

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



Issue 10  
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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

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# OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE  
OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Issue 10

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### ON THE COVER:

*French soldiers talk to locals in southern Mali*

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration\\_Barkhane.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane.jpg)



## New Chinese Aerial Refueling Aircraft Enters Service



Y-20 Aerial Refueling Aircraft

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:11059@PEK\\_\(20220208110459\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:11059@PEK_(20220208110459).jpg)

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**The YY-20 aircraft represents China's new generation of aerial refueling equipment**

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese officials recently confirmed that an aerial tanker variant of the Y-20, the **YY-20**, strategic transport aircraft has entered service [1]. The Y-20 is China's largest indigenously produced military transport aircraft. As China's interests overseas continue to expand, the ability to deploy forces rapidly using the base transport variant of the Y-20 will continue to be more important. China's armed forces previously relied on the HY-6, a modified variant of China's H-6 bomber, a design that dates to the 1960s. While few details are forthcoming, Chinese media coverage has described the new tanker as having three times the capacity of the **HY-6**. The YY-20 now likely provides China's PLA Air Force and PLA Naval Aviation with greater flexibility, endurance, and range, not only for strike aircraft but also for critical enablers such as airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft [2]. The new tanker could also be used to support China's nascent aerial component of its nuclear triad, which includes an H-6 variant equipped with an aerial refueling probe.

**Source:** “我军新一代空中加油机运油-20投入练兵备战 (The Chinese Military's New Generation Aerial Refueling Aircraft Has Entered Service),” *PLA Daily* (Official PRC Military Newspaper), 5 August 2022. [http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2022-08/05/content\\_4917374.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2022-08/05/content_4917374.htm)

*At the Air Force Aviation Open Event and Changchun Air Show press conference on 31 July, PLA Air Force spokesman Shen Jinke announced that recently, Air Force Yunyou-20 and J-16 aircraft have carried out aerial refueling training at sea, improving the level of realistic combat training.*

*Under the guidance of Xi Jinping's thought on strengthening the military, the Air Force has developed high-tech weapons and equipment systematically in accordance with the strategic goal of “integrated air and space capability; simultaneous preparation for offensive and defensive operations”*

*The YY-20 aircraft represents China's new generation of aerial refueling equipment, which can effectively enhance the long-range maneuverability of the aviation force while also undertaking the same aerial delivery tasks as the Y-20 aircraft.*

### Notes:

[1] In Chinese military nomenclature both Transport [运 yun; transport] and Tanker [油 you; lit, gas/oil] start with Y, hence the YY designation.

[2] For a breakdown of likely capabilities and comparison to U.S. tankers, see: Peter Wood, “China to Modify Y-20 Transport Aircraft for Aerial Refueling,” *OE Watch*, January 2019.

## China Debuts New Space Capabilities

By Peter Wood  
OE Watch Commentary

Since the beginning of 2022, new capabilities of several significant systems in China's space program have been tested. These include space-based orbital debris tracking sensors, a new spaceplane, a new series of datalink satellites, and tests of a deployable "sail" to facilitate deorbiting of satellites. Chinese state media *China News Online* describes the success of an orbital space debris monitoring system. As satellites and components from past launches accumulate in orbit, the danger of an accidental collision increases, threatening critical systems. "Space Domain Awareness" is crucial for both civilian and military applications as it involves precision tracking of known satellites and debris. While China has built an extensive ground-based system of radars, lasers, and optical sensors for tracking this debris, orbital sensors avoid many issues faced by ground-based systems, such as atmospheric distortion and sensor overload due to daylight. The same article also notes that China has made improvements to on-orbit image processing, an increasingly important technology, as the volume of data to be sent to ground stations increases.

China's National Space Administration media outlet *China Space Culture* describes the successful test of a "de-orbital sail," which uses the minimal atmosphere present in low Earth orbit to gradually lower and finally deorbit a satellite. Giving more control over deorbiting satellites is a priority as they can sometimes fail to burn up fully in the earth's atmosphere. As Chinese companies begin to test large-scale constellations of satellites for communications and other purposes, the ability to better control their reentry or remove them from orbit at the end of their service life is a significant development.

The third notable development is the launch of a new generation of "Tianlian" or "sky chain" data-relay satellites [1]. These satellites are a key component of China's

space-based infrastructure, passing massive volumes of data from communications and Earth observing satellites from orbits on the other side of the world to other communications satellites where they can then transmit the data to ground stations [2]. According to the article in government-run *Science and Technology Daily*, the new satellites enable the completion of China's space-based data network, allowing a shift from "intermittent" to "continuous" communication. The article also notes that the new generation of data-relay satellites capitalizes on the development of improved high-throughput communications satellites based on the Dongfanghong-4 bus. An even more capable Dongfanghong-5 system intended to operate in the Extremely High-Frequency Q/V bands was launched in January 2020 [3].

***If deorbit sails are configured, the orbit time can be shortened to less than ten years.***

Finally, China recently tested a reusable sub-orbital spaceplane, which can travel much faster than conventional aircraft due to the lower atmospheric pressure at the altitudes where they operate. Spaceplanes capable of achieving orbit offer the ability to maneuver more readily than traditional satellites and may act as testbeds for orbital technologies, which can then be brought back to Earth to collect data or further research. Much of the technologies required for both types of systems are similar. China wants to be a leader in space-based services and next-generation technologies. The development of such transatmospheric vehicles offers China a chance to not only improve its ability to operate in the space domain but to lead in emerging technologies.

Space capabilities are the epitome of systems of systems. As the aforementioned developments show, China is rapidly developing not only its ground-based support systems but its capacity to launch, maneuver on-orbit, and field resilient space-based systems as well.

## Continued: China Debuts New Space Capabilities

**Source:** “天舟三号飞船搭载显成果 空间碎片探测载荷在轨运行超9个月 (The Tianzhou-3 spacecraft carried remarkable achievements, and the space debris detection payload has been in orbit for more than nine months),” *China News Online* (PRC State Media), 8 July 2022. <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2022/07-08/9799106.shtml>

*According to the China Manned Space Engineering Office, the Tianzhou-3 cargo spacecraft launched on 20 September 2021 carried payloads, including space debris detection systems. As of March 2022, The space debris detection payload has acquired thousands of images in orbit. At present, the payload has been operating in a stable orbit for more than nine months.*

*According to reports, the space debris detection payload includes an optical camera, an on-orbit data processing unit, and a temperature control unit. At present, the payload has been running stably in orbit for more than nine months.*

*As of March this year, the space debris detection payload has acquired thousands of images on-orbit and made breakthroughs testing the design of the optical system of the large-field high-sensitivity detection system, on-orbit algorithmic detection and identification and processing of dim and weak space targets, and the rapid transfer of massive amounts of data.*

**Source:** “China’s Largest De-orbital Sail Successfully Deployed (国内最大离轨帆成功在轨展开), *China Space Culture* (China National Space Administration [CNSA] Official Weibo Account), 5 July 2022. <https://weibo.com/u/7480894382>

*On 23 June, the Long 2 March carrier rocket was successfully launched. On 26 June, it successfully deployed a deorbit sail device. This is the largest de-orbital sail used by China, with a surface area of over 25 square meters once fully unfolded. With the sail, a 300kg satellite will re-enter the atmosphere within two years, freeing up valuable orbits and reducing space debris.*

*...Without using measures [such as the sail] to deorbit itself, a 15-kg satellite in orbit at an altitude of 700km will remain in orbit for 120 years or more after the end of its service life; if deorbit sails are configured, the orbit time can be shortened to less than ten years. Moreover, the deorbiting sail is used to implement deorbiting without consuming fuel. Even if the spacecraft fails or is out of control, deorbiting can be effectively implemented.*

**Source:** “天链新星‘入列’ 我国第二代中继卫星系统建成 (“New Tianlian ‘Enters Service’ China’s Second-generation Relay Satellite System Has Been Completed),” *Science and Technology Daily* (State media outlet managed by the PRC Ministry of Science and Technology), 14 July 2022. <http://www.news.cn/techpro/20220714/c15e476cee634e85beb0d4f95913c6f7/c.html>

*On 13 July, the Tianlian-2-03 satellite, developed by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation’s (CASC) 5th Academy, was successfully launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center aboard a Long 3 March B carrier rocket.*

*After achieving a stable orbit, the satellite will form a network with the previously launched Tianlian-2 01 and*

*continue on 6*

## Continued: China Debuts New Space Capabilities

**Source Continued:** “天链新星 ‘入列’ 我国第二代中继卫星系统建成 (“New Tianlian ‘Enters Service’ China’s Second-generation Relay Satellite System Has Been Completed),” *Science and Technology Daily* (State media outlet managed by the PRC Ministry of Science and Technology), 14 July 2022. <http://www.news.cn/techpro/20220714/c15e476cee634e85beb0d4f95913c6f7/c.html>

*02 satellites to create China’s second-generation data relay satellite system. Both generations will be in orbit at the same time, significantly improving space-based Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TT&C), and data relay capabilities.*

*After the Tianlian-2 satellite is in orbit, it will work in cooperation with the Tianlian-1 system. It is mainly used to provide data relay and TT&C services for manned spacecraft, space laboratories, and space stations. It can also support remote sensing, mapping, meteorological and other satellites in medium- and low-earth orbits.*

**Source:** “我国亚轨道运载器重复使用飞行试验取得圆满成功 (China’s Test of Reusable Suborbital Vehicle Complete Success),” *Xinhua* (PRC State News Agency), 26 August 2022. [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-08/26/content\\_5706929.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-08/26/content_5706929.htm)

*On 26 August, a flight test of a reusable lift-type suborbital vehicle independently developed by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT), a subsidiary of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), was a complete success.*

*After the first successful flight test, the vehicle was inspected and recertified for launch and was launched vertically again from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, after which it completed its suborbital flight according to the plan and landed smoothly at the Alxa Youqi Airport, successfully realizing the suborbital transport in China. The complete success of this flight test has strongly promoted the leap-forward development of China’s space transportation technology from one-time use to repeated use.*

### Notes:

[1] “Tianlian” data-relay satellites [天链, lit. “sky chain”]

[2] For more information on the “Tianlian”, see Peter Wood, “China Launches New Communications Relay Satellite,” *OE Watch* May 2019.

[3] For more information on the Dongfanghong-5 system, see Peter Wood, “China Launches Test-bed For High-Bandwidth Communications Satellites,” *OE Watch*, May 2020.

## China Develops World's First Small Modular Reactor

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

China recently developed the world's first small modular reactor (SMR), which could have military, economic, and geopolitical implications. Chinese-language multimedia website *Běijīng zhōngguó hédiàn wǎng* (*Beijing China Nuclear Power Grid*) is touting the “Linglong No. 1,” also known as ACP-100, as a milestone technology that can make China the leader in developing small reactors. The Linglong No. 1 is a multi-purpose pressurized water reactor. Its single module and standardized design are expected to make mass producing them less costly. Furthermore, the unique modular design technology will allow them to be built in a factory and installed elsewhere.

The article also explains that the idea of a SMR jumped in popularity following the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan. Since then, China had been competing with the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and other countries to develop the first one. According to the article, the Linglong No. 1's high safety standards are one of its most prominent features. In the event of an accident, the core heat dissipates through passive means, such as gravity and natural circulation, to achieve long-term cooling. According to the article, the Linglong No. 1 also offers a cleaner energy option. It can generate 125,000 kilowatts, with an annual capacity of 1 billion kilowatts, which is enough to meet the power needs of 526,000 households. Each Linglong No. 1 is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 880,000 tons per year, which is the equivalent to planting 7.5 million trees.

While the article does not talk specifically about the military, it notes that the Linglong No. 1's smaller power and volume size make it suitable for more diverse applications, such as use on remote islands and reefs to provide desalination of seawater, heat, electricity, and steam production. This would make it an ideal source of energy for those atolls and reefs in the South China Sea and other remote areas China has been building up since early 2014.

**The project (Linglong No. 1) is the world's first onshore commercial small modular reactor and demonstrates that my country is at the forefront of small modular reactor technology.... Another beautiful business card for Chinese-made original technology.**

Finally, the article describes the Linglong No. 1 as a “double dragon” for the China National Nuclear Corporation, the owner and operator of the project, to compete in overseas markets, as part of China's “One Belt, One Road” initiative. It concludes that the safe and intelligent design of the small modular reactor will likely promote the country's technological leadership in the field of nuclear energy, “becoming another beautiful business card for Chinese-made original technology.”

**Source:** “核能领域的“移动充电宝”——记全球首个陆上商用模块化小堆玲龙一号研发 (Nuclear Energy Field ‘Mobile Power Bank’ – Development of the World's First Commercial Small Modular Reactor Linglong No. 1),” *Beijing China Nuclear Power Grid* (Multimedia Chinese-language news website covering China's nuclear energy sector), 26 August 2022. <https://www.cnnpn.cn/article/32431.html>

*After ten years, the China Nuclear Power Research and Design Institute, which has been closely following the development of nuclear energy around the world, has developed its own multi-purpose small modular pressurized water reactor, which is a major achievement in independent innovation and fills a domestic gap.*

*The International Atomic Energy Agency first began advocating the development of small and medium-sized reactors as early as the 1970s and 1980s. This prompted more and more countries, including the United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, and the United Kingdom to compete in the development of SMRs.*

*continue on 8*



## Continued: China Develops World's First Small Modular Reactor

**Source Continued:** “核能领域的“移动充电宝”——记全球首个陆上商用模块化小堆玲龙一号研发 (Nuclear Energy Field ‘Mobile Power Bank’ – Development of the World’s First Commercial Small Modular Reactor Linglong No. 1),” *Beijing China Nuclear Power Grid* (Multimedia Chinese-language news website covering China’s nuclear energy sector), 26 August 2022. <https://www.cnnpn.cn/article/32431.html>

*When the Nuclear Power Institute began researching SMRs, their efforts were aimed at desalination, electricity production, heating, steam production, etc. They completed the conceptual scheme, safety, and economic evaluation....*

*Construction of a demo small modular reactor officially kicked off on 13 July 2021. So far, the project is the world’s first onshore commercial small modular reactor and demonstrates that my country is at the forefront of small modular reactor technology.*

*...the Linglong No. 1 has a smaller footprint due to its small size. Smaller power and volume are suitable for more diverse applications. It can be used on both land and on offshore platforms; on remote islands and reefs, etc. to provide heat, power, cogeneration, and multi-field, multi-scenario, and multi-demand applications... providing stronger support for the development of my country’s economic growth.*

*At the same time, Linglong No. 1 is modular. By having a single module with a standardized design, mass producing them can be less costly. The small modular reactor system is simple. The equipment is small, making transporting and operating them more convenient. The unique modular design technology allows them to be built in a factory and installed at a different site, which greatly shortens the construction period...*

*... The most prominent features of the Linglong No. 1 are the integrated design, modular construction, high inherent and passive safety features. In the event of an accident, the core heat dissipates through passive means, such as gravity and natural circulation, to achieve long-term cooling...*

*As clean energy, nuclear power has multiple advantages.... Linglong No. 1 can generate 125,000 kilowatts, with an annual capacity that can reach 1 billion kilowatts... It can meet the power needs of 526,000 households.... It will greatly reduce the consumption of fossil fuel-based energy in my country and promote energy conservation and reduce emissions. At the same time, each Linglong No. 1 will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 880,000 tons per year, which is equivalent to planting 7.5 million trees...*

*Cooperation between Linglong No. 1 and my country’s mega-kilowatt independent third-generation nuclear power, the Hualong No. 1, has become a “double dragon” for China National Nuclear Corporation to compete in overseas markets and can support the country’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative. It is foreseeable that the safe and intelligent design of the small modular reactor will promote my country’s technological leadership in the field of nuclear energy and take the lead, becoming another beautiful business card for Chinese-made original technology.*



## PLA Cognitive Domain Operations: Considering Preemption and Hard Kill



Strategic Support Force Space Engineering University  
<https://bit.ly/3u4Nowb>

By Kevin McCauley  
 OE Watch Commentary

Numerous articles in the PLA's official newspaper *PLA Daily* examine various soft, or noncombat, aspects of cognitive warfare. An article by an author from the PLA Strategic Support Force's Space Engineering University diverges from these by advocating the integration of hard kill and preemption with noncombat aspects of cognitive domain operations to help the PLA severely degrade and disrupt an opponent to dramatically shape the battlespace and seize the initiative.

The author notes that local wars and armed conflicts have become hybrid confrontations in multiple domains and employing multiple methods. Cognitive warfare attempts to influence the target's cognitive faculties in the areas of physiology, psychology, and value judgments in a multi-domain battlespace. The author believes that there are five key objectives of cognitive warfare: to systematically restrict and control the opponent's decision-making, to create chaos in international communications, to attack the opponent's strategic focus, to actively shape the battlefield, and to seize strategic initiative. To achieve this, however, the author stresses a kinetic, proactive approach. Particularly, the article advocates preemptive strikes to destroy the enemy's decisionmaking center, communications hubs, reconnaissance and early warning system, and other key nodes.

**In order to fight military and political battles well in future wars, we should deeply grasp the characteristics and laws of offensive and defensive operations in the cognitive domain and improve our ability to fight the "five battles".**

**Source:** “瞄准未来战争打好认知‘五仗’ (Aiming at the Future War and Fighting the Cognitive ‘Five Battles’),” *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 23 August 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-08/23/content\\_322554.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-08/23/content_322554.htm)

*Recognize that information is the king of combat, expand the field and fight a good supporting battle. Future wars cannot be separated from strong information support, and system integration should be accelerated to gain data advantages. First of all, accelerate the construction of cognitive offensive and defensive combat theory base, databases, talent base, case example base and operational method base, dynamically collect and update the current situation of the enemy's cognitive offensive and defensive combat capability construction, and provide all-round support for cognitive offensive and defensive combat. Second, we will accelerate the building of a media communication matrix, improve and perfect our own platform system, step up the promotion of network platforms, pay attention to system integration, collaboration and linkage, break through the "barriers" of information connectivity as soon as possible, and achieve cognitive integration, sharing and comprehensive effects. Thirdly, we will accelerate the coupling and linkage of information and cognitive domain operations, vigorously develop core technologies such as neural network systems, artificial intelligence applications, cognitive decision-making and psychological attack and defense, mine and analyze cross domain and heterogeneous cognitive information, improve cognitive means and information fusion systems, and provide for "the faculty of forecasting" and "being omniscient" to win future wars.*

*continue on 10*

## Continued: PLA Cognitive Domain Operations: Considering Preemption and Hard Kill

**Source Continued:** “瞄准未来战争打好认知‘五仗’ (Aiming at the Future War and Fighting the Cognitive ‘Five Battles’),” *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People’s Liberation Army), 23 August 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-08/23/content\\_322554.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-08/23/content_322554.htm)

*Cognitive warfare should be coordinated, and multi-dimensional efforts should be made to fight a good overall battle. The future war is a joint operation in the land, sea, air, space, network, electromagnetic and other fields. We should adhere to the systematic thinking, strengthen the awareness of coordination, and improve the compatibility and coordination of cognitive domain operations and other military actions. For example, it can integrate human intelligence, geographical intelligence and open-source intelligence, rapidly collect and process massive amounts of data, eliminate the false and retain the true, accurately and efficiently seize the cognitive space, and achieve complementary advantages and full coverage to form cognitive advantages. Through the networking of decentralized and multi domain forces, a joint force in all fields with high connectivity, collective action and overall attack capabilities will be established to achieve the effect of "integrated deterrence". By integrating national resources, strengthening strategic communication, using cognitive momentum to amplify the effects of political disintegration, economic sanctions, diplomatic offensives, and cooperation with the target object by multi-dimensional pressure of military action, we strive to defeat the enemy without fighting.*

## THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR

by Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles



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

## PLA Education Reforms: Problems Remain After More Than 20 Years

By Kevin McCauley  
OE Watch Commentary

The question of professional military education (PME) effectiveness is on the table in China given the questionable efficacy of the last round of reforms to People's Liberation Army (PLA) PME programs. It has been 20 years since the PLA's Central Military Commission issued its 20-year Strategic Project of Military Talent with the objective of building up a contingent of command officers capable of planning and directing informationized wars [1]. Around the same time, now-President Xi Jinping's "Triad New Military Personnel Education System of Systems," which focuses on developing joint talent as well as integrating military universities with unit training, emerged [2]. The Triad reforms attempted to update courses and recruit talented faculty with projects like the "Famous Teachers" program to establish a stable faculty system that critiques reform efforts; active-duty officers are brought in to teach courses and instructors are sent to field training..

As the accompanying official PLA newspaper *PLA Daily* articulates, problems with China's PME systems remain. The article describes some PLA PME universities and colleges as failing to train personnel for war and the battlefield despite continuing efforts to couple educational institutions with military personnel to better link the classroom to the battlefield. The article highlights the need to improve courses and describes major programs in China's military universities to cultivate command talent and generate new combat capabilities. Faculties require improvement, and the author suggests the elimination



The PLA's Leading Military University: National Defense University

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Defence\\_University\\_\(China\)#/media/File:Teaching\\_Building\\_of\\_National\\_Defence\\_University.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Defence_University_(China)#/media/File:Teaching_Building_of_National_Defence_University.jpg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 3.0

**A**t present, problems such as imprecise connection between college education and army training still exist to varying degrees.

of outdated courses and course material. The article also cites the need to develop scientific and technological skills required to operate modern weapons and equipment, as well as understand new concepts of operations. It claims the PLA lacks technological literacy in network systems, intelligent technologies, and unmanned systems that are critical to future warfare concepts. Despite President Xi's renewed efforts to jump start the Triad reform, these problems will adversely affect the PLA's ability to develop talent capable of conducting modern combat operations.

**Source:** “构建战教耦合育人 (Constructing a new pattern of teaching war coupled with educating people),” *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 1 September 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-09/01/content\\_323229.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-09/01/content_323229.htm)

*Optimize the layout of disciplines, majors, and curriculum systems. Disciplinary majors and curriculum systems are the key foundational support and talent training plan for running schools and educating people....*

*Build a team of excellent teachers who know how to fight. Establish the concept of "Famous teachers must know actual combat", make the basic quality requirements for the teaching staff to be familiar with operational theory, familiar with combat regulations, grasp operational requirements, and understand advanced military technology, and guide teachers to grasp the internal law of the transformation from teaching ability of colleges and universities to the generation of combat effectiveness of the army , ... proficient in the organization,*

*continue on 12*



## Continued: PLA Education Reforms: Problems Remain After More Than 20 Years

**Source Continued:** “构建战教耦合育人 (Constructing a new pattern of teaching war coupled with educating people),” *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People’s Liberation Army), 1 September 2022. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-09/01/content\\_323229.htm](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-09/01/content_323229.htm)

*implementation, demonstration, inspection and evaluation of actual strive to become a famous combat teacher who is good at clearing the "fog of war", familiar with the characteristics of modern warfare, making good use of information technology and new forces in new fields, and strives to understand actual combat. ... Actively provide conditions for the majority of instructors to participate in major training activities and major weapons and equipment tests, increase follow-up research and training efforts, and promote the team of instructor's abilities and talent in military practice. Actively recommend instructors to participate in joint military exercises and training, overseas military operations, and major special tasks, and improve their ability to know and understand through actual combat training and exercises.*

*Accelerate forward-looking research on new fields and new qualities. With the accelerated development of the new military revolution, high-technology and high-tech equipment such as networks, intelligence, and unmanned systems have a profound impact on the game strategies of modern warfare, strategic design, and operational guidance have an increasing impact on the outcome of wars, and require higher and higher scientific and technological literacy for officers and soldiers participating in the war. ... Create a platform, environment and mechanism that is conducive to innovation, increase the training of young scientific and technological talents, vigorously promote cutting-edge scientific and technological innovation, realize the positive interaction between more achievements and more talents, and promote the ability to transform traditional disciplines by means of "military +" and "technology +."*

*By organizing research on new fields and new quality directions such as military intelligence and unmanned operations, and holding high-level military academic lectures, we will promote new theories, new tactics, new training methods, new technologies, and new equipment in the military field into classroom teaching.*

### Notes:

[1] “Informatization” is the concept of automated data systems-driven input for decision-making.

[2] “Triad New Military Personnel Education System of Systems 三位一体新型军事人才培养体系

## Chinese Tracking Ship Raises Controversy in Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port

By Cindy Hurst  
OE Watch Commentary

When the Yuan Wang 5, a Chinese third-generation tracking ship, entered the Port of Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka in September 2022, its presence intensified concern about Chinese intentions in the region. Indeed, it sparked what the Hong Kong-based, English-language newspaper *South China Morning Post* called a “diplomatic scuffle” with India that may be a microcosm of a broader power struggle in the Bay of Bengal. While Chinese media described the vessel as a “scientific research vessel” and merely part of “very normal exchanges between the two countries that enjoy a longstanding friendship,” Indian media was not convinced. According to the Indian English-language news magazine *India Today*, there are numerous reasons India should be concerned about the Yuan Wang 5’s port visit. One cause of the concern, according to the newspaper, is that China uses the vessel to track rocket and spacecraft launches for the country’s space program and moon exploration missions. Second, the Yuan Wang 5’s state-of-the-art technology also makes it effective at keeping tabs on many of India’s strategic facilities, such as key ports, military bases, nuclear bases, and space launch center.

For its part, Sri Lanka is caught in the middle of the row between the countries. While Sri Lanka has strong bilateral relations with India, its ties to China have grown over recent years. As prominent north Indian daily *The Tribune*



Chinese ship “Yuan Wang 2”

Source: Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuan\\_Wang-class\\_tracking\\_ship#/media/File:YuanWang2c.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuan_Wang-class_tracking_ship#/media/File:YuanWang2c.JPG) Attribution: Gadium, Public Domain

**Sri Lanka has almost no real choice except to say ‘yes’ if a Chinese ship of whatever nefarious credentials wants to dock in Hambantota and if that is the wish of the Chinese state.**

pointed out, China has helped to fund many projects in Sri Lanka, including the Hambantota harbor. As a result, China has “complete control of the Hambantota harbor as Lanka leased it to China Merchant Ports Holdings Company Limited for 99 years in 2017.”

**Source:** “Ling Xin, “Why Did Chinese Ship Yuan Wang 5 Spark a Diplomatic Scuffle?” *South Chinese Morning Post* (Hong Kong Chinese daily, once considered independent but now suspect of promoting China soft power abroad), 20 August 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/science/article/3189566/why-did-chinese-ship-yuan-wang-5-spark-diplomatic-scuffle>

*The vessel tracks rocket and spacecraft launches for China’s manned space programme and moon exploration missions. But some have called it a “spy ship”, which has led to the current controversy.*

*Yuan Wang 5 is a large tracking ship China uses to monitor and control rockets, satellites and test missiles while they are over the ocean and beyond the range of ground stations.*

*Built in 2007, Yuan Wang 5 has been regularly deployed by its operator—China Satellite Maritime Tracking and Control Department—to the Centra Pacific and the Indian Ocean to support satellite launches... Yuan Wang 5 has been heavily involved in China’s manned space programme, moon and Mars exploration as well as the construction of the Beidou navigation satellite system.*

## Continued: Chinese Tracking Ship Raises Controversy in Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port

**Source:** "China's Research Vessel Yuan Wang 5 Docks at Sri Lankan Port, Dispels India's Alienation of Ties," *Global Times* (Daily tabloid newspaper falling under Chinese Communist Party's People's Daily), 16 August 2022. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1273163.shtml>

*"The scientific research vessel successfully and smoothly docked at Hambantota Port. This is very normal exchanges between the two countries that enjoy a longstanding friendship," said Ambassador Qi in an interview after the welcoming ceremony...*

*Wang (Wenbin) stressed that Yuan Wang 5's scientific research activities are in accordance with international law and common practice and should not be interfered with by third parties.*

**Source:** "Why Docking of Chinese Spy Vessel Yuan Wang 5 at Sri Lanka Port is Dangerous for India," *India Today* (Weekly Indian English-language news magazine), 16 August 2022. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/why-docking-of-chinese-spy-vessel-yuan-wang-5-at-sri-lanka-port-is-dangerous-for-india-1988738-2022-08-16>

*Here are the reasons why India is concerned about the presence of the Chinese vessel near its southern tip.*

- *The vessel has state-of-the-art technology, making it one of the newest generations of tracking ships in the Chinese Navy. It can be used for transoceanic aerospace observation using satellite pictures.*
- *Known for its excellent record in space and satellite tracking, it has been used for many months now. It can track the launch of satellites, rocket launchers, and also intercontinental ballistic missiles.*
- *It can also send information to tracking stations in Beijing or other parts of China.*
- *It has the capability and the range to keep tabs on strategic military establishments, including nuclear ones, in the peninsular region.*
- *Using this vessel, China can collect information about India's military bases in the peninsula, the navy, and nuclear submarine bases in South India, including Kalpakkam and Kudankulam.*
- *Ports in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra on China's snooping radar will also be within the radar of this Chinese vessel.*
- *Isro's launch centre in Chandipur can also be snooped upon.*

**Source:** Sasanka Perera, "Yuan Wang Has Maritime Lessons for India," *The Tribune* (prominent north Indian daily with a focus that includes defense issues), 5 September 2022. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/yuan-wang-has-maritime-lessons-for-india-427977>

*However, in today's circumstances, Sri Lankan reality is not the ideal referred to above. Sri Lanka is seriously in debt to China monetarily due to numerous white elephant projects undertaken with Chinese loans, including the Hambantota harbour itself, along with other loans with no significant returns. On the other hand, the Chinese have complete control of the Hambantota harbour as Lanka leased it to China Merchants Port Holdings Company Limited for 99 years in 2017. In this overall context, Sri Lanka has almost no real choice except to say 'yes' if a Chinese ship of whatever nefarious credentials wants to dock in Hambantota and if that is the wish of the Chinese state. That is exactly what happened with Yuan Wang 5.*



## India Works To Maintain Sri Lankan Foothold Amid Growing China Presence

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

India is concerned that the Chinese involvement at the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka will turn into a long-term Chinese military presence. The docking in August of China's Yuan Wang-5, a research ship that can track satellites and ballistic missiles, raised additional questions in India about Chinese involvement at the Hambantota Port at a time when the Indian government has been dealing with the fallout of unrest in Sri Lanka. The accompanying excerpted article from the Indian independent think-tank *Observer Research Foundation* provides an Indian perspective on the visit of the Chinese ship and what the Indian government might do with Sri Lanka going forward.

The article reports that the visit took place after negotiations with the new government in Sri Lanka and that despite Indian efforts to prevent the visit, the Chinese government ultimately received permission to dock. The article compares Chinese and Indian assistance to Sri Lanka fol-

lowing weeks of civil unrest and the change in government there in July 2022, noting that India provided assistance with fewer conditions. In addition, Sri Lanka "reciprocated by cancelling Chinese projects in the Jaffna peninsula and consenting to India's investments" in various endeavors, including a maritime rescue coordination center at the Hambantota Port. Lastly, the author states that "unlike China, India has no option but to assist Sri Lanka" and that the recent assistance from India "was not aimed to root out Chinese influence; it was out of compulsion and to reverse its lost influence." As China is likely to continue using the Hambantota Port in various capacities, the Indian government appears to be maintaining a foothold for now.

**New Delhi's strategic and geographical compulsions barely allow it to sit back and watch Sri Lanka descend into chaos—a privilege that Beijing enjoys.**

**Source:** Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy, "Should India continue its assistance to Sri Lanka as China makes its way to Hambantota?," *Observer Research Foundation* (independent think tank in India), 23 August 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/should-india-continue-its-assistance-to-sri-lanka/>

*On 16 August, Yuan Wang-5—a Chinese naval vessel—finally docked in Sri Lanka's Hambantota port. Operated by the People's Liberation Army's Strategic Support Force, this "research vessel" can monitor/gather satellite and technical intelligence and also track the trajectories of ballistic missiles. This episode has raised several questions about India's assistance to crisis-hit Sri Lanka, Colombo's lack of gratitude for India, and China's relevance in the region...*

*...The Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry agreed to host the Chinese vessel on 12 July when its President had already fled. Initially, the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry rejected these claims in public. However, in late July, it was confirmed that the vessel would be docking in Hambantota from 11-17 August for "replenishment" purposes and that there was nothing unusual about it. However, considering the ship's potential to track and survey Indian defence and nuclear instalments in its Southern states, New Delhi expressed its concerns.*

*...On 4 August, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister met his Indian and Chinese counterparts in Cambodia and received verbal guarantees of further assistance from both. It is quite likely that China demanded guarantees to dock Yuan Wang-5 in these meetings, and India asked to deter the same. Soon after, the Sri Lankan government requested China to defer the vessel docking until further considerations...The Chinese embassy also sought an urgent meeting with the Sri Lankan authorities and allegedly held a closed-door meeting with the President. Following these meetings, China received its new dates of docking from 16-22 August...*

*...Beijing's response to the Sri Lankan crisis has been passive. It has withheld Colombo's requests for financial assistance, worth US\$ 4 billion, and loan restructuring, hoping to leverage them to further its interests.*

*continue on 16*

## Continued: India Works To Maintain Sri Lankan Foothold Amid Growing China Presence

**Source Continued:** Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy, “Should India continue its assistance to Sri Lanka as China makes its way to Hambantota?,” *Observer Research Foundation* (independent think tank in India), 23 August 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/should-india-continue-its-assistance-to-sri-lanka/>

*China has used Colombo’s compulsion to deliver a strong message to India and the world—regardless of its assistance, Beijing still holds significant leverage in Sri Lanka and could challenge India in its backyard. This is something that China could be more determined to show to the world as its tensions with Taiwan continue to escalate...*

*Contradictory to the Chinese approach, New Delhi’s response is based on Sri Lanka’s humanitarian needs and its self-interests. It has assisted Sri Lanka with US\$ 3.8 billion, expecting the island nation’s government to respect its interests and sensitivities. India’s assistance has taken in the form of currency swaps, grants, credit lines, humanitarian supplies, and infrastructure development...*

*In return, Sri Lanka has reciprocated by cancelling Chinese projects in the Jaffna peninsula and consenting to India’s investments in the energy sector, Free-Floating Dock Facility, Dornier aircraft, and a Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC). One of the sub-units of this MRCC will also be installed in the China-operated Hambantota port.*

*...unlike China, India has no option but to assist Sri Lanka. New Delhi’s strategic and geographical compulsions barely allow it to sit back and watch Sri Lanka descend into chaos—a privilege that Beijing enjoys.*

*...India’s assistance was not aimed to root out Chinese influence; it was out of compulsion and to reverse its lost influence. It is no secret that China’s investments and loans still largely outweigh New Delhi’s financial assistance. In fact, even India knows that the IMF bailout solution it supports would require Sri Lanka to talk to China and restructure its loans.*

*In the end, India should continue with its diplomatic engagement and assistance. India’s response to the crisis is not only strategic and status-oriented, but also symbolic since its Indo-Pacific partners expect it to play a significant role in the region. Any misadventure of denying or differing assistance to Sri Lanka also risks attracting more Chinese influence and undoing the positive gains of the last two years...*

# OEWATCH

Check out these **back issues** of **FMSO’s Operational Environment Watch** dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.



## Russia Builds New Armor Repair Facilities To Replenish Losses in Ukraine

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

While Russian information regarding the extent of damaged armor from their invasion of Ukraine is masked by the state, the accompanying excerpt from the Russian pro-business source *Kommersant* nevertheless suggests that such damages are considerable enough for Russia to need to establish new facilities. According to the article, Russia recently mandated the creation of two plants for the “repair of armored weapons and equipment, automotive equipment in the interests of defense.” The article also points out that based on special legislation passed in July 2022, these repair facilities will be able to “work outside the established hours of work, at night, on weekends and non-working holidays.” Currently, the main Russian armor repair facilities are in the Sverdlosk Region, on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains. The new plants will be built near Moscow and Rostov, much closer to Ukraine and Western Europe.

**The Russian Defense Ministry will create two armored plants.**



Russian T-72 Tank

Source: <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A2-72#/media/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:ParkPatriot2015part2-19.jpg>  
<http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/635> Attribution: Vitaly Kuzmin, CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Anastasia Larina, “Мишустин поручил создать два бронетанковых завода для ремонта военной техники (Mishustin instructed to create two armored plants for the repair of military equipment),” *Kommersant* (pro-business site), 5 September 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5547483>

*The Russian Defense Ministry will create two new armored plants. The corresponding order was signed by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. The document is posted on the portal of legal information. The main goal of the enterprises is “the repair of armored weapons and equipment, automotive equipment in the interests of defense.”*

*“To create a federal state institution “71 armored repair plant” of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and a federal state institution “72 armored repair plant” of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation,” the order says. They will be built in the city of Ramenskoye in the Moscow region and in the city of Kamensk-Shakhtinsky in the Rostov region.*

*In July, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law on special measures in the economy during a military operation. It allows the government to establish “the procedure and conditions for engaging in work outside the established hours of work, at night, on weekends and non-working holidays.” In August, several Rostec enterprises switched to work in several shifts without summer holidays to fulfill the state defense order.*



## Russia Claims Victory in Vostok 2022 Exercise

By Ray Finch  
OE Watch Commentary

One of Russia's large-scale, annual military exercises, Vostok-2022, took place from 1-7 September. As with such exercises, it was widely covered in the Russian media, and as the brief excerpt from the Ministry of Defense's TV Zvezda news network indicates, Russian forces again proved victorious. The article also stresses that Russia has not been isolated by its aggression against Ukraine, pointing out that 10 countries participated: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Tajikistan. The article says that President Putin arrived at the Sergeevsky training ground to watch the final part of the exercises from a specially equipped command post. He watched his soldiers taking lines, liberating settlements, and forcing enemy retreats.



President Putin and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov, Vostok 2022, 6 September 2022

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69288> Attribution: CCA CA 4.0 Intl

**Source:** Maxim Petrenko, Sergey Lebedev, “Враг уничтожен: как прошли учения Восток-2022»на полигоне Сергеевский (The enemy is destroyed: how did the exercises Vostok-2022 at the Sergeevsky training ground),” TV Zvezda (Ministry of Defense news network), 6 September 2022. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/2022961429-48GVw.html>

*Vladimir Putin watched the maneuvers from a specially equipped command post. From there, he fully assessed the operational situation. Real-time data came even from the distant borders of the huge test site. All thanks to cameras installed in the fields with 32x magnification.*

*At the same time, the Chief of the General Staff had a connection with all the commanders-in-chief. The most up-to-date information was received from the training ground to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the technical characteristics of the weapons used were shown on the screen.*

*According to the legend of the exercises, the mock enemy “Vostochnye” attacked the “Northern” and their allies, wedging 200 kilometers into the depth of defense. The enemy was stopped, suffered losses, but retained reserves. From this point, the action begins to unfold - a grouping of troops, supported by artillery and tactical landing forces, hitting the enemy, taking lines and liberating settlements. Massed strikes by rocket troops and artillery, breaking the enemy's reserves as well, are forcing the enemy to retreat.*

*A special feature of Vostok this year is the creation of a coalition grouping of the armed forces of ten countries - Russia, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, India, Kyrgyzstan, China, Mongolia, Tajikistan. Operational groups of the defense departments of Kazakhstan, Laos, Nicaragua and Syria were also involved....*

*...The participants of the maneuvers noted that all the goals of the exercises were fulfilled. The issues of ensuring military security in the Eastern Region have been worked out.*

## Russia Conducts Arctic Naval Maneuver and Propaganda Tour Along Northern Sea Route

By Les Grau  
OE Watch Commentary

In August, Russia's navy kicked off an exercise and a propaganda tour in the Arctic. As the first accompanying excerpted article from the independent Norwegian news site *The Barents Observer* describes, the Russian Northern Fleet concentrated in the Barents-Arctic region where there are western approaches to the Arctic Sea Route. The exercise included warships and submarines, but also support from air force and coastal air defense units with the aim of deterring an enemy attack from the Barents Sea against strategically important islands. These massive Arctic islands include Franz Joseph Land and Novaya Zemlya, with their nuclear, second-strike capabilities.

The second excerpted article from *The Barents*

*Observer* reports that the *Ivan Gren*, one of the Northern Fleet's newest large amphibious landing ships, was dispatched on an extended propaganda voyage to promote support for the "special military operation" in Ukraine. Loaded with military displays and an orchestra and choral group, the ship made several port calls along the Northern Sea Route over the course of two months. At a time when the Russian armed forces are consumed with the war in Ukraine, it is noteworthy that their attention to the Arctic is not diminished.

**L**ocals were welcomed onboard to see the exhibitions of weaponry and told stories about how soldiers with the Northern Fleet are heroically fighting for the fatherland in Ukraine.

**Source:** Thomas Nielsen, "Northern Fleet kicks off large Barents-Arctic naval exercise," *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian news site in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 18 August 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/08/northern-fleet-kicks-large-barents-arctic-naval-exercise>

*More than 10 warships and submarines are at sea, including "Pyotr Velikye", the Northern Fleet's large nuclear-powered battle cruiser....The naval vessels are supported by the air force and coastal air defense units. The exercise scenario, according to the Russian navy headquarters, is deterring an enemy attack on Russia from the Barents Sea, as well as repelling attacks on the country's Arctic islands.*

*Last week, a group of warships set out for the annual Arctic voyage. Those ships, including the destroyer "Admiral Levchenko" and the amphibious assault vessel "Aleksandr Otrakovsky" are currently far north in the Barents Sea, close to the shores of Franz Josef Land. Russia has, over the last decade, rearmed its Arctic archipelagos with new runways for heavy military planes and fighter jets and established missile defense systems aimed at ensuring access and control over the Northern Sea Route. Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya are both strategically important for protection of the bastion defense of the Barents Sea region, including the nuclear arsenal and second-strike capabilities...*

**Source:** Thomas Nilsen, "Loaded with military propaganda, warship setting sail on Arctic voyage", *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian news site in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 23 August 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/08/blessings-anti-fascist-congress-large-landing-ship-embarks-arctic-military>

*In his opening speech at the so-called first International Anti-Fascist Congress in the Patriot Park in Moscow on 20 August, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that "Ivan Gren" would embark on the agitation-propaganda cruise entitled "The Power is in Truth." Shoigu said the tour will be a first-of-its-kind. "Within its*  
*continue on 20*

## Continued: Russia Conducts Arctic Naval Maneuver and Propaganda Tour Along Northern Sea Route

**Source Continued:** Thomas Nilsen, “Loaded with military propaganda, warship setting sail on Arctic voyage”, *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian news site in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 23 August 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2022/08/blessings-anti-fascist-congress-large-landing-ship-embarks-arctic-military>

*framework, the “Ivan Gren” large landing ship will make a voyage along the Northern Sea Route and enter remote cities and garrisons.” Sergei Shoigu continued by calling on the international community to unite efforts in the fight against Nazism.*

*Up North in Severomorsk, where the voyage started, Deputy Commander of the Northern Fleet, Rear Admiral Igor Kurochkin, stated: “The main thing that we want to say with this move is that we warmly and sincerely support our servicemen who courageously and heroically solve the tasks of the special military operation.”*

*On board the “Ivan Gren” in Severomorsk, were schoolchildren from the Murmansk Nakhimov Naval School and teenagers with Yunarmiya, the military-patriotic movement associated with, and financed by Russia’s Defense Ministry. First port call for the agitation-propaganda sailing was Kandalaksha on the southern shores of the Kola Peninsula. Locals were welcomed onboard to see the exhibitions of weaponry and told stories about how soldiers with the Northern Fleet are heroically fighting for the fatherland in Ukraine.*

*On display in the hangars and rooms that normally carry tanks and attack helicopters are models of nuclear submarines, aircraft, warships and other military gear. The Northern Fleet’s naval orchestra will perform patriotic compositions and the “Ivan Gren” even bring a song and dance ensemble from Severomorsk.*

*Second stop on the route was Arkhangelsk, from August 28 to September 1. Thereafter, the ship sails north across the Barents Sea to Belushaya Guba, the largest military settlement on Novaya Zemlya where Russia in the course of the last few years has modernized the airfield to accommodate fighter jets and anti-aircraft missile systems. The second stage of the voyage starts on September 19 and will take place in the western part of the Northern Sea Route with Dikson as first stop and Dudinka by the Yenisei River as next port call.*

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

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





## Russian Navy Weaponizes Shipping Containers

By Charles Bartles  
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from pro-Kremlin daily newspaper *Izvestiya* describes Russian efforts to place electronic warfare systems in standard 40-foot shipping containers. The Russian Navy is also experimenting with other shipping container-based weapon systems involving air defense, anti-ship, and surface and underwater unmanned reconnaissance capabilities. These shipping container-based weapon systems are not only intended to augment the capabilities of the Russian Navy's ships, but also auxiliary ships (tugboats, transports, fuelers, etc.) that support the Russian Navy, and commercial ships if necessary. Shipping container-based weapon systems are likely to become more important to the Russian Navy as it

transitions from larger ships, such as cruisers and destroyers, which have many capabilities to smaller ships, such as frigates and corvettes, with fewer capabilities. These shipping container-based weapon systems will permit these small vessels to expediently and cheaply add capabilities as required.

**F**or the defense of Russian combat and auxiliary ships, an electronic warfare (EW) system is being developed. The EW system will be placed in ordinary 40-foot shipping containers.

**Source:** Roman Kretsul, “Шумящий патруль: российские корабли защитят системы радиоэлектронной борьбы (The ‘noisy’ patrol: Russian ships will be protected by electronic warfare systems),” *Izvestiya* (pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 8 September 2022. <https://iz.ru/1392104/roman-kretcul/shumiashchii-patrul-rossiiskie-korabli-zashchitiat-sistemy-radioelektronnoi-borby>

*For the defense of Russian combat and auxiliary ships, an electronic warfare (EW) system is being developed. The EW system will be placed in ordinary 40-foot shipping containers. Thanks to this, the system can be easily installed on the decks of ships and vessels. Such protective "boxes" should reliably protect ships and vessels from enemy missiles and drones by way of electromagnetic interference. According to experts, as a result, this decision will significantly strengthen the protection of the country's coastal regions.*

*The **Project 22160 ‘Vasily Bykov’** patrol ships will be the first to receive this electronic warfare systems. In the future, auxiliary vessels of the Russian fleet - tugboats, transports and others – could also acquire it...Initially, a weaker electronic warfare system was installed on Project 22160 ships, military historian Dmitry Boltenkov told *Izvestia*. “Apparently, they created a more powerful solution, of operational or strategic designation. Containers allow you to put the system on different ships,” the expert explained. “If necessary, it will be possible to build up the electronic warfare system of ship groups. They will be able to enter a given area and, in fact, completely “turn it off”. First, they will suppress drone control channels and communication systems. It will no longer be necessary to drive an electronic warfare vehicle onto a landing ship, instead they will simply put a container.*

*The Navy is also actively testing new container modules—with weapons and with various auxiliary equipment—including the Redut and Pantsir-M air defense systems, container modules with anti-submarine equipment, and container modules with cruise missiles. In particular, the **Kalibr-NK** cruise missiles. But the main possibility is that they can be adapted for the employment of underwater and surface unmanned vehicles of all types. This provides a reconnaissance capability over hundreds of kilometers...*

## Kazakhstan Suspends Defense Exports, Denying Russia Purchases

By Matthew Stein  
OE Watch Commentary

When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, international sanctions forced the Russian defense industry to consider purchasing military equipment from defense companies in Kazakhstan as a workaround to meet requirements for the Russian Armed Forces. In 2014, no significant Russian acquisitions from Kazakh companies ultimately took place. However, following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, a new round of international sanctions against Moscow have reportedly caused Russia to look again at Kazakhstan's defense industry. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from the independent news website *Fergana Agency* reports, the Kazakh government's announcement on 27 August that it is suspending all defense exports for one year.

The ban includes "the export of weapons, military equipment and military products," and it appears to have the greatest impact on Russia. The move is viewed as a direct effort by Kazakhstan to avoid violating sanctions levied against Russia, which it has stated multiple times that it seeks not to violate. The article notes that Russia had been planning to make a \$46 million defense purchase from a Kazakh company, including acquiring shells for howitzers, ammunition for mortars, rockets, and even armored personnel carriers. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development denied this. The article notes that the pro-Russian *Rybar Telegram* channel tried to refute



President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, following Russia-Kazakhstan talks in Sochi, Russia

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Putin-Tokayev\\_\(2022-08-19\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Putin-Tokayev_(2022-08-19).jpg) Attribution: CCA 4.0

**The export of weapons, military equipment and military products will be suspended until the end of August 2023.**

the Kazakh government by publishing documents for the purchase, but they could not be verified. Regardless of whether the Kazakh government agreed to the purchase, the one-year suspension of defense exports ultimately deprives Russia of a supplier of weapons and equipment that closely matches its own armed forces.

**Source:** "Казахстан на год приостановит экспорт вооружений (Kazakhstan is suspending defense exports for one year)," *Fergana Agency* (independent news website focusing on Central Asia), 29 August 2022. <https://fergana.agency/news/127503/>

*Kazakhstan will suspend the export of military products for a year. The Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development of the country came up with such an initiative, and it was supported by the Commission on Defense Industry, the website of the Prime Minister reports...the export of weapons, military equipment and military products will be suspended until the end of August 2023.*

*In the middle of this month, Russian Telegram channels reported on an allegedly planned deal for the sale of Soviet and Russian-made ammunition by the Kazakh company Technoexport... They said that the contract in the amount of \$46 million was concluded on July 16, 2022. The reports also provided a list of weapons - shells for howitzers, ammunition for mortars, rockets, armored personnel carriers and so on. The Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development of Kazakhstan denied this information a few days later.*

*In response, the Rybar Telegram channel published documents (without specifying their origin) that cast doubt on the refutation of the Kazakh authorities.*

*On August 19, a meeting was held in Sochi between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Kazakh leader Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. As the Kremlin reported, the agenda of the talks included the development of Russian-Kazakh relations, strategic partnership and cooperation.*

## Iran Wants Sukhoi-35 Fighters From Russia

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

Recent reporting suggests that Iran is working to modernize its air force, which is widely considered the most deficient branch of its military. The deficiency in Iran's air force rests largely on its outdated and increasingly obsolete jet fighters. Iran continues to fly F-14s sold to the Shah before the Iranian Revolution, and Iran is the only country that continues to fly the U.S.-made F-4 Phantom II, last produced more than 40 years ago. Iran also flies the Sukhoi SU-24, whose manufacture Russia ended 30 years ago; 40-year old MiG-29s; and a few Chengdu J-7s, a Chinese license-built version of the MiG-21. Iran claims its air force possesses more than 100 fighter jets, which is likely an exaggeration that does not take into account the end of production runs, natural attrition and aircraft losses, and cannibalization of some planes for spare parts.

In a bid to rectify these deficiencies, the excerpted article from the *Borna News Agency*, an outlet affiliated with Iran's youth and sports ministry, suggests that the Iran is in the market to upgrade and overhaul its fleet. It quotes the commander of the Iran's Army Air Force as saying that the Iranian military is considering the purchase of Russian Sukhoi-35s, an upgraded version of the Sukhoi-27 that it currently possesses. The article describes the Sukhoi-35 as "one of the most powerful 4th generation fighters in the world," claiming it can engage up to eight air-to-air targets



Russian Sukhoi-35 at the 2015 MAKS Airshow

Source: Dmitry Terekhov, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/MAKS\\_Airshow\\_2015\\_%2820615630784%29.jpg?20150929070701](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/MAKS_Airshow_2015_%2820615630784%29.jpg?20150929070701) Attribution: CCA – SA 2.0

simultaneously. While in recent years Iran has concentrated its acquisitions and developments on drones and precision missiles, it now appears that a potential Iranian shopping spree—enabled by high oil prices and potential sanctions relief—will also aim to revitalize its air force. Such a purchase would also cement a long-term training relationship with Russia.

**We hope to get these fourth-generation fighters in the future.**

**Source:** "Kharid-e Jangandeh Sukhoi-35 as Rusiya dar Dastor-e Kar-e Artesh-e Iran (The Purchase of Sukhoi-35 fighters from Russia is on the agenda of the Iranian army)," *Borna* (media outlet affiliated with the Islamic Republic's youth and sports ministry), 4 September 2022. <https://www.borna.news/دی-رخ-3/1372678-ش-ای-س-ش-خ-ب> ناری-اش-ترا-راک-روت-سد-رد-هی-س-ور-زا-وخ-وس-هدن-گنج

*Army Brigadier General Hamid Vahidi, commander of the Islamic Republic's Army Air Force, told the security and defense Correspondent of the Borna News Agency about the purchase of fighter jets for the Army Air Force, saying that the purchase of Russian Sukhoi-35 fighters is on the agenda. He stated that the purchase of Sukhoi-30 is not in the plan but currently the purchase of Sukhoi-35 from Russia is under consideration and added: "This issue is on the agenda and we hope to get these fourth generation fighters in the future." The commander of the Air Force also emphasized that the final decision on the purchase of Sukhoi-35 fighter jets from Russia rests with the Army Command and the Armed Forces General Staff.*

## Iran Intercepts Crystal Meth Shipment From Afghanistan



Customs officials discover 500 kilograms of crystal meth in a truck crossing from Afghanistan

Source: Fars News Agency [https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1401/06/14/14010614000228\\_Test\\_PhotoN.jpg](https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1401/06/14/14010614000228_Test_PhotoN.jpg) Attribution:

By Michael Rubin  
OE Watch Commentary

In the world of narcotics sales, Afghanistan has long been the world's top producer of illegal opium. However, the excerpted article from general interest Iranian website *Newsin.ir* reports that a customs inspector at Mahiroud, an Iranian border post near the midpoint of Iran and Afghanistan's 572-mile frontier, recently intercepted a truck carrying 500 kg of crystal meth coming from Afghanistan. Crystal meth is made from the ephedra plant, widely available in Afghanistan. That the seized haul was crystal meth suggests that the Taliban are expanding their embrace of the illicit economy beyond the sale of opium. Presumably, the Taliban seek to raise funds as they struggle with the responsibility of going from insurgents to national rulers, responsible for funding ordinary government operations. To that end, Afghanistan's illegal narcotics have created numerous problems for Iran. Not only does Iran serve as a transport corridor for the illicit products from Afghanistan, but its citizens are also consumers. Moreover, while Iran fights its own domestic drug war at great cost in blood and treasure, many within the Iranian regime are also complicit in the trade and fan the flames of organized transnational organized crime.

**Source:** "Kashef-e Mohamuleh 500 Kilo-ye Shisha dar Morzha-ye Sharq-e Tawsat Gomrak (Discovery of 500 kilograms of Crystal Meth at Eastern Border Customs)," *Newzin* (general interest Iran news website), 4 September 2022. <https://newsin.ir/fa/content/24366494>

*...Farideh Zubaydi, deputy legal and customs supervisor, said, "Since the beginning of this year [March 21, 2022], customs discovered five large shipments of narcotics, mainly shipments of meth with Afghan origins. Today's discovery makes that six major discoveries. He added: "Shipments of 580 kg, 153 kg, 400 kg, 61 kg and 1118 kg of narcotics had been discovered by customs colleagues since the beginning of the year. The discovery of a 500 kg shipment of crystal meth today marks the sixth large shipment discovered by customs. With divine blessings, while taking advantage of minimum available facilities, our colleagues this morning at Mahiroud Customs post in South Khorasan province were able to discover 500 kilograms of crystal meth that was professionally embedded in the tanker floor of the truck from Afghanistan.*

*Iran's Customs Deputy added: "Reports received from Mahiroud Customs in South Khorasan indicate that at 9:30 a.m., the trainer of the drug-sniffing dogs of this post was inspecting a white tanker truck driven by an Afghan national, and taking into account the risk indicators, managed to discover the professional placement of 500 one-kilogram packets of crystal meth.*

**The discovery of a 500 kg shipment of crystal meth today marks the sixth large shipment discovered.**



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Colombia's Gustavo Petro Promises New Approach to Security and Drugs

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary



Newly inaugurated president, Gustavo Petro

Source: El Macarenazoo, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:01GustavoPetro.jpg> Attribution: CCA3.0

Colombia's new president, Gustavo Petro, elected in June 2022, has wasted no time outlining the country's new position on the fight against illegal drugs. Petro has proposed a plan of "total peace," an ambitious proposal to disarm around two dozen criminal organizations operating in the country. As part of this proposal, Spanish center-left online daily *Público* reports the Petro administration is willing to suspend the practice of extradition and forgo arrest warrants to encourage criminal groups to participate in a ceasefire. While nearly two dozen groups would be eligible to participate, the Petro administration has especially sought to entice the dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), two of the oldest and largest guerrilla groups in the country. Mexican daily *El Financiero* also reported that the Petro administration has floated

a proposal to decriminalize cocaine. For now, Colombia's new government says it will favor crop substitution policies, paying farmers to grow alternatives to the coca plant.

Petro's plan for "total peace," combined with a new posture on narcotics policy, if implemented fully, may help to tamp down violence in Colombia at least temporarily. Similar plans have been tried in Central America and have led to short-term reductions in violence. However, the large size and value of many criminal economies easily attract illicit actors, often leading to the splintering of criminal organizations, as happened with the FARC during earlier negotiations; and creates vacuums normally filled by upstart groups. As such, while Petro's plans may produce new outcomes, it seems more likely that most gains might be merely ephemeral.

**Minutes after taking office last month, leftist President Gustavo Petro called for a new approach, saying in his inaugural address that the policies pursued by Bogotá and Washington have fueled violence without reducing consumption.**

**Source:** "Los avances de Colombia para alcanzar la paz total prometida por Gustavo Petro (The advances of Colombia to achieve the total peace promised by Gustavo Petro)," *Público* (a Spanish online daily considered center-left), 17 September 2022. <https://www.publico.es/internacional/avances-colombia-alcanzar-paz-total-prometida-gustavo-petro.html>

*Total Peace is not simply the negotiated disarmament of 18,000 men...from the 22 armed groups that have declared that they want to join this policy...Total Peace is to generate an environment to end the war once and for all. It is meant to find solutions to the social conflict generated by inequality, exclusion and lack of opportunities and aim to build social, environmental and economic justice. including them in a draft National Development Plan, which must be presented to Congress by February 7, 2023, as the deadline...For now, Petro has enough votes to move Total Peace forward.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Colombia's Gustavo Petro Promises New Approach to Security and Drugs

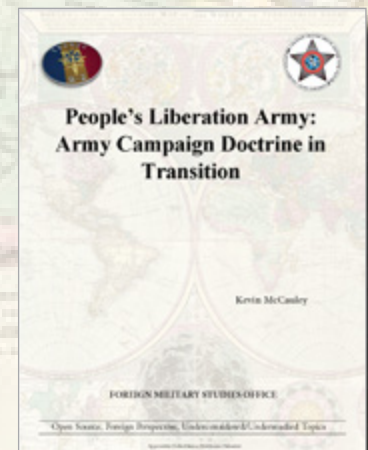
**Source:** “Este es el plan de Gustavo Petro, presidente de Colombia, para terminar con guerra vs. la cocaína (This is the plan of Gustavo Petro, president of Colombia, to end the war vs. cocaine),” *El Financiero* (Mexican daily with good regional reporting), 1 September 2022. <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/bloomberg/2022/09/01/este-es-el-plan-de-gustavo-petro-presiente-de-colombia-para-terminar-con-guerra-vs-la-cocaina/>

*Minutes after taking office last month, leftist President Gustavo Petro called for a new approach, saying in his inaugural address that the policies pursued by Bogotá and Washington have fueled violence without reducing consumption. Every week more details emerge about the change of course...In practice, if Colombia unilaterally decriminalized cocaine, it would violate international agreements and cause a break with the United States and other countries...This pariah status would likely harm the nation's ability to trade and access the global financial system.*

## PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY: ARMY CAMPAIGN DOCTRINE IN TRANSITION

Kevin McCauley  
September 2020

This monograph examines current People's Liberation Army (PLA) Army campaign doctrine, with a discussion of PLA theorists' vision of the evolutionary development of warfare to provide context for current doctrine as well as potential future direction. The PLA develops doctrinal joint and service campaign scenarios for possible offensive and defensive operations. PLA campaigns represent the operational level of war between strategic operations and tactical combat. The PLA's current focus on specific campaigns provides insight into Beijing's perception of potential conflict scenarios. The campaign scenarios provide commanders and staff data on command and control, coordination, combat actions, support, and other critical campaign elements for specific operational environments. The description of each campaign's operational environment and combat actions provides valuable support to operational planning and a context for staff and unit training for their specific operational mission. The Army campaigns are executed as components of a joint campaign, or as a primarily independent Army campaign with support from other services.



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Coastal West African States Brace for Wave of Terrorism From the Sahel

By Jason Warner  
OE Watch Commentary

The wave of terrorism that has engulfed the Sahel over the past four years is now threatening to spread even further south than ever before, into the states of littoral West Africa. Both Ghana and Togo had previously been viewed to be insulated from the larger-scale jihadist violence caused by Salafi jihadist groups plaguing their neighbors to the north, namely al-Qaeda's Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State's Sahara province (ISGS). Now, both Ghana and Togo are preparing for what they perceive to be an impending challenge of violence in their northern borders as both groups seek greater influence even further south. Two articles from each country help to paint a picture of local perspectives.

As the first article published in pan-African news aggregator *AllAfrica.com* describes, Ghana is undertaking extensive efforts to fortify its northern regions, those in closest proximity to Burkina Faso, which is one of the continent's states most prone to jihadist violence. Taken from a transcript released by the office of the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the article details that in response to the insecurity it views at its northern borders, Ghana has significantly increased recruitment into its armed services since 2020 and aims to recruit an additional 4,000 soldiers per year through 2024. Additionally, it opened at least 15 new forward operating bases in the north; has rolled out a new "See Something, Say Something" campaign; and has created new special operations, armor, signals, and mechanized artillery brigades. This is all in addition to ambitious new drives for weapons procurements for land, air, and sea. As President Akufo-Addo stated: "We need all of us to understand that the best way of making sure that our country continues to be at peace...will be undermined if we go to sleep on this terrorist matter." The second article, from the state-owned Ghanaian newspaper *Ghana Today*, describes how Ghana recently asked a U.S. delegation for counterterrorism assistance to address challenges at its northern borders. As the article notes, the request was underscored by Ghana's claims that the jihadist insecurity in Burkina Faso (and Mali and Niger further north) is a result of the United States' wars in the Middle East and South Asia, as well as its role in deposing Moammar Qaddafi in Libya in 2011.

Ghana's neighbor, Togo, is interpreting the impending threat of jihadist violence from the north similarly. As the



A Ghanaian soldier in 2013.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ghana\\_Armed\\_Forces\\_%E2%80%93\\_Military\\_Sergeant\\_Soldier.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ghana_Armed_Forces_%E2%80%93_Military_Sergeant_Soldier.jpg) Attribution: CC BY 2.0

third article from Togolese news source *ALome.com* notes, Togo's diplomatic corps returned to Lomé recently to convene under a new theme related to strategies for regions dealing with terrorism. Emphasizing Togo's new concern for the threats of jihadist violence coming from the north, the convention's keynote speaker was Somalia's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, whom Togo had invited to share with it lessons learned from Somalia's fight against al-Qaeda's branch in East Africa, al-Shabaab. Finally, in the fourth article, also from *ALome.com*, two editorialists writing under pseudonyms underscored the broader relationship between so many West African countries' recent victimization by al-Qaeda and Islamic State terror attacks and the question of national unity. As they write, so widespread and destabilizing have threats of terrorism become in West Africa, touching more citizens than before, that states and their citizens could reasonably find a new sense of patriotism—a "rally around the flag" effect—in banding together to combat the threats of such groups. As they write, "In order to counter the common agreement of terrorist groups to create anarchy and carry out massacres...it is really a question of awakening the patriotic fiber where it is sleeping and restoring it where it is destroyed."

**We need all of us to understand that the best way of making sure that our country continues to be at peace...will be undermined if we go to sleep on this terrorist matter.**



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Coastal West African States Brace for Wave of Terrorism From the Sahel

**Source:** Office of the Presidency of Ghana, “Ghana: 'We're Investing to Secure Our Borders Against Terrorist Threats' - President Akufo-Addo,” *AllAfrica.com* (a centrist pan-African news aggregator), 22 August 2022. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202208230416.html>

*The President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has emphasized the government's strong commitment to strengthening and fortifying the country's northern borders and points of entry against the threats of terrorism and violent extremism.*

*According to the President, "We can't be complacent and take that for granted. We need all of us to understand that the best way of making sure that our country continues to be at peace so that we can get on with resolving the challenges of development and elimination of poverty, which is our main concern, will be undermined if we go to sleep on this terrorist matter."*

*The President noted that the "See Something, Say Something" campaign, being undertaken by National Security, has caught the imagination of people.*

*In terms of manpower expansion, the Armed Forces recruited and trained some three thousand (3,000) soldiers between 2017 and 2020. It has, since 2021, embarked on accelerated nationwide recruitment and training to churn out a minimum of four thousand (4,000) officers and soldiers annually until 2024, in order to beef up the strength of our Armed Forces to optimal levels.*

*The Akufo-Addo Government has created additional bases, specialized units, and brigades, with the acquisition of requisite equipment, to enhance operations, particularly along Ghana's northern frontiers. This expansion has already seen the creation and establishment of the Army Special Operations Brigade, Armoured Brigade, Signal Brigade, and two (2) Mechanised Battalions, which are deployed in the Upper West and Upper East Regions.*

*The construction and equipping of fifteen (15) Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) across our northern frontiers for the Armed Forces for the Northern Border Project are also ongoing.*

*A number of combat vehicles, equipment, and weaponry, comprising about one hundred and sixty-three (163) Armoured Personnel Carriers and other combat vehicles, trucks and general vehicles, surveillance, and communication equipment, including optical and critical mass of night vision equipment, as well as weapons, ammunitions, and body armor, have been acquired to enhance intelligence acquisition, offer better protection, improve mobility and firepower for troops on internal security operations, including those deployed to the northern frontiers.*

**Source:** Rex Mainoo Yeboah, “West Africa: Ghana Appeals to the U.S. to Help Fight Terrorism in West Africa,” *Ghana Today* (state-owned national newspaper), 29 August 2022. <https://ghanatoday.gov.gh/news/ghana-appeals-to-us-to-help-fight-terrorism-in-west-africa/>

*President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has appealed to the United States Government to help West African deal with the threat of terrorism and violent extremism.*

*Speaking with a U.S. bipartisan Congressional delegation that paid him a visit at the Jubilee House, President Akufo-Addo said the threats posed by the expanding Islamic network were detrimental to the socioeconomic development of the region.*

*He told the delegation that the growing threat of terrorism in the region was a result of the U.S. decade-long fight*  
*continue on 29*



# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Coastal West African States Brace for Wave of Terrorism From the Sahel

**Source Continued:** Rex Mainoo Yeboah, “West Africa: Ghana Appeals to the U.S. to Help Fight Terrorism in West Africa,” *Ghana Today* (state-owned national newspaper), 29 August 2022. <https://ghanatoday.gov.gh/news/ghana-appeals-to-us-to-help-fight-terrorism-in-west-africa/>

*against terrorism in the Middle East and other parts of the world.*

*The President said the terrorism phenomenon further heightened in the region when the U.S. fought and drove hardened jihadist groups from the Middle East a decade ago, and the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Terrorism groups, which were originally confided in countries bordering the Sahel regions, took advantage of the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime and penetrated the West African region such as Mali to find refuge from the U.S. fight against them in the Middle East.*

**Source:** Akoyi A. and K. T. (Pseudonyms), “Les priorités de la diplomatie togolaise pour les 12 mois à venir: Maintenir le cap ‘des initiatives de bons offices et de médiation’ (The priorities of Togolese diplomacy for the next 12 months: Maintain the course of 'good offices and mediation initiatives').” *ALome.com* (Togolese news site), 6 September 2022. <http://news.alome.com/h/140788.html>

*Diplomats accredited to the Togolese Republic made their diplomatic return on Friday, September 2 to the capital Lomé for the year 2022-2023. For its second edition, this meeting between diplomats posted in Lomé took place around a topical theme linked to the challenges facing the continent: "Security challenges and strategies for stabilizing regions of the continent confronted with terrorism and to violent extremism."*

*The former Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, Abdissaïd Muse Ali, was rightly invited to share his country's experiences in the fight against terrorism. With this in mind, he presented a presentation to enlighten his fellow diplomats on the Modus Operandi of pirates and extremists.*

*In recent years, radicalism is gaining more and more status. Following Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, and other countries are expanding the list of countries targeted by armed groups. Hence the need to converge energies, harmonize stabilization strategies, to stick together between nations, forgetting political divisions.*

**Source:** Kossi Kone, “Lutte contre le terrorisme, restaurer la fibre patriotique (Fight against terrorism, restore the patriotic fiber),” *IciLome.com* (Togolese news site), 9 September 2022. <https://icilome.com/2022/09/afrique-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-restaurer-la-fibre-patriotique/>

*In Mali, as in Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin, and Togo, terrorist attacks affect populations and defense forces with loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. Earlier this week, dozens of civilians (traders and students) were killed by an artisanal mine laid by terrorists in northern Burkina Faso.*

*The governments of all these countries fight as best they can, militarily, against this barbarism. However, with the experiences of the Western powers in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is obvious that the military component is insufficient to carry out this fight effectively.*

*In order to counter the common agreement of terrorist groups to create anarchy and carry out massacres, it is essential that the social contract, which must be the figurehead of any nation, should be revisited and rebuilt. It is really a question of awakening the patriotic fiber where it is sleeping and restoring it where it is destroyed.*

*To this end, this love of the fatherland cannot be decreed as some governments hope. It is the result of continuous construction, the foundations of which are laid by the social, economic, and security policies of the leaders.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Mali Claims France Funded Terrorists; France Denies

By Jason Warner  
OE Watch Commentary

Tensions between France and Mali continue to mount. As the articles below—one from Mali, one from France—delineate, the junta leaders of Mali recently sent a letter to the UN Security Council accusing France of illegally violating its airspace to aid terrorist groups in the country, which France's years-long Barkhane counterterrorism mission has been in the country to fight.

The private Malian paper *Le Journal du Mali* reports that the ruling military junta in Mali, which came to power in May 2021, had sent the UN Security Council a letter claiming that it had proof of French violation of its airspace. It claimed that this occurred more than 50 times to collect intelligence and deliver arms to terrorists in the country. Malian diplomats went on to request a special meeting of the UN Security Council but ultimately provided no proof. For its part, as detailed in the second article from the private, left-leaning French editorial site *L'Opinion*, the French embassy in Bamako denied the claim. As the writer of the article pondered: "Is this [letter to the UN] a way for Bamako to designate an external enemy to veil its internal shortcomings?"

Such accusations—unfounded as they appear to be—play out against the backdrop of France's last nine years in the Sahel leading its Barkhane counterterrorism mission against groups associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. While France officially ended its Barkhane mission



French soldiers talk to locals in southern Mali in 2016.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration\\_Barkhane.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ration_Barkhane.jpg)  
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in August 2022, the ruling Malian junta and large swathes of the Malian population have taken to blaming the French mission not only for failing to stem the tide of jihadist violence, but also for offering support to such groups. Until now, such accusations have percolated in bilateral circles, angering French diplomats and even President Macron. Their elevation to the UN Security Council places them at unprecedented new levels.

**These flagrant violations of Mali's airspace have served France to collect intelligence for the benefit of terrorist groups active in the Sahel, and to drop arms and ammunition to them.**

**Source:** "Sécurité : le Mali accuse la France d'aide aux terroristes (Security: Mali accuses France of aiding terrorists)," *Le Journal du Mali* (private Malian newspaper) 17 August 2022. <https://www.journaldumali.com/2022/08/17/securite-mali-accuse-france-daide-aux-terroristes/>

*In a letter dated August 15 and addressed to the UN Security Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mali accuses France of repetitive and frequent violations of Malian airspace by French forces. In the letter signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdoulaye Diop, he asserted that the Malian government has several pieces of evidence that these flagrant violations of Malian airspace have been used by France to collect intelligence for the benefit of terrorist groups operating in the Sahel and to drop arms and ammunition to them. The government underscored that it is because of suspicion of destabilization maneuvers by France that Mali firmly opposed France's request for air support for MINUSMA, so that "France does not use the UN mission as a pretext to carry out subversive operations aimed at further weakening Mali and the Sahel region." In addition, Mali requests that France immediately cease its acts of aggression against Mali, in the event of persistence, Mali says it reserves the right to use self-defense.*

# TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

## Continued: Mali Claims France Funded Terrorists; France Denies

**Source:** “Le Mali accuse la France d’armer les combattants islamistes (Mali accuses France of arming Islamist militants),” *L’Opinion* (private French news site), 18 August 2022. <https://www.lopinion.fr/international/le-mali-ac-cuse-la-france-darmer-les-combattants-islamistes>

*Is this a way for Bamako to designate an external enemy to veil its shortcomings internally? Mali said in a letter to the president of the United Nations Security Council dated Monday that France violated its airspace and delivered weapons to Islamist fighters in order to destabilize the country. Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop estimated that more than 50 violations of Malian airspace had been observed this year, saying most of them were due to the use by French forces of drones, military helicopters, or fighter planes.*

*The Malian government claims to be able to demonstrate where and when France would have delivered weapons to Islamist groups, it is added in the letter, without any proof being provided. Bamako requests the holding of an emergency meeting of the Security Council on the issue.*

*"France has obviously never supported, directly or indirectly, these terrorist groups, which remain its designated enemies throughout the planet", indicated the French embassy in Mali on Twitter, stressing that 53 French soldiers were dead in Mali in the last 9 years. These accusations come as France on Monday completed the withdrawal of French soldiers from Barkhane, a military operation aimed at fighting Islamist movements in the Sahel.*



### FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF

by Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

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



## Colombia's New Government Quickly Reestablishes Relations With Maduro's Venezuela

By Ryan Berg  
OE Watch Commentary

Mere weeks after taking office in August 2022, Colombia's new president, Gustavo Petro, has reestablished relations with Nicolás Maduro's regime in Venezuela. This is noteworthy as relations between the two countries ruptured in 2019, when Colombia's then-president Iván Duque recognized Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president, thus prompting Maduro to end formal diplomatic ties. Under president Duque, Colombia was a staunch opponent of Maduro, seeking to isolate him on the international stage, while itself seeking to play a lead role in Latin America.

Presidents Petro and Maduro celebrated the resumption of relations with the exchange of ambassadors, *CNN en Español* reports. The article notes that the exchange of ambassadors, the reopening of their shared border, the resumption of trade, and eventually, a meeting between Petro and Maduro, signals a changing strategic environ-

ment in Latin America toward Venezuela's dictatorship.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also changed the region's appetite for isolating Venezuela and demanding domestic changes. In an interview with Colombia's leading weekly magazine *Semana*, Colombia's new ambassador to Venezuela, Armando Benedetti, announced Colombia's intention to buy Venezuelan oil and gas, previously sanctioned to press Maduro over links to organized crime and gross human rights abuses. Ambassador Benedetti also spoke of a proposal to establish special economic zones along the Colombia-Venezuela border, which immediately generated concern about the potential for drug trafficking organizations and Colombian guerrillas using these zones to launder money. Collectively these moves give the Maduro regime more space to maneuver.

**T**he first and most important step in this new phase of bilateral relations is to restore diplomacy between the two countries.



The Colombia-Venezuela border, which has witnessed millions of migrants in recent years  
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cidh/49534798383> Attribution: CC BY 2.0



## Continued: Colombia's New Government Quickly Reestablishes Relations With Maduro's Venezuela

**Source:** “Colombia y Venezuela restablecen relaciones bilaterales con la llegada de embajadores a Bogotá y Caracas (Colombia and Venezuela reestablish bilateral relations with the arrival of ambassadors to Bogotá and Caracas),” *CNN en Español* (the Spanish-language version of the popular American outlet), 29 August 2022. <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2022/08/29/armando-benedetti-embajador-de-colombia-en-venezuela-llega-a-caracas-orix/>

*Benedetti told journalists in Caracas that the first and most important step in this new phase of bilateral relations is to restore diplomacy between the two countries. That includes both the diplomatic issue and trade relations, one of the priorities of the two governments. “We are going to reestablish relations with Venezuela, we are going to reestablish trade from which more than 8 million Colombians live, we are going to look for an economic zone, tax exemptions and legislation that allows the Colombian government to invest in works that have an impact on the development of the region,” said Benedetti...Upon his arrival in Caracas, Benedetti told reporters that “there are several ideas” to restore trade relations...among them, creating a special economic zone on both sides. “And in my country legislation would have to be passed so that it can invest in hospitals, in bridges, in works, infrastructure, that really have an impact on development.”*

**Source:** “‘Es necesario que Colombia le compre gas a Venezuela:’ Armando Benedetti (‘It is necessary for Colombia to buy gas from Venezuela:’ Armando Benedetti),” *Semana* (Colombia’s leading weekly magazine), 9 September 2022. <https://www.semana.com/politica/articulo/es-necesario-que-colombia-le-compre-gas-a-venezuela-armando-benedetti/202247/>

*The purchase of gas from Colombia to Venezuela “is necessary because our country will run out of gas in the next seven years. They already have the gas pipeline that comes out of the Gulf of Maracaibo itself. They already have the exploitation, a gas pipeline, it would only be necessary to look for about 30, 40 kilometers so that they can begin to commercialize from Colombia.”*

# OEWATCH

Check out these **back issues** of **FMSO’s Operational Environment Watch** dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.



## Turkish Lessons Learned From the War in Ukraine



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets with Minister of National Defense Minister of Turkey Hulusi Akar, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Volodymyr\\_Zelensky\\_and\\_Hulusi\\_Akar.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Volodymyr_Zelensky_and_Hulusi_Akar.jpg) Attribution: CC BY 4.0

By Karen Kaya  
OE Watch Commentary

Various Turkish news programs consider Turkey's observations from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The accompanying excerpts from one such televised debate summarize Turkey's military, technical, and geopolitical takeaways from the war. The excerpts are from a program which aired on *Nokta TV24*, a Turkish independent news and analysis channel, featuring a discussion between former Turkish Ambassador Fatih Ceylan, the Turkish Permanent Representative to NATO from 2013 to 2018, and one of Turkey's top defense and security experts, Arda Mevlütoğlu. The show was posted on *YouTube*.

To begin, Mevlütoğlu notes the most important lesson from a military and technological standpoint has been that an armed force (Ukraine) can conduct very effective maneuvers against a much larger enemy force (Russia). He points to the importance of Ukraine's capable strike

systems, maneuver forces, and particularly communication systems. Citing reports of Russia having to resort to commercial GPS systems because of its Glonass GPS system being jammed, he concludes that attention to electronic and cyberwarfare are also extremely important. Mevlütoğlu also points to the importance of the psychological dimensions of the war, noting that Ukraine's successful and effective psychological campaign has enabled it to maintain the support of the European public, which has been critical for ensuring those countries' continued support. As such, he claims that diplomatic, cultural, and psychological factors are just as important as military defense technologies, which can even be a tool of foreign policy. He points to the success of Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones in Ukraine, and how the successes of these drones have increased Turkey's profile there [1].

Geopolitically, Mevlütoğlu assesses that Russia will end up deeply weakened in terms of potential and capability. He argues that such a Russia will have an asymmetric relationship with China, where China will have the upper hand in their trade relationship, especially in energy. In this sense, he sees China coming out as one of the beneficiaries of this war. On the other hand, he claims that the United States has consolidated its political-military influence in Eastern Europe, which he says will likely limit China's influence in Europe and access to the Atlantic.

***A***n armed force with a high degree of maneuver capability and a high communication capability can conduct very effective maneuvers regardless of how much bigger its enemy force may be.

## Continued: Turkish Lessons Learned From the War in Ukraine

**Source:** “İnsansız Kara - Hava ve Deniz Aracı Üretiminde Neredeyiz? | S-400’lerin İkinci Partisi Gelir Mi? Fatih Ceylan Arda Mevlütoğlu ile (Where are we in the Production of Unmanned Land – Air and Sea Vehicles? | Would a Second Batch of S-400’s Come? Fatih Ceylan speaks with Arda Mevlütoğlu),” *Nokta TV24* via YouTube (a Turkish independent news and analysis channel), 1 September 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT3eIYmT84Q&list=WL&index=63>

**Q:** *As you know, there’s been a huge inflection point in the global security environment in February 2022 with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine... We’ve left behind six months of this war. In these six months, what lessons should we learn as far as military operations and deterrence based on how the war is going? What strategies, visions, concepts, and doctrines do we need to develop for the future?*

**A:** *Six months of the Russia-Ukraine war has given us the opportunity to make some very important political, military, and strategic and observations. From the Turkish point of view, both from a military and technological standpoint, some of the most important ones are [as follows]: An armed force with a high degree of maneuver capability and a high communication capability can conduct very effective maneuvers regardless of how much bigger its enemy force may be. A well-educated, well-equipped force with units with good communication systems and highly [capable] strike systems can be very effective. Communication technology is the most important here... There is open-source information that says that the Starlink communication system provided by Elon Musk has been instrumental for Ukraine in the battlefield... We have reports that there have been important GPS jamming attempts in the region, especially against Russia’s Glonass system. And in fact, there are reports that Russia has had to resort to commercial GPS systems as a result. So we can conclude that there is huge competition in electronic and cyber war. We can’t see this directly, we can only observe the outcomes of this. The war has shown us that electronic and cyberwars, as well as strike and maneuver forces are extremely important.*

*There is also the psychological dimension. Morale and psychological support is very important. Ukraine has been conducting a very successful, very effective psychological war. It has not only consolidated its public support in the West, but increased it. It has obtained moral superiority and retained this. So, however right you may be in your war, if you can’t defend your thesis in the international arena or find international support, it is that difficult to continue your fight... Of course in this case there can be no explanation for attacking a sovereign country.*

*So [the war has shown us that] it’s not just military fighting [that matters]; the fight in the diplomatic, cultural, psychological dimensions are also very important. In fact, military defense is not just a military or industrial thing, its also an element of foreign policy. We don’t need to repeat the success that Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2s have had for Ukraine, they are even conducting crowdfunding activities to buy more.*

**Q:** *There’s a new reality now... When we look at the military strategies of the U.S., China and Russia and the related doctrines they are developing, we see a serious global strategic competition that is here to stay for many years. How will the balance of powers play out?*

**A:** *This is an open-ended process. In this competition between the U.S., China and Russia, my view is that, regardless of how this war ends, Russia will end up deeply weakened. It will continue to be a superpower and a big power, but it will be seriously damaged and tarnished in terms of potential and capability. Such a Russia will have an asymmetric relationship with China such that China will have an advantage, particularly in terms of energy imports and advanced technologies and systems. ... So I think China may come out benefiting from this [war]. I don’t know if it will result in a conflict with Taiwan- I think it’s very difficult and I hope not.*

*continue on 36*

## Continued: Turkish Lessons Learned From the War in Ukraine

**Source Continued:** “İnsansız Kara - Hava ve Deniz Aracı Üretiminde Neredeyiz? | S-400’lerin İkinci Partisi Gelir Mi? Fatih Ceylan Arda Mevlütoğlu ile (Where are we in the Production of Unmanned Land – Air and Sea Vehicles? | Would a Second Batch of S-400’s Come? Fatih Ceylan speaks with Arda Mevlütoğlu),” *Nokta TV24 via YouTube* (a Turkish independent news and analysis channel), 1 September 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZT3eIYmT84Q&list=WL&index=63>

*Taiwan’s TSMC company is very important for global microchip production, so a war in that region could lead to a serious global crisis... But it will be tense. In fact we see that the U.S. has focused its interest in that area. China’s relations with the U.S. and the West may be both competitive and cooperative at the same time... Finally, the U.S. has consolidated its military-political influence in Eastern Europe. So China’s influence in Europe and access to the Atlantic may become more limited.*

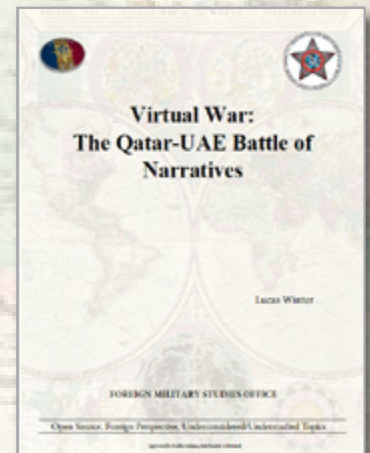
### Notes:

[1] See also Karen Kaya, “Turkish-Made Bayraktar TB2 Drones Play Important Role in Ukraine,” *OE Watch*, Issue 6, 2022.

## 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.





## The Appeal of "Duginism" in the Middle East

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

Whatever one thinks of Russian political theorist Aleksandr Dugin's esoteric cultural-geopolitical theories, his influence in Arabic-speaking countries is worthy of attention. Dugin, a Russian political philosopher who rose to prominence among Russian military and foreign policy elites with the 1997 publication of his book "Foundations of Geopolitics," has long called for Russia to annex Ukraine to counter "Atlantist" encroachment. Several of Dugin's books are available in Arabic translation, most recently a tome published last July by prominent Qatari think tank *The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies*. Two elements of Dugin's ruminations on culture and geopolitics are finding receptive audiences in the Middle East: one, his opposition to U.S. regional involvement; and two, his appeals to cultural conservatism and civilizational identity.

Dugin's strident critique of U.S. presence in the Middle East has been attractive to members of the Iranian-led "Resistance Axis," which includes Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon and opposes the "West," Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Following the assassination of Dugin's daughter Daria in August 2022 in Russia, allegedly by the Ukrainian government, a top Lebanese Hezbollah official issued a condolence statement that praised Dugin's support for "the Palestinian cause and the legitimate struggle against American hegemony, Zionist occupation and takfiri terrorism." Indeed, Dugin's strong critiques of Israel seemingly appeal to a broad spectrum of the Arab public, including leftists and liberals who may otherwise disagree with many of his far-right-leaning ideas.

Furthermore, Dugin's cultural conservatism seemingly endears him to a spectrum of Middle Eastern religious movements and organizations, both Sunni and Shi'ite. Perhaps most interesting in this regard are Dugin's appeals to Sufism, a diverse and varied Sunni school of thought and practice. Broadly speaking, Sufism is associated with a mystical, esoteric approach to Islam, in contrast to the strict textualism of fundamentalist Salafi or Wahhabi groups. The accompanying excerpt from the leftist, pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar*, translates a 2020 piece written by Daria Dugin on Russia's approach to the Middle East. In it, she argues for establishing a Russian alliance with the "Islamic Civilization" via Iran and Turkey, with special emphasis on Turkey due to its historical links with Sufism.

Dugin's appeal among Arab intellectuals and pundits has its limits, however. Arab liberals, in particular, are likely to be skeptical of Dugin's "anti-imperialism" and distrust his appeals to cultural conservatism. As a recent piece in the independent Lebanese news website *al-Modon* argues, Dugin supports the idea of self-determination yet also "theorizes conquests, profit-sharing, and access to the warm waters of oceans and seas," and as such is little more than an ideologue seeking to justify Russia's imperial ambitions.

**A special role in the project is given to Sufism, not only in Turkey but also in other countries in the Middle East and North Africa.**



Aleksandr Dugin, at the Civilizations of the Eurasian Area meeting on February 26, 2018 at the Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran.

Source: <https://www.farsnews.ir/photo/13981126000814/>  
ایس‌آر‌ا-ه‌ز‌و‌ج-ی‌آ‌ه-ن‌د‌م‌ت-ت‌س‌ش‌ن Attribution: CCA 4.0 INT

**Source:** *The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* (prominent Qatari think tank), July 2022. <https://bookstore.dohainstitute.org/p-2276.aspx>

*In 2021, M'henna Djebbar convinces Tebboune to include him in his inner circle to consolidate his faltering presidential power... But since June 2022, M'henna Djebbar's plans have been troubled by the strong comeback of his number one opponent: Said Chengriha, the head of the Algerian military institution, who has worked to slow down the rehabilitation of former generals from the 1990s, fearing their stranglehold on Algerian power.*

## Continued: The Appeal of "Duginism" in the Middle East

### Source:

الموسوي: جريمة اغتيال داريا دوجينا تشكل عملاً ارهابياً قذراً

(Al-Moussawi: The assassination of Daria Dugin is a dirty act of terrorism)," *al-Manar* (Lebanese Hezbollah media outlet), 24 August 2022. <https://almanar.com.lb/9887506>

*Hezbollah's official in charge of Arab and international relations, Ammar al-Moussawi, issued the following statement:*

*On the occasion of the tragic incident that claimed the life of Mrs. Daria Dugin, the daughter of the Russian thinker and philosopher Alexander Dugin, I would like to express my condemnation of this crime, which constitutes a filthy terrorist act. I also take this occasion to express my great appreciation for Mr. Dugin's position and courageous stances in defense of his country and people, as well as of just and righteous causes, including the Palestinian cause and the legitimate struggle against American hegemony, Zionist occupation and takfiri terrorism.*

### Source:

روسيا والشرق الأوسط: استراتيجيات آفاق وتوقعات

(Russia and the Middle East: Strategies, Prospects and Expectations)," *al-Akhbar* (leftist, pro-Hezbollah Lebanese daily), 22 August 2022. <https://al-akhbar.com/World/343506>

*A special role in the project is given to Sufism, not only in Turkey but also in other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, with the exception of countries where Wahhabism, Salafism and Takfirism predominate (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar)... Reviving the traditions of Rumi, Bektashi, and Yunus Emre may also change the role of Ankara, which has a chance to become a true leader of the Sunni world. Sufism, while remaining outside Middle Eastern operations, is at least as mobilizing as Salafism, and could play a role in uniting the Muslim world against Atlanticism and the Wahhabism it supports...*

*Thus, Moscow, Ankara and Tehran will return to their traditional roots and become centers of three spiritual civilizations (Orthodox, Sunni and Shiite). Together, they will oppose the West. It is interesting to note that these three nations, with imperial traditions, may have fought each other in the past, but today they have learned to overcome historical contradictions and realize the geopolitical inevitability of this tripartite partnership.*

### Source:

الدوغيون العرب

(The Arab Dugins)," *al-Modon* (independent liberal Lebanese news website), 25 August 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p978ntr>

*Indeed, in some of his books, Dugin theorizes conquests, profit-sharing, and access to the warm waters of oceans and seas. In short, the Russian Dugin is nothing but the other side of the American ideologues who have exposed us to creative chaos and what resulted from creative chaos, and democracy and what resulted from democracy...*

## "Chronic Instability" Atop Algerian Military's Foreign Intelligence and Security Directorate

By Lucas Winter  
OE Watch Commentary

The Algerian military seems plagued by internal rifts that negatively affect leadership and cohesion. Some evidence of this can be found in what the widely read Moroccan news website *Le360* characterizes as "chronic instability" atop Algeria's foreign intelligence and security agency, the General Directorate of Documentation and External Security (DGDSE). The *Le360* article considers the instability atop DGDSE leadership as proof of a political-military regime that "cuts off heads instead of questioning the structural reasons for its inadequacy," in ways that "destabilize both the officers and the troops."

In early September 2022, Major General M'henna Djebbar was appointed as director of the DGDSE, making him the fifth person to hold the position since current President Abdelmadjid Tebboune assumed office in December 2019. The volatility is noteworthy, given that for approximately 25 years, from 1990 until 2015, Algerian intelligence services were controlled by a single man: Mohamed Mediene, also known as "Toufik." Since then, factional struggles within the military and between the military and intelligence services have led to sudden falls from grace within the DGDSE, as one-time powerbrokers have been dismissed, indicted, or imprisoned for being on the losing side of a factional battle. Djebbar, who is a longtime associate of Mohamed Mediene, was briefly jailed in 2019-2020, during the purge led by then-chief of staff Ahmed Gaid Saleh, following the ouster of longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. According to the accompanying excerpt from the France-based online

news and analysis website *Maghreb Intelligence*, Djebbar has become a close ally to President Tebboune but is distrusted by Said Chengriha, the army's current chief of staff.

Major security challenges, including Libya's civil war, Morocco's annexation of the Western Sahara, and lawlessness in the Sahel are also likely to affect Algeria's military performance. Indeed, some recent DGDSE directors seem to have been appointed expressly to deal with the various crises of the moment. The first head of the DGDSE in the Tebboune era, Major General Mohamed Bouzit, was a Libya specialist appointed in April 2020 at a time of growing Turkish influence in Libya. After nine months on the job, he was dismissed and subsequently arrested on espionage charges. A report published at the time in the Africa-focused political weekly magazine *Jeune Afrique* argued that fail-

**A politico-military regime... which cuts off heads instead of questioning the structural reasons for its inadequacy.**

ure to curb Turkish influence in Libya was behind his fall. His replacement, nicknamed "Polisario" due to his strong ties with leaders in the Western Sahara independence movement, was likely appointed to deal with Algerian concerns over growing international support for Moroccan claims on the Western Sahara.

Domestically, the military-controlled Algerian government seems to be in a position of relative strength, having



President of the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria Abdelmadjid Tebboune (2021).

Source: <https://www.quirinale.it/elementi/60784> Attribution: Quirinale.it

largely neutralized the protest movement that overthrew Bouteflika in 2019. Algeria's natural gas reserves and relatively stable relations with both Russia and Europe have yielded newfound geopolitical leverage in the shadow of war in Ukraine. The Algerian military is strong on paper, thanks to substantial purchases of advanced Russian and Chinese weaponry in the past decade. Still, the chronic instability atop the DGDSE may be symptomatic of internal leadership and cohesion issues which, while not visible on the surface, should be considered when assessing Algeria's military capabilities.

## Continued: "Chronic Instability" Atop Algerian Military's Foreign Intelligence and Security Directorate

**Source:** Mohammed Ould Boah. "Les non-dits des nouveaux changements à la tête des services du renseignement algérien (What goes unsaid about new changes in the leadership of Algerian intelligence services)," *Le360* (widely read Moroccan news website), 16 July 2022. <https://fr.le360.ma/politique/les-non-dits-des-nouveaux-changements-a-la-tete-des-services-du-renseignement-algerien-263715>

*This chronic instability at the head of Algerian foreign intelligence is indicative of the improvisation, mistakes, even casting errors, of a politico-military regime visibly incapable of scoring points and which cuts off heads instead of questioning the structural reasons for its inadequacy. At this rate of purges, the Algerian army has become leaderless – in the sense of lacking a head. Decapitated, this army capsizes according to the news and thinks of reassuring the chain of command by changing commander each time. This destabilizes both the officers and the troops.*

**Source:** Ilyes Aribi. "Algérie: la cruelle désillusion des partisans du général M'henna Djebbar (Algeria: the cruel disillusion of General M'henna Djebbar's supporters)," *Maghreb Intelligence* (French-based online news and analysis website), 20 July 2022. <https://www.maghreb-intelligence.com/algerie-la-cruelle-desillusion-des-partisans-du-general-mhenna-djebbar/>

*In 2021, M'henna Djebbar convinces Tebboune to include him in his inner circle to consolidate his faltering presidential power... But since June 2022, M'henna Djebbar's plans have been troubled by the strong comeback of his number one opponent: Said Chengriha, the head of the Algerian military institution, who has worked to slow down the rehabilitation of former generals from the 1990s, fearing their stranglehold on Algerian power.*

**Source:** "Algeria: Is the Russia-Turkey rivalry at the heart of the Bouzit affair?" *Jeune Afrique* (Africa-focused political weekly magazine), 24 September 2021. <https://www.theafricareport.com/130371/algeria-is-the-russia-turkey-rivalry-at-the-heart-of-the-bouzit-affair/>

*Major General Mohamed Bouzit (aka Youcef), the former head of Algerian foreign intelligence, was appointed in April 2020 and replaced in January 2021. He was placed in detention in the Blida military prison, 60km south of Algiers, following his arrest on 7 September 2021...*

*Bouzit... is accused of having left the field open for Turkey to extend its field of intervention in Libya by installing several military bases, among other things... [and] is suspected of having misled Algerian diplomacy and favouring Ankara's Libyan interests...*

*Therefore, the Bouzit affair is just another episode in the clan struggle that dominates the Algerian political-military seraglio. This muted war is taking place between President Tebboune's close advisors, Chengriha's entourage and even generals from Ahmed Gaïd Salah's former team, who are all prepared to ally themselves with one or another of the factions to avoid joining their comrades in prison.*