurance, long-range UAV. Because of weight restrictions necessary for a solar-powered drone with such a range, it would likely serve a mainly surveillance role. Still, if Iran did develop a drone capable of flying 4,350-miles, it would extend Iran's surveillance range to all of Europe, and from the Sea of Japan and just off the shores of Indonesia to all but the southern and western tips of Africa.

Source: "Pehpadha-ye ba Barad 7,000 Kilometer Darim (We have drones with a range of 4,350 Miles)," Defapress (Iran defence ministry's official news agency), 27 June 2021. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/463994>

According to the Defapress correspondent, Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), said this morning at the opening ceremony of the clinical trial center of the Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, "It is hard to climb the peaks. It is difficult to cross hard rocks, but no country or nation can achieve progress and dignity without traversing the tough paths. A nation will not grow until it embraces great aspirations and turns them into external values...."

The commander of the IRGC added, "When the coronavirus spread, the world's major powers became thieves. They imagined that Iran would strain and fall in the face of this disease, but Islam and the guardianship shone, the nation mobilized, and we all became one heart. We connected and helped each other...."

He said, "The revival of a human being is the revival of all humanity, and this is the word of God. We have really decided to be among the best in the world from now on in everything, in the scientific arena, in the aerospace field where we launch satellites, in nanotech industry, and in the military arena, we have drones flying 4,350 miles with recovery which means we are pioneering in various fields."

Iran's Pollution Problems Peak



Iran Route 96 East, near Asaluyeh.

Source: Tasnim News, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1396/09/26/1396092615040427412810824.jpg>

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Pollution is a longstanding problem in the Iran because of increasing urbanization. Iranians from the countryside began flocking to the city during the shah's reign. According to World Bank data, a decade before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, 40 percent of Iranians lived in cities. When the shah fell, nearly half of Iranians lived in cities. Today, three-quarters of Iran's population are urban dwellers. The population of the greater Tehran metropolitan area has swelled from 2 million at the time of the Revolution to just over 16 million today. Pollution has increased alongside urbanization for two reasons: first, urban infrastructure has been unable to overcome the strain of population; and, second, the Iranian leadership's efforts to industrialize have often come at the expense of pollution controls. Often, only Tehran's air pollution struggle hits the press (see: "Tehran's Losing Battle with Air Pollution," OE Watch, May 2012) because most foreign businessmen, journalists, and diplomats who visit Iran limit themselves to the capital.

The excerpted article from Fars News Agency, an outlet affiliated with more hardline elements within Iran, comes from its new provincial service and so provides some insight into areas outside Tehran normally off-limits to foreign visitors. It reports on extreme pollution in Asaluyeh, an industrial town outside Bushehr that sits alongside Route 96, the main Iranian road connecting the southern Iranian cities of Abadan and Bandar Abbas. Asaluyeh is a major manufacturing center and is the location of land-based facilities in the Pars Special Energy Economic Zone. Such pollutants as sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide are readily detectable by smell—they are not easy for the government to deny—and cause a number of respiratory ailments such as asthma, headaches, and vision problems.

Extreme levels of such pollutants show lax standards in Iran's hydrocarbon industry. That the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps owns many such factories and remains aloof to legal remedy complicates, if not makes impossible, local efforts to resolve the situation. This may impact regional security as wildcat strikes increasingly impact the region as workers organize to improve local conditions. From an operational standpoint, Iran's pollution is important because of the sensitivity of the Iranian leadership and security forces to the country's nascent environmental movement. More than ethnicity or politics, environmentalism has shown that it can unite Iranians across region and class (see: "Iranian Environmentalists Arrested as Spies," OE Watch, April 2018).

“Such hazardous gases should not be present in a residential area.”

Source: “Hava-ye Asaluyeh Sad dar Sad Alludeh Ast (Asaluyeh's Air is 100% Polluted),” *Fars News Agency* (news outlet affiliated with hardline regime elements), 3 June 2021. <https://www.farsnews.ir/my/i/70712>

Asaluyeh's air pollution has put the health of workers in the area under serious threat. In the Asaluyeh region, due to the lack of equipped high gas burners with gas filters, the air in the area is filled with deadly gases such as sulfur dioxide, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen sulfide. Such hazardous gases should not be present in a residential area. Why are regional officials and refinery companies not thinking about the people and personnel of Asaluyeh region at all? The air is 100% polluted....

Iran Calls for Investigation into Missing Diplomats

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon after an uptick in Palestine Liberation Organization attacks on Israel and Israeli interests abroad. These culminated in the attempted assassination of Israel’s ambassador to the United Kingdom. After Israeli forces entered Lebanon, revolutionary Iran’s leaders debated how to respond—opposition to Israel was a central pillar of the Islamic Republic’s ideology. Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini rejected proposals to deploy Iranian military units to Lebanon, however, because the Islamic Republic needed all available forces to counter the Iraqi invasion of Iran. Instead, he proposed deploying trainers to Lebanon in order to mobilize southern Lebanon’s Shi’ites against Israel and Lebanese Christians.

On 4 July 1982, Iranian Military Attaché Ahmad Motovasselian, Chargé d’affaires Mohsen Mousavi, embassy employee Taqi Rastegar Moqaddam, and Kazem Akhavan, a photographer for the Islamic Republic News Agency, disappeared in Lebanon. Iranian officials have long accused the right-wing Christians Phalangists (today often called the Kataeb Party) as responsible for the attack. The Islamic

“Iran calls on Lebanese authorities to make serious decisions on Iran’s proposals.”

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) recently issued a statement that the Christian militiamen summarily executed the four, whose bodies were never recovered. In recent years, however, the Iranian Foreign Ministry has said—without any apparent evidence—that Israel had captured or quickly acquired the four Iranian diplomats and transferred them into Israel proper.

The accompanying excerpted statement from the website of Iran’s



Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1395/03/13/139503131150264097830784.jpg>

Foreign Ministry repeats the claim and suggests, however unlikely, that the four may be alive 39 years after their disappearance. The diplomatic purpose for such a claim, however, appears rooted less in new information that the missing Iranians are alive or that the Israelis were directly responsible, and more in an effort to contextualize and deflect responsibility from both Iran’s and Hezbollah’s early hostage-taking. At the same time, keeping the case of the missing Iranian officials alive, even after the IRGC acknowledged their deaths, can be a useful diplomatic tool for Iran by providing a mechanism to officially reintegrate Iran into Lebanese affairs, put Israel on the diplomatic defensive, and delegitimize Israeli concerns about Iranian Jews who disappeared in the 1980s and the subsequent taking of Israeli hostages by Iranian proxies.

Source: “Biyanieh Vizarat-e Amur-e Kharijeh-e Jomhuri Islami Iran be Monisabat-e Si va Nehmin Salruz Rebayesh 4 Diplomat-e Irani (Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Occasion of the 39th anniversary of the Abduction of Four Iranian Diplomats),” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* website, 4 July 2021. <https://mfa.ir/portal/NewsView/644019>

On July 4, 1982, a vehicle carrying four Iranian diplomats, namely Seyyed Mohsen Mousavi, Haj Ahmad Motavasselian, Taghi Rastegar Moghaddam and Kazem Akhavan, who were under the immunity of diplomatic police, were kidnapped by armed mercenaries of the Israeli regime in Lebanon’s al-Barbareh area in contravention of international regulations and conventions. Now, on the 39th anniversary of this crime committed by terrorist elements affiliated with the Tel Aviv regime, the families of those diplomats, who have gone through extreme suffering and pain, still hope their loved ones will be freed and return home.... The foreign ministry urgently calls on the incumbent UN chief as well as other international and human rights organizations and institutions, including the Red Cross Society, to pay due regard to this humanitarian and rights issue which pertain to international conventions recognized by the international community, and heed the rightful demand of Iran and the diplomats’ families and children. Accordingly... the Iranian foreign ministry also calls on Lebanese authorities to make serious decisions on Iran’s proposals to set up a cooperation committed to coordinate and regulate the existing data and shed light on the hidden dimensions of the incident....

Cameroon: Islamic State Branch Capitalizing with Boko Haram in Partial Disarray

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

The Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) is now rid of the leader of its rival organization, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, following the death in May of Abubakar Shekau. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African security think tank the *Institute for Security Studies* notes, ISWAP is capitalizing on Boko Haram's loss, beginning with the consolidation of its power around Lake Chad. The Far North administrative region of Cameroon has been particularly impacted by these changing dynamics.

When Shekau was alive, insurgents (mostly from Boko Haram) frequently launched attacks on civilians in Cameroon, including 16 recorded each month from March to May of this year. However, following Shekau's death, in June there were only two attacks, both against military bases. ISWAP claimed responsibility for one of these, and it is unclear whether ISWAP or Boko Haram attacked in the other. According to the article, the following month ISWAP sharply increased the number of its attacks against military bases, possibly to as high as eight.

There are two possible reasons behind the targeting shift from civilians to military bases. First, Shekau was in favor of attacking civilians, a stance that put him at odds with ISWAP leaders before Boko Haram and ISWAP splintered into different groups. ISWAP can now more readily pursue its policy of attacking military targets while trying to curry local civilian support, basically by presenting itself as an alternative to the state that has failed to deliver development projects to its poorest region. The second reason for the change in



ISWAP has been consolidating its power in the Lake Chad region, especially in northern Cameroon.

Source: UN/Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Chad#/media/File:Lakechad_map.png Attribution: Public Domain

targeting is that ISWAP, according to the article, has possibly co-opted commanders in zones dominated by Boko Haram to choose military and not civilian objectives. Whatever the reasons for the targeting change, Cameroon's civilians appear to be appreciative. Meanwhile, the country's armed forces are struggling to win militarily against ISWAP, and the government, which is often described as corrupt and inefficient, is struggling to win the hearts and minds of the civilian populace.

“A reduction in attacks on civilians, together with a ramping up of assaults against military forces and inflated claims of success, are all key features of ISWAP attacks in Cameroon's Far North since Shekau's death.”

Source: Agha-Nwi Fru and Teniola Tayo, “ISWAP Takes Aim at the State in Cameroon,” *Institute for Security Studies* (a South African security think tank), 22 July 2021. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/iswap-takes-aim-at-the-state-in-cameroon>

A reduction in attacks on civilians, together with a ramping up of assaults against military forces and inflated claims of success, are all key features of ISWAP attacks in Cameroon's Far North since Shekau's death. But these are early days.

ISWAP uses propaganda to inflate its threat and successes. After the attack on the MNJTF camp in Sandawadjiri in June, ISWAP announced it had killed 26 soldiers. The MNJTF refuted this, reporting no casualties and only one wounded. ISWAP also claimed to have seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition, again contradicting the MNJTF's assertion that only two machine guns and a few packs of ammunition were taken.

There are reports that ISWAP is establishing an elaborate governance structure for the Lake Chad Basin. It also appears that one of the group's new commanders will be tasked with covering Cameroon's North and Far North regions. These appointments are recent, and the details of ISWAP's strategy for the region and its consequences on the ground remain unclear.

One apparent trend is the lower threat to civilians, especially Muslims. Allowing civilians to pursue their livelihood activities and then taxing these activities is a pillar of the Islamic State's strategy.

Transnational Networks Smuggling Afghan Refugees into Turkey

By Karen Kaya
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying passages from regional sources provide local insight into the flow of Afghan refugees through Iran into Turkey as the Taliban consolidates its total control of Afghanistan. The sources suggest a transnational human smuggling network with cells in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Greece. According to the first passage from *TGRThaber*, a pro-Turkish government news source, there are two main routes that the refugees take. The first route starts in Afghanistan's Nimruz Province, continues to Zabul in Iran's Sistan Province, and then onward to Turkey. The second route is from Afghanistan to Pakistan, where the refugees then pass to Zaranj on the border with Iran. Another important insight is that the refugees are mostly males between the ages of 15 and 30. Apparently, women, children, and elderly people are not accepted by the smugglers. Upon arrival in Turkey, some of them continue on to Greece, depending on their financial resources and preferences. This source claims that Iranian intelligence and border security are complicit in the smuggling, allowing the refugees to evade the security checkpoints from Iran into Turkey.

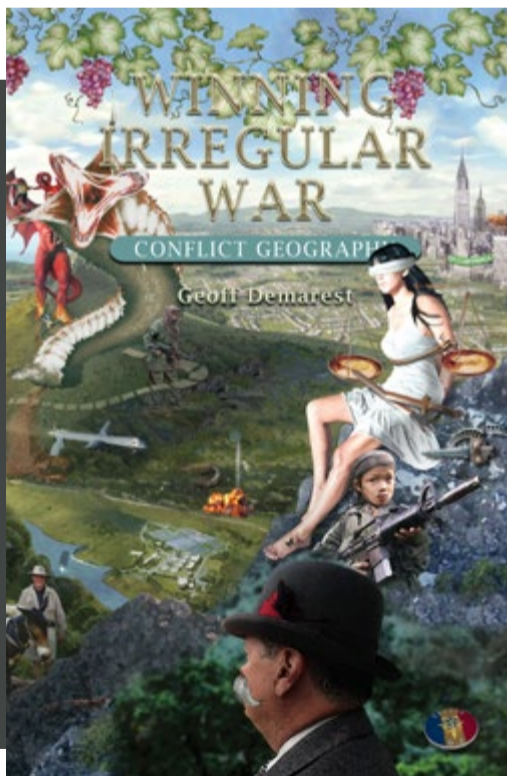
As the second passage from an independent Turkish news platform discusses, the Turkish government has taken some measures against this situation, including building modular walls and digging trenches along its border with Iran. These measures have decreased the numbers (from 1000-1500 per day to about 400-500 a day), but the smugglers have adjusted by changing their routes and methods to avoid detection. The source also suggests that the three main reasons Afghan refugees prefer Turkey are that they see Turkey as the gateway to the West, it is a country where Turkmens or Uzbeks will feel relatively at home, and they have relatives or acquaintances in Turkey already.



Afghanistan's Key Iran Border Points.

Source: Flickr/ United States Geological Survey, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sigarhq/8405981232> Attribution: CC BY 2.0

“The irregular migrants departing Afghanistan without any ID or passport, and crossing two thirds of Iran to arrive in Turkey, are assisted by Iranian intelligence and border patrol.”



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>

TERRORISM, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: Transnational Networks Smuggling Afghan Refugees into Turkey

Source: “Türkiye’ye çok uluslu komplo: Merdiven İran’dan rehberlik PKK’dan (Multinational conspiracy against Turkey: Iran provides the ladder, PKK provides the guidance),” *Tgrthaber.com* (a Turkish pro-government news website), 13 August 2021. <https://www.tgrthaber.com.tr/dunya/turkiyeye-karsi-cok-uluslu-komplo-2791330>

The Türkiye newspaper did an investigative analysis on the unknowns of the route that the refugees take. Witnesses discussed the refugee traffic along the route. An international relations expert from Kabul, Muhammed Ali Ashna, discussed that the smuggling network has an international scope, and a network that reaches all of Afghanistan’s villages. Ali Ashha, who conveyed that this network entails Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Greece and Europe, also noted that the PKK terror network is another partner to the smugglers.

Ali Ashha said: While still in Afghanistan, the illicit refugee candidates are split into groups of 80-100 and they move mostly from Afghanistan’s Nimruz province to Zabol in Iran’s Sistan province. Another route they take is the Pakistan corridor. The illicit refugees that are first passed from Afghanistan to Pakistan are then passed on to Zaranj, on the border with Iran. There is no border control on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border or on the Afghanistan-Iran border, so they have no trouble moving to these regions.

Payments are [made] at the Target Location

The refugees that depart from Afghanistan are guaranteed to arrive within four-five days. They are in the 15-30 age range. Women, elderly and small children are not accepted. This is due to the route and conditions. These people cover over 3000 km (~2000 miles) and they pass through many points on foot. For each person departing Afghanistan, a sponsor is required. The smuggling networks require these people to bring nothing with them. They take no ID, passport, phone with them. Per the agreement, once they arrive at their target location, the refugees are allowed to use the phone of the smuggling network’s Turkey branch, to call their family and their sponsor [in Afghanistan]; and the payment is made to the network’s Afghanistan contact. The refugees taken to Turkey are held hostage by the network until the payment is made. According to their agreement, once in Turkey, some of these people are taken to the Aegean and Marmara regions of Turkey, to then be passed on to Greece.

Iranian Intelligence Assistance

Muhammed Ali Asha, who expressed that Iran using the Afghan refugee ‘card’ against Turkey said, “The irregular migrants departing Afghanistan without any ID or passport, and crossing two thirds of Iran to arrive in Turkey, are assisted by Iranian intelligence and border patrol. In fact, Iranian intelligence is mixing unknown individuals into these groups. If they are caught, they say they are “refugees.” The illicit migrants departing Afghanistan to Turkey are 80% Pashtun, Hazara and Tajik. But if they are caught, they say they are Turkmen.

Tehran Carries them to the Border

Iranian researcher Babek Shahit also confirmed that Iranian security forces are openly supporting the migrants at the Afghanistan-Iran border and in their arrival to the Turkish border. “These migrants cover a distance of 2500 km inside Iran. They face no obstacles and arrive at the border of [the Turkish town of] Van.” Babek said. He also explained: Each group that departs Afghanistan uses designated vehicles and passes numerous cities, and dozens of check points to arrive at the Van border. We should ask, “How are these people, who have no ID or passport, not caught or sent back to their country?”

Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Iranian Intelligence and Border Patrol officers are all working in cooperation on this. These illegals, taken from the Afghan border, pass through important cities with high security such as Kerman, Qom, Zanjan to arrive at the Turkish border. Once they get to the border, [Iranian] officials provide them with ladders so they can climb over the security wall that Turkey has built. The Iranian intelligence helps these people evade Turkey’s security measures by directing them to the mountainous region of Kotur. Even though the terrain is difficult to cross here, they cooperate with the PKK to make the passage.



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>

Continued: Transnational Networks Smuggling Afghan Refugees into Turkey

Source: Fırat Fıstık, “Türkiye-İran sınırından izlenimler: Güvenlik önlemleri yeterli değil, geniş bir kaçakçılık ağı var (Observations from the Turkey-Iran border: Security measures are insufficient, there is a broad smuggling network),” *Medyascope.tv* (an independent Turkish news platform), 26 July 2021. <https://medyascope.tv/2021/07/26/turkiye-iran-sinirindan-izlenimler-guvenlik-onlemleri-yeterli-degil-genis-bir-kacakcilik-agi-var/>

Scenes of hundreds of Afghan refugees crossing the Turkey-Iran border became the main agenda of Turkey while politicians and others started talking about the [Afghan] refugees into Turkey and irregular migration. As Medyascope, we went to Van to see the situation on the ground, and to the Turkey-Iran border to speak to the refugees about their experiences, as well as to speak to the officials and the people of the region.

The arrival of Afghan refugees into Turkey can be understood in three dimensions. The first is the measures that the [Turkish] government is taking or not taking; the second is the smuggling activity and the problems it creates; the third is the experience of the refugees, why they prefer Turkey and how long this situation will last.

One week ago, the Van Governorate and security forces declared that 456 Afghan refugees and 11 smugglers were apprehended. Six were arrested. Another security measure the government has taken is the modular wall effort. This modular wall is planned across 63 kilometers. In addition, in an effort to secure the border [with Iran], 110 kilometers of trenches have been dug, 76 monoblocks and [watch] towers have been built. Despite these measures, the Afghan refugees are still arriving, though in smaller numbers. Instead the measures lead them to change their route and method.

The second place to look to understand the refugee flow is the smuggling activity. An intense and global smuggling network has been established. Those that have contact with the smugglers in Iran obtain an average of 400-500 Turkish Lira from each refugee. Once the refugees are picked up from the border, they are taken to shantytowns in Van, or central places and bus stations in Van, Tatvan and Diyarbakir. The refugees stay here for a few days and then, depending on their financial resources and preference, they can go to different cities in Turkey. Bus stations are places where refugees congregate. ...The smugglers keep the refugees in closed and isolated places to avoid capture. For example, sanctuaries, barns, buildings under construction, or places under bridges.

...All Afghan refugees point to the war in Afghanistan and the Taliban's increasing control as the reason for their arrival. At first, it was just young or middle-aged males coming, but now families are coming too.

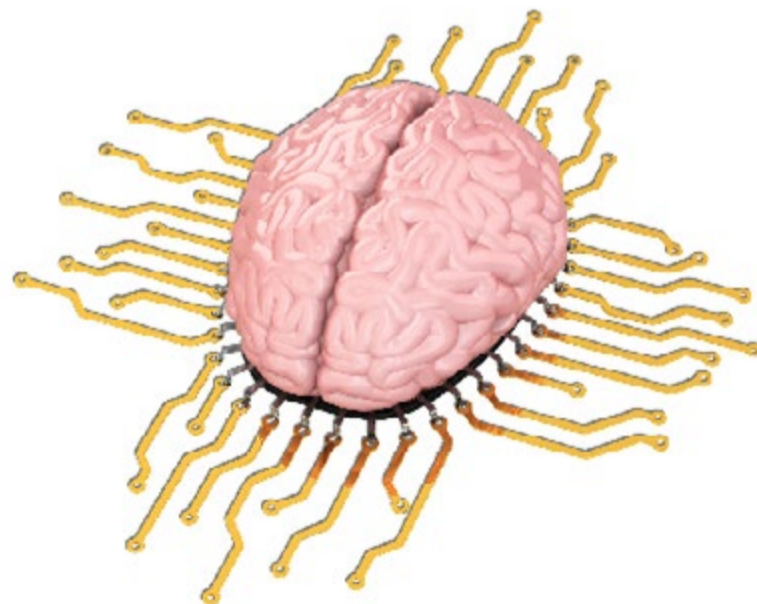
Three reasons why Turkey is preferred

There are three main reasons why Afghan refugees prefer Turkey. First, they see Turkey as the gateway to the West. Second, it is a country where Turkmens or Uzbeks will feel relatively at home. Third, they have relatives or acquaintances in Turkey already... Finally, the Afghan refugee flow to Turkey doesn't look like it will be over anytime soon. While the number has decreased from 1000-1500 per day a few weeks ago to about 400-500 a day now, it has not been prevented entirely.

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



In Somalia, Conflict Compounds the Problems of Climate Change

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

While much has been written about how climate change can lead to conflict, far less is reported on how conflict can worsen the impact of climate change, especially through impeding government efforts to mitigate the adverse effects of rising temperatures. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Shabelle Media*, an independent media operation based in Mogadishu points out, that is exactly what is happening in Somalia today. Torn by ethnic strife for four decades, and now ruled by a fragile government that is spending much of its effort on defeating al Shabaab, few resources are available to help the population combat the extreme weather events brought on by climate change.

Many Somalis are pastoralists, a group whose livelihood is particularly susceptible to drought. As the article notes, “compounding the challenge of climate change is the prolonged civil strife that has undermined the resilience of local communities who mainly eke a living from pastoralism and subsistence farming.” The article also includes a statement from the “head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Economic Security Program in Somalia,” who noted how “Somalia is a perfect case of disastrous consequences of the combination of climate change and conflict. The duo have worsened an already dire humanitarian situation.” The article goes on to mention how little money is available to assist the pastoralists as



With much of the government budget devoted to the military, relatively little is available to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/7325753682/in/photolist-c9PPYF-biwzWV-h4IU3m-cS5fKm-gVNjBz-bZsifj-cS5eEN-mWzvvs-cS5gnQ-dMNpqb-bUJM16-cS5dzw-cS5fyb-cS5ecw-cS5h5m-cS5esA-cS5fWJ-cS5gQw-cS5f9u-cS5eSS-cS5dUs-cS5hfq-bNLSn6-cS5fkE-cS5gaj-7AaB3D-cS5gzA-bNLQoD-bNLPm-dNjkrS-dNCJdV-bzRLhG-bNlpfp-7AaCQR-dNCJcG-9owLLR-c7tpSo-bNLoFc-dNJko3-bNLU8z-bzRKGo-bNLqvp-bNLroT-bNLUTr-bzRM9d-gVNjCg-H8RaLM-bvJrhr-B7yo6q
Attribution: Public Domain

“three decades of conflict have weakened institutions of governance in Somalia and left an estimated 2.9 million people internally displaced” and that this has “worsened competition for dwindling resources, leading to inter-communal tensions.” As one herder describes the situation, all of it “has pushed us further to the margins,” which has been noted to make recruitment by terrorist groups easier.

“Compounding the challenge of climate change is the prolonged civil strife that has undermined the resilience of local communities who mainly eke a living from pastoralism and subsistence farming.”

Source: Omar Nor, “Climate Change and Conflict Threaten Somali Herders,” *Shabelle Media Network* (an independent media operation based in Mogadishu), 3 August 2021. <https://shabellemedia.com/climate-change-and-conflict-threaten-somali-herders/>

...Somalia and the greater Horn of African region have become epicenters of climate related disasters that have worsened hunger, water stress and resource-based conflicts.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), more than 30 climate-related hazards including floods and droughts have hit Somalia since 1990, a three-fold increase compared to similar events between 1970 and 1990.

Compounding the challenge of climate change is the prolonged civil strife that has undermined the resilience of local communities who mainly eke a living from pastoralism and subsistence farming.

“Somalia is a perfect case of disastrous consequences of the combination of climate change and conflict. The duo have worsened an already dire humanitarian situation,” said Abdalla Togola, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Economic Security Program in Somalia.

While noting that three decades of conflict have weakened institutions of governance in Somalia and left an estimated 2.9 million people internally displaced, Togola said that climatic stresses have also worsened competition for dwindling resources, leading to inter-communal tensions...

According to Gure, the allure of pastoralism is fading at a dizzying speed as extreme weather events become the norm in Somalia, leading to loss of camels, cattle and goats that are a source of income, food and cultural identity.

“We the rural people have always relied on livestock for sustenance and losing them at a high rate due to drought has pushed us further to the margins,” said Gure. “We worry about the future of our children as it is apparent that harsh weather conditions will be the norm.”

UAE Continuing to Develop and Employ UAVs

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Despite its small size, the UAE seeks to establish a globally important military industry by focusing on innovation and new technology, with UAVs an important component of these efforts. The accompanying excerpted reports mention recent developments in drone usage and production for civilian, policing, and military uses, in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The first excerpt, from the English-language Dubai daily *Khaleej Times*, explains how the UAE aims to become the first country to employ UAVs to stimulate rainfall, using electromagnetic charge-emitting drones in place of more conventional methods of cloud-seeding via manned aircraft. The second excerpt, from the English-language Dubai daily *Gulf News*, describes a new initiative, called “Drone Box,” which aims to integrate quadcopter UAVs into Dubai’s extensive network of 300,000 surveillance cameras powered by artificial intelligence, and in doing so reduce average response time for police reports “from 4.4 to one minute.”

Alongside these civilian and policing uses, military UAVs continue to be a priority for Abu Dhabi’s growing defense industry. ADASI, an Abu Dhabi defense company focused on autonomous systems, unveiled its first line of “smart” loitering munitions (the “QX” family) last February. Although it is unclear when and where these UAVs might be employed, Libya seems a possibility given previous Emirati supplies of advanced weaponry to its Libyan allies. Turkey, whom the Emirates consider a key regional adversary, employed similar, domestically developed munitions against the UAE’s Libyan allies earlier this year. ADASI’s latest product is a portable UAV shelter/command-and-control center that is explicitly designed for operations in remote areas and at extreme high temperatures, both of which are also notable features of the Libyan battlefield.

“The precision-guided systems use sophisticated AI algorithms to target and strike, boasting an accuracy of 1 m CEP (circular error probable) – with an aim similar to laser guided munitions. Built to launch in any environment or terrain, the entire QX family of UAVs are lightweight, man portable, and comprise VTOL capabilities.”

Source: “Cloud-seeding: UAE yet to use drones to boost rainfall,” *Khaleej Times* (English-language Dubai daily), 26 July 2021. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/news/cloud-seeding-uae-yet-to-use-drones-to-boost-rainfall>

The UAE is not yet using drones to boost rainfall, but the new technology is being experimented, an official from the National Centre of Meteorology (NCM) has said... According to the NCM, this new method could efficiently replace the traditional way of depositing solid particles into the clouds.

Source: “Sheikh Mohammed launches Drone Box platform of Dubai Police,” *Gulf News* (English-language Dubai daily), 14 July 2021. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/sheikh-mohammed-launches-drone-box-platform-of-dubai-police-1.1626251465249>

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai launched the Drone Box platform, a Dubai Police initiative, on Wednesday. The platform is set to help reduce response time from 4.4 minutes to one minute for criminal and traffic reports... The Dubai Ruler was also briefed on the monitoring systems in place and the use of artificial intelligence systems for security that does not require human intervention. He added in his tweets that Dubai is monitored by more than 300,000 cameras around the clock.

Source: “Sheikh Mohammed launches Drone Box platform of Dubai Police,” *Gulf News* (English-language Dubai daily), 14 July 2021. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/sheikh-mohammed-launches-drone-box-platform-of-dubai-police-1.1626251465249>

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Source: “EDGE UNVEILS FIRST UAE-MADE FAMILY OF SMART LOITERING MUNITIONS AT IDEX 2021,” *EDGE/ADASI* press release, 21 February 2021. <https://adasi.ae/news/587>

EDGE, an advanced technology group for defence and beyond, today launches its first family of multirotor loitering munitions, the QX range... The QX family of loitering munitions comprises four products: QX-1, a micro-UAV, QX-2, a mini-UAV, QX-3, a small UAV, and QX-4, which features an impressive vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) fixed wing. The precision-guided systems use sophisticated AI algorithms to target and strike, boasting an accuracy of 1 m CEP (circular error probable) – with an aim similar to laser guided munitions. Built to launch in any environment or terrain, the entire QX family of UAVs are lightweight, man portable, and comprise VTOL capabilities.

Continued: UAE Continuing to Develop and Employ UAVs

Source: “GCS 300,” *EDGE/ADASI* product specification, 28 July 2021. <https://adasi.ae/product-detail/gcs-300>

Our GCS 300 shelter can be used for transporting, storing, operating, and maintaining UAVs in the field. Designed to operate at extreme temperatures, this robust product can be transported by road, rail, sea, and air, including C-130 and C-17 aircraft. On the ground, it expands into a full 6.1m x 5.8m technical and control hub with all the features, infrastructure, and equipment needed for frontline drone operations.



Dubai Skyline (2015).

Source: Tim Reckmann, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dubai_skyline_2015_\(crop\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dubai_skyline_2015_(crop).jpg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Military Poised to Play Larger Role amid Political Uncertainty in Tunisia

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

The Tunisian military could become a pivotal actor as the country enters a period of political uncertainty following President Kais Saied's suspension of the parliament in July. The accompanying excerpt, from the Lebanese media website *Daraj*, argues that Tunisia's army is "the only one managing the conflict today" and may well take steps to seize power, particularly if it disagrees with future decisions made by President Saied. Saied is a political outsider with weak links to the country's security services, thus any moves to consolidate his power as president would likely require support from the military.

The accompanying article from the Emirati news website *Erem News* singles out Division General Mohamed al-Ghoul as a key military ally for Saied. Tunisia's key military officer at present, if merely by virtue of his position as chief of staff of the land forces, al-Ghoul served as Tunisia's Defense Attaché to the United States (2016-2018) prior to his current appointment. As noted in the biographical summary published in 2018 by the French and Arabic language Tunisian news website *Leaders*, al-Ghoul was born in 1960 and has served on UN missions in Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire. The Tunisian military has historically stayed out of politics, but whether willingly or not, it may soon be thrust into playing a political role in Tunisia.



Brig. Gen. Mohamed El Ghoul visits at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy.
Source: Paolo Bovo, <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5150128/brig-gen-mohamed-el-ghoul-visits-caserma-ederle-vicenza-italy> Attribution: Public Domain

“if the army is given an opportunity to rule, it will bring a general to the Carthage Palace, as well as generals to the government headquarters in the Kasbah.”

Source:

(Let's raise our voice in defense of the Tunisian revolution)," *Daraj* (Lebanese news website), 26 July 2021. <https://daraj.com/76827/> (English version: <https://daraj.com/en/76974/>)

لترفع الصوت دفاعاً عن الثورة التونسية

The army presents to many a way out of the current equation and general state of suffocation. But if the army is given an opportunity to rule, it will bring a general to the Carthage Palace, as well as generals to the government headquarters in the Kasbah, especially as he who just dissolved the government and disrupted parliament lacks the required political representation to be nominated. It is clear President Saied has used the army. The latter is the only one managing the conflict today. If he does not revert his decisions, the military is not likely to remain in its position of managing the conflict, but will take steps towards seizing power. It is not too early to fear.

Source:

(Who is Mohamed al-Ghoul, chief of staff of Tunisia's land forces?)," *Erem News* (Emirati news website), 26 July 2021. <https://www.eremnews.com/news/maghreb-news/2336348>

من هو محمد الغول رئيس أركان جيش البرّ التونسي؟

Recent news suggested the possibility of the Tunisian President appointing the Chief of Staff of the Land Army, Major General Mohamed al-Ghoul, as Minister of Defense. He would succeed former Minister Ibrahim al-Bartajy, who was sacked today, Monday. According to Tunisian observers, Major General Mohamed al-Ghoul is considered among the most important military leaders that Tunisian President Kais Saied relied on to impose the unprecedented exceptional measures announced on Sunday...

Source:

(Who is Brigadier General Mohamed Ghoul, the Army's new Chief of Staff?)," *Leaders* (Tunisian news website), 27 June 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/rypdvwr> (French-language version: <https://www.leaders.com.tn/article/24989-le-general-de-brigade-mohamed-ghoul-nouveau-chef-d-etat-major-de-l-armee-de-terre>)

من هو أمير اللواء محمد الغول الرئيس الجديد لأركان جيش البرّ؟

Shortly after assuming the duties of a military attaché in Washington from 2016 to 2018, Major General Muhammad al-Ghoul was appointed Chief of Staff of the Land Army after being promoted to this rank on June 1. The 58-year-old Major General Mohamed Al-Ghoul is a product of the Republic, whose edifice was built by President Habib Bourguiba and who made it a means of social promotion. He is also a product of the military establishment, in which he has demonstrated dedication and efficiency in carrying out the various tasks assigned to him, whether at the national level or within the framework of international peacekeeping missions.

Russian and Chinese Security Interests in Tajikistan

By Matt Stein
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian and Chinese governments have a strong interest in the security of the Central Asian states, but particularly in Tajikistan, where each has a military facility. Both governments have increased the level of security cooperation with Tajikistan over the past few years. As the Taliban consolidates control in neighboring Afghanistan, the accompanying excerpted articles provide a look at what Russia and China have been recently doing to bolster security in Tajikistan.

The article from *Fergana Agency*, an independent news website focusing on Central Asia, reports on a recent “joint military exercise with the participation of 2500 military personnel from Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan” that took place “at the Harb-Maydon training facility, 20km from the border with Afghanistan.” The article includes a statement from the commander of the Russian Central Military District, who noted how “the use of a specific joint group of forces with aviation, reconnaissance and fire systems, and airborne forces based on experience gained in Syria was demonstrated for the first time.” The article also mentions how “of the 2500 soldiers involved in the exercise, 1800 are Russian, mostly from the 201st military base in Tajikistan.”

The article from *Kommersant*, a semi-independent Russian daily newspaper, reports on the delivery of “17 modernized BMP-2Ms by the end of July” to the Russian 201st military base in Tajikistan. The article

also notes a few features of the BMP-2M (a modernized variant of the Russian infantry fighting vehicle). While this may not appear to be a significant upgrade to the Russian units in Tajikistan, it marks another of several efforts over the past few years to increase the capabilities of units in the 201st (see: “Russia Transfers S-300s to Tajikistan,” *OE Watch*, December 2019).

The article from *Avesta*, an independent news agency reporting on Tajikistan, reports on a recent meeting between Chinese and Tajik officials where they “discussed issues of developing bilateral cooperation in security.” The article notes how “the situation of regional security was also discussed” and that “other details of the meeting were not disclosed.” In the past, details of security cooperation agreements between China and Tajikistan have rarely been publicly available, but have proven to be significant. This includes the establishment of a Chinese military base near the Tajik-Afghan border in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast a few years ago. The results of this meeting are unknown for now, but it appears that the two sides are maintaining cooperation. While this security cooperation took place before the Taliban seized control of the government in Afghanistan, the articles show that Russia and China continue to support the security of Tajikistan.

“The use of a specific joint group of forces with aviation, reconnaissance and fire systems, and airborne forces based on experience gained in Syria was demonstrated for the first time.”



Afghanistan - Tajikistan Bridge 2012.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Afghanistan_-_Tajikistan_Bridge_2012.JPG Attribution: CC BY YA 4.0

Continued: Russian and Chinese Security Interests in Tajikistan

Source: “В районе таджико-афганской границы завершились военные учения России, Узбекистана и Таджикистана (The military exercise of Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in a district on the Tajik-Afghan border has finished),” *Fergana Agency* (an independent news website focusing on Central Asia), 10 August 2021. <https://fergana.agency/news/122657/>

A joint military exercise with the participation of 2500 military personnel from Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has finished at the Harb-Maydon training facility, 20km from the border with Afghanistan...This was reported by the commander of the Russian Central Military District, Colonel-General Alexander Lapin...

“The use of a specific joint group of forces with aviation, reconnaissance and fire systems, and airborne forces based on experience gained in Syria was demonstrated for the first time,” said Lapin. He noted that the exercise was carried out alongside the ongoing situation in Afghanistan...Of the 2500 soldiers involved in the exercise, 1800 are Russian, mostly from the 201st military base in Tajikistan...

Source: “Россия усилит базу в Таджикистане партией БМП на фоне обострения в Афганистане (Russia is strengthening its base in Tajikistan with a delivery of BMPs against the backdrop of the escalation in Afghanistan),” *Kommersant* (semi-independent Russian daily newspaper), 21 July 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4909723>

The Russian military in Tajikistan will receive 17 modernized BMP-2Ms by the end of July, said the commander of the Central Military District, Alexander Lapin...

The BMP-2M is equipped with an automatic fire control system...it also has panoramic aiming and observation devices, as well as a new radio system, the R-168 “Aqueduct,” capable of operating in conditions with radio-electronic influence...

Source: “Таджикистан и Китай обсудили сотрудничество в сфере региональной безопасности (Tajikistan and China discussed regional security cooperation),” *Avesta* (an independent news agency reporting on Tajikistan), 10 August 2021. <http://avesta.tj/2021/08/10/tadzhikistan-i-kitaj-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-regionalnoj-bezopasnosti/>

Tajikistan and China discussed issues of developing bilateral cooperation in security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan reports... The situation of regional security was also discussed, a source said.

Other details of the meeting were not disclosed.

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