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Russian Perspectives on High-Technology, Hybrid War, and Color Revolutions

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ON THE COVER: Russian flag, Criminal act, and Russian military.

Sources: <http://ezmediart.com/static8/preview100/stock-video-waving-flag-of-russia-9687.jpg>; <http://valentereispessali.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/download-1370x880.jpg>; http://cache.boston.com/resize/bonzai-fba/Globe_Photo/2008/05/09/1210388509_9717/539w.jpg

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Despite Partial Withdrawal from Syria, Russia Remains a Threat

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-March Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the main part of the Russian forces to be withdrawn from Syria. The decision was met with suspicion from Turkey, where most analysts are focused on the fact that the S-400 surface-to-air missiles will stay in the region. These missiles, which Russia deployed after Turkey downed a Russian plane on 24 November 2015, had effectively turned Turkey's southern border into a "no-fly zone" for Turkey. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press reveal that many in the country continue to see Turkey as being threatened by Russia's presence.

The first passage, which discusses what the partial withdrawal really means, points out that the S-400 missile and radar system in Latakia will remain. The author claims that this means that Syrian air space will continue to be protected by Russia, which will retain the right to conduct aerial reconnaissance. It also notes that Russia will not be withdrawing from the Hmeymim Air base in Latakia and the naval base in the port of Tartus. Similarly, the second passage also focuses on the fact that Russia's removal excludes the Tartus Naval Base and the Hmeymim Air Base, noting that this means that Putin will be able to return to Syria whenever he wants. The second passage also notes that Russia's main goal, which was to force the West to speak with it on equal terms and to gain prestige, have been met.

The third passage notes that, unless Russia is not withdrawing some of its planes, such as its S-400 surface-to-air missiles, it is not possible to claim that there is any decrease to the threat to Turkey. It points out the Russian electronic war systems' capabilities, such as those of the Krashuka-4, which can blind any plane in the region, and reiterates that Russia's move to partially withdraw from Syria does not mean that Turkey can immediately freely maneuver in Syria. However, it notes that Turkey may potentially find some relief in the fact that a reduction in Russian air strikes may diminish the ability of regime forces and Kurdish forces to continue making advances.

Russian air strikes in Syria had helped the Syrian Kurdish group YPG (the armed wing of the Democratic Union Party, or PYD) which Turkey considers to be an affiliate of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). With the help of Russian air strikes the group had made gains along the Turkish border and even fired into Turkey, to which the Turkish military had responded with shelling them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Russia’s move [to partially withdraw from Syria] does not mean that Turkey can immediately freely maneuver in Syria. Russia will maintain an air presence in Syria.”

An S-400 air defense missile system at the Hmeymim airbase.

Source: https://rbth.com/news/2016/03/15/russian-s-400-systems-may-stay-in-syria-for-a-while-federation-council_575905



“If they are not withdrawing [the S-400’s], we cannot say that there is any decrease to the threat to Turkey...”

Source: “Rusya Suriye’den gerçekten çekiliyor mu?” (Is Russia really withdrawing from Syria?), *BBC.com* in Turkish, 15 March 2016, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160315_rusya_hediye

“The”What does this ‘partial removal’ by Russia mean?... The statements coming from Russia do not include mention that ‘the entire presence in Syria will be withdrawn.’ Instead, it is noted that the S-400 missile and radar system in Latakia will remain. In this case, Syrian air space will continue to be protected by Russia. It is also known that Russia will not be withdrawing from the military bases in Latakia and Hmeymim.”

Source: “Putin neden Suriye’den çekilme kararı aldı?” (Why did Putin decide to withdraw from Syria?), *BBC.com* in Turkish, 15 March 2016, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/03/160315_rusya_suriye_cekilme_analiz

“The Russian leader announced that his Defense Ministry’s goal in Syria has been reached; and that [Russia’s] withdrawal would start as of today, excluding the Tartus naval base and the Hmeymim air base... [Thus] Putin will be able to return to Syria whenever he wants.”

Military expert Anatoli Hramcihin [from the Carnegie Moscow Institute] says, ‘The main goal for Putin’s entry into Syria was to establish Russia’s prestige and force the West to speak to it on equal terms. This goal has been met.’

Source: “Rusya neden çekiliyor?” (Why is Russia withdrawing?), *Dunya.com.tr*, 15 March 2016, <http://www.haber7.com/dunya/haber/1844573-rusya-neden-cekiliyor>

“Dr. Can Kasapoglu says, ‘First of all, it is very important to see what Russia is withdrawing and what it is not withdrawing. There are about 40 planes that Russia has deployed to the region. Half of these are used in air-to-air missions, like the SU-30 and the SU-25... Then there are the S-400 and SA-17, SA-22’s that it has deployed to the region. If they are not withdrawing these, we cannot say that there is any decrease to the threat to Turkey...”

Russia has electronic war systems in the region. The Krashuka-4 system has the capacity to blind any plane in the region. Whether these are staying is very important for Turkey...

Russia’s move does not mean that Turkey can immediately freely maneuver in Syria. Russia will maintain an air presence in Syria. But perhaps Turkey may find some relief on this: There will be a partial decline in the YPG and regime forces’ advancement opportunities, that were enabled by Russian air support.”

Turkey and Ukraine Boost Security and Defense Ties

OE Watch Commentary: Their common rivalry with Russia is bringing Turkey and Ukraine closer. Following the deterioration of Turkey's ties with Russia, Turkey has deepened political and military ties with Ukraine. Multiple high-level visits between the countries in recent months point to intensified military and defense relations, including a decision to co-produce military equipment and weapons. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss this relatively new development, which Ukrainian President Poroshenko describes as a strategic partnership.

The first passage quotes Poroshenko as saying that relations between Turkey and Ukraine have advanced to an unprecedented level, noting that the two countries are now strategic partners. He also comments that the two governments have full trust in each other and that the Fifth High Level Strategic Council Meetings have been the most intense ever in bilateral relations. The passage also discusses Poroshenko's comments on Russia, which he blames for creating instability wherever it goes, including Crimea, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Syria. He notes that Russia has established two military bases in the Eastern Mediterranean and that Ukraine, Turkey, the U.S. and Europe cannot turn a blind eye to this.

The second passage discusses the high-level traffic in both the political and military fields between the two countries. It points out that Poroshenko was in Ankara on 9 March for a high-level strategic cooperation council meeting only three weeks after Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu paid a snap visit to Kiev. It also notes that on the same day that Davutoğlu was in Kiev, Ukrainian Chief of General Staff Viktor Muzhenko met with his Turkish counterpart General Hulusi Akar, a sign of intensified military and defense relations. The third passage discusses the two countries' plans for cooperation in the defense industry and their decision to co-produce military equipment and weapons.

With respect to both countries' rivalry with Russia, in the case of Ukraine, Russia is backing the separatists in eastern Ukraine, and in the case of Turkey, Russia has been supporting the Syrian regime and enabling the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey considers a terror organization. Both Turkey and Ukraine have been engaged in indirect military operations against Russia. In addition, both countries are located on the Black Sea, which has seen a large Russian military buildup in the last two years. Thus they have a common interest in strengthening security in the Black Sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“[Ukrainian President Poroshenko:] Relations between Turkey and Ukraine have advanced to an unprecedented level. We are strategic partners with Turkey Ukraine and Turkey...have agreed to jointly produce military equipment and weapons.”

Source: “Türkiye ile stratejik ortağız” (We are strategic partners with Turkey), *Milliyet.com.tr*, 11 March 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-turkiye-ile-stratejik-ortagiz/-dunya/detay/2207807/default.htm>

“In an interview published in TRT World, the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said, “Relations between Turkey and Ukraine have advanced to an unprecedented level. We are strategic partners with Turkey. Poroshenko said that the governments of Turkey and Ukraine have full trust in each other and that the Fifth High Level Strategic Council Meetings have been the most intense in bilateral relations ever...”

Poroshenko pointed out that Russia creates instability wherever it is present, such as in Crimea, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Syria. He also said that... Russia has established two military bases in the Eastern Mediterranean and that Ukraine, Turkey, the U.S. and Europe could not turn a blind eye to this problem.”

Source: “Turkey, Ukraine Boost Ties amid Growing Tension with Russia,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 9 March 2016, <http://www.hurriyetcailynews.com/turkey-ukraine-boost-ties-amid-growing-tension-with-russia-.aspx?PageID=238&NID=96250&NewsCatID=510>

“Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was in Ankara on March 9 for a high-level strategic cooperation council meeting as the guest of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, only three weeks after Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu paid a snap visit to Kiev. On the same day [that] Davutoglu was in Kiev... Ukrainian Chief of General Staff Viktor Muzhenko with his Turkish counterpart General Hulusi Akar, in a sign of intensified military and defense relations.”

Source: “Ukrayna ile Türkiye ortak silah üretecek” (Ukraine and Turkey will produce joint weapons), *Sabah.com.tr*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/02/16/ukrayna-ile-turkiye-ortak-silah-uretecek>

“Ukraine and Turkey, who are in on-going talks for cooperation in the defense industry, have agreed to jointly produce military equipment and weapons. A statement issued by the Ukraine National Security and Defense Council announced that the Council's Secretary Alexander Turchinov had a meeting with the Undersecretary for the Defense Industry Ismail Demir. The meeting included discussions on establishing joint working groups to produce military equipment and weapons; and the issue of partnering on special projects which entail advanced technology.

Turchinov, who noted that they regard Turkey as a strategic partner, said that he had visited Turkey earlier this year, and that they had agreed to cooperate on joint projects in the military-industrial arena. Ismail Demir, [also] pointed out the importance of the defense cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine.

The meetings yielded an agreement to start work on joint projects including a turbojet plane engine, tanks, armored vehicles, radars, communication and navigation systems development and production.”

Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK) Raise Profile Again

OE Watch Commentary: In recent months the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a branch of the outlawed terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has stepped up its terrorist attacks in Turkey, particularly in urban areas. The TAK has claimed responsibility for three recent attacks, which have included civilian casualties. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the most recent attacks by the TAK and shed light on this obscure group.

The first passage points out that the TAK has claimed responsibility for the attack in Ankara on 13 March 2016 which killed 35 civilians. It also notes that the TAK had previously claimed responsibility for the Ankara attack that took place on 17 February 2016 and a mortar attack at a major Istanbul airport on 23 December 2015. The passage notes that the group has claimed responsibility for some of the bloody attacks that the PKK conducts in cities and says that the TAK functions as part of the PKK, but sees itself as a completely independent organization, noting that the PKK does not claim responsibility for the TAK's attacks. The second passage notes that the TAK said on its website that the suicide attack on 13 March in Ankara was a "vengeful action" for counterterrorism operations in Turkey's southeast.

The third passage discusses the TAK's background, pointing out that the group is an illegal armed organization established in 2004, which uses suicide attacks, sabotage and arson to conduct strategic and sensational attacks in Turkey's metropolitan centers, targeting both civilians and military. It also points out that the TAK's attacks usually have focused on tourist areas.

The TAK is thought to have been established by the PKK's military wing in 2003-2004 to serve as the "special forces" of the organization, although the PKK has promoted the impression that the TAK is a separate entity. The TAK is perceived in Turkey as the PKK's metropolitan arm that conducts bombings in urban centers. The theory goes that this subsidiary enables the PKK to conduct attacks without having to claim direct responsibility. The TAK carries out most of its attacks in major urban centers in central and western Turkey, as opposed to PKK's area of operations, which typically focus on the country's heavily Kurdish southeast. Previously the TAK had raised its profile in 2004-2005 by claiming responsibility for about 90 attacks which targeted civilians in Turkey's tourist areas, attracting particular attention in the international media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3500122/Turkey-holds-five-Ankara-bombing-hits-PKK-Iraq.html>



Source: "Ankara saldırısını TAK üstlendi" (TAK claimed responsibility for the Ankara attack), Timeturk.com, 17 March 2016, <http://www.timeturk.com/ankara-saldirisini-tak-ustlendi/haber-136411>

"The TAK organization has claimed responsibility for the attack in Ankara on 13 March which killed 35 civilians... TAK had previously been in the news when it claimed responsibility for another Ankara attack which took place on 17 February; and a mortar attack at Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport on 23 December 2015.

...

TAK is known for claiming responsibility for some of the bloody attacks that the PKK conducts in cities. TAK, known as the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, functions as part of the PKK but displays itself as a completely independent organization. TAK's attacks are not claimed for by the PKK."

Source: "PKK-linked TAK Claims Responsibility for Ankara Attack," *Daily Sabah*, 17 March 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2016/03/17/pkk-linked-tak-claims-responsibility-for-ankara-attack>

"The terrorist group said on its website that the suicide attack was a 'vengeful action' for counter-terror operations in Turkey's southeast."

Source: "Ankara saldırısını TAK örgütü üstlendi. Peki TAK nedir?" (TAK claimed responsibility for the Ankara attack. But what is TAK?), *Milliyet.com.tr*, 17 March 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ankara-saldirisini-o-orgut-gundem-2211170/>

"The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), is an illegal armed organization, whose infrastructure was formed in 1993, but which was effectively established in 2004, is a group which uses suicide attacks, sabotage and arson to conduct strategic and sensational attacks in Turkey's metropolitan centers, targeting both civilians and military.

...

The group's attacks usually have focused on touristic areas and it has attacked cities like Mugla, Izmir and Antalya. In addition, the group has claimed responsibility for some forest fires.

"TAK is known for claiming responsibility for some of the bloody attacks that the PKK conducts in cities.

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), is an illegal armed organization, which uses suicide attacks, sabotage and arson to conduct strategic and sensational attacks in Turkey's metropolitan centers, targeting both civilians and military."

Iran-China Rail Link Operational

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian-Chinese relations are undergoing a renaissance fueled both by the re-entrance of Iran into the global energy trade and by a pivotal role China sees for Iran as Beijing pursues its “One Belt, One Road” strategy to revive trade along the Silk Road. While much analysis focuses upon how China is increasingly exerting itself to defend its maritime energy routes in the Middle East, the opening of a rail link between Zhejiang (just south of Shanghai) and Tehran suggests that China has overcome challenges posed by terrain, while Iran has modernized its rail infrastructure. While at first only monthly cargo trains are planned between the two countries, Mohsen Pourseyed Aqayi, the head of Iran’s national railway company, declared Iran’s ambition to make the train dispatch more frequent. As important, the entire rail trip took two weeks, about 30 days less than the same trip would take by sea.

While much of the Sino-Iranian trade may very well be innocent, the possibility that the new freight trade might involve dual use or military goods might concern counter-proliferation analysts, given that there are fewer possibilities for inspection than there would be with suspicious cargos at sea. While it may sound counterintuitive to believe that China would seek to help any covert Iranian nuclear or ballistic missile programs, it is useful to remember that North Korea would not have become as great a military threat as it is today had it not been for China’s aid and support.

While such a scenario may remain hypothetical, more certain is the fact that the rail route signals increasing Chinese (and Iranian) penetration into energy-rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, both of which have faced challenges getting their products to market. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“It is expected that this train will revive trade along the Silk Road”



Dignitaries and Ambassadors welcome the first train from China to Tehran
Source: PressTV.ir (<http://goo.gl/kKa7CK>)

Source: “Qatar-e Transit-e Rah Abrusham Varud Tehran Shod” [The Silk Road Transit Train Arrived in Tehran], *Tasnim*, 15 February 2016. <http://goo.gl/gE5TQR>

Silk Road Train Arrives in Tehran

This train had departed 14 days before with 32 containers carrying commercial goods from Yiwu in Zhejiang Province in eastern China and for the first time traversed Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to arrive in Iran. This is the first transit train which connects China to the Middle East, and in the future transit trains following this route will arrive in Iranian territory.

It is expected that this train will launch commercial activities and by rail revive transit and trade activities along the Silk Road and it will increase significantly the share of foreign trade between China, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran has become the crossroad of communication between the Far East, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, and there are significant prospects for the development of rail transport there.

Iran: UAVs Operations Commence in Aleppo

OE Watch Commentary: No element of the Iranian arsenal has grown so quickly in recent years as its fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Whereas the state-controlled Iranian press has paid passing mention toward the use of Iranian UAVs inside Syria, the Iranian government is increasingly upfront about its UAV deployments. In the excerpted article, the hardline *Raja* news service discusses the deployment of a surveillance drone fleet into Syria south of Aleppo, the current epicenter of the Syrian regime's efforts to recapture Aleppo, Syria's largest city and one currently held by rebels. The article puts to rest Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's repeated declarations that Iranian forces are merely training Syrian forces instead of engaging themselves. After all, while the Shahed-129 is a surveillance drone, the article speaks about how it is meant to expand the range of Iranian ground forces. It also reflects the notion that the Iranian press and perhaps defense forces conflate all majority Sunni opposition groups with ISIS or the Al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front. After all, there are many other groups—including some trained by U.S. forces or cooperating with more moderate opposition groups—operating in and around Aleppo.

Also important is the fact that the UAV fleet is under the control of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) elements. This suggests that the rapid expansion of Iran's UAV fleet reflects a similar growth in the influence and resourcing of the IRGC vis-à-vis the regular Iranian military. While the use of Iranian drones in both Iraq and Syria suggests a proliferation threat—especially since Hezbollah elements fight alongside Iranian and Syrian forces inside Syria—there is no indication as yet that the Iranian government has transferred command and control to non-Iranian proxies or terrorist groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The drones...improve the security and capabilities of the ground forces”



The Shahed-129 on display at an unspecified location in Iran.
Source: Raja News, <http://goo.gl/Nj2nKi>

Source: “Aghaz ‘Amaliyat-e Pehpad-e Iran dar Jonub Halab” [The Beginning of UAV Operations in South of Aleppo], *Raja News*, 1 March 2016 <http://goo.gl/SZjo9v>

UAV Operations Commence in Southern Aleppo

So far this year, from the 4th of February until now, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, using the Shahed-129 surveillance drones, has put under complete control the southeastern borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan... Images published show that this UAV has begun to conduct operations against the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) in the south of Aleppo. The Shahed-129 has unique and diverse capabilities: This bird has 24-hour endurance in a radius of 2,000 kilometers and at a flight ceiling of 25,000 feet, and it has a combat role by carrying smart bombs and missiles. This type of UAV relies on a variety of sensors that act as an airborne surveillance platform for targeting purposes.... The Shahed 129 drones are in the hands of the scientists of the IRGC Air Force in order to improve the security and capabilities of the ground forces of the revolutionary defense against the threats to the country and it is able to increase the its operational range beyond the borders of Iran, thereby helping the Islamic resistance.

Iranian Defense Minister Announces New Products

OE Watch Commentary: One of the lessons internalized by Iran after the Kremlin's 2010 decision to suspend the sale of the S-300 missiles to Tehran was that the Islamic Republic should bolster its indigenous military industries. In the excerpted article, first published on the Iranian Defense Ministry website, Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan unveils five new products. That many of these focus on defense against chemical attacks and other nuclear, biological, and chemical gear suggests that the Iranian defense apparatus actively envisions the possibility of becoming embroiled in a conflict involving weapons of mass destruction. While this does not itself mean that Iran is pursuing an offensive capability, it does, at a minimum, suggest that Iranian authorities are concerned about the possibility of terrorism involving chemical weapons, a capacity which ISIS has developed inside Syria (and which the Iranian-backed Syrian regime has also used).

The public announcement of such products, however, would likely neither deter terrorists nor comfort the population. After all, most of the gear unveiled would not be widely available to civilians. Rather, it reflects the paranoia and siege-mentality which the Iranian defense apparatus seeks to promote and might also signal growing preparation for a greater Iranian deployment to Syria and regions of Iraq in which ISIS is active. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The pursuit of innovation and design and sophisticated defense equipment are an important strategic mission.”



Defense Minister Inspects New Products, February 29, 2016.
Source: Iran Defense Ministry, <http://mod.gov.ir/sites/default/files/4/771A8423.JPG>

Source: “5 Dastavard-e Javid-e Fanavaraneh-e Defa’ye ba Hazur-e Vazir-e Defa’ Ravanmaye va Iftita’ah Shod” (Five New Technological Defense Achievements Unveiled with the Presence of Defense Minister), Ministry of Defense, 29 February 2016. <http://goo.gl/fTiLIn>

Five New Defense Products Unveiled

In the presence of Brig. General, Dr., and Minister of Defense Hossein Dehghan, minister of defense, and Armed Forces Logistics, five new technologies were unveiled, including: the ‘Pars Kam’ detector, a new system that can detect explosives and drugs, an explosion-proof polymer coating, a new generation of NBC protective clothes based on Travagzin membranes, as well as the launch of Obidoxime chloride, an important medicine that fixes the effects of chemical agents on the body. General Dehghan, speaking on the sidelines of the unveiling of the new achievements, and with reference to the Ministry of Defense’s approach to the design and manufacture of equipment and advanced technology in various fields, said, “Today, thanks to our scientists, experts, and our skilled and efficient researchers, we at the Ministry of Defense are witnessing new achievements... The pursuit of innovation and design and sophisticated defense equipment are an important strategic mission.”

The Syrian Underground

OE Watch Commentary: In February 2016 Syrian Sunni rebel group Jaysh al-Islam released a propaganda video showing footage from its 2015 campaign against pro-Assad forces on the outskirts of Damascus. The footage included images of subterranean structures attached to a military complex near the rebel bastion of Duma. Rebels claimed this was the Syrian military's alternate national command center, to be used if the joint command center in downtown Damascus were compromised. The subterranean structures appear to have been taken without a fight, making it hard to gauge how well the facilities were secured and whether they were even functional.

Most underground structures in the Syrian war are not so complex. Quite the opposite: Syria's subterranean environment is most frequently used for digging rudimentary tunnels to circumvent government sieges. The importance of these tunnels to besieged rebel-held urban areas is illustrated by the second accompanying excerpt, which describes a "tunnels security committee" regulating the use of tunnels by civilians in the eastern suburbs of Damascus (East Ghouta).

Some of the heaviest concentrations of rudimentary tunnels are found in Jobar, a Damascus neighborhood that abuts East Ghouta and which, despite years of heavy bombardment, remains largely impenetrable to government forces. According to an activist in Jobar cited in the third accompanying article, the Syrian government recently flooded and blocked off the neighborhood's drainage system, which rebels had been using to infiltrate the capital. As a result, "Rebel forces are working to dig additional new tunnels in order to conduct operations against regime forces and to smuggle weapons and food supplies into Jobar." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



“...Civilians wishing to exit via the tunnel must register their name with the Tunnels Security Committee...”

Source: مدينة تحت الأرض لقيادة جيش الأسد في قبضة المعارضة

“Assad Army’s Underground City under Rebel Control,” *Elaph*. 16 February 2016. <http://elaph.com/Web/News/2016/2/1072686.html>

Jaysh al-Islam fighters were surprised to find an underground passageway for cars with paved roads and lighting... 3 kilometers long, with escape exits to either side... after exploring the underground structure they reached a large green door, behind which were four other doors in close proximity to one another, which the Jaysh al-Islam commander claimed were to clear chemical agents....the building also had offices for the Air Force Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Political Administration, General Intelligence Directorate, as well as offices for the leaders of the various branches in the military, including Chemical and Artillery/Missiles.

Source: الأنفاق.. وسيلة هروب من الحصار بسوريا

“Tunnels... a Way of Fleeing Sieges in Syria,” *al-Jazeera*. 23 February 2016. <http://goo.gl/d3MSKE>

According to Umm Ramz, the tunnel is several kilometers long and crossing it requires major efforts and endurance, given its length, poor ventilation and narrow ceilings, which requires bending over while walking... According to a man in his forties, civilians wishing to exit via the tunnel must register their name with the Tunnels Security Committee and wait their turn, which can take long due to the large numbers and detailed investigation of those seeking permits to cross... According to Abu abd al-Rahman, over the past year more than 70,000 civilians have left the besieged Ghouta through tunnels.

Source: “Syria’s Underground War: Tunnels in Damascus Suburb Mitigate Blockade,” *SyriaDirect*. 4 February 2016. <http://syriadirect.org/news/syria%E2%80%99s-underground-war-tunnels-in-damascus-suburb-mitigate-blockade/>

Q: Why did the regime seal up the sewers?

The regime is trying to insulate the capital Damascus from the threat of rebel attacks. That’s why they sealed the drains.

They welded them shut with iron and poured cement on top of them. They also pumped water into the drainage pipes last week, which flooded the streets. Recent drops in air pressure caused the water level to rise, making the situation worse. The streets were flooded with rainwater as well as the water from the sewers.

Q: Why is the sewer system important for rebel fighters? How have they used them before?

They were used to conduct operations in the heart of the capital. The strategy of the rebel fighters in Jobar relies on tunnels, including the sewer tunnels. By using them, the rebels are trying to broaden the scope of their operations in central Damascus. The closure of the tunnels has constrained their movements, especially since Jobar is blockaded.

Q: What alternatives do the rebels have now that the sewer drains are sealed?

Rebel forces are working to dig additional new tunnels in order to conduct operations against regime forces and to smuggle weapons and food supplies into Jobar.

Northern Thunder: Egypt Participates in Saudi Arabia's "Islamic Coalition"

OE Watch Commentary: On 15 February Saudi Arabian launched the Northern thunder (Raad al-Shamal) military exercises in an important step toward strengthening the "Islamic Coalition" declared by bin Salman last December. The goal, as the second excerpt argues, is to create an "Islamic NATO."

As the most populous Arab Sunni-majority country, Egypt is a vital member of any purported alliance representing Sunni Arabs. Egypt was a robust participant in Northern Thunder, which, according to the second excerpt, belies claims of tensions in the Saudi-Egyptian relationship. Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi attended the final ceremonies and via Saudi mediation took initial steps toward thawing his government's relations with Qatar and Hamas. The successful military diplomacy notwithstanding, a major chasm continues to exist between Saudi and Egyptian foreign policy vis-a-vis Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"This is an occasion for the various Islamic armies...can become the kernel of an "Islamic NATO"..."



Heads of state photo, Northern Thunder exercises

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/raadnorth1/photos/pb.458120584363984.-2207520000.1458229145./532935990215776/?type=3&theater>

Source:

قرع طبول الحرب من أجل السلام

"Beating Drums of War for the Sake of Peace," *al-Hayat*. 12 March 2016. <http://www.alhayat.com/Opinion/Jamal-Khashoggi/14423284/من-أجل-السلام>

This is an occasion for the various Islamic armies, with their different military doctrines, to get to know one another. Many of them would not be able to do so otherwise, and that alone is a great achievement that can become the kernel of an "Islamic NATO"...

Source:

رئيس "عمليات القوات المسلحة المصرية" الأسبق: "رعد الشمال" إنجاز عسكري يحقق التكامل بين مصر والدول العربية

"Former Egyptian Armed Forces Operations Commander: Northern Storm is a Military Achievement that Brings Egypt and Arab Countries Together," *al-Ahram*. 11 March 2016. <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/882934.aspx>

The former commander of the Egyptian Armed Forces' Operations Command, BRIG GEN Abd al-Monam Saeed, said that Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi's recent visit to Saudi Arabia and Egypt's participation in the Northern Thunder exercises are in support of inter-Arab relations. He also considers the exercises a major military achievement that brings Egypt and Arab countries together. The trip shows that those who speak of problems between Egypt and Saudi Arabia are lying.

ISIS Surprise in Tunisia's Ben Gardane

OE Watch Commentary: In the early hours of 7 March 2015, over 50 ISIS-linked militants launched a coordinated attack on Ben Gardane (Guerdane), a Tunisian town of around 60,000 near the Libyan border. Most of the attackers seemed to be Tunisian nationals who had been in Libya, including many from Ben Gardane itself. According to the Tunisian government, the goal of the attack was to take over the town and declare it an official province of the Islamic State. As the first accompanying excerpt notes, the assailants sought to overpower the Tunisian National Guard and open the border for reinforcements from Libya.

The attack began at dawn prayers with a team of fighters trying to shoot their way into the National Guard barracks using light weapons and RPGs. A military barracks and police complex were targeted shortly thereafter, while assassination teams roamed the town targeting government agents. By mid-morning rebel fighters were present in at least six different areas of Ben Gardane and its surroundings. As the second accompanying article notes, the fighters used megaphones to entreat local residents to resist the corrupt government and join their side. The people did not rise up, and within hours Tunisian forces turned the tide and methodically advanced on the rebels.

Harkening to prior ISIS battlefield successes from Mosul to the Sinai, the attackers counted on leveraging the element of surprise. According to the third accompanying article, rebels did not harness surprise because of the Tunisian forces' superior skills, preparedness and tactics. In addition, the team of attackers had been wounded before the 7 March assault: their main training camp in Libya had been bombed three weeks prior, killing dozens of them and forcing the rest to disperse and proceed with the assault despite unfavorable conditions in terms of timing and manpower.

Tunisia recently built a barrier (berms and a moat) along much of its border with Libya. It is believed that the Libya-based Ben Gardane attackers used the official crossing to enter. Many of the attackers were native sons, including sleeper cells from within. Some time before the attack, a crackdown in one of Tunis's impoverished satellite neighborhoods netted an ISIS cell planning attacks in the capital, according to the fourth accompanying article. ISIS may be outnumbered and outgunned in Tunisia, but it continues to have an exploitable advantage among unemployed young men who associate the government with repression and corruption.

In August 2010 riots in Ben Gardane foreshadowed the nationwide (and region-wide) protests that followed the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Sidi Bou Zid. The town may well be once again acting as a harbinger of things to come. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... Tunisian forces were able to quickly move from defending to attacking, seizing the initiative from their enemy...”



Map showing Ben Gardane
Source: source: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>

Source:

تمن اعترافات الارهابيين : ثكنة الحرس اولاً.. العلم الاسود فوق معتمدية بن قردان. تح الحدود للجحافل..

“Terrorist Confessions: National Guard Barracks First, the Black Flag over Ben Gardane, and Opening the Border for Fighters,” al-Ikhbaria al-Tounisia. 10 March 2016. <http://goo.gl/tK3Mva>

Regarding the reasons for targeting the national guard barracks first from a mosque using 6 RPGs, the terrorist Sulaymani and his also-detained uncle said that they realized that the national guard were the ones guarding the border and thus wanted to rid themselves of this obstacle initially while also trying to break up the weaponry in possession of the guard in order to create chaos and open the border, to bring in the remaining militants who were waiting for zero hour on the Tunisia-Libya border.

Source:

تنظيم الدولة: المواجهة الاستباقية في تونس

“ISIS's Pre-emptive Attack on Tunisia,” Rawabet Center. 9 March 2016. <http://rawabetcenter.com/archives/22209>

Prior to the attack on Ben Gardane, Tunisian security services carried out a broad operation in the capital and specifically in the al-Tadamoun neighborhood, one of the capital's largest. The operation led to a 6-person ISIS cell being dismantled and the thwarting of their plan to target sensitive and important military/security areas within the capital. Several light and medium weapons, as well as manuals on learning to manufacture IEDs, were also seized.

ISIS Is Using Improvised Weaponry, Some Built in “Jihadi Training Labs”

OE Watch Commentary: Derived from insurgent social media, a training video obtained from the capture of an ISIS courier and provided to the British news source *Sky News* demonstrates that ISIS and Syrian rebels are increasingly developing improvised robotic weaponry. According to the reporting, in many instances militants are using scrap material to repair or piece together to produce a makeshift armored vehicle or alternative forms of weaponry.

ISIS employs well educated engineers and chemists, mechanics, and even former members of Saddam Hussein’s military to assemble these weapons systems. In January 2016 *Sky News* broke a story with exclusive footage showing ISIS fighters working in a kind of “Jihadi Lab” in Raqqa, Syria, creating anything from unmanned steel-plated trucks to IEDs. The author interviewed an ISIS defector who explained that the facility is meant to show others how to create weapons to be used in crowded areas in Europe. The footage showed self-driving cars with mannequins affixed in the driver’s seat, manufactured in such a way that it generates the kind of heat signature that a human being produces. These driverless cars are able to bypass heat scanning machines used in military bases, embassies and other government buildings, and remotely detonate by the operator controlling the vehicle. Other international news agencies, e.g., *Islamic Republic News Agency*, picked up the story.

According to Kurdish social media, while remote-controlled firearms are more often employed by Syrian rebels or the Free Syrian Army, ISIS is developing more advanced armored vehicles. Steel-plated vehicles with explosives inside, such as those utilized in Ramadi in May 2015, are increasingly taking the place of individual suicide bombers. These AVBIEDs (armored vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices) can drive through targeted city check points, unlike soft-skinned vehicle-borne IEDs or humans with bombs on them, who can be more easily interdicted with small-arms fires.

Other attempts at robotic weaponry include remote-controlled sniper rifles and machine guns. These “tele-operated” fire arms are typically mounted on platforms attached to cable wires that are plugged into either a computer or a small device with one or two buttons and a joystick that controls the rotation and aiming mechanism of the weapon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker & Keshavarz)**



Source: Stuart Ramsay, “Exclusive: Inside IS Terror Weapons Lab” *Sky News*, 6 January 2016. <http://news.sky.com/story/1617197/exclusive-inside-is-terror-weapons-lab>

“But doing such a programme and documenting it was meant to target a large number of people and in more than one location, of course it wasn’t for either Syria or Iraq.”

An IS defector in Turkey told Sky News.

Source: “Daneshka fanee bomb sazee daesh dar Raqqa, Soorye” (ISIS established Jihadi University in Raqqa, Syria). *Islamic Republic News Agency*, 6 January 2016 <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81909153/>

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHz19XM5Cg8>, 20 March 2014. Heading translation: “Praise be to Allah, the Mujahedeen have manufactured this PKC weapon, the will of God”

Somalia: AMISOM Battles al Shabaab and Potential Funding Cut

“The troops are at this stage engaged in critical operations and need even more support,” [AMISOM spokesman] Nkolokosa said. “This is not the time to cut the resources at their disposal.”

OE Watch Commentary: The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), composed of the forces of eight nations, finds itself struggling not only to defeat al Shabaab but also, as the accompanying excerpt relates, to maintain its financing. The European Union is considering trimming its financial support to AMISOM by a fifth, an amount that would result in significant pay cuts for the troops of this regional peacekeeping mission which supports the Somali Army in its fight against the terrorists.

So far the suggested reduction is only talk; an actual funding cut has not been implemented. Still, such discussions could possibly not be occurring at a worse time. Though AMISOM has had some marked successes, recently it has suffered a series of setbacks, including an attack on a Kenyan base in Southern Somalia that left 180 soldiers dead and another one on a Burundian base that reportedly resulted in up to 70 soldiers being killed. These operations show al Shabaab’s resiliency; the terrorists may have been pushed out of Mogadishu, but they still controls significant rural areas from where they can mount deadly assaults against AMISOM troops.

AMISOM is already stretched thin. Indeed, as the excerpt notes, it is hobbled by a lack of resources, including air assets, that forces it to curtail missions. Frustration with the mission’s progress (AMISOM has been fighting in Somalia since 2007), along with the slow pace of the Somali army’s development, which after years of external funding and training still suffers from marked deficiencies, has probably exacerbated donor fatigue. However, AMISOM’s spokesman has made it clear that not only are cuts unwise, but even greater funding should also be provided. With future budgets potentially tightening, AMISOM and the Somali Army could find its fight against al Shabaab even more constrained than it already is. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Somalia: Amisom Asks More Support for Al-Shabaab Battle, *Shabelle Media Network (Somalia)*, 18 Mar 2016, <http://shabellenews.com/?p=27486>

The African mission battling al-Qaeda-linked militants in Somalia needs more support during a critical stage, making it the wrong time to cut international funding, a spokesman said.

A European Union plan to trim financial support by a fifth this year that could cut troops’ wages “has been discussed but has not yet been implemented,” Gaffel Nkolokosa, a spokesman for the African Union Mission in Somalia, known as Amisom, said in an e-mailed response to questions.

Amisom, which comprises eight nations’ forces, deployed in the Horn of Africa country in 2007 to support the Somali army, dislodging the militants from the capital, Mogadishu, about four years later.

Amisom wants the United Nations to “fully support Amisom at all levels commensurate with similar peace enforcement missions,” Nkolokosa said. The mission against al-Shabaab is being curtailed by a “lack of force multipliers such as air assets and enablers,” Nkolokosa said.

Amisom also wants more support directed toward training and providing military equipment to Somalia’s army and police, Nkolokosa said.

Will future AMISOM operations such as this one, Burundian troops securing a perimeter near a Somali village, be curtailed as donors contemplate funding cuts?

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2013_10_15_Baidoa_Daynunay_Modmodey_Foot_Patrol_Medical_Water_001_\(10512635836\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2013_10_15_Baidoa_Daynunay_Modmodey_Foot_Patrol_Medical_Water_001_(10512635836).jpg)



Perceptions of Ethnic Domination in the Ethiopian Military

OE Watch Commentary: The protests in the Oromia region of Ethiopia that began in December 2015 have not died down: increasingly, what started as a small-scale protest now seems to be having an impact that extends up to the Ethiopian military. Importantly, the accompanying excerpted article, written by a prominent Oromo commentator in the aftermath of the protests, details how many ethnic Oromo (incorrectly) believe the Ethiopian national military, which is increasingly involved in efforts to stop their protests, is dominated by members of the Tigray ethnicity.

Unrest in Ethiopia began in December 2015, when members of the Oromo ethnic group, located in central Ethiopia, just south of the capital of Addis Ababa, began protesting over the Ethiopian government's plan to spread the capital territory into their land. This announced move violated one of the principles of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution - which created a series of autonomous ethnic states within a larger federal government - in that it would lead to an encroachment into their autonomous territory. This was particularly troubling, given the Oromos' perception that that the federal government and military are dominated by members of the Tigray ethnic group, often to the exclusion of a more representative participation of Oromos. Moreover, many have worried that the government would claim their land - via eminent domain - without compensation.

The accompanying article gives insights about how Ethiopian civilians, especially Oromos, understand the nature of the ethnic makeup of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF): in a country of more than 80 ethnicities, many Ethiopians believe that the ENDF is made up of primarily ethnic Tigray. This perception comes from the outstripped role that ethnic Tigray played in the overthrow of the Marxist "Derg" regime in 1991, through their insurgency, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). This perception also extends to the government as well, making the plan to extend the capital into Oromo territory appear to be a Tigray-dominated plan. The implication of all of this is that, as the military comes to take on a seemingly more prominent role in the suppression of the Oromo protests, the local perceptions of the ethnic composition of the military come to be meaningful.

While the Ethiopian government - historically very adept at suppressing protests and insurgencies - had hoped that the Oromo backlash would be short-lived, its persistence means that it is beginning to have military implications. First, rumors are circulating that Ethiopia will be withdrawing troops from its two peacekeeping missions in Somalia and Southern Sudan to deployed them to the Oromia region. If true, this would be surprising, especially given that Ethiopia is the largest contributor to African peacekeeping missions on the continent and known for its tremendously wide-ranging security and military arms. Moreover, Ethiopia has long been the U.S.'s primary ally in the Horn of Africa, and so its domestic problems may well have an impact on U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region. The impacts of these protests - military and otherwise - are yet to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“Characterizing the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) as “Tigrean army” is commonplace....”



Members of the Oromo ethnic group have been protesting plans to expand the Ethiopian capital into their territory. Many Oromo believe that the Ethiopian military and government are dominated by members of the ethnic Tigray.

Source: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201512120009.html>

Source: Berhane, Fetsum. 2016. "Jawar Mohammed: 'The Scary Image of Agazi Needs to Be Reexamined'." *Horn of Africa-English (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)*. February 8. <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2016/02/08/jawar-mohammed-ethiopian-military-agazi/>.

Characterizing the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) as “Tigrean army” is ...commonplace....The exact composition of top-level commanders is unknown, as the military is secretive about everything. Anecdotal information suggest the dominance of the armed struggle veterans in the command structure of the army.

Yet, that doesn't stop some from misrepresenting the composition of the entire active military personnel, which is 29% Amhara, 24% Oromo, 22% from the south (SNNP) and 18% from Tigray. ...The ENDF which was dispatched following the 2005 post-election crisis, is claimed to be entirely Tigrean. That claim was incessantly promoted by Jawar Mohammed, director of Oromia Media Network, in the past months in connection with the protests in Oromia.

It is common to refer to the current Ethiopian military as the TPLF [Tigray] army. This is factually incorrect because members of the military come from all corners of the country and Tigreans make up no more than 10%.

The scary image about the “Agazi” division that was involved in quashing the 2005 protests needs to be reexamined. This division is described as a Tigrean only unit or sometimes as being full of mercenaries. Anecdotal evidence shows that there are several non-Tigrean Ethiopians within the rank and file of the division including the command.

Ivory Coast Attacks Aimed at French Antiterrorism Presence

OE Watch Commentary: On 13 March gunmen unleashed attacks on two international hotels in the beachside town of Grand-Bassam in Ivory Coast, killing 18 and injuring 33. The three attackers eventually killed themselves as well. As the accompanying excerpted article details, commentators from the country are realizing that their state is facing a threat from a relatively new group, al-Mourabitoun, not as a result of any of their own policies per se, but rather as a result of French policies in the region, which creates new vulnerabilities for Ivory Coast itself.

As the article details, AQIM-offshoot al-Mourabitoun has claimed the attacks on the hotels. In a recent statement it relayed that the attacks were “a response to the anti-jihadist missions that France is leading in the Sahel...The attack on Sunday is part of a plan that aims to target their [French] homes and places of assembly.” Indeed, these claims fall in line with al-Mourabitoun’s larger rhetoric and action: the group is responsible for a stark uptick in terrorist attacks in francophone West Africa since late 2015, orchestrating the bombings at the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali, in November 2015 (which killed 21) and undertaking similar hotel attacks at the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in March 2016 (which killed 30 and injured 56).

The latest attack comes in a particularly vulnerable area of Ivory Coast: although Ivory Coast had stepped up its antiterrorism patrols in recent months in light of attacks in other francophone West African countries, Grand-Bassam was oddly left out of the heightened patrolling areas, of which al-Mourabitoun was likely aware. Importantly, no Anglophone or Lusophone states in West Africa have been targeted by al-Mourabitoun: neither Nigeria, Gambia, Sierra Leone, nor Liberia has been targeted on the Anglophone side, nor has Guinea Bissau been affected. Somewhat ironically, West African countries are now seemingly becoming more vulnerable to Islamic terrorism precisely because of the French presence that it there to assist them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“The attack on Sunday in Ivory Coast was a response to the anti-jihadist missions that France is leading in the Sahel”

Source: G.K. (pseudonym). 2016. “Cote d’Ivoire: Attaque Terroriste de Grand-Bassam - ‘Aqmi Donne La Principale Raison et Révèle Les Noms Des Djihadistes Tués.’” [Ivory Coast: Terrorist Attacks in Grand-Bassam: AQIM Gives Reasons Behind Attacks, and Reveals the Names of Killed Jihadists], *L’Intelligent Abidjan (Abidjan, Ivory Coast)*. March 17. <http://news.abidjan.net/h/586408.html>

In a published statement on a site that serves as a center for surveilling Islamist internet sites, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) revealed the real reason for the terrorist attack in Grand-Bassam, carried out Sunday March 13, which killed nearly twenty with numerous injuries.

According to the AQIM: “The attack on Sunday in Ivory Coast was a response to the anti-jihadist missions that France is leading in the Sahel...The attack on Sunday is part of a plan that aims to target their homes and places of assembly.”

Ivory Coast was also targeted for having delivered four member of AQIM to Malian authorities, according to the communiqué [From AQIM]. AQIM confirmed that the attack was led by three men: Hamza al-Fulani, Abdul Rahman, et Abou Adam al-Ansari, without mentioning their nationalities.

To recall, the terrorists perpetuate the simultaneous attacks on the beach near the Hotels “Etoile de Sud” and “Koral Beach et la Paillote.”

Le bilan communiqué par le Gouvernement vingt-quatre heures après, fait état de 18 morts dont 3 éléments des forces de l’ordre contre 3 agresseurs neutralisés.

The aggression has been claimed by the movement al-Mourabitoun, from the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, affiliated with AQIM.



Islamic terrorists from the newly formed al-Mourabitoun group, affiliated with AQIM, launched simultaneous attacks on two beach resorts frequented by Westerners on March 13. The group recently announced the attacks were in response to the increased French presence in undertaking anti-terrorist activities in the Sahel and Sahara.

Source: <http://theconversation.com/>

Boko Haram and Landmines

OE Watch Commentary: Fleeing from the national defense forces, Boko Haram militants recently made a fatal error by driving over land mines that they themselves - or their compatriots - had planted to target the Nigerian military. Two militants were killed, and their vehicle, outfitted with an anti-aircraft weapon, was destroyed. As the excerpted article below details, Boko Haram's use of land mines in its struggle in Nigeria is now posing threats not only to citizens of the country and the Nigerian military, but also to members of Boko Haram itself.

Since approximately mid-2015 civilians having been alarmed by the prevalence of land mines that Boko Haram has left in its areas of operation, intended primarily for the Nigerian military. As per the article below, estimates suggest that land mine numbers are in the hundreds. Locations, particularly around Boko Haram's main stronghold of the Sambisa Forest, have been found to be mined, which has had an expectedly negative impact on civilian lives and often succeeded in slowing the Nigerian fight against Boko Haram. For instance, in January 2016 five members of the government-civilian hybrid Joint Task Force were killed by Boko Haram's land mines, while another four were injured. Boko Haram's use of land mines has also been particularly pronounced in Cameroon, where seven land mine explosions recently occurred in five days, killing 34.

The use of land mines by Boko Haram is troubling for numerous reasons. First, the vast majority of countries (161) have banned manufactured land mines - via the 1997 Ottawa Treaty - as land mines can and do explode years after conflicts have ended, and injure and kill noncombatants. Yet, while the manufactured land mine business is now crippled, the use of homemade improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has filled in this gap in manufacturing. To that end, while commentators in Nigeria, such as the author below, refer to "land mines," it should be noted that Boko Haram's explosives are antipersonnel IEDs. Second, the group's use of land mines/IEDs is troubling precisely because of the general lack of coordination that characterizes the group: as was evidenced in the most recent accident, Boko Haram members are often hardly aware of where the mines have been planted, making figuring out how to recover unexploded mines difficult, dangerous, and costly once the conflict ends. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“During their inglorious days of territorial conquests, Boko Haram had buried hundreds of improvised land mines along major routes and communities to prevent invasion of troops into their new domain.”

Source: Haruna, Abdulkareem. 2016. “Nigeria: Fleeing Boko Haram Gunmen Killed By Own Landmine” *Leadership (Abuja, Nigeria)*. 18 March 2016. <http://leadership.ng/news/510153/fleeing-boko-haram-gunmen-killed-landmine>.

It was yet another bad day for Boko Haram terrorists on Thursday when a gang of them being chased by gallant troops of the Nigerian Army ran into a heavy land mine and got killed by the forgotten bombs they buried long ago.

During their inglorious days of territorial conquests, Boko Haram had buried hundreds of improvised land mines along major routes and communities to prevent invasion of troops into their new domain.

Army officials said, the unfortunate fate that befell the insurgents in Kumala area of Damboa Local Government of Borno state was a clear signal that Boko Haram is now in disarray as the Nigerian soldiers are only battling a residue of their long decimated force.

Lacking the past belligerency with which they carried out attacks in a kind of commando style, Boko Haram now resort to weak ambush tactics that are mostly foiled by combat ready troops of the Nigeria military.



The Nigerian army works to remove land mines in November 2015. Two Boko Haram militants were recently killed by land mines that the group itself had planted.
Source: <http://africanspotlight.com/2015/11/11/photos-nigerian-army-removing-landmines-planted-by-boko-haram/>

Boko Haram's Female Suicide Bombers Strike Niger

OE Watch Commentary: There are many new tactics that Boko Haram has introduced in the insurgency it has waged since 2010 in Nigeria and neighboring countries. For example, the first suicide bombings in Nigeria in 2011 at the Federal Police Headquarters and UN Headquarters and first kidnappings of foreigners in northern Nigeria came with the rise of Boko Haram and its faction Ansaru in 2011. Now, female suicide bombings are a tactic that Boko Haram is increasingly carrying out in not only Nigeria but also neighboring countries. In a two-year period since the Chibok kidnapping in April 2014, Boko Haram has deployed about 200 girls in 100 female suicide bombing operations, which have killed more than 1000 people (although it did not deploy the still missing schoolgirls, contrary to some media reports).

A French-language article in Niger's *Actuniger* discussed a tandem suicide bombing in its eastern city of Diffa involving one man and one woman. It also showed a graphic picture of the mutilated bodies of the attackers. Although this was not the first such attack in Niger, given the relative newness of the tactic the Nigerien security forces were apparently caught unprepared. The only saving grace they had, according to the article, was that both bombs detonated prematurely before the tandem could reach the market.

The tactic of suicide bombing involving less suspicious and harder to detect female attackers, who can place explosives under their loose clothing, will continue to be a challenge for Nigerien security forces. Chad also faced this challenge and responded with a ban on the burka, the full-body covering for women, in June 2015. Though it is unclear if this regulation is the direct cause, this policy coincided with the end of such attacks. Cameroon and Nigeria, however, like Niger, continue to face female suicide bombings and are relying mostly on public vigilance to detect young girls acting suspiciously or older men following younger girls, with the former possibly planning to remotely detonate the girls' explosives.

Now that Niger is facing the threat of Boko Haram's female suicide bombings, it will have to decide how to prevent Boko Haram from employing this tactic in public places. It does not appear Niger is yet clear what strategy it will use or to what extent there is precedent for defending against female suicide bombings beyond the Chadian example. Given Boko Haram's prolific use of the tactic, however, and as the *Actuniger* article suggests, Niger will likely to need brace for more attacks until it comes up with a solution. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The city was saved of a terrorist act of great magnitude since these two well-laden suicide bombers, a man and a woman, had as their main target, the town of Diffa.”



Suicide attacks, such as this one in the adjacent image, are a regular occurrence in northeastern Nigeria, but the use of females in suicide attacks not only in Nigeria but also neighboring countries, such as Niger, has become a major tool for Boko Haram in asymmetric warfare.
Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/four-women-suicide-bomber-die-in-maiduguri/3021347.html>

Source: “Deux kamikazes se neutralisent à l’entrée de la ville,” *Actuniger*, 13 February 2016.

Deux kamikazes se neutralisent à l’entrée de la ville

Two suicide bombers who were en route to the town of Diffa with the aim to detonate the explosive charges they carried were neutralized within 3 kilometers from the city. The scene was on a Saturday morning, and the city was saved of a terrorist act of great magnitude since these two well-laden suicide bombers, a man and a woman, had as their main target the town of Diffa. The attempt occurred during the election campaign and when the Boko Haram sect, weakened considerably in the field, is trying to return to power through terrorist acts and suicide bombings as is also the case these days in Cameroon and Nigeria.

For a Young Senegalese Jihadist: Nigeria or Libya

OE Watch Commentary: In what appears to be a growing trend that a French-language Senegalese news website is tracking, on 19 February *Buzz.sn* reported on a group of eight Senegalese men arrested in Nouakchott, Mauritania's capital. They brought along with them their wives, as they spent time in the city setting up a Boko Haram cell. Since Boko Haram pledged loyalty to ISIS in 2015 and now calls itself is the Islamic State's West Africa Province, it is possible that Senegal will become a target of Boko Haram in terms of not only its name, but also its operations. It is likely that this group of Senegalese men were under the command of ISIS, but placed organizationally in the same category as Boko Haram to launch attacks in West Africa (for more information, see: "Militancy in Senegal: Complacency or Time for Concern?" OE Watch, March 2016).

Yet, what makes this group of Senegalese in Nouakchott different than a colony of Senegalese in Libya is that they have already fought battles with Boko Haram in Nigeria, according to *Buzz.sn*. The article says they did not choose per se to fight in Nigeria or Libya: for them, wherever they could go to and fight jihad was sufficient. This information raises questions about whether new relationships are being made between Boko Haram and other West Africans by virtue of their allegiances to ISIS. If so, the ISIS's presence in sub-Saharan Africa may be more than an organizational fiction when it talks about its so-called West Africa Province. ISIS may be cultivating such indigenous networks to enable sub-Saharan Africans to carry out attacks in Nigeria or Senegal, the latter of which is yet to see any major attacks.

In terms of counterterrorism responses, the article points to few from the security forces to this ongoing trend. One option that Senegal is considering in line with other West African countries is to ban the female Islamic covering called a burka. Research is yet to corroborate whether or not this is effective: on the one hand, it could make it more difficult for females to carry out suicide bombings with devices under their garments; on the other hand, militant groups cite this as a grievance that motivates them to launch attacks. It also could be a violation of civil liberties in a democracy like Senegal, and has received criticism from Islamic scholars in Nigeria.

What is also lacking is coordination between security forces in Nigeria and Senegal and government forces in Libya. While ISIS sets up a network in West Africa, regional militaries are operating mostly in a reactive mode, rather than pro-actively engaging and undermining future threats together. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“A Senegalese doctor with the Islamic State in Libya calls himself Shekau the Senegalese (in deference to the Boko Haram leader and proscribed US terrorist, Abubakar Shekau).”

For a young Senegalese Jihadist: Nigeria or Libya?

Last week, Mauritania handed over to the Senegalese authorities eight suspected jihadists who were about to join the Islamic State in West Africa (formerly Boko Haram). They were living in Nouakchott, some with their wives.

Presented as the group leader, Mamadou Ndiaye whose nom de guerre is Abu Youssef allegedly participated in several battles with Boko Haram.

In light of the above, it could be said without the risk of error that the Nigerian branch of the Islamic State will attract as many Senegalese as Libyans.

Before this, five Senegalese of which the oldest is 30 years, were reportedly arrested in Niger after wanting to establish a branch of the Nigerian sect in Senegal.

It is not established whether the Senegalese jihadist candidates have a preference for one branch or another. The main thing for them is their desire to satiate jihad. The proof of this is the buzz.sn question, when a jihadist Senegalese currently in Libya said: “I wanted to go to Nigeria but this was not possible, so I set my heart on Libya.”

Source: “Boko Haram attirerait-il autant de Sénégalais que la branche libyenne de l’Ei ?” [Would Boko Haram attract as many Senegalese as the Libyan branch of IS?], *Buzz.sn*, 19 February 2016.



As seen in the adjacent image, Senegalese police inspect cars to search for weapons and explosives; however, the country's clean record in not suffering terrorist attacks is being challenged as Islamic State and Boko Haram network with Senegalese militants.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/senegal-questions-nine-hundred-counterterrorism/3163602.html>

How to Spot a Drug Route

OE Watch Commentary: A Mexican NGO called Security Justice and Peace has been producing an annual list of the fifty most violent cities of the world. For 2015, the majority of these cities were in Latin America, which, if nothing else, might call into question the influence of some data availability and methodology challenges. Nevertheless, the relatively high violence statistics associated with the list's fifty worst cities serve to highlight places that are clearly suffering.

The think tank attributes much of that suffering to gang warfare and the drug trade. Simple map plotting reveals what one might expect -- the cities often fall along logical movement routes for illegal drug product. Recently, reports of an odd-seeming security emergency in the little-known city of Tumeremo, Venezuela, led to a very easy search for it. Among other things, the list of violent cities traces one of very few motor routes through the Brazilian jungle. A quick look along that route from Venezuela -- and there was Tumeremo. What are the mathematical odds that the massacre of 28 miners in Tumeremo had anything to do with the movement of some kind of contraband? Put it at about 99.9%. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



“Brazil is the country that scores the highest number of dangerous cities among the first fifty places.”

Source: Editors, “Las 50 ciudades más peligrosas del mundo; 9 son mexicanas” (The fifty most dangerous cities in the world; 9 are Mexican), *Aristegui Noticias*, 28 January 2016, <http://aristeguinoticias.com/0702/mexico/las-50-ciudades-mas-peligrosas-del-mundo-9-son-mexicanas/>; see also, Viridiana Mendoza Escamilla, “Las 50 ciudades más violentas del mundo,” *Forbes Mexico*, 10 March 2016, <http://www.forbes.com.mx/las-50-ciudades-mas-violentas-del-mundo/>

“Data from a non-governmental organization reveal that Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia are the countries that have the highest number of dangerous cities.... Brazil is the country that scores the highest number of dangerous cities among the first fifty places, with 15. This is the only one that is higher than Mexico.”

Source: Carlos Peña, “¡MILITARIZADA DE PUNTA A PUNTA! Con uso de fuerza militar reabrieron paso en Tumeremo” (MILITARIZED FROM END TO END! Passage is reopened in Tumeremo with the use of military force), *El Nacional and DolarToday*, 10 March 2016, <https://dolartoday.com/militarizada-de-punta-punta-con-uso-de-fuerza-militar-reabrieron-paso-en-tumeremo-video/>

“At 0230 in the morning the Armed Forces carried out a special operation to reopen the pass. By midnight there were various sounds of violence between protestors and uniformed personnel. There are about 1,000 government military deployed in the town...the demonstrators are demanding that the government not stop the investigations into the presumed massacre of 28 miners.”

Source: Ricardo Puentes, “¿El Carmen de Chucurí sufrirá la venganza del ELN-FARC y Santos?” (Will El Carmen de Chucurí [a county in Northeast Colombia] suffer the vengeance of the ELN-FARC and Santos?), *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 10 February 2016, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/el-carmen-de-chucuri-sufrira-la-venganza-del-eln-farc-y-santos.html>

“Although 10 of the 11 councilmen of the community said they did not approve of the event, today, 10 February 2016, the mayor had received more than ten phone calls from the Ministry of the Interior asking how the preparations were going for the homage to the ELN and announcing that before day’s end the Minister Juan Fernando Cristo would himself call to confirm that everyone was collaborating for the reception of the guerrillas and their friends this February 14th.”

When Does a Negotiation Become the Threat?

OE Watch Commentary: A separate OE Watch article this month reports on an argument proposed by the Colombian government attorney general that the peace accords that the FARC are negotiating with the government should not be subject to provisions of the Colombian Constitution regarding approval of the accords -- that the accords, being peace agreements, fall under international humanitarian law and will meld with the Constitution. As such President Santos may be publicly distancing himself from that dubious claim, but critics are pointing to other aspects of the agreements that seem consonant with the attorney general's position and do even more damage to constitutional order.

Two ex-presidents, of significantly divergent political stripes, have been ringing alarm bells about some interesting aspects of the accords that have recently come to light. A brand new, autonomous court system is apparently in the offing, a court that would decide the fate of both ex-guerrillas and government personnel involved in any way with the war, a court peopled as much by the FARC as by anyone else. Another disconcerting breakthrough regards the anticipated concentration of FARC forces into zones where they could supposedly be inventoried as they faced disarmament and reintegration. The FARC intends these places to be contiguous with what are called campesino reservation zones. These are a form of communal ownership in a program long prized by the Colombian left. At least part of the Colombian legislature was thinking the FARC concentration zones would not have any geographic proximity to the campesino reservation zones. Now that question is very much in the air. Whole communities of rural agriculturalists might be delivered as virtual hacienda serfs to FARC leadership cadres, with the zones, not coincidentally, encompassing some of the best smuggling routes in, out and through the country.

There even seems to be growing evidence that the peace agreement is intended to force a parallel re-concentration of Colombian government military forces as well. During years of negotiation the Colombian government has been treating FARC leaders to a sense of moral equivalency. A logical consequence is that the FARC leaders thereupon demand that the agreement present an administrative and juridical equivalence as well. Beyond equivalence, it is looking like the FARC has been building an administrative, juridical and geographic advantage. It continues to deftly, prodigiously advance in Colombia's lawfare. For those who might have taken an oath to defend and support a constitution, there is a frightening lesson to be pondered in all of this. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...an all-embracing tribunal emerged, with supra-constitutional powers, without time limits, with capacity to revise the decisions of the past and the future...”

Source: Andrés Pastrana, “Ex presidente Andrés Pastrana: ‘Se entregó el país en 72 horas’” (Ex-president Andrés Pastrana: ‘The country was surrendered in 72 hours’), *El Tiempo*, 28 febrero 2016, <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/andres-pastrana-critica-el-proceso-de-paz/16522315>.

“At the end of the three days that barely gave them time for editing, an all-embracing tribunal emerged, with supra-constitutional powers, without time limits, with capacity to revise the decisions of the past and the future, as much in legislative matters as in judicial and disciplinary matters. A constituent tribunal that completely satisfied FARC aspirations of 50 years. In December, 2015, the parties presented to the world an ‘integral system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition’, with 75 points rushed in three days, creating the so-called Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). In its text the coup de main to the Colombian institutional structure is left clear. This JEP even bypasses those commitments that, in its tradition of respect for international law, the country has assumed in matters of International Law of Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and International Penal Law.”

Source: Álvaro Uribe Vélez, “¿Están engañando a los integrantes de las Fuerzas Armadas?” (Are they tricking the members of the Armed Forces?), *Libreta de Apuntes*, 28 February 2016, <http://libretadeapuntes.com/archivos/45942>.

“Our Armed Forces have been on the side of Democracy, not in the service of dictators. This one circumstance should prevent them being categorized as political actors and on an equal footing with the terrorists, as the current administration has done. Several articles in the agreement with the FARC, such as the 32nd and 34th, define the reach of these accords to civilians, agents of the State, soldiers and policemen, that would be subjected to the same norms and to the Tribunal of Justice [within the JEP as noted in the reference above].”

Source: ÁMateo Isaza Giraldo, “Las Farc cuestionan zonas de concentración aprobadas por el Congreso” (The FARC question the concentration zones approved by the Congress), *El colombiano*, 12 March 2016, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/paz-y-derechos-humanos/tension-entre-gobierno-y-farc-por-zonas-de-concentracion-EX3743204>.

“This Saturday, FARC negotiator ‘Benkos Bioho’ dismissed the idea that they are prepared to concentrate [their Forces] in location zones in the form approved by the Colombian congress: What the Congress of the Republic approved, Reform of the Law of Public Order, are open air prisons. They are not for transit, but rather for concentration, according to what they propose. What we are proposing are transit zones where we have historically lived in harmony with the communities, zones to implement and propel development’... ”

Colombia Peace Signing Postponed?

OE Watch Commentary: The FARC has long been negotiating a huge peace deal with the Colombian administration of Juan Manuel Santos. By the time this month's OE Watch is published, the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government was supposed have been signed. That signing has probably been postponed for a bit longer. Many hope it will never be signed -- or at least that it will be afterwards disapproved in public review.

One of the supposed steps of the process has been some form of public affirmation or disaffirmation, whether in a referendum, plebiscite or legislative ratification. The definitions and rules of all these have been thrown into debate. Most intriguing and disconcerting has been an assertion by Santos' attorney general that, because it is a peace process and peace is a fundamental human right, no public affirmation, whatever the participation or democratic math, is necessary for the agreement to take legitimate, legal effect. According to that view, human rights are the purview of international humanitarian law and trump any domestic constitutional concerns.

The reaction to this argument has featured incredulity and anger. Nevertheless, it was seriously forwarded so that the president's signature accomplishment would not run the risk of failure when tested against broader Colombian opinion. The peace negotiators in Havana apparently wish to cover their product with the imprimatur of the very word peace and not subject it to picayune laws or the ignorance of the lumpen proletariat. Not to be dismissed as part of the context, President Santos' public opinion poll numbers have plummeted.

End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

Rousseff Administration in Trouble

OE Watch Commentary: No one can say authoritatively just how big a demonstration or protest march has to be before it is big enough to matter as to political outcomes, much less to instigate immediate changes. Too many variables. However, the power to convoke has become both a direct and indirect tool for changing power in many parts of the world, and in Brazil the crowds demanding the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff are reaching olympic numbers in a year when the Brazilian government would like to offer a safe, orderly welcome to Olympic crowds.

The lid is off the high-level government corruption in Brazil. That country, always aspiring to global status and always seemingly poised to become the super-ally, is mired in internal political reconsiderations. Its experiment with socialist executives is apparently not going so well.

End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

“...73% of the citizens have an unfavorable impression of the President.”

Source: Javier Alexander Macías, “Santos no ve un acuerdo cercano y aplazaría fecha” (Santos does not see an agreement close-by and would postpone the date), *El Colombiano*, 10 March 2016, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/santos-no-ve-un-acuerdo-cercano-y-aplazaria-fecha-FA3727315>.

“The announcement of President Juan Manuel Santos about a possible postponement of the signing date of the final agreement with the FARC -- set for 23 March --, is evidence that at the table there still remain difficult points to reconcile. With the announcement: ‘the agreement cannot be finalized carelessly just to meet a deadline’, the President began to lower the pressure on the signing expected this coming Holy Wednesday, and he left half-open the possibility of arriving at an accord some days after the date agreed upon. ‘After so much effort, after so much time, if we have not arrived on the 23rd (of March) with a good agreement, I say to the counterpart: let’s set another date; I’m not going to fulfill the date with a bad agreement’, he emphasized.”

Source: Rafael Nieto Loaiza, “Otro favor a Santos” (Another favor for Santos), *El Colombiano*, 12 March 2016, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/opinion/columnistas/otro-favor-a-santos-CY3742730>.

“It is a juridical aberration to suppose that the Havana agreements modify the Constitution of themselves, as the Attorney General claims. The thesis that the Cuban pacts are ‘humanitarian accords’ and that as such they are directly incorporated into the Constitution is a broadside attack and fraud on the rule of law and democracy.”

Source: Salud Hernández-Mora, “Juan Manuel Santos se desploma en las encuestas en Colombia” (Juan Manuel Santos collapses in Colombian opinion polls), *El Mundo*, 13 March 2016, <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2016/03/13/56e59333ca4741397b8b45a8.html>.

“Santos’ image is falling sharply due to the accumulation of problems that his administration has not been able to contain. For 77% of Colombians, ‘things are going in the wrong direction’, and 73% of the citizens have an unfavorable impression of the President.”

Source: Urgente24, “Dilma y Lula arrinconados por 3 millones de manifestantes” (Dilma and Lula cornered by 3 million protestors), *Urgente24.com*, 13 March 2016, <http://www.urgente24.com/250406-dilma-y-lula-arrinconados-por-3-millones-de-manifestantes>.

“A multitude dressed in green and yellow has come out on the streets of Brazil this Sunday 13/03 against corruption, the ouster from power of President Dilma Rousseff and the arrest of former President Inácio Lula Da Silva. They marched in the largest political protest ever in Brazilian democracy, and this overwhelming success puts great pressure on the Administration, adding to a long political crisis. ...More than three million people concentrated in 257 localities in Brazil in protests without major incidents and was defined by their organizers as a great action against corruption in general. ‘I don’t want to live in a different country, I want to live in a different Brazil,’ chanted the crowd meeting in Copacabana.”

Drug Routes that Span from Argentina into Chile

OE Watch Commentary: The border region that divides Chile and Argentina spans over 3000 miles. Along this extensive border the Andes Mountain Range provides a natural barrier between the two countries; however, despite this fact, dozens of illegal border crossings have been detected in the Argentine provinces of San Juan and Neuquen. The crossings are allegedly used to move significant shipments of marijuana and cocaine from Argentina into Chile, where they are sold to consumers in Santiago de Chile, one of Latin America's largest drug-consumer cities. *Infobae* further highlighted the varying modus operandi of groups in the region and stated that basic techniques are often coupled with technology in the treacherous terrain that divides the two nations.

Apart from sharing an extensive border, trafficking operations from Argentina to Chile are further facilitated by Argentinian highway systems such as Routes 40 and 22. For example, Route 40 provides a north-south road that runs parallel to the Andes, while the 22 runs east-west from Buenos Aires directly into Neuquen Province. The importance of these highway systems lies in the fact that they are scarcely monitored and are practically void of police checkpoints, according to the *Voces Escritas* excerpt. These factors have made it possible for criminal groups to exploit these routes and move shipments from one country to the next with relative ease. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "La otra frontera caliente del narcotráfico" (The Other Border Region that is a Hotbed of Drug Trafficking Activity). *Infobae*. Accessed from <http://www.infobae.com/2015/12/01/1773676-la-otra-frontera-caliente-del-narcotrafico>

Peak trafficking times occur during the summer months when passes are free of snow although at least seven passes including Pino Hachado, Icalma, Mamuil Malal, Hua Hum, Carririne, Samore, and Pichachen are open year-round. Infobae further indicated that traffickers using the Argentina/Chile border to traffic drugs combine basic techniques with technology as part of their modus operandi. For example, human drug mules carrying shipments in backpacks are given GPS devices and night-vision goggles to navigate through dirt roads and mountain passes. Additionally, Chilean guides are often hired to meet drug mules and guide them to their final destination.

Source: "Narcotráfico: La frontera caliente entre Argentina y Chile" (Drug Trafficking: The Hot Border between Argentina and Chile). *Voces Escritas*. Accessed from <http://vocesescritas.com.ar/sitio/narcotrafico-la-frontera-caliente-entre-chile-y-argentina/>

"On routes 22 and 40 there are very few controls, but even if they exist, there is also police complicity that aids in the movement of shipments. In fact, local control checkpoints are quite easy to navigate."

Jet-Ski Murders Reported in Acapulco, Guerrero

OE Watch Commentary: Set on Mexico's Pacific Coast, Acapulco is reminiscent of white sand beaches, beautiful hotels, and tranquility. In recent years though, the city has been tormented by violence, as cartels such as the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco, La Barredora, and the Independent Cartel of Jalisco fight for control of trafficking and criminal operations. This is evidenced by the fact that Acapulco was ranked as the most violent city in Mexico in 2015, with 903 homicides as reported by *El País* in the first accompanying excerpt. In the first months of 2016 there have already been more than 70 reported murders, but what is truly concerning to authorities is that at least 4 cases demonstrated a new modus operandi, which involves gunmen on jet-skis conducting murders in broad-daylight on busy Acapulco beaches, according to *Insight Crime* (excerpt 2).

The most recent jet-ski murder was reported on 29 January 2016 and resulted in the death of a transient clothing vendor whose primary selling locations were tourist-frequented beaches. In this case, *El Imparcial* (excerpt 3) reported that a single assassin traveling on a jet-ski swam onto shore and shot the vendor with a 9mm pistol. Following the murder, he swam back out to his jet-ski and fled along Acapulco's jagged coastline. What is unclear at this point is whether this case was drug related or if the victim may have

Source: "Acapulco, el sol en un ataúd" (Acapulco, Sun in a Coffin). Accessed from http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/02/25/mexico/1456431995_693513.html

"In 2015 there were 903 reported homicides in Acapulco which averages out to 104 for each 100,000 inhabitants. This rate is higher than any other city in Mexico and marks Acapulco as one of the most violent cities in the world." "As holidaymakers sunned themselves on

Source: "Jet-ski Assassins' Impacting Acapulco's Tourism Industry." *Insight Crime*. Accessed from <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/jet-ski-assassins-acapulco-mexico-tourism-industry>

"Mexico's famous tourist destination Acapulco has seen a disturbing trend in 2016: assassins using jet-skis to conduct mid-day murders on the beach, suggesting the city's sky-high violence is increasingly affecting its tourism industry."

Source: "Matan a vendedor en Acapulco; asesino huye en moto acuática" (Vendor Killed in Acapulco; Murderer Flees on Jet-Ski). *El Imparcial*. Accessed from <http://www.elimparcial.com/EdicionEnLinea/Notas/Nacional/30012016/1050053-Matan-a-vendedor-en-Acapulco-asesino-huye-en-moto-acuatica.html>

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Continued: Jet-Ski Murders Reported in Acapulco, Guerrero

been targeted for failing to pay extortion fees commonly charged to vendors.

Regardless of the reason, it will be interesting to see how police in Acapulco handle this new modus operandi, as it has the potential to adversely affect the safety of tourists in addition to serving an example for criminal organizations in other coastal regions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“As holidaymakers sunned themselves on the golden sand of Acapulco beach, a man carrying a 9mm pistol swam up to the shore, shot a beachwear seller three times in the chest, and calmly made his way back to the jet ski and disappeared around the rocky headland to the west.

The new, ‘James Bond-style’ assassination is the new face of crime on Mexico’s Pacific Coast, where cartel killers are murdering gang rivals in tourist areas - and escape from the beach on high powered jet skis to get away from police.”

Mexican Cartels Resort to Importing Weapon Parts to Avoid Detection

OE Watch Commentary: Mexican cartels are notorious for illegally importing large quantities of high-power weapons such as AR-15s, AK-47s, and M-4s, as this type of firepower is needed to exert territorial control of key drug terrain. Historically, the best armed cartels are also the most feared by rivals and authorities alike, so it pays to invest in weapons. The problem with this scenario for cartels is that Mexican law prohibits common citizens from owning/importing the aforementioned weapon types, as they are deemed exclusively for police and military use. Second, even if Mexico did not restrict the use of these weapons, purchasing them abroad also poses legal constraints in terms of the quantity that can be acquired by a single individual. Still, there is a work-around to the acquisition aspect, as certain countries (not Mexico) sell individual weapon parts and/or kits without requiring retailers to report the purchase. This is fueling a new trend of do-it-yourself assembly in Mexico.

Take, for example, the AR-15, a staple weapon among cartels because of its light weight and relative ease of use. It can be purchased in kits with everything except the lower receiver, which is an added benefit, as this piece usually contains the serial number of the weapon. Without the serial number weapons are especially difficult to trace, as reported by the first *Excelsior* article.

There is a known work-around for the missing lower receiver: once all other weapon parts are in the country, cartels are able to use a “blank,” which is basically an aluminum piece with 80% of the work already finished, to convert it into a complete weapon. Tools needed in this scenario include items such as a drill, ruler, vice, drill press, and calipers. More complex shops require computer numerical control mills. In October 2014 Mexican authorities dismantled a shop in Guadalajara, Jalisco, that contained all of the latter equipment. Such a situation has them wondering just how far cartels will go to arm themselves.

In closing, what can be surmised about the do-it-yourself trend is that it will continue, as the process is fast and relatively easy, as pointed out in the second *Excelsior* article. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “Los cárteles traen armas por partes (Cartels Import Individual Weapon Parts).” *Excelsior*. Accessed from <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2016/01/27/1071333>

“The importation of weapon parts is a discreet process that is especially difficult to detect. Firearm manufacturers or importers are not required to stamp serial numbers on gun parts. Retailers do not have to report when they buy and sell parts kits with everything needed to complete a gun except a receiver. Receivers, which house the mechanical components of a firearm, like trigger groups and magazine feeds, can be purchased separately. To avoid detection, gunrunners will often use unfinished, or “80-percent” receivers—receivers that are mostly complete but require some further machining to be functional.”

Source: “El nuevo método de los cárteles: comprar armas en partes” (New Cartel Weapon Trafficking Tactic Consists of Buying in “Parts”). *Excelsior*. Accessed from <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/2012/07/13/nacional/847634>

“The assembly process of weapons that come in kits is not difficult. Experienced assemblers can put together an entire weapon in an hour or less and in the case of doubt, manuals and internet videos are available. In the case of the Guadalajara shops, assemblers went one step further and used a CNC mill that helped them produce untraceable lowers. Other parts such as weapon butts, plastic casings, and barrels abroad in completely legal purchases.”



AR-15 parts.

Source: http://www.gunsandammo.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/how-to-clean-an-ar-15/001_disassembling-your-rifle.jpg

Radioactive Material Stolen in Mexico. Again.

OE Watch Commentary: In February 2016 unsuspecting thieves stole a truck in Queretaro, Mexico, containing an industrial radiography camera with a source of iridium-192. Mexico's Interior Department quickly issued an alert across multiple states (first excerpted article). The loss of material that could be used to make a radiological dirty bomb represented an obvious security concern for Mexico.

This latest incident is just the most recent one involving radioactive materials in Mexico over the past few years (second excerpted article). Mexican police managed to identify and arrest two individuals connected with the theft, confirming that the truck was the target and not the material itself (third excerpted article). Although, as in past incidents, the material has been recovered (fourth excerpted article), it is still embarrassing to Mexico that, after years of reported incidents, such thefts still happen, and Mexico still does not seem to have, or be any closer to having, a real plan in place to prevent such incidents from happening in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>

Source: Unattributed author(s), “Segob alerta por robo de material radiactivo en Querétaro” [SEGOB alert for theft of radioactive material in Queretaro], *Milenio* redaction from NOTIMEX, 29 February 2016, http://www.milenio.com/estados/Segob_material_radioactivo_Queretaro-robo_radioactivo_Queretaro-Queretaro_0_691731034.html.

The Interior Department, through the National Coordinator for Civil Protection, issued an alert for the theft of a radioactive source that represents danger to human health if removed from its container ... the National Commission for Nuclear Security and Safeguards reported that ... they suspected the theft of a pickup truck. This vehicle ... was transporting a radioactive source of Iridium 192 ... used for industrial radiography

Source: Arturo Cerda Fuente, “En tres años se registran seis robos de material radiactivo en México” [In three years, six thefts of radioactive material have been reported in Mexico], *Noticieros Televisa*, 02 March 2016, <http://noticieros.televisa.com/content/televisa/noticieros/mexico/1603/tres-anos-se-registran-seis-robos-material-radiactivo-mexico/>.

In the last three years, six thefts of radioactive material have been reported in Mexico. Three of these occurred in Mexico State. The most recent was reported in San Juan del Río, Querétaro last weekend ... On 13 April 2015, a radioactive capsule was taken from a vehicle in the municipality of Cárdenas, Tabasco ... in February 2015, three vehicles transporting radioactive material were stolen in Salamanca, Guanajuato ... in July 2014, a truck transporting a source of Iridium 192 was stolen in the municipality of Atizapán de Zaragoza, Mexico State ... in June 2014, a radioactive source stored in a warehouse in the municipality of Tultitlán Mexico State, was stolen ... in December 2013, medical equipment with a source of Cobalt 60 was stolen in Mexico State



Mexico National Commission for Nuclear Security and Safeguards Logo
Source: <http://www.portaltransparencia.gob.mx/pot/imagenServlet?archivo=18100>

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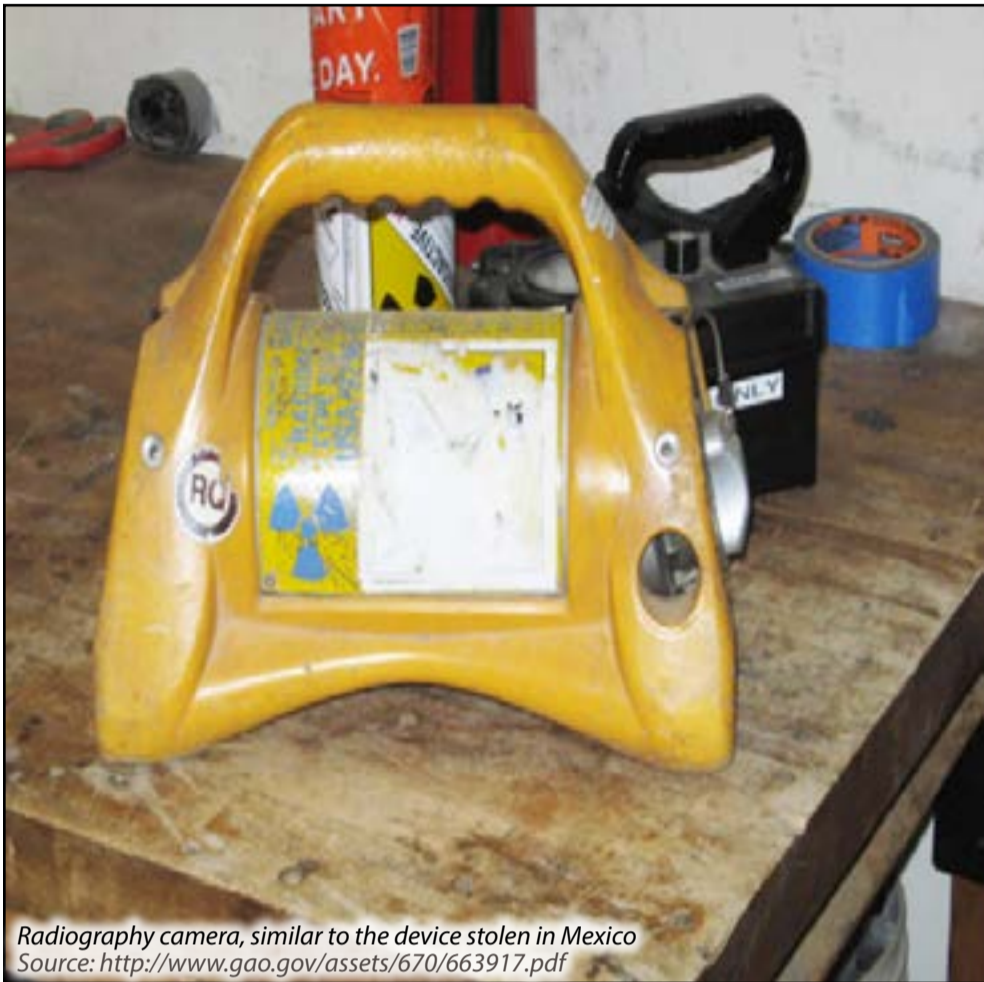
Continue: Radioactive Material Stolen in Mexico. Again.

The Queretaro State Prosecutor ... confirmed that two men were arrested over the weekend for the theft of a truck with iridium 192 ... “These two persons, who have a history of vehicle theft, admitted that they sold the truck to a third individual who sold it to a fourth” The Queretaro prosecutor said that the alleged thieves did not know what material was in the truck, so they do not know where it could be

Source: Rosa Emilia Porras Lara and Estrella Álvarez, “Detienen a dos por robo de camioneta con iridio 192” [Two arrested for theft of truck with Iridium 192], *Milenio*, 07 March 2016, http://www.milenio.com/estados/detienen_a_dos_por_robo_de_iridio_en_Queretaro-desconocen_donde_esta_el_iridio_0_696530520.html.

The State Prosecutor confirmed finding the truck that was transporting Iridium 192 as well as the material that was stolen in San Juan del Río on 27 February; two persons have been arrested for this crime ...

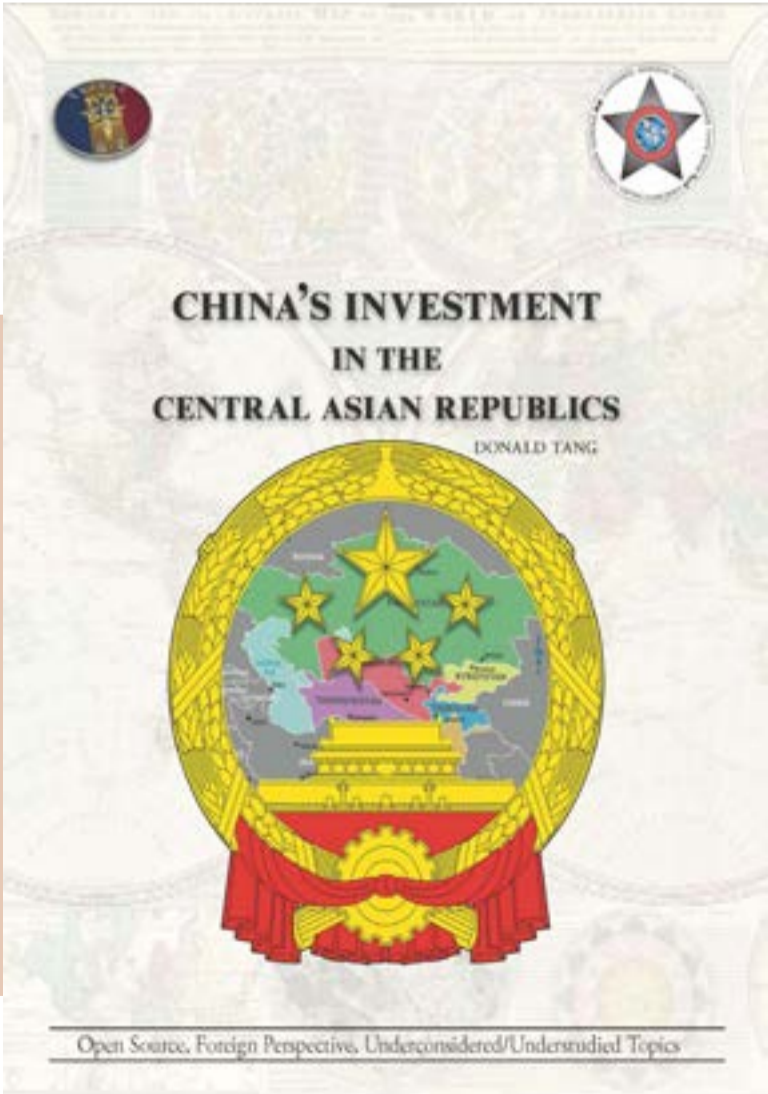
Source: Martha Romero, “Ratifican hallazgo de camioneta e Iridio-192” [Authorities confirm finding truck and Iridium 192], *El Universal Querétaro*, 09 March 2016, <http://www.eluniversalqueretaro.mx/metropoli/09-03-2016/ratifican-hallazgo-de-camioneta-e-iridio-192>.



Radiography camera, similar to the device stolen in Mexico
Source: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/663917.pdf>

Since the early 1980s China has embarked on an impressive economic reform program. Within some thirty years it has transformed from a closed authoritarian backward country to an economic powerhouse, but without the attendant political reforms. In order to maintain its tremendous economic growth, China has found it necessary to look beyond its borders, particularly into Central Asia. This paper examines Chinese investment in the five Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) over the past 25 years.

Source: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/663917.pdf>



Open Source, Foreign Perspective, Underconsidered/Understudied Topics

Mexican Navy Creates Police Force for National Capital

OE Watch Commentary: The Mexican Navy Department (SEMAR) has just announced the creation of a Naval Police battalion that will be located in Mexico City, with a stated mission supporting civil authorities in case of riots or actions that could affect access to naval facilities (first excerpted article). This is a function that historically has been filled by Mexico’s Federal Protection Service, with an added authority to operate outside of naval facilities (second excerpted article). The Naval Police have been providing law enforcement services to civilians for years in Mexico’s gulf states – especially Veracruz, where they actually replaced state and local police forces deemed so corrupt that they had to be dissolved.

SEMAR’s motives for creating the battalion are difficult to glean from the press coverage, which has been bland, only restating the Navy’s press release without commentary or criticism. This could indicate that this is nothing more than a routine, planned administrative change. However, the types of incidents described – riots, roadblocks, and attacks – represent tactics that drug cartels have employed in other parts of the country in recent months. Since SEMAR has had such a heavy footprint in high-profile cartel busts, it is worth monitoring to see if the creation of the Naval Police battalion is actually a preparatory measure, anticipating a potential future disturbance or attack that the civil security forces are unable to mitigate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Mexican Naval Infantry
 Source: Wikimedia Commons contributor BSMFBSMF, “Mexican Navy in Action, 11 September 2010, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mexican_navy_in_accion.jpg

Source: José Antonio Román, “Crea Semar Batallón de Policía Naval” [SEMAR Creates Battalion of Naval Police], *La Jornada*, 08 March 2016, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/ultimas/2016/03/08/crea-semar-batallon-de-policia-naval-5626.html>.

The Navy Department (SEMAR) reported ... the creation of a battalion of Naval Police, based in Mexico City ... the battalion will depend militarily, operationally, and administratively on the General Headquarters of the Navy Department High Command and among its tasks will be to support civil authorities in riots and acts intended to hinder, block, or attack naval facilities

Source: Octavio García, “Crea SEMAR el batallón de Policía Naval en la CDMX” [SEMAR Creates Naval Police Battalion in Mexico City], *Noticias MVS*, 08 March 2016, <http://www.noticiasmvs.com/#!/noticias/crea-semar-el-batallon-de-policia-naval-en-la-cdmx-652>.

... This new battalion is similar to the Federal Protection Service, under the National Security Commission ... but unlike the latter, the Naval Police Battalion will provide security and protection, inside and outside the department’s headquarters facility ...



Sinaloa Cartel boss Joaquin Guzman Loera AKA El Chapo, recaptured by SEMAR in January 2016
 Source: https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/20150127_sinaloa.pdf

Mexican Cartels Profit from Petroleum Theft

OE Watch Commentary: Mexico is an oil-exporting country and Mexican cartels are increasingly involved in the business. Mexican security forces have had numerous successes combatting criminal groups in recent years, directing significant effort to arrest cartel leaders. The result has been a disintegration of cartels into breakaway gangs, which have diversified their criminal endeavors to keep earning profits.

Some gangs have turned to stealing hydrocarbons from numerous petroleum facilities across Mexico (first excerpted article). The Mexican government is fully aware of the problem, and has been taking steps to crack down on hydrocarbon theft, such as the creation of fuel-theft task forces (second excerpted article) and even new legislation (third excerpted articles). Despite these efforts, and although not as profitable as narcotics smuggling, hydrocarbon thefts yield significant profits for organized crime – and significant losses for the Mexican state-owned oil company, Mexican Petroleum (PEMEX) (third excerpted article).

From an outsider's perspective, it is easy to focus on drug trafficking as the problem in Mexico, but this evolution shows that in Mexico the fight is both complex and dynamic. As much as it has been in any other conflict, the dialectic nature of war is reflected in Mexico's ongoing struggle against drugs and organized crime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Source: Unattributed author(s), "Crean grupo especial contra robo de hidrocarburos" [Special group created against hydrocarbon thefts] *Tiempo*, 25 February 2016 http://www.tiempo.com.mx/noticia/19353-crean_grupo_especial_contra_ro/1.

The criminal group "Los Zetas" could be involved in fuel thefts in the state, according to reports that the federal government has provided to Pueblo authorities ...

Source: Cristóbal Lobato, "Involucrados 'Los Zetas' en robo de hidrocarburos en Puebla" [Los Zetas involved in hydrocarbon theft in Puebla] *Periodico Digital*, 28 February 2016, <http://www.periodicodigital.mx/involucrados-los-zetas-en-robo-de-hidrocarburos-en-puebla/>.

The Federal Attorney General's Office (PGR) announced the creation of the Special Operations Group to Investigate and Prosecute Hydrocarbon Crimes, which will begin operations in Jalisco and will later deploy to states where there are thefts ... The Special Coordination Group will be comprised of personnel from the Navy Department (SEMAR), the Defense Department (SEDENA), the Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN), and Federal Police ...

Source: Unattributed author(s), "Gana crimen organizado 21 mil mdp anuales por 'ordeña': Pemex" [Organized crime earns \$(MXN) 21 billion by 'milking'], *Proceso*, 10 March 2016, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/433113/gana-crimen-organizado-21-mil-mdp-anuales-ordenapemex>.

Mexican Petroleum (PEMEX) calculates that 23,500 barrels of fuel are stolen from their pipelines daily, representing profits of \$(MXN) 21 billion [\$(USD) 1.1 billion] annually for organized crime ... the [International Congress for Prevention of Emergent Crimes] classified hydrocarbon theft as a crime with substantial impact to society that generates large profits for organized crime ... with the implementation of the new system of criminal justice and with the Law to Sanction the Crime of Extraction and Trafficking of Hydrocarbons coming into effect this year, the number of convictions would increase ...



Mexican Gas Station, Operated by PEMEX
Source: Wikimedia Commons contributor Magister Mathematicae, "Mexican Gas Station, Operated by PEMEX," Wikimedia Commons, 5 December 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pemex_gas_station.jpg

Indian Military Reviewing First Space Law

OE Watch Commentary: As India grows as a space-faring nation, it is addressing a broad range of issues, which now include drafting India's first space law. One important objective of the new law will be to enable privatized space ventures from India (first excerpted article), which is considered to be an important step in increasing India's space footprint. In addition to providing clarity, the law also seems to be India's way of getting ahead of future international laws and agreements by providing India with a solid legal foundation when negotiating with international stakeholders (second excerpted article).

The draft law is currently being reviewed by India's military, which is important because it highlights India's perception of the increasing importance of space in warfare. Indian press is even discussing the possibility of two separate Indian space agencies: one civilian, one military (third excerpted article).

India is rapidly becoming one of the major space actors and the Indian perspective of the future of space is one where India is not just a participant, but a leader. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

The 05 November 2013 launch of India's Mars Orbiter Mission aboard Indian Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-XL.
Source: <http://ssed.gsfc.nasa.gov/IPM/PDF/1089.pdf>



“The proposed law aims at allowing the entry of private players in many space ventures, including owning satellites and operating launch vehicles ”

The draft of first Indian space law that seeks to encourage private participation in the space business is being scrutinised by the armed forces because of which Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) may require more time to make it public ... The proposed law aims at allowing the entry of private players in many space ventures, including owning satellites and operating launch vehicles like Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), as the space agency is toying with the idea of handing over the PSLV services to a consortium of companies. Space activities in India are completely under the government with private sector serving as a supplier. In recent years, multiple proposals from private firms to launch satellite and carry out downstream applications are stuck in the Isro for lack of policy and absence of a regulatory law

Source: Madhumathi D.S., “Space Act Will Be in Place Soon, says ISRO Chairman [Interview with A.S. Kiran Kumar],” *The Hindu*, 03 March 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/space-act-will-be-in-place-soon-says-isro-chairman/article8293340.ece>.

Today, space-related activities are done [as per] business rules ... With a law, all activities will be done under the Space Act. As we enable more and more industries in space activities, we also want clarity on what they can do and what the limitations are ... So a law is necessary for the government to spell out how it will deal with issues, untoward incidents. It will help the government in how it will approach commercial use of space, international collaborations and international treaties; and state regulatory mechanisms ...

... there is a growing clamour for a comprehensive, legally binding treaty to commit nations to keep outer space a zone of peace ... it is imperative for India to register its entry date so that the cut off date, whenever it comes as part of this proposed treaty, does not work to India's disadvantage in so far as preparing for the country for space war is concerned. Indeed, with outer space becoming the fourth dimension of warfare, India cannot remain a mute spectator ... ISRO, being a purely civilian set up with a mandate to promote the peaceful uses of outer space, the Indian defence set up will look at the prospect of having an exclusive agency to exploit the military potentials of outer space. In all probability, the Indian military establishment would press for addressing the issue of space security arising out of the efforts to deploy anti satellite and killer satellite devices ...

Source: Kalyan Ray, “First Indian Space Law Being Vetted by Military,” *Deccan Herald*, 29 February 2016, <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/531672/first-indian-space-law-being.html>.



ISRO logo
Source: http://nisar.jpl.nasa.gov/images/nisar/isro_logo.jpg

Source: Radhakrishna Rao, “The Strategic Importance of Space Law for India,” *Indian Defence Review*, 06 March 2016, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/the-strategic-importance-of-space-law-for-india/>.

Indian University Creating Chatterbot Spies for Counterterrorism Mission

OE Watch Commentary: Scientists at the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata have been researching the application of artificial intelligence for indications and warnings of terrorism or other criminal activity. Chatterbots already exist, with uses ranging from customer service to spamming. What the Indian scientists hope to do is use the technology to sift through vast amounts dialog on social media to identify potential targets of interest to counterterrorist forces, who can then use human agents to determine whether identified leads are actual threats.

The challenge will be crafting chatterbots that can pass enough as human so as not to give away the operation. This may or may not be achievable, at least in the short run, but what the project really shows is that Indians perceive social media as the battle space of the future for counterterrorism, and that technological approaches could offer solutions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



New Academic Building at Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isical02.jpg>

Source: Joydeep Thakur, “Virtual Agents in Cyberspace To Help Security Agencies Tackle Terrorism,” *Hindustan Times*, 26 February 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com>; redaction available at <http://www.htsyndication.com/htsportal/article/Virtual-agents-in-cyberspace-to-help-security-agencies-tackle-terrorism/11670294>



User interacting with chatterbot

Source: Wikimedia Commons user Mariscal2014, “Interaccion entre Usuario y un Chatbot,” 17 May 2015, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chatbot.jpg>

... Statisticians and computer scientists from the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata are planning to create ‘virtual agents’ who will be planted in social networking sites popular in India ... These agents are known as ‘intelligent chatbots’ that are designed to simulate an intelligent conversation with one or more human users. Scientists would then analyse these ... before they could be passed on to security agencies and other government departments. Once the agencies obtain these data they could be used as an early warning system against possible security threats ... The project has been titled ‘Avatar’ and would take off very soon according to scientists ... “We are planning to create separate Avatars who will be fluent in different languages such as Bengali, Hindi, English, and Urdu among others. In future we would also like to introduce Mandarin Chinese to tap information from other Asian countries,” said Soumya Banerjee, an associate professor of computer science and engineering and a member of the Avatar team. Even though scientists are presently concentrating on networking sites that are popular in India there are plans to place such agents in sites which are popular in other countries too.



Main Building of Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isical01.jpg>

India Building Satellite Ground Station in Vietnam

OE Watch Commentary: India’s plans to build a satellite ground station in Ho Chi Minh City are causing concern for China. Although India has stations in other countries, this case is different because, in exchange for territorial access, India will share Earth-imaging data with Vietnam.

While such information is ostensibly for civilian humanitarian purposes, it has potential military applications as well (first excerpted article). Even if India really does consider military applications of the satellite station, the civilian mission is not merely a cover – the 2004 tsunami, which also affected India’s mainland, made it abundantly clear that there are real regional humanitarian assistance/disaster recovery requirements in the region.

However, potential military applications are not China’s only concern. India is also sharing its space expertise with partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (second excerpted article). Consequently, this station is part of a general trend in which India is asserting itself as a leader in space and in the region of Southeast Asia, roles in which China envisages itself as having primacy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Damage to Banda Aceh caused by 26 December 2004 Tsunami
Source: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/tsunami/images/bandaaceh.jpg>



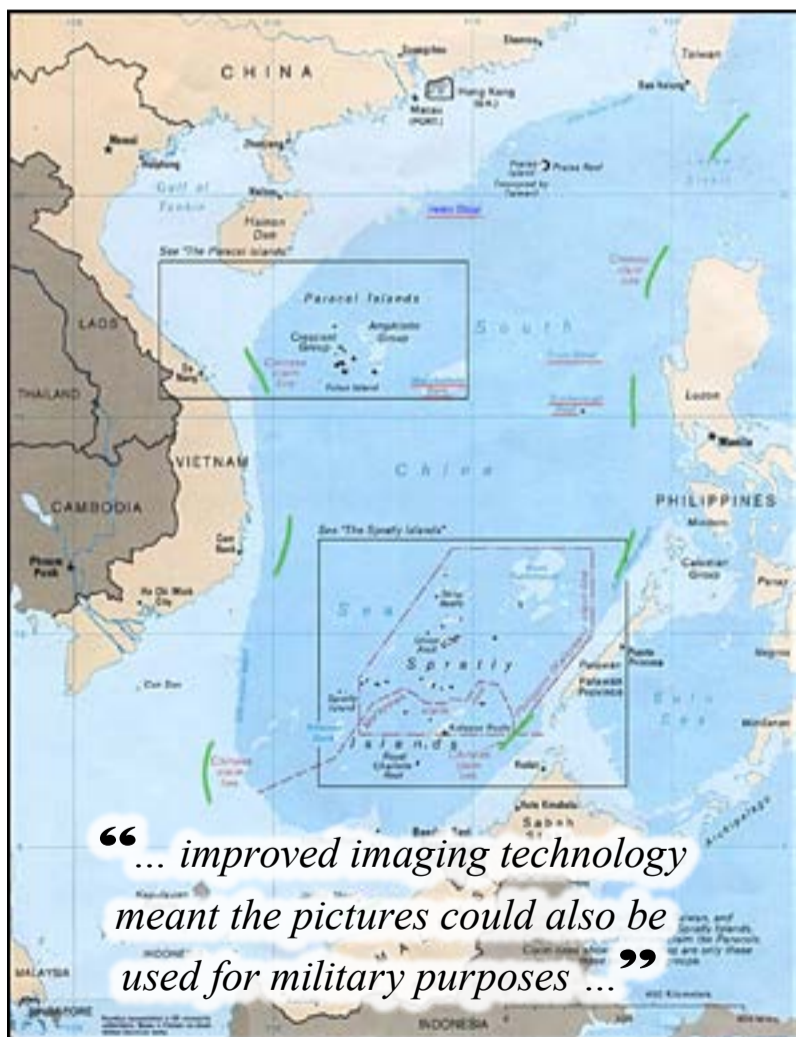
Source: Unattributed author(s), “India to Build Satellite Tracking Station in Vietnam that Offers Eye on China,” *Tuoi Tre News*, 25 January 2016, <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/32935/india-to-build-satellite-tracking-station-in-vietnam-that-offers-eye-on-china>.

India will set up a satellite tracking and imaging centre in southern Vietnam that will give Hanoi access to pictures from Indian earth observation satellites that cover the region, including China and the East Vietnam Sea ... While billed as a civilian facility ... security experts said improved imaging technology meant the pictures could also be used for military purposes ...

India ... has ground stations in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, Brunei, Biak in eastern Indonesia and Mauritius that track its satellites in the initial stages of flight ... But unlike the other overseas stations, the facility will also be equipped to receive images from India’s earth observation satellites that Vietnam can use in return for granting India the tracking site ... Chinese coastal naval bases, the operations of Beijing’s coastguard and navy and the new man-made islands it built in the Spratly archipelago of the East Vietnam Sea would be targets of Vietnamese interest ...

Source: Radhakrishna Rao, “India’s Satellite Monitoring Facility in Vietnam Upsets China,” *Indian Defence Review*, 30 January 2016, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indias-satellite-monitoring-facility-in-vietnam-upsets-china/>.

China ... has every reason to get perturbed over the Indian sponsored plan to set up a satellite monitoring station along with a satellite data reception centre in Ho Chi Minh city of Vietnam. For this high tech facility ... could also give its arch enemy, Vietnam, head start in tracking “events and developments” of strategic importance in the areas of interest including China and South China Sea on a sustained basis ... Incidentally, earth observation satellites meant for civilian uses can also be harnessed for surveillance and reconnaissance by the defence forces ... As part of its international cooperation programme, ISRO has offered to share its [sic] experience in utilizing the space technology for socio economic development with ASEAN countries which are also prone to natural disasters ... For obvious reasons, Vietnam has strengthened its ties with India with a particular focus on trade and defence ...



Spratly Islands

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:9_dotted_line.png

India's Navigation Satellite Constellation near Completion

OE Watch Commentary: With the successful deployment of its sixth navigation satellite, India is one step closer to and one step away from complete deployment of its regional navigation satellite constellation (IRNSS). Although only four satellites are necessary for minimal functionality, the full constellation will comprise seven satellites, which will provide India an alternative to the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) (first excerpted article). India expects to make its signals available for use once the seventh satellite is in orbit, which is currently expected to happen by or in April (second excerpted article).

Indian sources frequently describe the IRNSS as something comparable to the GPS, but they are actually very different systems. GPS provides global coverage with dozens of satellites in mid-Earth orbit, while IRNSS is really only a regional system using geostationary satellites located above the Indian subcontinent. A regional system is enough for India, though. It provides coverage for almost all of India's military requirements and many of India's trade requirements. In addition, it is another success for India's rapidly-growing space program.

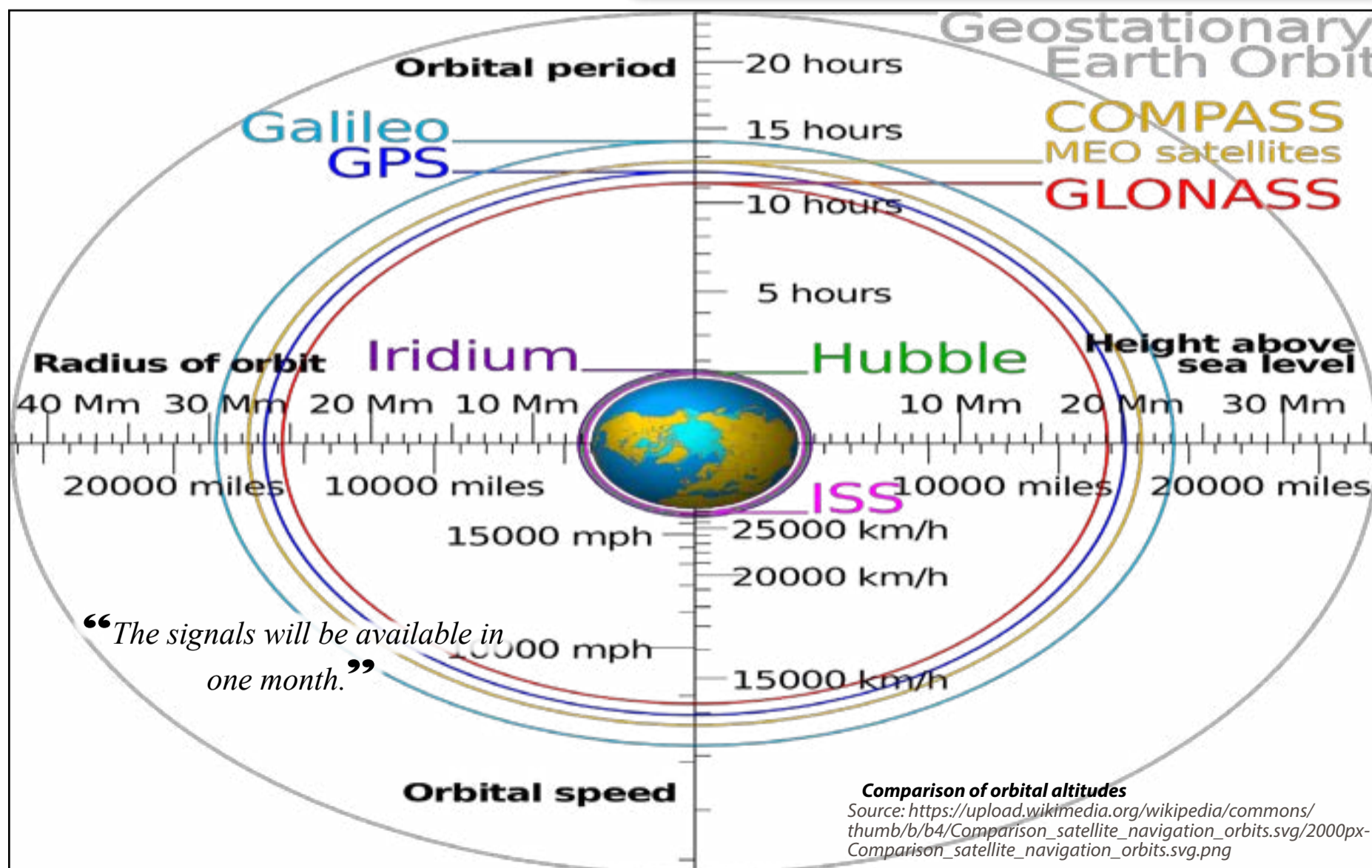
What is really interesting about the IRNSS is not that India now has its own satellite navigation system, but that India perceives it necessary, even urgent, to have its own organic capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Source: Unattributed author(s), "54-Hour Countdown for Launch of ISRO's IRNSS-1F Begins," *The Economic Times*, 08 March 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/science/54-hour-countdown-for-launch-of-isros-irns-1f-begins/articleshow/51311101.cms>.

The 54-hour countdown for the March 10 launch of PSLV C32 carrying the sixth navigational satellite IRNSS-1F from the spaceport of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh began ... IRNSS-1F will be launched from the second launchpad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in the spaceport of Sriharikota ... IRNSS-1F is the sixth navigation satellite in the IRNSS space system, comprising seven satellites, which would be on par with US-based GPS once the full complement of spacecraft is launched. While four satellites would be sufficient to start operations of the IRNSS system, the remaining three would make it more "accurate and efficient" ... The last in the series is expected to be launched by month end.

Source: T.K. Rohit, "India's Sixth Navigation Satellite, IRNSS-1F, Placed in Orbit," *The Hindu*, 11 March 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/pslvc32-lifts-off-with-navigation-satellite-irns1f/article8336628.ece>.

... The IRNSS-1F carrying two payloads — the navigation payload and ranging payload — was put into orbit 20 minutes after take-off from the second launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. " ... We have only one more satellite in this constellation to complete our sequence of seven satellites for the regional navigation system which we expect to do sometime next month. The signals will be available in one month," [A.S. Kiran Kumar, Chairman, ISRO] said ...



Cambodia Looks to China to Increase Military Capability: Is There a Hidden Agenda?

OE Watch Commentary: On 10 July 2015 an article entitled “Why is a Big Cambodia Military Delegation in China?” ran in *The Diplomat*. The author voiced skepticism over claims that a high-powered delegation, consisting of 23 high-ranking military and security officials from Cambodia, visiting Chinese officials was “routine” and simply for “friendship-boosting.”

The Cambodian delegation consisted of Defense Minister Tea Bahn, commanders from all three branches (Army, Navy, and Air Force) of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, and the National Military Police commander. The article goes on to explain that the trip came just days after violent border clashes between Cambodia and Vietnam over disputed territory. Cambodian opposition reportedly accused the ruling Cambodian People’s Party of using maps drawn by Vietnam to assess the country’s borders with Hanoi.

There was very little reported about the actual agenda of the visit to China. However, the following excerpted article from the *Phnom Pehn Post* could offer a clue about a possible agenda and discussions that took place. The article is about an army artillery recruitment drive in which more than 700 applicants have signed up to try to join the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Those who are selected will be trained to operate new Chinese-built artillery. Interestingly, this “induction” is said to be the first specifically for artillery soldiers, and once selectees complete long-term training “they will be shared to units and regions.”

The article explains that the previous weapons used by the Cambodian soldiers were Soviet-made and are now old. “The new weapons we have are made in China.”

There is nothing in the article that actually ties the delegation’s visit to the receipt and training of upgraded weapons from China. Perhaps there is a link though. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“...the induction was the first specifically for artillery soldiers. This requires long-term training . . . When they finish . . . they will be shared to units and regions.”

Source: Vong Sokheng and Shaun Turton, “Army on Artillery Recruiting Drive,” *Phnom Pehn Post*, 15 March 2016, <<http://m.phnompenhpost.com/national/army-artillery-recruiting-drive>>.

At least 700 applicants have signed up to join the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), with the successful recruits to be trained to operate new Chinese-built artillery, a senior military source said yesterday.

According to the document, signed in January, 500 recruits, between 18 and 25 years old and holding at least a high school diploma, were to be trained at the National Defence University and the Army’s artillery headquarters in Kampong Speu’s Samrong Tong district.

Defence Ministry spokesman Chhum Socheat said the induction was the first specifically for artillery soldiers. “This requires long-term training . . . When they finish . . . they will be shared to units and regions,” he said yesterday.

Cambodian Marines aboard the USS Tortuga during military training
 Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ae/US_Navy_100607-N-6770T-001_Royal_Cambodian_Marines_embark_aborad_the_amphibious_dock_landing_ship_USS_Tortuga_%28LSD_46%29.jpg



ISIS Integration with Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines?

Source: “Muddy Relations for ISIS in Philippines – Joseph Franco,” *The Malaysian Insider*, 19 February 2016. <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/sideviews/article/muddy-relations-for-isis-in-philippines-joseph-franco>

OE Watch Commentary: The declaration of the first ISIS province in Southeast Asia appears possible after Filipino and Malaysian militants from previously separate jihadist groups pledged a joint allegiance to ISIS in an online video released in January 2016. However, according to excerpts in the accompanying article from *The Malaysian Insider*, local analysis refutes this possibility. Although recognition from ISIS would certainly increase the attractiveness of Mindanao to jihadists based in Southeast Asia, there is little solid evidence of a formal relationship between Mindanao and ISIS.

As described in the excerpts, the reported video depicts more than two dozen gunmen gathered in front of a black flag associated with ISIS. Led by Isnilon Hapilon, the leader of the Basilan province faction of Abu Sayyaf in the Southern Philippines, the individuals in the video reiterated their prior pledges to ISIS “caliph” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The video claims that Hapilon is now the emir (leader) of the joined militant group of Abu Sayyaf and the Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines.

The accompanying article suggests that Hapilon’s apparent ascent as the head of ISIS-inspired militants in Mindanao is unprecedented, as it suggests his growing influence beyond Basilan, his traditional support base. Raising further alarms was the presence of three wanted Malaysian militants in the video.

According to the analysis in the article, there is little indication that this was orchestrated by the ISIS leadership. These foreign militants in the video have been on the run from Malaysia’s Special Branch and joined Abu Sayyaf in 2014. Their move to Mindanao appears to be more of a desperate move to avoid capture rather than a planned ISIS deployment. It also appears Hapilon took one of the three wanted Malaysian militants under Abu Sayyaf protection after the Malaysian promised access to ISIS funds.

The accompanying article also describes local traditions as a barrier to ISIS integration. For Mindanao to be an actual “satellite” province of ISIS, foreign militants would have to overcome the challenge of integrating with local terrorist groups there. The resilience of the Abu Sayyaf at the tactical-level remains rooted in indigenous cultural practice rather than actual connections to ISIS. The fighting tactics of Filipino militant groups are embedded within kinship networks and shared ethnic backgrounds. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

The declaration of the first Isis wilayat (province) in Southeast Asia appeared possible after Filipino and Malaysian militants from previously separate jihadist groups pledged allegiance to Isis in an online video released in January 2016.

Recognition from Isis would certainly increase the attractiveness of Mindanao to jihadists based in Southeast Asia. But there is little solid evidence of a formal relationship between Mindanao and Isis.

... video depicting more than two dozen gunmen gathered in front of a black flag associated with Isis.

Led by Isnilon Hapilon, leader of the Basilan-based faction of the Abu Sayyaf group (ASG), the individuals in the video reiterated their prior pledges to Isis “caliph” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

The video claimed that Hapilon was now the emir or leader of the converged militant groups, which included the ASG and the Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP).

Hapilon’s apparent ascent as the head of Isis-inspired militants in Mindanao is unprecedented as it suggests his growing influence beyond Basilan, his traditional support base.

Raising further alarms was the presence of three wanted Malaysian militants in the video

For Mindanao to be an actual ‘satellite’ province of Isis, foreign militants would have to overcome the challenge of integrating with local terrorist groups in Mindanao.

.. there is little indication that the pledges were orchestrated “top-down” by the Isis leadership. The foreign militants seen taking the pledge have been on the run from Malaysia’s Special Branch and joined the ASG in 2014.

Their move to Mindanao appears to be more of a desperate move to avoid capture, rather than a planned Isis deployment. It appears Hapilon took Anas under the ASG’s protection after the Malaysian promised access to Isis funds.

For Mindanao to be an actual ‘satellite’ province of Isis, foreign militants would have to overcome the challenge of integrating with local terrorist groups in Mindanao.

The resilience of the ASG at the tactical-level remains rooted in indigenous cultural practice rather than actual connections to Isis. The fighting tactics of Filipino militant groups are embedded within kinship networks and shared ethnic backgrounds.



Islamic State fighters in Anbar province, Iraq.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant#/media/File:Islamic_State_%28IS%29_insurgents,_Anbar_Province,_Iraq.jpg

Indonesian President Joko Widodo Proposes a Dramatic Budget Increase for the Military

OE Watch Commentary: Indonesian President Joko Widodo promises to allocate more funds to the Indonesian military if the economy improves this year. According to excerpts from *The Jakarta Post*, he said he would put as much as 1.5 percent of the GDP (approximately \$18.9 billion) into the defense budget if economic growth rises above 6 percent. He said that the federal government sets the current budget at about 1.1 percent of the country's GDP. The average military budget between 2005 and 2014 was 0.82 percent of the country's GDP, while the average between 2000 and 2004 was 0.78 percent. Widodo also ordered any future plans to involve the use of Indonesian military products to reduce imports and develop the domestic defense industry. Despite his promises, a local analyst is wary of the plan's GDP estimates.

According to the excerpts, Indonesian Military Chief General Gatot Nurmantyo presented suggestions to Widodo as to how to allocate the additional money, including development of Air Force bases outside Java and Navy posts on border islands, as well as improvements to equipment and capacity in eastern Indonesia. Currently, military development has been focused on Java, where a number of Air force Bases are located, such as those in Madiun, Yogyakarta and Malang.

A local analyst views the president's plan with uncertainty. Iis Gindarsah, a defense expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, criticized the plan, saying, "tripling the defense budget is ambitious, but realistic only if Indonesia's economic growth rate is at least 7 percent." According to Indonesia's economic growth data, since 2011 the country has not reached an economic growth rate of over 7 percent. In 2011 its economic growth rate was 6.2 percent of GDP; in 2012 - 6 percent; in 2013 - 5.6 percent; and in 2014 - 5 percent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: "Jokowi Pledges Ambitious Arms Spending" *The Jakarta Post*, 24 February 2016. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/02/24/jokowi-pledges-ambitious-arms-spending.html>

In a move to enhance support for the Indonesian Military (TNI), President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo promised on Tuesday that he would allocate more funds to it if the economy got better this year.

Arguing that primary weaponry systems (Alutsista) were essential for building a professional TNI, Jokowi said he would put as much as 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) into the defense budget, about Rp 250 trillion, if economic growth reaches above 6 percent.

The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) politician said that the TNI budget is currently set at about 1.1 percent of the country's GDP. In comparison, the average military budget between 2005 and 2014 was 0.82 percent of the country's GDP, while the average between 2000 and 2004 was 0.78 percent.

Aiming to reduce imports by developing the domestic defense industry, Jokowi also ordered any future plans to involve the use of Indonesian military products.

... TNI chief Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo presented an example of development programs that should be made, including to develop air force bases outside Java and navy posts on border islands, as well as to improve equipment and capacity in eastern Indonesia.

All this time, military development has been focused on Java where a number of air force bases are located, like those, for example, in Madiun, Yogyakarta and Malang.

Iis Gindarsah, a defense expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, criticized the ambitious plan, saying that "tripling the defense budget is ambitious, but realistic only if Indonesia's economic growth rate is at least 7 percent".

Source: "GDP growth (annual %)" World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>



President Widodo in 2013 while he was the Governor of the Provincial Government of Jakarta. [Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joko_Widodo#/media/File:Jokowi_blusukan.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joko_Widodo#/media/File:Jokowi_blusukan.jpg)

Singapore as Intermediary for ASEAN and China over the South China Sea?

Source: “Vietnam, Singapore Commit to Expanding Defence Ties,” *VietNamNet*, 2 March 2016. <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/151938/vietnam--singapore-commit-to-expanding-defence-ties.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Defense ministers from Vietnam and Singapore held bilateral talks over growing concerns in the South China Sea, with Vietnam’s Deputy Defense Minister Nguyen Chi Vinh expressing support for Singapore’s role as mediator between China and ASEAN. According to excerpts in the accompanying article in *VietNamNet*, after meeting with Permanent Secretary of the Singaporean Defense Ministry Chang Yeng, Nguyen said Vietnam believes that Singapore, in its capacity as the coordinator of the ASEAN-Chinese relations, will actively contribute to promoting ties between ASEAN and China and join in settling existing issues by peaceful means in line with international law.

As described in the accompanying article, both ministers expressed concern over the recent complicated developments that have harbored risks and dangers in the area, and called for “fully abiding by international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, stopping the illegal construction of man-made islands that changes the status quo in the disputed area, refraining from threatening to use force and using of force, and avoiding militarization in the East Sea [South China Sea].”

Of interest to Vietnam and Singapore are the 2002 Declaration of Conduct (DOC) and the planned Code of Conduct (COC), both of which aim to guide the actions of parties in the South China Sea. As the excerpts indicate, in the near future concerned parties in the South China Sea must conform to the DOC and accelerate negotiations to reach a COC. Vietnam and Singapore hope that both the DOC and COC will receive high consensus from ASEAN member states and outside countries. For Singapore’s role, Nguyen hopes that the city-state helps to raise the responsibility of China and ASEAN to fully enforce the DOC and develop an updated COC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Regarding security in the East Sea, they expressed their concern over the recent fresh, complicated developments which harboured risks and dangers in the area and called for fully abiding by international law, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, stopping the illegal construction of man-made islands that changes status quo in the disputed area, refraining from threatening to use force and using force, and avoiding militarisation in the East Sea.

In the near future, parties concerned must conform to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea and determinedly accelerate negotiations to reach a Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC) soon.

The two sides hoped that the above stance will receive high consensus from the ASEAN member states as well as support from peace-loving nations for the sake of regional and global stability and development.

Vinh said Vietnam believes that Singapore, in its capacity as the coordinator of the ASEAN-China relations, will actively contribute to promoting the ties between the bloc and China ties and join in settling existing issues by peaceful means in line with international law.

He hoped that Singapore would help raise the responsibility of China and ASEAN for fully enforcing the DOC and formulating a COC.



Is Another ISIS Attack in Indonesia Inevitable?

OE Watch Commentary: On 14 January 2016 Indonesia received a wake-up call when a group of militants with funding and inspiration, if not also direction, from Syria-based Indonesian ISIS militants launch a bungled attack in Jakarta modeled on the ISIS attacks in Paris in November 2015. Only two civilians and four attackers were killed, including two suicide attackers, although the entire nation suffered shock from the worst attack in Indonesia since attacks on hotels in Jakarta in 2009.

Indonesian security forces, however, do not rest assured that the country is in the clear. According to a 17 February *Jakarta Post* article, the same Indonesians who masterminded the recent Jakarta attacks from bases in Syria remain at-large, impervious to the efforts of the Indonesia security forces in a relative safe haven there. This keeps the Indonesian security forces on the defensive. They can hope to uncover ISIS-directed or ISIS-inspired cells at home by intercepting their communications, detecting their overt signs of radicalization, or carrying out intelligence operations to root out underground cells, including those with returnees from Syria, but the incoming funding from Syria or elsewhere is, according to the security forces, difficult to undermine.

In the article, Indonesian officials seem resigned to accept that, given the challenges, another attack in Indonesia may be inevitable. At the same time, there are indications that such pessimism may be unfounded. Following the recent attack in Jakarta, security forces broke up cells that were receiving funding from Turkey, Jordan and Iraq in order to strike targets like airports and the national police headquarters, which are harder targets than the Starbucks that was recently attacked. This shows that increased security at hard targets and further coordination with countries friendly with Indonesia, such as Turkey and Egypt, could reduce the likelihood of another ISIS-style attack. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Indonesian security officials, who are in the adjacent image responding to an ISIS-claimed terrorist attack on 14 January 2016 in Jakarta, are concerned about the possibility—even inevitably—of another attack in the near future.

Source: <http://www.voaindonesia.com/content/pengamat-program-deradikalisasi-harus-dirumuskan-lagi-/3157302.html>

“Terrorist attacks will still happen in the future because there are other groups who are linked to Bahrin Naim [the Indonesia mastermind of the recent attack in Jakarta] in Syria.”

Police chief admits difficulties in detecting flow of terrorist groups’ funds

Indonesian police have arrested dozens of people from radical Islamic groups who were plotting attacks against the airport and other targets in the near future. Police have launched a crackdown across the country, saying they suspect a broader extremist network helped carry out the assault. Seventeen of those arrested were directly linked to the Jakarta attacks, while 16 others were members of three other radical groups.

A group led by an extremist called Hendro Fernando had received 1.3 billion rupiah (HK\$755,000) from Jordan, Iraq and Turkey, and planned to launch attacks against Jakarta’s main airport and the national police headquarters. Another group led by a person identified only as ‘Helmi’ planned to use a car bomb to attack the Jakarta police complex in the city’s main business district. A third group, according to the police chief, planned stabbing attacks on traffic police.

“Terrorism attacks will still happen in the future because there are other groups who are linked to Bahrin Naim in Syria,” the police chief. Bahrin Naim is one of three high-profile Indonesians fighting for the Islamic State group in Syria. Police say he played a central role in motivating groups in Indonesia to launch attacks in the country.

Police now say the biggest threat comes from two main sources – Indonesians in Syria encouraging local groups to launch attacks, and Indonesians who return home from fighting in the Middle East.

Source: “Police Chief Admits Difficulties in Detecting Flow of Terrorist Groups’ Funds,” *Jakarta Post*, 17 February 2016

China Sets its Sights on the DARPA Model

OE Watch Commentary: Professor Pan Jianwei, a highly influential and leading Chinese physicist, is calling for China to create a government agency similar to the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to develop new technology for the military. While China has long lagged behind in innovation, there has been a big push to reverse that trend, including in military technologies. The following excerpt discusses some of China's advanced research projects currently underway. According to the author, these could potentially change the world.

One of the projects highlighted is China's first quantum communication satellite, which is scheduled to be launched in June of this year. Also, in Guizhou scientists expect to complete the construction of the world's largest aperture spherical telescope (a radio telescope) this year. This will allow scientists to view great distances into outer space. Another project mentioned is China's first deep sea station, which it hopes to develop by 2020, and its first space station, which it hopes to complete by 2022. The last two projects are the C919, China's first passenger jet, which the country expects to challenge Boeing and Airbus, and the maiden flight of the Long March 5 Rocket this year, which will be China's biggest heavy-lift rocket and will be used in the construction of the space station.

In the past China has long sought out the technologies of other nations and mimicked them or reverse engineered them. It will be interesting to see if China does ultimately create a center similar to DARPA as it continues to push toward becoming a more innovative nation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Stephen Chen, "Six Chinese Technology Projects that Might Change the World," South China Morning Post, 11 March 2016, <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1922979/six-chinese-technology-projects-might-change-world>>.

Six Chinese Technology Projects that Might Change the World

One of China's leading physicists has called for the creation of a government agency similar to the US institute that develops new technology for the military. Professor Pan Jianwei, the nation's leading expert on quantum physics and executive vice-president of the University of Science and Technology of China, said Washington's Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency in the US, or DARPA, was a good model of how to pursue innovative research for military applications, including the internet, GPS and voice recognition technology.

During the escalating and complicated military conflict in eastern Ukraine, UAVs have become increasingly common and important to operations for either side. Ukrainian forces are at a considerable disadvantage, mainly because Ukraine's armed forces were ignored and underfunded. After ten months of conflict in the eastern states of Luhansk and Donetsk, technical overmatch is becoming the deciding factor in battle. This article pertains to the conflict's UAVs tactics, Russia's emphasis on UAVs, and counter-UAV techniques.

Source: http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/products_regionalSecurity_PACOM/20151222%20Harvey-Rebel%20Drones-UAV%20Overmatch%20in%20the%20Ukrainian%20Conflict%20%28final%20with%20cover%20and%20background%20page%29.pdf



China Plans to Tighten Control over the East and South China Seas through Arbitration

OE Watch Commentary: China plans to set up an international maritime judicial center, which, according to some observers, is expected to raise its profile in international arbitration. The following is an excerpt from an article that describes some of the legal issues that seem to be prompting China to push for establishing the center.

According to the article, Supreme People's Court Chief Zhou Qiang said that China would strengthen its capacity in maritime cases and establish an international maritime judicial center to "resolutely defend national sovereignty, maritime rights and interests, and other core interests." While Zhou did not give any details about the center in the article, his report came after various incidents occurred in the East and South China Seas. According to Zhou, local maritime courts were not equipped to handle international cases. Therefore, a higher level maritime center would be better able to handle cases with foreign parties.

It will be interesting to see how China might use the international maritime judicial center to its advantage. Clearly, such a center would be yet another way for China to project power and maintain the upper hand over the heavily contested region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"To resolutely defend national sovereignty, maritime rights and interests, and other core interests, we will strengthen our capacity in maritime cases and establish an international maritime judicial centre."

Source: Zhen Liu, "China Floats Plan for International Maritime Legal Centre," *South China Morning Post*, 13 March 2016, <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1924477/china-floats-plans-international-maritime-legal-centre>>.

China Floats Plan for International Maritime Legal Centre

China will set up an "international maritime judicial centre" as it seeks to project its power at sea and territorial tensions rise with its neighbours.

Delivering a work report at the National People's Congress on Sunday, Supreme People's Court chief Zhou Qiang said China would improve the work of its maritime courts. Courts across China should work to implement the goal of building the nation into a "maritime power" and the "One Belt, One Road" strategy, he said.

"To resolutely defend national sovereignty, maritime rights and interests, and other core interests, we will strengthen our capacity in maritime cases and establish an international maritime judicial centre," he said.

Strategic Implications of the Afghan Mother Lode and China's Emerging Role

By Cindy A. Hurst and Robert Mathers

http://www.industry.com.au/press/161601/161601-72/161601-72_75-81_Hurst-Mathers.pdf



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As the 2014 withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops draws closer, the question on many minds is what will become of Afghanistan. Will the country slip back into its usual pattern of power struggles, be taken over by the Taliban, or continue to develop into a global economic player? This report talks about many of the hurdles Afghanistan must overcome before being able to achieve success. It also discusses one possible outcome – a growing alliance with neighbor China, in which both countries stand to benefit. Although this prospect may initially be distasteful to those who have shed blood and treasure over the past decade to create a viable state within Afghanistan, it may be the best way to achieve the end state those nations strived to establish.

Lieutenant Commander Cindy A. Hurst, USNR, is a Research Analyst for the Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Colonel Robert Mathers, USA, is the former Chief of the International Engagement Cell, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission-Afghanistan, and is now the Director of the Eurasian Security Studies Program at the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

Command System Trends for Future Informatized Warfare

“Regard fast regulating actions as a life-or-death test of strength. Bring into play the advantages of deeply merged information systems, reduce the layers of command, shorten the command pathways, tap hidden system functions, reduce the length of time required to convert decisions and instructions into system language, shorten the ‘distance’ information has to travel, achieve rapid, dynamic regulation of multi-element forces in multi-dimensional space, and achieve speed through victory by launching effective attacks before the enemy can do so.”

OE Watch Commentary: The PLA’s flagship newspaper, *Jiefangjun Bao*, reported in March about the requirement to grasp the form of future informatized war, since understanding this is forecast to be the primary way to win modern warfare. The article discussed five basic requirements for comprehending and improving informatized warfare. First, modern warfare will be joint, and joint thinking must be cultivated. Second, command will have to be dispersed, mainly because command systems will be the first targets selected for attack. Third, informatized war will be precise. A “brain + computer” decision-making model must be put in place. Fourth, flexibility and speed will be required to overcome modern warfare’s transparency, where concealment is difficult to achieve. Finally, since informatized warfare is manifested on a digitized battlefield, database construction is becoming more and more important, as it offers ways to handle sudden situations and military, as well as nonmilitary actions. These databases must be constructed in peacetime. This will eventually result in the necessity to reduce the levels of command. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Li Huohui, “Accurately Grasp the Command Mechanisms for Modern Combat Operations,” *Jiefangjun Bao* Online, 15 March 2016.

Joint: In modern warfare, all combat operations are joint, without jointness there is no victory, and the mechanism by which to win victory lies in internal unity and external jointness...as the spheres of informatized warfare expand from the traditional combat space to new areas such as outer space, the deep sea, and to networks and the electromagnetic spectrum [wang dian], the “three no warfare” [san wu zhan zheng], namely with no people, no shape, and no sound, and “mixed warfare” [hun he zhan zheng] forms of operations have emerged, and the connotations, the denotations, and the space and time of joint operations are also undergoing profound change.

Dispersed: Combat command systems are the first targets selected for attack by the two sides in a conflict. The mechanism of victory will lie in protecting oneself while paralyzing the enemy... Future informatized combat command will inevitably be command information system based and with a scattered layout, distributed decision making, and interactive command and control. ...delegated authority [fu quan] command will become the basic form of command. A reserve command post which used to “listen in silence” can “meddle in other people’s business,” while the basic [main] command post “in continuous command” often remains silent, not speaking until a critical moment.

Precise: Precise combat operations require precise command; the value of a mechanism for victory lies in using precise to defeat coarse. Thus it is necessary to put in place a mutually supplementing “brain+computer” decision making model, using a computer to simulate the battlefield environment as realistically as possible, eliminating as much as possible the subjective factors in the human brain’s decision making... It is necessary to adopt a “manual+system” interactive pattern of operations, stress the mutual complementarity of the advantages which people and machines have... It is necessary to use “voice+systems” command and control measures, combine dynamic manual control with self-adapting systems control, meticulously regulate combat forces, timing, space, information, goals, and the process, and achieve dynamic amassing of energy and precise release of it.

Speed: “Flexibility” is the soul of combat command, and the highest realm of the art of command. Modern warfare is practically transparent both ways. Acting in concealment is difficult to achieve. The mechanism by which to be victorious involves reacting quickly and using speed to get the upper hand. It requires flexible command which “reaches the extremities quickly.” It requires seizing “time superiority” on a battlefield of instantaneous fights and “flash” victories. That produces previously unimagined asymmetric advantages. Regard the rapid acquisition and analysis of information as having priority over all else. Strengthen the concept of “reconnaissance first”...

Database preparation: Informatized war is manifested as a digitized battlefield, on which what is fought is a battle of data, where victory lies in merging networks and sharing, and the victor is the side which is superior at that. So winning informatized local wars requires great emphasis on the creation of databases. If we say that a command information system is the veins and arteries of “systems of systems” operations, then combat operations data is the blood coursing through those vessels. And without that flow, the combat operations system becomes an “empty shell,” a machine “idling,” and information system-based combat command becomes a spring with no source of water, a tree without roots.

Syrian Rebels Using Balkan Weapons

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article indicates that several Balkan countries, especially Serbia, are producing weapons that have fallen into the hands of Syrian fighters. The weapons identified in the Syrian **YouTube** video mentioned in the article were made by the Krusik Corporation, Zastava Arms, and the Military Technical institute, all Serbian weapons manufacturers.

Serbia identifies the United States, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Israel and several South American countries as its largest weapons buyers. However, in 2014 the research group Conflict Armament Research found that Serbia was ISIS' fifth largest source of total ammunition and fourth largest for ammunition manufactured after 2010. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

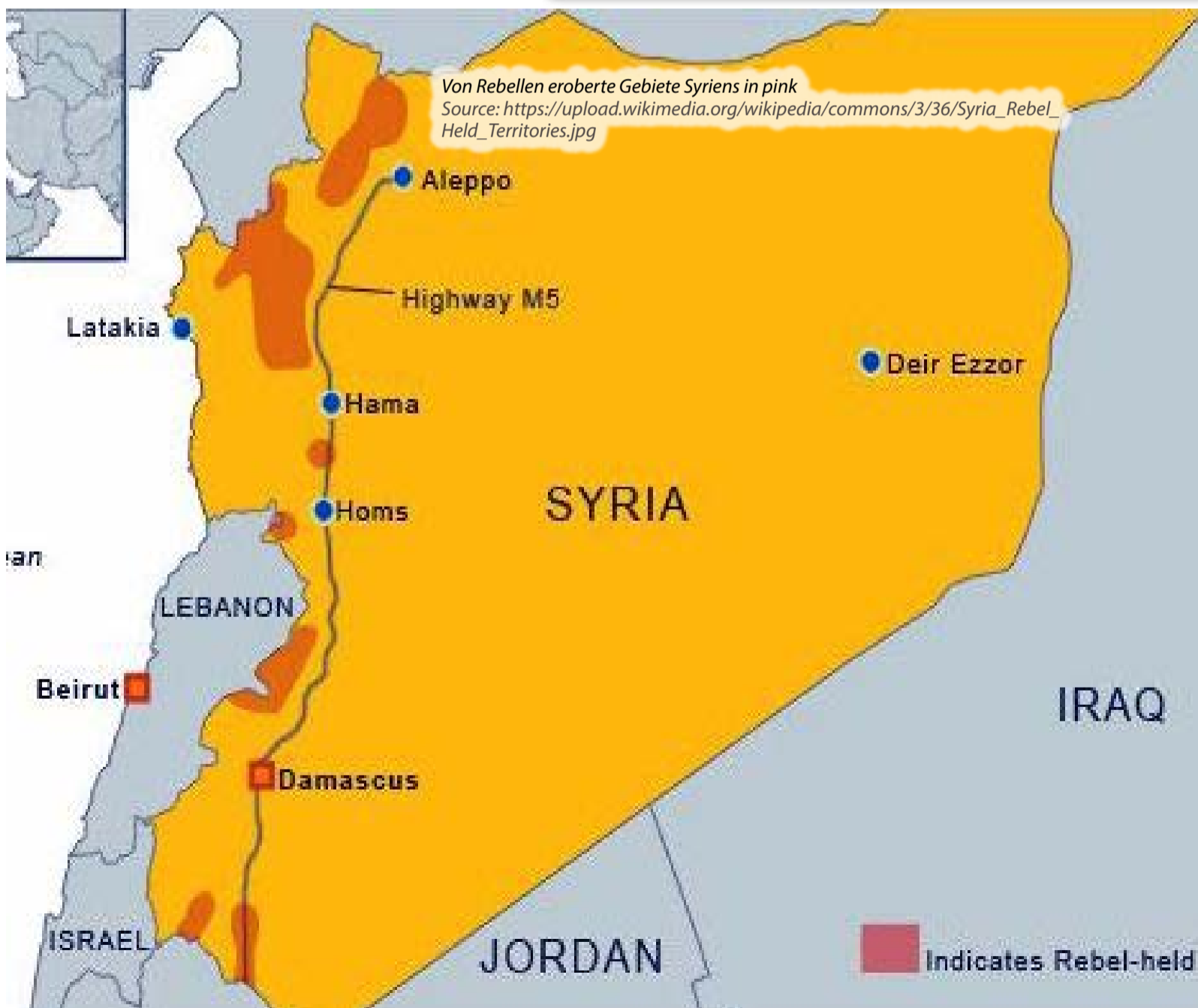
“Several Balkan-produced armaments, mostly manufactured in Serbia, are being used by Syrian rebels.”

Source: Dragojlo, Sasa. “Balkan Weapons Sighted in Syrian Rebel Hands.” *Balkan Insight*. 15 March 2016. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/balkan-made-weapons-identified-at-syrian-battlefield-03-10-2016>>

“Several Balkan-produced armaments, mostly manufactured in Serbia, are being used by Syrian rebels, according to weapons specialists from the Armament Research Services, ARES think tank.

M62P8 120mm high explosive mortar projectiles and an M02 Coyote 12.7 x 108mm heavy machine gun were identified from a YouTube video released on February 12 and a heavy machine gun from a Facebook picture, all posted by Syrian rebel fighters.

N.R. Jenzen-Jones, an arms specialist and director of ARES, confirmed the origin of the arms, saying that weapons manufactured in the former Yugoslavia have been documented in Syria before.”



Kazakhstan Providing Security Assistance?

OE Watch Commentary: There are occasional instances of security assistance given by one Central Asian government to another, but they do not often attract much attention and typically include basic equipment or spare parts. The accompanying excerpted article reports on the recent ratification in Kazakhstan's Senate (upper house of parliament) of an agreement to transfer five million rounds of ammunition and some other items to Kyrgyzstan, and there are a couple of things that can be taken away from it. (Though it is not mentioned in the article, the ammunition being transferred is reportedly three million rounds of 5.45mm and two million of 7.62mm, while the spare parts are for the S-75M3 surface-to-air missile system.)

The announcement of the transfer was met with some skepticism in Kyrgyzstan, specifically about the usefulness of the items. A few Kyrgyz officials noted how the ammunition was nearing the end of its shelf life and believed that the government of Kazakhstan was only doing this as a cheaper alternative to disposing it. One of the senators quoted in the article mentioned the ammunition factory that is set to open next year in a special economic zone in Karaganda, and this could be a factor in the large amount of ammunition here.

Outside of the ammunition, Kyrgyzstan does not have a modern inventory of air defense systems, so the spare parts could be beneficial. At the same time, Kazakhstan's Armed Forces could be phasing out their own S-75M systems, as they have added around 20 more of the S-300 systems to their inventory over the past few years. Overall, the items Kazakhstan is sending to Kyrgyzstan are not on the same level of security assistance that Russia would provide; however, if Kazakhstan's economy is able to recover in the next few years and the government continues to expand its defense industry, this kind of security assistance might be a more common occurrence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Kazakhstan will give Kyrgyzstan around 5 million rounds of ammunition.”



Source: <http://static.ca-news.org/upload/ennews/4/573354.1456805111.m.jpg>

Source: “Казakhstan отдаст Кыргызстану лишние боеприпасы с истекающим сроком годности (Kazakhstan will give Kyrgyzstan surplus ammunition with a limited shelf life),” *Inform Buro*, 18 February 2016.
<http://informburo.kz/novosti/kazakhstan-otdast-kyrgyzstanu-lishnie-boepripasy-s-istekayushchim-srokom-godnosti-.html>

Kazakhstan will give Kyrgyzstan excess ammunition with a limited shelf life

...The agreement provides for the transfer of small arms ammunition, smoke grenades, and spare parts of surface-to-air missile systems... “...The cartridges and (smoke) grenades have a shelf life. We invited our colleagues to determine if this is suitable or not, and on this basis we will transfer them,” – said (Kazakhstan’s) senators...

...Kazakhstan will give Kyrgyzstan around 5 million rounds of ammunition. This number caused concern among some deputies and they asked if the country will have enough ammunition... Senator Dulat Kustavletov asked – “Will we have enough? We still do not have an ammunition factory. We still purchase cartridges from abroad.”... the Deputy Minister of Defense could not answer, but Senator Mukhtar Altynbayev responded, “...We have more than a billion (rounds) and these have a shelf life. To utilize all of them would be too expensive.”

Remembering Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko in Tajikistan

OE Watch Commentary: There have been a number of cases over the years of notable figures from the Tajik Civil War or from Tajikistan's military and security services who were killed under strange circumstances. The accompanying article reports on the case of Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko, the commander of the OMON (special purpose) unit of the Interior Ministry, who was killed in the town of Garm in the Rasht Valley during an incident in February 2008. It shows how the circumstances of his death and the investigation that followed continue to be discussed. There are a few things about the case that are worth considering and provide context for why journalists continue to bring this case up.

The circumstances of Zakharchenko's death that are more established show that it is different than most of the other notable cases over the past several years. While he was allegedly in Garm to remove Mirzohudza Akhmadov from power, he was not accused of attempting to subvert or overthrow the government; it was also not an alleged dispute between him and a member of another ministry, such as in other cases in the past. Based on this and other articles written about him since 2008, Zakharchenko was well respected. This stands in contrast to Gulmurad Khalimov, the OMON commander who left Tajikistan around a year ago and joined the ISIS to fight in Syria.

The other notable individuals who were killed under strange circumstances may have had support from their respective regions or power bases in Tajikistan, but there has not been as much of a push by journalists to continue an investigation as in this case. In any case, there is a belief that the circumstances of Zakharchenko's death will not be disclosed, though the article notes the subject will continue to be brought up every year.

**End OE Watch
Commentary
(Stein)**

“The killers have yet to be found despite the fact that the security services named the main suspects from the beginning. On 8 February the General Prosecutor's Office again stated that the investigation into the death of Zakharchenko is suspended”



“The Circumstances of the Death of Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko in 2008 Continue to Be Discussed in Tajikistan.”

Source: <http://fsm.myqip.ru/?1-22-15-00000022-000-0-0-1435913492>

Source: Gaysina, Liliya, “Полковника никак не спишут” (The colonel will not be written off), *Asia-Plus*, 17 February 2016.
<http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/polkovnika-nikak-ne-spishut>

The Colonel Will Not Be Written Off

The second of February marked exactly eight years to the day that the OMON commander, Oleg Zakharchenko, was shot at point-blank range in Rasht. The killers have yet to be found despite the fact that the security services named the main suspects from the beginning. On 8 February the General Prosecutor's Office again stated that the investigation into the death of Zakharchenko is suspended.

Eight years ago the Interior Ministry reported that subordinates of Mirzohudza Akhmadov, the head of the Rasht organized crime division of the Interior Ministry, attacked members of OMON in the village of Garm... Zakharchenko died on the spot as a result of gunshot wounds and six members of the unit were injured...

...in July 2008 the General Prosecutor told reporters “The suspect has been established, but I cannot announce his name in the interest of the investigation”...on October 13, 2008 he told reporters again “The killer of Zakharchenko has not been disclosed, but no one has been detained and other details of investigation are not possible to announce yet.” On October 22, Tajik media reported that President Rahmon granted amnesty to Akhmadov. At the same time the Interior Minister Mahmadvazar Salikhov answered questions about the investigation and said the case was closed...In 2009 the General Prosecutor's Office reported the investigation will be resumed...Immediately following the suicide of former Interior Minister Salikhov, the Prosecutor General blamed the minister for Zakharchenko's death. According to the prosecutor, Salikhov gave the order to arrest Akhmadov, but this was done illegally...

...Every year at press conferences the case of the dead colonel is brought up...lawyers explained to us that after 15 years the statute of limitations on this case will expire, so in seven years this can be legally written off...

The Media Presence of Nationalist Groups in Kyrgyzstan

OE Watch Commentary: The group “Kyrk Choro” has received attention for its activities in Kyrgyzstan over the past couple of years, most notably for an illegal raid on a Bishkek nightclub in which its members detained patrons and employees and accused them of being involved in prostitution. The accompanying excerpted article reports on the group’s latest target, which follows with one of their goals of protecting Kyrgyzstan from external or internal enemies and the negative influences they have on Kyrgyz society.

The issue of unpaid electric bills for guest houses in the Issyk-Kul area has been noted with some frustration in Kyrgyz media, and the amount of debt totals over half a million dollars, but this has not been met with demands from other sources or groups to rectify the situation like those of Kyrk Choro.

The leaders of Kyrk Choro have in the past claimed that they are willing to take any necessary action to fulfill their goals, though in the article they note that they will not resort to illegal means to shut off the electricity. In the midst of the backlash following the raid on the nightclub, Kyrk Choro leadership mentioned that it had signed a memorandum with the government to carry out its activities; however, representatives from the security services of Kyrgyzstan released a statement that they will not allow any of these groups to act as law enforcement. Kyrk Choro appeared to have been aware of this on a subsequent raid on a cafe, though some of its members did commit assault and were arrested; it is not known if they were charged.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the article is how the electric company was not aware of any effort by Kyrk Choro to shut off the electricity until the author of the article contacted it. Kyrk Choro, as well as other groups, has made a point to be active in promoting itself through various media, but over the past several months it has been largely quiet. The group could take action at the 30 day deadline (the time the group has given the guest houses to pay off their debts), but it remains to be seen what that involves and how much publicity it draws. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Members of the movement “Kyrk Choro,” known for self-serving raids in Bishkek, have promised to shut off the electricity of Issyk-Kul guest houses, in debt for electric bills”



“Issyk Kul is a popular destination in Kyrgyzstan and is home to a number of guest houses that are at the center of a dispute over unpaid electric bills. Resolving this debt has become the latest target of the nationalist group Kyrk Choro.” Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Issyk_Kul#/media/File:Issyk-Kol_Sun_bathers_%283976724286%29.jpg

Source: “У прибывшего из Сирии кыргызстанца обнаружен схрон оружия” (A citizen of Kyrgyzstan who had been in Syria was found with a cache of weapons), *K News*, 15 January 2016. http://www.knews.kg/action/74202_u_pribyvshogo_iz_sirii_kyrgyzstantsa_obnarujen_shron_orujiya/

“Kyrk Choro” is threatening to shut off electricity of the guest houses in debt

Members of the movement “Kyrk Choro,” known for self-serving raids in Bishkek, have promised to shut off the electricity of Issyk-Kul guest houses, in debt for electric bills... (“Kyrk Choro”) has given 30 days for the guest houses to eliminate their debts.

The movement leader Kochorbayev said in an interview that they will act together with “Vostokelektro” without using illegal means. However, “Vostokelektro” told Kloop that this is the first time they have heard about this... “We have not received any request from them or conduct any negotiations with them,” – reported the press service of the company... According to the company the list of debtors has 20 major customers. The total debt is more than 39 million Som...

High-Technology, Hybrid War, and Color Revolutions

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article by Chief of the Russian General Staff General Valeriy Gerasimov outlines some of his views regarding the relationships between hybrid war, high technology, and color revolutions. Of particular interest, he provides a definition of “hybrid war” (“hybrid methods,” in his words). His view that the primary means of hybrid war are color revolutions, which are themselves foreign-sponsored coup d’états, makes it very obvious that he sees hybrid war as not a Russian invention, but rather a Western one.

Interestingly, Gerasimov emphasized the importance of technology and charged the Academy of Military Science with developing means for combatting hybrid war and, by extension, color revolutions. The Russian military has already made some efforts along these lines. The Ministry of Defense has activated its first cyber unit in Tambov, and although this development can simply be traced to the increasing importance of information technologies in modern warfare, it can also be seen as another way the General Staff is looking to combat threats other than traditional military ones, such as color revolutions. Controlling the information domain is a consistent theme in the Russian government’s actions, and it can be seen in Russian efforts to restrict nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), project the Russian narrative in the mass media to foreign audiences (one *Russia Today* commentator has referred to this as a “soft power coup for Russia”), and develop the capability to block foreign internet sites.

Gerasimov also discusses challenges for territorial defense. The General Staff is keenly aware of the difficulties in defending against color revolutions, and is experimenting with some changes to the reserve system to counter such a threat. Russia has transitioned some of its strategic reserve capability into an operational reserve by forming “territorial defense battalions.” Such units have appeared elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and usually consist of relatively lightly armed infantry who are assigned to secure critical infrastructure in the rear. These forces are not intended to serve in high-intensity combat operations abroad, but are instead intended to provide wide area security in the rear, a useful tool for countering any color revolutions that may arise. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: General Valeriy Gerasimov, “The Syrian Experience: Hybrid Warfare Requires High-Tech Weapons and Scientific Substantiation,” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 9 March 2016, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>>, accessed 20 March 2016. February 2016.

.... In contemporary conflicts the emphasis in the methods of struggle being employed is increasingly shifting toward the integrated employment of political, economic, informational, and other nonmilitary measures implemented on a foundation of military force. These are so-called hybrid methods. What they amount to is achieving political goals with the minimum armed impact on an adversary. Predominantly by undermining his military and economic potential, by applying informational and psychological pressure, and by active support for internal opposition and for insurgency and subversive methods. The principal means employed is “color revolutions,” ...essentially a coup d’etat organized from the outside.

...The nuclear weapons in Russia’s arsenal remain the primary factor in the strategic deterrence of potential adversaries from undertaking aggression against our country and its allies. At the same time, however, an additional set of coordinated statewide military and non-force measures has been adopted with a view to neutralizing military dangers and threats, inclusive of countering hybrid methods of exerting pressure. Chief among these are measures aimed at strengthening international positions and maintaining and expanding a Russian presence in regions that involve the country’s national interests.

....What is essential now is a scientific analysis of the forms and modes of employing multi-agency groupings, of the sequence of actions by the military and non-force constituent of territorial defense given the possible emergence of crisis situations in a matter of days and even hours.

...Today the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces must be ready to protect the state’s interests in a military conflict of any scale with an adversary’s extensive employment both of traditional and hybrid methods of confrontation...Priority attention is being paid to high-technology components. At the same time, one important area in the building, development, and training of the Armed Forces is that of giving them the capabilities to operate effectively in nontraditional

circumstances. This means not only building up capabilities to respond to asymmetric modes of warfare. It is essential to learn to operate in such a way as to effectively resist the implicit adversary and nullify the strong aspects of the high-tech adversary.

...Today we are acquiring priceless combat experience in Syria....The focus should be on new promising areas of military research, on evolving the forms of strategic operations by the Armed Forces, on the conflict in space and in the information arena, on the formulation of requirements for advanced armaments and control systems.

(continued)

Continued: High-Technology, Hybrid War, and Color Revolutions



“Today the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces must be ready to protect the state’s interests in a military conflict of any scale with an adversary’s extensive employment both of traditional and hybrid methods of confrontation. All the requisite decisions on increasing the combat capabilities of the army and navy have been taken and are being implemented. Priority attention is being paid to high-technology components. At the same time, one important area in the building, development, and training of the Armed Forces is that of giving them the capabilities to operate effectively in nontraditional circumstances. This means not only building up capabilities to respond to asymmetric modes of warfare. It is essential to learn to operate in such a way as to effectively resist the implicit adversary and nullify the strong aspects of the high-tech adversary.”

— Chief of the Russian General Staff,
General Valeriy Gerasimov

Hypersonic Missiles May Lead to a Russian 'Prompt Global Strike'

OE Watch Commentary: Russian security experts have lamented the possibility of the U.S. developing a "Prompt Global Strike" system, giving the U.S. a capability to use conventional munitions to strike almost anywhere around the globe in a few hours, especially with the advent of hypersonic weapons. This idea has been particularly troublesome because Russia fears that the United States could attempt to destroy Russia's strategic nuclear capabilities at their deployment areas, using only conventional weapons. Although this concern is frequently voiced in Russia, there are other Russian opinions that believe this idea is farfetched, to say the least. The accompanying excerpted article from *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* assesses this possibility, and finds that the U.S. does not, and probably will not, have the capabilities to reliably nullify Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities in the foreseeable future.

Although, the U.S. may not be able to nullify Russia's strategic deterrent assets, a capability provided by a Prompt Global Strike system is still very formidable, and one which Russia desires. The accompanying excerpted article from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* discusses Russian efforts to develop hypersonic weapons and the possibilities of deploying them on existing platforms, namely the Yasen- (Project 955) and Orlan- (Project 114) class submarines. This development could be in furtherance of a Russian system to create an entire range of systems, including other ballistic and cruise missiles, and their associated platforms, intended to defeat adversaries promptly at a lower level of escalation, without crossing the nuclear threshold. Some Russian commentators have called these systems a Russian version of Prompt Global Strike.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

"The American Trident strategic naval missile takes 15-20 minutes to fly to us, and the land-based Minuteman-3 takes 25-30 minutes. That is enough time to react. With the advent of hypersonic platforms there will simply not be enough time to respond. So there will always be the temptation to start and win a nuclear war."

— Major General (ret.) Vladimir Dvorkin

Project 949A Antey submarines

A series of Soviet and Russian third-generation multirole nuclear-powered submarines

Developer	Rubin
Production years	1982–1996
Built	11 submarines
Lost	1 (Kursk)

Antey submarines, designed in the 1970s to be "aircraft-carrier killers," can effectively stand up to any surface targets, including groups of enemy aircraft carriers

The submarines can reach high speeds when submerged and have the ability to dive to a significant depth with low noise, as well as good maneuverability and controllability



Specifications

Length	154 m	Displacement, submerged	23,900 tons	Operational depth	500–520 meters
Beam	18.2 m	Speed, surfaced	15 knots	Maximum depth	600 meters
Displacement, surfaced	14,700 tons	Speed, submerged	33 knots		

Propulsion

OK-650V nuclear reactors	2 units	Thermal power	2 × 190 MW	Total nominal power	98,000 horsepower
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Armament

	Missiles	Torpedoes
	P-700 Granit: 24 3M-45 missiles, max range 500 km	6 torpedo tubes 2×650-mm and 4×533-mm; 28 torpedoes

RIANOVOSTI Editor: Alexey Timatkov, Designer: Yevgeny Ivanov, Art director: Ilya Ruderman, Manager: Pavel Shorokh, Template: Alexei Novichkov.

Project 949A Antey Submarines
Source: <http://sputniknews.com/infographics/20130916/183500034/Project-949A-Antey-Submarines.html>

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Continued: Hypersonic Missiles May Lead to a Russian 'Prompt Global Strike'

Source: Dmitriy Akhmerov, Yevgeniy Akhmerov, and Marat Valeyev, "It Cannot Be Done Quickly: The Might of Nonnuclear Cruise Missiles Is Illusory," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 21 October 2015, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/27617>>, accessed 20 March 2016.

It Cannot Be Done Quickly: The Might of Nonnuclear Cruise Missiles Is Illusory

Since recently, the subject of the nonnuclear disarming of the Strategic Nuclear Forces has been under active examination in open sources. The idea amounts to the following: In the United States they are simultaneously developing Prompt Global Strike (PGS) and missile defense systems that form an integrated offensive-defensive potential. In the foreseeable future a situation is possible whereby precision offensive arms systems will prove capable of inflicting a disarming strike on targets belonging to the Russian Federation's Strategic Nuclear Forces without the use of nuclear forces or systems, while any missiles (warheads) surviving this strike would be destroyed by antimissiles...

Arguments for the Competent

In this context, they argue as follows. The possibility has been established of standard Strategic Nuclear Forces targets being destroyed by nonnuclear precision cruise missiles; the United States already possesses a significant quantity of such missiles and is increasing their numbers, and the emergence of hypersonic missiles is expected; there is a real threat of the Strategic Nuclear Forces being disarmed solely by nonnuclear precision systems. It is not difficult to see that this string of facts and consequences lacks a link that is fundamentally important for the conclusion -- an evaluation of the potential for precision nonnuclear weapons to decommission not just isolated standard targets but the entire Strategic Nuclear Forces, a unique strategic system of a global nature, taking into account the totality of essential properties and relations that it alone possesses...Without a detailed analysis, the assertion of the possibility of nonnuclear disarming of the Strategic Nuclear Forces is simply postulated without substantiation...

Statement of the Problem

The procedure for the calculations envisages an approximate estimate of the values of the required numbers of nonnuclear cruise missiles to destroy the most important Strategic Nuclear Forces targets and the subsequent evaluation of the possibility of realizing the calculated numbers for the destruction of these targets in the time determined by the combat readiness (requirement of short duration of disarming strike), with a concluding estimate of the possibility of covert infliction of the strike...it is assumed hypothetically that by 2020 the grouping of stationary missile systems will include 180 intercontinental ballistic missiles (30 each in Kozel'sk, Dombarovskiy, and Uzhur, and 90 in Tatishchevo).

Back in 2009 Major General Vladimir Belous asserted that in order to decommission a stationary ICBM it is necessary to ensure penetration of the armored roof of the launch silo by means of the impact of a powerful charge. Thus, the calculation of the required numbers per launch silo boils down to determining the number of missiles necessary for a direct hit by at least one of them on the roof of the facility with a specified probability given the known accuracy of the cruise missile...The diameter of the roof of the launch silo is 6 meters...

90 Silos in Five Minutes

In what way could the calculated numbers of nonnuclear cruise missiles be used to destroy stationary missile systems, taking into account the combat capability of the systems, that is, the assumed time before launch of the ICBM? ...Given an attack from one direction at a velocity of 800 kilometers per hour a cruise missile will cover that distance in six minutes. Therefore in order to attack each launch silo with the full required numbers within not more than five minutes, the aggressor must form up two phalanxes of cruise missiles each with 225 missiles, simultaneously attacking the positional area from opposite directions and each having a depth of two minutes (27 kilometers) where the speed of the cruise missile is equal to 800 kilometers per hour...

Inevitable Response

...A nuclear response to a nonnuclear strike against the Strategic Nuclear Forces should be in no doubt, since it is enshrined in all military doctrines beginning with the one adopted in November 1993...The totality of the factors -- those demonstrated and those left out of this analysis -- that operate in the context of the potential aggressor's performing a task that threatens the very existence of the United States makes it possible to consign the concept of nonnuclear disarming of the Russian Federation's Strategic Nuclear Forces to the sphere of theory, which overlaps diffusively with the sphere of science fiction, but not to the sphere of ideas that have any significance for the practice of military organizational development.

The main threat to the Strategic Nuclear Forces was and will remain nuclear air and space attack systems. Nonnuclear cruise missiles may supplement them and influence the strategic balance by destroying not launch silos but, for instance, elements of strategic aviation airfields or ballistic-missile-carrying nuclear submarine bases. They could also be used to destroy the structures at the permanent places of deployment of mobile missile systems (assuming that some of the missile systems may remain in these structures during dispersal), mobile missile systems in field positions, bridges, and so forth. Thus, in performing the tasks of participation in strategic nuclear deterrence the Strategic Nuclear Forces' air and space defense should continue to be created first and foremost to combat nuclear attack systems.

(continued)

Continued: Hypersonic Missiles May Lead to a Russian 'Prompt Global Strike'

Duckbill Hits United States: Before End of Decade Russia Could Obtain Weapon That Enables It to Achieve Parity with Any Adversary

Hypersonic missiles are capable of speeds of tens of kilometers per second and will be capable of striking targets in any part of the world. According to Boris Obnosov, head of the Tactical Missile Armament corporation, the country has come close to creating missiles capable of reaching speeds of Mach 5-10, or 6,150-12,300 kph... From the military standpoint hypersonic aircraft are a very effective strike asset. Hypersonic flight is undetectable to modern radar systems. There are no means at present, and none is even being planned, to intercept such missiles.

Not Enough Time to Blink

The United States ties the implementation of the Prompt Global Strike (PGS) program, also translated as "Global Lightning Strike," which will enable the American military to deliver pin-point strikes in any region of the world within 60 minutes, to achieving hypersonic speed. In the opinion of specialists, their [U.S hypersonic weapons] implementation will facilitate the creation of hypersonic long-range air-launched cruise missiles, an anti-ship naval cruise missile, and versions for use against land targets by 2018–2020, as well as a reconnaissance aircraft by 2030.

...Vladimir Dvorkin, who prior to 2001 headed the Defense Ministry's 4th Central Scientific Research Institute (the institute was dealing with the issues of nuclear weapons development and use), says that "The American Trident strategic naval missile takes 15-20 minutes to fly to us, and the land-based Minuteman-3 takes 25-30 minutes. That is enough time to react." With the advent of hypersonic platforms there will simply not be enough time to respond. So there will always be the temptation to start and win a nuclear war. This theory is very popular in America. It is discussed in the scientific community. And as Russian experts view it, if hypersonic missiles were to appear they could move from theory to the area of military strategy...

The Wish and the Reality

One can only judge by indirect signs what is being done in Russia in this area. For example, last year Western media citing the Washington Free Beacon [website] reported the successful testing of the Yu-71 hypersonic glide vehicle. Without giving details, the Washington Times reported that in 2020-2025 Russia intends to deploy 24 nuclear-tipped hypersonic air vehicles at a test range not far from the town of Dombrovskiy. According to the newspaper, the hypersonic system will have strategic as well as conventional versions...

The Yu-71 is not unique in this context. Its operational principles are similar to the functions as described of the maneuverable nuclear warheads of the Topol-M, Yars, and the new RS-26 ballistic missiles. The Defense Ministry has cited them many times as an example of the capability for penetrating any antimissile defense. Maneuvering at speeds close to Mach 10, the missile can swerve at any moment and change its flight in an unpredictable manner, which guarantees hitting the target. There is no missile defense system capable of calculating such a trajectory and targeting the attacking device with antimissiles.

The "Duckbill" Goes to War

No Russian department has ever reported success in creating hypersonic flying apparatuses with an "extended operating cycle." However, the year before last the Takticheskoye Raketnoye Vooruzheniye Corporation, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade did announce that they had agreed a program for creating hypersonic missile technologies. More than 2 billion rubles has been invested in generating the promising technology, and it was planned to obtain the first apparatus no later than 2020. What it will be like, and for what purposes it is being created, of course, no one has been willing to specify.

However, it is possible to deduce that some groundwork has been done, based on the MAKS exhibition in suburban Zhukovskiy. In 2011 the Central Aircraft Engine-Building Institute located in Lytkarino, outside Moscow, demonstrated a whole set of prospective hypersonic apparatuses. The institute's display had missile mock-ups that looked less like the classic cigars and more like avant-garde showpieces, with a compressed, shovel-like pointed nose cone similar to the Australian duckbill creature and a chopped-style body shape...

There are indirect signs that the foundation of the Tsirkon is a missile created on the basis of the Yakhont /Oniks supersonic anti-ship missile and its Russian-Indian version, the BrahMos. India's BrahMos Aerospace Limited has many times publicized its work on developing a hypersonic version of its product. The "duckbill" version was displayed as a mock-up. According to a company representative, a hypersonic missile does exist and is being tested. If that is the case, there is also a Russian analogue.

The most interesting thing is that at present the Oniks is a part of the Bastion system with which the coastal missile troops are armed. It

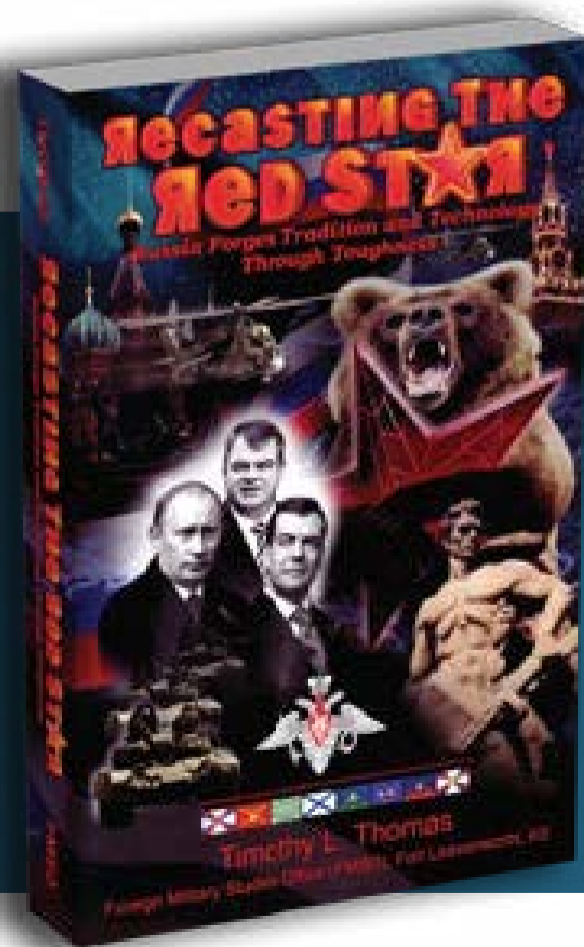
Source: Dmitriy Litovkin, "Duckbill Hits United States: Before End of Decade Russia Could Obtain Weapon That Enables It to Achieve Parity with Any Adversary," *Komsomolskaya Pravda Online*, 04 February 2016, <http://tvzvezda.ru/news/krasnaya_zvezda/content/201602060859-t09h.htm>, accessed 20 March 2016.

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Continued: Hypersonic Missiles May Lead to a Russian 'Prompt Global Strike'

is also installed on the latest Project 955 Yasen-class multi-purpose nuclear submarines. Most likely they will be installed as part of the modernization of the Project 949 Antey class attack nuclear submarines and Project 114 Orlan-class heavy nuclear submarine cruisers as a replacement for the Granit missiles. Designers say that three Oniks can be installed in the submarine's launch tubes in place of one Granit. Altogether there are 24 launch tubes on the Orlan. The Antey has the same number. As a result, the boats will be equipped not with 24 but with 72 missiles. Now, let us imagine that these will be the modernized Oniks, in other words the Tsirkon. The first such surface ship -- the Admiral Nakhimov -- is already in the Severodvinsk dock awaiting a weaponry upgrade.

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.



Russia Increases Testing of New Generation of Strategic Missiles

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation is currently fielding a new generation of strategic missiles. As the accompanying article from TASS discusses, in the last few years Russia has started to replace RT-2PM2 Topol ICBMs with the new RT-24 Yars ICBMs, and there are also plans to start field testing the Sarmat missile, the heavy ICBM replacement for the R-36M Voyevoda. In addition, the Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces are fielding a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the RSM-56 Bulava, as discussed in the accompanying article from Izvestiya. Perhaps the most controversial development is that of the RS-26 Rubezh. The Rubezh is based upon the Topol and Yars missile systems and has a maximum range of 5,800 kilometers, causing accusations that this missile violates the spirit of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that completely eliminated the use of intermediate-range (500-5,500 kilometers) missiles. The Rubezh's operational range barely exceeds the lower limit of the intercontinental weapons category (5,500 kilometers), which otherwise gives the Rubezh the same characteristics of an intermediate-range ballistic missile. According to the Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General Sergey Karakayev in the accompanying article from *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer*, in order to ready Russia's new generation of strategic missiles, Russia will conduct 16 intercontinental ballistic missile launches in 2016, twice the amount conducted in 2015. Reportedly, fourteen of the sixteen launches, will test new missiles and warheads, while the other two launches will be part of tests to extend the life cycles of existing systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Ministry of Defense: It is Planned to Rearm all Strategic Missile Troop Divisions with Yars and RS-26 in 2021," *TASS Online*, 21 February 2016, <<http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/2132865>>, accessed 20 March 2016.

Ministry of Defense: It is Planned to Rearm all Strategic Missile Troop Divisions with Yars and RS-26 in 2021

The Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN) missile divisions will be completely rearmed with Yars (silo) and Yars-M (mobile) ground missile systems with RS-26 missiles in 2021, Colonel-General Viktor Yesin, consultant to the RVSN commander, announced on 21 July. The process of rearming all missile divisions which are armed with the Topol missile system, with the Yars and Yars-M mobile missile system sometimes referred to as Rubezh with the RS-26 missile, is planned in full for 2021. By then the Topol mobile ground missile system will be taken out of service," Yesin said. According to him, seven of the 12 missile divisions forming part of the RVSN are currently armed with the Topol missile system. "To date, the Teykovo missile division has been rearmed with Topol-M and Yars missile systems. Its rearmament is completed," the general explained.

Military railroad missile system

RVSN assistant commander Igor Denisov also stated that work on the creation of the Military Railroad Missile System (BZhRK) is at the first stage. "We had the BZhRK previously, it was created with the participation of Ukrainian enterprises. Work on it was completed in the early 2000's. Now new experimental design work has opened up with exclusively Russian collaboration. The first stage of this research and design is currently being performed," Denisov said...

Sarmat ICBM tests

According to RVSN assistant commander Igor Denisov, experimental design work to create the Sarmat heavy ICBMs are at the third stage and testing will begin in 1.5 to 2 years. "Today is the third stage of research and development. I think that in the next 1.5 to 2 years we will move to the heavy missile test stage," Denisov said. He said that the heavy ICBM that is being created is designed to replace the Voyevoda ICBM which is in service...

Navy Prepares to Conduct Salvo Launch of Bulava Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles

The Northern Fleet is preparing for a routine inspection of the combat readiness of the nuclear deterrent forces. Two state-of-the-art Project 955 strategic missile carriers, the Yuriy Dolgorukiy and the Vladimir Monomakh, expect to put to sea. One of them is to carry out a salvo launch of Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles. At the end of last year the Vladimir Monomakh did not fulfill its task. Two strategic missiles launched toward the Kura range in Kamchatka did not reach the set target...

A salvo launch is the only form of practical inspection of the combat readiness of a missile carrier. The testing of sea-based missiles in combat conditions, in contrast to an isolated launch, requires special training and skills on the part of the crew. The main danger is the entry of seawater to fill the tubes left empty after the departure of the missiles...

"During tests of the RSM-54 Skif, 38 launches were carried out -- 32 of them were failures," Anatoliy Sitnov, former chief of armaments at the Defense Ministry, commented on the situation for Izvestiya. "Naval strategic systems are very complex. There is the mortar launch from the launcher, the switching on of the sustainer motor above the water, and a whole string of other factors influencing success. The Bulava is a fifth-generation missile. Very complex, multirole, standardized with our other strategic systems in terms of the basic systems, multiservice. And there is nothing out of the ordinary in the fact that its tests involve certain difficulties."

(continued)

Continued: Russia Increases Testing of New Generation of Strategic Missiles

“We [The Russian Strategic Forces] plan to conduct 16 launches in 2016, comprising two for the purpose of extending service life and 14 for tests, experimental practice with missile complexes under development, equipping strategic missiles for combat, and Russian Federation Armed Forces command and control training.”

- Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General Sergey Karakayev



Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General Sergey Karakeyev
Source: <http://cdn1.img.sputniknews.com/images/101621/30/1016213077.jpg>

During the upcoming sortie the missiles will also be tested first and foremost. It is for this reason that the Navy command cannot say precisely which of the missile carriers will carry out the test firing -- the Yuriy Dolgorukiy or the Vladimir Monomakh. According to a source in the fleet's staff, the submarine for the launch will be chosen depending "on plans for the fleet's combat training and on the technical readiness of the ship."

Source: Dmitry Litovkin, "Navy Prepares to Conduct Salvo Launch of Bulava Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles," *Izvestiya Online*, 02 March 2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/605349#ixzz41kl05DDP>>, accessed 20 March 2016.

The 'Sarmat' Will Replace the 'Voyevoda'

[Oleg Falichev] How many launches were conducted in 2015, and how many are planned for 2016?

[Sergey Karakayev] Seven missile launches were executed in 2015: one within the framework of RF Armed Forces command and control training, two for experimental practice in equipping strategic missiles for combat, three during missile system tests, and one for the purpose of scrapping missiles with expired periods of serviceability while simultaneously launching space vehicles. We plan to conduct 16 launches in 2016, comprising two for the purpose of extending service life and 14 for tests, experimental practice with missile complexes under development, equipping strategic missiles for combat, and Russian Federation Armed Forces command and control training...

[Oleg Falichev] Some experts state that US missile defense is able to level our nuclear missile potential in the event of war. Others say that even the missile defense being built is incapable of becoming a palpable threat to Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces in the event of retaliatory counterstrikes and return fire...

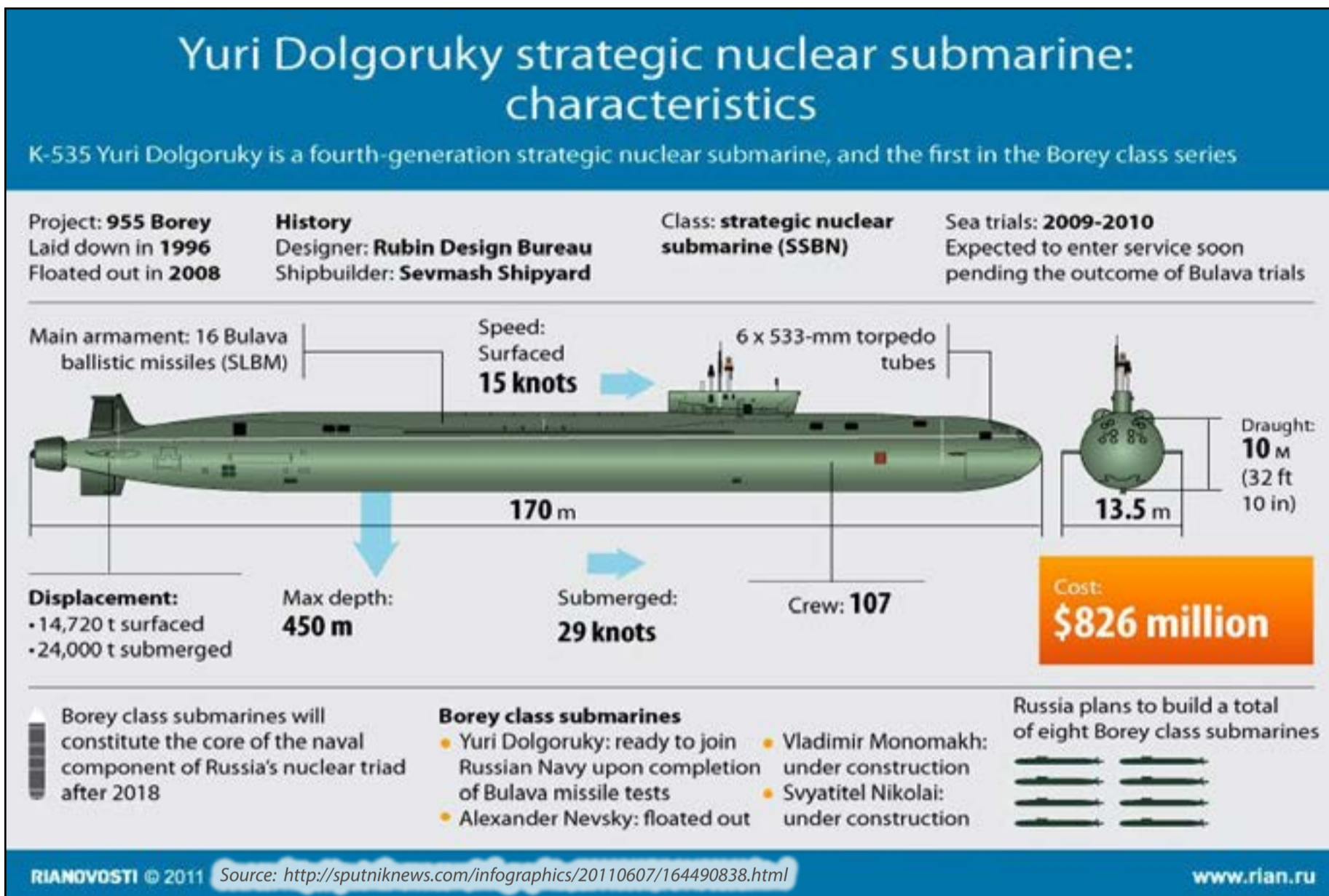
[Sergey Karakayev] Specialists' assessments show that the US missile defense that has been deployed up to the present is incapable, in terms of its informational and firing capacity, of resisting the massed use of the Strategic Missile Troops' grouping.

In analyzing the "European Phased Adaptive Approach" schedule, designated for the period through 2020, for implementing the US missile defense development concept, I can say that, in terms of its scope and military-strategy consequences, it surpasses all preceding projects...The present US Administration has not cut a single missile defense program out of those identified by that concept in 2009: neither the volumes of production of new information systems and extended-range interceptor missiles, nor the plans for their delivery and deployment in key regions of the world...

(continued)

Continued: Russia Increases Testing of New Generation of Strategic Missiles

Source: Oleg Falichev, "The 'Sarmat' Will Replace the 'Voyevoda'," *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* Online, 27 January 2016, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/28908>>, accessed 20 March 2016.



Source: <http://army-news.ru/2012/10/atomnaya-podvodnaya-lodka-proekta-955-borej/>

Russian Airborne Expansion on Hiatus

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Airborne (VDV) has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Russian Federation's efforts to increase conventional military capabilities. Last summer it was announced that the VDV would add a third parachute/air assault regiment to each of its divisions, add a new brigade (345th Air Assault Brigade), convert the 38th Signals Regiment to a C2 brigade, and reactivate the 104th Air Assault Division by reorganizing the 31st Air Assault Brigade headquartered at Ulyanovsk. In addition, it was planned to add a tank battalion to each division and brigade, expanding the VDV from 45,000 to 60,000 troops.

Apparently, some of these plans have been put on hold, as the accompanying excerpted articles explain. Although the VDV, has suspended some of its expansion plans (such as additional maneuver regiments in the divisions), other force modernization improvements such as the introduction of new BTRs (BTR-MDM) and BMPs (BMD-4M) and other combat vehicles appear to remain on track. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Airborne Commander, Colonel General Valdimir Shamanov

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Shamanov#/media/File:Vladimir_Shamanov._Cabinet_photo.jpg

Increase in Numerical Strength of Airborne Troops Postponed

The Russian Defense Ministry has reviewed plans for an increase in the numerical strength of the Airborne Troops. It had been envisaged that within the framework of the reform of the Armed Forces additional -- third -- regiments would be created within Airborne Troops divisions. As a result the total strength of the winged infantry was supposed to rise from the present 45,000 to 60,000 paratroopers...The decision to suspend the formation of the new regiments was adopted on 29 January during an extended Defense Ministry collegium session. However, it has only just become known, in the context of the large-scale Airborne Troops exercises that are coming to an end today near Pskov...

Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov, commander of the Airborne Troops, announced the plans for an increase in the numerical strength of the parachute troops in the summer of last year. According to him, this would be done within the framework of the creation of the Rapid Reaction Forces in Russia. The parachute troops are supposed to play the key role in their structure. To this end, three GRU reconnaissance battalions were transferred and made subordinate to the Airborne Troops commander. Furthermore the General Staff was hoping to revive the 104th Airborne Assault Division, which will consist of three regiments stationed in Ulyanovsk, Engels, and Orenburg, and it also intended to create a new airborne assault brigade in Voronezh. Currently the Airborne Troops consist of four divisions, four airborne assault brigades, and one spetsnaz brigade.

Now the implementation of these plans has been postponed until 2020 at the earliest. People at the Defense Ministry explained to Izvestiya that at present the Airborne Troops are facing several large-scale tasks: rearmament with modern models of equipment, the rehearsal of new elements of combat use, and the creation of subunits in areas representing the greatest danger to the country's security. Crimea, for instance...

General Vladimir Shamanov has emphasized repeatedly that the rearming of the troops is proceeding at an accelerated pace. By 2020 the number of modern models of arms and military equipment in the Airborne Troops will exceed 80 percent. That is more than in the Aerospace Forces, the Navy, and the Ground Forces in the same period, but slightly less than in the Strategic Missile Troops -- here the proportion of modern equipment will be at the level of 95 percent. Last year the Airborne Troops acquired three companies of unmanned aerial devices. And 50 state-of-the-art BMD-4M and 30 Rakushka BTRs entered the armory. All Airborne Troops subunits are equipped with the Andromeda-D combat command and control system. At the end of the year the paratroopers acquired six tank companies.

Source: Dmitriy Litovkin, "Increase in Numerical Strength of Airborne Troops Postponed," *Izvestiya Online*, 19 February 2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/604647#ixzz42EPr1gRc>>, accessed 20 March 2016.

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Continued: Russian Airborne Expansion

Source: “Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoygu Has Held Regular Meeting of Military Department Collegium,” *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 29 January 2016, <http://function.mil.ru/news_page/person/more.htm?id=12075558@egNews>, accessed 9 March 2016.

The scale and pace of the rearming of the Airborne Troops is not only impressive but is also, it may be assumed, not cheap. The Defense Ministry justifies this in terms of the increased role of the winged infantry in ensuring the security of the state. Last year not a single exercise or surprise inspection of the military districts took place without the involvement of a significant number of Airborne Troops forces and resources. Three Airborne Troops formations were involved in the Tsentr-2015 exercises. These exercises were deemed to be the biggest since USSR times...

Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoygu Has Held Regular Meeting of Military Department Collegium

A meeting of the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Collegium was held today in Moscow under the supervision of Russian Defense Ministry chief Army General Sergey Shoygu.

The meeting was attended by leaders of the Armed Forces and representatives of state authorities and the Defense Ministry Public Council...

A report was also heard on building up the combat strength of the Airborne Troops (VDV) in the framework of the development of rapid reaction troops...

Referring to the next agenda issue, the defense minister noted the importance of building up the fighting strength of the VDV as part of the development of rapid reaction troops.

It is planned to increase combat capability by improving the fighting strength of the VDV and equipping them with modern and advanced models of weapons and military equipment and reconnaissance and electronic warfare gear.

“Taking into account the necessity to optimize spending on maintenance and equipping of the Armed Forces, today we will discuss proposals on priority measures to increase the fighting strength of the VDV and development of rapid reaction troops,” the head of the military department said...



The Armata Chassis: 5 Years from Announcement to Serial Production

OE Watch Commentary: In March 2016 Sergey Chemezov, head of the Russian state corporation Rostec, announced that the T-14 tank had already begun serial production. If this is true, the T-14 and its Armata chassis have entered serial production less than five years after the 12 May 2011 announcement in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* that Russia had abandoned development of the T-95 (object 195) tank in favor of the development of the Armata chassis and associated T-14 tank. If work on the Armata started around this time, Russia has demonstrated an impressive capability to design and rapidly field new large-end items such as tanks, BTRs, and BMPs, a process which takes much longer than five years in the U.S. military.

The fielding of the Armata chassis appears not to be the exception, but rather the rule, as it apparently takes about five years from the beginning of the Russian design process until serial production begins for most major Ground Forces/Airborne end items, if the initial prototype is deemed viable. The Ground Forces' 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV howitzer (replacement for the Msta-S 2S19 howitzer), the Russian Airborne's 2S36 Zauralets-D mortar/howitzer (replacement for the 2S9 Nona) and the 2S25 Sprut-SD light tank have all taken about five years to get from the issue of requirement/initial design concept to the serial production phase. Problems delaying the production of Russian armaments are usually in regard to the state's financial resources, and not due to bureaucratic, production, or congressional constraints.

The Russian Federation is able to enter serial production quicker than the U.S. due to a much different arms development cycle. Capability development questions are settled in the Russian General Staff, with inputs from the branch chiefs (far fewer bureaucratic hurdles in the Russian system). There also appears to be no bidding process. A manufacturer is simply assigned, and it builds a few prototypes. If the prototype is unacceptable, the manufacturer returns to the design phase. Innovations are

Source: "Tanks A Lot: Russia's Advanced Armata T-14 'Already in Serial Production,'" *Sputnik Online*, 14 March 2016, <<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160314/1036238101/russia-armata-production.html>>, accessed 20 March 2015.

Tanks A Lot: Russia's Advanced Armata T-14 'Already in Serial Production,' "Tanks A Lot: Russia's Advanced Armata T-14 'Already in Serial Production,'" *Sputnik Online*, 14 March 2016, <<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160314/1036238101/russia-armata-production.html>>, accessed 20 March 2015.

...*The National Interest*, quoted a top Russian defense industry executive as saying that Russia's Armata family of combat vehicles, including the advanced T-14 tank, is already in serial production... the news will certainly come as a surprise for many Western analysts who "believed that the Armata family was still in its developmental stages" after its new models took part in the 2015 Victory Day parade in Moscow... referred to Sergey Chemezov, head of the Russian state corporation Rostec, who confirmed in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* that the T-14 is already being mass produced.

Although "Moscow reduces its defense outlays as oil revenues suffer," the Armata main battle tank project will never be put on hold... You can't quit when you're halfway there. Everything that has been started will be finished, and money will be allocated to it," Chemezov said, adding that as for the T-14, "it's already in serial production."

...the T-14, the Armata Universal Combat Platform includes the T-15 heavy infantry fighting vehicle, the T-16 armored recovery vehicle and an upgunned heavy assault armored vehicle, which...has already been dubbed "the Tank Killer" by Russian media.

As far as the T-14 is concerned, it is "a source of major concern for Western armies," including the German Armed Forces..."As a direct response to the development of the T-14, Germany recently launched an effort to upgun the Leopard 2 with a new 130mm cannon and is developing plans to launch a new main battle tank called the Main Ground Combat System...

The Armata tank features sophisticated weaponry, a remote control turret and outer armor that explodes on impact to prevent shells from reaching the crew inside. The tank's interior features a capsule that keeps the crew isolated from ammunition and fuel, which could increase the chances for the crew's survival if the tank is hit. A digital control system directs the tank's movement, tracks targets and activates its defense systems, freeing the crew from routine tasks so they can focus on key combat functions. Currently, the tank sports the standard 125-mm cannon, but, designers say, it could easily be outfitted with a much more powerful 152-mm cannon in the future.

Technological Breakthrough: Russia to Debut 3D Printed Armata Tank

Russian Defense has been widely using the method of creating physical objects in a digital 3D model, or if simply said, 3D printing.

The development of solid objects made of polymer materials at the company 'Electromashina', which is a part of 'Uralvagonzavod' corporation, has been underway for some time now. In the summer of 2015, the industrial 3D-printer was introduced, which was designed to create prototypes and low-volume parts.

metal. One can produce not just a detail, but the complete assembly and check the assembly of all of the mechanical characteristics," Anton Ulrich said.

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Continued: The Armata Chassis: 5 Years from Announcement to Serial Production

accepted or rejected at the prototype phase; many designs make it no further than this phase. If the prototype is acceptable, improvements are made, and a test batch (approximately a battalion set) of vehicles is produced for field testing, which takes approximately a year or two, after which the product is further refined and put into full serial production. If the initial prototype is deemed viable, serial production of a major end item can begin approximately five years after the receipt of requirement and design process begins.

This appears to be the case with the Armata. Prototypes of the Armata chassis (as a BMP and tank) participated at the 9 May 2015 Victory Parade. On 17 November 2015 *Interfax* announced that UralVagonZavod was producing a test batch of 20 T-14s for government trials, and on 29 February 2016 it announced these twenty T-14s were undergoing state trials. Full serial production of the Armata was expected in 2017-2018, but the announcement that serial production had already begun in March 2016 may have been due to many of the design problems being worked out during the course of the T-95 (object 195) project, which shares many features with the Armata and likely had the same design team.

Another reason that Russia is able to reach serial production quickly is the emphasis on interoperability and modularity. All new Russian designs for BTRs and BMPs (Armata, Kyrganets, Atom, BTR-82, BMD-4M) are manufactured to accept BMP-3 turret specifications. Manufacturers only have to design for the weapon capability and turret specification; mobility characteristics are determined by the chassis selected. In situations where the chassis is not sufficient, such as ground pressure issues resulting from heavier loads, instead of developing a new chassis, the existing chassis are heavily modified. For example, the BMD-4M chassis had additional road wheels mounted to support the heavier components of the 2S25 Sprut-SD light tank, and the Armata chassis can have the engine situated in the front (BTR/BMP) or rear (tank), as needed. Russia's unified design standards make many combinations of turrets and chassis possible, despite being produced by different manufacturers, a beneficial situation for the export market.

Source: "Can't Touch This! Russian Armata Tanks to Get New Active Protection System," *Sputnik Online*, 15 March 2016, <<http://sputniknews.com/military/20160315/1036302986/armata-active-protection-system.html>>, accessed 20 March 2016

company 'Electromashina', which is a part of 'Uralvagonzavod' corporation, has been underway for some time now. In the summer of 2015, the industrial 3D-printer was introduced, which was designed to create prototypes and low-volume parts.

"The 3D-printer helps to speed up the trial production. When the designer develops some new product he designs and primarily works with the 3D-computer model first. So, the 3D-printer allows the drawing of fabricated prototype parts," the Head of the Laboratory of Rapid Prototyping 'Electromashina' technologies Anton Ulrich said. According to him, the designer in developing the product can receive the required item on the spot; take into account any errors when running a batch or small batch production. The expert further noted that the technology allows one to bypass the problems that would need to be dealt with in classical ways.

"There is no need to sharpen an item in order to obtain a sample, just to realize that it does not fit and requires a re-run in the production. There is no need to waste metal. One can produce not just a detail, but the complete assembly and check the assembly of all of the mechanical characteristics," Anton Ulrich said.

At the same time, according to the expert, the prototype can be used as a master model to fabricate tools for the manufacture of parts made of metal or plastic. In other words, the prototype parts for the Armata tank and other military vehicles, produced by Uralvagonzavod, can be printed on 3D-printers. The technology is just a step away from the ability to create 3D-printed titanium parts several meters in length...

Can't Touch This! Russian Armata Tanks to Get New Active Protection System
Russian armored units based on the Armata Universal Combat Platform will get new upgraded active protection systems by the end of the year. The new ultraviolet (UV) detectors soon to be installed on T-14 Armata battle tanks and T-15 Armata heavy infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) can detect rockets and grenades approaching from any direction, thus drastically improving the vehicles' active protection systems' efficiency. "The UV detectors have already been installed both on the T-14 tank and on the T-15 IFV and are currently undergoing tests as part of the Afganit active protection system. We intend to complete the project by the end of the year," a source in the Defense Ministry who is familiar with the issue told Izvestia newspaper.

The new detectors trace the UV photons in the trail of ionized air left by a rocket-propelled projectile. The system doesn't just detect a rocket launch; it evaluates the projectile's speed and trajectory, supplying the active protection system with all the data it requires to successfully intercept a threat.

According to the newspaper, the Afganit active protection system previously relied only on small radars installed on four sides of a vehicle to detect incoming projectiles. However, this radar system could theoretically be 'confused' by a large volley of shells, rockets and even fragments of debris flying around during a battle, or even suppressed by enemy electronic countermeasures. The addition of these new UV detectors, however, drastically improves Afganit's efficiency, thus increasing a combat vehicle's chances of survival during fighting.

Source: "Technological Breakthrough: Russia to Debut 3D Printed Armata Tank," 2 February 2016, *Sputnik Online*, <<http://sputniknews.com/military/20160206/1034346115/russia-3D-printed-armata.html>>, accessed 20 March 2015.

(continued)

Continued: The Armata Chassis: 5 Years from Announcement to Serial Production

It appears that cost (both production and operation/maintenance) is a key factor that is considered from the very beginning of development. Innovations that are deemed too costly are weeded out early, the design must not only be combat effective, but also feasible in terms of cost.

In order to develop new technologies and control costs, Russia appears to pursue the incremental “evolutionary,” as opposed to “revolutionary” approach to development and design. Many of the design elements of the T-95 tank prototype are found in the T-14, to include the gun (2A82 125-mm smoothbore gun/ ATGM launcher), active defense system (Afganit), engine (Chelyabinsk A-85-3A X-diesel engine), and several other systems. Russia can apparently overcome any proprietary issues and may “plug-n-play” options and features from different manufacturers as desired. Although Russia will experiment with new innovations (such as double barreled howitzers), it will usually build these innovations on the backs of known and trusted components. For instance, the 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV howitzer has a completely automated turret (new innovation), with plans to reduce the crew to 2-3 personnel, but this turret is on the same chassis that has reliably served Msta-C for many years (there are plans that Koalitsiya-SV will eventually be on an Armata chassis). This system assures that Russian weapons manufacturers never really start from scratch, and allows for the efficiency of smaller production runs.

One advantage that likely allows a quicker run to serial production is Russia’s use of only a few manufacturers. Russia’s primary manufactures of combat vehicles are UralVagonZavod (T-72,T-90, Armata) and KurganMachineZavod (BMP-1, BMP-2, BMP-3). These production lines may be kept “warm” through the steady production of new combat vehicles and the refurbishment of old combat vehicles. UralVagonZavod is currently conducting “frame-off” upgrades of Russia’s entire T-72 fleet, converting them into T-72B3s. Russian manufacturers have also touted the capabilities of new computer software that more quickly facilitates production than traditional paper plans, and, as one accompanying articles discusses, recently introduced 3D printing technology that has also sped development. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T-14_Armata#/media/File:9may2015Moscow-02_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T-14_Armata#/media/File:9may2015Moscow-02_(cropped).jpg)

The Armata: the World’s First Post-War, Third-Generation Tank

Tactical and Technical Specifications of the T-14 Tank

Main gun (2A82)	125 mm	Firing in motion	Engine
Cannon ammunition stores	45 rounds	Commander’s panoramic sight	Four-cycle, X-shaped, 12-cylinder gas turbine super-charger with intermediate air cooling
Automatic loader capacity	32 rounds	Circular view cameras	Carburation System
Combat firing rate	10-12 per min	Heat sensor	Direct fuel injection
Target detection range	>5,000 m	Afganit active defense system	
Target attack range	7,000-8,000 m	Dynamic defense system	
Engine	1200-2000 hp	Fire aiming and control system	
Engine replacement	0.5 hour	Combat C2 and navigation system	
Maximum weight	48 tons	Active counter-mine defense	
Maximum speed	80-90 kph	Auxiliary power plant	
Travel reserve	>500 km		
Armor strength	>900 mm		
Crew	3 personnel		

The Future is Bright for Battalion Tactical Groups

OE Watch Commentary: One lesson Russia learned in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War was the difficulty of deploying troops far from their garrisons. In order to remedy this problem (and several others), Russia downsized from division- to brigade-sized units, better facilitating movement by an “order of magnitude.”

The Russian Federation has also increased its mobility through the use of battalion tactical groups (BTGs). The BTG is an ad hoc formation of a motorized rifle or tank battalion with attachments that has been around in various forms since Soviet times, and is regularly employed by Ground Forces, Airborne, and Naval Infantry units.

The BTG appears to be Russia’s instrument of choice in Eastern Ukraine, prompting some analysts to speculate that Russia was fielding BTGs because it was difficult or impossible to field fully functional brigades. Since Russia now regularly transports brigades and their equipment considerable distances for exercises, it is unlikely that Russia is fielding BTGs in Ukraine due to logistic difficulties, but instead because it believes that the BTG is the most effective formation for combat in those circumstances.

Although the Russian Ground Forces have recently decided to reinstitute divisions into their order of battle, judging by the success Russia has had with BTGs in the last few years, the BTG will likely continue to be found in brigades and Russia’s newly created divisions for the foreseeable future, as the accompanying excerpted article describes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



The Return of the Divisions. Ground Troops Will Rectify ‘Brigade Bias’

The Armed Forces have summarized the final results for the year 2015. As is the custom, first to do this was the minister of defense, to be followed by the commanders in chief and the commanders of the combat arms. How much has the appearance of the army and navy changed, how are our military reacting to the challenges of the times? Colonel General Oleg Salyukov, commander in chief of Ground Troops of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, answered questions put to him by Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer.

[Falichev] During a 12 January conference call at the Russian Federation’s National State Defense Management Center the defense minister spoke about the constitution of three new divisions. What will they comprise, and where is their deployment location?

[Salyukov] The composition of the troop groupings in the strategic and operational sectors is being upgraded for the purpose of reacting to emerging military threats. The basis of these groupings comprises Ground Forces formations and units. They are capable of conducting combat operations in differing geographic and climatic conditions.

Three combined-arms formations will be stationed in the western sector. I particularly want to emphasize that these divisions are not being constituted from scratch but on the basis of the brigades and will surpass them in firepower, in striking power, and will perform missions successfully on a broader front. Ground Forces formations and units are currently acquiring the very latest arms and military equipment, and this is enabling their combat capabilities to be substantially increased.

[Falichev] Why have we again swung from brigades to the establishment of divisions?

[Salyukov] The thing is that in the past we created a certain bias in favor of brigades. At that time we cut practically all the divisions, leaving just one -- the 49th Machine Gun and Artillery Division on the Kuril Islands, where I was division commander, incidentally.

But our country is a large one, with diverse theaters of operations, a fact that cannot be ignored. Highly mobile brigades are needed in some places, divisions in others. Furthermore, all troop groupings are created for specific missions, and the divisional structure combines well with regimental and brigade structures. I would add that it was precisely the no-notice inspections that prompted us to take this decision...

There is something else that is equally important. A good “cadre window” for professional development is opening, the opportunity to experience the level of divisional commander. Previously, the position of brigade commander was immediately followed by that of army commander or his deputy, chief of staff, for which the acquired knowledge and experience may prove inadequate.

Believe me, we are not suffering from gigantism, figuratively speaking, and it is not a case of the country’s being militarized. No less importance is being given to small subunits, battalion tactical groups in particular. A painstaking analysis conducted in 2014-2015 by the Ground Forces High Command into the constitution, support, and employment of task forces by the armed forces of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, and the world’s leading countries has enabled us to establish the optimal composition of battalion task forces in Ground Forces’ units.

Commander of the Russian Ground Forces, Colonel General Oleg Salyukov
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Salyukov

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Continued: The Future is Bright for Battalion Tactical Groups

Source: Oleg Falichev, "The Return of the Divisions. Ground Troops Will Rectify 'Brigade Bias,'" *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 10 February 2016, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29096>>, accessed 20 March 2016.



Battalion tactical groups based on motorized infantry or tank battalions have now been constituted and readied for operations in all formations. These are self-sufficient subunits capable at any moment of accomplishing an assigned mission. In the future they will be comprised solely of men serving on a contract. Right now the main emphasis is being placed on training battalion task force command and control elements for operations in difficult conditions, on unfamiliar terrain...

Keeping NBC Relevant Flame Weapons in the Russian Armed Forces

By Charles Bartles

The Russian Nuclear, Biological, And Chemical (NBC) Defense Troops are tasked with identifying NBC threats in the environment, performing decontamination of troops and equipment, and most interestingly, employing aerosols and flame weapons to engage the enemy. In most militaries, flame weapons have traditionally belonged to the NBC Troops. The popularity of such weapons has waned significantly throughout the world, but not so in the Russian Armed Forces. While the utility of NBC Troops in today's asymmetric warfare is questioned in other armies, Russian NBC Troops firm grasp of flame weapons keeps them relevant, engaged, and makes them an important asset in the Russian maneuver commander's toolbox.

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Flame_2015.pdf

Geogry Mirsky's Final Interviews

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 January 2016 Georgy Mirsky, a famous Middle East expert and professor, passed away. He was 89 years old. He was a keen observer and commentator of Russia and Russia's foreign policy, who spoke out bravely against both the Soviet regime and Vladimir Putin's government, and raised an entire generation of Russia's Middle East experts. Even those in Russia who disagreed with his views deeply respected him. The accompanying excerpts are among the last interviews of his life.

Both are from *Argumenty i Fakty*, a paper that in recent years turned decisively pro-Putin. The first is from 29 January 2016, where Mirsky remembers his life as a lecturer during the Soviet era. He highlights anti-Semitic sentiment at the time, including questions from audiences who had hoped that prominent dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn were really Jewish. He remembers Yevgeniy Primakov, Russia's former prime minister and foreign affairs minister, whom he knew very well since his college years. He recalls anti-American sentiment in the Soviet Union, where people believed that the American president was ready any minute to send nuclear weapons towards the Soviet Union. He highlights that he himself was never a "Soviet person," and that the KGB failed to recruit him.

The second excerpt is from 11 December, 2015, where Mirsky highlights the current atmosphere in Russia. He describes the current environment of revival of pro-Stalin thought, which he tried to counter to no avail by describing Stalin's crimes to students. He feels that, while the era of Stalinist repressions will not return to Russia, currently in Russia the atmosphere is fiercely anti-American, both at the very top level of the government, and down below. At the same time, he did not believe this situation was doomed to remain. Europe is different, he writes; while it too had its share of dictators, it did not have such element of subservience in its culture as that of Russia. He mentions that the Russians he met in America (where he lived for 9 years) are different, and therefore there is nothing inherent in Russian genes that allows *I saw*

Source: Vitaly Tseplyaev, "«Человек антисоветский». Последнее интервью политолога Мирского «АиФ»" ('An Anti-Soviet Person.' Political Scientist Mirsky's Last Interview with AiF), *Argumenty i Fakty (Argument and Facts, or AiF)*, 29 January 2016. http://www.aif.ru/society/people/chelovek_antisovetskiy_posledne_intervyu_politologa_mirskogo_aif

...On 26 January passed away Georgy Mirsky - an outstanding scientist, one of the most famous Russian Orientalists. He did barely did not make it to 90 and even in such advanced years he worked actively, looked cheerful and tireless.

"AIF" publishes an interview with Mirsky, which he gave to the weekly paper shortly before his death

..I got used to long lectures to a long conversations. To the fact that you need to orient yourself instantly. Because people asked the most tricky questions. People often asked, for example: Is it true that the real last name of Sakahrov—Tsukerman Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn's – Solzhenitser? And I had to disappoint the comrades asking this question, say that they were both purely Russian.

About Primakov

I knew him very well. Against the background of our general slacking off, carelessness, he was completely different - very businesslike, hard-working, efficient and conscientious. In this sense, he was absolutely not a Russian person. Although, of course, he was not Russian - Jewish on both sides ... But at the same time - a typical Soviet person! At 100%! Not I - no, I am completely anti-Soviet. And he—Soviet...

By the way, the KGB failed to recruit me... they gave up on me but got their revenge. For many years I was not allowed abroad - anywhere other than Poland and GDR [German Democratic Republic, East Germany], perhaps...

Source: Vitaly Tseplyaev, "Георгий Мирский: «На Западе просто не понимают Россию»" ('Georgy Mirsky: 'In the West They Simply don't Understand Russia), *Argumenty i Fakty (Argument and Facts)*, 11 December 2015. http://www.aif.ru/society/people/chelovek_antisovetskiy_posledne_intervyu_politologa_mirskogo_aif

....The majority of people [right now] do not know anything about Stalin's crimes, although many books are written about this. I tell the students ... But this does not make an impression. They repeat the same, "Stalin won the war, and in addition there was no theft and corruption. And this is partly true: what was there to steal? ... Finally, Stalin is considered a strong man who crushed all the enemies, fought against the Americans. I of course, I do not believe that Stalinist times will return to us. But the spirit of the time is now again this—enemies are everywhere, America is "just dreaming" for Russia not to exist in the world. This is said at the very top. And at the bottom there is terrible anti-Americanism."...

many Russians in America—they are different. I disagree that in our genes there is some kind of inherent defect, which is conducive to appearances of Ivan the Terrible, Peter the First, Stalin...

In the end, Europe had enough despots, but this illness ended.

(continued)

Continued: Geogry Mirsky's Final Interviews

dictators such as Stalin to take power. He ends the interview by highlighting that Russian culture contains an element of subservience—recognized by Russia's classic writers—but it has the capacity to change. "We are not doomed to live with it [subservience] forever. I will never believe this!" **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Vitaly Tseplyaev, "«Человек антисоветский». Последнее интервью политолога Мирского «АиФ»" ('An Anti-Soviet Person.' Political Scientist Mirsky's Last Interview with AiF), Argumenty i Fakty (Argument and Facts, or AiF), 29 January 2016. http://www.aif.ru/society/people/chelovek_antisovetskiy_posledne_intervyu_politologa_mirskogo_aif

This is so and not so... Knighthood traditions in Europe were strong... And in us, of course, servility is sitting very deep, but it cannot remain same forever!..[within the Russian people]there are genes of servility, subservience. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Berdyaev, all recognized this... But this does not mean that we are doomed to live with it forever. I will never agree with this!

Following Russia's forcible seizure of Crimea in February-March 2014 and its involvement in destabilizing southeastern Ukraine, much expert commentary has advanced the idea that Moscow's use of military power was rooted in 'hybrid warfare.' This non-Russian concept, which blurs the distinction between war and peace and uses military force in combination with other forces and soft power elements, restricts the scope to examine Russia's use of force in Ukraine. In fact, the 'hybrid warfare' concept is entirely alien to Russian military science and is only discussed by Russian military theorists and specialists in reference to assessing developments in foreign military approaches to warfare.

Source: http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/McDermott/Brotherhood_McDermott_2015.pdf



Brothers Disunited: Russia's Use of Military Power in Ukraine, by Roger N. McDermott, UK

Russian Expert: Moscow and Damascus Playing a Game with the West

Source: Yulia Reprintseva, “Востоковед Александр Шумилин: ‘Сирия и Москва ведут игру с Западом’ (Orientalist Alexander Shumilin, ‘Syria and Moscow are Playing a Game with the West’), *Novaya Gazeta*, 17 February 2016. <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/71908.html>

OE Watch Commentary: On 17 February 17 2016 *Novaya Gazeta*, one of the few remaining independent newspapers in Russia, published an interview with Alexander Shumilin, Director of the Center for the Analysis of Middle East Conflicts with the Institute for US and Canadian Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences. The interview is a response to the partial cessation of hostilities that major powers, including the US and Russia, had agreed upon in Munich on 12 February 2016. Following the agreement, Moscow continued its bombing campaign while Assad claimed he will not stop fighting until he regains all of Syria’s territory.

Shumilin begins with commenting on a view a number of Russian experts expressed in business-oriented *Kommersant* shortly after the Munich agreement, who believe Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is drawing Moscow into Syria, in essence, holding Moscow “hostage.” Shumilin disagrees. He believes it is naïve to think that Assad could influence Moscow this way when Moscow holds all the cards and has control over Assad. He highlights that it is Moscow that predominantly is bombing in Syria, not Assad. For each of Assad’s planes, Moscow has two, he says. While Assad’s statements tend to be stronger than Moscow’s, in principle both sides agree. Shumilin adds that Assad has to make strong statements for not only foreign, but also domestic purposes—he needs to maintain the morale of his army to prevent desertion. In a situation such as the Moscow-Damascus alliance, each side would be playing a game of trying to pull a rope towards itself, as Shumilin describes, but all depends on the strong player, and in this game Moscow is that player.

Shumilin also asserts that Moscow and Damascus are playing a game with the West, a game where Moscow will say that it asked Assad to abide by the partial truce, but he refused to cooperate. In reality, however, according to Shumilin, Moscow negotiated the Munich agreement, and Moscow should tell Assad to abide by it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Kommersant newspaper experts have already commented on Assad’s recent statement. They assert that the head of Syria, by making statements about the impossibility of the ceasefire and thereby denying the Munich agreement, is trying to dictate his own conditions to Moscow. The very situation in Syria is, “one among examples of how great powers, drawn into local conflicts on the side of the administered countries often become their hostages.”

Director of the Center for the Analysis of Middle East Conflicts with the Institute for US and Canadian Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences Alexander Shumilin commented on the situation for Novaya Gazeta—the expert fundamentally disagrees with the conclusions of his colleagues and believes that the Syrian President together with Russia are playing a game with the West.

Is Syria really trying to manipulate Moscow?

Of course, there is manipulation. This is a necessary process. At different moments in the tandem Moscow-Damascus one side or the other pulls the rope. In this situation, everything depends on the behavior of the strong player. In this tandem that is Moscow. The agreements reached in Munich were with it [Moscow], not with Damascus, and it should influence Damascus.

But Damascus has decided to dig in its heels, and this can be seen as a certain game. It is hard to imagine that Assad may resist seriously, being completely dependent on Moscow and Tehran. He plays the game of an uncompromising, harsh ruler, based on domestic consumption in order to prevent any kind of desertion from his army. These concerns of his are quite real.

It turns out that from Assad’s side there is a double game? In the external field, and on the internal one?

There is a much stronger need for Assad to carry out this game than for Russia. He has to maintain the morale of his army. Otherwise, a stop in the offensive would lead to confusion and possible change in the balance of forces on the battlefield. In this situation, it would mean a certain future setback for him. He was not ready for this.

But it seems that Moscow is not ready for this also. This failure will also be its failure. So here games are being played out on the rhetorical level. I will explain. Moscow promised in Munich to work on Assad and to achieve a truce, and it sort of is fulfilling its promise, but if once Assad is not being cooperative, Moscow threw up his hands – what, they say, can we do?

I reject the viewpoint that Assad is drawing in and influencing (Moscow - Ed.). To say that he is drawing in poor Moscow – is naïve. Of course, he can do nothing without Moscow’s regulations. Russia is mainly bombing, not Assad. Assad has one plane, Russia—two. Such is the arrangement. The problem is that Moscow’s and Assad’s reading of the situation on the battlefield is same. Since this is the same, the conclusions are the same...

Russia Lends \$200 Million to Armenia to Buy Weapons

OE Watch Commentary: In late February 2016 Western and Russian sources reported that Moscow has provided Armenia a \$200 million loan for purchasing Russian weapons in the next two years at a low (3 percent) interest rate. The accompanying excerpt from a blog in *Kavkazskiy Uzel* by Albert Voskanyan presents an Armenian perspective on this issue.

Voskanyan believes that Moscow is driven primarily by geopolitics in this case, not economics. Russia needs to preserve balance in the South Caucasus, particularly in light of deteriorating relations with Turkey and increased threats from radical Islamism. He that Armenia, as a “Christian” country, remains Moscow’s strongest ally in the South Caucasus. “Azerbaijan does not want to spoil relations with Turkey, which, in turn, would like to create a new headache for Russia - to reopen the Karabakh conflict, while it [Russia] is busy in the Middle East,” writes Voskanyan about the Nagorno-Karabakh region, disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He adds, “Against this background, Russia is arming Armenia and its base in Armenia, thereby establishing a certain balance in the region.”

Broadly speaking, Voskanyan concedes that Russia often pursues arms trade for the sake of arms trade, rather than for political purposes, but not in the South Caucasus. “[I]f in some regions, Russia does not control the situation and doesn’t know in which direction the weapons it sold will fire, in our region, to the contrary, much is under its control. And I am sure, if there are no signals from its [Russia’s] side, neither side of the conflict will begin active military operations.” He concludes that if it was in Moscow’s geostrategic interest, it would offer weapons to Armenia without requiring financial compensation at all. Moreover, Russia’s policy in the South Caucasus remains connected to the situation in the Middle East. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Albert Voskanyan, “Предоставление кредита Армении со стороны России или сохранение баланса в регионе” (Credit Offer to Armenia from Russia or Maintaining Balance in the Region”), *Kavkazskiy Uzel (Caucasian Knot)*, 23 February 2016. <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/blogs/929/posts/23919>

Information came through that Russia provided Armenia with a loan of \$ 200 million for purchasing Russian arms in the next two years and with a very low percentage (3% annually).

Under the agreement, Armenia uses the credit until the end of 2017 and will have to pay in Russian rubles...

Just over a year ago, Azerbaijan purchased \$1 billion worth of modern weapons from Russia...

Against the background of deteriorating relations with Turkey, and in view of the fact that among Christian countries Armenia is closest to a stronghold of Islamists in Syria and Iraq: Armenia’s south, and Iraqi Kurdistan share together approximately 200 km of Persian land, Russia dramatically enhances fighting capabilities of its ally in the CSTO – Armenia. Also, Russia has strengthened its military base located in Gyumri (Armenia), and continues to do so, with personnel and equipment...

...Azerbaijan does not want to spoil relations with Turkey, which, in turn, would like to create a new headache for Russia - to reopen the Karabakh conflict, while it [Russia] is busy in the Middle East. Against this background, Russia is arming Armenia and its base in Armenia, thereby establishing a certain balance in the region.

At one time there was much outrage when Azerbaijan purchased modern weapons from Russia. But there were opinions were that this is just business and nothing else here... But, actually, it is business....Profits received from weaponry sales are massive...

So weapons are sold. Only if in some regions, Russia does not control the situation and doesn’t know in which direction the weapons it sold will fire, in our region, to the contrary, much is under its control. And I am sure, if there are no signals from its [Russia’s] side, neither side of the conflict will begin active military operations.

Tomorrow the situation could change, Russia will again sell more arms to someone, then to the other side, thus maintaining the balance ... I am confident that, given what has been said, Russia could provide arms to Armenia even without compensation...

In this case, politics are involved, first and foremost. Russia has its own geopolitical interests. Armenia is Russia’s chief military stronghold the south Caucasus mountain range and strengthening its defense capability is connected with the entire foreign policy in the Caucasus, and even in the Middle East ...

The Most Dangerous Man in Russia?

OE Watch Commentary: Twenty years ago this month the first Chechen president, and former Soviet Air Force General, D. Dudayev was killed by a Russian air-strike. While the Chechen separatists fought on to gain a short-term reprieve, it was not long before Russian forces reestablished the Kremlin mandate within the region. The Kremlin leadership regards the relatively peaceful situation today within Chechnya as one of its greatest achievements, with current Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov standing as the centerpiece of this accomplishment. The Kremlin's success in pacifying this region, however, has come at a high price.

The Kremlin's formula for defeating the separatist Chechen insurgency was built around gaining the loyalty of one of the region's powerful clans. The "Chechenization" of the conflict transferred responsibility for defeating the insurgency and maintaining order in the region to the Kadyrov clan in exchange for generous Kremlin support. The process has so evolved over the past decade that not only does Chechnya enjoy a remarkable degree of autonomy (and continues to be a recipient of substantial Kremlin economic largesse), but, more importantly, the Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has also become one of the most powerful figures in Russia today.

In February 2016 Ilya Yashin, one of the few remaining Russian opposition leaders, presented a report, titled: "National Security Threat," which examines Kadyrov, describing in detail how and why he has become a danger to Russia's security. As the brief accompanying excerpt points out, "Kadyrov has created in Chechnya a regime built on his own personal power," effectively silencing any sort of opposition within the region. The report describes that beneath the façade of Chechen stability lies a brutal and corrupt regime, which has now spread beyond Chechnya. Over the past couple of years it appears that Kadyrov, whether acting independently or upon Kremlin orders, has deployed Chechen fighters beyond the region's borders. The report claims that Chechen fighters have allegedly supported the pro-separatist forces in the Donbas. (The full report in English can be accessed here: <http://www.4freerussia.org/wp-content/>

The excerpt goes on to describe the "private army" of roughly 30,000 armed men that Kadyrov has created, which is "loyal only to him." Yashin's report claims that this army is "perhaps the most combat-ready fighting force in modern Russia," suggesting that this force could be employed to further the Chechen leader's ambitions within both the North Caucasus and the wider Russian Federation. The report itself describes how federal security agencies are largely powerless today within Chechnya. Given the long history of antagonism between Russia and Chechnya, Kadyrov's "private army," his oppressive control over the region and personal ambitions could ultimately combine and undermine Russia's national security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "That Long-Awaited Report on Ramzan Kadyrov. The Seven Big Findings About Chechnya's Dictator," *Meduza*, 23 February 2016. <https://meduza.io/en>

On February 23, opposition politician Ilya Yashin presented his new report, "National Security Threat," which examines Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov....

...Kadyrov has created in Chechnya a regime built on his own personal power. Chechnya's parliament, courts, and media all operate under Kadyrov's strict personal control. Political opposition is virtually outlawed. In elections, Vladimir Putin and the ruling political party United Russia regularly receive 99.9 percent of the vote. Kadyrov calls human rights activists "enemies of the people," and he supports the imprisonment of individuals who organize protests....

...Kadyrov has created his own private army. The Chechen Republic has roughly 30,000 armed men at its disposal. Kadyrov recruits ethnic Chechens who are loyal only to him. Yashin's report describes these soldiers as "perhaps the most combat-ready fighting force in modern Russia." The core of this group is made up of former separatists whom Kadyrov has amnestied. Soldiers from these Chechen units fought in eastern Ukraine against the Ukrainian army....



Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Will the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act Make it to 20?

OE Watch Commentary: NATO-Russian relations have deteriorated significantly since Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Cooperation and discussion within the NATO-Russian Council was suspended in April 2014, followed by the Kremlin's release of a new security strategy in December 2015, where it designated NATO expansion as a threat to the country's security. The worsening of relations has prompted some NATO members to question the utility of abiding by the provisions of the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act, particularly the issue of permanently deploying NATO forces within new member states. As the first two accompanying excerpts point out, the fundamental premise of the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act (the notion that Russia and NATO must cooperate to ensure European security) has been severely damaged by Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The first excerpt includes a quote from the Estonian president, who points out that when the Founding Act was signed, "a force larger than a brigade per state was believed to be large at that moment," but that, given the current security situation, "such a narrow interpretation of the treaty looks odd." The second excerpt, from a Polish source, echoes this sentiment, suggesting that the 1997 agreement relegates new NATO members as "second-class," since the "agreement assumes that no serious changes will be made in regard to the stationing of troops in our region." According to this Polish author, merely "reinforcing [NATO's] eastern flank" is the "sad reality" which the Polish people must live with.

On the other side, Russian officials have a far different interpretation as to the reasons behind the strain in NATO-Russian relations. The Kremlin leadership claims that it has been the aggressive expansion of the NATO alliance which has upset the balance of European security. The third excerpt comes from a long interview that Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev, regarded as one of the Russian president's closest advisers, gave to *Krasnaya Zvezda* in January 2016. In this interview, he claims that Russia was assured that when NATO expanded, "military bases and weapons of aggression would not be deployed on those states' territory," but the Alliance has not kept its word, and, thus, he rhetorically asks "how can there be any talk of trust?" He asserts that it was Brussels which called for the "curtailment of cooperation between Russia and NATO," apparently forgetting about Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support of separatists in Ukraine, which prompted this move.

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which stated that the two sides would not regard each other as adversaries. As NATO continues to adopt measures to defend and reassure those members closest to Russian borders, the Kremlin leadership will likely respond in kind. The Founding Act's goal of "overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation" appears farther away than ever. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Estonian President Deems Restrictions on NATO Military Presence near Russian Borders to Be Obsolete," *Interfax*, 24 February 2016.

...The treaty signed in 1997, which limited the military presence of NATO forces in the territories of new states, did not envisage the current security situation, he said in an interview published by the Monday issue of the newspaper Eesti Päevaleht.

"It says that large permanent forces will not be deployed in the territories of new member states under the current and forecasted security situation. A force larger than a brigade per state was believed to be large at that moment. Besides, the 2016 security levels were not forecasted 20 years ago," the chief of state said. "So, yes, such a narrow interpretation of the treaty looks odd," the president said.

...It is hard to accept this, but it is the product of our NATO status as a second-class member. The agreement that was made with Russia in 1997, before we joined NATO, is still of paramount importance to the alliance's old member states (those who belong to the group of first-class members). The agreement assumes that no serious changes will be made in regard to the stationing of troops in our region. In other words, it assumes that no permanent bases will be established on new member states' territories.

Moscow has already managed to trample this agreement on several occasions, however, as we can see, Russia can get away with more than others can. One must speak openly about the unequal treatment of NATO members. For the time being, it is only possible to reinforce the eastern flank and this is also something that the Polish people should be frankly told, without sugarcoating the sad reality.

Source: Jerzy Haszczyński, "The Legend of Permanent NATO Bases in Poland," *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 January 2016.

(continued)

Continued: Will the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act Make it to 20?

...[KZ] How do you regard the intensification of NATO forces' presence in Central and East European countries?

[NP] During the years of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact's existence, NATO consisted of 12 member-countries. We were being assured that the North Atlantic Alliance would not expand but, in the event, NATO today already unites 28 states.

When NATO was admitting East European countries into its alliance, we were being told that military bases and weapons of aggression would not be deployed on those states' territory. In practice, everything is happening in precisely the opposite way. We are seeing a demonstrative rise in NATO's military activity, the replacement of US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe with new types, and we are hearing hostile statements by NATO generals in regard to our country.

This is all happening contrary to the bloc's obligations under the 1997 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which remains the official basis of Russia – NATO relations.

How can there be any talk of trust? You can see for yourselves what NATO promises while not keeping any promises in relation to our country or taking account of our national interests. And the curtailment of cooperation between Russia and NATO at the initiative of Brussels is creating even greater potential for mistrust and increased tension.

At the same time, I would like to emphasize that we do not intend to be drawn into the senseless confrontation which is being resolutely imposed on us. The RF is ready, as before, to develop relations with NATO, but only on condition of having Russia's legitimate interests taken into account and of respect for international-law norms by the alliance....

Source: “Секретарь Совета Безопасности РФ Николай ПАТРУШЕВ: ‘Мы не намерены ввязываться в бессмысленную конфронтацию,’” [Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev: “We Do Not Intend To Be Drawn into a Senseless Confrontation] *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 31 January 2016.
<http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/syria/item/27518-my-ne-namereny-vvyazyvatsya-v-bessmyslennuyu-konfrontatsiyu>



Restructuring Russia's Military Logistic Warehouse System

OE Watch Commentary: Late last year the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced it was going to consolidate and streamline the military's logistic warehouse storage system. As the accompanying excerpt points out, by 2020 it plans to replace the existing 330 bases and warehouses on Russian territory with the creation of 24 "transshipment logistics complexes (PLK)." The excerpt claims that this consolidation will not only simplify logistics but also save the MoD billions of rubles in not having to service the currently existing 330 facilities. The move will also release more than 50,000 service personnel, which may be a euphemism for job cuts.

This consolidation and construction of these new PLKs is an expensive proposition, and, given Russia's current economic challenges, the Russian defense minister has stated that "the military are working on the question of attracting private investments to 'reduce the burden on the federal budget.'" According to the article, these private investors will receive subsidies in exchange for compensation of part of the loan interest rate, though the exact details of this system have yet to be worked out. Nor does the article mention how the MoD plans to sell off and liquidate the old logistic facilities; presumably these assets could be used as collateral to attract private investors.

In late 2008 former Russian Defense Minister Serdyukov ruffled a lot of feathers when he announced a massive reorganization of the military, removing and streamlining much of the old Soviet structure. Some analysts claim that the "fruits" of this restructuring became evident six years later in the successful seizure of the Crimea. Regardless, when he was removed from this position in late 2012, many pointed to his earlier reform efforts as one of the proximate causes (allegations of corruption also played a role). Since they touch upon any number of vested interests, reducing and consolidating military structures tend to be risky propositions. As the Russian military continues to reform and modernize its logistical infrastructure, it may be worth recalling the shady circumstances regarding sales of excess property which led to the dismissal of the former defense minister. This will not be an easy process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Ivan Safronov, "“Минобороны меняет склады на комплексы. Военную технику и материалы будут хранить по-новому” [Defence Ministry Exchanges Warehouses for Complexes; Military Equipment and Materials Will Be Stored in New Way], *Kommersant Online*, 29 February 2016. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2926598>

Kommersant has learned the details behind the creation of 24 Russian Federation Defense Ministry transshipment logistics complexes (PLK), which by 2020 should replace the existing 330 bases and warehouses on Russian territory. The military calculates that the reform will not only simplify logistics, but also will also lead to savings: the operation of the complexes is estimated at 14.8 billion rubles annually, which is two times less than the cost of servicing the currently existing 330 facilities.

According to what *Kommersant* was told, to reduce the burden on the federal budget the Defense Ministry has already turned to private investors who are prepared to help them build six PLKs in three military districts.

Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu first announced plans to create 24 PLKs during an enlarged board meeting of the Ministry of Defense in December 2015. "Replacing the obsolete bases and warehouses will release more than 50,000 service personnel and reduce the annual costs of maintaining the infrastructure," he said, adding that all the savings will be directed "at making up the deficit in areas of ongoing expenditure."

According to *Kommersant's* information, the current system for storage of material resources consists of 330 facilities and their annual maintenance costs the military 29.4 billion rubles. "Many buildings are physically obsolete, most of them do not meet the requirements of operational warehousing functions and fire safety," *Kommersant's* source at the Defense Ministry said. "The appearance of the PLKs will not only make it possible to reduce costs by almost double, to 14.8 billion rubles, but also will expand the logistical capabilities for supplying the army."...

...The military expects the construction of all 24 PLKs to be completed by 2020. The Defense Ministry acknowledges that the work of selecting materials for the construction work is complicated by the use of outdated departmental rules....

...In this regard, the military has had to turn to private investors. During the last meeting on PLKs, Mr. Shoygu stated that the military are working on the question of attracting private investments to "reduce the burden on the federal budget." As *Kommersant's* source in the department explained, it is about a mechanism of project agreements — the receipt of subsidies in exchange for compensation of part of the loan interest rate....

Russia's Bridge to Crimea

OE Watch Commentary: Russia recently marked the two-year anniversary of the Crimean annexation with celebrations, speeches and high-level visits to the peninsula. The Kremlin leadership may have been trying to re-spark the surge of patriotism which burned within Russia after the initial seizure of the peninsula in March 2014. Despite the festivities, some of this patriotic fervor has diminished as a result of the painful consequences of this annexation (e.g., economic sanctions, a tarnished international image, the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, etc.). Still, there is absolutely zero indication that the Kremlin has any intention to reverse its position regarding Crimea.

To mark the occasion, President Putin visited the construction site of the bridge which will link Crimea to the Krasnodar region on the Russian mainland. Preliminary work on the 19-km-long bridge has been going on for months, and, as the first excerpt indicates, the start of motor and rail traffic is scheduled to begin on December 18, 2018. Besides personally checking on the bridge's progress, Putin also stressed the necessity of upgrading the entire transport infrastructure in the peninsula, including a highway from Kerch to Simferopol, to avoid traffic congestion. Infrastructure development, including new road construction, remains one of the Kremlin's most difficult challenges.

The Russian leadership perceives the linking of Russia to Crimea as more than a mere construction project. As the second excerpt points out, during his visit Putin called the construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait "a historic mission," which, though attempted in the past, had never been realized. Once completed, the bridge will not only simplify access to this peninsula, but also serve as a permanent reminder of Russia's claim to this territory. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Crimea's Transport Infrastructure Needs to Be Developed Synchronously with Kerch Bridge Construction – Putin," *Interfax*, 18 March 2016.

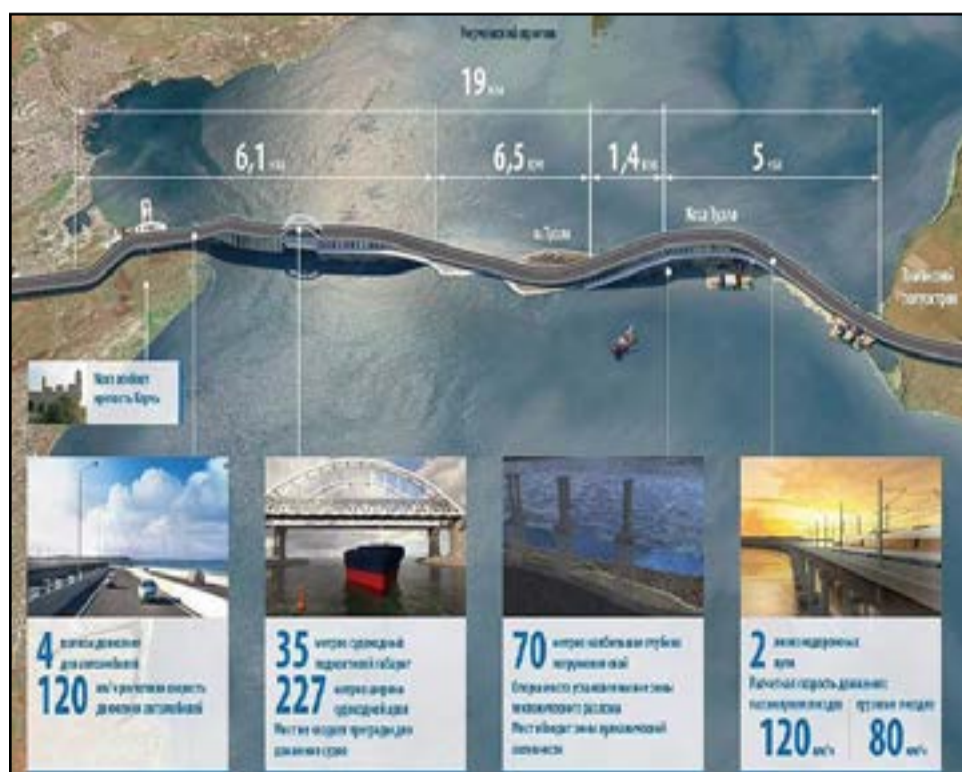
TUZLA ISLAND (Crimea) Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the construction of the Kerch Bridge needs to be linked to a higher throughput capacity and an upgrade of the entire transport infrastructure in the peninsula, including a highway from Kerch to Simferopol.

The head of state also said he hopes the pace of the work, which has been taken in the construction, will be kept.

"I hope that the pace taken in the works will be preserved. I recall, according to the plans, the start of motor and rail traffic is scheduled on December 18, 2018. And here, I want to stress the following: a rise in the throughput capacity and the upgrading of the entire transport infrastructure in Crimea, including a highway from Kerch to Simferopol, needs to link to the bridge construction," Putin said at a meeting on socio-economic development in the region on Friday....

...It is planned for the bridge to connect the Crimean Peninsula with the Russian mainland both by a highway and a railway. The projected throughput capacity of the highway (four lanes will be built) is 40,000 vehicles a day. The railway will include two tracks with a daily throughput capacity of 47 pairs of trains. An arch-shaped span, 227 meters long and 35 meters high, is envisaged for the passage of ships.

In December 2018, bridge traffic will be in working mode. In the summer of 2019, it is due to be put into operation.



Artist Rendition of Kerch Strait Bridge linking Russia to Crimea.
Source: kerch-most.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin called the construction of a bridge across the Kerch Strait "a historic mission," which could not have been fulfilled during the whole previous century.

At a meeting on socio-economic development in Crimea and Sevastopol the president recalled that at first the construction of the bridge was planned back under Nicholas II in 1910, but the First World War did not allow for the launching of these works.

In 1930, Soviet engineers drafted a railway project from Kherson to Poti also through this section, but the Great Patriotic War hampered this, Putin said....

... "Our predecessors understood the importance of this bridge crossing between Crimea and the Caucasus and sought to implement this project long ago. We will hope that we will fulfill this historical mission," Putin said.

Source: "Historic mission to build bridge to Crimea should be fulfilled – Putin," *Interfax*, 18 March 2016.

Ice Breakers Don't Make the Cut

OE Watch Commentary: The realities of the budget are slowing down the acquisition of new Russian icebreakers. Russia has the world's largest icebreaker fleet, but will have to continue using the old ships until the budget allows the construction of new ones. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The strained Russian economy does not allow for major investments in new icebreakers.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, <http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/atle-staalesen>, 16 March 2016

Crisis-ridden government cuts money for icebreakers

The icebreaker program is on the cut-list along with 41 other federal investment projects. The list was discussed in a meeting between President Putin and key government ministers. The 42 projects include investment amounting to 347.3 billion rubles, of which credits were to account for 235.5 billion.

The meeting revealed major differences in the position of the country's Central Bank and the Ministry of Economic Development. While the former proposes to boost federal project financing in a bid to vitalize the economy, the latter wants to proceed with the cut-plan.

Russia is in the process of unfolding a major icebreaker program, which includes both nuclear-powered and conventional diesel-engine vessels. The jewel in the program is the LK-60 (project 22220) icebreaker, which will be able to ship through three-meter-thick ice. At least two LK-60 vessels are being built. The first one of them, the Arktika, is to be ready for service in 2019.

Russia is also building the world's biggest diesel-engine icebreakers, the LK-25 (project 22600). The first vessel of this type, named “Viktor Chernomyrdin” is being built by the Russian state company Rosmorport and is significantly behind schedule.

Airborne Spetsnaz Forces to Jump onto Arctic Ice Floe

OE Watch Commentary: It is spring and a young paratrooper's thoughts turn to extreme jumping. Last April Russian airborne troopers made their first ice floe drop in support of a search-and-rescue training exercise that moved toward the North Pole. While the bulk of the 98th Guards Airborne Division still uses the D-10 standard parachute, the division conducted over 500 Arbalet drops in the Arctic last April.

This April will be equally enjoyable for the division scouts and other Arbalet-equipped jumpers. The rectangular steerable parachute is very capable and deploys an initial drogue chute for stability. Russian Airborne do not yell “Geronimo” when they exit the aircraft. Perhaps these Arctic paratroopers will yell “Nanook”. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: TASS, <http://tass.ru>, 17 February 2016

VDV Special Forces to Land on Drifting Arctic Ice in Spring

“According to the training plan VDV Special Forces subunits will be deployed to the Arctic. The plan is to make an airborne landing under severe Arctic conditions onto a limited area like, for example, a drifting ice floe. The training is expected in March-April of this year,” Kochetkov said.

He stated that the military are using the Arbalet-2 [Crossbow] modernized steerable parachute system that was designed for reconnaissance units and VDV Spetsnaz. The general pointed out that at present tests of the system are being completed together with oxygen equipment that will allow airborne deployments from altitudes of up to eight kilometers [4.9 miles].

Arbalet-2 is designed to enable a parachutist to jump safely in full flight gear weighing up to 150 kilograms [330 pounds] at aircraft speeds up to 350 kilometers per hour [217 miles per hour]. It can be used in the range of temperatures from minus 35 to plus 35 degrees Celsius [-31° to 95° Fahrenheit].

The Russian Federation Defense Ministry had earlier announced plans to conduct a mass air drop in the North Pole region in the first half of 2016. The first mass air drop in the Arctic in Russian history was conducted in the spring of 2014 -- back then a battalion of the 98th Airborne Division, numbering 350 men, landed onto Kotelny Island (New Siberian Islands).

“Major General Vladimir Kochetkov, deputy commander of the Airborne Forces stated that in March-April 2016, Airborne Troops (VDV) and Special Forces (Spetsnaz) will conduct airborne landings in the Arctic, including training jumps onto drifting ice floes.”

Getting Ready for the Exercise Season

OE Watch Commentary: The 200th Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade and the 61st Naval Infantry Brigade conducted amphibious landings from large amphibious ships at the Dudinka river port and on various Arctic islands last year. Amphibious assault landings are complex, involving coordinating air and shipborne fires while moving vehicles and personnel to shore in a coordinated manner. One of the first steps is getting the gear on ships in a manner where it can be quickly off-loaded. That the 200th Motorized Rifle Brigade is doing this training now indicates that it may have an amphibious exercise during the coming spring or summer.

The Northern Fleet's Gerogiy Pobedonosets and Kondopoga are both Ropucha-class large landing craft commissioned in 1985 and 1976 respectively. They were built in Gdansk, Poland, and can transport up to 500 tons of vehicles or cargo and 225 assault troops. They are roll-on roll-off vessels (RO-RO) designed for drive-on loading and discharge, as well as dockside crane loading. Each is 112 meters long with a beam of 15 meters, displaces 4080 tons and has a draft of 3.7 meters. Both vessels have long service with the Northern Fleet and should get the soldiers and naval infantry on the beach in good order during the coming training year. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Sleeve Insignia of the Russian Northern Fleet
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/09/Sleeve_Insignia_of_the_Russian_Northern_Fleet.svg/2000px-Sleeve_Insignia_of_the_Russian_Northern_Fleet.svg.png

“The crew of the large amphibious warfare ship (BDK) Kondopoga, together with subunits from Northern Fleet formations of ground and coastal troops, practiced the tasks involved in preparations for loading Arctic military equipment onto a double-decked vessel.”

Source: Northern Fleet Press Service, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <http://www.mil.ru>, 2 March 2016.

Crew of Large Amphibious Warfare ship Kondopoga and Arctic Motorized Rifle Troops practice loading military equipment aboard ship

The training was held at Guba Gryaznaya, Kola Bay. The activities involved all-terrain military vehicles in service with the Northern Fleet Arctic motorized rifle brigade, including TTM-4902PS-10 articulated twin-chassis amphibious snow and swamp vehicles.

During the training exercise, the crew of the BDK Kondopoga practiced aspects of ship maneuver and cargo balancing when receiving naval infantry, while driver-mechanics improved their skills in driving onto the landing ship's twin deck.

These activities are an integral part of combat training of driver-mechanics of subunits of Northern Fleet ground and coastal troops. In the first phase the training of servicemen takes place at the formations' ranges where they develop a sense of the size of the vehicles and how to control them in a confined space and maneuvering the vehicle according to orders from the load commander.



From Polar Seas to Moscow?

OE Watch Commentary: The retirement of Admiral Viktor Chirkov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy, is news since his replacement may indicate changing Russian naval priorities. Admiral Chirkov's sea service was as a surface warship officer with the Pacific and Baltic Fleets, while Admiral Vladimir Korolyov his probable successor, is a submariner with extensive service in the Northern Sea Fleet and Command of the Black Sea Fleet. He is currently commander of the Northern Fleet. The Northern Fleet commander-in-chief has always been an important position in the Russian and Soviet Navy. The submarine nuclear missile fleet has always worked from Arctic waters and the Northern Fleet is now a strategic command equal to that of the four military districts. The Russian emphasis on defense of the Arctic carries additional reasons to put their best and brightest officers in Polar Waters-and to consider them for highest level command. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Admiral Viktor Chirkov

Source: http://vestnikkavkaza.net/upload2/files/vice-admiral_Chirkov.jpg

Source: Trude Pettersen, *The Independent Barents Observer*, <http://www.thebarentsoberserver.com>, 14 March 2016

The next Commander of the Russian Navy?

According to Russian media, Chirkov has been on sick leave from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy since November 2015, and has now filed a request for dismissal on reasons of health. RIA Novosti reports that Admiral Vladimir Korolyov, who is Commander of the Northern Fleet, will most likely be appointed new Head of the Navy. Korolyov has been acting Commander-in-Chief since the end of November 2015, when Chirkov underwent a minor surgery.

Chirkov went through another surgery in January and is now under recovery in a hospital. About two weeks ago, Chirkov requested dismissal on reasons of health not allowing him to serve as Commander. The new Commander-in Chief of the Russian Navy will be appointed in the beginning of April. If Korolyov becomes Russia's next Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, he will be the fourth officer to climb from position as Commander of the Northern Fleet to the country's highest-ranking naval officer. Since 1991, the Russian Navy has had six Commanders, three of them came from the Northern Fleet. Chief of Staff of the Northern Fleet, Vice Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov has been acting Commander of the Northern Fleet since November 2015.



Admiral Vladimir Korolyov

Source: <http://warfare.be/0702ey70/common/korolev-bls.jpg>

““Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy Admiral Viktor Chirkov has resigned, and will likely be replaced by Commander of the Northern Fleet Admiral Vladimir Korolyov.””

Russian Defense Ministry Collegium Discusses Intellectual Property, Arctic and Airborne Forces

OE Watch Commentary:

Defending the Arctic, increasing the strength and capability of rapid-reaction forces and the safeguarding MOD intellectual property were the main topics of the end-of-January meeting of the Defense Ministry Collegium. The on-going Russian deployment in Syria, the difficult relations with Turkey and the eminent peace talks were not part of the agenda. Instead, the collegium focused on longer-term issues.

The Ministry of Defense is managed by a collegium chaired by the defense minister and includes the deputy defense ministers, heads of Main Defense Ministry and General Staff directorates, and the commanders of the joint strategic commands/military districts and of the six services (Ground Forces, Air Force, Navy, Strategic Rocket Forces, Airborne Forces and Aerospace Defense Forces). The collegium is the principal staff and advisory board of the Minister of Defense. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russian Defense Ministry chief Army General Sergey Shoigu held a meeting of the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Collegium. The meeting was attended by leaders of the Armed Forces and representatives of state authorities and the Defense Ministry Public Council.”

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, <http://www.mil.ru>, 29 January 2016

Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoigu holds regular meeting of Military Department Collegium

There was discussion of the draft concept of a centralized system of management of Russian Federation intellectual rights relating to activities in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense, as well as issues surrounding the implementation of the plan of activities for 2016-20 in the Northern Fleet in respect of the formation of military units to ensure the Russian Federation’s military security in the Arctic.

A report on building up the combat strength of the Airborne Troops (VDV) within the framework of the development of rapid reaction troops was given.

In his opening speech the defense minister noted that, in accordance with the law, the management of rights pertaining to the results acquired through federal budget funds is vested in state contractors. The largest of these is the Ministry of Defense.

“In this regard, proposals have been prepared on the basic principles of building a new, centralized system of management of intellectual rights,” Army General Sergey Shoigu noted.

Such a system, the head of the military department emphasized, should ensure use of those rights by all interested parties.

Turning to the question of creating Northern Fleet formations and military units in the Arctic and the creation of a support infrastructure, the defense minister reviewed that this work is carried out as part of the implementation of decrees by the Russian president in 2012 and his instructions following meetings in Sochi, as well as during the implementation of the new Military Doctrine approved in 2014 in which the Armed Forces are tasked to ensure national interests in the Arctic.

Construction is under way on military facilities in the Franz-Joseph Archipelago, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya, and the New Siberian Islands, creating the necessary living conditions for servicemen.

“Thus, on Kotelnyy and Alexandra Land Islands the construction of unique administrative and residential complexes, designed for year-round occupation by military units, is being completed. An extensive logistics infrastructure is being constructed. Great importance is attached to environmental safety, waste disposal, and cleaning up the Arctic,” Army General Sergey Shoigu stated.

The defense minister stressed that special attention is being paid to strengthening the airspace monitoring system in the Arctic.

“The Northern Fleet 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army was formed in December 2015 for this purpose. Radio-technical troop units and an anti-aircraft missile regiment equipped with upgraded S-300 Favorit systems have begun on air defense combat duty in the Franz-Joseph Archipelago, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya, and the New Siberian Islands.” In addition, General Shoigu noted that the build-up of permanent forces is being carried out in the Arctic.

“As a result the capabilities of the Armed Forces to adequately respond to existing and projected threats, and also to ensure protection of national interests in that region, will be expanded,” the defense minister added.

Referring to the next agenda issue, the defense minister noted the importance of building up the fighting strength of the Airborne Forces as part of the development of rapid reaction troops.

The MOD plans to increase combat capability by improving the fighting strength of the Airborne and equipping them with modern and advanced models of weapons and military equipment and reconnaissance and electronic warfare gear.

General of the Army Gareyev Discusses the Nature of Future Wars

“The threat to Russia, the AMS president believes, is connected, in particular, with informational and other subversive operations, the creation of managed chaos for the purpose of provoking various kinds of disturbance and disrupting the state’s internal resilience, as was done in Iraq, Libya, and Ukraine. It is therefore important for military science to provide an answer to the question of how to counter these so-called non-military threats – ‘soft force,’ and hybrid wars in general. ”

OE Watch Commentary: On 11 March the Russian Army’s *Red Star* newspaper offered comments made by General of the Army Makhmut Gareyev at the recent Academy of Military Science forum. He noted that the second department of the Academy is focused on armed conflict within a single information environment and on network-centric methods of troop command and control. The department is also working on preparing new combat regulations and studying the influence of weapons based on new physical principles on tactical operations.

Gareyev noted that the scale and technological capabilities of nonmilitary means have improved to the point where they may require that the United Nations consider if these conditions mandate a revision in the definition of war’s essence. He is quoted on the importance of training, the methods of countering stronger opponents, and how to link new weapons to their tactical utilization and the methods of actions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

The main factor which is deterring the launch of a major new war against Russia nowadays is nuclear weapons. Our opponents therefore place their reliance mainly on achieving political objectives by two means: First, through subversive operations, “color revolutions,” large-scale informational actions; second, when the use of military force is required, strategic aims are achieved in stages – by unleashing local wars and conflicts.

Indisputably, automated control systems, robotics, pilotless reconnaissance and strike equipment, and weapons based on new physical principles are introducing many changes into the character of military operations. And it is the AMS’s job to thoroughly study all these new phenomena in military science and the art of war.

The AMS president’s report also touched upon military-economic problems. He expressed the view that it is advisable to create a defense industry ministry – without the previous economic functions and with the main task of coordinating defense industry enterprises’ activities, initiating innovative technologies, and organizing the training of the engineering and technical personnel needed for the defense industry.

Given the present condition of our economic potential, it is desirable, Army General Makhmut Gareyev stressed, to place the main emphasis on asymmetrical means and methods of operation. It is known, for example, that communications, navigation, reconnaissance, and the entire management of strategic nuclear forces, air defense, and conventional precision weapons in today’s leading states are conducted via space. Using electronic and other asymmetrical means to disrupt that entire system can do much to weaken that advantage of the opposing side.

But it is not only a matter of the weapons themselves. It is no less important to develop tactics for their effective use, whereby the combat properties of various weapon types complement one another and in some measure cancel out their weaknesses.

The AMS president’s report spoke in detail about methods of training the troops’ (fleet forces’) command and control agencies. We know that Armed Forces’ training has two sides, Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareyev noted. The first one is correctly predicting the character of armed warfare and, based on that, to determine what to teach the troops’ (fleet forces’) command and control agencies. The second is how to teach it, and what operational- and combat-training methods should be employed in order to achieve the training objective.

But one must also find possibilities for getting all the command and control agencies trained in conditions that represent real activity as authentically as possible to fulfill their assigned duties. Then we shall have a modern Army. There should be no rift between the content and methodology of training.”

Source: Unattributed report, “How Does One Develop a Modern Army?” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 11 March 2016.

Russia's Syrian Campaign: Pluses and Minuses

“Western military experts did not deny that the Russian Aerospace Forces were carrying out effective strikes against ISIL positions. On the other hand, there are too many ‘buts’ in this story. There is evidence indicating that the bombs frequently missed the fighters for a worldwide caliphate. On several occasions the world press reported large-scale casualties among the civilian population. The air operation in itself could hardly have led to the collapse of the terrorists’ regime, while the ground forces of Russia’s allies in the region have yet to announce final victory over the enemy. The flow of refugees from the war-torn region to Western countries is not stopping. Furthermore, as Eastern specialists have said repeatedly, ISIL in its present form is first and foremost a kind of ideology and it is impossible to destroy it by using bombs.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 March the Russian paper *Novaya Gazeta Online* published an article about Russia’s Aerospace Force experience in Syria. It considered what might be the positives and negatives that the nation and the military can take from the mission.

According to the newspaper, which is sometimes critical of the Kremlin, there were some of both. The reason for positives was that this appeared initially to be a short mission, a go-in and get-out scenario where ground forces would not be used. The goal was to help assist and prop up the Assad regime and help protect Russia’s southern flank. However, when Turkey shot down a Russian military plane and terrorists blew up a Russian plane over Egypt, things got more chaotic. This prolonged the Russian mission, ending with a few negatives spilling over into the press’s narrative on the experience (civilian casualties, bombs missing ISIL fighters, refugee flows continue, etc.). Some of the negatives were blamed on the so-called “black swans” of unforeseen consequences and eventualities. Others were blamed on lack of proper training and equipment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Kirill Martynov, “Coming Home with a Black Swan. What the Russian Aerospace Forces are Bringing Back from the Syrian Campaign,” *Novaya Gazeta Online*, 16 March 2016.

In general, military campaigns rarely follow the plan drawn up in advance and are full of unforeseen eventualities -- “black swans.” Back then, I wrote that in pinning their hopes on strong-arm support for the Al-Assad regime the Kremlin tacticians were improvising in many respects. They were facilitating the withdrawal from the Donbas [Donets basin], they were maintaining the president’s rating at a sky-high level by continuing to promote the theme of Russia’s revival as a great military and “geopolitical” power, and finally, they were imposing themselves on the West as partners in the struggle against ISIL (a terrorist organization banned in Russia). The only thing they failed to see was that Russia also has another southern neighbor, a very particular kind of regional power, a NATO member headed by an exceptionally mistrustful authoritarian leader. Turkey has its own interests in the Middle East, and it is the refusal to take account of these that could be called the cause of the conflict between our countries.

What objectives were, after all, achieved in reality? First and foremost Moscow saved from military defeat the Al-Asad regime, which feels fairly confident today. Second, the domestic political result is that Russian citizens were able to be distracted from their own problems for another six months, watching colonels on television giving dashing reports on the struggle against the terrorists in the Middle East. Finally Russian diplomacy, trying to break into the club of civilized countries by sitting on the shoulders of the Aerospace Forces, has achieved some successes here in recent months.

The clear pluses of the ending of the Syria campaign for citizens include the fact that a Russian ground operation and a “second Afghanistan” never happened, fortunately. Nor did matters reach the point of an open conflict with the NATO countries. But to say that Russia is leaving Syria as a victor would still be disingenuous. A terrorist attack after Syria does not necessarily mean “because of it,” but in this case the link seems obvious -- without the Russian military presence in the Middle East the terrorists could have found a more suitable target. And Russian military intelligence was supposed to foresee such risks. Relations with Turkey, ruined in the course of the operation, can also hardly be considered a victory trophy.

Gerasimov on Countering Hybrid War

Russian Chief of the General Staff V. V. Gerasimov, in his yearly February presentation to the Academy of Military Science (and printed in VPK), discussed the threat that hybrid war presents to the Russian Federation and what Russia intends to do about it. His speech clearly indicates that this threat is now on a par with three other threats to Russia's security mentioned in earlier speeches: Prompt Global Strike, Global ABM Systems, and cyber threats. He begins by noting that in contemporary conflict, "the emphasis on the methods of fighting moves toward the complex application of political, economic, information, and other nonmilitary means, carried out with the support of military force." These factors, he notes, are the so-called hybrid methods.

Fears that Gerasimov highlighted were the ability of information technologies to manipulate protest in a country, which he said must be prevented; and the ability of the Internet to exert an impact on the consciousness of citizens, which requires Russia's orchestration of interagency activity to neutralize such impacts. Information resources must be viewed as potential effective weapons that can be used against Russia. Such worries fit with Russia's focus on the so-called information-psychological threat to the nation that information warfare specialists point out.

To counter hybrid techniques two deterrence-type approaches were recommended. Internally the country's military and civilian assets must be mobilized to neutralize threats and counter or deter hybrid methods. Externally, Russia's cooperation with foreign countries and organizations such as the CSTO, SCO, and BRICS can help to deter foreign aggression through a demonstration of solidarity with other nations. Today, Gerasimov notes, Russia must be prepared to protect state interests against an adversary's employment of both traditional and hybrid methods of confrontation.

Gerasimov pointed out the following description of hybrid's methods in his speech:

- Their essence is to attain political goals with minimal armed impact through undermining an adversary's military and economic potential, exerting information-psychological pressure, actively supporting a domestic opposition, and using insurgency or subversive methods.
- Their principal means are "color revolutions," which are effectively coup d'états organized from the outside and based on technologies that manipulate a population's protest potential and other nonmilitary means; color revolution results in the killing of civilian populations under national or religious criteria, rampant crime, and mass uncontrolled migration; and color revolutions are complemented by covert military means where force is used under the cover of peace-enforcement activities or crisis resolution.
- States under hybrid aggression are relegated to conditions of chaos, domestic political crisis, and economic collapse. Thus Russia must confront them.
- Trends in the evolution of hybrid war indicate that changes must be instituted in the organization of defense, and must include not just the military but all organs of authority. Some of the measures required are laid out in the Defense Plan of the Russian Federation and in the Defense Plan for 2016-2020. A set of military and nonmilitary measures are laid out to counter hybrid methods of pressure
- Russia must focus on confronting the primary constituents of hybrid methods, such as the falsifying of events and the imposi-

tion of restrictions on the activity of the mass media. Their impact can be the same as the large-scale employment of troops and forces. The massive influence on people's consciousness facilitated the inflammation of nationalism in Ukraine and upheavals in the Arab world, in Gerasimov's opinion. The rise of hybrid threats means Russia must put more emphasis on territorial defense through coordination with all federal organs of executive authority. This includes countering foreign private military companies, subversive groups, and terrorist organizations.

There was one statement in the speech that was difficult to comprehend from the tone of his comments, that being Gerasimov's point that Russia's Syrian experience indicates hybrid warfare requires high-tech weapons. It is unclear if he meant that high-tech weapons are needed to oppose hybrid warfare; or if hybrid warfare is being waged by the US (or Russia?) in Syria along with high-tech weaponry, in both nations cases via airpower. Also, while Gerasimov pointed to private military companies, subversive groups, and terrorist organizations as threats, he failed to mention little green men, vacationing Russian soldiers in Ukraine who are fighting, or Russian private military companies, which have been speculated to be in Syria.

To confront these threats, Gerasimov calls for the Academy of Military Science's assistance in helping to develop the forms and methods to counter them. This requirement supports a major theme of Gerasimov's over the past three or four years this has been overlooked. For example, in his now well-discussed 2013 speech at the Academy, where most of the focus was on his belief that nonmilitary actions now outnumber military actions by a rate of 4:1, he used the phrase "forms and methods" eleven times. No one in the West commented on what those forms and methods might be. In his 2016 speech, where he mentioned the combination four times, he notes that the scientific development of the forms [author: the organization for combat, according to a Russian source] and methods [author: the type of armaments developed along with the use of the principles of war, also according to a Russian source] of applying joint institutional groups and sequences of military and nonmilitary actions must be considered for crisis situations.

Gerasimov states that he fears the US's advanced form of combat actions—the globally integrated operations that presupposes the creation of combined armed force grouping to defeat an enemy through joint actions and a "21st century blitzkrieg" design. According to Gerasimov, both the means of armed conflict, which he defined as a combination of traditional and hybrid methods, and forms of resolving inter-state contradictions have changed. He warned that Russia must be aware of this, and that hybrid methods were even introduced in Syria by actors "hidden in the shadows." To confront them, Russia used high-tech methods in Syria and must continue to consider the use of other forces and means of all different organs of executive authority. With regard to increasing the combat capabilities of the army and navy, Gerasimov noted the following:

Primary attention is paid to the high-tech components. At the same time, rendering the Armed Forces capable of acting effectively in non-traditional conditions is becoming one of the important vectors of their build-up, development, and preparation. This means not only increasing the capabilities to respond to asymmetric methods of warfare. It is necessary to learn to act in a way that effectively counters the covert adversary and balances the strengths of the high-tech one.

Gerasimov on Countering Hybrid War

In conclusion, Gerasimov stated that the Academy must focus on the “new perspective vectors of military research, the evolution of the new forms of strategic activities of the AF, space and information warfare, and the development of requirements for the prospective armaments and command and control systems.” Of particular importance is the study of the nature of modern warfare and the problems of strategic deterrence, which perhaps means finding ways to deter hybrid pressures with nonnuclear means. Gerasimov ended by calling for more coordination between the Academy and the General Staff to “solve many important and complex problems.”

Source: Valery Gerasimov, “Hybrid Warfare Requires High-tech Weapons and a Scientific Basis,” *VPK Military-Industrial Courier*, 9 March 2016

Sergey Shoygu: Russia’s Emergency Defense Minister A Bio-Sketch

By Ray Finch, FMSO

This paper briefly examines the background of Russia’s Minister of Defense, Sergey Shoygu, the speculation behind his sudden appointment in November 2012, the challenges he faces, his efforts thus far within the Defense Ministry, and possible future implications -both military and political - surrounding his selection as Russia’s chief military representative. This paper posits that should the stars align correctly, as a close friend of President Vladimir Putin, Shoygu could become the next leader of Russia.

<http://fms0.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Finch-Shoygu.pdf>

