

Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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**ON THE COVER:** Members of a Chinese military honor guard marching with the emblem of People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force in the foreground. Sources: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PLASSF.svg>; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese\\_honor\\_guard\\_in\\_column\\_070322-F-0193C-014.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_honor_guard_in_column_070322-F-0193C-014.JPG)

# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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## A Russian Accident or Warning in al-Bab?

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 9 February, a Russian airstrike in Syria killed four Turkish soldiers and left 10 wounded in the city of al-Bab. Russian President Putin called Turkish President Erdoğan, acknowledging that the Russian jets had carried out the strike and offered condolences. The incident came at a time when Turkey and Russia are coordinating their military activities in Syria, especially around al-Bab; and at a time when the two countries, along with Iran, are working together for a cease-fire in Syria. The accompanying passages discuss the incident from the Turkish perspective. While official sources claim that the incident was an accident, some analysts suggest that it was a warning sign from Russia, who wanted to signal to Turkey to stop advancing south.

The first passage quotes a Turkish government official as saying that the incident was an accident and points out his comments that Russian officials had stated this as well. The second passage discusses a statement by the Turkish Armed Forces which also notes that the incident was a mistake or accident. However, the third passage suggests that these are efforts by the Turkish side to downplay the incident, and that Russia has offered no formal apology. It points out that a Russian official has instead pinned the blame on Turkey saying that “...the [Russian] strikes on terrorists, was guided by coordinates given to them by our Turkish partners, and Turkish servicemen should not have been present on those coordinates...”

The fourth passage discusses that the airstrikes which killed the Turkish soldiers were a warning sign from Russia to Turkey. The author, a retired Turkish ambassador believes the incident marks a demarcation line south of al-Bab and “shows that Turkey’s Operation Euphrates Shield has reached the limit acceptable to Russia and the Syrian regime.” The author calls the incident a “friendly-fire incident” and notes that it should be seen as a warning in this context.

Whether it was an accident or not, as the fourth passage notes, the operation has reached a critical point, in which Turkish forces risk coming face to face with Syrian regime forces. This fact, coupled with the latest incident makes it unlikely that Turkish and Free Syrian Army forces will advance further south. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



*“Ankara is trying to downplay the incident, clearly not wanting a crisis with Moscow at this critical moment in Syria. Turks, however, are upset and confused, even angry.”*

**Source:** “Rus savaş uçağının Türk askerlerini vurmasına ilişkin hükümetten ilk açıklama (The first official statement regarding Russian war plane hitting Turkish soldiers),” *Cumhuriyet.com.tr*, 9 February 2017. [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/673543/Rus\\_savas\\_ucaginin\\_Turk\\_askerlerini\\_vurmasina\\_iliskin\\_hukumetten\\_ilk\\_aciklama.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/673543/Rus_savas_ucaginin_Turk_askerlerini_vurmasina_iliskin_hukumetten_ilk_aciklama.html)

*“...Finance Minister Nihat Zeybekci, who answered parliamentarians’ questions at the Parliament General Assembly, said that “It has been officially declared by statements made by the Russian President and the Turkish Armed Forces that the Russian plan has hit our soldiers by mistake.” Zeybekci [said], “I also believe that the bombing in al-Bab was a result of a mistake...”*

*In response to the objections made in the General Assembly Hall, Minister Zeybekci said, “This is the official statement. You can say it’s not so, I say this is the official statement, and we can talk until the morning, but it is something that makes us all sad. Even if it’s unlikely, it is within the realm of possibility that such mistakes take place in war zones.”*

**Source:** “Rus savaş uçakları yanlışlıkla Türk askerlerini vurdu: 3 şehit, 11 yaralı - yeniden (Russian war planes accidentally hit Turkish soldiers: 3 killed, 11 wounded--correction),” *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 9 February 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/rus-savas-ucaklari-yanlislikla-turk-askerlerini-40360932>

### **Turkish Armed Forces Issued a Statement**

*The Chief of the General Staff issued a statement in the evening hours and said that a Russian war plane had accidentally targeted a building, killing three [Turkish] soldiers and wounding 11, including one in critical condition.*

*“On 9 February 2017, around 08.40, in the area of the Euphrates Shield Operation, a war plane belonging to the Russian Federation, during an air raid targeting ISIS targets, released a bomb which accidentally hit a building in which Turkish Armed Forces elements were present, resulting in the death of three of our heroic soldiers and the wounding of 11 of our heroic soldiers with one in critical condition.”*

**Source:** Semih Idiz. “Can fragile Ankara-Moscow friendship survive Russian strike?,” *Al Monitor*, 14 February 2017. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/turkey-russia-syria-cast-shadow-erdogan-putin-romance.html>

*Russia did not offer a full apology, trying instead to pin the blame for the incident on the Turkish side. The Russian position was put forward hastily by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, who told the Russian media, “Unfortunately, our military, while carrying out strikes on terrorists, was guided by coordinates given to them by our Turkish partners, and Turkish servicemen should not have been present on those coordinates.”*

...

*Ankara is trying to downplay the incident, clearly not wanting a crisis with Moscow at this critical moment in Syria. Turks, however, are upset and confused, even angry.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: A Russian Accident or Warning in al-Bab?

**Source:** Ünal Çeviköz, “El- Bab ve ötesi (Al-Bab and beyond),” *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 13 February 2017. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/unal-cevikoz/el-bab-ve-otesi-40363738>

*...Another reason the battle over the city of al-Bab has become more critical is the fact that the Syrian army has entered the city from the south. This means that Syrian opposition units supported by Turkey and Syrian regime units will come face to face with each other soon. In fact, it is being reported that the forces have started encountering each other, and that the first armed conflicts between the sides have taken place.*

*This means that there is an increasing chance that, within the shrinking war zone in the city, Turkey's own units will come face to face with Syrian regime forces.*

...

*This shows that Turkey's Euphrates Shield operation has reached the “acceptable” limits established by Russia and the Syrian regime. There were signs that this limit was approaching back when, on 24 November 2016, our units were attacked by Syrian [regime forces]. The final signal came with Russia's “friendly fire” and the losses resulting from it.*

*“Turkey's Euphrates Shield operation has reached the ‘acceptable’ limits established by Russia and the Syrian regime. ...The final signal came with Russia's ‘friendly fire’ and the losses resulting from it.”*

## Turkey to Train 5,000 Syrian Police

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkey is taking steps to ensure the security of its borders with Syria will be protected after its Armed Forces leave the country. Turkey has trained 450 Syrian police to provide security in a border region, with the goal of training a total of 5,000. The objective is to ensure that gains made as part of Operation Euphrates Shield, which the Turkish Armed Forces launched (along with the Free Syrian Army) on 24 August, will be long-lasting. The accompanying passages from the Turkish and Middle Eastern press discuss this initiative.

Operation Euphrates Shield was launched with the goal to clear a certain part of the Turkish-Syrian border (the key town of Jarabulus and its surrounding region) from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and ensure that the Kurds did not achieve territorial continuity among their cantons. Jarabulus was wrested from ISIS fighters as part of this operation, and now the border town is slowly getting back on its feet. Schools have reopened and some 7,700 Syrian refugees have returned from Turkey. As the first two passages discuss, the Turkey-trained Syrian forces will be deployed to provide security in this region.

The third piece discusses a video showing a group of Syrian security forces dressed in Turkish police uniforms, chanting “long live Turkey, long live Erdoğan and long live a free Syria.” The piece also quotes a Turkish security expert as saying that the move is an attempt by Turkey to ensure the presence of pro-Turkey forces in northern Syria even *(continued)*

*“... Turkey wants to make sure that in the aftermath [of a peace settlement] the territory that was cleared of IS on the one hand and the Syrian Kurds, the PYD in particular - would be safe-guarded by a pro-Turkey element of the Syria opposition...”*

**Source:** “Türkiye’den Fırat Kalkanı sonrası hazırlığı: 450 polis eğitildi (Turkey prepares for the day-after Euphrates Shield: 450 policeman have been trained),” *Trsputniknews.com*, 23 January 2017. <https://tr.sputniknews.com/ortadogu/201701231026884753-suriye-turk-polisi/>

*...Regions freed from terror organizations as part of the Euphrates Shield Operation will be secured by Syrian security forces trained by Turkish police. ...The first group of 450 Syrians received police training in Mersin [Turkey] and are reportedly leaving for Syria soon. The training is expected to continue and the number of Syrian police to be trained is expected to go up to 5000.*

### ‘Safe Zone Police’

*Meanwhile, it is also reported that a similar training program is taking place in Jarabulus [Syria] where the Turkish Armed Forces has established control. The goal is to expedite civilians’ return to areas taken back from ISIS and protect civilians by training ‘safe zone police’. The patrol forces will wear blue uniforms and start their mission in Jarabulus.*

**Source:** “Türk polisi üniformasını dahi verdi: Suriye’ye gidiyorlar (Turkish police even gave their uniforms: They’re going to Syria),” *Yeni Safak*, 22 January 2017. <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/turk-polisi-uniformasini-dahi-verdi-suriyeye-gidiyorlar-2600813>

*As the advance of the Turkish Armed Forces in Syria continues as part of Operation Euphrates Shield, civilians have started returning to areas freed from terror organizations. Security in towns will be provided by Syrian security forces trained by Turkish police... It is expected that the training will continue and the goal is to train some 5000 Syrian police.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Turkey to Train 5,000 Syrian Police

if a peace deal is reached. The expert points out that “...Turkey wants to make sure that in the aftermath [of a peace settlement] the territory that was cleared of IS on the one hand and the Syrian Kurds, the PYD in particular - would be safe-guarded by a pro-Turkey element of the Syria opposition.” The PYD is the Democratic Union Party in Syria, which Turkey considers an extension of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**Source:** “Turkey trains and deploys hundreds of police to Syria,” *Middle East Eye*, 23 January 2017. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkish-trained-syria-security-forces-be-deployed-syria-1261199803>

*A video posted by Yeni Safak newspaper on Sunday [22 January] showed a group of Syrian security forces dressed in Turkish police uniforms, chanting “long live Turkey, long live Erdogan and long live a free Syria.”*

*According to Turkish security expert, Sinan Ülgen, this move is an attempt by Turkey to ensure the presence of pro-Turkey forces in northern Syria even if a peace deal is reached.... “...Turkey wants to make sure that in the aftermath [of a peace settlement] the territory that was cleared of IS on the one hand and the Syrian Kurds, the PYD in particular - would be safe-guarded by a pro-Turkey element of the Syria opposition,” explained Ülgen.*

## Israel Unveils Anti-GPS Jamming System

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Russia and others are developing GPS-jamming systems, Israel is one step ahead. The following passages discuss Israel Aerospace’s recently unveiled anti-jamming system, which will allow uninterrupted operation even under direct electronic attack. In the electronic-warfare battlespace, this will give Israel the upper hand and the potential to export to many air forces and armies who want to immunize themselves against the threat of GPS-jamming.

As the first passage discusses, the system, called ADA is an advanced system that protects avionic systems from GPS jamming. It has already been integrated into several systems and platforms operating both in Israel and abroad and will soon integrate into one of the main platforms of the Israeli Air Force. The piece notes that the ADA integration will ensure the operational continuity of the aircraft fleet, allowing avionic systems which rely on satellite navigation systems to continue uninterrupted operation even under direct electronic attack, when the enemy uses GPS jammers or other methods of interference.

The second passage notes that the unit is about 20 cm by 20 cm and is a stand-alone product that can be integrated into any airborne or maritime platforms. The piece also quotes an Israeli official as pointing out that “Considering the operational challenges, we believe this system has considerable export potential for many air forces and armies who experience GNSS jamming in combat zones.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

**Source:** “Israel Aerospace unveils anti-jamming system,” *Globes.co.il*, 31 January 2017. <http://www.globes.co.il/en/article-israel-aerospace-unveils-anti-jamming-system-1001174573>

*Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. has unveiled ADA - an advanced system that protects avionic systems from GPS jamming. ADA has already been integrated into several systems and platforms operating both in Israel and abroad and recently won a tender from Israel’s Ministry of Defense, for integration into one of the main platforms of the Israel Air Force.*

*The ADA integration will ensure the operational continuity of the aircraft fleet, allowing avionic systems which rely on satellite navigation systems to continue uninterrupted operation even under direct electronic attack, when the enemy uses GPS jammers or other methods of interference.*

**Source:** “IAI debuts GPS anti-jamming system,” *Defense News*, 31 January 2017. <http://www.defensenews.com/articles/iai-debuts-gps-anti-jamming-system>

*Measuring about 20 centimeters by 20 centimeters, the laptop computer-sized system is based on the firm’s multichannel Controlled Reception Pattern Antenna (CPRA) technology designed to render avionics systems immune to direct electronic attack from GPS jammers or other methods of interference. The system consists of two major elements: a GPS antenna array built from multiple antennas and an advanced digital processing unit.*

*“This unit features the most advanced signals processing using the CRPA method, which is the leading anti-jamming method. It’s a stand-alone product that can be integrated into any airborne or maritime platforms,” said Alex Levite, ADA project manager.*

*Jacob Galifat, general manger of the MALAM Division, said capabilities provided by his firm’s ADA system are imperative at a time when avionics systems are increasingly vulnerable to proliferating jamming threats. “Facing today’s threats to GNSS, these systems are a must, for any platform using GPS, or any other Global Satellite Navigation Systems. Our operationally proven systems will ensure the availability of GPS- and GNSS-based systems, even in the most contested, [electronic warfare]-saturated battlespace.*

*“Considering the operational challenges, we believe this system has considerable export potential for many air forces and armies who experience GNSS jamming in combat zones.”*



## Iran: US Presence in Bahrain in the Crosshairs?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Iran's 29 January 2017 ballistic missile test—its tenth since signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and UN Security Council passage of Resolution 2231 but its first since the start of the new US administration—reinvigorated international debate about whether Iran's ballistic missile tests violated Iranian commitments under both agreements. At issue is whether Iran's ballistic missiles are designed and can carry a nuclear warhead. Iranian officials argue that they are not designed to do so and therefore are permissible, while others argue that a capacity to carry a nuclear warhead makes any work on ballistic missiles illegal.

The 29 January test was met with augmented sanctions on individuals and firms involved with Iran's ballistic missile program. Iranian officials responded with outrage. It is in this context that Hojjat al-Islam Mojtaba Zonour, a former advisor to the Supreme Leader's representative to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), is important. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is not only Iran's political leader but constitutionally he is also commander-in-chief, with the ability to hire and fire any military commander. He communicates with the IRGC through a permanent representative stationed with the IRGC's top brass. Zonour's statements, therefore, excerpted here from an Iranian website and newspaper closely affiliated with the IRGC, are more than simple bloviating, but rather likely reflect the hostility to the United States still present at senior levels of Iran's religious and military hierarchy. While Western press mention of Zonour's comments focused on his acknowledgement and implicit threat that Iranian missiles could reach Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city, in seven minutes, his threats to attack the US Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain should be of concern.

Previously, it was conventional wisdom in both war games and in the academic and policy sphere that any military engagement with Iran—be it a limited skirmish with the United States or a hypothetical Israeli airstrike—might lead Iran to retaliate by means of its proxies in southern Lebanon and elsewhere. Zonour's declaration suggests that in such a scenario, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps could target directly not only the US presence in Bahrain but also bases in Afghanistan and elsewhere with missiles rather than only indirectly or by proxy as has often been assumed in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“They will be flattened if the Americans make a mistake.”*

**Source:** “36 Payehgah-e Nizami Amrika Tirras –e Samanehaye Mushaki Iran (36 U.S. Bases within Iranian Missile Range),” *Resalat News*, 5 February 2017. [www.resalat-news.com/fa/?code=251219](http://www.resalat-news.com/fa/?code=251219)

### ***36 American Bases are within Range of Iranian Missiles***

*“A member of the Commission on Foreign Affairs and National Security in the Parliament said: 36 American military bases are within range of the missile systems of Iran. According to a Fars report, Hojjat al-Islam Mojtaba Zonour at a commemoration for Basij industrial engineers, said... the truth is that it is not a slogan that Iranian missiles can hit Tel Aviv in only seven minutes. He stated that 36 American bases are within range of Iranian missiles. The American Fifth Fleet has occupied a part of Bahrain, and the enemy's farthest military base is in the Indian Ocean but these points are all within the range of Iran's missile systems and they will be flattened if the enemy makes a mistake.”*



Harbor patrol and USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) at Naval Support Activity, Bahrain.  
Source: Naval Support Activity, Bahrain <http://www.navy.mil/local/nsabahrain/>



## Iran: Who Are Our Enemies?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Almost every week since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's clerical leadership have presided over Friday prayer sermons and rallies in which they encouraged chants of 'Death to America.' After more than three decades of such behavior, many Western diplomats and politicians have become inured to it, and many suggest it is just pro forma and should not be taken as a true expression of the Iranian leadership's attitudes toward the United States or the West. In an address excerpted here to prominent officials and citizens in Qom, Iran's main clerical center, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei addressed the notion of enmity and argued that the United States, alongside Great Britain, Israel, and the international elite should be considered Iran's true enemies.

The notion of Britain as an enemy has a long history in Iran, dating back to the nineteenth century when Great Britain wielded great influence over Iranian politics and exploited Iran economically. Khamenei's castigation of international plutocrats fits within the Islamic Republic's rhetoric of social justice and defending Iran against the exploitation by the Western-dominated international system. His hatred of Israel is well-known, and perhaps forms the chief immutable pillar of Islamic Republic ideology. That he includes the United States as the enemy and warns that the weekly castigation of America should not simply be seen as a slogan, however, is important because it puts a damper on the ambitions of those who see the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as a crack in the façade of Iranian government antipathy that could somehow be widened by further outreach. Indeed, in his broader speech, he argues that there is no substantive difference in the policies toward Iran put forward by the Obama administration and Secretary of State John Kerry and those of the current administration; at its core, he argues, the problem with the United States is its ideology, behavior, and unwillingness to recognize that what Washington condemns as Iran's support for terrorism, Khamenei believes is legitimate. Notable is his omission of Russia as an enemy. After all, both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union victimized Iran as much as British imperialists did.

Just as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps exists to defend Iran from enemies both foreign and domestic, Khamenei reaffirms that Iran faces challenges not only from abroad, but from those inside Iran who are enamored with outside cultures. His conclusion that Iranians must double down on the Islamic Republic's core ideology suggests that sustained reform will remain at best in the realm of regime rhetoric rather than result in substantive change. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The main enemies...are America, Britain, the international plutocracy, and Zionists.”*



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei addresses an audience in Qom.  
Source: Leader.ir, [http://leader.ir/media/album/news/51400\\_999.jpg](http://leader.ir/media/album/news/51400_999.jpg)

**Source:** “Vazifeh-e Muhim Mas‘ulan va Mardam Taqvīt-e ‘Avamil Eqtedar Melli va Shenakht-e Doshman Ast (The Important Task of the Authorities and People is the Strengthening of National Authority and Recognition of the Enemy),” *Leader.ir*, 8 January 2017. [leader.ir/fa/content/17195/](http://leader.ir/fa/content/17195/)  
مق-مدرم-فالت-خ-م-ی-ا-هر-ش-ق-ز-ا-رف-ن-ن-ا-ر-ا-ز-ه-ر-ا-د-ی

### ***Khamenei: Who Are Our Enemies?***

*“He then posed the question: “Who are our enemies?” and he said, “The main enemies of an independent and progressive Iran are America, Britain, the international plutocracy, and Zionists.” The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution noted, certainly, in addition to foreign enemies, we also have internal enemies—reluctance, disappointment, depression, laziness, bad policies, bad behavior, various disputes, and narrow-mindedness....” That the main enemy is foreign is not a slogan but a reality based on knowing rational principles...The Leader of the Islamic Revolution noted that under these conditions, the most important duty for state officials, academics, seminary scholars as well as cultural and political activists is “to boost the power of the country and make it resistant through strengthening the elements of national might.”*



## Iran: Domestic Weapons Production up 69 Percent

**OE Watch Commentary:** The end of many military sanctions on Iran in the wake of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Tehran's ability to purchase sophisticated, off-the-shelf weapons systems (even if the timeline of sanctions expiration may impact delivery dates) has not led the Islamic Republic to abandon let alone scale down its investment in its domestic armament industry. In the excerpted article, Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan brags at a ribbon cutting for new production lines that Iran's domestic armament industry has increased production by 69 percent over the past three years. This suggests that Iran has used some of the hard currency windfall in the form of new investment and unfrozen assets since negotiations began for the Joint Plan of Action (the temporary agreement which predated the JCPOA) to bolster its military industries.

While Dehqan bragged about 115 new products, the five main achievements he noted in other articles surrounding his appearance and speech included the Fajr 5 guided rocket, the Misaq 33 shoulder-launched rocket system, a 40-mm grenade-launcher system, the Masaf 5.56 x 445mm -caliber gun and a new pistol.

Such products may not rise to the same level of international concern as possible Iranian import of S-400 missiles or new ballistic missiles, but the proliferation possibilities to Iranian proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere will complicate the operational environment in which the United States and its allies operate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“115 types of new defense systems and items have been designed.”*



Fajr-5 Rocket.

Source: [Tabnak.ir, http://www.tabnak.ir/files/ar/news/2014/7/12/27221\\_652.jpg](http://www.tabnak.ir/files/ar/news/2014/7/12/27221_652.jpg)

**Source:** “Iran Ti 3 Sal Akhira Bish az 115 Nua’ Taslihat-e Jadid Tarahi va Tawlid Kardeh Ast (Over the Last 3 Years, Iran has Designed and Manufactured Over 115 New Types of Weapons),” *Fars News*, 6 February 2017. <http://www.farsnews.com/13951118000895>

### **Over 115 New Types of Weapons**

*“Gen. Hossein Dehqan, minister of defense and armed force logistics, in an unveiling ceremony for the opening of production lines for five military achievements...said, the defense ministry, in order to effectively support the armed forces in the areas of ground combat and air defense, [recognizes] that construction and production of these advanced system are another big step in fulfilling the supply requirements of the armed forces and strengthening the defense capabilities of the country...”*

*The defense minister, with reference to the 69 percent growth in the past three years, said, “In this period, over 115 types of new defense systems and items have been designed, produced and launched.”*

## Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

**By Matthew Stein**

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein%20Com/Compendium%20of%20Central%20Asian%20Military%20and%20Security%20Activity%20v7%20-%20October%202016.pdf>





## Chechen Military Police in East Aleppo

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early December, two Chechen Battalions (Vostok and Zapad) were sent to guard the Russian military base on the outskirts of Lattakia. Shortly before Christmas, a contingent – presumably from these forces – was deployed to East Aleppo. The deployment of Chechnya-based Russian Military Police to the anarchic and destroyed neighborhoods of East Aleppo has led observers on both sides of the Syrian conflict to reflect on how the “Chechen Model” is being applied in Syria. The accompanying articles give some local insight into the goals and challenges of the Chechen deployment in Aleppo, particularly in terms of their relations with Iranian-backed loyalist militias.

Loyalist militias did not depart East Aleppo after rebels were expelled in early December, as the Syrian government had hoped. Instead, the pro-government fighters retreated from central areas to the city’s eastern periphery. According to the first excerpt, the al-Baqir Brigade has become the dominant loyalist militia in East Aleppo. They are backed by Iran and dominated by members of the Sunni al-Baggara tribe from Aleppo’s south and southeast countryside. The brigade’s name references the tribe’s common ancestor (Muhammad al-Baqir), who is an important Shia historical figure. Syrian opposition sources claim that many of the militia members now identify as Shia.

Sectarian sensitivities prevent Iranian-backed forces from holding the conservative, working-class Sunni neighborhoods of East Aleppo. Absent a reliable loyalist Sunni force to deploy in these areas, the Syrian government turned to its Russian ally for support.

In mid-January a Chechen delegation that included the Mufti of Chechnya traveled to Aleppo. During the visit they met with Syrian religious authorities and prayed at the ruins of the Great Mosque of Aleppo, which Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has vowed to restore. Pro-government sources have emphasized that the Chechens deployed to Aleppo are Sunni Muslims, and as the second excerpt notes: “Perhaps the Kremlin wanted to show local and global public opinion that it understood the religious nature of Aleppo’s people by deploying the Chechen forces.” Indeed the Kremlin has been eager to highlight these religious sensitivities, as noted in the third accompanying excerpt, which describes reactions to a video that went viral, showing a Russian soldier in Aleppo converting to Islam under the guidance of the Chechen Mufti.

Around the time of the Chechen delegation’s visit, Syrian media outlets reported that three members of the Chechen deployment had been killed in the Helwanayah roundabout of East Aleppo’s Tariq al-Bab neighborhood. The incident was never confirmed, but opposition sources claimed the perpetrators were from the al-Baqir Brigade, given that some of their fighters had been killed in a firefight with Russian forces the day before. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



Russian Military Police in Aleppo (screenshots).  
Source: ANNA News <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vxmYR6QQkl>

“...Perhaps the Kremlin wanted to show local and global public opinion that it understood the religious nature of Aleppo’s people by deploying the Chechen forces...”

Source:

حلب تحت حكم الميليشيات.. وبعض النازحين يعودون

“Aleppo Under Militia Rule as Some Refugees Return,” *al-Modon*, 5 February 2017. <https://goo.gl/K7Iteh>

*The militias did not leave the city as the regime and Russian military police had hoped, but rather they moved away from the city center and neighborhoods frequented by Western and Arab media delegations where reconstruction is programmed, such as the Old City and areas surrounding the citadel. Russian military police dares not venture to the city’s working-class eastern neighborhoods due to the danger of pro-regime militias and armed gangs. A Russian military police patrol was ambushed near the al-Halwaniyya roundabout and all three soldiers were captured. Their bodies were found tossed near the roundabout the next day, on 14 January 2017. The pro-regime NDF, specifically the “al-Baqir Brigade,” which includes members of the Baggara and other tribes, was blamed. This occurred days after a member of the al-Baqir Brigade was killed by Russian Military Police near the same area due to a traffic problem. The al-Baqir Brigade controls the neighborhoods of al-Salihin, Karm Hamoud, al-Marjah, and parts of Fardous, al-Masir and Jazmati. Its influence extends to villages south and southeast of Aleppo. It has recruited new fighters after militias took over East Aleppo and became rich through plundering and stealing.*

Source:

الشرطة العسكرية الشيشانية في حلب

“Chechen Military Police in Aleppo,” *Ayn al-Madina*, 22 January 2017. <https://goo.gl/Y6p2vf> (translation via: [http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/32261/Why\\_Are\\_Chechen\\_Military\\_Police\\_Patrolling\\_Aleppo](http://syrianobserver.com/EN/Features/32261/Why_Are_Chechen_Military_Police_Patrolling_Aleppo))

*This measure coincided with Assad’s announcement of his intention to bring peacekeeping forces from friendly countries Egypt, China and Armenia. However the surprise was not in the deployment of Russian police forces, but that the majority were Chechen. It is unprecedented in Russia’s post-Soviet history that forces from a non-Russian background who practice the Islamic faith have been sent to a foreign country. Perhaps the Kremlin wanted to show local and global public opinion that it understood the religious nature of Aleppo’s people by deploying the Chechen forces.*

Source:

حلب: روسيا تستبدل مفتي الشيشان بالمحييني

“Aleppo: Russia Exchanges the Chechen Mufti for Muhaisin,” *All4Syria*, 28 January 2017. <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/383382>

*The video caused controversy on social media. Some believe it is mere propaganda aimed at improving the image of the Russian occupation of Aleppo. Regime loyalists seek to highlight how the video shows the difference between what they call “true Islam” and “extreme Islam,” describing Russia as calling for moderate Islam.*



## ISIS Dummy Equipment: More Than Just Airstrike Decoys

**OE Watch Commentary:** Deception is a pillar of the fighting doctrine of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), not merely a tactic it uses to defend against airstrikes. The employment of decoys and dummies is an important manifestation of this doctrine. According to the accompanying excerpts, ISIS's dummies serve a variety of purposes including deterring attackers; misdirecting enemy fire; intimidating local opponents; and encouraging supporters.

As the first passage discusses, Iraqi security forces recently found an ISIS workshop to produce dummy wooden vehicles on the east side of Mosul. The passage notes that the wooden vehicles are used “to deceive UAVs and surveillance and attack aircraft and other troops in the al-Arabi neighborhood.” This follows a March 2016 video posted to YouTube showing anti-ISIS Iraqi militia fighters examining a fake black wooden Humvee captured in Anbar Province. No context was given for how ISIS employed the dummy vehicle, but the models found in Mosul are similar. Much of the analysis and media reporting assumes them to be airstrike decoys, though the lack of a heat signature makes wooden objects largely ineffective as such.

The earliest reports of ISIS using “Quaker Guns” date back to September 2014, only months after they chased Iraqi troops out of Mosul and declared themselves heads of the new caliphate. As the second accompanying article explains, ISIS began defending against expected attacks by setting up fake anti-aircraft missiles and heavy machine gun nests on high points throughout the city. ISIS employed these props to “make itself appear stronger and scare the forces that may attack its positions after American and Western airstrikes” while also sending “a message to its followers... that it possesses hundreds of air defense missiles.”

Fake vehicles have featured prominently in ISIS's ongoing defense of Mosul. Wooden tanks placed along main highways and junctions have drawn a great deal of fire from Iraqi troops. Intelligence gathered from the video feeds of commercial surveillance drones, used extensively by combatant groups in Iraq and Syria, may inaccurately identify them and other dummy vehicles as real equipment. Wooden Humvees painted to resemble those used by Iraqi Security Forces can create confusion and allow ISIS to leverage the element of surprise. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...showing they are serious about deception ...”



Wooden dummy Humvees, East Mosul, January 2017. Inset: Tanks, rifles and vehicles in wooden dummies workshop, East Mosul, 11 November 2016.  
Sources: <https://www.facebook.com/mod.mil.iq/photos/a.1474021859493981.1073741828.1447878605441640/1935520600010769/?type=3&theater>; <https://www.facebook.com/mod.mil.iq/photos/a.1474021859493981.1073741828.1447878605441640/1890545891174907/?type=3>

**Source:**

بالصور.. ضبط عجلات وهمية لداعش في الموصل

“In Pictures: ISIS Dummy Vehicles Captured in Mosul,” *All Iraq News*, 27 January 2017. <http://www.alliraqnews.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=57375>

*Iraqi security forces found an ISIS workshop to produce dummy wooden vehicles on the east side of Mosul.... the wooden vehicles are used “to deceive UAVs and surveillance and attack aircraft and other troops in the al-Arabi neighborhood. They are placed on main roads and junctions to draw the greatest number of rockets possible and force significant expenditures on rockets and ammunition. The wheels are painted in military colors to like those of the Iraqi Army’s Counter-Terrorism Units.”*

**Source:**

داعش يلجأ للتمويه وينشر اسلحة وصواريخ خشبية

“ISIS resorts to concealment and deploys wooden weapons and missiles,” *al-Sabah al-Jadid*, 14 September 2014. <http://newsabah.com/newspaper/18812>

*ISIS resorts to traditional deception methods to magnify the size of its military arsenal... they have deployed hundreds of wooden rockets with realistic-looking fins and painted in metallic colors, showing they are serious about deception. In most urban areas under its control ISIS has also scattered thousands of wooden machine guns carved and painted to resemble Duskhas and PKs. The group’s intention is that these weapons’ barrels be prominent in the openings and holes made in rooftop walls of tall buildings. In this way it seeks to project greater strength and scare the forces that may attack its positions after American and Western airstrikes. If the group had this number of missiles, which are between four and five meters long, they would have been used against our positions in the various battles over the past three weeks in Nineveh Province. The group also aims to send a message to its followers, who are nervously following news on the launch of the airstrikes, that it possesses hundreds of air defense missiles...*



## Jordan Braces for ISIS Retreat to the Syrian Desert

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early December, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) regained control of Palmyra from Syrian loyalist forces despite being under attack in Mosul (Iraq) and al-Bab (Syria), while also preparing for an impending attack on Raqqa (Syria). The accompanying articles explore how expelling ISIS from these three urban strongholds could force the group to disperse to the Syrian Desert (Badia). Authorities in Jordan are concerned by this scenario and have begun adjusting their policies accordingly.

As the first accompanying excerpt notes, in January ISIS opened several fronts in the Syrian Desert, simultaneously attacking four Syrian airbases “to prove they are still able to launch attacks” and to “improve their military position with the impending loss of the city of al-Bab.” Battles in Deir Ezzour, described in the third excerpt, provide a preview of what dispersed ISIS desert strike forces might look like: “flexible and highly mobile” units of 40 fighters “divided into two groups and equipped with Kalashnikovs, PKC machine guns, Dragunov sniper rifles, and anti-tank missiles” attacking relatively soft positions.

Jordanian political and military authorities foresee ISIS having a foothold in the Syrian Desert by the summer of 2017, and according to the second accompanying excerpt, this is Jordan’s top foreign policy concern. The Jordanian government previously sought to roll back ISIS from the Syrian Desert using a local proxy force called the “Tribal Army.” The first (and only) engagement ended with “catastrophic losses” for the Jordanian-backed forces, forcing the kingdom to back away from using proxy forces against the self-proclaimed caliphate. Jordan has furthermore begun moving away from arming rebel factions opposed to the Syrian government, pushing them instead to the negotiating table.

Jordanian fears of mobile ISIS units roaming the Syrian Desert are most acute in al-Rukban, an informal encampment on the Syrian side of the desert border that houses tens of thousands of refugees from ISIS-controlled territory. Al-Rukban is likely to be high on ISIS’s list of priority targets if the group is indeed expelled from its urban strongholds and forced to seek haven in the Syrian Desert. According to the fourth excerpt, Jordanian security believes that “thousands of ISIS members live in the camp.” The camp’s despondent residents are attractive targets for ISIS recruiters. Over the past seven months, four different car bombs have gone off in or near the camp, including one that crashed into a border post and killed several Jordanian soldiers. The Jordanian-backed “Tribal Army” is deeply enmeshed in the camp’s political and security affairs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

*“[Jordan’s northeast] area is expected to become a main haven for ISIS by this summer, after the group loses control over Mosul and American pressure increases on the city of Raqqa. The threat has become closer and clearer for Jordan, and post-Mosul ISIS increases rather than eliminates the danger.”*

**Source:**

هجوم واسع لداعش على ٤ مطارات عسكرية للنظام

“Broad ISIS Attacks on 4 Regime Military Airports,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 4 February 2017. <https://goo.gl/0X99vN>

*ISIS is fighting on four broad military fronts in Syria, simultaneously targeting four Syrian regime force airbases... “They are actually fighting on eight fronts, aiming to prove they are still able to launch attacks”... the attacks on regime airbases in rural Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Deir Ezzour aim to “improve their military position with the impending loss of the city of al-Bab” in eastern rural Aleppo...*

**Source:**

داعش والأردن.. التهديد أكثر اقتراباً

“ISIS and Jordan: The Approaching Threat,” *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 24 January 2017. <https://goo.gl/1wkzTt>

*Jordan’s official though undeclared read on the situation is that the kingdom’s northeast, bordering Deir Ezzour, the Syrian Badia and rural Homs, has become the number one foreign threat. This area is expected to become a main haven for ISIS by this summer, after the group loses control over Mosul and American pressure increases on the city of Raqqa. The threat has become closer and clearer for Jordan, and post-Mosul ISIS increases rather than eliminates the danger... Jordan and the Americans armed and trained the “Tribal Army” to fight ISIS in Albu Kamal and then Deir Ezzour, but the initial battles were total disappointments, as the new army suffered catastrophic losses and lost a large chunk of its weapons. This confirms the Jordanian view, which the Americans do not understand, that rushing to train and prepare a force without confirming the outputs will have reverse results, which is indeed what happened... [Jordan] has forced its allies to stop fighting the Syrian regime and abide by the ceasefire...The regional map with the breakup of ISIS’s Iraqi state is not ideal for Jordan; quite the opposite: the threat of ISIS on the Jordanian border is clearer than before.*

**Source:**

“دير الزور: تكتيكات عسكرية جديدة لـداعش”

“Deir Ezzour: New ISIS Military Tactics,” *al-Modon*, 23 January 2017. <https://goo.gl/FhCX4c>

*ISIS relied on small groups, flexible and highly mobile, to fight the regime... there were no more than 40 ISIS fighters in the battle to control the brick and cement block factory. They were divided into two groups and equipped with Kalashnikovs, PKC machine guns, Dragunov sniper rifles, and anti-tank missiles.*

**Source:**

كيف قرأ الأردن تفجير مخيم الركبان؟

“How Does Jordan Understand the al-Rukban Camp Explosion?” *al-Dustour*, 22 January 2017. <https://goo.gl/7JvMQa>

*The frightening explosion in al-Rukban proves the Jordanian security view that claims thousands of ISIS members live in the camp. This explains Jordan’s various obstacles in dealing with the camp, and the great care taken even in humanitarian cases... How will Jordan deal with the injured?... The situation is complicated given the many considerations...*



## Why African Arms Embargoes Often Fail

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying article provides significant insight into several underreported reasons behind embargo failures in Africa. Despite painting a bleak picture of the situation on the ground, the author provides several overlooked explanations as to why arms flows continue despite the implementation of numerous impediments.

Perhaps most interesting of these explanations is the futile attempt to target the money of those involved in the arms trade. Though there are certainly corrupt politicians and others who have bank accounts, including foreign ones that can be seized, many of the violators lack such economic assets. They may command vast areas with large mineral deposits guarded by militias, but they operate outside the formal banking system. Additionally, threats to limit the travels or confiscate the passports of arms smugglers are also often futile as many of these individuals rarely travel outside the area they control...think local warlords. Trade in arms is conducted through emissaries, with minerals serving as the currency.

Another often overlooked factor is the development by several African countries of their own domestic arms industries, which in some cases might eventually replace arms lost to embargoes. Surprisingly though the article states that no link has been found so far between arms embargoes and homegrown weapons production. This seems to go against what was observed in South Africa when the 1963 arms embargo was enacted against that country. Still, South Africa is probably the exception rather than the rule as it had the technical capacity to develop a significant weapons manufacturing capability - indeed it was already making arms, albeit on a relatively small scale - before the embargo. Countries such as Somalia on the other hand presently lack the resources for arms manufacturing beyond the artisanal level. Besides, the ease of accessibility of weapons probably negates the need or desire to invest in production facilities by either the Somali government or its armed opposition, notably al-Shabaab.

Political factors should also not be overlooked in the failure of embargoes. As the article relates, African countries frequently view the imposition of an arms embargo as a punitive measure rather than as a way to help the embargoed country. Furthermore, the country ends up being perceived as a "failure," a stigma they decry. There is thus sometimes little incentive from a political standpoint to assist the UN in their well meaning endeavors. Even when governments are on board, their actions, such as increasing border surveillance in one area, are often woefully inadequate as traffickers just shift their routes.

Porous borders, corrupt officials who look the other way, difficulties in interrupting payment transactions, politicians angry at the failed state label, and numerous other reasons undermine African arms embargoes. Such a multidimensional problem will require a multidimensional approach that takes all of these factors into account. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“In Somalia, armed violence continues unabated despite the country having been under an arms embargo since 1992.”*

**Source:** Nelson Alusala, “Towards effective implementation of UN-imposed arms embargoes in Africa,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, November 2016. <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/policybrief92.pdf>

*The effectiveness of these UN-imposed embargoes is the subject of much debate in Africa.*

*In Somalia, armed violence continues unabated despite the country having been under an arms embargo since 1992.*

*The success of an arms embargo depends a great deal on the willingness of neighbouring countries to walk with the embargoed country*

*Countries do not consider sanctions as a positive element in their transformation, but as a sign of punishment.*

*... a senior of government official expressed the helplessness of Côte d'Ivoire to single-handedly deter marauding traffickers, without the support of neighbouring countries.*

*This is made worse by the fact that these law-enforcement agencies are ill-equipped with the necessary skills and technical capability to monitor and enforce targeted sanctions. The situation is, however, also undermined further by lack of adequate funding.*



The AK-47, a favorite of arms traffickers.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons



## A New Eye on Rebel Forces in Eastern DRC: Joint Follow-up Mechanisms

**OE Watch Commentary:** The eastern portion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is home to regionally destabilizing rebel groups, including some with links to al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. Against this backdrop, countries in the Africa Great Lakes Region have decided to establish a military intelligence base in Kasese, Uganda, close to the DRC border to monitor the situation. The accompanying article discusses this base, which will be staffed by 12 officers, known as the Joint Follow-up Mechanisms, or JFM.

Much of the JFM's focus will be on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan Islamic-leaning rebel group that has been recruiting young men from mosques. As 2016 ended, the group increased its attacks on civilians in eastern DRC. However, the ADF is not the only dangerous group holed up in that region. Two other groups based in the region are the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, which includes Hutus who carried out the Rwandan genocide; and M23, a rebel group which had signed a ceasefire with the DRC government in 2013. Adding to the volatile mix are approximately 80,000 South Sudanese refugees, including former fighters of Rick Machar, who oppose South Sudan's president, Salva Kiir.

Financial support for some of the rebel groups comes through illegal exploitation of the DRC's rich mineral resources. Political support comes from certain governments who use some rebel groups as proxies.

UN peacekeepers as well as troops from Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa – known as the Intervention Force – tried and failed to neutralize the rebel groups in the past. Now, with the JFM monitoring and gathering intelligence on them—something that was not done before—there might be hope that the governments of the African Great Lakes Region can better formulate how to effectively deal with these very dangerous menaces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“...efforts to get rid of negative forces in eastern DRC have suffered because of lack of permanent intelligence and monitoring...”*



Kasese, not drawn to scale, will serve as the home of the Joint Follow-up Mechanisms. Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Fred Oluoch, “Uganda to host military intelligence base to monitor eastern DR Congo,” *The East African*, 10 Jan 2017. <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Uganda-host-military-intelligence-base-monitor-eastern-DR-Congo/2558-3512834-pkx6m8z/index.html>

*Countries in the Great Lakes Region will at the end of January set up a military intelligence base in Kasese, Uganda, to monitor “negative forces” in eastern Congo.*

*The executive secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Zachary Muburi-Muita told The East African that efforts to get rid of negative forces in eastern DRC have suffered because of lack of permanent intelligence and monitoring.*

*... the Islamic-leaning ADF is regrouping by recruiting young men from mosques with the promise of being taken to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.*

*“These negative forces are being sustained by illegal exploitation of mineral resources through international links and are also enjoying political support from some governments in the region, who use them as proxies,” ...*

## A Small Box That's a Big Deal: How Latin American Countries Are Using CubeSATS and Why it Matters

by Kevin Freese

The Army is the Defense Department's largest space user and the space domain is an essential part of the current and future operational environment. A relatively new satellite technology – the CubeSAT – is now making it easier for countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay to launch their space programs. By facilitating traditionally non-spacefaring nations to develop space programs, CubeSATS will give such nations a greater voice in international space policies and laws. For the United States, this will mean increased necessity to take the interests of other nations into consideration when operating in space.



[http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ\\_A%20Small%20Box%20That%20s%20a%20Big%20Deal\\_%20How%20Latin%20American%20Countries%20Are%20Using%20CubeSATS%20and%20Why%20it%20Matters.pdf](http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/SWJ_A%20Small%20Box%20That%20s%20a%20Big%20Deal_%20How%20Latin%20American%20Countries%20Are%20Using%20CubeSATS%20and%20Why%20it%20Matters.pdf)



## Zimbabweans Envious as Gambia's President Goes but Theirs Stays

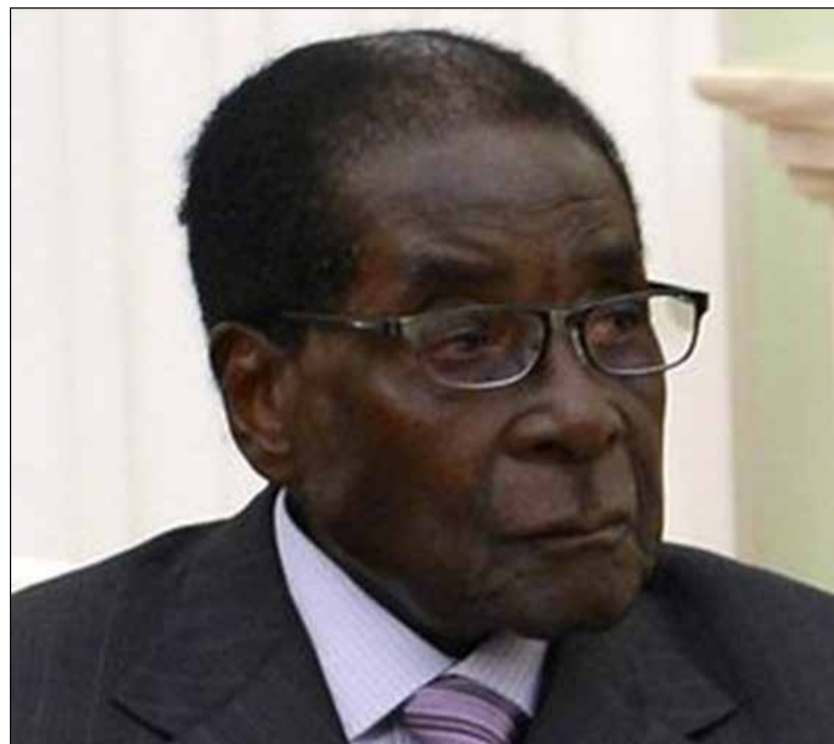
**OE Watch Commentary:** In late 2016, Adama Barrow was elected president of Gambia, but his presidency was thwarted by Yahya Jammeh, who had served as the country's president since 1994. In mid-January, with nearby countries flexing their military muscle, and in what could best be described as a forced voluntary flight, Jammeh fled the country, allowing Barrow to finally assume office. Much of Africa was jubilant as an ironfisted ruler who remained in office for too long finally abdicated. The accompanying article relates the envious mood in Zimbabwe, where Robert Mugabe, the country's President since 1987 (and Prime Minister for several years before that) does not appear to be leaving any time soon.

There are several reasons for Jammeh being forced to leave while Mugabe gets to stay, beginning with the respective regional bodies. The Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, of which Gambia is a member, took a firm stand against Jammeh after he refused to leave office following his electoral defeat. The Southern African Development Community, SADC, of which Zimbabwe is a member, does not appear as anxious to take action against Mugabe. Perhaps this is because, as the article describes, the SADC's liberation-led leaders are unwilling to oust one of their own.

A related factor is the unwillingness of South Africa "to appear as if they are bullying their neighbor, Zimbabwe," according to the article. Without the will from South Africa, SADC's most powerful member, to intervene in Zimbabwe, the other SADC members are also averse to the idea. Contrast this with Gambia's neighbor, Senegal, who readily supplied troops for the operation against Jammeh.

Unfortunately for Zimbabweans who yearn for change, the problem is not just the surrounding countries. At home, Zimbabwe has a fractured opposition. Whereas Gambians had Barrow to rally around, no single opposition leader has emerged from Zimbabwe. With so many Zimbabwean parties looking to take on the presidency – at last count there were more than 48 – analysts predict that the 2018 election will see Mugabe elected once again. Moreover, unlike the 2008 election, widely believed to be doctored, the results this time could correctly show him with the winning tally. Unless the opposition can unite, Zimbabwean envy described in the article towards Gambia is likely to continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“We need an ECOWAS in southern Africa.”*



Unless a badly fractured opposition can unite, longtime Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, pictured here during a trip to Russia, is predicted to prevail in elections next year.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** “So how did Mugabe get away with it? Zimbabweans look to the Gambia with envy,” *News24 (South Africa)*, 21 Jan 2017. <http://www.news24.com/Africa/Zimbabwe/exclusive-so-how-did-mugabe-get-away-with-it-zimbabweans-look-to-the-gambia-with-envy-20170121>

*“We need an ECOWAS in southern Africa.”*

*While Jammeh has been ostracized by regional body ECOWAS, SADC did no such thing nine years ago.*

*South Africa didn't want to be seen as bullying a neighbor.*

*Zimbabwe's opposition was horribly fractured in 2008...The splitting isn't over yet.*

*Will ZANU-PF draw lessons from what's happening in the Gambia to make sure Jammeh's humiliation can't happen in Zimbabwe? Or will Zimbabwe's opposition and civic activists finally unite?*

## Transition in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan - From Conscripts to Contract Soldiers by Matt Stein

**Kazakhstan's Armed Forces have been working to modernize, reform and expand their capabilities since the state became independent in 1991. Much of the attention on this development has been on security cooperation with Russia, the United States and other partners, but there have also been internally driven efforts that could have just as significant an impact. One of these efforts over the past several years has been the increase in the number of professional contract soldiers in the Armed Forces, which is part of a plan to have contract soldiers make up 99 percent of the Armed Forces by the end 2016. While the result has yet to be announced, an examination of Kazakhstan's effort to have its Armed Forces made up of contract soldiers will show how this effort has been progressing and the impact this could have on the capabilities of the country's Armed Forces and on the Central Asian region.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein%20-%20Transition%20in%20the%20Armed%20Forces%20of%20Kazakhstan%20-%20From%20Conscripts%20to%20Contract%20Soldiers.pdf>



## Following Deadly al-Shabaab Attack, Some Kenyans Rethink AMISOM Involvement

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 27 January, al-Shabaab attacked the Kenyan base in Kolbiyow, Somalia. The attack came only a few days after the first anniversary of a similar attack on a different Kenyan base, El-Adde, by the same terrorist group. The recent attack claimed the lives of at least 50 Kenyan soldiers, while last year's attack had killed over 100. The accompanying articles discuss the attacks; along with some calls to rethink Kenya's involvement in the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

The first passage discusses the similarities between the two attacks. Both started before daybreak, were initiated by suicide vehicle borne IEDs, and led to casualties on both sides. According to a preliminary report, the first Kenyan casualties occurred when the bomb laden vehicle exploded. The attack continued with waves of suicide bombers, fighters on foot and with pickup trucks with mounted machine guns, who also joined the fray.

The first passage also notes that there are conflicting and unconfirmed accounts, as is often the case with such attacks. These include al-Shabaab using a military grade personnel carrier, al-Shabaab seizing weapons and vehicles from the base, and discrepancies in the number of Kenyan soldiers killed, with Kenya saying 50 and al-Shabaab claiming 57.

The Kolbiyow attack comes only three days after al-Shabaab attacked a hotel in Mogadishu, killing 28 people. It also follows a string of attacks on AMISOM bases over the past two years that resulted in high casualties of Kenyan, Burundian and Ugandan soldiers.

With the latest attack, Kenyans are calling for a rethink of Kenya's strategy and role in the war. As the second article relates, six years ago when Kenya joined AMISOM, it did so with the thought that the war would be brief. Now there appears to be no end in sight. However, having Kenya withdraw troops from Somalia, as Ethiopia has just done, would greatly weaken AMISOM and Kenya remains concerned that a strong al-Shabaab would launch terrorist attacks, as it has done before, on Kenyan soil. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“When Kenya joined the African Union Mission in Somalia some six years ago, the understanding was that it was to be a short assignment and that terrorists would be vanquished and the soldiers [would] return to carry on with their usual operations.”*



Several hours after al Shabaab attack on their AMISOM base in Somalia, Kenyan soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, launched a major operation against the terrorists.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

**Source:** Fred Mukinda and Stella Cheron, “Kenyan soldiers fight back after raid by Shabaab” *Daily Nation (Kenya)*, 28 January 2017. <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/1056-3789976-3qva6fz/index.html>

*The raid was similar to the El-Adde attack in that it occurred before daybreak, was initiated with vehicle-borne bomb and there were casualties on both sides.*

*“The information being peddled by terrorists on social media is false and part of their propaganda,” he said. Al-Shabaab had claimed that 57 soldiers had been killed in the raid.*

*Besides Kenya, Al-Shabaab has attacked camps belonging to Uganda, Burundi and Ethiopia, with Uganda and Burundi suffering massive casualties.*

**Source:** “It’s time for Kenya to rethink war against al Shabaab,” *Daily Nation (Kenya)*, 27 January 2017. <http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Editorial/time-kenya-rethink-war-shabaab/440804-3789988-bv5ob8z/index.html>

*When Kenya joined the African Union Mission in Somalia some six years ago, the understanding was that it was to be a short assignment and that terrorists would be vanquished and the soldiers [would] return to carry on with their usual operations.*

*After many years in the war-torn country and the rising cases of killings of our soldiers it is time to step back and review our mission and strategy in Somalia.*

*The government must rethink the strategies for fighting al-Shabaab without putting our soldiers in harm’s way.*



## An Unfinished Operation: Neutralizing the LRA

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) once terrorized large portions of Uganda, but as the accompanying article relates, the group founded and led by Joseph Kony is now only a shadow of itself. Though estimates of its size were always sketchy, its peak strength of somewhere between two and three thousand soldiers has dwindled to just 150 to 200. These numbers mean that it is no longer able to attack hard targets such as government troops on the move; being limited instead to only soft targets such as unarmed civilians. Having fled Uganda, it reportedly roamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. LRA attacks in these three central African countries have led to large scale displacements of civilians both internally and across borders, including into Uganda, as they fear being killed or abducted.

As the article discusses, the lack of decisive action has led to the war against the terrorist group being prolonged. During side meetings of the 28th African Union Summit, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni urged central African militaries to make strong commitments to finally rid Africa of the LRA scourge. He stated a joint plan would be required in order to flush out LRA remnants, and urged the international community to support the effort by providing force multipliers such as helicopters.

It is difficult to know the LRA's exact location, though their main source of income appears to be in the Garamba Forest of the DRC where they steal gold from miners and hunt animals for ivory. They avoid using satellite phones, radios and other devices that would give away their position. This lack of credible intelligence is one of the factors Museveni cited for why cross-border efforts are required, noting that both human and technical resources must be brought to bear on finding the group. However, until that critical piece of intelligence becomes available, the operation to neutralize the LRA remains unfinished. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Museveni called on all engaged in the fight against the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in the Central African Republic to commit themselves and allow military commands to jointly work out a plan to flush out remnants of the LRA and put an end to the suffering of the civilian population.”*

**Source:** “Museveni pushes for joint regional operation to flush out Kony,” *The Independent (Uganda)*, 30 January 2017. <https://www.independent.co.ug/museveni-pushes-joint-regional-operation-flush-kony/>

*Museveni called on all engaged in the fight against the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in the Central African Republic to commit themselves and allow military commands to jointly work out a plan to flush out remnants of the LRA and put an end to the suffering of the civilian population.*

*“What they do is attack soft targets. That is not a strength; it is a weakness but it embarrasses governments because then they are not protecting their people enough.*

...

*We must move in day and night and hunt them down. After, we must have a zonal force which remains there. The force must be disciplined...not killing, looting, raping women or talking badly to the people. This will give confidence and security to the people,” Museveni said.*



Slaughtering elephants for ivory helps fund terrorist groups including the LRA.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons





## The Changing Face of African Conflict

**OE Watch Commentary:** Anyone who regularly follows Africa knows that parts of the continent are embroiled in conflict. However, they may be surprised to find out how that conflict has changed over the years. The accompanying article discusses a report from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) out of the University of Sussex, which claims that battles and large scale wars are on the decline in Africa. Replacing these are multiple, co-existing agents including local, pro-government, and political militias; rebel groups; and foreign entities such as ISIS seeking local partners, all frequently violently jockeying for power.

In 2016, 34% of incidents in Africa involved state agents, higher than in previous years, reflecting government efforts to forcefully stay in power. Other interesting findings of the report include the fact that Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia accounted for 33% of all violent conflict on the continent last year. Somalia, where the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has spent ten years and billions of dollars trying to implement peace, had 740 armed, organized violent events in 2016. This was roughly equal to the other three countries combined. Interestingly, the average number of deaths per event differed among the four countries: Somalia lost an average of two and a half lives per event; while that number was four for Libya, four and a half for South Sudan and six for Nigeria, which has a large number of civilian casualties.

Protests were also on the rise last year, with a 4.8% increase over 2015. Chad, Tunisia, and Ethiopia were all big contributors to this, but by far the largest was South Africa. Police violence against protesters there fueled more disorder. As the article notes, unless political solutions are found, this low level of violence - the changing face of African conflict - is likely to persist or even escalate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

*“Despite lesser media coverage, a number of countries across the continent witnessed lower yet sustained rates of armed conflict, as state and non-state actors continue to use violence to influence political dynamics or consolidate their position vis-à-vis other competitors.”*

**Source:** Simon Allison, “Africa: Conflict is not going away, but it is evolving,” *Daily Maverick (South Africa)*, 7 Feb 2017. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2017-02-07-africa-conflict-is-not-going-away-but-it-is-evolving/#.WJ3LA4WcGcw>

*Nigeria is also extreme in that fatalities “are overwhelmingly against civilians compared to battles between armed agents, and fatalities when the state retakes territory are also markedly higher than in other crisis contexts”. On the other hand, actors in the Libyan conflict appear to avoid directly targeting civilians.*

*Elsewhere, the absence of full-blown civil war or large-scale insurgencies masks disturbing levels of violence.*

*When it comes to protests, there are some signs that Africans are beginning to find their voices, with a 4.8% increase last year in the number of events involving rioters and protesters.*

*Despite lesser media coverage, a number of countries across the continent witnessed lower yet sustained rates of armed conflict, as state and non-state actors continue to use violence to influence political dynamics or consolidate their position vis-à-vis other competitors.*



Throughout Africa protests for a variety of causes increased last year.  
Source: Wikimedia Commons



## Keeping up the Operational Tempo Against Boko Haram

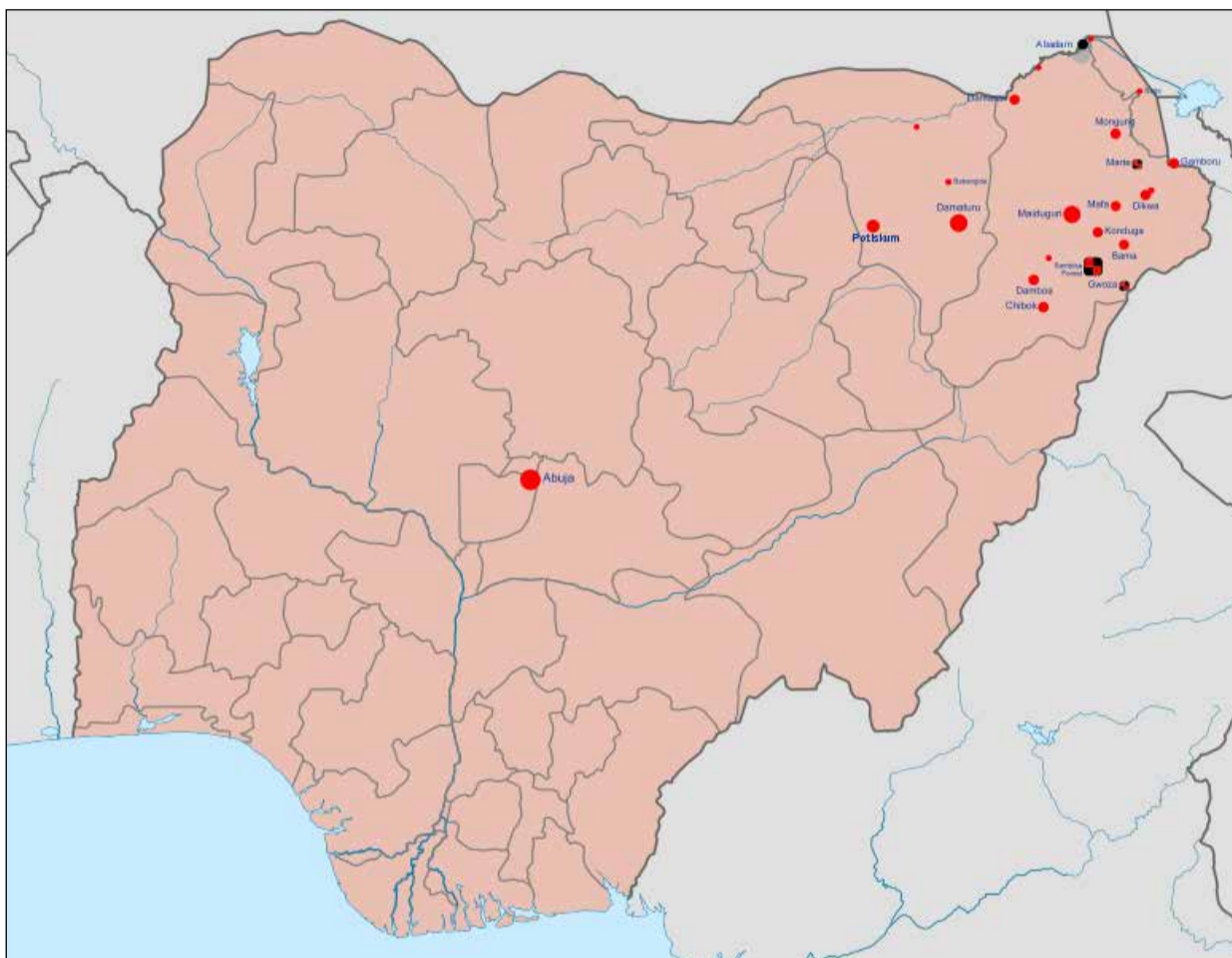
**OE Watch Commentary:** Since declaring a State of Emergency and launching an offensive against Boko Haram in 2015, the Nigerian military has forced Boko Haram out of the territories it held in its declared Islamic State in northeastern Nigeria. Unlike other State of Emergencies before 2015, this one has not been short term. Nearly two years later, the military is still on the offensive. Despite setbacks, including occasional large-scale Boko Haram attacks, Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), mistaken air strikes that have had devastating consequences for civilians, and significant numbers of military casualties, the military's counter-insurgency approach under this State of Emergency is being renewed and improved.

According to the excerpted article from a Nigerian source, Nigeria's counter-insurgency focus will be on preventing Boko Haram from regrouping, especially by using the air force to bomb Boko Haram camps. The military recognizes that killing all Boko Haram fighters is not possible. Its goal is to keep Boko Haram fighters on the run so they cannot train new fighters in their camps, store weapons, and have time plan major attacks. Increasing reports of Boko Haram defections as well as the escape of a second Chibok schoolgirl, who was taken captive by Boko Haram in April 2014, suggests that Boko Haram morale may be decreasing and that the militants are unable to maintain control of their most prized resources—namely, the Chibok schoolgirls.

The Nigerian military also plans to improve its counter-insurgency operations in three other ways. First, it has elevated its medical directorate to the status of a branch, showing a greater focus on caring for wounded soldiers amid complaints of the government ignoring them. Second, it has improved the defenses around military barracks throughout the northeast in hopes of protecting them from Boko Haram attacks: it was the fall of barracks in 2013 that allowed Boko Haram to become the de-facto power in Borno State by 2014. Finally, the government has developed a new human rights-based curriculum in recognition that alienating the population, including abusing Boko Haram members and relatives, has become a factor encouraging Boko Haram recruitment.

While the insurgency's end is still not near, the Nigerian military's improvements to its counter-insurgency strategy should allow it to continue making progress against Boko Haram. Moreover, these lessons can be used in other parts of the country, which are also witnessing various forms of low-grade insurgency and insecurity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“The Air Force has vowed to ensure that remnants of Boko Haram terrorists are not allowed to regroup again in any part of the country to pose a threat to lives and properties.”*



Areas of Boko Haram activity in Nigeria.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boko\\_Haram\\_insurgency\\_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boko_Haram_insurgency_map.svg)

**Source:** “We’ll Never Allow Boko Haram Regroup Again,” *ThisDayLive*, 7 January 2017. <http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/01/07/airforce-chief-well-never-allow-boko-haram-regroup-again/>

*The Air Force has vowed to ensure that remnants of Boko Haram terrorists are not allowed to regroup again in any part of the country to pose a threat to lives and properties. Chief of Air Staff (CAS) Air Marshal Sadique Baba Abubakar stated. He explained that the incessant cases of insecurity in the country where armed groups in the North-east and some part of the South have continued to hold the nation hostage will be checkmated with the expansion. He said, “Apart from the field command, we also have the medical branch now. It used to be a directorate, now it’s a branch because we are expanding. We have also enhanced our bases. It is not likely that anybody can threaten our bases now unlike in 2013 when we didn’t have the right structure. For the North-east, our focus now generally is to ensure that Boko Haram does not regroup anywhere. Our men are flying to ensure that these guys do not regroup to constitute any threat to our troops or any community in the North-east.” He also spoke in respect for human rights: “we have changed the curriculum for training; we have included the aspect of respect for human rights and we have given them the basic understanding of humanitarian law that was not there before”.*



## Arson Emerging as Insurgent Fashion?

**OE Watch Commentary:** In 2017 so far, Chile has suffered extensive, costly incendiary protests which have taken the form of *actual fires*. Many of the record number of forest fires are attributable to natural climatic conditions. Others, however, were the product of arson, apparently organized in support of an ethnic based insurgent movement. The accompanying passages discuss the organized use of arson as a destructive resistance tactic by some Mapuche groups. Chile can hardly be described as a ‘third-world hell hole’ and its ethnic Mapuche challenge is worthy of more of our attention as an irregular war case.

According to the current CIA World Factbook, the Mapuche identity accounts for over nine percent of the population. This is up from a reported ‘Indian’ population of 3% and a ‘White’ population of 95% in 1991. The question of ethnic grievance and activation of that grievance has been heightened by external interests and tied, expectedly, to land claims which are considered ancestral, as the second passage notes. It should perhaps be worrisome that the organized use of arson as a destructive resistance tactic may be undergoing rehearsal there. The Mapuche question has been a magnet for provocation from the region’s leftist revolutionary groups, perhaps even including the FARC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Multiple contributors, “Incendios forestales en Chile de 2017 (Chilean forest fires of 2017),” *Wikipedia, la enciclopedia libre*, 2017 varios dates. [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incendios\\_forestales\\_en\\_Chile\\_de\\_2017](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incendios_forestales_en_Chile_de_2017)

*“The Chilean forest fires of 2017 are a series of forest fires generated in multiple focal points in Chile’s central and southern zones, between the regions of Coquimbo and Los Lagos, with greatest intensity in the regions of O’Higgins, Maule y Biobio, as well as distant foci in the Magallanes and Chilean Antarctic regions (the country’s austral zone), during January and February of 2017... Authorities have admitted that the origin of the fires is human and to this point there are 43 arrested, demonstrating that many of the points were started intentionally.”*

**Source:** EFE, “Dos muertos en incendio provocado en la zona del conflicto mapuche en Chile (Two deaths in arson fire in Mapuche conflicto zone in Chile),” *Terra*, 4 January 2013. <https://noticias.terra.cl/chile/dos-muertos-en-incendio-provocado-en-la-zona-del-conflicto-mapuche-en-chile,0307a838c16fb310VgnCLD2000000ec6eb0aRCRD.html>

*“The loss happened around 0200 hours (0600 GMT) this Friday, when about twenty masked gunmen set fire to a family home in Lumahue, situated near the locality of Vilcun, in Araucania, about 700 kilometers south of Santiago.” ... For his part, the district attorney declined to give information regarding the identity of the detainee and his possible connection with the demands of Mapuche groups that in the region are confronting agriculture and forestry businesses over the ownership of land that they consider ancestral.”*

## Cuba’s State

“...whoremongering represent[s] an extra salary for many policemen...”

**OE Watch Commentary:** The first accompanying source reference is noteworthy for the student of irregular war in that the Cuban police, as an armed institution (and as part of a national government hierarchy), is accused of the pro-forma role of big-pimp. As background, note that until 2014, the US State Department rated Cuba as a Tier 3 country on its *Trafficking in Persons Report* (Tier 3 lists ‘countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so’). In 2016, that rating was improved to the Tier 2 Watch List, although the accompanying country narrative stated that the ‘Government of Cuba does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so.’ Policemen getting caught up supplementing their incomes in a prostitute protection scheme is nothing new, but this article raises the question of whether pandering is becoming customary in the national police force.

The second accompanying source reference, on a much less lurid topic, gives part of the answer. The government allows small private transportation entrepreneurship, but recently clamped down on price controls, causing some publicly visible disruptions and discontent. The wry analysis from the Cuban writer is that the crisis will end and the bureaucracy will win — that every corner of Cuban life is eventually regulated to the last detail. So, according to Cuban commentators, Cuba’s sex trade will continue, and while the police might be playing a central role, the bureaucrats will soon also have it under control, or at least extract their rents. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Gerónimo García, “La prostitución, un ‘salario extra’ para muchos policías (Prostitution, extra pay for many policemen),” *Diario de Cuba*, 8 February 2107. [http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1486400787\\_28725.html](http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1486400787_28725.html)

*“I don’t know why it surprises you if here even a potato-head knows that prostitution and whoremongering represent an extra salary for many policemen’,...’The policemen are a necessary evil in this business. They lend a certain security and whistle if a operation is coming through the zone. They almost never make us pay them “in kind;” they want money’, she added... ‘It is best not to begin lying to them because they are into everything and they have, like, a network’ ...”*

**Source:** Jorge Olivera Castillo and Alen Lauzán, “Transporte: La crisis interminable (Transportation: The interminable crisis),” *Diario de Cuba*, 14 February 2017. [http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1487050553\\_28930.html](http://www.diariodecuba.com/cuba/1487050553_28930.html)

*“It is very possible that the current social tensions caused by the control over non-state carrier prices has a more-or-less happy ending — obviously for the bureaucracy, that knows the signals of central power by heart. In the end, they will impose the rules of coexistence between the bigwigs and their vassals, in this case the majority of the people, which has become accustomed to survive in the niches of illegality, ...”*



# Manuel Santos' Ten Rules for Peace

**OE Watch Commentary:** While suffering very low levels of public popularity, Colombian President Manuel Santos appeared aglow in the unfolding normalization of relations with the FARC and his reception of the Nobel Peace Prize. Early this February, he took the podium in the iconic Colon Theatre in Bogota to speak in front of other Nobel laureates. He offered to the world a list of ten rules for peace. To some the list was inspirational and the moment one of national pride. Other Colombians, however, did not rate their President's composition with the Decalogue from Mount Sinai. The first accompanying reference offers the President's instruction unvarnished, although only the headings are relayed here. The second accompanying reference is an extensive critique of it. The excerpt is taken from a valuable essay for those seeking an expression of what the opposition finds wrong with the political-philosophical current on which the Santos administration carried the deal with the FARC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...*WE MUST TALK.*”

**Source:** Ariel Cabrera, “Santos propuso a la comunidad internacional la Carta de Colombia, diez principios para la paz (To the International community Santos proposed the Charter of Colombia, ten principles for peace),” *Radio Santafé*, 3 February 2017. <http://www.radiosantafe.com/2017/02/03/santos-propuso-a-la-comunidad-internacional-la-carta-de-colombia-diez-principios-para-la-paz/>

*“1. PEACE IS A RIGHT; 2. WE ARE ONE; 3. WE ARE DIVERSE; 4. WE MUST FOLLOW THE GOLDEN RULE; 5. WE MUST AVOID WAR; 6. WE MUST BE LAWFUL; 7. WE MUST TALK; 8. WE MUST RESPECT EACH OTHER; 9. WE MUST EDUCATE; 10. WE MUST UNDERSTAND. ”*

“*There are conflicts that can only be ended by force...*”

**Source:** Eduardo Mackenzie, “Los 10 mandamientos de Juan Manuel Santos (Juan Manuel Santos' 10 commandments),” *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 5 February 2017. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/los-10-mandamientos-de-juan-manuel-santos.html>

*“...‘7. WE MUST TALK: Whenever possible, conflicts should end by way of dialog. The International community should support effective means of prevention and limitation of wars.’ Would that Santos had spoken with the Colombians and not only with the FARC in Cuba, in the badly named ‘peace negotiations’. ‘Conflicts should end by way of dialog’. That variation of pacifist ideology does not withstand analysis. It does not respect the facts. There are conflicts that can only be ended by force, allied to the law, for the neutralization and destruction of the aggressor; not by way of a ‘dialog’....”*

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## Venezuelan Government Strategy

**OE Watch Commentary:** Sometimes foreign advice and intervention regarding Venezuela's internal woes is what it seems. Luis Zapatero is an ex-president of Spain and Ernesto Samper an ex-president of Colombia. As related by the first accompanying opinion, they have come together, lending their good offices, to give advice to the heterogonous opposition to Venezuela's regime. Their advice to the opposition is that it give up trying to toss out the bolivarians and instead become more loyal and cooperative. The two former presidents' advice apparently reflects the current Venezuelan government's policy. Notably, Zapatero and Samper are both from left-leaning parties with expressed sympathies for the bolivarian movement, of which the current Venezuelan regime is a part.

The second reference adds a more ominous angle that begs a question. It is an explicit warning by the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro that Colombia not meddle in the question of bolivarian control of the Venezuelan state. The cautionary expression makes us wonder if it is the product of growing paranoia or a calculated effort to back Colombian President Santos away from public enthusiasm for bolivarian concessions toward its opposition. Nicolas Maduro also makes what some might receive as self-deluding bluster — that Venezuela is a bulwark for stability and peace in the continent. Actually, that might not be far from the truth if one's definition of stability is the durability of control by a leftist party, and one's definition of peace is the suppression of dissent and the submission of political opponents. Nevertheless, the true colors of the Maduro policy are made clear. The bolivarian 'Revolution' is not taking any steps back. The party's control mechanisms also bespeak that resolve, and are elegant indeed. As the third passage notes, in Venezuela, the bolivarian military increasingly is in control of whether and what people will eat. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...the proposition is made openly to slacken what has been the battle flag for 18 years...”*

**Source:** Carlos Blanco, Venezuela: Acuerdo para la rendición incondicional (Venezuela: Agreement for Unconditional Surrender),” *El Nacional*, 25 January 2017. <http://www.el-nacional.com/autores/carlos-blanco>

*“The project for achieving an agreement proposed by ex-presidents [of Spain and Colombia, respectively] Zapatero and Samper is not so much a fraud, but rather a text in which the proposition is made openly to slacken what has been the battle flag [of the opposition] for 18 years: the exit of the regime and its replacement by a democratic government.”*

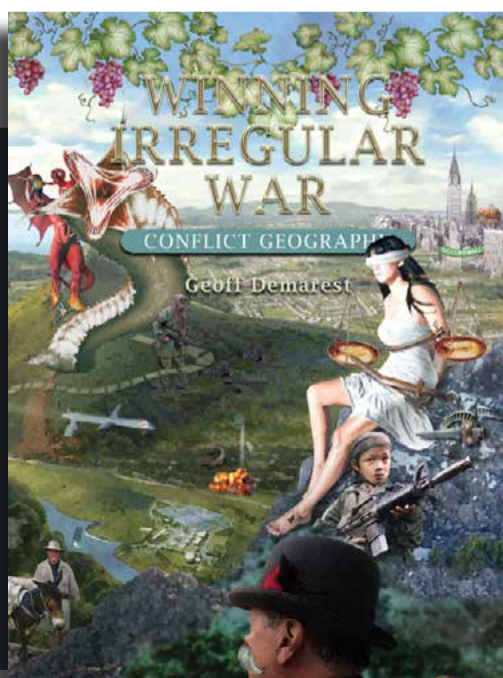
*“There will be no peace in Colombia if they destabilize the bolivarian revolution...”*

**Source:** Editors, Maduro: “No habra paz en Colombia si se mete con la revolucion (Maduro: There will not be peace in Colombia if it meses with the revolution),” *Taringa*, 12 February 2017. <http://www.taringa.net/post/info/19772758/Maduro-No-habra-paz-en-Colombia-si-se-mete-con-la-revolucion.html>

*“...President Nicolas Maduro said that ‘there will be no peace in Colombia if they destabilize the peace in Venezuela, I demand maximum respect for the peace in our country’. He added that ‘those who conspire from outside [the country] had better think and think again. Venezuela is a strong point and bulwark for stability and peace in the continent. There will be no peace in Colombia if they destabilize the bolivarian revolution’.*

**Source:** Ibsen Martínez, “Venezuela: Hambruna y militares (Venezuela: Starvation and the military),” *Para Rescatar el Porvenir*, 25 January 2017. <https://pararescatarelporvenir.wordpress.com/2017/01/25/ibsen-martinez/>

*“...President Nicolas Maduro said that ‘there will be no peace in Colombia if they destabilize the peace in Venezuela, I demand maximum respect for the peace in our country’. He added that ‘those who conspire from outside [the country] had better think and think again. Venezuela is a strong point and bulwark for stability and peace in the continent. There will be no peace in Colombia if they destabilize the bolivarian revolution’.*



**Geoff Demarest's *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.' In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest raises new and overlooked concepts related to modern conflict in a provocative manner designed to stir up debate and critical thinking. As Geoff Demarest puts it: "I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious."**

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW_2015.pdf)



## Trade Deals Hail New Cooperation between Argentina and Japan

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Japan and Argentina have never been enemies, they have not been allies either. Instead, their relationship has been characterized by insignificant engagement and sporadic high level visits over the last six decades. However, recent developments signal that this tide may be turning. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's recent visit to Argentina coupled with Argentinian President Mauricio Macri's plans to expand relations with Japan have created an unprecedented moment in bilateral relations between the two countries. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss this trend.

Argentinian President Mauricio Macri, who took office in November 2015, is looking to re-engage foreign partnerships ignored or pushed to the side during the Kircher administrations (2003-2014) and he currently has his sights set on Japan. As the first passage discusses, this "paradigm shift" is supported by a visit from Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on 21 November 2016, during which both sides agreed to deepen bilateral relations, increase trade and establish a bilateral "strategic alliance." As the passage notes, Japanese companies see a lot of potential in Argentina and the Japanese state will provide financial support to these companies to invest in Argentina.

More specifically, Japan is interested in investing in transport, energy, agriculture, and commercial electronics while Argentina is interested in increasing exports and reaping the benefits of foreign investment. These new agreements signal a significant departure from Argentina's previously sluggish trade relationship with Japan. For example, as the second excerpt points out, Argentina currently ranks 55 in the list of countries that trade with Japan while neighboring Brazil has reaped extensive economic benefits from its relationship with Japan. According to the third passage, the new agreements with Japan herald economic and commercial bonds that were "previously unthinkable". In Argentina's era of re-engagement, the hope is to create lasting and significant economic impact within the country, which now looks more feasible than ever. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*"...from now on they will reinforce an economic and commercial bond that was previously unthinkable."*

**Source:** "Argentina y Japón elevan a nivel de "asociación estratégica" el vínculo bilateral (Argentina and Japan Elevate Strategic Association via Bilateral Agreements)," *Telam*, 17 November 2016. <http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201611/171131-argentina-japon-asociacion-estrategica-vinculo-bilateral.html>

*"We have agreed to build a strategic partnership to further advance the relations between our countries. We have also agreed to promote trade between the two countries. In the economic field, Japanese companies have a lot of interest in Argentina, which has enormous potential," Abe said to a euphoric Macri. The gesture is not minor. From now on, the Japanese state will provide financial support to the companies in their country to invest in Argentina. It will do so through the Foreign Trade Organization of Japan (JETRO) and this turns out to be a paradigm shift. During the 12 years of the Kirchner government and with a country in default, the Japanese state did not endorse any investment project in Argentina.*

**Source:** "Argentina y los desafíos del mercado japonés (Argentina and its Challenges with the Japanese Market)," *Infobae*, 21 November 2016. <http://www.infobae.com/opinion/2016/11/21/argentina-puede-abrir-las-puertas-grandes-del-mercado-japones-al-mercosur/>

*Per data from the UN, Argentina ranks 55th in the list of countries that trade with Japan. Last year there was a total of \$1.22 billion in exports and purchases from Tokyo for \$572 million. Very small figures if one compares the large volume of Japan's trade with Brazil. Today, Japan's investments in Argentina are around \$100 million per year. That is, 30 times less than the capital invested in Brazil.*

**Source:** "Shinzo Abe: "Japón apoya la apertura que lidera Macri" (Shinzo Abe: Japan Supports Opening Offered by Macri)," *La Nacion*, 21 November 2016. <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1958032-shinzo-abe-japon-apoya-la-apertura-que-lidera-macri>

*"Macri and Abe are greatly increasing trade and business opportunities between the two countries. Diplomatic sources from Japan and Argentina concurred during an interview with La Nacion that, "from now on they will reinforce an economic and commercial bond that was previously unthinkable."*



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## Argentina Purchases Israeli Military Equipment to Monitor Drug Trafficking

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 2 January 2017, the Argentinian government agreed to purchase four Israeli high-speed and fully armed river patrol vessels, together with an integrated vigilance system. The vigilance system will be used to monitor the Parana River where large-scale drug shipments enter Argentina from Paraguay and Bolivia. The new vessels are imperative to fulfill the Macri administration's goals of modernizing its military force and counter-acting the exacerbation of drug trafficking activity in the country; particularly in littoral areas where vigilance is not as robust as it could be. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss the importance of the new patrol vessels.

The first passage discusses the details of the deal and notes that the vessels will be operating along the Parana River, which is one of Argentina's main entries of marihuana and cocaine from central South America. The Argentinian government has been proactive in monitoring drug shipments, but has lacked the resources necessary to monitor the Parana River given that its area of responsibility covers over 3200 miles of coastal areas and rivers. As the second passage discusses, traffickers have taken advantage of this situation and are currently using amphibious aircraft to drop shipments along the Parana River.

In the third excerpted passage, Claudio Izaguirre of the Argentinian Anti-Drug Association points out in an interview with Paraguayan news source *La Nacion*, that traffickers prefer amphibious aircraft to traditional fluvial transportation (boats/cargo vessels) as they are able to land directly in the Parana River and drop shipments into fast-boats that quickly move shipments to safe-houses. Amphibious flights are also able to fly at low altitudes which allows them to avoid aerial radar systems. At present, Izaguirre indicated that his organization detects up to 20 amphibious flights a week, but the hope is that with the new Israeli vessels, the Prefectura Naval will be able to interdict shipments and thwart trafficking in a more effective manner. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The Shaldag ISL class patrols will be operating along the Parana river, which is one of Argentina’s main entries of marihuana and cocaine from central South America.”*



Map showing the Paraná River and its tributaries.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Riodelaplatabasinmap.png>

File:Riodelaplatabasinmap.png

**Source:** “Argentina se arma con tecnología militar israelí para combatir narcotráfico (Argentina Purchases Military Equipment from Israel to Combat Drug Trafficking),” *PanamPost*, 02 January 2017. <https://es.panampost.com/raquel-garcia/2017/01/02/argentina-militar-israeli-narcotrafico/>

*On 02 January 2017, the Macri administration announced the purchase of four Israeli high speed and fully armed river patrol vessels, together with an integrated vigilance system for land border crossings, with a total bill of eighty million dollars. The Shaldag ISL class patrols will be operating along the Parana river, which is one of Argentina’s main entries of marihuana and cocaine from central South America. They can accelerate up to 40 knots in seconds and carry two guns, a 25mm Typhoon in the bow and a 20mm Oerlikon in the stern plus two machine guns. Highly versatile and with great mobility, given its small draft, the vessels can also carry a 12-men landing group for special operations.*

**Source:** “La fragil frontera norte (The Fragile Northern Border),” *La Nacion*, 17 November 2013. <http://servicios.lanacion.com.ar/archivo/2013/11/17/024/DT>

*A spokesperson for the Prefectura Naval of Argentina stated the use of amphibious aircraft along fluvial routes is not surprising because traffickers realize it is impossible for authorities to monitor all coastal and river activity at all times, as the Prefectura is responsible for more than 5,117 km of coastline and rivers. During an interview with *La Nacion*, the spokesperson indicated that “there are large extensions of unmonitored river systems in the north, northeast and eastern sectors of Argentina which drug traffickers have taken advantage of. From these locations, they are able to drop their shipments for local distribution and foreign export.”*

**Source:** “Los isleños del Delta del Paraná viven acosados por el narcotráfico (Islanders in the Parana Delta Live in Fear of Drug Traffickers),” *El Tiempo*, 15 November 2016. <http://tiempo.infonews.com/nota/13388/los-islenos-del-delta-del-parana-viven-acosados-por-el-narcotrafico>

*According to *El Tiempo*, the amphibious shipments belong to Bolivian and Paraguayan traffickers, who are well aware of terrestrial Federal Police checkpoints and radar systems that actively scan Argentinian airspace for incoming narco flights. To avoid radar detection pilots are told to fly at low altitudes. Regarding coordination and drop points, Izaguirre indicated that pilots use GPS coordinates and drop shipments to awaiting fast-boats only if there is no sign of police or military activity in and around the area.*



## MS-13 Gang Calls for Truce to End Violence

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December 2016, the MS-13, a major gang in El Salvador voiced their desire to create a definitive pact to end violence and reintegrate themselves into society. This follows unprecedented murder rates following the collapse of a previous truce proposed in 2012. The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss the significance of this development, and how it is different than the previous truce.

The first passage notes the MS-13's declaration that it "prefers to continue dialogue options with the government instead of resorting to violence". This proposal appears to be different than the 2012 truce, for two reasons. First, the group is proposing that the government create a process that would allow active members to leave the gang if they wish to do so and help re-integrate them into society. The cost of this process is estimated at \$12,000 per gang member. Second, as the second excerpt discusses, the MS-13 spokesperson in charge of negotiations proposed dismantling the gang; a significant proposal which has never been discussed or even considered before. However, as the third passage discusses, as willing as the gang may be to negotiate, the government is hesitant and has to consider the willingness of political parties, society, and even the financial ramifications that would need to be considered.

The final passage provides some background on the previous truce. On 9 March 2012, El Salvador's two largest gangs, Mara Salvatrucha-13 (MS-13) and Barrio 18 announced a truce claiming that they were tired of the violence and constant murders. This truce also consisted of deals with the government to transfer certain high ranking gang members to different prisons and allowed gang members other benefits. In the short term, the truce was hailed as a success because it cut violence rates in half and helped bring homicide rates in the region to a 10-year low. Unfortunately, this truce only lasted 15 months and once it collapsed, murder rates surged by nearly 70% in late 2013. *La Nacion* indicates that the truce initially worked because the Salvadoran government tacitly supported it, but their rhetoric changed in mid-2014. Since the end of the truce, violence and gang activity has continued and even worsened, culminating in the current situation and proposal for a new truce. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**Source:** "Lo que se le olvida al gobierno es que al matarnos están matando a la gente que los llevó al poder (What the Government is Forgetting is that by Killing Us, they are Killing the People who Brought them to Power)," *El Faro*, 17 January 2017. <https://elfaro.net/es/201701/salanegra/19750/%E2%80%99CLo-que-se-le-olvida-al-gobierno-es-que-al-matarnos-est%C3%A1n-matando-a-la-gente-que-los-llev%C3%B3-al-poder%E2%80%9D.htm>

*The MS-13 assures that the government's strategy to deal with the gang has failed to corner or weaken them. Instead, group leaders claim that the strategy has encouraged members to take revenge to the extent that they could be the impetus behind a war that would only cause chaos within the country. However, the MS-13 states that it prefers to continue dialogue options with the government instead of resorting to violence.*

**Source:** "MS-13 pide diálogo al gobierno y pone sobre la mesa su propia desarticulación (MS-13 Requests Dialogue with Government and Proposes Dismantling)", *El Faro*, 17 January 2017. <https://elfaro.net/es/201701/salanegra/19747/MS-13-pide-di%C3%A1logo-al-gobierno-y-pone-sobre-la-mesa-su-propia-desarticulaci%C3%B3n.htm>

*The MS13's spokesman insisted that the issue (referring to dismantling the group) can be addressed if they are treated seriously in the negotiations. "The FARC have done it," a spokesman said, referring to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia). "We can not leave saying that we are going to disarm. Everything depends on how the government receives the proposal and the seriousness it gives." He (MS-13 spokesperson) added that they had seen the process of the demobilization of the FARC in Colombia as a model: "After killing people and being terrorists, they are going to reinsert themselves as citizens," he said.*

**Source:** "La Mara Salvatrucha pide dialogo al gobierno de El Salvador (Mara Salvatrucha Requests Dialogue with Government)", *Univision*, 19 January 2017. <http://www.univision.com/noticias/maras/la-mara-salvatrucha-pide-dialogo-al-gobierno-de-el-salvador>

*The President's spokesperson Eugenio Chicas stated the following regarding the proposed deal issued by the MS-13: "It sounds like a well thought and serious proposal, which cannot be given a quick and improvised response. I am not the man indicated to deal with an offer of this kind. This has to be taken care of by Interior Secretary Hato Hasbún, who is responsible for all sorts of dialogues and agreements on behalf of the government." He further added that the possibility of exploring an agreement with the MS-13 depends on several factors: first, the social acceptance of the negotiations; second, the convergence of the political willingness of different parties; and third, the resources needed to finance such a process and the legal discussions that must take place before it starts.*

**Source:** "Así funcionan las pandillas en El Salvador (How Gangs Function in El Salvador)", *La Nacion*, 08 August 2015. [http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/como-funcionan-pandillas-El\\_Salvador\\_0\\_1504449607.html](http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/como-funcionan-pandillas-El_Salvador_0_1504449607.html)

*Gangs in El Salvador are aware that their violence and criminal activity is associated with negative political image and because of this, the El Salvadoran government wants to come to some sort of agreement with gangs but not openly because it shows how much power these gangs possess. For this reason, the Mauricio Funes administration distanced itself from the truce in 2012 but did comply with some gang requests including prison transfers and allowing cell phones in prisons amongst other things. This collaboration resulted in a dramatic reduction in homicides, but when President Salvador Sánchez Cerén took office in June 2014, he reneged on all agreements made by the previous administration which resulted in unprecedented levels of gang violence and a cancellation of the truce.*





## Unprecedented African Migration Reported in Central America

**OE Watch Commentary:** Europe and the United States have historically been popular destinations for African migrants looking to escape poverty and civil wars. However, with many European countries capping the number of asylum seekers they are accepting, the US has become the primary destination for many migrants from Africa. In this journey, most Africans cross the Atlantic Ocean and arrive at the Americas through Brazil. From there, they use routes to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and Honduras to arrive in the US. The accompanying passages discuss the trends in the routes that African migrants are taking, and highlight unprecedented levels of African migration in Central America.

Those that make it to Costa Rica receive help from the Costa Rican government to move north through the country. The only requirement issued by the Costa Rican government is that migrants check in at a migration center every 15 days. From Costa Rica, migrants must pass through Nicaragua on their journey to the US. However, as the first passage discusses, the Nicaraguan government has made this task very difficult. This means that many migrants end up stranded in Costa Rica for longer than expected. The piece also notes that many of the migrants seek out human smugglers to get them across the border.

Honduras and Mexico are also reporting abnormally high numbers of African migrants passing through their territories. The second passage reports that Honduras received over 3,400 migrants this year; 1,205 of which were from the Republic of Congo. Mexico has also seen a dramatic increase of migrants from Africa since 2011. In 2015, over 2,000 migrants, the majority coming from Ghana and Somalia, were detained; up from 280 migrants from Africa (mostly from Eritrea) detained in 2011. In the first seven months of 2016, the number skyrocketed to 4,900, almost entirely from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mexico would likely take steps to re-patriate some of these individuals, but as the third passage discusses, does not have the diplomatic ties with many African nations to do so.

As the second passage discusses, many of these migrants leave their countries due to poverty and violence (in the form of terrorism, civil wars, and dictatorships). They also lack basic living necessities such as safety and adequate health services. Given the trends in Africa, this migration trend is likely to be a growing challenge for many developed nations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“Official reports indicate that up to 11 November 2016, 3,400 people crossed into Honduran territory; 1,205 of which were reported as being from the Republic of Congo. To a lesser extent, authorities also noted an increased influx of migrants from other African countries such as Senegal, Ghana, Somalia, and Cameroon.”*

**Source:** “Cientos de africanos se aglomeran en Peñas Blancas para cruzar a Nicaragua (Hundreds of Africans Congregate at Peñas Blancas Border to Cross into Nicaragua)”, *La Prensa*, 16 June 2016. <http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/06/01/nacionales/2044328-migrantes-africanos-intentan-cruzar-a-nicaragua>

*Nicaragua has maintained a hardline stance against letting migrants without visas pass through the country. Many of the migrants have sought out human smugglers to get them across the border, with varying degrees of success.*

**Source:** “Honduras: Alarmante llegada de africanos en su paso a Estados Unidos (Alarming Number of African Migrants Pass Through Honduras on their Way to the United States)”, *El Heraldo*, 21 November 2016. <http://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/1019616-466/honduras-alarmante-llegada-de-africanos-en-su-paso-a-estados-unidos>

*Official reports indicate that up to 11 November 2016, 3,400 people crossed into Honduran territory; 1,205 of which were reported as being from the Republic of Congo. To a lesser extent, authorities also noted an increased influx of migrants from other African countries such as Senegal, Ghana, Somalia, and Cameroon.*

*In interviews conducted by the authorities to the migrants who use the country as a step to reach the United States, they found out that many leave their country because of poverty, violence (in the form of terrorism, civil wars, and dictatorships) and the lack of basic living necessities. They seek to improve their living conditions. They also found out that some claim they left their country because they do not have adequate health services to treat a disease.*

**Source:** “Mexico enfrenta una oleada de africanos (Mexico Experiences Mass Influx of African Nationals)”, *El Universal*, 30 December 2016. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/nacion/sociedad/2016/12/30/mexico-enfrenta-una-oleada-de-africanos>

*In testimony before the Mexican Senate on Aug. 3, Mexico’s chief immigration officer Ardelio Vargas Fosado said his agency was aware of the influx of migrants from outside the Americas. But the lack of diplomatic relationships between Mexico and many African countries has made it difficult to deport those apprehended, he said.*



Migrants at sea.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/19863662131>



## Street Gangs and Forced Displacements in El Salvador

**OE Watch Commentary:** A new report from El Salvador says that the country's street gangs accounted for 84 percent of forced displacements in 2016. While forced displacements have been an issue in the Northern Triangle Region (which comprises Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador) for at least a decade, the problem has reached a critical, unprecedented level, in not just El Salvador, but in Guatemala and Honduras as well. The accompanying passages discuss this trend.

The first discusses a report by ten NGO's which found that the two main gangs in El Salvador—the Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) and their rivals, the Barrio 18—accounted for two thirds of all forced displacements in the country. The second passage discusses that forced displacement by gangs is also problematic in Honduras, and just as in El Salvador, is much more prevalent now, compared to ten years ago. Gangs are operational in 40 percent of Honduras, with major strongholds in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Another factor that has changed over the last decade is that gangs now control both impoverished and middle class neighborhoods whereas before they only targeted low-income neighborhoods. This is also true in El Salvador. In fact, many families are forced to pay extortion fees to live in their own homes. As the second passage discusses, the extortion and violence exerted by gangs leads to forced displacement of entire neighborhoods as families have chosen to flee for their own safety.

The third passage discusses the importance of territory. The more a group controls, the more power they exert and the more cash they generate. Unless governments in these countries take steps to stop the blatant abuse of normal citizens, gangs will continue to cause forced displacement in a region where there is no place else to go but north. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The fundamental objective of criminal gangs in Central America is territorial dominance and control of black market operations (selling drugs and weapons). In short, more territory equates to more control and more revenue.”*

**Source:** “Pandillas de El Salvador responsables de 84% de desplazamiento forzado (Gangs in El Salvador Responsible for 84% of Forced Displacement in the Country)”, *La Voz de Honduras*, 17 January 2017. <http://radiohrn.hn/l/noticias/pandillas-de-el-salvador-responsables-de-84-de-desplazamiento-forzado>

*According to the report by the Civil Society Roundtable Against Forced Displacement by Violence and Organized Crime in El Salvador (Observatorio de la Mesa de Sociedad Civil contra el Desplazamiento Forzado por Violencia y Crimen Organizado en El Salvador) — which is comprised of ten non-governmental organizations — the Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) was responsible for about a third of the forced displacements caused by the gangs, while their rivals in the Barrio 18 accounted for another third.*

**Source:** “ACNUR: las maras son en El Salvador la principal causa de “desplazamiento forzado” (ACNUR: Las Maras in El Salvador are the Principal Cause of Forced Displacement)”, *El Faro*, 19 March 2016. <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201403/internacionales/15084>

*For the most part, citizens flee from the communities in the face of death threats, to ensure that their children are not recruited at force by the gang, or to avoid paying weekly or monthly extortion payments. In Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, thousands of citizens have also fled after having their homes seized by gang members.*

**Source:** “Así funcionan las pandillas en El Salvador (How Gangs Operate in El Salvador)”, *La Nacion*, 17 August 2016. [http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/como-funcionan-pandillas-El\\_Salvador\\_0\\_1504449607.html](http://www.nacion.com/mundo/centroamerica/como-funcionan-pandillas-El_Salvador_0_1504449607.html)

*The fundamental objective of criminal gangs in Central America is territorial dominance and control of black market operations (selling drugs and weapons). In short, more territory equates to more control and more revenue. It also aids in the intelligence collection process as gangs can place more informants in areas they control.*



China's cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and inference. The policy appears to have three vectors. These three aspects—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/3Faces%20of%20the%20Dragon.pdf>



## Brazilian Criminal Groups Seeking FARC Dissidents

**OE Watch Commentary:** *La Semana* is reporting that the largest criminal organization in South America (The First Capital Command or Primeiro Comando da Capital, or PCC) is actively looking to recruit FARC dissidents who do not want to take part in the demobilization process. The accompanying passages discuss the risks involved in such a development.

As the first passage notes, there are multiple reasons why the PCC would be interested in aligning with FARC dissidents. These include the opportunity to receive weapons and training needed to fight against Brazil's armed forces, and control of key trafficking routes in Colombia. With a presence in two-thirds of Brazil, the PCC is currently considered Brazil's largest and most powerful criminal group. It also maintains powerful ties with criminal groups in Bolivia and Paraguay. Given these links, the proposed recruitment of FARC dissidents could undo much of the work that was put into the reconciliation process in Colombia and even increase trafficking operations in the region.

The Colombian government currently estimates there are anywhere between 150-300 FARC dissidents that the PCC may try to recruit. According to the first passage from *La Semana*, the PCC is particularly interested in two key leaders known as Gentil Duarte and Francisco Javier Builes, aka John 40; but especially in John 40 as he is a powerful leader within the FARC and was previously in charge of financial operations in the Bloque Oriental. As the second passage discusses, Colombian and Brazilian leaders are working together and recently met in Manaus, Brazil to discuss possible strategies to thwart PCC recruitment of FARC dissidents. Given the work that was put into stabilizing Colombia, it is of utmost importance to the government to keep the PCC out of Colombian territory. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The PCC, the largest criminal organization in South America, is looking to recruit FARC dissidents in an effort to obtain weapons and military training needed to fight against Brazil’s armed forces.”*

**Source:** “Las grandes pandillas brasileñas reclutan disidentes de las FARC (Powerful Brazilian Gangs Look to Recruit FARC Dissidents)”, *La Semana*, 02 February 2017. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/pcc-de-brasil-recluta-a-disidentes-de-las-farc/514105>

*The PCC, the largest criminal organization in South America, is looking to recruit FARC dissidents in an effort to obtain weapons and military training needed to fight against Brazil’s armed forces. Simultaneously, the PCC is also interested in expanding their operations into Colombia with the intent of cutting out intermediaries to obtain cocaine. Key leaders they are looking to recruit include Gentil Duarte and Francisco Javier Builes, aka John 40.*

**Source:** “Las pandillas brasileñas importan ex guerrilleros colombianos (Brazilian Gangs Import Ex-Colombian Guerillas)”, *El Periodico de Mexico*, 31 January 2017. <http://www.newsjs.com/url.php?p=http://elperiodicodemexico.com/nota.php?id=846352&sec=Internacional-Seguridad>

*Concerned with information regarding the possible PCC recruitment of FARC dissidents, government leaders from Colombia and Brazil met in Manaus in late January. During this meeting, they agreed to reinforce border security, increase information sharing, and coordinate efforts to dismantle these organizations and/or inhibit collaboration between them as primary steps in dealing with this situation.*

## Suheil al-Hassan and the Syrian Army's Tiger Forces

By Lucas Winter

This paper looks at the genesis, evolution and growth of the Syrian Army's "Tiger Forces" and their leader Suheil al-Hassan. The paper shows how Hassan has played an important role since conflict began in 2011. It attributes his transformation from special forces commander to leader of military campaigns to an ability to harness the Syrian Army's full infantry, artillery and airpower better than any other loyalist field commander. Given the Syrian Army's manpower shortages, rampant corruption and rivalry-laden bureaucracy, this is no small feat. Al-Hassan has become a key symbol in the Syrian loyalist camp, able to project more combined arms power than anyone else in Syria. His success on the battlefield comes less from tactical or strategic insights than from his ability to thrive within the loyalist camp's opaque and rivalry-laden bureaucracy. For this he has become a symbol to regime supporters, proof that the war can be won by working within the system.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Small%20Wars%20Journal%20-%20Suheil%20al-Hassan%20and%20the%20Syrian%20Army%E2%80%99s%20Tiger%20Forces%20-%202016-07-22.pdf>





# DPRK Committed to Ballistic Missile Program

**OE Watch Commentary:** Despite extensive sanctions and UN Security Council Resolutions condemning the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) for pursuing nuclear and ballistic missile technology, Kim Jung Un continues to conduct missile test launches. The DPRK considers the advancement of their missile program a matter of grave concern regarding their own national defense.

The accompanying piece from the official North Korean newspaper, *Rodong Sinmun* refers to their nuclear missile capabilities as an essential deterrent against the “US nuclear war threat.” Annual nuclear war exercises conducted by the US and the Republic of Korea along with the launching of Minuteman-3 by the US are perceived as direct threats against the Kim Regime. The piece notes that the US “is kicking up a fuss” over the DPRK’s ballistic missile program while allowing other nations around the world to pursue additional missile capabilities. It claims that this double standard reveals that the US is not acting out of a desire for peace but a strategic aspiration for regional hegemony.

The strong rhetoric indicates the DPRK’s resolve to continue their nuclear and missile programs despite consistent international pressure to cease all missile and nuclear testing. Becoming a formidable nuclear power remains the keystone to their strategy for maintaining regional autonomy.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Galluzzi)**

**Source:** Pae, H.-t. “Intercontinental Ballistic Rocket Test Launch Cannot Become a Bone of Contention,” *Rodong Sinmun*, 20 January 2017. [https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_200\\_203\\_121123\\_43/content/Display/KPO2017012002432908](https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_200_203_121123_43/content/Display/KPO2017012002432908)

*The United States is kicking up a fuss and is frightened to death by the fact that our preparation for an intercontinental ballistic rocket test launch has reached the final stage.*

*Our intercontinental ballistic rocket test launch aimed at countering the United States’ nuclear war threat ... is a part of the consolidation of our national defense capabilities... Around the world, many countries have launched intercontinental ballistic rockets. If intercontinental ballistic rocket launches are a provocation and a threat, as the United States argues, all of these countries should have become issues.*

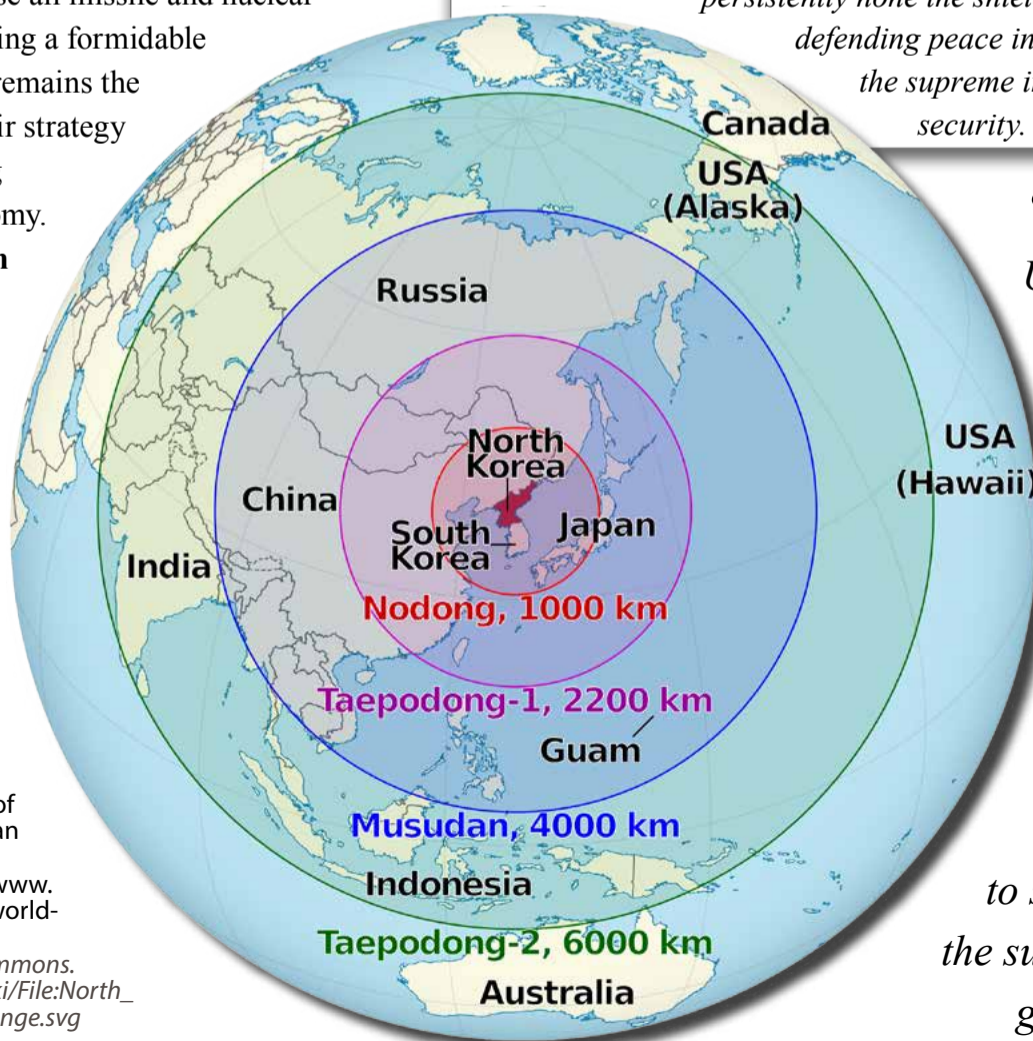
*It is a well-known fact in the world that the United States, while conducting the test launch of “Minuteman-3,” an ICBM, last year, openly raved that this was “to signal the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea.”*

*Mobilizing the South Korean puppets and enormous forces, it is staging nuclear war exercises every year in order to carry out preemptive attacks on our Republic.*

*The reason that the United States takes issue with our intercontinental ballistic rocket test launch is because the destiny of its strategy for hegemony over Asia and the Pacific is at risk.*

*It is natural that, as long as the United States is making a last-ditch, desperate effort to plunge the place of our nation’s existence into nuclear catastrophe and to place peace in the Asia-Pacific region and in the rest of the world in jeopardy, we will even more persistently hone the shield of justice and the precious nuclear sword of defending peace in order to safeguard the destiny of the nation, the supreme interests of the country, and global peace and security.*

*“It is natural that, as long as the United States is making a last-ditch, desperate effort to plunge the place of our nation’s existence into nuclear catastrophe and to place peace in the Asia-Pacific region and in the rest of the world in jeopardy, we will even more persistently hone the shield of justice and the precious nuclear sword of defending peace in order to safeguard the destiny of the nation, the supreme interests of the country, and global peace and security.”*



Estimated maximum range of some North Korean missiles based on data from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21710644>.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North\\_Korean\\_missile\\_range.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Korean_missile_range.svg)



## The Chinese Navy's Growing Might

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past year, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has been making huge strides toward modernization. The following two excerpted articles from Chinese sources highlight some of that progress.

According to the first article, China now has six electronic-reconnaissance vessels, the latest one (*Kaiyangxing*) of which was commissioned in January. *Kaiyangxing* is reportedly "so sophisticated that only a few countries, such as the United States and Russia, are capable of developing it." According to the second article, the PLAN has also commissioned its fifth Type 052D guided missile destroyer. Known as the *Xining*, it "has a stealth design and can act as a flagship for a strike group." Because of its capability, the destroyer has been dubbed by some as a "carrier killer." As the PLAN's "mightiest destroyer," the Type 052D is the country's most "capable fleet escort."

China is believed to be modernizing its navy for a number of reasons including the desire to dominate and defend its claim over the South China Sea; to defend its commercial sea lines of communication; to displace US influence in the Western Pacific; and to assert its status as a leading regional and major world power. Furthermore, China appears to be increasing the pace of its modernization efforts. In addition to the growing number of destroyers heavily armed with an array of cutting edge technologies and weapons, we can also expect to see more electronic intelligence platforms and highly capable platforms. These include China's first domestically designed aircraft carrier, which will deploy domestically developed J-15 fighter jets. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“The Type 052D class is deemed by military experts to be the mightiest destroyer and the most capable fleet escort deployed by the PLA Navy. With a large load of anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles, it has been described by some Western observers as a ‘carrier killer’.”*

**Source:** Zhao Lei, “New PLA Navy Ship Unveiled,” *China Daily*, 12 January 2017. [http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2017-01/12/content\\_15556017.html](http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2017-01/12/content_15556017.html)

### ***Vessel has top speed of 37 km/h and displacement of 6,000 metric tons***

*The Kaiyangxing is capable of conducting all-weather, round-the-clock reconnaissance on multiple and different targets, the report said, adding that the ship is so sophisticated that only a few countries, such as the United States and Russia, are capable of developing it.*

*“The fact that we are facing an increasing number of difficulties when we safeguard our maritime interests means that we require more reconnaissance ships to support the PLA Navy’s operations on the open sea,” he said. “In addition, our future carrier battle groups also need such vessels that can provide various kinds of theater intelligence.”*

*In 2016, the PLA Navy commissioned a total of 18 ships, including a Type 052D guided missile destroyer, three Type 054A guided missile frigates, and six Type 056 corvettes.*

*China is now building a domestically designed aircraft carrier in Dalian, Liaoning province. According to Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun, the new carrier will have a displacement of 50,000 tons and will deploy domestically developed J-15 fighter jets.*

**Source:** Zhau Lei, “New ‘Carrier Killer’ Delivered to Fleet,” *China Daily*, 24 January 2017. [http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2017-01/24/content\\_15562973.html](http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2017-01/24/content_15562973.html)

### ***New ‘Carrier Killer’ Delivered to Fleet***

*The Type 052D class is deemed by military experts to be the mightiest destroyer and the most capable fleet escort deployed by the PLA Navy. With a large load of anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles, it has been described by some Western observers as a “carrier killer”.*

*According to military sources, a Type 052D destroyer has a full displacement of nearly 7,000 metric tons and a wide range of weapons, including a single-barrel 130-mm naval gun and a close-in weapon system as well as a total of 64 HHQ-9 long-range anti-aircraft missiles and YJ-18 or YJ-83 anti-ship cruise missiles. Adopting a host of cutting-edge technologies, the vessel features a low radar signature, a high information level, and a state-of-the-art phased array radar.*



052D class destroyer.  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:052d.jpg>



## Xi Jinping: The Center of China's Universe

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since Xi Jinping took control of the People's Republic of China, the country's military has been undergoing a radical transformation. The accompanying passages from Chinese sources discuss this transformation, Xi Jinping's complete control over it, and the elements that Chinese officials view as essential to creating "a world-class military."

The first article offers an overview of the country's progress toward reshaping the military thus far. The armed forces have been streamlined and senior governing bodies have been reorganized. Each branch of the armed forces has been formally established, while the top four PLA departments –staff, politics, logistics, and armaments have been disbanded and replaced by 15 new agencies under the CMC to boost efficiency. The seven military regions were reshuffled into five theater commands and training exercises have intensified. In addition, China has made a number of other "less obvious" administrative changes meant to streamline various military operations. The country has also made progress in producing domestic military technology and weapons and initiated a massive campaign to try to clean up corruption. The latter has resulted in more than 50 senior officers being convicted or placed under disciplinary probes.

The second article discusses Xi Jinping as the core of the Party Central Committee and as the core of the entire Party and notes that this "is the fundamental way of ensuring the realization of the strong military goal and of constructing a world-class military." Both articles drive home the concept of Xi Jinping having complete control over the entire transformation, which has been ongoing since he took power in 2012. Some outside observers have argued that granting Xi the power of a core leader, which has the ingredients of a dictatorship, could jeopardize China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi\\_Jinping\\_Sept.\\_19,\\_2012.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Xi_Jinping_Sept._19,_2012.jpg)

*“The reform has resulted in the biggest overhaul of the People's Liberation Army for several decades. The PLA's senior governing bodies up to the level of the Central Military Commission were reshuffled, the regional command was reorganized, and new units were established to prepare for wars in cyberspace and even space itself.”*

**Source:** Zhao Lei, "PLA Restructures to Meet New Challenges," *China Daily*, 10 January 2017. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-01/11/content\\_27920160.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-01/11/content_27920160.htm)

### ***PLA Restructures to Meet New Challenges***

*In the past 12 months, China has carried out a number of measures to streamline its armed forces and prepare them for the challenges posed by modern warfare.*

*The reform has resulted in the biggest overhaul of the People's Liberation Army for several decades. The PLA's senior governing bodies up to the level of the Central Military Commission were reshuffled, the regional command was reorganized, and new units were established to prepare for wars in cyberspace and even space itself.*

*Looking back at the timeline, it seems clear that President Xi Jinping, who is also chairman of the commission, probably decided to revolutionize the armed forces when he was elected top leader in November 2012.*

**Source:** “坚定维护核心 坚决听党指挥 (Firmly Safeguard the Core of the Party and Resolutely Listen to the Party's Commands),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 4 February 2017. [http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content\\_7475470.htm](http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_7475470.htm)

### ***Firmly Safeguard the Core of the Party and Resolutely Listen to the Party's Commands***

*To firmly safeguard General Secretary Xi Jinping as the core of the Party Central Committee and as the core of the entire Party is the fundamental way of ensuring the realization of the strong military goal and of constructing a world-class military. Currently, our military is at the historical crossing point of transitioning from being big to being strong. To advance on this road we will encounter many [difficult situations such as the historical battles at] “Loushan Pass” [or] “Lazikou Pass.” When we encounter this kind or that kind of hidden shoals and dangerous reefs or danger zones, we must always persist in absolute leadership of the Party over the military and always persist in having Chairman Xi as the core that navigates [and] grasps the rudder.*



## Can ISIS Gain a Stronghold in the Philippines?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and his administration expect more violence as the country's military continues offensive operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group and others affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Much of Duterte's concern, according to the first article, is centered on Abu Sayyaf and its senior leader Isnilon Hapilon. The president argues that the impending crackdown by the United States on ISIS militants could cause ISIS to spill over to the Southern Philippines. He claims that if the terror group loses its land base in the Middle East, "they will start to scatter around the world." He believes their favorite target will be the southern part of the Philippines and goes on to warn that the situation will become bloody.

According to the second article, in late December 2016, the ISIS leadership reached out to Hapilon to instruct him to locate an area in Mindanao, a large island in southern Philippines, and establish a caliphate. According to the article, ISIS finds that Mindanao would be more conducive to establishing a caliphate as opposed to smaller islands where they can be trapped in the area. This idea of establishing a caliphate in the southern Philippines reportedly goes back to similar efforts beginning in 2016. It is worth noting that Hapilon was reportedly injured during an air raid this year, which offers a degree of uncertainty regarding the collaboration between Abu Sayyaf Group and ISIS.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“Duterte ... warned of bloody consequences in case IS extremists are able to fully penetrate the Abu Sayyaf and other groups in Southern Philippines.”*

**Source:** Christina Mendez, “Violence Seen to Persist in Mindanao Due to IS,” *Philstar*, 3 February 2017. <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/02/04/1668900/violence-seen-persist-mindanao-due>

### ***Violence Seen to Persist in Mindanao Due to IS***

*[Philippine President Rodrigo] Duterte also warned of bloody consequences in case IS extremists are able to fully penetrate Abu Sayyaf and other groups in the Southern Philippines.*

*Duterte also noted that the impending crackdown by the United States on the IS militants might spill over to the Southern Philippines.*

*“And if [US President Donald] Trump decides to invade the Middle East and if ISIS loses its land base there, they will start to scatter around the world. Their favorite target would be the southern part of the Philippines,” the President said.*

*“It’s gonna be bloody,” he warned.*

**Source:** Carmela Fonbuena, “ISIS Makes Direct Contact with Abu Sayyaf, Wants Caliphate in PH [the Philippines],” *Rappler*, 26 January 2017. <http://www.rappler.com/nation/159568-isis-direct-contact-isnilon-hapilon>

### ***ISIS Makes Direct Contact with Abu Sayyaf, Wants Caliphate in PH***

*Philippine defense chief Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the leadership of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria made direct contact with Abu Sayyaf senior leader Isnilon Hapilon back in December 2016 to instruct him to find a suitable area to establish a caliphate in Mindanao.*

*“They’ve made contact. One of the leaders in Basilan, Isnilon Hapilon, moved to Central Mindanao allegedly on the behest of ISIS people in the Middle East to find out if Central Mindanao is more conducive to the establishment of their wilayat [caliphate],” Lorenzana said on Thursday, January 26, in a press briefing.*

*Citing intelligence reports, Lorenzana said ISIS finds the islands of Sulu and Basilan, where the Abu Sayyaf Group traditionally operates, too small for a caliphate...They can be easily trapped in the area...*

*Rappler executive editor Maria Ressa reported as early as January 2016 about an ISIS video talking about plans to create a caliphate in Mindanao. Hapilon himself had long ago sworn allegiance to ISIS although the military said there were no direct links until now.*

## **River Flotillas in Support of Defensive Ground Operations: The Soviet Experience**

Lester W. Grau

In the history of warfare, ground and naval forces frequently have to cooperate. There are usually problems putting these two forces together since their missions, equipment, training, communications and mutual unfamiliarity get in the way. These problems are common during transport of ground force equipment and personnel aboard naval vessels, exacerbated during amphibious landings and assaults and very difficult when operating together along major rivers. This article analyzes the Soviet history of defensive river flotilla combat during the first period of the Great Patriotic War (World War II against Germany). It outlines missions, the operational environment, lessons learned, the command and control problems experienced between naval and ground forces and the challenges of conducting such operations.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/River%20Flotillas%20in%20Support%20of%20Defensive%20Ground%20Operations%20The%20Soviet%20Experience.pdf>



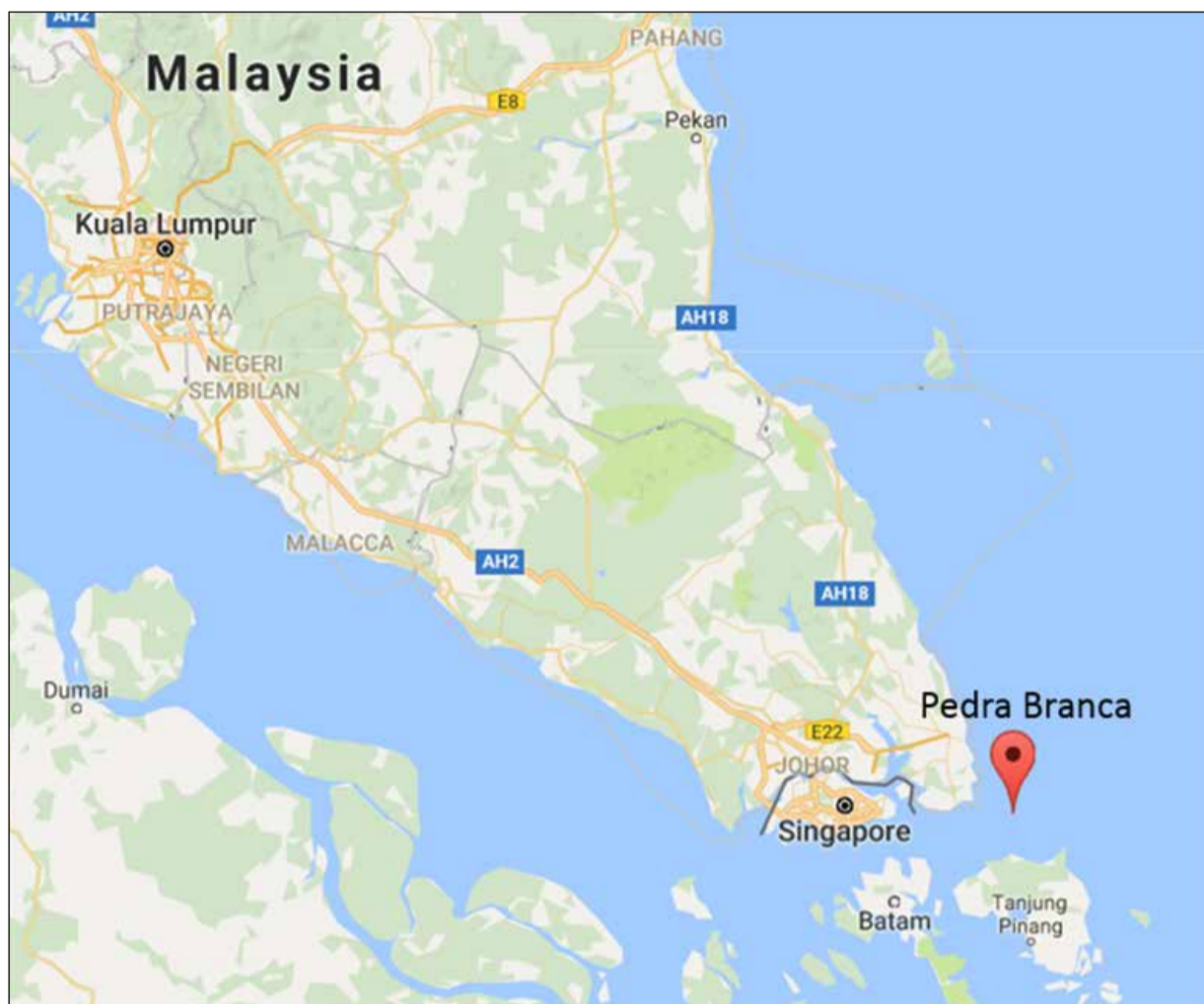
## Territorial Dispute between Singapore and Malaysia is Revived

**OE Watch Commentary:** After nearly a decade-long resolution, a territorial dispute between Malaysia and Singapore has been revived. The 6.2 acre island, known as Pedra Branca in Singapore and Pulau Batu Puteh in Malaysia, is located 30 kilometers east of Singapore and 15 kilometers off peninsular Malaysia's southern coast. According to the website of Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the island has long been of strategic importance in commanding "the entire eastern approach to the Straits of Singapore, through which almost 900 ships pass daily."

As the accompanying article in *The Malay Mail* discusses, the dispute can be traced back to 1980 when Malaysia published a map that showed the island to be within its territorial waters, triggering a territorial dispute that would last for nearly three decades. Finally, in 2008, the dispute was resolved when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) granted ownership to Singapore. The ICJ had concluded that since Singapore acted as an authority in granting or not granting Malaysian officials' permission to survey the waters around the island, and Malaysia reacted to neither Singaporean flag nor military equipment on the island, that it should belong to Singapore. The case was closed...until recently.

Sometime between August 2016 and January 2017, the United Kingdom released some documents to the public, reigniting the dispute. The documents included "private letters of Singapore's colonial authorities from 1958, a British Navy incident report from the same year, and an annotated map of naval operations from the 1960s." Since going through the documents, whose contents have not yet been disclosed, Malaysia is claiming that had the Court been aware of these documents at the time of its decision, it would have reached a different conclusion over who the rightful owner over the island is. As such, Malaysia has made an application to review a 2008 judgment by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the award of Pedra Branca to Singapore. The case is ongoing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*"...the Court would have been bound to reach a different conclusion on the question of sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh had it been aware of this new evidence."*



Pedro Branca island location.  
Source: Google Maps

**Source:** "International Court of Justice – Case concerning sovereignty over Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge," The Website of Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Undated, [https://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media\\_centre/special\\_events/pedrabranca.html](https://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/special_events/pedrabranca.html)

*Pedra Branca is an island that sits at the eastern entrance of the Straits of Singapore. It lies about 24 nautical miles to the east of Singapore.*

*Its location has long been of strategic importance to us as it commands the entire eastern approach to the Straits of Singapore, through which almost 900 ships pass daily.*

**Source:** "Malaysia Basing New Batu Puteh Challenge on Declassified UK Papers," *The Malay Mail*, 4 February 2017. <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/malaysia-basing-new-batu-puteh-challenge-on-declassified-uk-papers>

### **Malaysia Basing New Batu Puteh Challenge on Declassified UK Papers**

*"Malaysia claims that these documents establish the new fact that 'officials at the highest levels in the British colonial and Singaporean administration appreciated that Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh did not form part of Singapore's sovereign territory' during the relevant period," the ICJ said in a statement.*

*"Malaysia argues that 'the Court would have been bound to reach a different conclusion on the question of sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh had it been aware of this new evidence.'"*





## China's National Cyberspace Security Strategy

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late December 2016, China released its *Cyberspace Security Strategy*. The accompanying passages highlight important parts of this document, which was broken into four parts. First, it listed opportunities and challenges, which included new platforms for social governance and new territory for protecting national sovereignty, among other issues. Second, it discussed goals, which included ensuring peace, security, openness, cooperation, and orderliness. Third, it listed principles which covered cyberspace sovereignty, the peaceful use of cyberspace, Internet governance in accordance with the law, and planning cybersecurity and development as a whole. Finally, the document listed nine strategic tasks. They were to safeguard cyberspace sovereignty and national security, protect information's basic infrastructure, enhance China's cyber culture, crack down on cyber terrorism and illegal crimes, improve the Internet governance system, consolidate the basis for cybersecurity, enhance cyberspace protection capabilities, and enhance international cooperation in cyberspace. There was a strong push in the document to support the United Nation's efforts to formulate a universally accepted set of international cyberspace rules and anti-terrorism conventions and to speed up the establishment of an Internet governance system (legal norms, supervision, self-regulation, technical support, social education, etc.). **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

*“...cyberspace is a new territory of national sovereignty. We must build a cyberspace protection force that is commensurate with China's international status and fitting of a strong cyberspace nation, vigorously develop the means of cybersecurity defense, detect and resist cyber intrusion in a timely manner, and cast a strong posterior shield to safeguard national cybersecurity.”*

**Source:** Cyberspace Administration of China release, “National Cyberspace Security Strategy,” December 2016, approved by the Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs, no further information provided.

*We must build and improve the national cybersecurity technology support system; strengthen research into the basic theory and major issues of cybersecurity; strengthen standardization, certification, and accreditation of cybersecurity work, and make more use of standards to correct cyberspace behavior; perform well in fundamental work such as grading protection, risk assessment, and vulnerability discovery to improve cybersecurity monitoring and early warning, and the emergency response handling system for major cybersecurity events.*

*We must implement the cybersecurity human resource project, strengthen development of cybersecurity discipline and profession, build first-class cybersecurity colleges and innovation parks, form an ecological environment that is conducive to personnel training, innovation, and entrepreneurship; run cybersecurity publicity week activities, vigorously carry out national cybersecurity publicity and education; promote bringing cybersecurity education into teaching materials, into schools, and into classrooms to improve cyber media literacy; enhance social awareness and protection technology in cybersecurity; improve the ability of majority of internet users to identify and resist illegal criminal activities such as harmful cyber information and cyber fraud.*

*The cyberspace is a new territory of national sovereignty. We must build a cyberspace protection force that is commensurate with China's international status and fitting of a strong cyberspace nation, vigorously develop the means of cybersecurity defense, detect and resist cyber intrusion in a timely manner, and cast a strong posterior shield to safeguard national cybersecurity.*

*“Cyberspace sovereignty is inviolable. We respect the right of all countries to choose their own development path, cyberspace management mode, internet public policy, and have equal participation in international internet governance. Cyberspace affairs falling within the sovereignty of each country shall be decided by the people of the respective countries. Each country has the right to formulate the relevant cyberspace laws and regulations in accordance with its own national conditions, and draw lessons from international experience to take the necessary measures to manage its domestic information system and cyberspace activities in its own territory; protect its national information system and information resource from intrusion, interference, attack, and sabotage; guarantee the legal rights and interests of its citizens in cyberspace; prevent, deter, and punish the dissemination of harmful information that endanger national security and interests in its own cyberspace.”*

### When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

[http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609\\_Grau\\_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf](http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf)



# China Hails Progress Toward Military Reforms, Improved Jointness

by Peter Wood

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**OE Watch Commentary:** As the major reorganization of the Chinese military neared its one-year anniversary in late December 2016, the Chinese press and propaganda organs reflected on the progress made and steps yet to be taken in this core part of China's military modernization project. The accompanying passage provides one example of this. While the passage highlights improved coordination, it should be noted that joint operations, the ability of the Army, Air Force, Navy and Rocket Forces to work together in coordinated campaigns, still remains a key bottleneck for the PLA. In addition, though the reforms have made major progress toward streamlining the command structures, there are still calls for the PLA to "cast off" old concepts about the predominance of the Ground Forces (PLAGF), indicating that the transition has not gone smoothly.

As the accompanying passage from *China Military*, the news website of the Chinese Armed Forces discusses, PLA Air Force Spokesperson Senior Colonel Shen Jinke (申进科) noted that Chinese aircraft recently overflew the Bashi and Miyako Channels and that this was "the first time for the PLA Air Force aircrafts to fly over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait at the same time, which is different from the previous six open sea trainings in the Western Pacific Ocean..." These two channels are to the North and South of Taiwan, between the island and Okinawa and the Philippines, respectively. Such flights are becoming routine, though they largely represent an aspirational combat capability.

China is attempting to resolve a number of issues that remain in terms of military coordination between disparate regions and between military services. The military reorganization reduced the number of Military Regions from 7 to 5, and streamlined the command structure to prevent bottlenecks in communication due to the Ground Forces' primacy in key organizations. The continuing attention given to "Big Ground Army, Big Military Region System Mindset" (大陆军、大军区体制下的思维定势) is understandable given the virtual omnipresence of Ground Force' officers throughout the previous PLA structure.

The latest Defense White Paper, issued in May 2015, directly addressed the imbalance of influence between the services, calling on the PLA to abandon "the traditional mentality that land outweighs sea," a sentiment that has been echoed in *PLA Daily* editorials. The relegation of the Ground Forces to the role of "one among many" rather than the heart of the PLA is ruffling feathers and smashing "iron rice bowls."

The reorganization and downsizings are just one step in the modernization process. Jointness, in particular is a goal in which there has been some more obvious progress. As the year progressed, a number of exercises were carried out to test the new command structures as well as to practice more basic capabilities such as trans-regional movement and joint operations. Realistic, Joint, and Trans-Regional (跨区) exercises are all focused on this goal. Earlier in 2016, the Navy participated in its longest-distance-ever joint transregional counter-terror exercise in China's Western province.

However, such exercises require an advanced level of coordination that the PLA is unused to. Perhaps tellingly, most long-distance operations are conducted by a single service. The accompanying passage is thus significant in demonstrating the progress made in this area.

The PLA certainly faces a number of structural and technological hurdles to becoming a true peer competitor to the United States. Despite a clear definition of its modernization goals, recognition of continuing weakness, and great strides toward "basically accomplishing mechanization and making major progress in Informationization" by 2020, the odds of making good the reforms and making the PLA a truly joint military in the same time frame—or at least before Xi Jinping steps down, are decreasing. Over the next year more high profile exercises can be expected to hone joint operations and discover remaining bottlenecks in communication. For international analysts, additional attention should be directed toward the theory and progress of PLA joint operations, as well as other keystone concepts such as System of Systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

*“It is the first time for the PLA Air Force aircrafts to fly over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait at the same time, which is different from the previous six open sea trainings in the Western Pacific Ocean, according to media reports.”*

**Source:** "Expert: Chinese air force able to cope with two high sea operations simultaneously," *PLA Daily*, December 29 2016. [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-11/29/content\\_7383359.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-11/29/content_7383359.htm)

*Warplanes of the Chinese PLA Air Force flew over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait to the Western Pacific Ocean for open-sea training on Nov. 25, said Senior Colonel Shen Jinke, spokesperson of the PLA Air Force on Saturday. Shen added that multiple types of warplanes participating in the open-sea training flew over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait at the same time, with the established training objectives achieved. Shen said that the PLA Air Force will continue to organize such routine open-sea training in a bid to further enhance and explore the open-sea operational capabilities of its aviation troops, so as to safeguard national sovereignty, security and peaceful development. It is the first time for the PLA Air Force aircrafts to fly over the Bashi Channel and Miyako Strait at the same time, which is different from the previous six open sea trainings in the Western Pacific Ocean, according to media reports.*



## Bitcoin, Paypal and the Financing of Terrorism in Indonesia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Indonesian's most infamous terrorist overseas is Bahrin Naim, who is a member of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and believed to be in Syria. Naim is suspected of coordinating, or at least inspiring, Indonesians to carry out attacks for ISIS in Indonesia. The most prominent attack he inspired was the January 2016 suicide attacks near a Starbucks at a mall in Jakarta, which killed two civilians and five attackers. Naim, who maintained a blog at the time, indicated that the attacks in Jakarta were intended to duplicate ISIS's massive attack in Paris in November 2015.

While Naim's visible online activities, such as blogging, are known, the excerpted article from *beritaharian* on 9 January discusses Naim's financing operations in Indonesia using Bitcoin and PayPal. Overall, Indonesian's anti-money laundering agency says there were 25 cases in 2016 where digital currencies or online mediums such as Bitcoin and PayPal were used to fund terrorist activities. According to the article, the agency believes the rise in the use of these online mediums for funding terrorism can be attributed to the difficulties and risks in using conventional banking systems. Eventually, the anti-money laundering agency believes that it will learn to track these new types of online money transfers, but by that time—likely in two or three years—the terrorists will have developed new means for transfers that the agency will struggle to track.

The article also points out that the security issues related to hard-to-trace online mediums is not limited only to financial transactions. Telegram is an application that operates on closed forums and is more difficult to track than Twitter or Facebook. It has become popular among ISIS members since 2016 when Twitter began closing down hundreds of ISIS members' accounts. Naim reportedly used Telegram when speaking to a young lady in Indonesia who he introduced to a militant that she ended up marrying. Soon after, the militant convinced her to become a suicide bomber, although the Indonesian security forces broke up her cell before she could carry out at attack near the intended target: the presidential palace in Jakarta. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“[Bahrin Naim] is using online payment services such as PayPal and the digital money Bitcoin to transfer money to movements in Indonesia to finance terrorist activities.”*



Bitcoin is hard for anti-money laundering agencies to trace and is being used for terror financing by an Indonesian ISIS militant.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/mht-bitcoin-soars-in-2016/3661230.html>

**Source:** “Militan Bahrin Naim guna PayPal, Bitcoin pindahkan dana bagi biayai serangan di Indonesi (Militant Bahrin Naim Uses PayPal, Bitcoin, to Transfer Money for Financing Attacks in Indonesian),” *Beritaharian*, 9 January 2017. <http://www.beritaharian.sg/dunia/militan-bahrin-naim-guna-paypal-bitcoin-pindahkan-dana-bagi-biayai-serangan-di-indonesia>

*Bahrin Naim is among the most well-known militants in Indonesia, which is struggling with the terrorism of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Middle East. [Naim] is using online payment services such as PayPal and the digital money Bitcoin to transfer money to movements in Indonesia to finance terrorist activities.*

*The Indonesian Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre [PPATK] said that concealed fraudulent transactions associated with the terrorism ... increased from 12 to 25 cases in 2016. It has been exposed that funds have been transferred to domestic terrorism cells throughout Java, which were recently destroyed by Indonesia's anti-terrorism unit, Detachment 88 (Densus 88).*

*Mr Ivan Yustiavandana, of the PPATK said today we are talking about PayPal, Bitcoin. Two to three years from now, we may be talking about other ways, new ways. The more sophisticated we are in trying to catch them, the more they try to find new ways.*

*Most of them, if not all, receive money and learn to make bombs and launch attacks from Indonesian fighters in ISIS such as Bahrin Naim in Syria, who deliver messages to Indonesia using Telegram. One of the cells intended to attack the Presidential Palace in Jakarta by using a female suicide bomber, but the plan was thwarted by Densus 88.*



## An Updated Look at Kazakhstan's Defense Acquisitions

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has historically been Kazakhstan's main supplier for weapon systems. Several years ago the government of Kazakhstan started to diversify its inventory of weapon systems and equipment through acquisitions from non-Russian defense companies. The accompanying excerpted article from a Kazakh source reports on the recent delivery of four Russian Mi-35M attack helicopters to Kazakhstan; and provides insight into Russia's current position as a supplier of defense acquisitions for Kazakhstan.

As the article reports, the Mi-35M is an export variant of a more advanced Mi-24. The Kazakh government announced the purchase of the Mi-35Ms last year, but the article confirms that the variants of the Mi-24 that had been in service have already been withdrawn from service. This suggests that the process of putting the Mi-35Ms into service moved very quickly. This is likely because, as the article mentions, the 405th Aircraft Factory (see: <http://www.arz405.kz/>) finished assembly and conducted trial flights. This is a notable difference from the purchase of helicopters from Eurocopter (Airbus Group) a few years ago, which involved setting up a new factory to finish assembly in addition to training personnel on a new system. The 405th factory already has the experience and facilities to quickly put the new helicopters into service and while the crews had to undergo additional training in Russia, it did not take long to get everything ready and put into service.

The author predicts that Kazakhstan will acquire more Mi-35Ms in the next few years to replace the Mi-24s. Ultimately, the article demonstrates that Russia remains an important supplier of defense acquisitions for Kazakhstan.

**End OE Watch Commentary**  
(Stein)

*“The ‘Thirty-five’ is a major modernization of the Mi-24V/VP and classified as the Mi-24VM...”*



*“The Mi-35 (Czech Air Force version pictured here) is an export variant of the Mi-24V and includes advanced avionics and targeting systems in addition to being capable of operating at high altitudes and in extreme climates.”*  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mi-35\\_8044.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mi-35_8044.JPG)

**Source:** Bedenko, Grigory, “‘Крокодилы’ в Казахстане: второе пришествие (‘Crocodiles’ in Kazakhstan: the Second Coming),” *Inform Buro*, 19 January 2017. <https://informburo.kz/stati/krokodily-v-kazahstane-vtoroe-prishestvie.html>

### **“Crocodiles” in Kazakhstan: the Second Coming**

*...The new helicopters were bought in Russia in the framework of refitting the Kazakh Air Force. Equipment of this level came to our country after a long break, in connection with the withdrawal from service of the Soviet-built Mi-24V...The “Thirty-five” is a major modernization of the Mi-24V/VP and classified as the Mi-24VM. The export version is Mi-35M. The helicopters that arrived in Kazakhstan are designed the same as those in the Russian Armed Forces...*

*The aircraft performance is designed to operate in different geographical conditions, including high altitude and hot climates... Now it is possible to use precision-guided munitions. The helicopter is equipped with modern avionics and sighting system OPS-24N with a gyro-stabilized optronic station GOES-324...A group of Kazakh pilots and technical personnel were sent to Russia at the beginning of 2016 for training. At the moment there are 12 people trained – four crews...The helicopters arrived in Kazakhstan from Rostov-on-Don in November 2016 in an uncompleted condition. Their assembly and trials were carried out on the 405th aircraft factory, located at the Almaty International Airport... It can be assumed that Kazakhstan's generals have high hopes for the Mi-35M...In the next few years their number will grow to a full squadron, which is known to have from 10 to 30 aircraft...*



## Armenia Looks for Alternative Partners in Security Cooperation

**OE Watch Commentary:** When the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh periodically turns violent, Armenians turn their attention to the country's membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and how the organization might respond based on its collective defense article. The accompanying excerpted articles from Armenian, Azeri and Russian sources report on a recent incident on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and provide insight into how such incidents are perceived in the region. The final passage from an Armenian source suggests that the CSTO is not viewed as an adequate mechanism to ensure Armenia's security; and that Armenia should diversify its partners.

The latest violent incident took place on 29 December on the border, near the Armenia town of Chinari. As the articles from Armenia's *News.am* and Azerbaijan's *Haqqin* demonstrate, each side claimed the other initiated an incursion. Russia's *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* notes a report that the body of an Azerbaijani soldier who was reported missing following the incident, turned up on the Armenian side of the border. The Russian source also claims that the incident took place away from Nagorno-Karabakh. Regardless of the circumstances, sources in Russia and in the region pointed to Azerbaijan as the initiator of the incursion. Additionally, the Armenian *News.am* article includes an embedded video briefing by Armenian officials and this shows the effort Armenia took to state its case that Azerbaijan initiated the incident.

The article from Armenian *Lragir* reports on Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan's visit to Iran and shows the Armenian reaction to the incident. In the article, Defense Minister Sargsyan states that Armenian acquisitions from Russia and through the CSTO are insufficient for the country's security requirements. The CSTO responded to the incident in December by condemning and blaming Azerbaijan, but it did not invoke the collective defense article. Armenian officials have criticized the CSTO and fellow members of the organization for not supporting them in the conflict against Azerbaijan, though the collective defense article had not been seriously considered in previous incidents. The Armenian government signed a joint agreement with Russia on a united defense group in November 2016 that might have allowed Russia to intervene on behalf of Armenia, but there is no mention of this. (For more information see, "The Reaction to the Russian-Armenian Joint Force," in *OE Watch*, January-February 2017) The author of the *Lragir* article speculates that Armenia is looking to form an alternative security system, but based on Sargsyan's comments, this might be more about finding alternative partners for weapons and equipment rather than a new defense agreement. How Russia responds to this remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

**Source:** "Armenia Ombudsman: Azerbaijan deliberately fired at Chinari village," *News.am*, 18 January 2017. <https://news.am/eng/news/368271.html>

### **Armenia Ombudsman: Azerbaijan deliberately fired at Chinari village**

*Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Armenia, Arman Tatoyan, on Wednesday held a press conference. He reflected on the incident that occurred at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border as well as the Azerbaijani army's firing of shots toward Chinari village of Armenia's Tavush Province, on December 29...Tatoyan informed that his representative carried out a fact-finding work at Chinari village, on December 29 and 30... "The incident, from which it all started, was the killing of three Armenian soldiers [by Azerbaijan]..."*

**Source:** "А теперь Минобороны Азербайджана заявило о боях с Арменией (The Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan has now announced the clashes with Armenia)," *Haqqin.az*, 29 December 2016. <http://haqqin.az/news/88655>

*...A reconnaissance group of the Armed Forces of Armenia was ambushed while attempting to violate the border. The enemy was forced to retreat during the clashes, suffering a number of losses. A soldier of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan went missing as a result...*

**Source:** Yuri Roks, "В ОБСЕ вспомнили о карабахском конфликте (They are reminded about the Karabakh conflict in the OSCE)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 January 2017. [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2017-01-12/6\\_6900\\_karabah.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2017-01-12/6_6900_karabah.html)

*The village of Chinari is located away from Nagorno-Karabakh, on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border area. Some people have long abandoned it due to frequent shelling from the Azerbaijani side... The parties to the incident blamed each other...(the OSCE Minsk Group report) also contains a detail which eloquently indicates the initiator of the conflict: on the Armenian side of the border, the dead body of Azerbaijani soldier, reflecting the diversionary sortie.*

**Source:** Naira Hayrumyan, "Հայաստանն այլընտրանքային անվտանգություն և է կառուցում (Armenia is building an alternative security system)," *Lragir*, 30 January 2017. <http://www.lragir.am/index/arm/0/politics/view/146939>

*The Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan is visiting Iran today. At the Army Day celebrations on January 28 he made a remarkable statement about the visit. He said that weapons, purchased within the framework of the Armenian-Russian cooperation and the CSTO (the Collective Security Treaty Organization), are insufficient to ensure Armenia's security requirements, so we are holding talks with Russia and other partner countries to fill our arsenal with weapons...The formation of an alternative, reserve security system is not just a requirement for Armenia to diversify (weapons supply sources), but a matter of national security. Especially in an environment where formal blocs, of which Armenia is a member, repeatedly make it clear that they will not ensure Armenia's security in case of aggression...(Sargsyan) noted that Georgia, for example, is important in terms of various aspects, including strategic...*



## Gauging the Reaction to Pakistan's Babur and Ababeel Missile Tests

**OE Watch Commentary:** The wars and periodic skirmishes between India and Pakistan have had a significant impact on weapons development on both sides. As the accompanying excerpted articles report, Pakistan recently took the latest step when it carried out two important missile tests. The passages from Pakistani and Indian sources demonstrate how the development was reported by each side, providing insight into their threat perceptions.

The articles from Pakistan's *Dawn* and the *Daily Times* report on the successful tests of the Ababeel medium-range ballistic missile and the Babur-3 cruise missile in January. Both articles provide some specifications of the missiles, including the Ababeel's 2200 km range and its payload of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRV), which is the first missile in Pakistan's inventory with this capability. The Babur-3 is notable for being launched from a modified submarine, though neither article mentions that its range is estimated at 450 km, which is less than the range of the ground-launched variants Babur 1 and 2, which is 700 km.

Both Pakistani sources note that the new missiles provide deterrence, but neither believes that they give the country any edge against India. *Dawn* points out how India's Agni-V missile has a longer range than the Ababeel, while the *Daily Times* reports that India already has a seaborne nuclear launch capability with the INS Arihant. The Agni-V is also reportedly going to have multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles in a future variant of the missile.

The article from Indian *Deccan Herald* serves as an example of how sources in India reported it. The article discusses both tests and notes that the Ababeel missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead up to 2,200 kms, "bringing many Indian cities within its range."

Pakistan's successful missile tests may have given it better deterrence capabilities, but the reaction from India suggests that they are viewed as potential threats. Any development of additional systems to match Indian capabilities could result in an upward spiral of capabilities and tension on both sides. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*"The first successful flight test of Ababeel, after the two operational MRBMs Shaheen-I and Shaheen-II, would enable Pakistan to launch multiple warheads using Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology.."*

**Source:** Ali Osman, "What you need to know about Pakistan's Ababeel ballistic missile," *Dawn*, 25 January 2017. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1310463/what-you-need-to-know-about-pakistans-ababeel-ballistic-missile>

### **What you need to know about Pakistan's Ababeel ballistic missile**

*The strategic forces of Pakistan, with the testing of the 2,200 kilometre range Ababeel ballistic missile, have achieved vital technological and deterrence capability with the introduction of a missile with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) compatibility...Pakistan has become the seventh country in the world to now possess the technology, which was developed in the late '60s by the Americans and Russians. India first tested a MIRV capable missile in 2012, with the successful launch of the Agni-V...*

*India's quest for a ballistic missile defence (BMD) system also challenged the effectiveness of Pakistan's strategic deterrence...Although the Ababeel has shorter range when compared with India's Agni-V, it provides the needed deterrence...It is not yet clear how many MIRVs will be carried by the Ababeel.*

**Source:** Maimuna Ashraf, "Babur-III and Ababeel: contours and counters," *Daily Times*, 31 January 2017. <http://dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/31-Jan-17/babur-iii-and-ababeel-contours-and-counters>

*...Pakistan's two first-ever recently tested nuclear-capable missiles, 'Babur-3' submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) and 'Ababeel' surface-to-surface medium range ballistic missile (SSBM), has further reinforced the debate on South Asian maritime security, second-strike capability and missile defense technologies in the regional landscape...Reportedly, Pakistan modified one of its three Agosta 90 B diesel-electric submarines to launch the submarine missile...The first successful flight test of Ababeel, after the two operational MRBMs Shaheen-I and Shaheen-II, would enable Pakistan to launch multiple warheads using Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology...it is likely to provide Pakistan a seaborne nuclear deterrent while India already possesses it after formally commissioning its nuclear powered submarine — INS Arihant...*

**Source:** "Pak conducts 1st flight test of N-capable 'Ababeel' missile," *Deccan Herald*, 24 January 2017. <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/593030/pak-conducts-1st-flight-test.html>

*Pakistan today successfully conducted the first test flight of the radar-evading 'Ababeel' surface-to-surface ballistic missile (SSM) capable of carrying a nuclear warhead up to 2,200 kms, bringing many Indian cities within its range..."The development of the Ababeel weapon system was aimed at ensuring survivability of Pakistan's ballistic missiles in the growing regional Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) environment," the (ISPR) release said, in an obvious reference to India.*

*The Ababeel missile test came close on the heels of a successful test of submarine-launched cruise missile Babur-III on January 9...The missile, launched from an undisclosed location in the Indian Ocean from an underwater, mobile platform, had hit its target with precise accuracy, the (Pakistani) Army had said. Babur-III is a sea-based variant of ground-launched cruise missile Babur-II, which was successfully tested in December last year.*



## India and China: Arms Sales and the Delicate Balance of Power

**OE Watch Commentary:** China and India appear to be caught up in an arms sale race, both aiming to encircle the other by selling arms to the other's neighbors. The excerpted article in *India Today* from 11 January discusses Indian arms sales to Vietnam at a time when Vietnam is engaged in a potentially volatile dispute with China over islands in the South China Sea. According to the article, India may sell Akash surface-to-air missile defense systems to Vietnam, which Vietnam could use to intercept Chinese aircraft at a range of 25 kilometers. In late 2016, India was also reported to be close to selling the joint Russia-India designed BrahMos missile to Vietnam, which is the world's fastest cruise missile and would give Vietnam a new asymmetric capability to counter China if a battle broke out in the South China Sea.

The article notes China's harsh condemnation of India for considering such a sale to Vietnam. It suggests that China's concern is rooted in India reaching parity with China in terms of nuclear capabilities and India's use of its arms sales as a diplomatic counter to China. India has recently tested intercontinental ballistic missiles with a 4,000-kilometer range that could reach Beijing. Now India is developing other advanced weapons systems and selling them to China's neighbors and countries in conflict with China, raising the risk for China of being encircled by these weapons systems.

The article justifies India's arms sales to Vietnam and other countries surrounding China, such as Japan and Mongolia, as well as Taiwan, as a reaction to China's own encirclement of India. China has exported its nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan and will soon provide Pakistan a nuclear submarine. Moreover, as part of China's foreign infrastructure development plans and String of Pearls strategy, it is building ports and infrastructure in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Bangladesh, all of which surround India. However, the article claims that India's sales to Vietnam are most specifically in response to China's arms sales to Pakistan, given that Pakistan is the primary adversary to India and Vietnam is the most powerful competitor for China of the South China Sea country claimants.

The article concludes that China has no right to condemn India's prospective sales to Vietnam because that is exactly what China is doing to India in India's own sub-region. Rather than stirring up trouble, as China alleges, India may be maintaining a balance of power between China and India in South Asia and Southeast Asia, leading to stability in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

<sup>1</sup> "Brahmos: Vietnam's new killer Indo-Russian missile," *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, 22 June 2016. [http://rbth.com/blogs/continental\\_drift/2016/06/22/brahmos-vietnams-new-killer-indo-russian-missile\\_604759](http://rbth.com/blogs/continental_drift/2016/06/22/brahmos-vietnams-new-killer-indo-russian-missile_604759)

*“If China can sell weapons to Pakistan, why can't India do so to Vietnam?”*



BrahMos missiles, which India may sell to Vietnam despite Chinese objections. Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/india-to-sell-advanced-missiles/3399999.html>

**Source:** “China says it will not sit idle if India sells missiles to Vietnam,” *Indiatoday*, 11 January 2017. <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/china-india-missiles-vietnam/1/855048.html>

*Global Times, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China (CPC), has threatened India once again. This time it is about India's proposal to sell Akash missiles to Vietnam. The system has an interception range of 25 km to keep an effective check on any incoming hostile aircraft for area defence and deliberations are said to be in an advanced stage.*

*China has been trying to encircle India by making inroads in its neighbourhood, by offering to develop or developing ports and infrastructure in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives or by reaching out to Nepal and Bangladesh or with its String of Pearls geopolitical theory where it is said that China is developing a network in the Indian Ocean region to encircle India. Now, of late, India is realising the Chinese designs and is pursuing an agenda to answer China in its own geopolitical language by developing bilateral and strategic ties with countries in China's neighbourhood like Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan and even Mongolia. It is a much needed course correction. If China can do so, why can't India? If China can sell weapons to Pakistan, why can't India do so with Vietnam?*

*If China can do so then it doesn't have any right to preach us that 'India-Vietnam ties should be built for the sake of peace and stability in the region, rather than stirring up troubles or anxiety for others'.*



## Iskander Turns 10, Modernization Scheduled

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying TASS interview with Valeriy Kashin, general designer of the Machine-Building Design Bureau Science and Production Corporation, discusses Russian plans to upgrade the Iskander missile system. The modernization of this system is significant because it is “unequaled worldwide in its performance” and will be in service for at least another 25 years. The Iskander missile system fills an important niche in Russian force projection. Tactical and theater ballistic missiles are far more important for Russia than for the US/NATO. In general, Russia believes that the US/NATO will maintain air superiority; and has thus invested heavily in missile technologies to fill a niche that air power fills for the US/NATO.

Iskander missile systems are found in missile brigades operated by the Russian Ground Forces’ Missile and Artillery Troops. These brigades are usually part of an Army Group (Combined Arms Army or Tank Army) or Army Corps. In terms of capabilities, the Iskander missile system is a significant improvement over its predecessors and has little in common with them (Tochka and Oka). The system is capable of not only transporting and launching two missiles, but also firing two different types of missiles. The Iskander, which Russia classifies as a tactical-operational *(continued)*

**Source:** “Start of Iskander Upgrade Planned for Beginning of 2020s,” TASS Online, 19 January 2017. <http://tass.ru/opinions/interviews/3951316>

*The Russian Iskander-M operational-tactical missile system is unequalled worldwide in its performance and will be in service for at least another 25 years. Valeriy Kashin, general designer of the Machine-Building Design Bureau (KBM) Science and Production Corporation, which created these weapons, spoke in a TASS interview about the plans to upgrade the Iskander...*



Valeriy Kashin, general designer of the Machine-Building Design Bureau Science and Production Corporation.  
Source: [http://www.kbm.ru/local/images/kbm/\\_400\\_kb\\_jpg\\_1395032816.jpg](http://www.kbm.ru/local/images/kbm/_400_kb_jpg_1395032816.jpg)

**[TASS] Is it planned to further upgrade the Iskander-M missile system?**

*[Kashin] We have already prepared proposals for the further development of this system and they are currently being reviewed in the Defense Ministry. But the improvements need to be coordinated with some events. The beginning of the 2020s will mark 10 years since the first brigade was equipped with the Iskander-M and the time will come when *(continued)**



Russian Ground Forces' Missile Brigades with 500km launch range annotated.





## Continued: Iskander Turns 10, Modernization Scheduled

missile system, can fire two SRBMs (SS-26 Stone) or two ground-launched cruise missiles GLCMs, referred to as the R-500 or Iskander-K in Russian, and possibly could fire a combination of these missiles.

These missiles can carry a variety of payloads weighing 480-700 kilograms, including cluster warheads (antipersonnel/antimateriel), fragmentation submunitions, area denial submunitions, HE, thermobaric, high explosive earth penetrators for bunker busting, electromagnetic pulse, decoy, and nuclear warheads. The Iskander's missiles are reportedly compliant with the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, but there are allegations that these missiles could be easily modified to violate the 500-kilometer lower limit of the treaty.

As discussed in the interview, the Iskander missile system has been in service for ten years and will likely be modernized in the course of the previously scheduled maintenance overhaul. If Russia does proceed with this modernization, the Iskander will follow a similar modernization pattern as other Russian combat vehicles. This pattern is one of frequent, incremental modernization, with no requirement that the entire force is modernized to a certain level, before the next modernization program begins. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*the equipment will require repair. That is, the upgrade should coincide with the need for repair and maintenance of the equipment in brigades armed with the Iskanders in order not to reduce their combat readiness. But as regards the service life of existing Iskander-Ms, we believe that this system will be operational for a comparable time to its predecessors, 25-30 years, (the Tochka has served for over 40 years and the Tochka-U for 30 years). Here it must not be forgotten that the Iskander-M deliveries mean the creation of a full infrastructure to place a brigade in its place of permanent deployment and the creation of depots and a technical position. All these are serious costs, and the creation of new systems every five to 10 years constitutes an irrational expenditure of state funds. On the other hand, there other targets could emerge that have to be destroyed, new political circumstances and threats at the borders could arise. Naturally, it is necessary to respond to this by a system upgrade.*

**[TASS] By what year will all brigades be equipped with Iskanders?**

*[Kashin] Our contract is computed up to 2017, and next year we have to deliver sets for a further two brigades. There might need to be some further number of systems but this is already being decided the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff. We will continue to produce missiles...*

**[TASS] Are there foreign analogues of the Iskander?**

*[Kashin] In the USA, for example, the tasks involved in destroying targets up to 500 kilometers in depth are planned by other means, primarily aviation...*

Iskander missile system.  
Source: Vitaly Kuzmin





## Principles of Russian Armor: Modularity, Standardization, and Survivability

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying article from *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* discusses Russian armor developments and states the principles of armor development explicitly: modularity, standardization, and the value of human life. These principles will come as little surprise to those following Russian military modernization.

Russia's modernization and standardization efforts have included the creation of not only the Armata tracked heavy chassis, but also the Kurganets-25 tracked utility chassis and the Bumerang wheeled chassis. These three chassis types, made by three different manufactures, are all designed to accept the same turret, the "universal combat module" known at the "Epoch" or "Bumerang-BM," made by a fourth company. (The universal combat module consists of a 30mm automatic cannon, four "Kornet" antitank missiles, and a 7.62mm PKT machine gun.) This level of interoperability is unheard of in Western defense industries, where proprietary technology and financial considerations would make the pursuit of such an effort difficult. The imposition of such a standard must have been implemented several years ago, as some reports have implied the BTR-82A (armored personnel carrier) and BMD-4 (infantry fighting vehicle for the Airborne) have already entered service, and may also be capable of mounting the "universal combat module."

In terms of survivability, Russia has touted the Armata's design that puts the crew in an armored capsule. This is made possible by an autoloader and unmanned turret, that reportedly not only allows better crew protection, but also provides significant weight savings.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the article is the mention of how the T-14 Armata could be utilized. In the past, the T-14 was always discussed as operating with other Armata-chassis vehicles, but this article lays out a possible different type of use. The author believes that the T-14 could be used as a "reconnaissance tool" in conjunction with other combat vehicles and tanks, such as the T-90. The T-14 does have an impressive array of sensors for such usage, and there is discussion of mounting a tethered UAV on the Armata as an ISR platform. This is the first time the T-14 has been described as a "network-centric warfare" enabler for other combat vehicles. This author's description may be an anomaly, or the result of changing Russian thinking about the number of Armata-chassis vehicles that could realistically be produced, as Russia had announced that 2,300 vehicles on Armata-chassis vehicles would be fielded by 2025. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

### UNIVERSAL COMBAT MODULE «BUMERANG-BM» or «EPOCH»

Armaments	
30mm Automatic Cannon	
4 «Kornet» Missiles	
7.62mm PKT Machine Gun	

Maximum Range (meters)	
«Kornet» (antitank)	8,000
«Kornet» (guided)	10,000
Automatic Cannon	4,000

**Source:** Sergey Cherkasov, "The Incalculable Armata," *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer Online*, 17 January 2017. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/34625>

*...The basis for Russian military design rests on three principles: modularity, standardization, and the value of human life. We should cherish not only combined armor but also the soldier who sits behind it. The result is a phenomenon, the breakthrough of the decade: the Armata combat platform. Unfortunately, in our society there is still no understanding that this is not a tank but something much bigger. The Armata is a tracked platform that makes it possible to create heavy armor for many years. The Armata family will include 28 vehicles. Modern technologies of computer data processing and the genius of Russian engineers have given rise to a highly flexible and universal platform: the engine on it can be moved from the nose to the rear, and weapons and components can be added and removed...*

*All this provides substantial savings at several stages. First, a common platform during development makes it possible to focus on designing "add-ons" and weaponry. Second, during production, the mass issuance of parts on a single production line reduces design costs as a whole. Third, during operation, identical repair kits reduce maintenance costs. Fourth, modularity speeds up the return to service of non-functional vehicles, which is especially important in field conditions. As a result, we have a greater variety of combat vehicles for the same money.*

*...The T-14 is primarily a reconnaissance tool: its Doppler radar with active phased antenna array coupled with infrared and ultraviolet cameras is capable of detecting more than 50 targets at distances up to 100 kilometers. Due to its closed communication channels the T-14 can carry out targeting and adjust the fire of its own escort of T-90 tanks, as well as of the following Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled guns and close- and medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems. Thus, the T-14 design embodies the concept of network-centric warfare...*



## The Growing Role of DOSAAF and Private Military Companies

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia's Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet (DOSAAF) is a government-sponsored sports and outdoor enthusiast organization that promotes and funds militarily useful skills, such as flying, hiking, camping, shooting, skiing, parachuting, driving, and athletics, for young people. The predecessors of the organization were invaluable in the Great Patriotic War (Second World War) by providing skilled servicemen to the Armed Forces. The accompanying articles discuss recent DOSAAF developments.

Russia appears to be growing the quantity of persons trained and quality of skills provided. According to the accompanying *RIA Novosti* article, in 2016, DOSAAF trained 32,600 personnel in one of sixteen military occupational specialties (MOSs). In 2016, DOSAAF trained 1,011 parachutists. In the future, additional MOSs will be provided, and there may be special programs for young men considering service in the naval infantry and spetsnaz.

The passage from *Moskovsky Komsomolets* discusses perhaps the most interesting DOSAAF development. Apparently, there is some consideration of using DOSAAF to train personnel serving in Private Military Companies (PMCs), in particular for sapper (military engineer) demining and explosive ordinance disposal. (The Russian military's conduct of these activities in Syria has been widely reported on in the Russian press.) Russian PMCs have been a hot topic in Russian security circles. They have reportedly been found in Eastern Ukraine and Syria, and there has been discussion of changing Russian law to more easily facilitate their operation. The fact that Russia is considering using a state funded asset to provide training for the (semi) private sector, indicates that at least some elements of the Russian government see private military companies as having a role in state security. Another reason for this development may be finance related, as private military companies may be a potential funding stream to supplement DOSAAF's state provided funds.

DOSAAF is particularly valuable for the conscription-based manning system that the Russian Federation utilizes to fill its rank and file, but would be an inefficient way of imparting skills to a fully professional (non-conscript) army. Conscripts who have participated in DOSAAF activities gain skills that would be difficult to impart to troops who are only drafted for one year. The DOSAAF system is so well ingrained into the Russian military system that a DOSAAF representative sits on each draft board in order to advise the state on the best way to utilize each conscript. For example, a conscript who has participated in a DOSAAF parachuting club would be more likely to be assigned to an airborne unit.

The DOSAAF program declined after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but in the last few years experienced a resurgence. Today, it exists in many states of the former Soviet Union in one form or another. DOSAAF reportedly operates 81 regional branches, over 3,000 local branches, and more than 1,300 educational and sports organizations in the Russian Federation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“DOSAAF trained 32,600 citizens on 12 military-registration specialties in 2016.”*

— *DOSAAF Deputy Chairman, Sergey Serikov*



DOSAAF Flag.  
Source: [el-dosaaf.ru](http://el-dosaaf.ru)

**Source:** “DOSAAF Has Announced That It Can Train up to 80,000 Young Men Annually for the Army,” *RIA Novosti* Online, 11 January 2017. [https://ria.ru/defense\\_safety/20170111/1485527559.html](https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20170111/1485527559.html)

*DOSAAF can train up to 80,000 young men for the Army annually, at the time when more than 32,000 conscripts were trained in 2016, Society Deputy Chairman Sergey Serikov said. “A state mission has been assigned to Russian DOSAAF: the training of citizens on military-registration specialties. In the aggregate, the available facilities permit it to carry out the training of specialists on military registration specialties in the amount of up to 80,000 men per year,” Serikov said while summing the results of the fall draft.*

*In his words, in accordance with the Ministry of Defense task, DOSAAF trained 32,600 citizens on 12 military-registration specialties in 2016. “The training of specialists for the Airborne Troops was the distinctive feature of training in 2016. In 2016, the planned task for the training of citizens on military-registration specializes in support of the VDV was established at 1,000 men and the fulfillment totaled 1,011 men”, Serikov added.*

*He also pointed out that, while taking into account the acquired experience, Russian DOSAAF is examining the training of conscripts for service in the VDV and, in the future, for Naval Infantry and Spetsnaz units. In the process, they plan to expand the list of military-registration specialties in subsequent years. So, the training of specialists for the Signals Troops began in 2016-2017. “At the present time, we are conducting the “Seamen” experiment on two specialties of training specialists for the Navy, based upon the results of which a decision will be made on training these specialists for the Armed Forces based upon the military-registration specialties”, the DOSAAF deputy head concluded.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: The Growing Role of DOSAAF and Private Military Companies

**Source:** Aleksandr Stepanov, "Private Military Companies May Appear in Russia," *Moskovsky Komsomolets* Online, 18 January 2017. <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2017/01/18/v-rossii-mogut-poyavitsya-chastnye-voennye-kompanii.html>

*DOSAAF celebrates its 90th anniversary in 2017. On the eve of the jubilee Alexander Kolmakov, the society's chairman, summed up the results for the year and talked about what innovations lie in store for DOSAAF in the immediate future. In particular, there are plans to create private sapper companies and even private military companies on the basis of the society...*

*Kolmakov also talked about yet another interesting innovation — a private sapper company is to be created on the basis of DOSAAF. "Together with the Russian Union of Engineers we are completing the creation of the first engineering company to train sappers from among reserve service personnel, including experts for underwater mine clearance from bodies of water," Kolmakov said, noting that the decision to create such company was proposed by Sergey Shoygu, the head of the military department.*

*"During one of his meetings the minister of defense drew attention to the fact that abroad tasks to clear areas of mines and shells in areas of military conflicts are frequently carried out by private engineering companies. In this connection he proposed that thought be given to whether the defense organization would be able to assume responsibility for creating such a company to perform special tasks," Kolmakov said. He noted that the company would operate on a pilot-scheme basis for a while in order to check the utilization of private sappers when clearing various kinds of munitions and mines. "We will of course clear mines in areas of former military conflicts in accordance with a recommendation from the country's military department," Kolmakov stressed.*

*Viktor Vodolatskiy, deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, Eurasian Integration, and Links with Compatriots, who also attended the news conference, suggested that private military companies might also be created on the basis of the society. In his view it is necessary for a federal law governing DOSAAF's activity to be adopted and for the creation of private military companies to be possibly considered within the framework of such a law.*



Alexander Kolmakov, DOSAAF Chairman.  
Source: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Колмаков,\\_Александр\\_Петрович#/media/File:Alexander\\_Kolmakov.JPG](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Колмаков,_Александр_Петрович#/media/File:Alexander_Kolmakov.JPG)



President meeting with DOSAAF Chairman, Alexander Kolmakov.  
Source: [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Колмаков,\\_Александр\\_Петрович#/media/File:Vladimir\\_Putin,\\_Sergey\\_Ivanov,\\_Georgy\\_Shpak,\\_Alexander\\_Kolmakov,\\_September\\_2003.jpg](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Колмаков,_Александр_Петрович#/media/File:Vladimir_Putin,_Sergey_Ivanov,_Georgy_Shpak,_Alexander_Kolmakov,_September_2003.jpg)



## Reporting Military Losses: Ukraine and Russia

**OE Watch Commentary:** The fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists in Southeast Ukraine continues to simmer, and occasionally boil over as it did in late January and early February 2017. The accompanying excerpts from Ukrainian and Russian sources demonstrate the contrast in the way military losses are reported.

According to UN statistics, nearly 10,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed in this conflict over the last three years. In early January 2017, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense released figures regarding the number of soldiers who died in 2016. The first excerpt from a Ukrainian source parses this data, pointing out that more soldiers died in noncombat losses than “were killed at the front in combat clashes.” According to the article, “in 2016 noncombat losses among the Ukrainian military totaled 256, while 211 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were killed at the front in combat clashes.” It notes that suicide, illness and weapon mishandling were the top three causes behind the noncombat deaths. The article describes some of the underlying causes behind these fatalities (e.g. combat fatigue, stress, substance abuse) and some of the prophylactic measures adopted by the Ukrainian authorities to prevent future losses.

The Russian Ministry of Defense has not been as forthcoming regarding military casualties incurred in 2016. Recall that in mid-2015, the Kremlin enacted legislation which stated that information regarding military deaths, whether in peacetime or war, would be classified as state secrets. Some analysts suggested that this legislation was partially predicated upon the Kremlin’s insistence that it was not militarily involved in Ukraine. Revealing this information could be punishable by up to seven years in prison. Still, as the second excerpt from a Russian regional source indicates, some information can be gleaned regarding recent Russian military losses. According to this article, a soldier from Tatarstan, who was killed in Syria in the summer of 2016, was awarded with the rank of Hero of Russia. The article goes on to assert that “Russian combat losses in Syria have reached at least 24 people.”

A key component of the current Kremlin strategy is built around the notion of restoring Russia’s military prowess, and in both equipment and manpower, the Russian military far surpasses the strength of its Ukrainian neighbor. There may be a danger, however, in concealing the human costs behind these military achievements. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“... more [Ukrainian] soldiers are dying in the intervals between battles than from the militants’ bullets and mines....”*

**Source:** Artur Hor, “Небоевые потери: почему украинские солдаты погибают, когда пушки молчат (Noncombat Losses: Why Ukrainian Soldiers Are Dying When the Guns Are Silent),” *Apostrof*, 12 January 2017. <http://apostrophe.ua/article/society/2017-01-12/pochemu-na-fronte-pogibaet-bolshe-soldat-kogda-pushki-molchat/9444>

*The Defense Ministry has published some disturbing statistics — in 2016 noncombat losses among the Ukrainian military totaled 256, while 211 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were killed at the front in combat clashes. Apostrof investigated why more soldiers are dying in the intervals between battles than from the militants’ bullets and mines....*

*The most horrifying thing of all is the cause that came in first place for noncombat losses in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2016. It was suicide. In the past year the Defense Ministry has recorded 63 such cases....*

*...If you ask the Defense Ministry what they are doing to prevent people committing suicide, they will say that they have orders and directives concerning the prevention of suicide and all the specialists are working on it. ...According to the military psychologist, some suicides at the front could be anticipated back at the stage of selection of soldiers at the military commissariats.*

*...In second place on the blacklist of noncombat losses in the Ukrainian Army is soldiers’ deaths from illnesses. According to Defense Ministry figures 58 service members died from this cause in 2016....*

*...The third most widespread cause of noncombat losses in the ATO is death as a result of careless handling of weapons — 39 deaths. However, the military themselves assert that this is not the cause but the consequence of another problem in the Army — drunkenness. Although according to official figures 10 people died of poisoning by alcohol or drugs in the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2016, according to the military it is alcohol that lies behind deaths resulting from accidents (29), murders (30), and road traffic accidents (18)....*

**Source:** “В военкомате подтвердили гибель в Сирии еще одного российского военного (Military enlistment office confirms still another death of a Russian soldier in Syria),” *RosBiznesKonsalting (RBK)*, 10 January 2017. [www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5874ea859a7947c879140d3a](http://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5874ea859a7947c879140d3a)

*Russian combat losses in Syria have reached at least 24 people as the death of yet another serviceman, who was killed in the summer of 2016, has been confirmed by sources in his native Republic of Tatarstan.*

*Two district military enlistment offices in the city of Kazan, reported that Captain Marat Akhmetshin had been killed in Syria in June 2016. He was awarded the title of a Hero of Russia posthumously....*



## Cossack Influence in Southeastern Ukraine

**OE Watch Commentary:** Three years ago, when conflict began in the Donbass region between pro-Russian separatist and pro-Ukrainian forces, units on both sides were manned with volunteers and regular military forces. Units made up of Cossacks—predominantly East Slavic-speaking, self-governing, semi-military communities located in Ukraine and Russia—were among the better organized forces on the pro-Russian separatist side, where they played a key role in some of the early battles. Since then, these Cossack units have become largely incorporated into the official force structure of the Lugansk and Donetsk separatist militaries. Cossacks, however, have also fought on the opposite side to defend Ukraine’s territorial integrity. The accompanying excerpt addresses some of the challenges Ukrainian military authorities have experienced with incorporating an independent Cossack military unit into its ranks.

The article begins by suggesting that the Ukrainian “General Staff is deliberately inhibiting the formation of such a military unit,” by placing all sorts of administrative obstacles among those who want to form a Cossack battalion. The article asserts that those who claim Cossack descent and are already serving in the Ukrainian military would not be allowed to transfer to this new unit. A Cossack spokesperson alleges that the Ukrainian General Staff “wanted to control the appointment of officers in the battalion,” which contradicts “the Cossack tradition” of electing its own officers. Cossack leaders also assert that potential new recruits into the Cossack unit are encouraged to join regular units since “it is not known when the Cossack battalion will be created.”

A representative from the General Staff rebuffed these assertions, pointing out that the actual cause of delay in forming this unit dealt with the Cossack’s inability to provide “an initial list for acquisition,” which will spell out the number of personnel and associated equipment. Another source who “represent[s] the Cossacks’ interests in the Defense Ministry,” suggests that “military officials’ prejudice against the Cossacks” stems from the fact that “at the moment society does not take Cossacks seriously... because they made an exhibition of themselves.” The article ends on an alarming note, pointing out “that if compromise with the General Staff is not achieved in the near future, some Cossacks are ready for drastic measures,” which might include joining with the radical group, Right Sector.

Cossacks, whether affiliated with Russia or Ukraine, have a long tradition of protecting borders. Throughout history, however, Cossacks have also demonstrated a willingness to revolt when they didn’t agree with central authorities. Whether fully subordinate to the official military or not, Cossack units will continue to play an important role as the governments in Moscow and Kiev attempt to resolve the conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Artur Hor, “Козацький бунт: у Холодному Яру хочуть створити нову Січ (Cossack Revolt: Plans To Establish New Sich in Kholodnyy Yar),” *Apostrof*, 19 January 2017. <http://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/society/2017-01-19/kazachiy-bunt-v-holodnom-yaru-grozyatsya-sozdat-novuyu-sech/9556>

*The first Cossack battalion in Ukraine could be created within the Armed Forces; however, the General Staff is deliberately inhibiting the formation of such a military unit. This is the statement that the representatives of Cossack organizations made to **Apostrof**. The Cossacks say that if the generals of the General Staff do not meet their expectations, they are ready to act radically and create a new Cossack sich [military settlement] in Kholodnyy Yar, Cherkas’ka Oblast.*

*It is planned that the main task of the Cossack battalion will be protection of the Ukrainian state border. The reason for creating such a unit is to combine disparate Cossack organizations, of which there are around 600 all over Ukraine....*

*“We encountered enormous resistance from the generals of the General Staff. We were supposed to be formed on the basis of the 28th Brigade, but we were openly told that the formation of a Cossack battalion would not be allowed under any circumstances,” Oleksandr Shepilov explains to **Apostrof**. Lt Col Shepilov notes that the General Staff has set a number of official conditions the Cossacks simply cannot meet. “For example, one such condition was a ban on accepting active soldiers into our battalion.... Oleksandr Shepilov notes that the General Staff also wanted to control the appointment of officers in the battalion. “But this is a profanation, because the Cossack tradition is to elect officers....*

*The General Staff assures **Apostrof** that it is not creating any artificial obstacles to the formation of the Cossack battalion. “The General Staff has completed all administrative papers to create a separate unit with such a name and so on. The command has made decisions about where to form it and how. The unit has already been defined, but the problem is that in order to form the unit there should be an initial list for acquisition, which they failed to give us,” Colonel Andriy Polonsky...*

*Lt Col Shepilov argues that the General Staff invented another way to disrupt the work of forming the lists of volunteers for the Cossack battalion.... We agreed to this, but when the soldiers began to undergo medical examination, I started receiving calls with complaints: As soon as soldiers undergo medical examination, representatives of the military commissariats offer them the opportunity to join other battalions. The guys do not agree, because they want to join the Cossack battalion. But they are told that it is not known when the Cossack battalion will be created, they are advised to take the assignment card and get a contract and money to support their families from now on....*

*However, Volodymyr Harbuz, head of a working group representing the Cossacks’ interests in the Defense Ministry, adds that the military officials’ prejudice against the Cossacks can be easily explained. “At the moment society does not take Cossacks seriously, and they can only blame themselves for that, because they made an exhibition of themselves: They have epaulets and stripes, but they achieve no result in the creation of statehood. Therefore there is a biased attitude,” Harbuz explains to **Apostrof**.*

*Lt Col Shepilov notes that if compromise with the General Staff is not achieved in the near future, some Cossacks are ready for drastic measures, because they “have shed their blood” to obtain the right to form a separate unit of the Armed Forces. “We will have to take the path of Right Sector. They created the Ukrainian Volunteer Army. We have already held talks with them....*



## Growing Russian Military Presence Abroad

**OE Watch Commentary:** While Russian military involvement in Syria and Ukraine has captured many recent headlines, the Kremlin is also making its military presence felt in more distant countries. The accompanying articles discuss Russia's expanding ties with two such countries: Libya and the Philippines.

Building upon ties developed over the past half-century, Russia continues to expand its influence today within the war-torn and divided country of Libya. The brief first excerpt from the centrist Russian source, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes the visit of "Libyan National Army commander General Khalifah Haftar to the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov" in mid-January 2017.

Having completed operations near Syria, the Russian ship parked off the coast of Libya and "invited [General Haftar] to the warship for a teleconference involving talks with Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu." As the article points out, the Kremlin apparently regards "Haftar as an ally in the fight against terrorism." Besides "advocating the country's secular development, [Haftar] enjoys clout among the military." The article suggests that "speculations" of Haftar allowing greater Kremlin influence/presence in the region in exchange for Russian military assistance is "provocation," claiming that Libyans "will never sacrifice their freedom, territory, and independence." Nevertheless, altruistic considerations have rarely been the chief drivers of Russian military interests in Libya or elsewhere.

Libya is not the only country where Russia appears to be gaining a foothold. The second excerpt, again from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes the warm welcome Russian naval personnel received upon docking in the port of Manila. The Philippine President remarked "that Russian sailors were the most welcome visitors, they could moor at the berths here at any time convenient to them, and they could even live under the warm Filipino sun for as long as they liked." The article also points out that after Philippine Defense Minister Delfin's visit to Moscow in December 2016, "it was announced that Russia and the Philippines planned to hold joint exercises in the South China Sea." The article concludes by asserting that "Russia also feels its responsibility as a power playing an increasingly significant role in world politics... and the presence of the Pacific Fleet in the Philippines could only contribute to accomplishing them."

As Russia continues to strengthen and modernize its military, the Kremlin leadership has been moving to re-establish a global military presence. A key component of their strategy is to identify and support a local strong leader upon whom it can provide aid in return for greater control and concessions. This strategy has so far worked in Chechnya and Syria and could soon be adopted within Libya and the Philippines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Ravil Mustafin, "Нужны ли России военные базы в Ливии? (Does Russia Need Military Bases in Libya?)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 19 January 2017. [http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-19/1\\_6906\\_2livia.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-19/1_6906_2livia.html)

*The recent visit paid by Libyan National Army commander General Khalifah Haftar to the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov shed light on the question of Russian preferences in Libya. ...Far from every contender for the role of a leader capable of uniting the country and extracting it from the chaos of internecine feuding is invited to a warship for a teleconference involving talks with Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu. This speaks not only of the importance and perhaps also of the urgency of the issues discussed but also of Moscow's special attitude toward Haftar as an ally in the fight against terrorism.*

*And why, indeed, should Moscow not count on Haftar. Of all the more or less important Libyan politicians, the general is the only one who, in possession of an organized military force, is assessing the situation rationally and advocating the country's secular development. He enjoys clout among the military....*

*As for the speculation that has appeared over how, in return for potential aid with weapons, Haftar is prepared almost to grant Moscow use of the naval base and airbase in the Benghazi region and thus extend the zone of Russian influence in the region, this all looks like provocation. Whatever trust Libyans may have in Russia, they will never tolerate a foreign military presence on their territory.... They can deal with foreigners — trade with them or even make friends — but they will never sacrifice their freedom, territory, and independence.*

**Source:** Boris Vinogradov, "КАРТ-БЛАНШ. Получит ли Тихоокеанский флот базу на Филиппинах (Carte Blanche. Will Pacific Fleet Get Base on Philippines)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 24 January 2017. [www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-24/3\\_6910\\_kartblansh.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-24/3_6910_kartblansh.html)

*It is rare for a statement by Rodrigo Duterte, the president of the Philippines, not to be split into quotes and to be ignored by the world press.... But what he said recently when climbing on board the Admiral Tributs, a large anti-submarine ship of the Pacific Fleet, in the port of Manila is unlikely to be categorized as an outrageous political statement or a reflective impromptu.*

*In addition to the "Welcome!", which is customary on such occasions, Duterte said that Russian sailors were the most welcome visitors, they could moor at the berths here at any time convenient to them, and they could even live under the warm Filipino sun for as long as they liked. That is, on a permanent basis. Manila views Russia as a friendly power, the defender of its interests, its patron and ally, and for this reason it is willing to consider the issue of closer cooperation in the military sphere....*

*...As for Lorenzana, when he was in Moscow he visited the Russian Federation Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, studying a selection of our weapons. Here there is also some symbolism: after the talks, it was announced that Russia and the Philippines planned to hold joint exercises in the South China Sea.*

*...It must be understood that Russia also feels its responsibility as a power playing an increasingly significant role in world politics. It has no fewer interests here than America. It could be said that Moscow and Washington are facing common tasks in this regard. And the presence of the Pacific Fleet in the Philippines could only contribute to accomplishing them.*



## Chechen MP Battalion in Aleppo: The Russian Perspective

**OE Watch Commentary:** Having secured the strategically important city of Aleppo in early January, Kremlin officials announced a reduction in their military presence in the region. They withdrew a portion of their heavy assets (to include their sole aircraft carrier), but left behind enough equipment and manpower to secure vital interests, to include a Military Police (MP) battalion from Chechnya. The accompanying excerpt from the pro-Kremlin news source, *Izvestiya Online*, describes how one Russian expert views the mission and the rationale for deploying such a unit to Aleppo.

The author begins by pointing out that “the objective of this Russian operation is not simply to defeat the terrorist groupings... but to restore state order throughout Syrian territory.” Since “the Syrian Army...cannot perform policing functions... and the local [Syrian] police are weak,” this Russian MP unit will help to provide sufficient stability and security to Syria’s largest city and allow the state to provide basic services. According to the author, the Chechens assigned to this Russian MP battalion have experience with this type of operation, when in 2006, they “were sent to Lebanon to protect military construction workers taking part in the country’s restoration following the clash between Israel and Hizballah.”

The author goes on to assert that since the Chechens are Sunni Muslim, this unit will be able to better relate to the complex circumstances in Aleppo and will prove that Russia will not favor one religious or ethnic group over another. Since many of these soldiers lived through the violence of the Chechen conflict, they “know from their own experience what it is to go through such a crisis and how they should act in these circumstances.” Finally, the author points out that having “Muslim servicemen from Chechnya” helping to restore order in Aleppo will counter any propaganda among Russian Muslims “that Russia is allegedly opposing Islam in Syria.”

In 2000, the Kremlin was able to largely stabilize the situation in Chechnya by identifying a strong local leader, gaining his allegiance, and then supporting this leader to consolidate power over the region. They appear to be using the same model today in Syria, and perhaps emblematic of the Kremlin’s wider ambitions, they have entrusted loyal Chechen forces to handle this most delicate mission. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

For an interesting PR video on the role of this unit in Aleppo, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtjnvnLffJk>



Syria.  
Source: cia.gov

*“If there is in the world an army subunit in which the soldiers and officers know from their own experience what it is to go through such a crisis and how they should act in these circumstances, then it is the Russian military police battalion manned by men from Chechnya.”*

**Source:** Nikolay Silayev, “Экспорт государственного порядка (Export of State Order),” *Izvestiya Online*, 31 January 2017. <http://izvestia.ru/news/661160>

*By sending to Aleppo a military police battalion manned by ethnic Chechens, Moscow has taken an important step toward settling the situation in Syria. The objective of this Russian operation is not simply to defeat the terrorist groupings and to deprive them of their influence but to restore state order throughout Syrian territory.... The presence of a Russian military police battalion from Chechnya here is significant for several reasons.*

*First, maintaining order in Aleppo, Syria’s biggest city, is critically important. The civil war in the country has not yet been ended and the organs of state power in the regions liberated from the terrorists are only just getting down to work. The infrastructure in the city is destroyed and mine clearing and constant and extensive humanitarian aid are required.... The Syrian Army...cannot perform policing functions. The local police are weak.... It is the Russian military police, or to be more precise a battalion of that police manned by Chechens who are Sunni Muslims, which can be the most neutral force here. Especially as the Chechen servicemen already have similar experience. In 2006 the “Vostok” and “Zapad” battalions were sent to Lebanon to protect military construction workers taking part in the country’s restoration following the clash between Israel and Hizballah....*

*Second, Russia needs to prove to its Near East opponents that there is no religious component in the Syrian conflict, no support for the Shiites and Alawites... as people in the East are trying to make out.... It is hard to imagine a more graphic refutation than the presence in Syria of Russian Sunni servicemen. And their presence in a capacity, as military police, which presupposes the closest contact with residents.*

*Third, Syria, and primarily Aleppo, is now experiencing what Chechnya experienced in the last decade.... If there is in the world an army subunit in which the soldiers and officers know from their own experience what it is to go through such a crisis and how they should act in these circumstances, then it is the Russian military police battalion manned by men from Chechnya.*

*Finally, there is the domestic political aspect. The community of Russian Muslims is being subjected to propaganda pressure from outside — it is being told that in Syria Russia is allegedly opposing Islam. The Muslim servicemen from Chechnya will see with their own eyes what is happening in the Near East.*





## Testing Russian Weapons in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Alongside various geopolitical objectives, the Kremlin's involvement in Syria has provided the Russian military with a valuable testing ground for new weapons and equipment. The accompanying excerpt from the Russian pro-business website, *Vzglyad Online*, reviews some developments in these fields and their possible implications for Russia's defense industry. The article points out that employing these new systems in the Syrian battleground "is not simply about testing under desert conditions, but also during interactions with unfriendly technologies of the 'Western partners.'"

The article begins by describing advances in Russian aviation and missile technology, to include "the newest Su-35S and Su-30SM fighters, the Su-34 fighter-bombers, the multirole Su-30 heavy fighters" as well as "the Kalibr Kh-101 precision missiles." While Russia has often been at the forefront in aviation and missile technology, the same cannot be said for robotics. The Syrian operation, however, has helped to change this perception. Over the past 18 months, the Russian military has employed new robotic technologies in Syria, including the Uran-6 mine clearing robot as well as unconfirmed reports "on the use of the Argo and Platforma-M type Russian [robotic] assault systems."

The article then describes advances made in Russian UAV technology, and although it provides few specifics on their use in Syria, it asserts that "the previous year was rich in reported developments" to include advances in integrating UAVs with tanks which will allow crews to "rapidly engage targets." The article also points out Russian electronic warfare developments on the Syrian battlefield, providing a brief description of two new systems, the Leyer-3 and the Krasukha-4. The Leyer-3 can be "mounted on the Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicle" and is able to "imitate GSM communications base stations," allowing it "to route all calls and reports through completely secure military equipment, becoming a valuable source of data for intelligence officers." It also highlights the Krasukha-4 EW system, "designed to counteract a broad spectrum of on-board radars of enemy strike and reconnaissance aviation" to include "UAV control radio channels."

The article concludes by pointing out that the massive investments in the Russia's "defense industrial complex during the period following 2008" appear to be paying off. However, the author notes that the goal of transferring "military developments into the civilian sector" has yet to be realized, and claims that "one must hope that in the foreseeable future we will see not only sapper robots, but also (for example) original Russian household robots." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"That the war in Syria remains the main background in this context is wholly understandable. Besides fighting terrorist groups, it is essentially performing the role of a gigantic range for testing military developments, which the RF [Russian Federation] military leadership, in general, is making no effort to conceal."*

**Source:** Nikita Volchenko, "Сирия стала полигоном для испытания новейших разработок российского ВПК (Syria has Become a Test Range for Testing the Latest Developments of Russia's Defense Industrial Complex)," *Vzglyad Online*, 3 February 2017. <https://vz.ru/society/2017/2/3/855888.html>

*The domestic VPK [defense industrial complex] has made a leap forward, primarily by virtue of the Army's large-scale rearmament program and the expansion of consumer markets. But the war in Syria has also played its role, and as part of this role several of the latest domestic developments have been tested....*

*...That the war in Syria remains the main background in this context is wholly understandable. Besides fighting terrorist groups, it is essentially performing the role of a gigantic range for testing military developments, which the RF [Russian Federation] military leadership, in general, is making no effort to conceal. And this is not simply about testing under desert conditions, but also during interactions with unfriendly technologies of the "Western partners," who are directly or indirectly peering around behind the backs of the local "bearded ones"*

*...The list of new or extensively modernized Russian developments which have appeared in Syria is long, especially as it pertains to aviation and missile equipment (taking into consideration the predominately remote nature of the war). First, there is combat aviation: the newest Su-35S and Su-30SM fighters, the Su-34 fighter-bombers, the multirole Su-30 heavy fighters. Secondly, there are the Kalibr Kh-101 precision missiles with their famed voyage from the Caspian Sea....*

*However, although the creation of new aircraft and missiles has been a traditional strong area in the USSR and Russia, Russian defense industries have not ignored combat robots, for example, a relatively new worldwide trend.... Specifically, in Syria (and before then in Chechnya and Ingushetia) the Uran-6 mine clearing robots proved their worth. This remotely controlled vehicle with a system of trawls is able to destroy buried munitions or to trigger their explosions. In the Syrian Arab Republic they were extensively used by sappers at Palmyra, and judging from videos of the explosions the robot was not idled by an absence of tasks.... Although the sapper robot is an officially recognized operations support device, the picture concerning the use of fire support robots in the RF Armed Forces is thus far based primarily on rumors. In Russian and Western sources there are reports on the use of the Argo and Platforma-M type Russian assault systems....*

*...An important component of the aforementioned high-technology military operations assets is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (BPLA). In this respect the previous year was rich in reported developments.... Another promising example of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles is the attempt to integrate them with tanks: developers from MAI [Moscow Aviation Institute] and MGTU [Moscow State Technical University] have created a device that flies 20-30 meters above a tank. It obtains power from a cable connected to the tank which transmits information to the vehicle. Thus, the crew receives a scan of the battlefield and can rapidly engage targets.*

*(continued)*



## Continued: Testing Russian Weapons in Syria

*In the best traditions of “shield and sword” warfare, the evolution of electronic warfare (REB) systems are being continued in Russia. This is wholly reflective of the global trend toward a shift of confrontation into the area of digital technologies and toward the interception of weapons command and control systems. At a minimum two systems that were in Syria are worth mentioning.*

*The first of them is the Leyer-3, a hybrid UAV and electronic warfare technology. The mobile systems are mounted on the Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicle and on a vehicle command and control center. They have been operational in the troops since 2015. They are, in fact, able to imitate GSM communications base stations. Suppressing them and substituting their own cellular communications towers for the GSM base stations, they are then able to route all calls and reports through completely secure military equipment, becoming a valuable source of data for intelligence officers.... The second electronic warfare system which became known in Syria was the Krasukha-4. It was designed to counteract a broad spectrum of on-board radars of enemy strike and reconnaissance aviation. It is affirmed that the system is able to suppress not only radar stations [RLS], but also UAV control radio channels, which makes the system especially crucial in modern high-technology warfare....*

*...In essence at this time the demonstration of the results of the outlays of capital investments made in the armed services and in the defense industrial complex during the period following 2008 is continuing.... But inasmuch as the migration of military developments into the civilian sector is not only a conscious necessity, but also a goal formulated by the head of state, one must hope that in the foreseeable future we will see not only sapper robots, but also (for example) original Russian household robots.*

**Tim Thomas's *Recasting the Red Star* describes Russia's culture of military thought through its modernization effort. Adding to his robust library of work on the subject, Tim Thomas illuminates Russia's Defense Ministry reform efforts, the Russian national security strategy take on the operational environment, and a relevant review of the Russian military doctrine.**



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Recasting%20the%20red%20Star.pdf>



Krasukha-4 at MAKS Exhibition 2015.  
Source: <http://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/MAKS-2015/i-W9x5PRr>



## Expanding Russia's Naval Base at Tartus, Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** In January 2017, Syria and Russia signed an agreement that allows Russia to extend and expand its use of a naval base at Tartus in Syria. Tartus, the second largest port in Syria after Latakia, situated 140 miles northwest of Damascus, has been left relatively untouched by the Syrian civil war. The accompanying articles from the Russian press discuss the agreement and the conditions under which the Russian navy must operate while in or near Syrian waters. The second piece notes Iran's tacit influence over the Syrian leadership on this issue.

According to the first excerpt from the Russian government news source, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, "the agreement was signed for 49 years, but the lease for the port territory can be automatically renewed every quarter of a century, until one of the parties opts out of the treaty process." The Soviet Union built the base in 1977 to support the Soviet navy as it operated in the Mediterranean Sea. The port was used to resupply Soviet ships with fuel, food and water but lacked any major repair facilities. The new agreement will allow Russia to expand the base's abilities by installing high-tech repair facilities and the ability to accommodate nuclear powered vessels. The article also describes how the base would be defended: The Syrian army will defend the base from the land, while the Russian military will defend air and sea approaches to the base.

Russia, however, is not the only country involved in Syria, and the second excerpt from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online* suggests that "Damascus' tougher demands on the presence of the Russian Navy and aviation in Syria appeared as a result of Iran's tacit influence over the Syrian leadership." The article describes several restrictive conditions the Russian navy must operate under when in or near waters under Syrian control. For instance, "there can be no more than 11 combat units in the material and technical support center" and "the Russian Command is obliged to notify Syria's authorized organ of this in good time (no later than 12 hours before entering and six hours before leaving)." There are also provisions which allow the Syrian government to annul the agreement after giving a one-year notice. According to this excerpt, Iran "was displeased with the information that...the Russian Federation was preparing a draft treaty with Syria on the creation of a full-blown naval base in Tartus" primarily because Russia is willing to work with Turkey and the US to resolve the Syrian conflict.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Gartner)**

*"...Nezavisimaya Gazeta's military-diplomatic sources point out that Damascus' tougher demands on the presence of the Russian Navy and aviation in Syria appeared as a result of Iran's tacit influence over the Syrian leadership."*

**Source:** Mikhail Falaleyev, "Встанем у моря. В сирийском Тартусе будет российская военная база (We Will Stand by Sea. There Will Be Russian Military Base in Syria's Tartus)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 22 January 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/01/22/rossijskie-korabli-budut-bazirovatsia-v-sirijskom-tartuse.html>

*A Russian-Syrian agreement has been signed on the creation in Tartus of our naval base, which will be able to receive 11 large warships, including those equipped with nuclear power plants. In fact, this will not only be a transit facility for restocking food and drinking water supplies but also a place for high-tech repairs.... The agreement was signed for 49 years, but the lease for the port territory can be automatically renewed every quarter of a century, until one of the parties opts out of the treaty process. It was decided that the Syrian Army will protect our base from the direction of the land border and that we will cover the port and the dock with the sea and the air.*

**Source:** Vladimir Mukhin, "Тартус не станет военно-морской базой России; Усилению влияния Москвы в Средиземноморье противится Тегеран (Tartus Will Not Become Russia's Naval Base; Tehran Counters Moscow's Growing Influence in Mediterranean)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 23 January 2017. [http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-23/2\\_6909\\_tartus.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-23/2_6909_tartus.html)

*The Russian Federation and Syria have at last signed documents whereby the stationing of Russian troops in that country acquires juridical status. However, certain aspects of the agreement beg questions....*

*The document defines new regulations governing Russian Federation warships putting into territorial and internal waters, as well as Syria's ports. At the same time there can be no more than 11 combat units in the material and technical support center, including warships with nuclear propulsion (provided nuclear and ecological safety is observed). The agreement does not state whether this includes nuclear submarines, for example. Damascus will rigidly control the coming and going of Russian ships in its territorial waters, since the Russian Command is obliged to notify Syria's authorized organ of this in good time (no later than 12 hours before entering and six hours before leaving)....*

*"This agreement operates for 49 years and is automatically extended for subsequent 25-year periods unless either side notifies the other side in writing through diplomatic channels no less than one year before the latest period expires of its intention to terminate it," the document reads.*

*That is, from now on, if the Syrian leadership no longer wishes to have a modernized naval material and technical support center in Tartus, just one year later there will be no Russian naval presence there....*

*...Nezavisimaya Gazeta's military-diplomatic sources point out that Damascus' tougher demands on the presence of the Russian Navy and aviation in Syria appeared as a result of Iran's tacit influence over the Syrian leadership. Tehran is pained by the Russian Federation's increasing role in the Near East and dislikes the fact that Moscow is involving Turkey in settling the conflict in Syria and is planning to cooperate actively with the United States and other countries that are part of the coalition.*

*Tehran was displeased with the information that appeared in Russian media in October 2016 to the effect that the Russian Federation was preparing a draft treaty with Syria on the creation of a full-blown naval base in Tartus.*



## Operational Plans for Russia's Naval Base on the Mediterranean

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian sea traffic to Syria has been heavy and stressed the limited facilities of the old Soviet-built repair and docking facility in the port of Tartus. Upgraded facilities are clearly needed as the Russian facility can only handle four medium sized ships when its floating piers are fully operational. The port cannot handle large Russian warships currently in the area such as the Admiral Kuznetsov Aircraft Cruiser and the missile cruiser *Petr Veliki* [Peter the Great]. The accompanying passages discuss the operational details and plans for the base, which will aid Russian efforts to support Syria and could also support a permanent Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“On January 20, Moscow and Damascus signed a 49-year agreement to modernize the repair and docking facility in the Syrian port of Tartus. Upon the agreement’s expiration, a 25-year extension will be automatic unless one side informs the other a year in advance of any desired changes.”*

**Source:** Nikolai Litovkin, “Russia to build full-fledged naval base in Syria,” *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, 23 January 2017. [http://rbth.com/international/2017/01/23/russia-to-build-full-fledged-naval-base-in-syria\\_686651](http://rbth.com/international/2017/01/23/russia-to-build-full-fledged-naval-base-in-syria_686651)

*The Tartus naval repair facility was built by the Soviet government in 1977, and is the only Russian naval facility on the Mediterranean Sea. Until recently, the Tartus facility was nothing but a floating pontoon for rudimentary ship repair. According to the new agreement, Russia will build a full-fledged base at Tartus and have the right to deploy up to 11 ships in the area.*

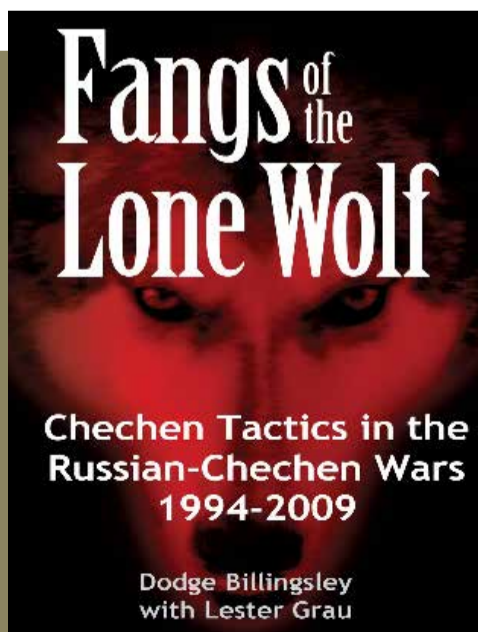
*Retired Colonel Mikhail Khodorenok stated “We’re beginning major construction of military infrastructure - a wharf, barracks, headquarters, ammunition storage, and so on. Tartus will turn into a naval base headed by a fleet Vice Admiral.” Khodorenok added that it would take two to three years to build the base. The number of servicemen stationed there will depend on the number of ships deployed in Tartus, and it’s highly unlikely that 11 ships will be docked in the region at the same time. Instead, most likely about five ships will be based in Tartus on a regular basis, while visiting ships will appear from time to time.*

*According to Vadim Kozyulin, a professor at the Academy of Military Sciences “Ships that are part of the Admiral Kuznetsov aircraft carrier group will be stationed at the base. Large landing, patrol and anti-submarine ships, most likely from the Black Sea and Northern Fleets.”*

**Source:** Mikhail Falaleyev, “Встанем у моря. В сирийском Тартусе будет российская военная база (We Will Stand by Sea. There Will Be Russian Military Base in Syria’s Tartus),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 22 January 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/01/22/rossijskie-korabli-budut-bazirovatsia-v-sirijskom-tartuse.html>

### ***We Will Stand by Sea. There Will Be Russian Military Base in Syria’s Tartus***

*Our naval base will be able to receive 11 large warships, including those equipped with nuclear power plants. In fact, this will not only be a transit facility for restocking food and drinking water but also a place for high-tech repairs. This means that Russia will build a modern production facility, including complete docks capable of receiving nuclear vessels. But this will not just be a giant “repair shop” or a transit point but a combat position: It will be possible to deliver air and sea strikes against terrorists from this base. The base will have control systems for anti-aircraft and antisubmarine warfare. A battery of S-300 missile defense weapon systems is already stationed there. Up to 10 ships and auxiliary vessels are serving as part of a naval force in the Mediterranean Sea, with one of its bases located in Tartus. Small missile ships Zelenyy Dol, Serpukhov, and Mirazh have recently joined the force on rotation.*



Books on guerrilla war are seldom written from the tactical perspective and from the guerrilla’s perspective. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf*: is an exception. These are the stories of low-level guerrilla combat as told by the survivors. They cover fighting from the cities of Grozny and Argun to the villages of Bamut and Serzhen-yurt, and finally the hills, river valleys and mountains that make up so much of Chechnya. Dodge Billingsley, the primary author was embedded with Chechen guerrilla forces after the first war, so he knows the country, the culture, the key actors and the conflict. Yet, as a Western outsider, he is able to maintain perspective and objectivity. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf* provides a unique insight into what is becoming modern and future war.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Fangs-of-the-Lone-Wolf.pdf>



## Russian Hypersonic Weaponry

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia will be adding hypersonic weaponry to its arsenal in the near future. As the accompanying passage from a Russian source discusses, hypersonic ammunition is a weaponry type that travels at a speed of “mach five” or above (five times the speed of sound), which is around 3750 miles an hour. The major selling point of such ammunition is its lack of vulnerability. Air defense weapons systems are currently unable to stop a projectile that is flying at such a speed, with the exception of the S-500 Prometheus surface-to-air missile. The excerpt details the advantages of this system for Russia, noting that “Russian developments in the sphere of hypersonics will ensure military parity for at least the next 40 years.”

While the speed at which the round flies is a major selling point, there are two major drawbacks to hypersonic ammunition. The first is that the shell risks being destroyed due to the high speeds and temperatures. The second is that a cloud of white hot plasma forms around the shell that could burn the equipment necessary to control of the missile. According to a recent statement by Russian military officials, Russia has succeeded in overcoming both of these issues. Due to this success, multiple Tsirkon anti-ship missiles will be outfitted on some of Russia’s fleet such as the Admiral Nakhimov, the Petr Velikiy and the Admiral Kuznetsov.

This weaponry would allow Russia to carry out precision air strikes while disregarding missile defense systems. It would also allow Russia to bypass nuclear options, as the kinetic energy of the warhead arriving from space would be more than enough to destroy the intended target. **End OE Watch Commentary (McConnell)**

*“In the opinion of experts from the Foundation for Advanced Research, Russian developments in the sphere of hypersonics will ensure military parity for at least the next 40 years.”*

**Source:** Anton Valagin, “Какое гиперзвуковое оружие готовит Россия (The Type of Hypersonic Weapons Russia is Preparing),” *Moscow Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 22 January 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/01/22/kakoe-giperzvukovoe-oruzhie-gotovit-rossiia.html>

*“It is customary to consider a speed five or more times the speed of sound hypersonic (Mach five and above) – roughly, above 6,000 kilometers an hour, or 1.6 kilometers a second. This is twice the speed of a bullet fired from a sniper rifle. The key advantage of hypersonic ammunition is its lack of vulnerability – none of the existing air defense or missile defense systems are capable of stopping a target flying at such a speed. The Russian S-500 Prometheus surface-to-air missile system, whose tasks include intercepting hypersonic targets, has just started tests. Other countries have such systems at the development stage, at best.”*

*“In the opinion of experts from the Foundation for Advanced Research, Russian developments in the sphere of hypersonics will ensure military parity for at least the next 40 years.”*

## New National Guard Equipment: Electric-Shock Batons

**OE Watch Commentary:** Reports out of Moscow indicate that the National Guard will be armed with a ZEUS baton that possesses an LED flashlight, a laser sight, and the ability to fire electronic shocks up to five meters and stun grenades from a built-in rail. The baton is tied to its owner via a special chip code ensuring that it can only be used by its owner. The batons will be in use by patrols and those responsible for maintaining public order. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, “National Guard Troops Will Be Armed with Electric-Shock Batons. New Batons Contain Flashlights, Laser Pointers, and Can Throw Grenades,” *Izvestiya Online*, 23 January 2017.

*On the outside ZEUS differs little from traditional devices used by security forces: a rubber stick with two electrodes at its tip. The only visible difference is probably the Picatinny rail (a rail interface system).*

*“We specialize in the development of non-lethal weapons and therefore understand very well what functionality is required for the security forces, what tasks they perform and in what conditions,” Igor Shushura told Izvestiya. “ZEUS is unique in that, unlike similar foreign devices, it combines several functions. It performs its routine functions (as an electric-shock baton) and, because of its powerful flashlight, it can be used by a serviceman to inspect a car or the basement of a residential building at night.”*

*What makes the new shocker different is that, in addition to close-quarters combat, it can also be used for shooting the offender within a range of five meters. Special cartridges with electric needles which cause neuromuscular incapacitation are used for that. It is equipped with a laser pointer for precise targeting.*

*If a serviceman just needs to stop somebody by temporarily blinding and deafening him he can install on the device a cartridge with stun grenades instead of one with needles.*

*ZEUS has undergone clinical trials—the impact from the shocker immobilizes the offender without damaging his internal organs, ears, or eyes. In addition, the shocker is also an individual-use device, which can only be used by its owner. Each device is equipped with a personal chip code containing the owner’s data. If the owner drops the device for any reason, it immediately stops working.*

*“ZEUS has undergone clinical trials—the impact from the shocker immobilizes the offender without damaging his internal organs, ears, or eyes.”*



## Russia's UAV Virtual Cellular Communication Tower

**OE Watch Commentary:** The modernization of Russia's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) continues to impress foreign observers. A recent report notes that the Leer-3 UAV can effectively turn into a "virtual cellular station" by sending messages and totally controlling a subscriber's devices once it replaces a base station. If it manages to take the place of a cellular communications tower, it can also send audio messages and small video clips to subscribers. The accompanying passages from the report discuss some of the capabilities of these UAVs.

The Leer-3 RB-34IV Electronic Warfare UAV was used to send out instant messages to armed formations in Syria "with application forms for the Armistice," according to Lieutenant-General Sergey Kuralenko, the Chief of the Center for the Reconciliation of the Opposing Sides in Syria. It thus appears to have some psychological warfare mission implications, if it can do all of these tasks. The Leer-3 can reportedly block enemy mobile telephones while simultaneously not impeding the operation of friendly mobiles phones. The systems can collect telephone numbers and call these numbers while blocking other people's signals. It may also be able to remotely connect user devices as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

*"The Leer-3 complex is composed of three Orlan-10 UAVs and a command and control post on a KamAZ-5350 truck. The unmanned aerial vehicles' primary mission is to suppress cellular communication towers. To do this, special 'jammers' have been installed onboard the Orlan-10 UAVs, and also disposable jammers, which they drop onto the ground. Having jammed the base stations, the old Orlan-10 UAVs were able to send instant messages to subscribers under certain conditions...But the new flying drones can easily handle those targets. They 'jam' base stations and take their place, while becoming virtual cellular stations."*

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Vladimir Zykov, "The Russian Army Has Obtained a Cellular Weapon: The Modernized Leer-3 Complex Will Be Able to Send Instant Messages and Audio and Video Messages," *TASS*, 25 January 2017. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3969215>

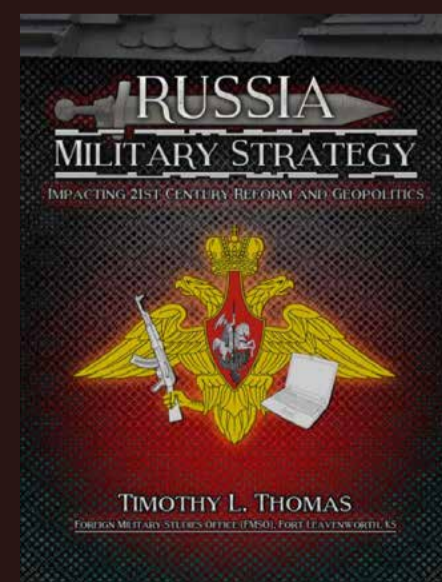
*Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), which are capable of taking the place of a cellular communications tower and of sending instant messages, audio messages, and small video clips to subscribers in the future, have been officially accepted into the Russian Army inventory. The drones have already completed successful tests during the course of the Russian Operation in Syria and will arrive at Ministry of Defense subunits in the near future.*

*The new UAVs have been developed based upon the Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicle. They will become part of the modernized Leer-3 RB-34IV electronic warfare complex. The first Leer UAVS, the mission of which is the suppression of the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMC) networks, arrived in the troops already in 2015. But until recently, the complexes were not always capable of working with the networks, where the 3G and 4G generations of information transmission technologies are being used.*

*"The Leer-3 complex is composed of three Orlan-10 UAVs and a command and control post on a KamAZ-5350 truck. The unmanned aerial vehicles' primary mission is to suppress cellular communication towers. To do this, special 'jammers' have been installed onboard the Orlan-10 UAVs, and also disposable jammers, which they drop onto the ground. Having jammed the base stations, the old Orlan-10 UAVs were able to send instant messages to subscribers under certain conditions...But the new flying drones can easily handle those targets. They 'jam' base stations and take their place, while becoming virtual cellular stations."*

**For the past ten years, as Prime Minister and President, Vladimir Putin has led an extensive reorganization and reequipping of his country's armed forces. Further, he has taken several opportunities to reclaim Russian territory that was taken, from his perspective, illegally. This book describes Putin and the military's use of various strategic concepts, the Defense Ministry's new equipment and reform initiatives, and Putin's geopolitical quest for influence in the Arctic and Ukraine. Included in the discussion are some of the unintended consequences of his actions (negative world opinion, sanctions, NATO responses, etc.).**

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas\\_Russian%20Military%20Strategy\\_Final\\_\(2%20May%202016\).pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas_Russian%20Military%20Strategy_Final_(2%20May%202016).pdf)





The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US government. Re-published in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation's China Brief. This article is from China Brief, Volume 16, Issue 19, dated 21 December 2016. <https://jamestown.org/program/strategic-support-force-update-overview/>

## The Strategic Support Force: Update and Overview

It has been nearly a year since the first round of military reforms responsible for the creation of the Strategic Support Force (战略支援部队; SSF). Although media reports were initially forthcoming with information, references to the SSF quickly dropped off, leaving far more questions than answers. However, as the PLA has started a more serious and concrete implementation of the hard work of reforms, more details have gradually emerged. A year on, there is enough information available to enable a basic understanding of the Force's structure, unit composition, and future direction. The SSF has become a force optimized for combat in space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic domain that will enhance the PLA's capability to fight and win future informatized wars.

### Force Overview

It is important to note that, while the SSF is a unique product of the reforms, it is built from the familiar. The reforms have thus far employed a “bricks not clay” approach to reorganization, repurposing whole, existing institutions and reforming them into new organizations to align with new paradigms, presumably with more minute changes to follow. This is best seen in the reorganization of the former four general departments into the new Central Military Commission functional organs.[1] Following from this concept, the SSF appears to be wholly constructed from the operational units and organizations from the former general departments, particularly the General Staff Department (GSD), General Armament Department (GAD), and General Political Department (GPD) units responsible for space, cyber, and electronic warfare, the SSF's main missions.

The force looks to be primarily designed around two operational imperatives. One, is peacetime-wartime integration (平战结合 or 平战一体). Previous operating concept would have required the PLA to transition to a wartime posture just prior to or shortly after the outbreak of war. For strategic-level information operations, in real terms this would require unprecedented coordination between GSD, GAD, GPD, and Military Region units across different echelons. The SSF simplifies this process dramatically, effectively organizing these units into operational groups under new domain-centric verticals as standard practice, optimized, like the new Military Theater Commands (战区), as a wartime structure.

Two, the SSF is intended to shift the PLA's most strategic, informatized missions from a discipline-centric to domain-centric force structure. Previously, space, cyber, and electronic warfare units were organized according to their mission type—the disciplines of reconnaissance, attack, or defense—rather than their war-fighting domain. This is best seen in the cyber mission, for which espionage was handled by the 3PLA, while the attack elements were handled by the 4PLA. The central concept here is the idea of “integrated reconnaissance, attack, and defense” (侦攻防一体化), which requires that the intelligence, offensive, and defensive elements are integrated together to enable full-spectrum war-fighting in a particular domain. This new organizational construct is also intended to enable previously impossible levels of unified planning, force construction, and operations.[2]

### Force Structure and Composition

Established on December 31, 2015, the Strategic Support Force is a Military Theater-grade (正战区) or Deputy Military Theater-grade (副战区) organization commanded by former Second Artillery Force Major General Gao Jin (高津). The political commissar is Major

General Liu Fulian (刘福连)<sup>i</sup>. Li Shangfu (李尚福), former director of the GAD Xichang Satellite Launch Center (西昌卫星发射中心; 27th Base) has been identified as a deputy commander of the SSF<sup>ii</sup>. Rao Kaixun (饶开勋), former director of the 1PLA, is reportedly another deputy commander<sup>iii</sup>. The SSF is responsible for the PLA's space, cyber, and electronic warfare missions. Functionally and structurally, the SSF operates like the former Second Artillery Force (第二炮兵部队; PLASAF), which was similarly a *budui* that functioned like a service and consolidated strategic capabilities under the CMC<sup>iv</sup>.

Under this leadership, the force appears to have a staff department, equipment department, political department, and, presumably, a logistics department. More operationally, the force appears to have headquarters components for its space and cyber forces, embodied in the Space Systems Department (航天系统部; SSF-SSD) and Network Systems Department (网络系统部; SSF-NSD), respectively. The SSF may create or already have an Electronic/Electromagnetic Systems Department (电子/电磁系统部; ESD) for its electronic warfare force. These departments may be subordinate to the staff department or, more likely, to SSF leadership directly, which would make them Corps Leader grade (正军级) or Deputy Corps Leader grade (副军级) organizations.



### Space and Aerospace Mission

Of the known missions of the SSF, the space mission has been the best defined in the year since its creation. Space units are organized into the newly-established Space Systems Department. The former General Armament Department's space mission forms the basis for the Space Systems Department, although the department also draws units and missions from the former General Staff Department. The SSD consolidates nearly every aspect of PLA space operations, including space launch, support, telemetry, tracking, and control (TT&C) and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). The current head of the SSD is unknown, though would likely come from the GAD's space cadre.

(continued)



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## Continued: The Strategic Support Force: Update and Overview

### Launch Facilities:

English Name and Cover Designation	Chinese Name
1. Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center / 20th Testing and Training Base (63600部队)	中国酒泉卫星发射中心 / 第20试验训练基地
2. Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center / 25th Testing and Training Base (63710部队)	中国太原卫星发射中心 / 第25试验训练基地
3. Xichang Satellite Launch Center / 27th Testing and Training Base (63790部队)	中国西昌卫星发射中心 / 第27试验训练基地
4. Wenchang Aerospace Launch Site	文昌航天发射场
Sources: (1) “航天员景海鹏陈冬入住太空“新”家” (Astronauts Jin Haipeng, Chen Dong, Move in to « New » Home in Space), PLA Daily, October 20, <a href="http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2016-10/20/content_7312493.htm">http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2016-10/20/content_7312493.htm</a> ; 我国成功发射云海一号01星 (China Successfully Launches Yunhai 01 Star), PLA Daily, November 11, <a href="http://zz.81.cn/content/2016-11/12/content_7355138.htm">http://zz.81.cn/content/2016-11/12/content_7355138.htm</a> ; (2) Zhejiang University, September 27 (3) 中国西昌卫星发射中心: 打造卫星发射“新引擎” (China Xichang Satellite Launch Center: to Develop and Launch “New Engine” Satellite), Strategic Support, April 17, <a href="http://chuansong.me/n/518219052766">http://chuansong.me/n/518219052766</a> ; 我国成功发射风云四号科研试验卫星 (China Successfully Launches FengYun 4 Scientific Research and Experiment Satellite), PLA Daily, December 12 <a href="http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_7401227.htm">http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_7401227.htm</a> (4) 让青春在追逐强军梦想中绽放 (Allowing Youth to Blossom in the Pursuit of the Dream of a Strong Military), PLA Daily, May 8, <a href="http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2016-05/08/content_4654402.htm">http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2016-05/08/content_4654402.htm</a> ; “眼睛可以失明, 但追梦的脚步不能迷失方向”——记海南文昌航天发射场工程建设指挥部工程师周湘虎 (“The Eye May Go Blind, but the Pursuit of the Dream’s Pace Must Not Flounder/Get Lost”—Hainan Province’s Wenchang Spaceflight Launching Site Headquarters Engineer Zhou Xianghu Wrote), PLA Daily, November 1, <a href="http://news.xinhuanet.com/2016-11/01/c_1119830374.htm">http://news.xinhuanet.com/2016-11/01/c_1119830374.htm</a>	

### Space Telemetry, Tracking, & Control:

English Name and Cover Designation	Chinese Name
1. Beijing Aerospace Flight Control Center	北京航天飞行控制中心
2. Xi’an Satellite Control Center / 26th Testing and Training Base (63750部队)	中国西安卫星测控中心 / 第26试验训练基地
3. Telemetry, Tracking, and Control Stations (e.g., Kashi station)	[喀什] 航天测控站
4. China Satellite Maritime Tracking and Control Department 23rd Testing and Training Base	中国卫星海上测控部 / 第23试验训练基地
Sources: (1) 北京航天飞行控制中心: 实行型号团队机制迎战高密度航天任务 (Beijing Spaceflight Control Center: The Implementation of Model Team Mechanism Takes on High-Density Spaceflight), Strategic Support, April 10, <a href="http://chuansong.me/n/518219552684">http://chuansong.me/n/518219552684</a> ; (2) Zhejiang University, September 27; 娄勤俭在战略支援部队驻陕某部走访慰问 (Lou Qinqian Visits PLA Strategic Support Force Stationed in Shaanxi and Salutes Them) Weinan Daily, July 30, <a href="http://www.weinan.gov.cn/news/zwyw/525891.htm">http://www.weinan.gov.cn/news/zwyw/525891.htm</a> ; (3) 走进“中国航天测控第一站” (Enter “China’s First Spaceflight Monitoring and Control Station”), PLA Daily, May 3 <a href="http://www.81.cn/jsjz/2016-05/03/content_7030079.htm">http://www.81.cn/jsjz/2016-05/03/content_7030079.htm</a> ; (4) 新型舰只装备战略支援部队 用于卫星海上测控 (New Ship Type to Equip Strategic Support Force for Monitoring and Control of Spaceflight at Sea), Phoenix, June 30, <a href="http://news.ifeng.com/a/20160630/49269997_0.shtml">http://news.ifeng.com/a/20160630/49269997_0.shtml</a> ; 战略支援部队如何锻造新质利器: 多搞原创出奇制胜, (PLA Strategic Support Force on How to Forge a New Weapon: Create More Unorthodox Surprises), PLA Daily, March 3 2016, <a href="http://www.chinanews.com/mil/2016/03-11/7792939.shtml">http://www.chinanews.com/mil/2016/03-11/7792939.shtml</a>	

The SSD has also incorporated certain units from the General Staff Department, though much fewer than from the GAD, which had comparatively greater number of units responsible for space mission. The Aerospace Reconnaissance Bureau (航天侦察局; ARB), responsible for aerospace ISR, has shifted to the SSF, based on personnel transfers, including that of Zhou Zhixin (周志鑫), head of the ARB<sup>v</sup>. The Satellite Main Station (卫星通信总站; SMS) from the former GSD Informatization Department (总参信息化部; INFOD) has also been incorporated into the SSF<sup>vi</sup>. [3]

English Name and Cover Designation	Chinese Name
Aerospace Reconnaissance Bureau (ARB) 61646部队	航天侦察局
Satellite Main Station (SMS) 61096部队*	卫星总站
Sources: 军队15位“大咖”畅谈如何提升军事创新能力 (Fifteen Military “Big Shots” Discuss How to Improve Military Innovation), PLA Daily, April 9 2016, <a href="http://www.81.cn/jwz/2016-04/09/content_6998103_2.htm">http://www.81.cn/jwz/2016-04/09/content_6998103_2.htm</a> ; 战略支援部队某总站党委在转隶调整中发挥凝心聚力作用纪实 (Strategic Support Force, PLA Daily, February 29 2016, <a href="http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0229/c117092-28158656.html">http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0229/c117092-28158656.html</a> ; 卫星点波束的移动目标指向优化研究 (Moving-Target Pointing Optimization of Satellite Spot-Beam), Paper Download Page, CNKI, <a href="http://cnki.sgst.cn/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?filename=TX-JS201505006&amp;dbcode=CJFD&amp;dbname=CJFD2015">http://cnki.sgst.cn/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?filename=TX-JS201505006&amp;dbcode=CJFD&amp;dbname=CJFD2015</a> .	
* Both the ARB and Satellite Main Station have been split off from their former parent units, which have become new bureaus under the General Staff Department’s successor, the CMC Joint Staff Department (联合参谋部; JSD). The GSD 2PLA has become the new JSD Intelligence Bureau (情报局; JSD-IB) and the GSD INFOD has become the new JSD Information Communications Bureau (信息通信局; JSD-CIB).	

Although a more comprehensive analysis of where the former General Armament Departments operational and R&D units have moved is beyond the scope of this report, it is worth noting that a number of these organizations that fall outside of the space mission have also moved to the SSF. Some serve administrative or support functions, such as the GAD 306th Hospital, which was transferred from the GAD in July 2016, while others are more germane to the SSF’s mission<sup>vii</sup>. Such R&D-focused institutes may be housed in the SSD or alternatively could have been transferred to the SSF’s Equipment Department, or some equivalent.

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English Name and Cover Designation	Chinese Name
1. China Nuclear Test Base / 21st Experimental and Training Base 63650部队*	中国核试验基地 / 第21试验训练基地
2. Aerospace Research and Development Center	航天研发中心
3. Project Design Research Center	工程设计研究所

Sources: (1) 中国核试验基地科学家干惊天动地事 做隐姓埋名人 (China's Nuclear Test Base Scientists Move Heaven and Earth While Maintaining Anonymity), PLA Daily, January 30, <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0130/c1011-28097575.html>; (2) 国家863计划“北斗地基导航信号网络关键技术”课题通过科技部技术验收评审 (National 863 Program “Beidou Ground Navigation Signal Network Key Technology” Goes Through Ministry of Science and Technology Technical Assessment and Appraisal Upon Delivery, China Transport Telecommunications and Information Center, October 17 <http://www.cttic.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=10&id=1848>; Zhejiang University, September 27; (3) 国家863计划“北斗地基导航信号网络关键技术”课题通过科技部技术验收评审 (National 863 Program “Beidou Ground Navigation Signal Network Key Technology” Goes Through Ministry of Science and Technology Technical Assessment and Appraisal Upon Delivery, China Transport Telecommunications and Information Center, October 17 <http://www.cttic.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=10&id=1848>; Zhejiang University, September 27

\*Military researchers affiliated with the GAD 21st Test Base have published journal articles discussing directed energy weapons (DEW), which suggests that this base may have a mission to conduct research into operational uses of lasers or other directed-energy weapons. This aligns with the Strategic Support Forces mission to be a “new-type” (新型) force responsible for “new-type” capabilities, which DEWs have traditionally been characterized as.

There are key remaining questions regarding the SSF's space mission. For one, it remains unclear whether the Space Systems Department will incorporate kinetic anti-satellite capabilities, such as direct-ascent weapons, or those will remain with the successor to the form PLASAF, the PLA Rocket Force (解放军火箭军; PLARF). It is also unclear whether the SSD will incorporate operational units responsible for hydrology, meteorology, mapping, and navigation, although there are initial indications that some of these units are now part of the SSF<sup>viii</sup>. These units were previously under the GSD First Department (总参一部; 1PLA; also known as the Operations Department), Survey and Mapping Bureau (总参测绘导航局; SMB). The 1PLA is now reorganized as the JSD Operations Bureau (作战局; JSD-OB) under the Joint Staff Department, with the new Battlefield Environmental Support Bureau (战场环境保障局; JSD-BESB) taking the place of the former Survey and Mapping Bureau<sup>ix</sup>.

### Cyber Mission

Although the SSF's cyber mission has thus far been far less defined than its space mission, the details and structure are becoming progressively clearer. The Strategic Support Force's cyber forces appear to be organized under the newly-established SSF Network Systems Department (网络系统部; SSF-NSD). The former General Staff Department Third Department (总参三部; 3PLA) appears to be the central component around which the NSD is organized. The 3PLA is the Chinese military's premiere cyber espionage organization, and their preeminence in this domain makes them a natural fit as the primary “tent-pole” for the SSF's cyber force. Although the leadership of the NSD is unknown, Zheng Junjie (郑俊杰), former head of the 3PLA, may have moved over, but this cannot yet be independently confirmed. This would put him in contention as a potential Commander of the NSD.

Multiple organizations subordinate to or affiliated with the former 3PLA have moved over to the Strategic Support Force. Most noteworthy, the GSD 56th and 58th Research Institutes, both formerly under the 3PLA, have moved to the Network Systems Department<sup>x</sup>. The GSD 56th and 58th Research Institutes previously reported directly to 3PLA headquarters, and were tasked with military research, development, testing, and acquisition (RDT&A) in support of 3PLA's mission. [4] Additionally, a growing number of public records link former 3PLA units and facilities—in particular, former Technical Reconnaissance Bureau's and the 3PLA headquarters itself—to the SSF<sup>xi</sup>. These moves are reliable indicators not only that the core functions of 3PLA have

moved, including its administrative responsibilities but also that the Network Systems Department itself may be synonymous with the 3PLA, essentially acting as a renamed, reorganized version of the former department. [5]

Other aspects of cyber warfare, including cyber-attack and cyber defense, should be expected to shift into the NSD, yet there have been no indicators of this so far. Computer network attack (CNA) has traditionally been handled by the GSD Fourth Department (4PLA) and the computer network defense (CND) mission has been handled by the GSD Informatization Department. While elements of both organizations have moved to the SSF, there is no indication that their cyber missions have yet been tasked specifically to the NSD. [6] It is likely that these missions will move to the NSD within the coming few years to align with the principles around which the SSF is organized and to fulfill the concept of “integrated cyber-attack, defense, and reconnaissance.” [7]

Although cyber constitutes one of its primary missions, the 3PLA is also responsible for traditional signals and communications intelligence, which doesn't fit squarely into the Network Systems Department. If the Network Systems Department is solely focused on cyber warfare, as its name implies, then the traditional signals intelligence mission of the nation-wide network of TRB's would need to find a new home. This a substantial portion of the 3PLA's personnel, facilities, and organizational mass. Currently, it is unclear if the Central Military Commission will split this mission away from the 3PLA, but given the trajectory of the reforms this seems likely.

### Electronic Warfare Mission

At this point, the least amount of information is known or can be confirmed about the status of the SSF's electronic warfare (EW) mission. The General Staff Department Fourth Department (总参四部; 4PLA), also known as the Electronic Countermeasure and Radar Department (电子对抗与雷达部), has been responsible for strategic-level, or national level, electronic warfare for the PLA. [8] In contrast to the space and cyber missions, which have been scattered across several different in the general departments, the electronic warfare mission had been solely under the remit of the 4PLA. Given these facts, it is likely the 4PLA will have a strong, central role in the electronic warfare mission under the SSF—perhaps even forming a separate systems department of its own—though so far the extent of the 4PLA's move, though assumed, is unclear.

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In recent months, there have been some preliminary indicators that suggest portions of the 4PLA have been transferred. The 54th Research Institute, formerly subordinate to the 4PLA, appears to have moved to the SSF, though it is not clear under what administrative structure<sup>xii</sup>. Previously, the GSD 54th RI reported directly to 4PLA headquarters, and much like the 56th and 58th Research Institutes for the 3PLA, its move is a strong indicator that core components of the 4PLA now report to the Strategic Support Force. The fate of the 4PLA's operational units, alternatively, have been assumed to move but their status is still unconfirmed; however, their primacy in strategic electronic warfare makes their move to the SSF a near-certainty.

Speculatively, the SSF may create an equivalent Electronic or Electromagnetic Systems Department, analogous to the Space Systems Department and Network Systems Department, to oversee a force to fight in the electromagnetic domain. Presumably, the 4PLA would serve as the central "tentpole" around which the rest of the force would be formed. This would mean that each of the SSF's confirmed missions of space, cyber, and electronic warfare would have a main administrative and operational headquarters under the SSF, responsible for warfighting in their respective domains.

This potential structure could answer the question as to the status of the 3PLA's traditional signals intelligence mission, if it is eventually split off from the Network Systems Department. A notional Electromagnetic Systems Department would be a natural home for the 3PLA's technical reconnaissance mission, which would provide the both the domain reconnaissance component supporting the 4PLA's electronic warfare mission as well as the critical intelligence component for the PLA's expanding strategic missions.

### Informatization

The Informatization Department and its subordinate units do not appear to have moved to the Strategic Support Force as initially predicted, but rather seem to have remained largely within the Central Military Commission thus far<sup>xiii</sup>. The Informatization Department has been reorganized into the Information Communications Bureau (信息通信局; JSD-ICB) under the CMC's Joint Staff Department. Its former research institute, the 61st Research Institute, has also remained within the CMC but moved to the CMC Equipment Development Department<sup>xiv</sup>. [9]

Operationally, the CMC has appeared to have retained units for force-wide information support. The highest-echelon organization responsible for command and control, the Information Support Base (联合参谋信息保障基地; JSD-ISB) formerly under the Informatization Department, has remained under the CMC Joint Staff Department, presumably directly reporting to Information Communications Bureau<sup>xv</sup>. Before the reforms, all national-level informatization units and communications main stations reported directly to the ISB. It is unclear how many will still remain subordinate to the ISB. An overly cautious Central Military Commission, reluctant to give up too much control of information, may choose to keep a number of these informatized units under its direct purview.

The structure and shape of this CMC informatization corps is currently unknown. Speculatively, it is possible that the Central Military Commission may create a joint informatization force similar in structure and scope to the Joint Logistics Support Force (军委联合后勤保障部队; JLSF), a fusion of former General Logistics Department units and possibly logistics units from the other service branches<sup>xvi</sup>. [10] Such a "Joint Information Support Force" (军委联合信息保障部队)

would presumably be responsible for national-level, joint information support, command and control, information security, and intelligence dissemination.

At this point, it remains unclear whether and to what extent the SSF will incorporate an informatization or information support mission. Some informatization units are confirmed to have moved to the Strategic Support Force, but these could be the exception rather than the rule. Units responsible for elements of space information support, computer network defense, and spectrum sensing/management are expected to move over to corresponding missions in the Strategic Support Force, but there has been no confirmation in open sources thus far.

### Conclusion

Thus far, the Central Military Commission has focused on making broad strokes and affecting change in larger, leading organizations first, in what the PLA is calling an "above the neck" (脖子以上) reform<sup>xvii</sup>. Such an approach minimizes disruptiveness of reforms and helps generate buy-in from leadership on deeper cuts that will undoubtedly take place in the future. Ultimately, this serves as a slow, incremental baseline on which future reforms can be built. For the Strategic Support Force, this has meant that the old siloed nature of space, cyber, and electronic warfare have been broken and reorganized into new verticals.

This alone, however, will not be enough. Although the organizational structure now employed by the SSF is a better representation of a domain-centric view of war fighting, some incongruences remain at lower levels. Elements of the former GSD's cyber, space, and electronic warfare capabilities remain integrated within units responsible for other missions. To fully follow-through on the conceptual framework employed for the Strategic Support Force, deeper, more painful cuts will need to happen. The PLA is now embarking on "below the neck" (脖子以下) reforms, likely to be implemented over the remaining three year period the reforms are intended to take place. This process will presumably entail undertaking deeper, more difficult changes than previous changes have presaged. For the SSF, this will be the test to see whether the PLA can fully implement the concepts and guiding paradigms that will enable better war-fighting or institutional barriers and vested interests will win the day.□

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### Notes

1. In the reforms, the four general departments, the General Staff Department (总参谋部; GSD), General Political Department (总政治部; GPD), General Logistics Department (总后勤部; GLD), and General Armament Department (总装备部; GAD) have become slimmed-down, CMC functions organs called the Joint Staff Department (军委联合参谋部; JSD), Political Work Department (军委政治工作部; PWD), Logistics Support Department (军委后勤保障部; LSD), and Equipment Development Department (军委装备发展部; EDD), respectively.

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2. Xiao Tianliang [肖天亮] (eds.), *The Science of Military Strategy [战略学]*, National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社], 2015, p. 388; Though the SSF does appear to have incorporated a former General Political Department unit, the 311 Base (311基地; 61716部队) or the “Three Warfares Base,” for now the status of this unit isn’t entirely clear. Traditionally, the psychological dimension of warfare hasn’t been considered a domain, per se, but rather a discipline under information operations. It is not clear whether the PLA intends to create a war-fighting force on par with those for space, cyber, and electronic warfare that would conduct psychological operations. See <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/81377x/201606/669378161.html> and <http://www.cqvip.com/QK/97723X/201401/49213060.html> for personnel linkages between the 311 Base and the SSF.
3. Both the ARB and Satellite Main Station have been split off from their former parent units, which have become new bureaus under the General Staff Department’s successor, the CMC Joint Staff Department (联合参谋部; JSD). The GSD 2PLA has become the new JSD Intelligence Bureau (情报局; JSD-IB) and the GSD INFOD has become the new JSD Communications and Information Bureau (通信信息局; JSD-IB).
4. According to Mark Stokes, Russell Hsiao, and Jenny Lin, the 56th Research Institute focuses on research and development of advanced computing technologies, including supercomputers. The GSD 58th RI focuses on cryptography and information security. Both of these technologies have applicability to cyber warfare. [https://project2049.net/documents/pla\\_third\\_department\\_sigint\\_cyber\\_stokes\\_lin\\_hsiao.pdf](https://project2049.net/documents/pla_third_department_sigint_cyber_stokes_lin_hsiao.pdf)
5. In this regard, it is noteworthy that so far the 3PLA’s sister organizations from the General Staff Department, the 2PLA and INFOD, have remained under the GSD’s successor, the CMC Joint Staff Department, along with their respective Research Institutes. In this way, the various GSD Research Institutes may be a useful bellwether for judging if a particular general department or organization has moved. Such an approach to renaming is consistent with the PLA’s “bricks not clay” reform.
6. While the PLA has so far move whole organizations, it can’t be ruled out that the CMC may move smaller pieces of organizations when necessary. For instance, the CMC moved the 2PLA to the CMC, reorganizing it as the Intelligence Bureau (JSD-IB), and moved the 2PLA Aerospace Reconnaissance Bureau (ARB) to the SSF Space Systems Department; effectively separating the components of the organization. Generally, however, it appears that the CMC is building with whole organizations, but lingering uncertainty as to how deeply the CMC is cutting into traditional mission sets hinders the ability to make predictions with greater confidence.
7. In the previous structure, each Service Branch, including the PLASAF, and Military Regions maintained their own Technical Reconnaissance Bureaus. The SSF does not seem to incorporate these other Service or MR-specific TRB’s, and they appear to continue to be entities independent of the SSF’s cyber mission as inherited from the 3PLA. Interestingly, there are preliminary indicators to suggest that the former MR TRB’s are not under the control of the new Military Theater Commands as one would expect, but rather report directly to the new Army Leading Organ, indicating that the Army is utilizing the former network of MR TRB’s as a de facto reconnaissance branch in a similar manner the former GSD used the 3PLA.
8. As previously discussed, the former 4PLA was also responsible for the PLA’s computer network attack mission. In general, for information operations, the 4PLA appeared to act as the “attack” element, with the 3PLA serving as the reconnaissance element, while the Informatization Department acted as the defense element.
9. The 61st Research Institutes name would therefore be the CMC Equipment Development Department 61st Research Institute (中央军委装备发展部第61研究所).
10. An excellent forthcoming paper from Erin Richter and Leigh Ann Ragland-Luce examines the JLSF in greater detail. Thank you to both for giving the author a basic introduction into the JLSF.

<sup>i</sup> 陆军领导机构火箭军战略支援部队成立大会在京举行 习近平向中国人民解放军陆军火箭军战略支援部队授予军旗并致训词 (Army Leadership Convenes in Beijing to Form the Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force, Xi Jinping Confers Colors and Delivers Speech to Army, Rocket Force, and Strategic Support Force), *Xinhua*, January 1 2016, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/01/c\\_1117646667.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/01/c_1117646667.htm)

<sup>ii</sup> 战略支援部队副司令员李尚福晋升中将军衔 (Strategic Support Force Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff Li Shangfu Promoted to the Rank of Lieutenant General), *Sohu*, August 30 2016, <http://news.sohu.com/20160830/n466791345.shtml>

<sup>iii</sup> 原总参作战部部长饶开勋任战略支援部队副司令员 (Former Chief of Operations Department of the General Staff Department Rao Kaixun to Serve as Deputy Commander of Strategic Support Force), *The Paper*, November 3 2016, [http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_1417427](http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1417427); 代表信息 (Delegate Information), The National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China, <http://www.npc.gov.cn/delegate/viewDelegate.action?dbid=122920>.

<sup>iv</sup> John Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: China’s Information Warfare Service.” *The China Brief* 16, no. 3 (February 8, 2016): 15-20. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-strategic-support-force-chinas-information-warfare-service/>

<sup>v</sup> 军队15位“大咖”畅谈如何提升军事创新能力 (Fifteen Military “Big Shots” Discuss How to Improve Military Innovation), *PLA Daily*, April 9 2016, [http://www.81.cn/jwz/2016-04/09/content\\_6998103\\_2.htm](http://www.81.cn/jwz/2016-04/09/content_6998103_2.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> 战略支援部队某总站党委在转隶调整中发挥凝心聚力作用纪实 (Strategic Support Force ‘Certain’ Station Party Committee Directs the Role of Documentaries in Building Cohesiveness, *PLA Daily*, February 29 2016, <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0229/c117092-28158656.html>

<sup>vii</sup> 解放军第306医院转隶成为战略支援部队总医院 (The PLA’s Number 306 Hospital Becomes Central Hospital for the Strategic Support Force), *Sohu*, July 31 2016, <http://news.sohu.com/20160731/n461899452.shtml>

<sup>viii</sup> 嘿! 气象兵, 你每天都干些啥? (Hey! Meteorological Soldier, What Are Some of Your Daily Routines?) *chuangsong*, December 4 2016, <http://chuansong.me/n/1235731652757>

<sup>ix</sup> 原总参测绘导航局局长薛贵江少将任军委联合参谋部战保局局长 (Former Director of Map Survey and Navigation Bureau of the Operations Department of the General Staff Department, Major General Xue Guijiang to Head the Joint Staff Department’s Station Projection Bureau), *The Paper*, February 19 2016, [http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_1433620](http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1433620)

<sup>x</sup> 中国人民解放军战略支援部队网络系统部第五十六研究所 (PLA Strategic Support Force, Network Systems Department’s 56th Research Institute) China Postgraduate Student News, <http://yz.chsi.com.cn/sch/schoolInfo--schid-368175.dhtml>; 中国人民解放军总参第五十八研究所 (PLA Strategic Support Force, Network Systems Department’s 58th Research Institute) China Postgraduate Student News, <http://yz.chsi.com.cn/sch/schoolInfo--schid-367828.dhtml>



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- <sup>xii</sup> 网络空间战略论坛年度人物 (Participants in this Year's Cyberspace Strategy Forum), China Information Security Network, August 26 2016, <http://www.cnitsec.com.cn/index.php/index/articontent/menuid/52/tabid/100/id/3001/type/news.html>; 激光探测定位系统项目单一来源采购公示公告 (Laser Detection Positioning System Project, Single Source Procurement, Public Bulletin) Beijing Guotai Jianzhong Management & Consultation Co., Ltd, October 31 2016, <http://www.bjgtjz.com/newsview.asp?nid=11478>; 部分专家报告题目 (Part Experts' Report Topics List), IECAS & ORIA Chinese Radar Industry Association Journal, <http://radars.ie.ac.cn/UserFiles/File/2016%E9%95%BF%E6%98%A5%E9%9B%B7%E8%BE%E4%B8%8E%E5%AF%B9%E6%8A%97%E7%A0%94%E8%AE%A8%E4%BC%9A%E6%8A%A5%E5%91%8A-1025.pdf>; 战略支援部队如何锻造新质利器: 多搞原创出奇制胜 (PLA Strategic Support Force on How to Forge a New Weapon: Create More Unorthodox Surprises), *PLA Daily*, March 3 2016, <http://www.chinanews.com/mil/2016/03-11/7792939.shtml>
- <sup>xiii</sup> John Costello, The Strategic Support Force: China's Information Warfare Service, *China Brief* Volume 16 Issue 3, February 8 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-strategic-support-force-chinas-information-warfare-service/>
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- <sup>xv</sup> 2016年定向培养士官招生计划表及工作日程安排表 (2016 Non-Commissioned Officer Vocational Development Schedule and Arranged Work Schedule Table), *Duxuan* network, June 26 2016, <http://www.duxuan.cn/doc/5514893.html>
- <sup>xvi</sup> 习近平: 军队改革是决定军队未来的关键一招, (Xi Jinping: Military Reform is the Key Move to Decide Future Military), *Sina*, November 29 2016, <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/china/2016-11-29/doc-ifxyawmm3819408.shtml>
- <sup>xvii</sup> “脖子以下”改革展开, 军代表关心三件事 (“Below the Neck” Reform Spreads, PLA Representatives are Concerned with Three Things), *PLA Daily*, December 19 2016, [http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2016-12/19/content\\_7413070\\_2.htm](http://www.81.cn/jmywyl/2016-12/19/content_7413070_2.htm)





## Strategies Underlying Iranian Soft Power

Iran's approach to soft power is sophisticated and varied. While the Islamic Republic's religious rhetoric might dominate the Western understanding of Iran, successive governments—both before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution—have sought to capitalize on Iran's culture, religion, and historical legacy to extend influence and achieve aims far beyond its borders. To understand Iranian soft power therefore requires recognition of Persia's imperial past, its religious evolution, Persian language and culture, and its history.

### Capitalizing on an Imperial Legacy

Iran is not only a modern nation state, but it is also the inheritor of an ancient civilization. While the Middle East and Asia are home to many artificial states born in the twentieth century, Iran—or Persia, as it was known until 1935—has had a near contiguous history and sense of identity going back two millennia. Modern Iranian culture is a *mélange* of the influences which dominated in various incarnations of the Persian Empire and Iranian state.

The Persian Empire, at its greatest extent, stretched from the Mediterranean to India. Over just the last five hundred years, however, it has lost half its territory: The Portuguese seized Bahrain in 1521; the Ottoman Empire took Baghdad in 1638; and, in the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire wrested from Tehran's control of what today is Armenia, Azerbaijan, and part of Georgia. Iranian elementary school texts teach about the Iranian roots not only of cities like Baku, but also cities further north like Darbent, in southern Russia. The Shah lost much of his claim to western Afghanistan after in the Anglo-Persian War of 1856-1857. Between 1871 and 1872, Iran lost much of Baluchistan not to the British army, but rather to the Indo-European Telegraph Department, the nineteenth century equivalent of losing a battle to the post office. While Iran today may be a shadow of the Persian Empires of the past, a strong sense of history and pride pervades the country. Many Iranians consider their former imperial boundaries to be a natural sphere of influence, *Iranzamin*, just as Russian nationalists believe that Russia should have paramount influence within their "near abroad." Indeed, the notion of *Iranzamin* is a staple of rhetoric and cultural conception which transcends the 1979 Islamic Revolution; it remains an important aspect of Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini's rhetoric today.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this is why Ali Saidi, the Supreme Leader's representative to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) spoke about taking the fight "from Shalamchah [on the Persian Gulf] to the shores of the eastern Mediterranean" and, more recently, Gen. Mohammad Jafar Assadi, a former ground forces commander, bragged in January 2017 about Iranian influence again stretching from Iran to the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

If the history is one pillar of Iranian outreach and a commonality upon which Iranian leaders shape soft power strategies, then religion is another pillar. The Islamic Revolution may have inaugurated the modern world's first Shi'ite theocracy, but to assume Iran's importance or attraction rests only upon Shi'ite Islam is to misunderstand the residual influence of Iran's pre-Islamic past and its importance to the development of Islam. Across the Iranian plateau, Zoroastrianism grew from murky origins to become the official religion of the ancient Achaemenid Empire. From their capital in Babylon and their dynastic center at Persepolis, they ruled a vast empire stretching at its height from the Balkans to the Indus River Valley. Zoroastrianism outlived the Achaemenid Empire and dominated the Persian plateau for one thousand years. Its embrace of duality came to permeate Iranian culture, and not simply in terms of good versus evil. Even today under the Islamic Republic, the most prominent holiday in Iran is not Islamic but rather cultural: Iran's leading ayatollahs have long ago given

up any effort to stamp out celebration of Nowruz, the pre-Islamic Persian New Year which begins on the first day of the Spring Equinox and continues for almost two weeks. Rather than suppress this pre-Islamic identity, they have embraced it as a mechanism by which they can reach out to other "Persian" societies. In 2014, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, for example, spent his first Persian New Year as president attending a Nowruz festival in Afghanistan rather than Iran.<sup>3</sup> The annual festival, begun in Iran, is now hosted on a rotating basis in other regional countries.

The magi, Zoroastrian priests, are all but forgotten to those in the West except for their bit role in the New Testament as wise men bearing gifts. However, as a priestly class, they reigned supreme, at least up until the rise of Islam. Islam arose in the seventh century against the backdrop of a region exhausted by war. The Byzantine and Sassanid Empires had fought each other to a standstill, exhausting both empires and giving the new armies of Islam fertile ground to expand. By the end of the Prophet Muhammad's life in 632 AD, the Islamic Empire stretched across the Arabian Peninsula. Over the next three decades, it grew rapidly to encompass a region stretching from Libya to Afghanistan. The Arabs were predominantly a desert, nomadic people; managing a vast new empire required a different skill set. Enter both the Zoroastrian magi and Persian bureaucrats who converted to Islam to retain their privileged position. Herein lies Zoroastrianism's relevance to the present day: The magi, and by extension Iran, shaped Islam as much as Islam shaped Iran. While outsiders might believe contemporary Iran's reach to be limited to the ten or perhaps 15 percent of the Islamic world that is Shi'ite, the Iranian influence upon Islam is actually much greater. Iranian officials see themselves not simply as the representative and protectors of international Shi'ites, but rather as a beacon for all Muslims.

Shi'ism is, of course, part and parcel of the Islamic Republic, but for Iran, it is actually a relatively new phenomenon. Iran was largely Sunni until the beginning of the 16th century. In 1501, Shah Ismail Safavi, the founder of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), decreed Shi'ism to be Iran's official religion. He imported clergy from southern Lebanon (the linkage between Lebanon and Iran thus extends back centuries before the creation of Hezbollah in the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon) in order to replace and supplant a clerical class at the time indistinguishable from the Ottoman Empire. While textbooks might give 1501 as the date of Iran's conversion, the process was slower. Just as King Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church in England was simply the start of a centuries-long religious upheaval rather than its end, so too did Iran only become majority Shi'ite around the time that George Washington crossed the Delaware River.

Religion is one source of identity; ethnicity is another. While in the West, a genetic definition of ethnicity predominates, in the Greater Middle East ethnicity has revolved around language since the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>4</sup> An Arab is someone who speaks Arabic as their mother tongue, a Turk is someone who speaks Turkish, and a Persian is someone who speaks Persian (or its constituent dialects, Farsi, Dari, or Tajik). Arabic may be the lingua franca of the Middle East from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Persian Gulf, but Persian fulfills that role from the mountains of Kurdistan through the bazaars of Central Asia and down through the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, the official language of India was Persian under the sixteenth century Moghul Empire; only in 1832 did the British army force India's princes and rajas to conduct business in English. Even so, Persian remains the language of culture and poetry throughout much of West, South, and Central Asia. School children well beyond Iran's borders memorize the poetry of famous Persian poets like Rumi, Saadi, and Hafez. When Iranian authorities reach out to Shi'ite

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communities, like Afghanistan's Hazaras, they might embrace sectarian identity as the commonality around which to shape soft-power but, if their target is further afield—such as predominantly Sunni Tajikistan, Iranian authorities would be more likely to draw on their common ethnic heritage. That is not to say that other Persian speakers always embrace Iran's big brother attitudes; indeed, they often resent it.<sup>5</sup>

Language and culture can be important for other reasons. Strategies evolve within cultural contexts. Western academics may trace modern strategy and statecraft to Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), and China scholars may root Chinese strategy to Sun-Tzu (544-496 BC). A genre of princely literature also developed during Sassanian times in the centuries immediately before Persia's Islamization. Mirrors for Princes, books of protocol and other guides, elaborated on the relationships and duties of ruler and subject. The most famous examples include the *Qabusnama* ("Book of [King] Qabus") written by a 11th century king ruling over what is now the southern coast of the Caspian Sea; *Nasihāt al-muluk* (Counsel for Princes), written by the eleventh century philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazali (1058-1111); and the *Siyasatnama* ("Book of Government"), a manual of government written by the eleventh century Seljuq grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092).<sup>6</sup> The *Siyasatnama* included 50 chapters, ranging from "On holding court for the redress of wrongs and practicing justice and virtue," to "On having troops of various races," to "Exposing the facts about heretics who are enemies of the state and of Islam." There is documentary evidence that rulers into the nineteenth century not only kept such literature in their personal libraries, but that they also read them.<sup>7</sup> Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei may not see himself as a Persian king, but his strategy for ruling and for exporting his ideology has far more in common with Iran's imperial and intellectual past than it does with other countries and regimes which have evolved out of other cultural milieu. Beyond simply examining specific chapters of the *Qabusname* or *Siyasatnama* or any other example of "Mirrors for Princes" literature, Notre Dame professor Deborah Tor's "The Islamisation of Iranian Kingly Ideals in the Persianate Furstenspiegel"<sup>8</sup> provides some useful context by showing the interplay between Islam and kingship before the Islamic Revolution.

The Islamic Revolution transformed Iran from a country content simply to be a regional power into one which sought to export its ideology in order to remake other regional states into the Islamic Republic's image. For this, the concept of export of revolution became paramount. The idea that this imperative to replicate Iran's Islamic revolution is simply within the realm of regime radicals and can be dispensed by engaging regime moderates or reformers is naïve.

Both the constitution of the Islamic Republic and the founding statutes of the IRGC make export of Iran's Islamic Revolution part of the *raison d'être* of the regime. Article 3 of the constitution, for example, declares the goals of the regime to be both "the expansion and strengthening of Islamic brotherhood and public cooperation among all the people" and "unsparing support to the oppressed of the world," while Article 154 calls for support of the just struggles of the oppressed against the arrogant in every corner of the globe." The issue came to a head in 2008 when former President Mohammad Khatami suggested that the Iranian leadership formally understand revolutionary export in terms of soft power. "What did the Imam [Khomeini] want, and what was his purpose of exporting the revolution? Did he wish us to export revolution by means of gunpowder or groups sabotaging other countries?" Khatami asked, before suggesting Khomeini "meant to establish a role model here, which means people should see that in this society, the economy, science, and dignity of man are respected...."<sup>9</sup> While clergy closer to the Supreme Leader intervened

to ensure a military understanding of revolutionary export predominated, the debate nonetheless highlighted the importance by which Tehran holds soft power as an arrow in its quiver and illustrates the fact that the difference between regime reformers and hardliners is one of tactics rather than goals.

To illustrate these aspects, both the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and "the Last Will and Testament of Imam Khomeini" are useful because they illustrate the prerogative to export through all means necessary, both hard and soft, the precepts and ideology of the Islamic Republic. Indeed, Khomeini states in his Last Will and Testament, "This politico-religious testament of mine is not made to the noble people of Iran only. Rather, it is recommended for all Islamic nations and the oppressed peoples of the world regardless of religious or nationality."<sup>10</sup> Khomeini's notion in particular is important because it illustrates an Iranian objective to influence on a global scale, rather than simply just among lands in which it has had historical influence.

### The Iranian Way of Influence

Iranian soft power seeks both to exploit commonalities Iran shares with the target it seeks to influence and to use a variety of tools to achieve that influence. The first is the "Hezbollah model." While the United States government officially designated Hezbollah to be a terrorist group on October 8, 1997, many European governments argue that such labeling lacks nuance.<sup>11</sup> After all, Hezbollah is not simply a "resistance" group, but rather a political party with an active a social service network. It runs charities and schools, and even a satellite television station. The goal of the Hezbollah model is simply to create a state within a state, thereby delegitimizing the official state structure until such a time that structure can be co-opted or overthrown.

Patronage is the basis of the Hezbollah model. Here, Iraq provides a useful example in the contrast between strategies: After the fall of Saddam Hussein, as various constituent groups bargained to form the next government, each pursued distinct strategies:

- Kurds prioritized formal recognition after years of ethnic and national denial and so sought the most prestigious offices and ministries on the world stage. They pushed first Jalal Talabani and then Fuad Masoum for Iraq's largely symbolic presidency while Hoshiyar Zebari became first foreign and then finance minister.
- Sunni Arab sectarian parties sought ostensibly powerful posts, for example, the defense ministry and the speakership of parliament. They may not have achieved their broad goal of restoring the influence they had before Saddam's fall, but the defense ministry post symbolized that goal.
- What Iraqi Shi'ite sectarian leaders and parties prioritized was the ability to dispense patronage, a core component of a strategy long employed by Lebanese Hezbollah and encouraged by their Iranian advisors. Firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who despite his Iraqi nationalist rhetoric tended to act as pro-Iranian militia leader, placed his followers in the health ministry. By controlling hospitals and clinics, Sadr could either use services to expand his influence among ordinary people or simply employ his followers in a personnel-rich bureaucracy. Khodair al-Khozaei, a member of the Da'wa Party, likewise sought to place Da'wa members in schools across Iraq. After all, the foreign ministry may be prestigious, but the health and education ministries employ more people. To control the health or education ministries means awarding jobs as doctors, nurses, teachers and administrators to political followers regardless of their qualifications.

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It would be a false caricature to suggest all Iraqi Shi'ites are under Iran's thumb, but the strategy to take control of personnel-rich ministries does segue with Iranian goals. In the West, governments might prioritize competence, provision of services, and education. In Iran and among its proxies, the calculation seems to be that if this leads to a decline in the quality of service and even to brain drain, then that can be a net gain because the educated middle class tends not to support the theological goals of Iran or its proxies. More malevolently, Iranian proxies can also control who received assistance and who did not. In Baghdad, Sadrists treated Shi'ites but neglected Sunnis, many of whom died as a result.

### Charities absent Altruism

Charities form another pillar to the Hezbollah model. They enable the Islamic Republic and its proxies to develop patronage networks and infiltrate both cities and countryside. Of myriad Iranian charities, the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) is perhaps the most important. With assets supplied by the Supreme Leader, the Committee sponsors programs similar to those conducted by Western charities, helping orphans, the disabled, and the elderly in Iraq, Lebanon, and Central Asia. To those deprived and vulnerable in these areas, it provides food aid, blankets, and fuel; sponsors computer classes and medical clinics; and offers interest-free loans.<sup>12</sup>

In Afghanistan, Iranian-backed charities also helped sponsor weddings which would otherwise be unaffordable for young men, a gift which engenders a lifetime of loyalty.<sup>13</sup> They also sponsor competition to build further patronage. The Iranian embassy in Kabul, for example, hosted an IKRC contest to test knowledge of Khomeini's Last Will and Testament among more than 1,000 aid recipients.<sup>14</sup> This parallels similar contests held inside Iran. Iranian authorities also use the IKRC to organize rallies and propagate Tehran's vision. Hence, on the last Friday of Ramadan, the IKRC often organizes annual Qods [Jerusalem] Day rallies in places like Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip to parallel similar commemorations in Iran.<sup>15</sup> The annual event often descends into an orgy of incitement and radical rhetoric, most often directed toward Israel and both Jews and the West more broadly.

In addition to the significant amounts of aid they do deliver, Iranian charities seek to augment their influence by claiming credit for the activities of others. To drive into Basra from the north is to pass a phalanx of signs for the Shahid al-Mihrab Foundation, the charitable wing of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), claiming credit for housing and infrastructure projects implemented by US forces.

Such charities also signpost a broader Iranian presence. In Basra, Najaf, and Karbala, the three largest cities in southern Iraq, Iranian operatives have driven IKRC donation boxes into sidewalks along main thoroughfares. Local authorities deny issuing permits for such activities, but say they fear the Iranian response if they remove illegal boxes or signage.

The Iranian government has even sought to use charities in the United States in order to further its influence. In 2013, after a nearly five-year legal battle, the US Department of Justice seized the assets of the Alavi Foundation, including a \$500 million Manhattan skyscraper, although litigation continues as to the propriety of the order. The FBI complaint alleged that the Foundation ran a charity on behalf of the Iranian government.<sup>16</sup> Before the US action, the Foundation provided grants and other funding to academics and individuals who would often then turn around and promote the Iranian government's line.<sup>17</sup>

The career of Ammar al-Hakim, the current ISCI leader, illustrates the importance of charities to Iranian soft power. Iran's IRGC helped found ISCI—originally named the Supreme Council for Islamic

Revolution in Iraq—as part of its strategy to organize and co-opt Iraqi Shi'ites. ISCI presided over two corollary organizations: The Badr Corps, an IRGC-trained militia, and the Shahid al-Mihrab Foundation, ISCI's charitable wing. Ammar rose to the leadership of ISCI not through the Badr Corps, but rather as head of the Foundation. This suggests that while American forces in Iraq focused on checking the advance of the Badr Corps, for the Iranian-backed leadership, the Foundation was equally if not more important. That said, the Iranian concept of charities often blurs the sharp line between aid and military that exists with Western NGOs. Hence, in August 2010, the US Treasury Department designated the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee branch in Lebanon as a terrorist entity for the assistance it provided Hezbollah.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond charities, the Iranian regime controls a vast business empire which it can use in pursuit of regime interests. The IRGC rose to prominence against the backdrop first of the Islamic Revolution and then of the Iran-Iraq War. When the war ended in 1988, the Revolutionary Guardsmen were loath simply to go back into the barracks let alone disband. As the Iranian government cut military expenditures, Khatam al-Anbiya, literally, “the Seal of the Prophets,” the IRGC's engineering and contracting wing, moved into civilian enterprises. Today, they control much of Iran's construction sector, oil industry, automobile manufacturing, and electronics. The IRGC uses Khatam al-Anbiya in order to expand its foothold and influence beyond its borders. For example, Iran is among the world's most active dam-exporting nations.<sup>19</sup> Because every company involved in such heavy construction is affiliated with Khatam al-Anbiya, such activities enable Iran not only to win favor within countries which they help develop, but also to insert IRGC members into those same countries. As the Syrian civil war continued into its fourth year, for example, and Iran sought to retrench its forces not only in Syria but also in northern Lebanon, it struck a deal to build a dam in northern Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

The same holds true with Iran's automobile industry: By opening Iran Khodro plants in Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Senegal, and Belarus,<sup>21</sup> the IRGC is not only able to provide jobs and thus augment its patronage, but also to enable cover for IRGC officers.

In July 2012, IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari spoke to Khatam al-Anbiya employees and spoke of the importance of the Guards in development work.<sup>22</sup> Career trajectories underline this. In 2013, for example, the Defense Minister appointed Rostam Ghasemi, a former oil minister and Khatam al-Anbiya commander, to be his senior advisor.<sup>23</sup>

### Educating the Next Generation

Khomeini meant the Islamic revolution not only to transform Iran but also the entire region. Nor did he see the revolution as only changing the political order; he saw its goal as the fundamental transformation of society. Accordingly, he prioritized the transformation of schools and universities and sought to change society through education. He formed a Cultural Revolution Committee which worked to impose an ideological litmus test on teachers and purge those who taught Western philosophy, history, literature, and subjects Khomeini deemed in contradiction to his own Islamic vision.

In recent years, the Iranian government has simultaneously sought to reinvigorate its cultural revolution and export it abroad. Hence, in 2008, Hossein Mozaffar, a member of Iran's Expediency and Discernment Council, suggested creating mosque councils to counter Western influence.<sup>24</sup> Then, in 2015, Ayatollah Hosseini Bushehri, a member of the Assembly of Experts, a clerical body which will choose the successor to Khamenei, argued the need “to provide

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academic and administrative solutions for the serious struggle against manifestations of corruption and the enemy's cultural NATO."<sup>25</sup>

Education is also an important component of Iranian soft power and spans all levels. To understand fully the importance of education, it is useful to review Ayatollah Khomeini's original "Program for the Establishment of an Islamic Government."<sup>26</sup>

Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance encourages sponsors Quran competitions and supports the Islamic Propagation Organization which publishes political and religious tracts and prints posters and religious art.<sup>27</sup> Iran opens its seminaries to foreign students with a goal to propagate Shi'ism and Iran's political philosophy. Latent Iranian racism, however, often undercuts the effectiveness of instruction in Iran, as Iranian landlords and others abuse foreign students.<sup>28</sup> Outside Iran, however, efforts to leverage education have had some success. In Afghanistan, Ayatollah Asif Mohseni, a figure beholden to Tehran because his religious credentials are not recognized in Najaf, founded Khatam al-Nabayin University. Its professors are trained in Iran, Iranian officials set its curriculum, and regime-approved publishers supply its library. In 2010, the budget for that single Iranian-backed university was greater than the Afghan government's entire higher education budget.

In recent years, Iran has also worked to expand its network of Islam Azad Universities internationally. Originally founded as a chain of community colleges immediately after the Islamic Revolution in order to expand educational opportunities to the masses—and keep late teens and twenty-somethings off the street at a time when revolution and war had decimated the Iranian economy—the network of several hundred colleges has become an essential means to promote regime ideology and train its cadres. Indeed, during the Ahmadinejad administration, the Iranian government moved to consolidate regime control over the campuses and centers which some regime ideologues complained had grown too independent. Iranian officials now operate a branch of Islamic Azad in Kabul, Afghanistan, and they have often opened up other campuses in Armenia, Dubai, and Lebanon.

Iranian publishers—many supported or under the control of ministries—are active. The annual Tehran International Book Fair, now in its 30th year, attracts hundreds of publishers from around the world.<sup>29</sup> While many Iranian titles are innocuous, others propagate political conspiracies or anti-Semitic and national hatred. It is many of these which the Tehran International Book Fair promotes in exhibits around the world, in cities like Beijing, Frankfurt, and Moscow.

### Train and Assist Missions

In recent years, the Islamic Republic has taken its influence further by expanding training programs abroad. Consider the Law Enforcement Forces (*Niru-ye entezami-ye jomhuri-ye eslami-ye Iran*) whose role spans a spectrum from traditional police functions to a role overlapping the paramilitary Basij. According to General Hossein Ashtari, the group's commander, Iranian authorities are considering expanding their overseas operations.<sup>30</sup>

If the Iranian Law Enforcement Forces begin training overseas corollaries, they will essentially be remaking other countries in their image. To conduct police training in Lebanon, for example, where the pro-Hezbollah Michel Aoun's rise to the presidency confirms growing Iranian influence, will permanently alter the system and the ideological preparation of its police to enable the influence of Iran and its trainers to persist long after Aoun is gone. The same thing could be true Iraq, or Yemen would help Iran solidify control and influence in its new 'near abroad.'

The Islamic Republic also appears prepared to replicate a similar

strategy with regard to the Basij (*Sazman-e Basij-e Mostazafin*, the Organization for the Mobilization of the Oppressed). The Islamic Republic created the Basij began against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq War as a volunteer force. They were the child-soldiers who iconically ran across minefields barefoot with plastic keys to paradise around their necks. In 1981, Iran's parliament formally folded the Basij into the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.<sup>31</sup> While Basij autonomy from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has wavered with time, Danish-Iranian scholar Ali Alfoneh put it correctly when he observed, "... While the IRGC may have been the varsity team and the Basij junior varsity, they played the same game."<sup>32</sup>

Today in Iran, the Basij is ever-present. Youth chapters exist in secondary schools, and the organization runs summer camps and afterschool activities. University students and professors have chapters, each of which is charged with keeping their imagined constituencies in line ideologically, by physical force if need be. An all-female Basij unit helps enforce women's conformity to the Islamic Republic's social mores. Separate Basij units even exist in factories and among Iran's dwindling nomadic population. Simply put, the Islamic Republic has found the Basij a useful way to control society.

Perhaps is no surprise, then, that as the Islamic Republic increasingly seeks to export the Basij model abroad, not as a means of direct control but rather in an effort to reshape societies in the image of the Islamic Republic. In December 2011, for example, Ali Saidi, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's representative to the IRGC, gave religious justification to the push to expand the Basij beyond Iran's borders. "There is a need for 100 million Basijis in the region before the Imam of the Era can emerge," he said.<sup>33</sup>

In 2014, Gen. Hossein Hamadani, who oversaw Qods Force operations in Syria until his death in Aleppo the following year, announced that "the Basij is presently being formed in Iraq after Lebanon and Syria." "Iraqi officials are reaching the conclusion that they must get help from local popular forces," he added, suggesting that Iranian officials saw the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq (*Hashd al-Shaabi*) to be the basis for a new Iraqi Basij.<sup>34</sup>

### The Fifth Estate

The press is just as important as education to furthering the Iranian message. Iran-watchers in the United States and Europe are familiar with Press TV, an Iran-funded and produced English-language satellite channel which also has ubiquitous presence on the internet, often crudely promoting the Islamic Republic's official position. Press TV, however, is a relative late comer. As the 2003 Iraq war loomed, Iranian authorities quickly set up the Arabic-language Al-Alam television, beating similar American efforts by months.<sup>35</sup> The result was that the Iranian government had a virtual media monopoly once the war began, shaping the perception of American occupation in a way both inaccurate and corrosive.

Iran's success rests on a comprehensive media strategy. To populate content for so many networks, the Islamic Republic pursues a media strategy more de-centralized in some ways than its competitors. Prior to the 2003 start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Al-Alam distributed phones and video cameras to Iraqi youth, promising to pay them for footage that Al-Alam could use; seldom was there a bombing, protest, or an incident embarrassing to American forces that Al-Alam did not cover.

The Iranian government saturates the airwaves with a far larger number of officials and semi-official outlets. This stands in sharp contrast to countries that have one or two official channels geared to broadcasts abroad. Bahraini Shi'ites, for example,

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listen almost exclusively to Iranian radio such as Voice of the Islamic Republic in Arabic or Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting in Arabic, and watch Iranian satellite channels such as al-Sahar and al-Alam. Whereas US media, whether public or private, is lucky to have one or two crews in any specific country, the Iranian media strategy in effect enables Iran to have hundreds of unofficial but highly effective stringers. The Iranian-backed Ahlulbayt television and radio blankets southern Iraq with religious programming. That Kabul-based Tamaddon (“Civilization”) television broadcasts an Iranian perspective across Afghanistan is no coincidence: Upon the Taliban’s fall, IRGC Qods Force commander Hassan Kazemi-Qomi—subsequently Iran’s ambassador to Iraq—set out to systematically establish radio and television stations and build the broadcast and relay network to support them.<sup>36</sup>

Message is also important. Not only does the Iranian media cover the news, but it also provides a consistent message in pursuit of regime goals. It does not subscribe to a philosophy used by other countries that truth or self-criticism bolsters credibility; Iranian outlet suffer no editorial confusion.

Iranian officials also seek to cultivate non-Iranian media without embarrassment or self-consciousness all too common when Americans seek to do likewise. On August 3, 2012, for example, the Iranian embassy in Kabul hosted an *iftaar* (Ramadan fast-breaking) dinner for journalists from Afghanistan’s leading newspapers and television stations to push an Iranian-sponsored and funded project to create a “union of journalists.”<sup>37</sup> The expense of such an endeavor would be a drop in the bucket: Iran has spent \$100 million annually on Afghan media.<sup>38</sup>

While much of the detail with regard to Iranian strategy in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bahrain has occurred too recently to be included in any extensive book study of Iranian media strategy, there have been some useful overviews, such as Pierre Pahlavi’s “Understanding Iran’s Media Diplomacy.”<sup>39</sup>

### Framing the Past; Presenting the Future

Another area in which Iranian soft power is uncontested is in the construction of museums to promote its world view. In the aftermath of the Iran hostage crisis, Iranian authorities transformed the former US embassy into a museum to illustrate both supposed Iranian victories over America as well as grievances against the United States. Hence, the former embassy displays portions of the US helicopter which crashed during the 1980 mission to rescue the hostages, as well as supposed American espionage equipment seized in the embassy take over as well as, of course, copies of the cables woven back together by the hostage takers and contracted carpet weavers. Other displays show dioramas depicting the downing of a civilian Iranian airbus by a missile fired by the U.S.S. Vincennes. Co-located with the museum, appropriately, are classrooms and offices belonging to the psychological operations center of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The Iranian government and its proxies have taken museum construction outside Iran itself. On a mountaintop east of Sidon, Lebanon, lies Mlitta, which is an expansive Hezbollah museum created and run by the pro-Iranian militia. School children can come and examine captured Israeli military hardware or tour caves in which Hezbollah operatives slept and coordinated actions. Visitors can also handle crew-served weaponry in cement bunkers, or try to spot mannequins of Hezbollah terrorists in the brush and forest surrounding the complex. The entire Mlitta facility reinforces Hezbollah’s resistance narrative and subtly highlights Iranian links, with posters and photographs of Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khamenei accompanying the displayed kit of Hezbollah fighters.

In Iraq, another target of Iranian influence, the Museum of Imam Hussein picks up many themes common in post-revolutionary Iran. Visitors in the museum pass donation boxes not for the museum itself, but instead for Shi’ite militias and “volunteers.” And whereas in Iran, visitors to building are forced to step on mosaic depictions of American flags in doorways, the Imam Hussein museum forces visitors to step upon the names of all those contemporaries who opposed Hussein. Much of the museum content contains legitimate artifacts, but the absence of discussion of the United States while displaying wall-size silk carpets depicting Shi’ite history and donated by Iran leaves visitors with a clear sense that Iran is the protecting power while the United States is disinterested at best in religious justice.

The same holds true at the Museum of Jihad in Herat, Afghanistan, founded by Iranian-funded regional power broker Ismail Khan, which depicts the victory of the (Iranian-backed) mujahideen over the Soviets. The assistance of the United States is downplayed at best, enabling Iran to retroactively amplify its role. Education matters, and school groups as well as locals only receive one narrative of history, one that either is antagonistic to the United States or ignores the American role in liberation struggles or preservation of religious freedom.

### When All Else Fails, Bribe.

Money matters. Whereas the Hezbollah model and charity penetration imply a bottom-up approach, top-down application of money matters when all else fails. Where charity targets the masses, bribery can recruit politicians and leaders. Between 2001 and 2007, the Iranian government gave more than \$250 million in grants to the Afghanistan government, effectively bribing whomever assistance Tehran needed at any given time.<sup>40</sup> Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai admitted in 2010 that Iran provided his offices with “bags of money” worth hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.<sup>41</sup>

Iranian banks can be an important tool in dispensing such money or funding proxy groups. While the Shi’ites in Bahrain face real discrimination and harbor legitimate grievances, there are some who seek to overthrow the Bahraini monarchy and orient Bahraini society closer to Iran.<sup>42</sup> While Tehran has denied any role in the sectarian unrest which began following the Arab Spring, Bahraini officials privately suggest that interest from Iranian business accounts deposited in Bahraini banks might fund and subsidize an increasingly radicalized opposition.

Pocketbook diplomacy greases all other soft-power, as Iran utilizes its oil wealth to dispense aid to countries whose votes it needs on bodies such as the United Nations Security Council and International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) Board of Governors. Here, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and South America provide fertile ground given that region’s relative poverty. Iran, for example, plied South Africa with aid when that state served on the UN Security Council and IAEA Board of Governors, an investment that paid off after South Africa used its position on the Security Council to oppose sanctions against Iran despite an IAEA report which found the Islamic Republic continued to enrich uranium in violation of its safeguards agreement and two security council resolutions.<sup>43</sup> Once South Africa’s term on these bodies expired—and for that matter that of Nigeria, the Côte d’Ivoire, Uganda, Tanzania and Togo—Iran largely lost interest and shifted its aid elsewhere. Tehran uses the same mercantile policies toward the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, when it wants to leverage that group for statements or other support.<sup>44</sup> (For an overview of this diplomatic vote buying in Africa see also “Africa: Iran’s Final Frontier?” *Operational Environment Watch*, U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office, April 2013,

(continued)





# Continued: Strategies Underlying Iranian Soft Power

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