

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



SPECIAL ESSAY: The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

See page
76

TURKEY	LATIN AMERICA	CENTRAL ASIA
3 Turkey Considers the Geopolitical Aspects of the Greek Crisis	32 Bolivarians Happy for Nuclear Iran	51 Who Is Fighting in Ukraine?
5 How Will the Iran Nuclear Deal Affect Turkey?	32 A Real Property Note from the Colombian War	52 A Future Space Component in Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense?
7 Turkey Appoints New Defense Minister	33 The Colombian-Venezuelan Border	53 The Meaning of the Day of National Unity in Tajikistan
	35 Drone Technology in Colombia	54 Rules of Engagement on the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border
MIDDLE EAST	36 Mexico's Most Dangerous Highways	
8 Ex-Iranian Official Reveals Past Iran-Taliban Cooperation	37 Female Involvement in Mara Salvatrucha Factions on the Rise in Honduras	RUSSIA, UKRAINE
9 Former Revolutionary Guards Chief Justifies Iranian Intervention in Iraq and Syria	38 Mexican Drug Cartel Uses Dynamite to Kill Live Victims	55 Balancing: Conscription, Contract Service, and a Reserve System
10 New Iranian Focus on Developing Periphery, Cyberspace	INDO-PACIFIC ASIA	56 NGOs and the Myth of Russia's "Hybrid War" Strategy
11 Jordan's Border Policy Moves from Defense to Deterrence	39 Indonesia's New Military Leadership and Possible Way Forward	58 Russia's Use of Unmanned Vehicles as Electronic Warfare Platforms
13 Jordan's Largest Espionage Case In Ten Years	39 Thailand's Acquiring Subs Points to Military Ambition and Growing Ties with China	60 The Orlan-10 and Artillery, Let's Ponder How They Work Together...
14 Yemen: Twilight of AQAP, Dawn of the Islamic State?	41 Can Malaysia Fix the Insurgency in Southern Thailand?	62 Implications of Georgia's Cooperation with Russia and Iran in Fight against ISIS
16 The Politics of Fighting the Islamic State	42 Turning Points for Two Insurgencies in the Philippines	63 Anti-Government Protests Grip Armenia
18 Egypt Tries to Plug Gaza's Tunnels	43 Singapore Prepares for Cyber Warfare	64 Russian Perspectives on Increased Military Cooperation with Bahrain
AFRICA	44 Is Cambodia Becoming China's Pawn in Southeast Asia?	65 Russia and the ISIL Threat
20 And Now, Cholera: South Sudan's Complex Terrain Gets More Complex	45 Muslim Hardliners Control Indonesian Police with Bribery and Fear	67 Sensitive Discussions at Army 2015
21 African Countries Hired Private Hackers	46 Thailand and the Uighur Immigration Quagmire	68 Patriotic Investments Paying Off
22 The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC): Plagued by Politics	CHINA, KOREA, JAPAN	70 Arctic Refueling and Resupply while Underway May Get Easier
23 Improving the African Union's Policy on Police in Peacekeeping	47 Japan Aims to Counter China's Diplomatic Muscle	71 Medical Support for Arctic Combat
25 Boko Haram Reversing Nigerian Government Gains, Confidence in Buhari Wanes	48 Indian Commentary Considers China's New Military Strategy	72 Russians Modifying Short-to-Medium Range Air Defense System for Arctic Use
27 Do More Boko Haram Attacks Signal Its Weakness?	49 Made in China 2025	73 The All-Terrain Arctic Field Kitchen
28 Behind the Nigerian Military Shakeup	EUROPE	74 Russia-China Information Security Cooperation
30 France Under Pressure from ISIS-Influenced AQIM in the Sahara	50 Greece Improves Relations with Kosovo, Startling Serbia	75 Competing Russian-Ukrainian Claims over MH-17
31 To Ban or Not to Ban: Burqas, Bombings, and Boko Haram		SPECIAL ESSAY
		76 The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is part of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-2's Operational Environment Enterprise and for over 25 years has conducted open source research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues, emphasizing those topics that are understudied or unconsidered.

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

Materials, outside of the original foreign press article, under copyright have not been used. All articles published in the Operational Environment Watch are not provided in full, and were originally published in foreign (non-US) media.

FMSO has provided some editing, format, and graphics to these articles to conform to organizational standards. Academic conventions, source referencing, and citation style are those of the author.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US Government. Release of this information does not imply any commitment or intent on the part of the US government to provide any additional information on any topic presented herein.

The Operational Environment Watch is archived and available at: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil>.

Contact FMSO at:

usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.fmso-web@mail.mil

OEWATCH

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 5 | Issue 08

August | 2015

Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Turkey	Karen Kaya
Middle East	Tara Beeny Michael Rubin Lucas Winter Jacob Zenn
Africa	Robert Feldman Jason Warner Lucas Winter Jacob Zenn
Latin America	Geoff Demarest Brenda Fiegel
Indo-Pacific Asia	Cindy Hurst Anthony Ortiz
China, Korea, Japan	Cindy Hurst Chris Marsh Tim Thomas Blaze Zandoli
Central Asia	Michael Rose Matthew Stein Jacob Zenn
Europe	Alyssa Jackson
Russia, Ukraine	Chuck Bartles Anna Borshchevskaya Adam Croft Ray Finch Les Grau Tim Thomas
Editor-in-Chief	Tom Wilhelm
Editors	Ray Finch Harry Orenstein
Design Editor	Keith French

Turkey Considers the Geopolitical Aspects of the Greek Crisis

8 July 2015

“Pro-Western Turks are very concerned with Greece’s destiny, and they are ready to extend whatever support they may give in order to prevent Greece’s economy from collapsing.”

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey has been closely watching the developments in its neighbor Greece. The accompanying passages from the Turkish and international press discuss Turkey’s views on the Greek crisis and suggest that Turkey is more concerned with the geopolitical aspects of the Greek crisis, such as the risk of Greece having to seek help from Russia and China. They also discuss the compassion that Turkey has for their neighbor and a Turkish suggestion to pay off some of its debt.

The first passage, by Turkish foreign policy expert Sami Kohen, notes that leaving Greece alone at this difficult time would be a “heavy political fiasco for Europe,” as it might lead Greece to resort to other means (like asking for help from Russia or China). He points out in a separate piece that the fact that Greek Prime Minister Tsipras visited Moscow recently and received a signal from the Russians that they might help should not be taken lightly. He notes that if Athens enters Moscow’s orbit, this could lead to significant changes in the region’s political and economic balances. Russia and Greece are fellow Orthodox nations and have recently signed agreements on pipeline deals to carry Russian gas to Europe.



Source: <http://www.defencegreece.com/index.php/2011/10/turkey-greece-forum-start-today-in-athens/>

The third passage discusses the economic impact on Turkey. It notes that Turkish exports to Greece make up only one percent of Turkey’s total exports and that when viewed from this angle, the crisis in Greece is not expected to take a large toll on Turkey. However, the author also notes that “for Greece to turn into a danger for the economy of the European Union (EU) would be a risk for Turkey, given that 50 percent of Turkish exports are to the EU.” He also mentions that a Turkish parliamentarian

(continued)

Source: Sami Kohen, “Avrupa’nın Yunan sınavı” (Europe’s Greece test), Milliyet.com.tr, 8 July 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/avrupa-nin-yunan-sinavi/dunya/ydetay/2084671/default.htm>

“Greece’s main problem is economic, but leaving it alone is a political attitude that contradicts with the European project. In addition, it would be a heavy political fiasco for Europe (or the EU) for Greece to have to resort to other means to overcome its crisis and stay afloat (like asking for help from Russia or Greece).

Source: Sami Kohen, “Yunanistan’ı kim kurtaracak?” (Who will save Greece?), Milliyet.com.tr, 1 July 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yunanistan-i-kim-kurtaracak-/dunya/ydetay/2081409/default.htm>

“...it would be a illogical for Europe and the West to lose Greece over stubborn attitudes. [Greek Prime Minister] Tsipras visited Moscow recently and received a signal [from the Russians] that they might help. This should not be taken lightly. For Athens to enter Moscow’s orbit could lead to significant changes in the region’s political and economic balances. This crisis cannot be overcome by stubborn attitudes on either side. Tsipras must gain Europe’s support to overcome this problem. But the West should also use its mind and resources to not lose Greece.”

Source: “Yunanistan’daki kriz Türkiye’yi nasıl etkiler?” (How would the Greek crisis effect Turkey?), Deutsche Welle in Turkish, 29 June 2015, <http://www.dw.com/tr/yunanistandaki-kriz-turkiyeyi-nasil-etkiler/a-18550143>

“One of the countries following the developments in Greece is its neighbor, Turkey. The foreign trade volume between the two countries is around six billion dollars. But the exports to Greece, as of the end of 2014, make up only one percent of Turkey’s total exports. Seen from this angle, the crisis in Greece is not expected to take a large toll on Turkey. On the other hand, for Greece to turn into a danger for the European Union (EU), would be a risk for Turkey, given that 50 percent of Turkish exports are to the EU.

Greece’s situation is discussed in Turkish politics as well. A parliamentarian from Izmir from the [pro-Kurdish] People’s Democratic Party (HDP), Ertuğrul Kürkçü, suggested that Turkey should pay 1.6 billion euros of Greece’s debt or give Greece an interest-free loan. Kürkçü, who claimed that the Euro and the EU would have a big problem if Greece went bankrupt, said “This is the biggest help we can give to our neighbor at its time of difficulty. In return, we will gain the Greek public’s friendship, and the opportunity to turn the Aegean Sea into a sea of peace.”

“For Athens to enter Moscow’s orbit could lead to significant changes in the region’s political and economic balances.”

Continued: Turkey Considers the Geopolitical Aspects of the Greek Crisis

suggested that Turkey should pay 1.6 billion euros of Greece's debt or give Greece an interest-free loan, for the sake of gaining the Greek people's friendship and bringing peace to the Aegean Sea.

*The final passage notes that Turks felt a sense of solidarity with the Greek people in their saga with their creditors and claims, "the fact that Turks felt compassion toward their Greek neighbors is ironic given the bitterness of their relations (at times bordering on going to war) in the last decades of the 20th century." This bitterness is due to a dispute between the two NATO allies regarding the Aegean, which involves the delimitation of the continental shelf, territorial waters, air space, flight information regions and the militarized status of the Greek islands near the Turkish coast. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).***

Source: Cengiz Çandar, "A Turkish plan to bail out Greece?" Al Monitor.com, 7 July 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/turkey-greece-bailout-austerity-referendum-support.html>

"The fact that Turks felt compassion toward their Greek neighbors is ironic given the bitterness of their relations (at times bordering on going to war) in the last decades of the 20th century..."

The Turkish public opinion felt a sense of solidarity with the Greek people in their saga with their creditors — EU's Eurozone led by Germany, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

... Pro-Western Turks are very concerned with Greece's destiny, and they are ready to extend whatever support they may give in order to prevent Greece's economy from collapsing."

Turkey and Africa: A Rising Military Partnership?

By Karen Kaya and Jason Warner

Like many other aspirant emerging countries such as China, Brazil, and India, since 2002, Turkey has unleashed a charm offensive in Africa, deepening bilateral ties with African states in the realms of economics, politics, and more notably, defense and security affairs.

This paper considers the implications from this ever-growing relationship between Turkey and Africa for the U.S.. Where do Turkey's interests in Africa converge with those of the U.S. and where do they diverge?

Given that Turkey's military and security interests and goals in Africa largely parallel those of the United States, the U.S. stands to benefit from the unique chance to partner with a Muslim ally whose presence in parts of Africa appears to be more welcome than those of other Western countries due to its shared religion, cultural ties and lack of imperial history.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-Africa.pdf>

How Will the Iran Nuclear Deal Affect Turkey?

14 July 2015

“Iran should now re-visit its role in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and start playing a positive, constructive role. We need to put an end to sectarian-based policies. We need to participate in the resolution of these problems through political dialogue. This is our expectation from our brother Iran.”

— Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu

OE Watch Commentary: Turkish officials have welcomed the Iran nuclear deal, claiming that it would help the Turkish economy by boosting trade and investments between the two neighbors. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss how the deal is likely to impact Turkey, noting that it has the potential to improve Turkey’s prospects for becoming an energy hub, but also pointing out that competition may increase between the neighbors.

The first passage summarizes Turkey’s initial reaction to the deal by providing the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s statement on the issue. The statement notes that Turkey welcomes the deal, congratulates both sides and highlights the importance of transparency and a spirit of trust in the implementation of the agreement, noting that this is vitally important for the region’s peace and stability.

The second passage highlights the comments of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on the deal, calling on Iran to revisit its role in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and to start playing a positive, constructive role. He also calls for an end to sectarian-based policies and for Iran to participate in the resolution of these problems through political dialogue, saying, “This is our expectation from our brother Iran.”

The third passage discusses the deal’s benefits for Turkish businessmen and the private sector. Others have also echoed that the deal would lead to a surge in Turkish exports to Iran, increasing the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries. The second passage also notes that lowering tension between Iran and the West relieves Turkey from being in the difficult position of having to balance its need to co-exist with its neighbor Iran, while fulfilling its duties as a U.S.-ally. The passage also notes the possibility for political and military competition to increase, but claims that this can be managed. *(continued)*

Source: “Türkiye’den nükleer anlaşmaya ilk tepki” (Turkey’s first reaction to the nuclear deal), Radikal.com.tr, 14 July 2015, http://www.radikal.com.tr/dunya/turkiyeden_nukleer_anlasmaya_ilk_tepki-1397311

“The Turkish Foreign Ministry made the following statement [regarding the Iran deal]: ‘Turkey, who sees diplomacy as the only alternative for the solution of the problem regarding Iran’s nuclear program, welcomes the conclusion of long negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran with an agreement. We congratulate both sides for this outcome; place a great deal of importance in the implementation of the agreement with all its provisions; and expect the International Atomic Energy Agency-- which will have a central role in the monitoring of the agreement in the coming period-- and the international community to implement the cooperation foreseen in the agreement in a fully transparent manner. We highlight that the implementation of the agreement in a spirit of trust, and in a full and continuous manner, is vitally important for the region’s peace, security and stability.’ ”

Source: “Bakan Çavuşoğlu: İran; Suriye, Irak ve Yemen’deki Rolünü de Gözden Geçirmeli” ([Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu: Iran should revisit its role in Syria, Iraq and Yemen), Haberler.com, 14 July 2015, <http://www.haberler.com/bakan-cavusoglu-iran-suriye-irak-ve-yemen-deki-7509625-haberi/>

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said, “Iran needs to re-visit its role in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. It needs to play a positive, constructive role. We need to put an end to sectarian-based policies. We need to participate in the resolution of these problems through political dialogue. This is our expectation from our brother Iran.”

Source: “ABD-İran anlaşması Türkiye’yi nasıl etkiler?” (How would the U.S.-Iran deal affect Turkey?), Sabah.com.tr, 14 July 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2015/07/14/abd-iran-anlasmasi-turkiyeyi-nasil-etkiler>

[International Relations professor Bayram Sinkaya] says, “I believe that the deal will positively effect Turkey-Iran relations. First of all, the sanctions against Iran had negatively effected Turkey... Our businessmen and the private sector were afraid to do business with Iran... This problem will go away and the road for cooperation with Iran will be paved.

On the other hand, the tension between Iran and the West was a burden on Turkey. It needed to balance its neighbor with its ally; because the closer [Turkey] would get to Iran, the more the U.S. would react; and when [Turkey] would get close to the U.S., then Iran would react. In this regard, the agreement will relieve Turkey’s situation.

....

There will also be competition for sure; both in the political and military fields, but the important thing is for this competition to be managed. Will this be managed through conflict, intelligence or winning hearts? We can start to identify the rules of the game. If there are not enough communication channels or negotiations, then this competition can be quite rough and uncontrollable. But if the communication channels remain open, we see that the competition can be managed. If the agreement is successfully implemented, the competition can be healthy.”

Continued: How Will the Iran Nuclear Deal Affect Turkey?

The final passage claims that Turkey may become an energy hub, with the natural gas that it would take from Iran and sell to the European markets. It notes that this could help Europe, which is looking for alternative sources of natural gas to reduce its dependency on Russia. End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).

Source: “Iran’ın nükleer anlaşması Türkiye’yi nasıl etkileyecek?” (How will the Iran nuclear deal affect Turkey?), Haberturk.com.tr, 14 July 2015, <http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/ekonomi/haber/1102928-iran-pazari-aciliyor-yatirimcilar-kapida-bekliyor>

“Turkey imports two important energy sources from Iran: natural gas and oil. Authorities had earlier said that more natural gas could be imported from Iran if the sanctions were lifted and the prices dropped. Iran has the world’s second largest natural gas reserves after Russia. But only 48 percent of its reserves are being processed. In addition, it is possible for the gas imported from Iran to be carried to Europe via Turkey through the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP). This is because Europe, which is having problems with Russia, is looking for alternative sources of natural gas.”



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran-Iraq-Syria_pipeline#/media/File:Middle-East-map.gif



Turkey’s Role in Afghanistan and Afghan Stabilization

By Karen Kaya

Turkey views its presence in Afghanistan not only as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, but also as a “brotherhood duty” to help the Afghan people restore peace. Turkey’s views towards Afghanistan are also based on its own strategic interests: as long as Afghanistan is unstable, the whole region will be unstable, posing a security threat to Turkey. When Afghanistan becomes a secure and stable country, this will introduce wider stability in the region, bringing new economic benefits for the region in general and for Turkey in particular.

http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20140831_art007.pdf



Turkey Appoints New Defense Minister

3 July 2015

“At a critical time [dealing with the terrorist threat in neighboring Syria], we prefer somebody whose knowledge and experience we trust and who worked with the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces] in the past. This office cannot be run by a temporary assignment or by an acting minister.”

OE Watch Commentary:

As a result of the 7 June 2015 elections, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in 13 years, requiring a coalition government. As the parties hold coalition negotiations, many changes are taking place in the government. One of the most important changes is that former Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz was elected parliament speaker. The interim government of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has appointed former Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül, who served in this capacity between 2002-2011, to replace Yılmaz. The accompanying passages discuss this choice of defense minister.

The first passage discusses Davutoğlu's commenting that Gönül has distinguished himself as an experienced former National Defense Minister, having served in that position for nine years, and pointing out that he was not able to be run as a candidate for parliament in the 7 June elections because of the 3-term rule, which limits parliamentarians' terms to three. Thus, the AKP chose the National Defense Minister from outside the parliament, which was a surprise to many. Gönül served in three consecutive governments formed by the AKP starting in 2002, when the party was first elected to power.

The second passage notes Davutoğlu's comments: “At a critical time [dealing with the terrorist threat in neighboring Syria], we prefer somebody whose knowledge and experience we trust and who worked with the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces] in the past. This office cannot be run by a temporary assignment or by an acting minister.” Turkey has been concerned with Syrian Kurdish advances against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Kobane and Tal Abyad; and the presence of various other radical Islamist groups along its 560-mile border with Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Turkey's New Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vecdi_Gonul_2005.jpg

Source: “Yeni Milli Savunma Bakanı Vecdi Gönül oldu” (Vecdi Gönül became the New Defense Minister), Sozcu.com.tr, 3 July 2015, <http://www.sozcu.com.tr/2015/gundem/yeni-savunma-bakani-vecdi-gonul-oldu-876504/>

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu announced that Vecdi Gönül would fill the post of National Defense Minister vacated by İsmet Yılmaz. Prime Minister Davutoğlu responded to journalists' questions following a meeting with the new leader of the Turkish Grand National Assembly İsmet Yılmaz.

The Prime Minister said, “I have proposed Mr. Vecdi Gönül as the National Defense Minister to the President. He has distinguished himself as an experienced former National Defense Minister. The process is being completed today.”

The Minister is from outside the Parliament

Vecdi Gönül, who is from the AKP, served as Defense Minister between the years of 2002-2011. Gönül was not able to be a candidate in the 7 June elections because of the 3-term rule. The AKP chose the National Defense Minister from outside the parliament.”

Source: “Turkey Appoints Gönül New Defense Minister,” Defensenews.com, 3 July 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/leaders/2015/07/03/turkey-appoints-defense-minister-gonul/29663887/>

“Davutoğlu told reporters that, ‘At a critical time [dealing with the terrorist threat in neighboring Syria], we prefer somebody whose knowledge and experience we trust and who worked with the TSK [Turkish Armed Forces] in the past... This office cannot be run by a temporary assignment or by an acting minister.’”

Source: “Davutoğlu names Vecdi Gönül new defense minister,” Today's Zaman, 3 July 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_davutoglu-names-vecdi-gonul-new-defense-minister_392713.html

“Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu announced... that former Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül is to be Turkey's new defense minister, after İsmet Yılmaz left the role for the post of parliament speaker...”

Gönül previously served as defense minister between 2002 and 2011. After Davutoğlu's announcement, Gönül spoke to the [hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr) website, saying: “I am most thankful to our president and our prime minister for deeming me worthy of this position. Even though it is temporary, I will do my best fulfill the requirements of this job for the good of our nation.”

Ex-Iranian Official Reveals Past Iran-Taliban Cooperation

6 July 2015

“There were even a number of discussions with Mullah Omar.”

OE Watch Commentary: In 1998, as the Taliban sought to consolidate control over the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, Taliban troops stormed the Iranian consulate in the city and executed eight Iranian diplomats and intelligence officers stationed there. Iran responded by massing 70,000 troops along its border with Afghanistan and threatening to invade the country. Over subsequent years, when various U.S. military officers and senior intelligence analysts have in Congressional testimony accused Iran of supplying the Taliban with weaponry to use against the Afghan government or American forces, the Iranian retort has been to remind observers both of the sectarian divide between Shi‘ite Iran and the Sunni Taliban and the fact that Iran and the Taliban almost went to war.

It is in this context that the remarks by Mehdi Abu‘i, former head of Iran’s Anti-Drug Headquarters, are interesting. Abu‘i describes a hitherto secret dialogue between Iranian officials and the Taliban, including direct discussions with cloistered Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Abu‘i suggests in this excerpted interview with the conservative Iranian web portal **Tasnim** that the basis of the discussion was to trade Iranian assistance to Afghanistan’s agricultural sector in exchange for a reduction in opium cultivation. This would be in Iran’s interest, of course, because it had become not only a transit route but also a consumer country.

While Taliban opium cultivation did decline in the year prior to the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, this did not necessarily translate into a sincere commitment to opium eradication: by warehousing and not destroying existing stocks, the Taliban were able to ensure continued high prices for drugs they sold or taxed. Still, Abu‘i’s revelations raise not only new questions about the role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which had previously claimed credit for the decline, but also the modality of ties between the Taliban and Tehran. For example, who in the Iranian context was in charge of the dialogue with the Taliban—was it simply the Anti-Drug Headquarters or was the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps involved?—and did those links continue after the Taliban’s fall? If they did, it suggests a mechanism by which the Taliban and Iranian officials perhaps coordinated anti-ISAF activities. With opium production again surging in Afghanistan, Abu‘i’s revelations might also foreshadow a much more open dialogue between the Taliban and Tehran following any ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Mehdi Abu‘i

Source: Tasnim News (<http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/788606>)

Source: “Nagofteh-ha-ye Yek Sardar az Mozakareh ba Taliban dar Daheh 70s,” (“Never Before Revealed, Commander Speaks of Negotiation with the Taliban in the ‘90s”), TasnimNews.com, 6 July 2015. <http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/788606>

Negotiation with the Taliban in the 1990s

General [Mehdi] Abu‘i, with regard to the strategy of the National Security Council in the late 1990s, described the contents of informal discussions with the Taliban about how Mullah Omar forbade the cultivation [of opium] and drug cultivation in Afghanistan declined from 5,000 tons to 250 tons...

[Tasnim Correspondent]: What was the strategy on Afghanistan?

At that time, the Taliban had come to power in Afghanistan and produced between 4,500 and 5,000 tons of opium annually. At that time, it was decided that with the Taliban dominating such a large part of Afghanistan, there would be unofficial discussions.

[Tasnim Correspondent]: What was the aim of these discussions?

“We made a promise in negotiations with Taliban that if planting poppies and production of drugs reduce in the country, we would provide significant support to Afghanistan in the agricultural sphere.”

[Tasnim Correspondent]: What was the result of these discussions?

“The Taliban at this time sought international prestige and recognition, and so welcomed strongly welcomed these talks and there were even a number of discussions with Mullah Omar, and it was in these talks that we promised that in exchange for any decrease in cultivation and drug production in Afghanistan, Iran would provide agricultural equipment, seeds, fertilizers and agriculture engineers to Afghanistan; the Taliban happily accepted our suggestions, and even a year before America invaded Afghanistan, Mullah Omar announced that poppy cultivation was forbidden, and that as a result of this, the Taliban reduced poppy production and drug trafficking in Afghanistan in that year from 5,000 tons of opium to just 250 tons.

Former Revolutionary Guards Chief Justifies Iranian Intervention in Iraq and Syria

29 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: For much of the last two years Qassem Soleimani, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)'s Qods [Jerusalem] Force, the IRGC's elite unit charged with export of revolution, has been the face of Iranian military involvement in both Iraq and Syria. With the interview excerpted here from **Sepah News**, a news portal belonging to the IRGC, it is clear that this intervention is not simply a rogue operation, but comes blessed by the Supreme Leader himself. Major General Yahya Safavi, the subject of the interview, was for a decade the Commander-in-Chief of the IRGC. In 2007, upon the appointment of Mohammad Ali Jafari to head the IRGC, Safavi moved into the Office of the Supreme Leader, where he serves as a special advisor. The introduction to the interview also emphasizes the military role of the Supreme Leader as Chief of the Supreme Command, rather than simply as a political or religious leader.

While the Iranian government has hitherto only been willing to intervene in Iraq and Syria by proxy or with a limited number of advisors, Safavi lays out a clear redline: if the Islamic State attacks or seizes any Shi'ite shrines, for example, if it endangers the holy shrines in Karbala or the Kadhimiya Shrine in Baghdad, then the Iranian military will intervene in force.

Also noteworthy is Safavi's embrace of crude conspiracies with regard to a hidden U.S. hand behind the Islamic State and harsh rhetoric. While many Iranian officials said they were insulted by President George W. Bush's labelling of Iran as part of an 'Axis of Evil' in the 2002 State of the Union address, Safavi appears to see no irony in his labeling of Europe, the United States, Israel, and moderate Arab states as a "Satanic Triangle." **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Agar az Iraq va Suriya Hamayat Namikardim Bayad ba Terroristha dar Kinar Morzha-ye Iran Mijangidem" ("If We Do Not Protect Iraq and Syria, We Will Have to Fight Terrorists Along Our Border"), SepahNews.com, 29 June 2015. <http://sepahnews.com/shownews.aspx?ID=961eed51-0f21-42bd-96e1-ced3cf899b62>

If We Do Not Protect Iraq and Syria, We Will Have to Fight Terrorists Along Our Border

The assistant and advisor to the Chief of the Supreme Command said that "the Islamic State wants to come to the Holy Shrines, but we give them the message that if they come near to these Holy places, you should know that we will enter the arena directly, and they will not be able to deal with the Basijis..."

For more than five years, this evil triangle of Europe, America, Zionism and some Arab countries have made proxy war in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Major-General [Yahya] Safavi, by asking what is their aim and why Westerners support these terrorists, noted, "This Satanic triangle seek to wage war to diminish the strength and economy of the axis of resistance, to the benefit of the Zionist regime... If we did not support Iraq and Syria, we would be fighting terrorists at our borders.

"This Satanic triangle seek to wage war to diminish...the Axis of Resistance."



Khamenei shakes hands with former IRGC chief Yahya Safavi as current IRGC leader Mohammad Ali Jafari looks on.

Source: Islamic Students News Agency, <http://www.payvand.com/news/07/sep/Khamenei-Safavi-Jafari.jpg>

New Iranian Focus on Developing Periphery, Cyberspace

1 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: While analysts, journalists, and diplomats often focus on the religious nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran, just as important is its embrace of a state-centered economy. This, in turn, has led to a series of five-year development plans, each of which must be approved by the Supreme Leader. On 1 July Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei formally sent a letter to President Hassan Rouhani summarizing and outlining the new “Sixth Development Plan.” The entire plan is lengthy, as is the outline itself, of which an excerpt is provided here, but two items may be of interest to those in the United States concerned with Iran’s future direction. The first is a call to develop the sparsely populated Makran coast along Iran’s Arabian Sea (northern Indian Ocean) coastline, i.e., the portion of Iran which is outside the Strait of Hormuz. While Iran has in recent years bolstered its naval presence with small bases at Jask and Chahbahar, the area retains a lawless, “Wild West” character compounded by smugglers, Baluchi insurgents, and drug runners. Unacknowledged in the plan is the sectarian character of development: much of the Makran Coast remains Sunni, so by seeking to spark new development in the region the central government is also trying to alter its religious demography.

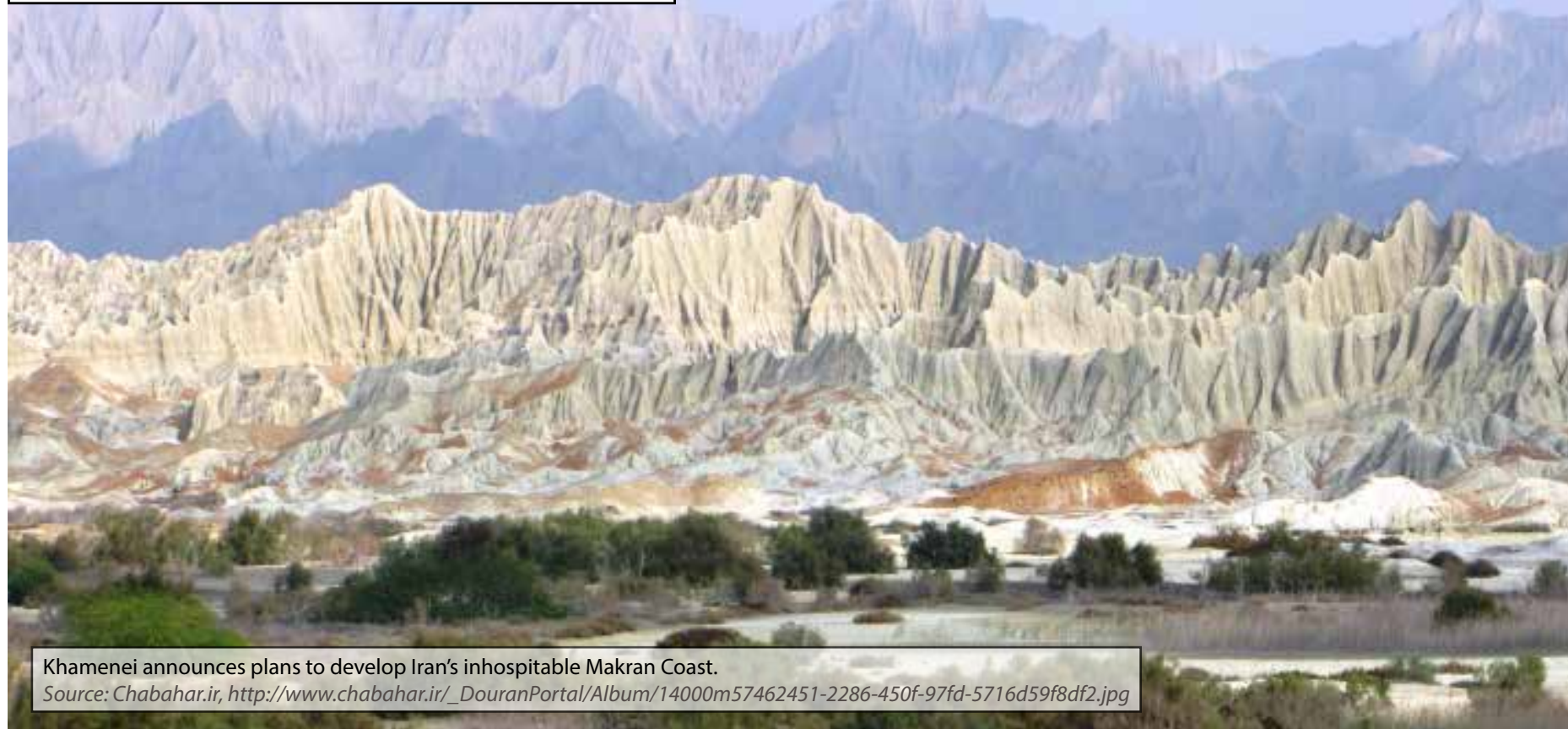
The second key element of the Sixth Development Plan is the continued Iranian emphasis on developing its cyber capabilities. Offensive cyber warfare capabilities remain a major emphasis in the plan, as do attempts to build a national intranet in order to insulate the Islamic Republic from the broader internet. Goals and metrics include severely limiting social networking with platforms that operate separately from the state. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Ablagh Siyasat-ha-ye Kali Barnameh-i Sheshom Towse’ah” (“Notification of the General Policies of the Sixth Development Plan”), Khamenei.ir, 1 July 2015. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=30128>

Notification of the General Policies of the Sixth Development Plan

His Excellency, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, in a letter to Mr. Rouhani, president of the Republic, announced the policies incorporated into the Sixth Development Plan. These policies are based on the three axes of “resistance economy,” “developing science and technology,” and “strengthening culture,” and taking into account the current realities in both the domestic and international spheres, in order to achieve the aims of the Sixth [Development] Plan, which are to help bolster Islamic thinking in terms of progress that is completely independent of the global capitalist system... [These include] the development of mutual trade and economic ties, especially in the Southwest Asia region... the economic development in the south of the country especially between Chahbahar and Khorramshahr with an emphasis on the Makran Coast... And on information and communication technology, the development of e-government in the context of a national information network, five-fold increase in the development of content in cyber space...and the localization of social networks, and completion and development of Iran’s national internet, providing security for the national network, and control over input and output data...so that 50 percent of internet traffic is domestic.

“The aims of the Sixth Plan are to help bolster Islamic thinking...completely independent from the global capitalist system.”



Khamenei announces plans to develop Iran’s inhospitable Makran Coast.

Source: Chahbahar.ir, http://www.chahbahar.ir/_DouranPortal/Album/14000m57462451-2286-450f-97fd-5716d59f8df2.jpg

Jordan's Border Policy Moves from Defense to Deterrence

2 July 2015

“Are we going to fight beyond the borders? If so, where and when? North, or east, or on both fronts?”

OE Watch Commentary: *Jordan's regime has long billed itself as a responsible regional actor, and it has always advocated regional stability. In recent years Jordan has leveraged its partnership with the United States to become a regional hub for military training, hosting forces of regional states and allies at the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center near Amman. Since May, Jordan has featured as the first training site for Syrian opposition fighters enrolled in the Syria train-and-equip program.*

Jordan has repeatedly offered to assist Iraq's fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham through weapons provision or the deployment of Jordanian ground forces, but Iraq has rejected the Kingdom's offers. Instead, Jordan redeployed thousands of troops to the Jordan-Iraq border in February, and in June announced upgrades to its border security, including a network of radars and observation towers stretching along the Jordan-Syria border. The article from Ammon News excerpted here reports the final phase of the project—an installation along the entire Jordan-Iraq border—is scheduled for completion by the end of 2015.

As discussed in the accompanying articles, Jordan's troop deployments have been accompanied by rhetoric indicating a shift from “defense” to “deterrence.” In an interview with Al-Ghad, excerpted here, former Jordanian deputy prime minister Ayman Safadi explained that Jordan's strategy of deterrence evolved “according to operational requirements on the ground,” and expressed confidence the policy will continue to achieve success. Other commenters were less certain of the Kingdom's policy shift, in part because the government has yet to officially articulate it. In the excerpted column from Al-Dustour, leading political analyst and columnist Oraib al-Rantawi, criticized the Jordanian government's failure to explain its national security decision making.

The long-term course of Jordan's security policy is no doubt difficult to articulate publically, especially when it hinges on the aims and actions of other regional and international actors. Winning public support for a dramatic policy shift will be important, however, especially if rumors of a Jordanian role in constructing buffer zone in Syria materialize. End OE Watch Commentary (Beeny)

Source: Ammon News.net. “Al-urdun yanjaz al-murahla ath-ania min nitham muraqiba li Daesh (Jordan completes second stage of surveillance system for Daesh)” 10 June 2015. <http://www.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleno=232951>.

Jordan completes second of surveillance system for Daesh

Jordan completed the second stage of a new surveillance system. American officials say it prevents Daesh infiltration into the country over the Jordanian-Syrian border.

The new surveillance system includes a network of radars and observation towers that provide Jordanian military forces the opportunity to discover intruders several kilometers before their arrival at the border.

Colonel Robert Paddock, military attache at the U.S. Embassy in Jordan, said “The observation and surveillance system is an important tool in the hands of Jordanian forces which can, thanks to this system, observe everything moving in the direction of the border. Likewise, the Jordanian army can rely on this system to move its troops in order to thwart any attempt at infiltration across the border” according to Al Arabiya television.

With the completion of the second phase of the project, the new system significantly raises the efficiency of the Jordanian armed forces in performance of special functions. The completion of installation along the entire Iraqi border is expected by the end of this year.

Source: Rishq, Taghreed. “Siasioon: Khiaarat al-urdun maftooaha li-muwajaha tatawr as-sira'a fi Suriya” (Politicians: Jordan's options are open to face the evolution of the conflict in Syria), Al-Ghad, 2 July 2015. <http://www.alghad.com/m/articles/879837>.

Politicians: Jordan's options are open to face the evolution of the conflict in Syria

...former Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi said the situation in Syria gets harder every day, “what is necessary is an ongoing review of how to fortify the Kingdom from the consequences, especially the security ones.” Safadi added in an interview with Al-Ghad that, “All indicators show that this [review] is really happening, as evidenced by the success of the defense and deterrence strategies that were adopted by the Kingdom.

In Safadi's view, Jordan will not permit the region in Syria neighboring its borders to become a starting point for any terrorist or security threat, “The strategy of deterrence has evolved, and its results are evidenced by the failure of any effective or overwhelming presence of terrorist organizations such as Daesh to take root.”

Safadi said that analysis of the Jordanian position toward the Syrian crisis, since its inception and through its stages of deterioration, clearly shows that it is a “rational position” based on a fixed position: the protection of the security of the Kingdom and its borders from any security threat, and to minimize as much as possible the consequences of the social and economic crisis.

He added that Jordan, “succeeded in addressing the security threats--which increased due to developments of the southern front--through the adoption of defensive strategies, and then deterrence, especially in determining requirements to keep the security risk outside the borders of the Kingdom. . .the security strategy evolved according to operational requirements on the ground, and I think it will continue developing to achieve its goals in accordance to the nature of threats that occur,” said Safadi.

(continued)

Continued: Jordan's Border Policy Moves from Defense to Deterrence

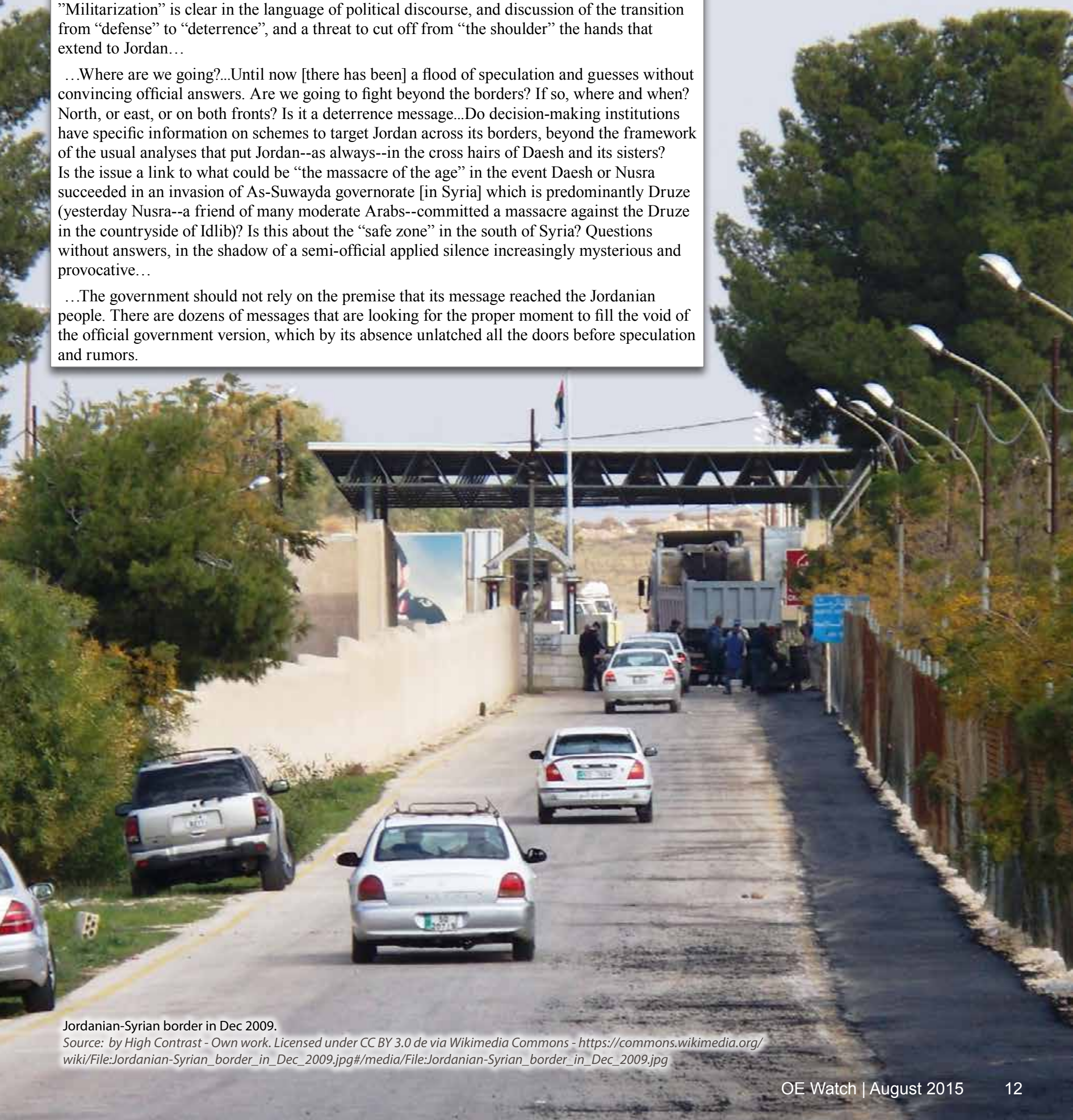
Source: Al-Rantawi, Oraib. "Tofaan al-asila waaltasailat (A flood of questions and more questions)" Al-Dustour, 11 June 2015. <http://goo.gl/zed6LL>

A flood of questions and more questions

The torrent of questions which circulate among Jordanians is nearly unending. "Militarization" is clear in the language of political discourse, and discussion of the transition from "defense" to "deterrence", and a threat to cut off from "the shoulder" the hands that extend to Jordan...

...Where are we going?...Until now [there has been] a flood of speculation and guesses without convincing official answers. Are we going to fight beyond the borders? If so, where and when? North, or east, or on both fronts? Is it a deterrence message...Do decision-making institutions have specific information on schemes to target Jordan across its borders, beyond the framework of the usual analyses that put Jordan--as always--in the cross hairs of Daesh and its sisters? Is the issue a link to what could be "the massacre of the age" in the event Daesh or Nusra succeeded in an invasion of As-Suwayda governorate [in Syria] which is predominantly Druze (yesterday Nusra--a friend of many moderate Arabs--committed a massacre against the Druze in the countryside of Idlib)? Is this about the "safe zone" in the south of Syria? Questions without answers, in the shadow of a semi-official applied silence increasingly mysterious and provocative...

...The government should not rely on the premise that its message reached the Jordanian people. There are dozens of messages that are looking for the proper moment to fill the void of the official government version, which by its absence unlatched all the doors before speculation and rumors.



Jordanian-Syrian border in Dec 2009.

Source: by High Contrast - Own work. Licensed under CC BY 3.0 de via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jordanian-Syrian_border_in_Dec_2009.jpg#/media/File:Jordanian-Syrian_border_in_Dec_2009.jpg

Jordan's Largest Espionage Case In Ten Years

8 July 2015

“[Khaled al-Rabiyaey] participated in many security courses in Iran, including courses in physical fitness, shooting, the use of various kinds of weapons, methods of opening doors, surveillance operations, and the process of selecting safe houses and writing in invisible ink.”

OE Watch Commentary: On July 6, Ghazi Mrayat, a journalist at the semi-official Jordanian newspaper **Al Rai**, published a report that the Jordanian State Security Court had begun proceedings against Khaled al-Rabiyaey, dual citizen of Iraq and Norway for charges of “possession and handling of explosive material” and “intent to carry out terrorist acts”. The article was subsequently removed when the military body of the State Security Court, headed by military judge Colonel Dr. Mohammed Afif, issued a gag order on the case, banning publication of information related to the indictment.

Al Rai published a second article related to the case on 8 July, which was picked up by **The New Khaleej**. (BBC Monitoring notes **The New Khaleej** is possibly linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.) **The New Khaleej** article, excerpted here, provides details from a copy of al-Rabiyaey's indictment that was reportedly obtained by **Al-Rai**. The article explains that al-Rabiyaey was arrested on 3 April and subsequently detained and interrogated. Later, al-Rabiyaey reportedly helped the security services locate a cache of nearly 45 kg of high-explosive RDX hidden in Jordan's Tughra Ausfour area (between Amman and Jerash). The first session of the trial was scheduled to begin 13 July.

More interestingly, the article provides details about al-Rabiyaey's background and former experience with the Iranian intelligence services. If true, the report provides a valuable window into the recruitment and operations methods of the Iranian intelligence services **End OE Watch Commentary (Beeny)**

Source: Al-Motiri, Khaled, “Dabt 45 kg men mada al-RDX shadida al-infijar” (45 kg of high-explosive RDX seized), *The New Khalij*, 8 July 2015, <http://www.thenewkhalij.com/ar/node/16786>.

45kg of high-explosive RDX seized: New details revealed about Iranian scheme to carry out “terrorist acts” in Jordan

On Wednesday, the semi-official Jordanian newspaper al-Rai published important details in the case of Khaled Jassem Khadem al-Rabiyaey, an affiliate of the Iranian Quds Force who is accused by Jordanian authorities of planning to conduct “terrorist acts” in the country.

These [details] come despite the gag order on the case from Jordanian judicial authorities.

The following are the most prominent of what the Jordanian newspaper reported, which was mentioned in the indictment which the newspaper obtained:

The arrest of the [Khaled al-Rabiyaey] came on the third of April, and it was decided to detain him on the sixth of the same month. After he was entrusted to the public prosecutor of the Jordanian State Security Court, he was charged with three counts: “possession and handling of explosive material with intent to use it to carry out terrorist acts” and “acts likely to disturb the public order and endanger the safety of society and [creating a] security risk”, and “affiliation with an illegal group (Quds Force) with a view to commit terrorist acts”. (The Quds Force is a unit of special forces in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard responsible for operations outside [Iran's] territorial boundaries.

The accused travelled frequently to Iran in 1980 to visit family that was exiled there (for reasons unclear). Later he was recruited by Iranian intelligence, where he worked as an information officer in the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution, and joined the Council's affiliated military units with the aim of fighting against Iraqi forces.

Al-Rabiyaey worked in Iranian Revolutionary Guard wiretapping stations in order to eavesdrop on Iraqi military units. The accused was fluent in Arabic and Persian, and also worked at the Department of Aircraft Resistance.

The accused participated in many security courses in Iran, including courses in physical fitness, shooting, the use of various kinds of weapons, methods of opening doors, surveillance operations, and the process of selecting safe houses and writing in invisible ink.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the accused was assigned to work in the Department of Foreign Operations of the Iranian intelligence service, where he was assigned to provide logistical support and smuggle combat elements that participated in the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Iran, Shapour Bakhtiar, in August 1991 in the French capital, Paris. The accused participated in an operation transferring a central locking device later used in the assassination of an unnamed woman in Istanbul.

Then the accused was assigned to travel to Jordan to learn the procedures of navigating between the governorates, to identify sites of brush and forest. Indeed, he arrived in Jordan and resided there for more than a month, during which he visited various regions of the Kingdom.

Then he went to Lebanon, where he met an individual named “Abu Saeed” and ultimately worked as an administrator for the Axis of the Levant with Iranian intelligence.

Abu Saeed tasked the accused to go to Jordan, and told him of the existence of a “drop point” containing explosive materials in the area of al-Shahid Wasfi et-Tal forest, which is located on the road between Amman and Jerash (just about 48 km to the north of Amman). [Abu Saeed] asked [the accused] to search for [the explosives] and transfer them to another safe area.

The accused came to Jordan went to the al-Shahid Wasfi et-Tal forrest, and managed to reach the “drop point”. The explosives were two plastic packages containing a quantity of explosive material. The accused transferred the explosives to Jordan Heights [Tughra Ausfour] an area of dense trees, where he buried the explosives and then left for Amman and from there to Lebanon, where he told Abu Saeed the details of what he had done.

During 2014, while in Iran, the accused met with an intelligence officer named Mr. Abbas. They conversed, and later the same officer visited [the accused], accompanied by a person named Sejad, and asked him to go to Jordan and inspect the explosive material which he had previously buried in Jordan Heights [Tughra Ausfour], along with surveying the Jordan-Israel border and learning a ways and methods of moving in the border region, in preparation for use in carrying out terrorist operations.

Yemen: Twilight of AQAP, Dawn of the Islamic State?

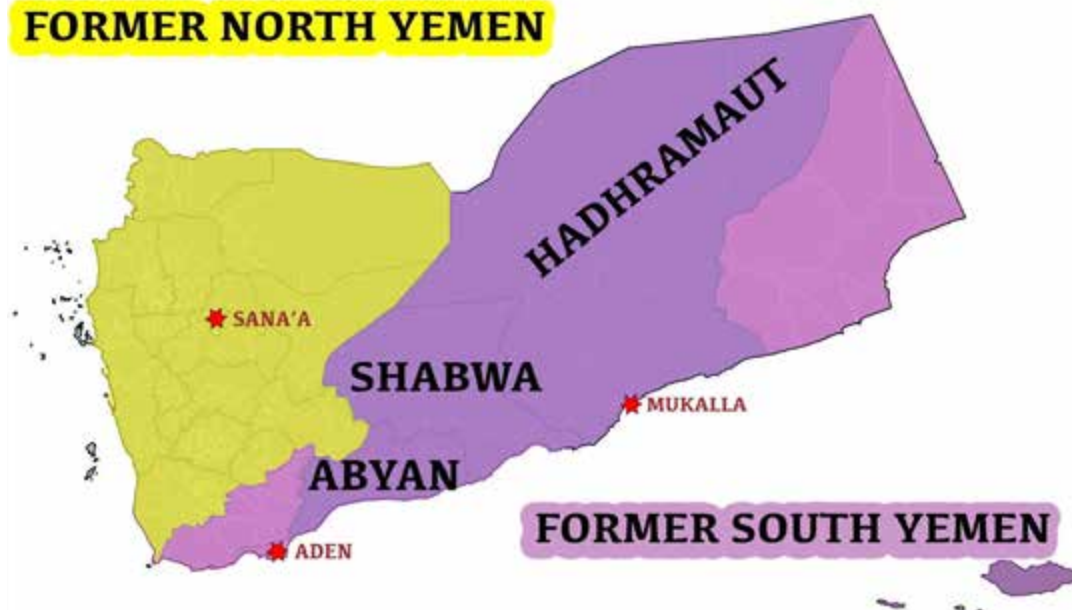
4 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past few months drone strikes have progressively picked off the top leadership of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), including head honcho Nasir al-Wuhayshi in June 2015. Although jihadi networks are built to withstand leadership decapitation, the drone strikes have coincided with defections to the Islamic State (IS). AQAP's days as the leading jihadist network in Yemen may be numbered.

On 2 April AQAP took over the port city of Mukalla (Hadhramaut Province) in what the first accompanying article describes as a Saudi-brokered handover. On 12 June the Saudi newspaper **al-Sharq al-Awsat** published a story on the state of AQAP since then. The article, which is excerpted alongside this commentary, claims that after the takeover of Mukalla a split emerged among AQAP leaders. Jalal Belaidi, a native of Abyan Province and important local field commander, led a group that defected and pledged allegiance to IS. In 2011 and 2012 Belaidi had starred in a series of videos made by AQAP after it took over towns in Abyan and Shabwa Provinces. According to the third accompanying article, Belaidi and his followers have now set up a training camp in the Hadhramaut desert near Saudi Arabia.

(continued)

FORMER NORTH YEMEN



Former North and South Yemen

Source: "Yemen districts". Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yemen_districts.png#/media/File:Yemen_districts.png

Source:

أبرز القوى النافذة جنوباً
"The most prominent fighting forces in the south," al-Akhbar. 4 July 2015. <https://www.al-akhbar.com/node/237182>

Before al-Qaeda entered Mukalla on 2 April, negotiations took place between Fahmi Mahrous, a former general in the security services in Hadhramaut and the Salafi extremist Salih Sharfi. Both of these men are Saudi proteges. They reached an agreement for the troops loyal to Hadi, of which there were 3,000, to withdraw without fighting. The number of al-Qaeda militants that entered Mukalla did not exceed 200.

Source: انقسامات وسط المتشددين تؤدي لظهور "داعش" آخر في جنوب اليمن
Ahmed al-Jaaidi. "Fissures among extremists lead to the emergence of another ISIL in southern Yemen," al-Sharq al-Awsat, 12 June 2015. <http://goo.gl/xep55>

According to a military source, since 2 April the group has suffered internal splits, with the emergence of an armed faction within AQAP calling itself ISIL and led by prominent field commander Jalal Belaidi, a native of Abyan Province in southern Yemen...

“...the emergence of an armed faction within AQAP calling itself ISIL and led by prominent field commander Jalal Belaidi...”



Jalal Belaidi

Source: YouTube screenshot (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVRfsjCACLU>)

Continued: Yemen: Twilight of AQAP, Dawn of the Islamic State?

Despite reports of armed clashes, the battle between AQAP and IS in Yemen is for now largely informational. In early June Qatar's **al-Jazeera** aired a documentary called "al-Qaeda's Informant," which claimed that AQAP's new leader, Qassim al-Raymi, was the creation of Yemen's intelligence services. As the fourth article notes, these allegations may lead to further rebellion within AQAP's ranks, to the benefit of Belaidi's faction. Al-Raymi is a northerner from Sanaa Province, while Belaidi is a native of Abyan, a province in former South Yemen. Yemen's jihadists are strongest in the southern provinces of Shabwa, Abyan and Hadhramaut and, consequently Belaidi has home-field advantage here. The ascent of his group (IS) at the expense of the al-Raymi-led faction (AQAP) seems almost inevitable. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: جلال بلعدي يعلن عن تأسيس معسكر تدريب "داعش"
"Jalal Belaidi announces ISIL by opening a training camp," al-Masdar, 27 June 2015. <http://almasdaronline.com/article/72987>

A military and a tribal source both confirmed that ISIL had set up a training camp in the Qaf al-Kathiri area of Hadhramaut's desert, near the border with Saudi Arabia... Eyewitnesses told al-Masdar Online that ISIL militants, some wearing Afghan- and Pakistani-style clothing set up checkpoints in al-Qiyaan near Thumud District, in an attempt by the group to secure the training camp... the disagreement between Belaidi's wing (which joined ISIL) and Ansar al-Shari'a (the name used by the local al-Qaeda branch) devolved into armed clashes in Wadi Sirr. The clashes led to injuries and casualties on both sides.

Source: مقتل الوحيشي .. هل يستفيد "داعش" من تراجع "القاعدة" باليمن؟
"Al-Wuhayshi killed... will ISIL take advantage of al-Qaeda's decline in Yemen?" al-Araby al-Jadid, 17 June 2015. <http://goo.gl/79azaI>

It was expected that the group would pick Qassim al-Raymi, aka Abu Hureira al-Sanaani, to replace al-Wuhayshi. Al-Raymi is one of the most important remaining historical leaders. He is also controversial. A documentary aired less than two weeks ago on al-Jazeera and titled "al-Qaeda's Informant" linked al-Raymi the National Security Bureau, one of Yemen's intelligence agencies. The film created a stir among AQAP activists and observers on the Internet. A man interviewed on the show - allegedly an informant who infiltrated AQAP - claimed that Salih's nephew, the former deputy head of the National Security Bureau, told him to meet with al-Raymi. Supporters of the group denied the accusations, calling them attempts to sully their reputation and undermine trust in their leadership... [al-Raymi's] rise may represent the start of defections and one should not discount the possibility that Jalal Belaidi, from Abyan Province, be the one leading a formal defection.



Qassim al-Raymi

Source: YouTube screenshot

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVRfSjCACLU>)



Shiban, Hadhramaut Valley, Yemen

Source: - "Shibam Wadi Hadhramaut Yemen" by Jialiang Gao www.peace-on-earth.org - Original Photograph. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shibam_Wadi_Hadhramaut_Yemen.jpg#/media/File:Shibam_Wadi_Hadhramaut_Yemen.jpg

The Politics of Fighting the Islamic State

8 July 2015

“... the Russian president’s proposal is more logical than what is being proposed by American officials...”

OE Watch Commentary: Since coalition airstrikes began targeting the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq last August, the group has gained footholds in Libya, Egypt and Yemen; consolidated control over Mosul, Raqqa, Fallujah and other cities in Syria and Iraq; continued to successfully recruit on a global level; and expanded its area of operations with recent terrorist attacks in Tunisia and Kuwait. The first accompanying article, an op-ed published in the Saudi daily **al-Hayat**, argues that the fight against IS is not being taken seriously enough, as evinced by the international coalition’s strategy of fighting only from the air.

In a late June press conference alongside his Syrian counterpart, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for a joint effort to fight IS that would bring together Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Jordan, on the one hand, and the Syrian government on the other. The author of the second accompanying article argues that this idea is being taken more seriously than one might expect as a result of shifts in American policy. The United States, he explains, has started to “wash its hands” of Arabs both Sunni and Shi’a and placed “all its eggs in the Kurdish basket.” The strengthening of nationalist Kurdish groups has, in turn, brought about a convergence of interests among the four countries with significant Kurdish populations (Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran).

(continued)

Source:

تسونامي “الداعشي”: المواجهة ليست بحجم التحدي
Adel Malek. “The ISIL Tsunami: The response is insufficient for the threat,” al-Hayat. 4 July 2015. <http://goo.gl/bTE7dq>

First: We must realize once again that the way “ISIL’s terrorism” is being fought is insufficient given the danger and challenges posed by the group. Furthermore, what is called the “international coalition” is not so in the least, since “war from above” - that is only from the air - will not achieve the goal of destroying ISIL terrorism. Second: If the Russian proposal for a new anti-terror coalition that includes countries that have and continue to fight Syria is found to be serious, this would indicate that the region has entered a new era... Who will lead the fight against the “ISIL Tsunami”? The question will remain until Allah causes what has been destined to happen.

Source:

ستون متطوعا سوريا فقط ينضمون لبرنامج التدريب الامريكى لمحاربة الدولة الاسلامية
Abd al-Bari Atwan. “Only sixty Syrian volunteers joined the American training program to fight the ‘Islamic State’,” Al-Rai al-Youm. 8 July 2015. <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=284277>

It is clear that the United States has begun to gradually “wash its hands” of Arabs both Sunni and Shi’a. It is placing all its eggs in the Kurdish basket, providing them with weapons and training which are beginning to yield “victories” on the ground against the Islamic States in northeast Syria. This includes the takeover of the city of Tel Abyad near the border with Turkey and practically linked geographically to the self-ruled Kurdish areas in Iraq. The Kurds are strongly motivated to fight the Islamic State due to their nationalist aspirations to establish a Kurdish state in northern Syria, Iraq and southern Turkey. Fears of this have driven the four regional countries - Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran - closer together and led them to momentarily put their differences apart. The Russian initiative proposed by Vladimir Putin should be understood in this context. The initiative calls for a Saudi-Turkish-Syrian-Jordanian four-way alliance to fight the Islamic State... no opposition “in principle” has emerged to this initiative in the slightest, and as of the time of writing we have not heard any clear rejection from Saudi Arabia, Jordan or Turkey.



Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Mualim

Source: “Walid Muallem” by Foreign and Commonwealth Office - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/foreignoffice/3751887007/>. Licensed under OGL via

زنموك ايديميكيو - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Walid_Muallem.jpg#/media/File:Walid_Muallem.jpg



Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov

Source: Kremlin.ru [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons



Former Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal (deceased 7/9/2015)

Source: By United States government work [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Continued: The Politics of Fighting the Islamic State

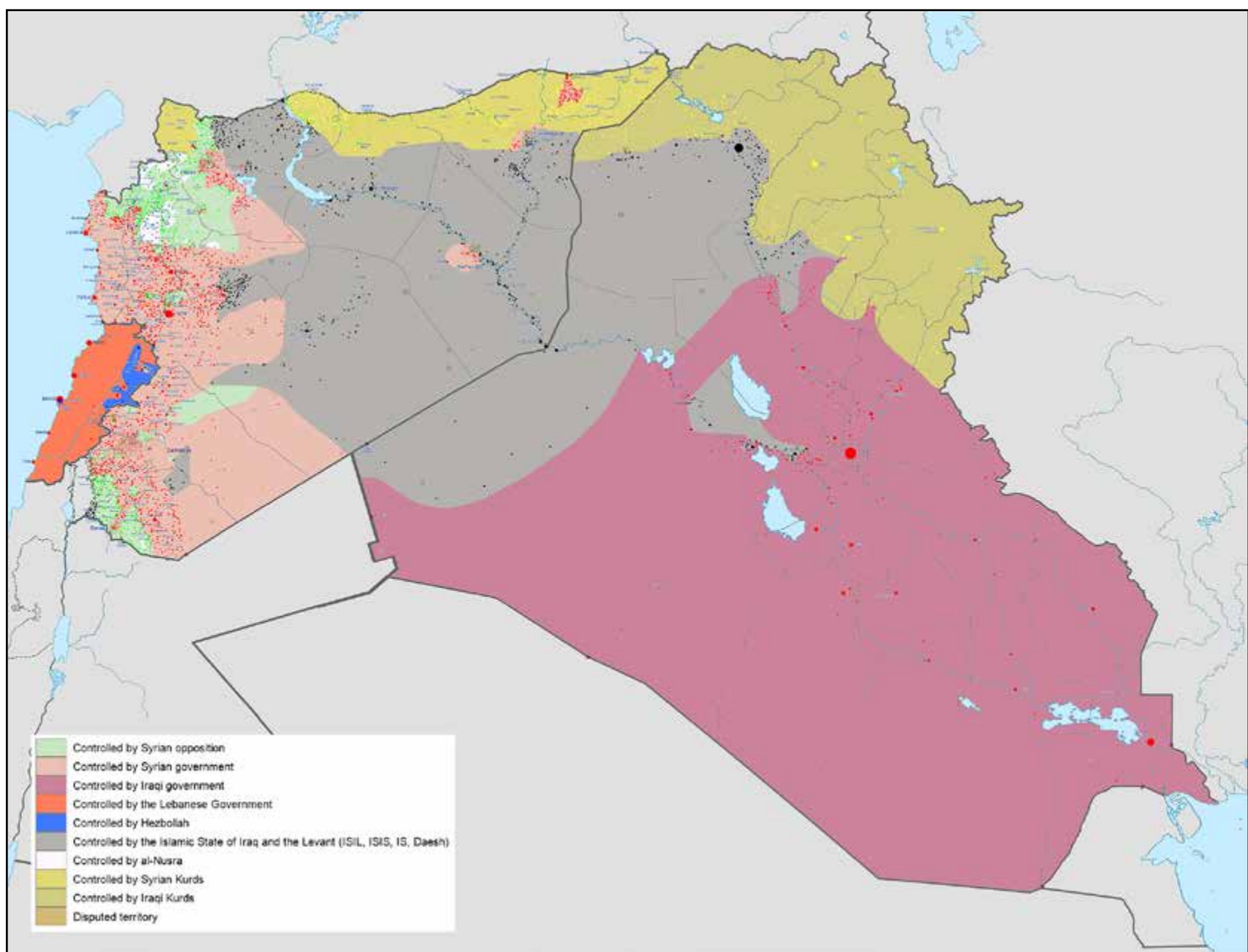
*In principle, Saudi Arabia rejects the idea of working with the Syrian government in an anti-IS coalition. In the third accompanying article, the former editor-in-chief of the Saudi daily **al-Sharq al-Awsat** explains why: "To us the Iranian threat is more dangerous than ISIL, this is a fact that always needs to be taken into consideration." He thus rules out Saudi collaboration with the Assad government, as it would signal acceptance of Iranian hegemony over Syria. Still, the author is not fully dismissive of the Russian proposal, noting that "what the Russian president is proposing is more logical than what is being proposed by American officials," whom he accuses of seeming to not understand the region's complicated history.*

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

Source:

مشروع حلف سعودي تركي مع الأسد
Abd al-Rahman al-Rashid. "The Project for Saudi and Turkey to ally with al-Assad," al-Sharq al-Awsat. 7 July 2015. <http://goo.gl/z6ACc7>

We must understand the ongoing geopolitical transformation. We are facing a region whose map is changing, with Washington yielding to the new reality being imposed by Iran, with its nuclear program and its geographical spread into Syria and Iraq. This expansion threatens the existence of Gulf countries, Turkey and Jordan. It also dangerously upsets the regional balance with Egypt that has been in place for half a century. The Iranians today direct the regimes of two large countries - Syria and Iraq. Were Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to ally with Assad they would be recognizing Iranian hegemony over Syria! It would be dangerous for countries of the Gulf and Turkey to ignore the Iranian expansion and see the problem as only coming from one angle, namely terrorism and ISIL. To us the Iranian threat is more dangerous than ISIL, this is a fact that always needs to be taken into consideration. In fact the Russian president's proposal is more logical than what is being proposed by American officials, who don't seem to distinguish between sects and seem to not understand the region's complicated history. Putin is calling on the Sunnis to fight the Sunnis, asking Sunni countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Jordan to fight ISIL, the Sunni terrorist group. The Americans, however, turn to the Shi'a extremists of Iran for help in fighting Sunni extremism. This is a frightening mistake; it will strengthen ISIL rather than the opposite, as Sunnis from all over the world will flock to defend their coreligionists...



Syria/Iraq - Territorial Control Map.

Source: "Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese insurgencies" by BlueHyperCane761 - Own work:en:Template:Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese insurgencies detailed map. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syrian,_Iraqi,_and_Lebanese_insurgencies.png#/media/File:Syrian,_Iraqi,_and_Lebanese_insurgencies.png

Egypt Tries to Plug Gaza's Tunnels

23 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *In October 2014 militants from what became the local Islamic State franchise killed over 30 Egyptian soldiers in northern Sinai Province. In response, Egyptian authorities declared war on the tunnels linking Egypt and the Gaza Strip and began clearing a buffer zone 500 meters into the Egyptian side of the roughly 14 kilometers of shared border. A few weeks later they doubled the proposed width of the buffer zone, and recent reports suggest it may be extended another 500 meters for a total of 1.5 kilometers. Around 2,000 houses have been forcibly abandoned in the Egyptian border town of Rafah, and although affected families have been promised compensation, only a small minority appears to have received anything.*

In June 2015 the Egyptian military announced it had discovered and destroyed 1,429 tunnels between Gaza and Sinai. According to the first accompanying article, the longest one - discovered in March - was nearly 3 kilometers long and was likely dug using modern equipment and a large number of workers. In late June the Egyptian military began digging a 20-meter deep, 10-meter wide trench 2 kilometers from the border. As the second accompanying article notes, there is talk of making the trench even deeper so that it meets the water table; local tribal leaders suggested filling the trench with water in order to flush out the tunnels.

(continued)

“...The strategy of forced displacement in the Sinai Peninsula along Egypt’s eastern border will lead to increased violence ...”

Source: Ahmed Fouad. “Egypt discovers record-length smuggling tunnel,” al-Monitor. 17 April 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/egypt-sinai-gaza-tunnels-sanctions-sisi-terrorist.html#>

The importance of the buffer zone expansion is becoming clear in light of the armed forces’ announcement on March 29 of the discovery of a secret tunnel connecting Gaza to Sinai and stretching along 2.8 kilometers (1.7 miles) into Egyptian territory. This tunnel is the longest tunnel yet to be discovered by the armed forces. Nasser Khaled, an infrastructure expert and soil mechanical engineer, told Al-Monitor that digging such a tunnel requires modern equipment and a large number of workers to dig either in rocks or loose land. He said the process takes four to five months, while the average cost of the required equipment is no less than about 10 million Egyptian pounds (\$1.3 million)...



Tunnel in Rafah, Gaza Strip

Source: By Marius Arnesen (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/anarkistix/3464809713>) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Source: مصر تحفر أضخم خندق لتأمين سيناء
Mohammed al-Bahrawi. “Egypt digs biggest trench to secure Sinai,” al-Masry al-Youm. 23 June 2015. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/759939>

... “the trench will not be filled with water, which is different from the idea proposed by tribal shaykhs, who suggested digging a channel alongside the border and flooding it in order to destroy the deeper tunnels”... The source added that military engineers are going to deepen the trench to more than 30 meters, until they reach the water table. The army will also build surveillance towers along the trench. A tribal source requested that the no more border areas in the city of Rafah be cleared, saying “There is no point in clearing more areas if there are no tunnels there”... he warned that doing so would stoke anger among the people.



Gaza tunnel for kidnapping soldiers

Source: By Israel Defense Forces (Tunnel in Gaza Used for Kidnapping Soldiers) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

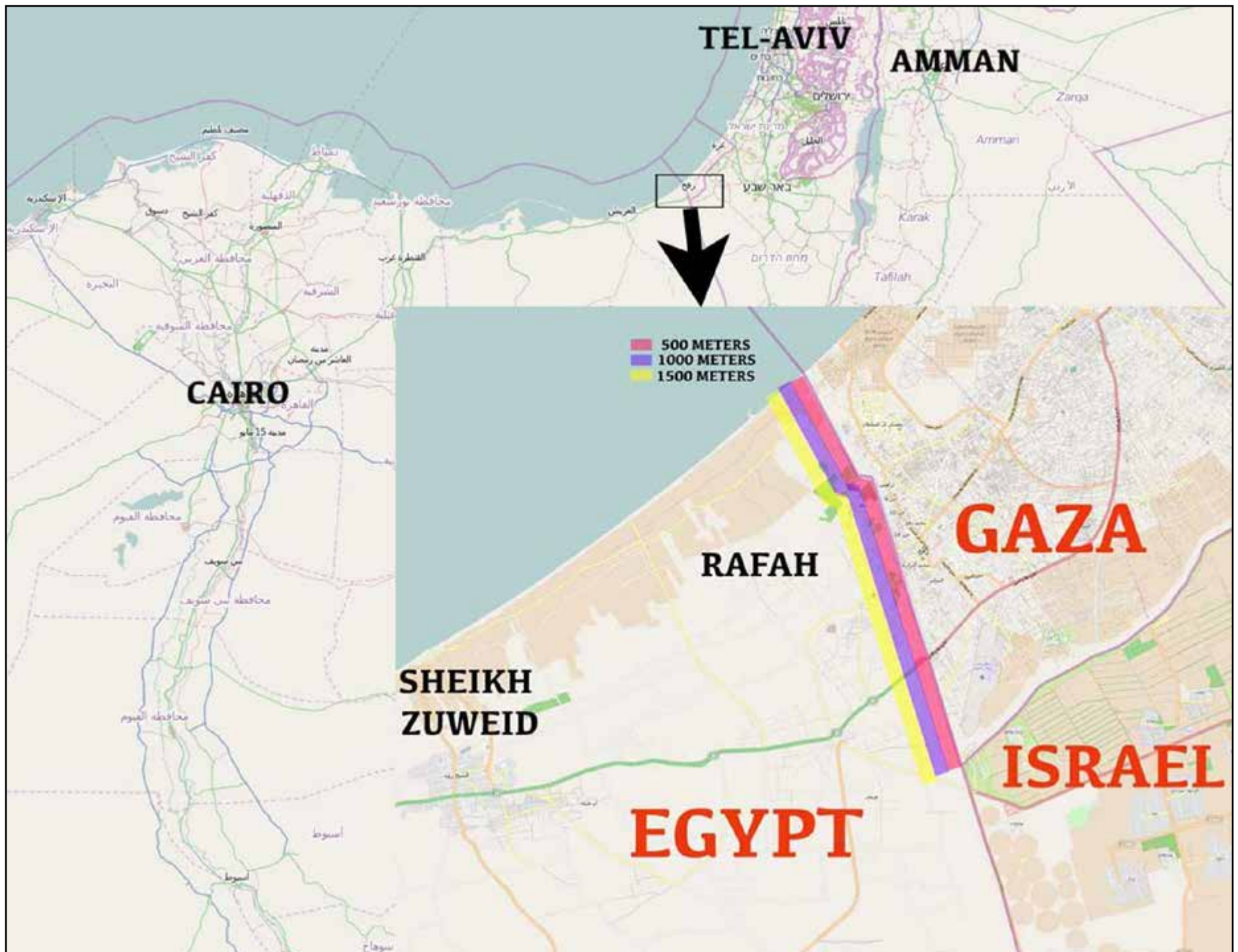
Continued: Egypt Tries to Plug Gaza's Tunnels

The third article claims there is a causal link between forced displacement and growing violence in the Sinai. In addition to the more visible displacement along the border, since 2013 residents of the flashpoint town of Sheikh Zuweid and surrounding villages have been forcibly displaced without being offered compensation. Some of these displaced locals, the article argues, resent the Egyptian military's presence and turn to supporting the insurgency in Sinai.

In their efforts to curb tunneling in the northern Sinai, Egyptian military leaders appear to be alienating much of the local population. It is as though they are losing sight of the forest by focusing only on the trees. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: مسيرة إقامة المنطقة العازلة: يوميات التهجير في سيناء
 "Chronicle of Displacement in the Sinai: the Fate of the Buffer Zone," al-Araby al-Jadid. 23 June 2015. <http://goo.gl/oCHSfh>

"The strategy of forced displacement in the Sinai Peninsula along Egypt's eastern border will lead to increased violence and an expansion of the areas where Egyptian army and security forces are targeted, which will in turn make it harder to identify those who are engaged in armed clashes with authorities." This warning was made by a group of Egyptian researchers to al-Araby al-Jadid with regard to everyday life in the Sinai... Following the attack in Karam al-Qawadis in October 2014, Egyptian authorities announced they would create a buffer zone in Rafah and displace its residents. This decision is considered one of the main reasons for the increase in violence... "What many observers of the Sinai don't realize is that the forced displacement truly began in Sheikh Zuweid. This became clear in the daily military operations in the villages surrounding the town. In the town itself, the army permanently closed the town's central roundabout in August 2013. As a result 150 stores were forced to close and their owners received no compensation. No less than 50 families living near the roundabout were also forced to leave"... Activists warn that displacement in Sheikh Zuweid takes place faster than in Rafah, only without drawing any attention or compensation offered to its residents...



Source: (CC BY-SA 2.0 <http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>) via © OpenStreetMap contributors

And Now, Cholera: South Sudan's Complex Terrain Gets More Complex

23 June 2015

“After subjecting those [suspected] cases to analysis ... we confirm beyond doubt that there is an outbreak of cholera in Juba,” Health Minister Dr Riek Gai Kok told journalists in Juba on Tuesday.”

OE Watch Commentary: Each passing year South Sudan's celebrations commemorating its independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 appear increasingly muted, likely a reflection of the continuing deterioration of the nation's economy and internal security. On this, the fourth anniversary, the beleaguered country is suffering yet one more problem. As the accompanying article relates, cholera has broken out. The death toll continues to rise since this article was released, with the latest in mid-July at 32 individuals, including at least 6 children under the age of 5.

Usually it is thought that a disease has symptoms, but, in this case, the symptom is the disease, for the presence of cholera is a symptom of a nation unable to provide adequate public health services. The problem is in large part due to South Sudan, the world's newest nation, being mired in interethnic conflict, a situation that existed even prior to its independence. Complicating the situation is that it is not just two groups clashing, but rather several, though the fighting between the Dinka, of whom President Salva Kiir is a member, and the Nuer is the largest conflict. This endless warfare has helped drain the country's coffers, leaving little for essential projects such as providing potable water. Thus, this outbreak of cholera, a disease often spread by drinking contaminated water and which has appeared in the country before, was perhaps inevitable. As the accompanying article relates, the World Health Organization recommends declaring an outbreak after 10 or 20 confirmed cases; South Sudan has over 170.

While some have described South Sudan as a “fragile state” others have gone so far as to call it a “failed state.” The presence of cholera, a generally preventable disease, perhaps gives additional credence to the latter. With a government unable to control its territory, multiple ethnic groups fighting, crumbling infrastructure, and strong Chinese interest in the country's vast oil reserves, much, if not all, of the remote, landlocked nation of South Sudan - whether a fragile state or a failed one - can at the very least be considered complex terrain. Throwing cholera into the mix makes it even more so. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Ashley Hamer, “South Sudan Government Declares Cholera Outbreak,” AllAfrica.com (Supplied to AllAfrica.com by Al Jazeera under an agreement with the African Media Agency), 23 June 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201506232042.html>

South Sudan's government has declared cholera outbreak in the capital city, where at least ...171 cases were confirmed.

The first suspected case was received on June 1 originating from inside the UN ‘displaced persons’ camp on the outskirts of Juba. Cases have since spread outside the camp to some of the city's most congested neighbourhoods.

World Health Organization guidelines indicate that an outbreak should be declared after 10 to 20 confirmed cases.

The health minister was reluctant to explain why the government waited for three weeks before going public. He said “we are not here today to investigate the past ... information is not a cure alone ... In the last two weeks we have not been idle”.

“What was lacking was the public declaration, but already we have been taking measures.

“We want to contain it here in Juba. We don't want it to overspill [into other parts of the country,” said the minister.

Cholera broke out in the capital last year, five months into a civil war that is still ongoing over a year later. That outbreak was devastating infecting more than 6,000 people across 16 counties and resulted in the deaths of 167.



Embroiled in war, little money is available to provide basic public health services such as clean water.

Source: <http://www.medindia.net/news/ssudan-water-shortage-sparks-crisis-107305-1.htm>

African Countries Hired Private Hackers

9 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The recent hack on a private internet firm, Hacking Team, has revealed that it had been contracted by delegations from at least three African countries - Sudan, Ethiopia, and a state-level government from Nigeria - to provide software to hack into citizens' private accounts. In short, the revelations came that Sudan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria had purchased software from Hacking Team to spy on their citizens; it was reported that Egypt, Morocco and "some other African countries" did the same. Unsurprisingly, human and internet rights' groups across the world bemoan the existence of companies such Hacking Team not only for intruding upon citizens' rights to privacy in general, but also for their tendency to facilitate often abusive regimes to further stifle citizen dissent and/or monitor their populations.*

As the first article details, in Nigeria it was the governor of Bayelsa state, in the southeastern Niger Delta region of the country, who had purchased the software to gain access to information on citizens' phones and email accounts. Notably, the article emphasizes that the government was not known to have been under the threat of attacks from cybercriminals at the time, thus insinuating that the purchase may have been undertaken for more nefarious purposes.

As the second article relays, the government of Ethiopia was also revealed to have hired the firm. Simultaneously - and in a potentially related story - it was also revealed that a former Ethiopian activist, now living as a naturalized US citizen (under the name of Kidane), allegedly had his computer hacked by the Ethiopian government beginning in October 2012. Thus, the revelation about Ethiopia contacting Hacking Team is "potentially related" in that it might well have been Hacking Team that facilitated its monitoring of the activist. For its part, Hacking Team said that when it found out that its software, called Galileo, was being used by the Ethiopian government to spy on the U.S.-based journalist, it cancelled the subscription. For its part, the Ethiopian government has yet to confirm or deny any of the allegations.

*Thus, while Internet penetration in many parts of Africa still generally lags behind most parts of the world, governments are nevertheless increasingly showing themselves to be as equally willing as other governments to leverage the power of Internet monitoring for their own benefits. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

Source: 2015. "Bayelsa Governor Hires World's Most Ruthless Hackers For N100M To Hack Computers, Phones In Nigeria." Premium Times (Lagos, Nigeria). 9 July 2015. <http://saharareporters.com/2015/07/09/bayelsa-governor-hires-world%E2%80%99s-most-ruthless-hackers-n100m-hack-computers-phones-nigeria>

The Bayelsa state government paid close to one hundred million naira to an Italian firm, Hacking Team, to hack computers and phones in Nigeria, new information emerging from the firm's leaked internal data has shown.

Hacking Team, notorious for equipping governments with tools to hack citizens' computers and phones, was itself hacked Sunday night and 415 gigabyte of internal data leaked to the public.

... Documents seen by Premium Times show that the Bayelsa government, a small state in Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta, paid Hacking Team N98 million to carry out internet attacks, in what appears to be the most ambitious hacking project by a Nigerian state government.

The contract was signed in late 2013, Hacking Team's internal documents, leaked after the Sunday night hack attack on the company, show.

... The intentions of the Bayelsa state government in purchasing the software are unclear at this time.

As at the time the Bayelsa state government acquired the software, the state was not known to be under any external cyber aggression.

Source: TesfaNews Staff. 2015. "Hacking Team Admits Selling Spying Software to Ethiopia." TesfaNews (Ethiopia). 18 July. <http://www.tesfanews.net/hacking-team-admits-selling-rcs-to-ethiopia/>.

... Hacking Team admitted on Monday that the company has indeed sold its hacking software to Ethiopia.

Several international human rights organizations blamed the Ethiopian government for abusing the spyware to limit press freedom. The Remote Control System (RCS) the Ethiopian government acquired from hacking team is believed to steal passwords and private email communications from journalists, opposition political members, and individuals.

The Ethiopian government had already paid 1.55 million euros to get the service from Hacking Team, the receipt from hacked email communication revealed.

Hacking Team is blamed for selling the software to Syria, Ethiopia, and Sudan – countries accused of human rights abuses David Vincenzetti told the Guardian that his company had also sold its software to Egypt, Morocco, and other African countries.

Previously, a Canadian company, Citizen Lab, reported that the software acquired from Hacking Team was used to wiretap the activities of Ethiopian journalists and opposition party members.



A man stands outside of an Internet cafe in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government, as well as various other governments around Africa, has been revealed to have been paying a private hacking firm to gain access to citizens' personal online information.

Source: <http://willdoherty.org/wordpress/?p=858>

The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC): Plagued by Politics

23 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *New analyses surrounding the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) coming from South Africa have highlighted some cracks in the enterprise's foundation that will continue to plague its much needed, though increasingly unlikely, standup. As the accompanying articles detail, the political rifts among African countries who do and do not want to see ACIRC come to fruition are serving as bigger problems than all involved had hoped.*

As a recap, ACIRC is intended to be an African Union (AU)-sponsored rapid deployment capability to fill in the gaps where current AU efforts in the form of the African Standby Force (ASF) have failed to materialize over the past twelve years. In short, when the Organization of African Unity became the Africa Union in 2002, the AU ushered in a deeply progressive new continental collective security policy accompanied by numerous institutions to support it. Among the institutions that it created was the ASF, which was intended to be a rapid-reaction force to deploy to any African region according to Article 4(h) of the African Union's Constitutive Act, which allows for: "the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity." However, while laying the framework for the ASF engendered optimism, as of 2015 it has yet to be fully operationalized. As a result, the AU still lacks a rapid-deployment capability to stem conflicts at their incipient stages. Because the problems that the lack of such a capability has wrought (especially in instances of state breakdowns like Mali and the Central African Republic), Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, proposed the creation of rapid-deployment mechanism, ACIRC, to be operationalized while the ASF was standing up.

*Yet, as the article below details, political differences among African countries are spelling trouble for the eventual standup of the force. For its part, Dlamini-Zuma's South African government has been the unquestioned leader at the forefront of helping to standup ACIRC. Other early adherents to the plan have been Uganda, Senegal, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea: in total, some 13 countries have committed to potentially contributing troops, money, or material once it is operationalized. However, other countries are notably against the creation of ACIRC, since, they claim, it duplicates pre-existing efforts and draws resources and focus away from the long-standing ASF project. Most notably, apart from South Africa, most of the AU's major troop contributors (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Egypt among them) are not keen on the idea. To that end, observers, including the authors below, have begun to suggest that the political differences among countries might be a death knell for ACIRC, putting an end to the initiative before it has even really gotten off the ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

Source: Brosig, Malte, and Norman Sempijja. 2015. "The African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis: Advice for African Policymakers." South African Institute for International Affairs (Pretoria, South Africa). June 23. <http://www.saiia.org.za/policy-briefings/the-african-capacity-for-immediate-response-to-crisis-advice-for-african-policymakers>.

While the ACIRC has been endorsed by the AU Assembly in 2013, in practice it is far from being a pan-African project and has been criticized for creating divisions among AU members. Key countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt are not endorsing the concept, partly out of fear of South African dominance. A key determinant of the future of the ACIRC remains its political acceptance and the remaining opposition on the continent. The building of a self-reliant continental and robust security architecture implies the allocation of important human and financial resources. This would require strong political commitment from African leaders to invest in the operationalization of these mechanisms (ASF, ACIRC), not only by redefining their national defense policies on external military operations but also by investing in strategic and operational capacities at the continental and regional level.

Source: Brosig, Malte. 2015. "Rapid Response an Elusive Political Project?" South African Institute for International Affairs (Pretoria, South Africa). June 24. <http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/rapid-response-an-elusive-political-project>.

Undoubtedly the AU is in need of a rapid response instrument as the events around Mali demonstrated where France was the only actor able to provide quick and decisive military action against the Tuareg/Jihadist insurgency. The idea of a rapid response tool under the AU Commission – as opposed to a region-based ASF – can be an innovative tool, as most conflicts do not neatly fall into regional categorizations. De facto the ACIRC is intended to address gaps and flaws in the existing security architecture.

However, in practice it is confronted with significant challenges that endanger the whole project. At the forefront is political disunity. Although the ACIRC was adopted by the AU assembly it rests only on the support of a minority of African countries. So far 13 countries have committed to the project. With the opposition camp being filled with political heavyweights such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya or Nigeria (all four are major troop contributors to peacekeeping missions) it is doubtful if the ACIRC can gather enough political momentum and military capability to get off the ground quickly. Additionally South Africa's spearheading of the initiative and its leadership ambitions are not well received everywhere.

The second major challenge is the open question of how to harmonize the ACIRC with existing peacekeeping structures such as the ASF: while the ACIRC is supposed to be only a stop-gap instrument until the full operationalization of the ASF, which from the beginning was supposed to have a rapid response capability, de facto it is much more. The idea of a rapid response instrument under the direct administration of the AU runs against the design of the ASF, which is based on regional support. While from a functional perspective it plugs an institutional gap, from a political perspective the ACIRC can easily be seen as a competing project at the cost of Regional Economic Communities. These concerns need to be allayed for the project to succeed.

Improving the African Union's Policy on Police in Peacekeeping

1 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Since the early 1990s African international organizations have launched or participated in some 31 peace support operations around the continent. Thus, more than ever, the African Union (AU) is at the forefront of trying to “get it right” when it comes to engendering positive security outcomes throughout the continent. While it is currently undertaking numerous projects in the areas of peace and security, one of the highest-priority items on its agenda is correcting and clarifying its policies on the importance of police in its peace support operations. As the accompanying article details, the importance of AU policing in peacekeeping operations cannot be underemphasized.

“The African Union is currently working to ensure that “the police dimension is well covered in all functional areas within the AU Peace Support Operations Division.”

The increasingly multidimensional nature of peace support operations led the AU, in the articulation of its 2004 Common African Defense and Security Policy, to delineate three main actors in the peacekeeping and peacebuilding process: civilians, military, and the police. Historically, especially in Africa, the police have assumed to simply be subordinate to the military. Rarely have police had their own mandating procedures, nor have they been sufficiently involved or consulted in the planning or operations phases of such missions.

Nevertheless, the importance of police in peace operations has come to the fore globally as an imperative part of improving peace operations outcomes. First, police are viewed as a “midway” point between the military and civilian populations, thus serving as an ideal intermediary force between two sides that sometimes fail to understand one another completely. Second, the police’s role extends throughout society, from helping to reinstate the rule

(continued)

Source: Meressa Kahsu and Anne Livingstone. 2015. “Why the AU Needs to Get Policing Right.” Institute for Security Studies (Pretoria, South Africa). July 1. <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/why-the-au-needs-to-get-policing-right>.

To allow for police work that caters to the dynamic, complex environment outlined above, the African Union (AU) introduced a multi-dimensional approach to its peace and security interventions on the continent. This new approach was laid out in the Common African Defence and Security Policy (2004). The focus was to include the three primary components of peace support operations and peacebuilding – namely civilians, the military and the police – at all levels of strategic, operational and tactical analysis, planning and implementation.

This represented a significant change, and was part of the global trend to move beyond military dominance in peacekeeping by incorporating civilian and police actors from the onset of conflict, given the critical role they play in longer-term peacebuilding. Globally, it was increasingly evident that the role of police and law enforcement was vital if chances of a return to conflict were to be minimized.

....With its establishment in 2002, the AU began making a number of institutional changes. The Protocol of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) defines the components of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). ... However, these primary documents did not include the police at the policy level of the APSA.

Similarly, the police components of the REC/RMs were not represented at the decision-making level. The police component is a part of the planning element, but remains understaffed and subordinated to the military component. This gap is now being addressed, as there is no longer any question that getting policing right is at the heart of a successful peace support operation. Police experts need sophisticated tools and specialized knowledge to respond to local interpretations and practices on rule of law, justice and traditional mechanisms that can be used to support conflict resolution. The complex environments where peace support operations are mandated require an expanded range of technical skills and command structures that support the objectives of the host state in restoring the rule of law.

Last year, the inauguration of the Police Strategic Support Group (PSSG) highlighted the commitment to bringing strategic police representation to the same level as that of the Military Staff Committee. At its maiden conference, a range of police experts from AU-led peace support operations focused on the structure and organization of the AU Police, the ASF police component in the APSA, the relationship with the REC/RM planning elements and the capacities and capabilities of the regional police.

A highlight of the meeting was the attention paid to ensuring that the police have a clear role and identity. The police are focused on defining its identity and being clear about the vision, mission, codes of conduct, structure and other elements that will empower the police to be involved as decision-makers equal to their military counterparts.

In the coming months, the PSSG will engage police leadership from across the continent to work on the recently amended AU Peace Support Operations Divisions (PSOD) structure. This will ensure that the police dimension is well covered in all functional areas within the AU PSOD. The second focus area is greater clarity of roles and responsibilities in peace support operations, which will help to clearly distinguish how police differ from their military counterparts. This level will improve coordination and cooperation between these two key players.

A third focus area is the development of AU Police policy, guidelines and standard operating procedures. This is intended to harmonize approaches to policing and the rule of law, and also to develop standards for the countries and regional actors who contribute to the ASF police component.

Continued: Improving the African Union's Policy on Police in Peacekeeping

of law to reestablishing a functioning judicial system to more traditional functions of providing everyday protection against crime and violence. Third, police are typically more numerous and are often less costly to deploy, allowing them to serve as an built-in force multiplier.

Given the primacy of the police in peace support operations, as the article below details, the AU has recently inaugurated a Police Strategic Support Group, which works in conjunction with the African Union Military Staff Committee. (For more on the state of the AU'S Military Staff Committee, see last month's edition of Operational Environment Watch). One of the overriding themes that the committee, composed of police from around the continent, has focused on is ensuring that the police operating within AU peace support operations have a clearly defined role and identity that will "empower the police to be involved as decision-makers equal to their military counterparts."

End OE Watch Commentary
(Warner)



A policewoman serving as part of an African Union mission. The African Union is currently attempting to clarify the role and profile of African police within AU peace support operations.

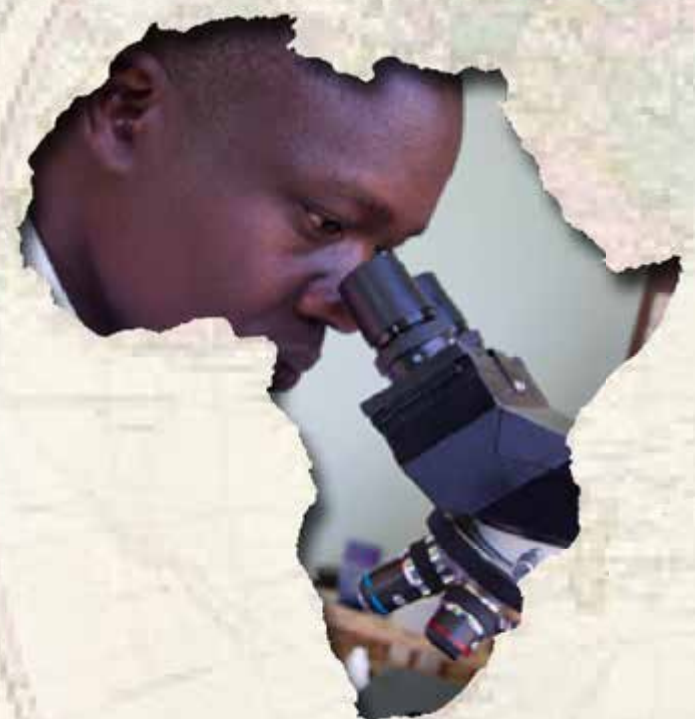
Source: <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/why-the-au-needs-to-get-policing-right>

Africa's Brain Drain: Its Impacts on Security and Stability

By Lieutenant Colonel Robert Feldman, U.S. Army Reserve.

Africa is bleeding. Much of its lifeblood, composed of well-educated individuals who could help tackle its toughest problems, is flowing away. This hemorrhaging of engineers, doctors, teachers, nurses, businesspersons, scientists, and others with extensive training constitutes Africa's brain drain. This brief study examines the impact of this loss in the social, economic, political and security spheres.

<http://fms0.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Africa's-Brain-Drain.pdf>



Boko Haram Reversing Nigerian Government Gains, Confidence in Buhari Wanes

4 July 2015

“The Buhari administration has simply been grandstanding about taming Boko Haram; all words no action.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Despite the hope that accompanied the election of Muhammadu Buhari in March 2015, some in Nigeria, like the author of the attached article, are beginning to express a loss of hope that Buhari was the antidote that Nigeria was looking for in its fight against Boko Haram. Many in the country rejoiced that the seasoned former general would now be the commander-in-chief in the fight against Boko Haram. While Buhari has at least publicly evinced commitment to the fight, the few months since his election have been some of the bloodiest in the past year, thus leading some to argue that his actions are insufficient.*

Since taking office Buhari has undertaken numerous actions that have been intended to build upon the gains that were seen during the lead-up to the election. Three are notable. First, Buhari moved the command and control center from Abuja to the northeastern city of Maiduguri, an epicenter of Boko Haram activity. Second, he has deepened cooperation with neighboring governments in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon as part of the combined efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force. (Yet, as was detailed in last month’s Operational Environment Watch, Buhari has dug in his heels in insisting that Nigeria stay in command of the MNJTF, despite the fact that neighbors have said that leadership should be on a rotating basis). Third, Buhari recently sacked nearly all of the country’s top military commanders that had served under his predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, replacing the Chief of the Defense Staff, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of the Navy Staff, Chief of Air Staff, Chief of Defense Intelligence, and the National Security Advisor. (For more on the shakeup, see the accompanying article in this edition of Operational Environment Watch, “Behind the Nigerian Military Shakeup.”)

(continued)

Source: Adebowale, Yemi. 2015. “In Buhari’s 36 Days, Boko Haram Kills 406 Nigerians” ThisDayLive (Lagos, Nigeria). 4 July. <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/in-buhari-s-36-days-boko-haram-kills-406-nigerians/213796/>.

Buhari’s administration is clearly not making any progress in the war against Boko Haram terrorists... I was shocked when I compiled the casualties in the last 36 days of this administration. 406 innocent Nigerians have been killed in the last 36 days by Boko Haram in the North-east. That is an average of 11 people killed daily. Please, check out the timeline below.

It is a shame that some people have suddenly relegated reports about these atrocities to the background. We are not putting pressure on this administration to take proactive action. Even Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State and Ibrahim Geidam of Yobe State have suddenly become quiet. So, these lives no longer matter because two of them now belong to the party at the centre? The Buhari administration has simply been grandstanding about taming Boko Haram; all words no action. Running to the leaders of Chad and Niger Republic for help is not a bad idea. Goodluck Jonathan did the same; but it cannot put an end to suicide bombings in our country. Troops from the MNJTF won’t come into Maiduguri or Damaturu to help stop suicide bombings. They can only help battle cross-border infiltration...

Aside from moving the Command and Control Centre of the war to Maiduguri, Buhari has so far not done anything special in the war against Boko Haram in the last 36 days. This is basically because he has no blue print for tackling the crisis. While campaigning for the Presidency, Buhari simply played politics with the Boko Haram crisis. He did not have any Think Tank working on strategies for taming the monster. The movement of the C and C to Maiduguri did not impact positively on the war as seen from the data below. The movement itself is an archaic war technique. There is clearly no sense in this. Buhari simply wants to jeopardize the Command and Control Centre...

... A man cannot give what he does not have. An honest leader who is not competent will not get us anywhere. A competent leader who is dishonest will also not get us anywhere. May Allah save us from the scourge of Boko Haram and Buhari’s ineptitude.

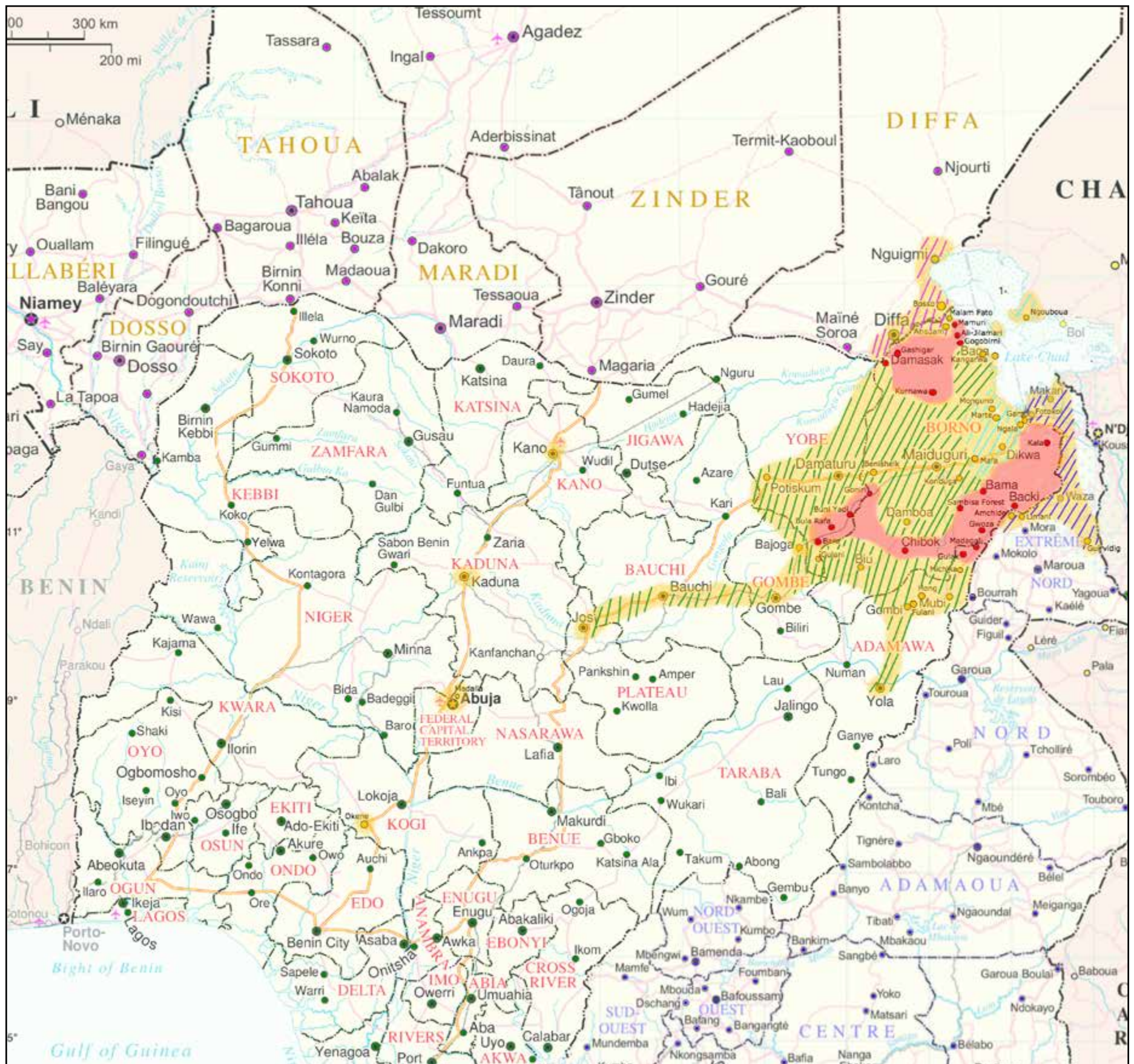
Timeline of Deadly Boko Haram Attack in 36 days

May 30	26 killed, in bomb attack on a mosque near Borno market
May 31	4 killed at Gamboru market, Maiduguri
June 2	17 killed at Maiduguri abattoir
June 3	4 killed in attack on mechanical workshop on Baga Road
June 4	Female suicide bomber kills two near military checkpoint in Maiduguri
June 5	40 killed in suicide attack on Jimeta Night Market
June 7	3 killed in suicide attack on Baga/Monguno Highway
June 11	37 killed in separate attacks on six Borno villages
June 15	Twin suicide bomb attacks kill 11 persons in Potiskum
June 17	Accidental explosion kills 15 persons in Monguno
June 22	8 killed in twin suicide attacks on Baga Fish Market, Maiduguri
June 23	15 killed in suicide bomb attack on Nannawaji Village, Gujba LG
June 23	20 killed in attack on Debiro, Hawul LG
June 27	5 killed at General Hospital, Molai, Borno State
June 30	48 killed in Mussaram I and Mussaram II near Monguno
July 1	98 killed in Kukawa Village; 48 killed in Monguno [not originally listed]
July 2	11 killed at Malari Village along Bama/Konduga Highway
July 3	29 killed in Mussa Village, Askira-Uba LG.

Continued: Boko Haram Reversing Nigerian Government Gains, Confidence in Buhari Wanes

Despite these changes in policy, Boko Haram has actually upped its attacks. As has been noted widely in the Nigerian press, 406 people have died in the country during the first 36 days of the Buhari administration, which began on 29 May 2015. (For a timeline of deaths in those 36 days, see below.) As the commentator below relays, many Nigerians who once put their faith in Buhari are beginning to waver in their optimism. Some believe that Buhari never actually had a fleshed-out plan to fight the group. Others believe that civil society pressure to hold the government accountable has dropped off. Still others believe that the governors of the northern states, where Boko Haram is most deadly, have quieted their critiques of the government, since many of them are now part of Buhari's ruling People's Democratic Party.

In sum, initial euphoria that Buhari would be the silver bullet against the Boko Haram insurgency now seems to be dying down significantly. End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)



Map of Boko Haram control and attacks in the Lake Chad Region. Boko Haram controlled areas are in red. Areas that have been attacked by Boko Haram in orange. Source: "Boko Haram in Lake Chad Region" by Zeogludon - Own work. Licensed under CC0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boko_Haram_in_Lake_Chad_Region.png#/media/File:Boko_Haram_in_Lake_Chad_Region.png

Do More Boko Haram Attacks Signal Its Weakness?

15 July 2015

“We’ve made Boko Haram change its strategy.... “They can no longer hold territory and so now have been forced to turn to waging asymmetric warfare.”

OE Watch Commentary: As the previous article detailed, Boko Haram has been seemingly reversing the gains that the Nigerian military and the Lake Chad Basin’s Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) had seemingly made. Indeed, while Boko Haram has recently stepped up its attacks, the commentators in the article below seem to think that, rather than signaling a renewed strength for the group, Boko Haram’s uptick in attacks actually signals that it is getting weaker.

In short, some believe that the recent uptick in suicide attacks - as opposed to face-to-face combat - is a sign that Boko Haram is getting more desperate, as increased international cooperation forces it to fight battles on multiple fronts. As per the article below, it seems unable to hold territory: the group is now more consistently on the run due to the transnational efforts of the MNJTF. Thus, it has recently begun to rely on suicide bombers to unleash attacks. This was particularly true during the first three weeks of June, when its suicide bombers (including several women) wreaked havoc throughout Maiduguri and villages in Borno state. (As has been noted, this uptick during these months coincides with calls from the Islamic State, to which Boko Haram had recently pledged allegiance, to increase attacks during the month of Ramadan.)

Paradoxically, both sides seem to see Boko Haram’s turn to the use of suicide bombers in a positive way. For Boko Haram, the increased employment of suicide bombers helps it maintain its profile as being destructive, but requires relatively little planning, preparation, and manpower, and puts fewer of members at risk. Using a different line of reasoning, for the Nigerian government, the turn to suicide bombers signals that its counterinsurgency campaign has Boko Haram on the run. As one of the below commentators suggests, “We’ve made Boko Haram change its strategy,” Hassoumi Massaoudou, the Nigerian Minister of the Interior, told **Jeune Afrique**. “They can no longer hold territory and so now have been forced to turn to waging asymmetric warfare.” Whether or not this hypothesis will hold remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

Source: Mathieu Olivier and Sabrian Myre. 2015. “Pourquoi La Multiplication Des Attaques de Boko Haram Témoinne En Fait de Son Affaiblissement.” [“Why the Increase in Boko Haram Attacks Actually Signals its Weakening.”] *JeuneAfrique*. July 15. <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/245168/politique/terrorisme-boko-haram-tue-t-vraiment-plus-quavant/>.

Between the 1st and 3rd of July, the number of attacks attributed to Boko Haram have caused more than 200 deaths, of which more than 150 came in a single day. This represents one of the biggest tallies of deaths that have been registered in the past year. During the two first weeks of July, Boko Haram killed more victims than the average of the twelve months before.

...What should we take from this? “We’ve made Boko Haram change its strategy,” Hassoumi Massaoudou, the Nigerian Minister of the Interior, told *Jeune Afrique*. “They can no longer hold territory and so now have been forced to turn to waging asymmetric warfare.”

In effect, Boko Haram is now trying to avoid face-to-face confrontations and instead prefers to launch suicide attacks, especially since its declaration of allegiances to the Islamic State....”Boko Haram is now employing a strategy of last resort, since kamikaze attacks cause the death of so many soldiers....Indeed, many indicators confirm to us that they are very weakened despite the growing number of attacks.” Thus, now is the time to intensify attacks against the terrorist group.

....If the election of the new Nigerian president has ushered in a breath of fresh air into the efforts of regional cooperation against the jihadists, these gains can’t necessarily be considered durable. Despite a decrease in violence during the months of April and May in northern Nigeria, the number of attacks since the beginning of July clearly demonstrate that terror is not definitively over.

Nevertheless, Boko Haram cannot continue at its actual pace. With almost daily attacks in Nigeria, Niger, Chad or Cameroon, the terrorist group “is searching to prove that it can fight on all fronts,” says an analyst. “But not for long,” he says, since it soon risks depleting its resources.



The above shows the number of Boko Haram victims per month, from July 2014 (top bar of graph) to July 2015 (bottom bar of graph). Observers believe despite a recent uptick in attacks over June and July 2015, Boko Haram is actually becoming weaker.

Source: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/245168/politique/terrorisme-boko-haram-tue-t-vraiment-plus-quavant/>

Behind the Nigerian Military Shakeup

14 July 2015

“The sacking of the military chiefs had been expected, given they were appointed by former president Goodluck Jonathan, but also because they failed badly in dealing with the insurgency.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As the two previous articles have detailed, the fight against Boko Haram has not been the smooth victory that newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari would have hoped. Despite that fact, some are optimistic that his recent and wide-ranging shakeup of the Nigerian military’s top staff will lead to gains.*

In short, Buhari has recently shuffled nearly all of the top military brass in his administration. The new replacements include:

*Major-General Abayomi Gabriel Olonishakin – Chief of Defence Staff;
Major-General T.Y. Buratai – Chief of Army Staff;
Rear Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas – Chief of Naval Staff;
Air Vice Marshal Sadique Abubakar – Chief of Air Staff;
Air Vice Marshal Monday Riku Morgan – Chief of Defence Intelligence;
Major-General Babagana Monguno (rtd.) – National Security Advisor.*



Muhammadu Buhari, the recently elected President of Nigeria, has recently fired numerous top military brass in a bid to improve the country’s fight against Boko Haram.

Source: <http://www.thefocusng.com/ptf-report-indicted-buhari-in-1999/>

Multiple rationales underlie the shift. First, the replacement of the old military commanders was, as detailed by the article below, a somewhat expected part of politics: the replaced officers had been brought in by former President Goodluck Jonathan; thus, any new president would likely reshuffle. Second, many have suggested that these changes have been ushered in due to Nigeria’s perceived inefficacy at combatting Boko Haram: Buhari believes that the newly appointed chiefs of many branches of the armed services will be superior in their roles. (However, it should be noted that this “better than the predecessor argument” cannot necessarily be applied in all cases, since, for instance, the fight against Boko Haram lacks a maritime dimension that would have underwritten the replacement of the chief of the Navy.) Third, and beyond just inefficacy, the military reassignments had to do with general critiques about the operational culture that has continued to plague the Nigerian military for years, including disregard for chain of command, human rights abuses and physical violence against civilians, corruption, and extrajudicial detentions and arrests.

While the changes in military brass might be useful in the long term, in the short term, they might actually do more harm than good. Reshuffling all branches of the military at the beginning of a new presidency and in the midst of a multinational counterinsurgency operation could potentially lead to miscommunication, mishandling of issues, and a general “restart” of a campaign that had seemingly been effective. Moreover, it is questionable whether or not reappointment in the upper echelons of the Nigerian military will actually have the effect of righting a deeply engrained military culture that is not known for its professionalism. Nevertheless, the move might well bring about the intended benefits in the long term, once the new kinks get worked out. Observers are crossing their fingers that detractors of the move will ultimately be wrong. End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

Source: Kazeem, Yomi. 2015. “Nigeria’s Buhari Fires His Military Chiefs as He Resets for Battle against Boko Haram.” Quartz. July 14. <http://qz.com/452390/nigerias-buhari-fires-his-military-chiefs-as-he-resets-for-battle-against-boko-haram/>.

Nigeria’s president Muhammadu Buhari has fired the country’s military chiefs—his clearest statement of intent in the fight against Boko Haram since taking the rein of power six weeks ago.

Buhari has repeatedly said fixing Nigeria’s security problems is a priority. Within minutes of being sworn in on May 29, he ordered the relocation of the military forces’ headquarters to Maiduguri—one of the worst hit cities by the Boko Haram militants. In the same vein, within his first month in office, Buhari has pushed for an international military coalition with neighboring countries and also committed \$100 million in funding to fight the sect.

However, the early decisions have not had the desired results as Boko Haram has significantly stepped up its attacks with a spate of suicide bombings across the country. With over 600 Nigerians killed by Boko Haram under the Buhari administration, the president has come under fire for appearing to be a slow decision-maker in trying times.

The sacking of the military chiefs had been expected, given they were appointed by former president Goodluck Jonathan, but also because they failed badly in dealing with the insurgency. They were perceived to be part of the old administration, which Buhari had previously blamed for being complacent and negligent. Also, given the claims of corruption in the military which left soldiers on the front-lines ill-equipped, the sackings signal Buhari’s ambition to revamp the military which has also been plagued by an abysmal human rights record.

Continued: Behind the Nigerian Military Shakeup

Source: Ugwuayani, Sylvester. 2015. "Buhari Appoints New Service Chiefs." DailyPost Nigeria (Nigeria). July 13. <http://dailypost.ng/2015/07/13/breaking-buhari-appoints-new-service-chiefs/>.

Following the sack of the nation's service chiefs on Monday, President Muhammadu Buhari few hours later has replaced them with new ones and they include:

Major-General Abayomi Gabriel Olonishakin – Chief of Defence Staff
 Major-General T.Y. Buratai – Chief of Army Staff
 Rear Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas – Chief of Naval Staff
 Air Vice Marshal Sadique Abubakar – Chief of Air Staff
 Air Vice Marshal Monday Riku Morgan – Chief of Defence Intelligence
 Major-General Babagana Monguno (rtd.) – National Security Advisor

The new Chief of Defence Staff, who hails from Ekiti State, was until his new appointment, the Head of the Nigerian Army Training and Doctrine Command in Minna, Niger State.

For the new Chief of Army Staff, Buratai who hails from Borno State, he was until his new appointment, the Commander of the Multinational Joint Task Force which has its headquarters in Ndjamenana.

He has previously served as Commander of the Nigerian Army's 2nd Brigade in Port Harcourt and Commander of the Nigerian Army School of Infantry in Jaji, Kaduna State.

The new Chief of Naval Staff, Ibas is from Cross River State and enlisted into the Nigerian Defence Academy as a member of the 26th Regular Course in 1979 and was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant in 1983.

His previous appointments include Naval Provost Marshal, Chief Staff Officer, Naval Training Command, Chief of Administration, Naval Headquarters, Flag Officer Commanding Western Naval Command and Chief of Logistics, Naval Headquarters. Until his appointment as Chief of Naval Staff, he was the Chief Executive Officer of Navy Holdings Limited.

The new Chief of Air Staff, Abubakar hails from Bauchi State.

His previous appointments include Chief of Standards and Evaluation, NAF Headquarters; Chief of Defence Communications and Air Officer Commanding, NAF Training Command. Until his new appointment today as Chief of Air Staff, he was the Chief of Administration, NAF Headquarters.

According to Presidential spokesman, Femi Adesina, who disclosed this, the new service chiefs will hold their appointments in an acting capacity until confirmed by the Senate.

Confronting Africa's Sobels (Soldiers by Day, Rebels by Night)

By FMSO analyst Robert Feldman and noted geographer Michel Ben Arrous

While the sobel phenomenon (soldiers by day; rebels by night) described within these pages may appear to be an African problem, the Western world's increasing involvement in fighting terrorists on that continent make it one America's military forces might encounter. Unfortunately, it could add a significant layer of complexity to US operations as American troops attempt to differentiate allies from enemies. In Africa, sometimes they are one and the same.

Parameters Winter 2013-2014

http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2013/7_FeldmanArrous.pdf



France Under Pressure from ISIS-Influenced AQIM in the Sahara

23 June 2015

“This video is not dated and the location is unknown. But for the first time, AQIM has decided to radically change its way of communicating.”

OE Watch Commentary: In recent years, the French military has become increasingly involved in maintaining security in the Sahel region and responding to Islamist and sometimes also nationalistic militants. The most enduring enemy, however, has been Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has kidnapped dozens of French and other European citizens in exchange for large ransoms (which France has often paid), and attacked French mining and energy plants in the region. Now, however, according to an article on **Radio France Internationale (RFI)** on 23 June 2015, French and other military forces in the region may have to prepare for Islamic State (also known as ISIL)-style militant activities in the Sahel. In the past year ISIL affiliates in Africa, in contrast to AQIM, have focused on soft targets, such as beach resorts, museums or hotels, and have employed high levels of brutality, such as beheadings of Christian migrants, for propaganda value.

The excerpted **RFI** article refers to a video, released by AQIM's Saharan Branch, featuring a South African and a Swedish hostage, who, along with a French hostage, were kidnapped more than two years ago (France freed the French hostage in a rescue operation in 2014). This video, however, mirrors the style of ISIL videos, with the same sound effects, militants' clothing, and camera angles, as well as a British-accented militant like “Jihadi John,” the notorious ISIL militant who beheaded several American and British hostages in Syria. It is possible that, like other AQIM-connected militant groups in the southern Sahara, such as Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Boko Haram, this AQIM Sahara Branch is planning to leave al-Qaeda and formally join ISIL. Before Boko Haram joined ISIL, for example, its leader announced “support” for ISIL's leader Abubakar a-Baghdadi and began mimicking ISIL propaganda videos, both of which AQIM's Sahara Branch has now done.

The challenge for the French military in the Sahel will be to expand its defense posture to protect the types of soft targets that ISIL may attack in the region and combat the extremist ideology that ISIL propagates in videos, which are mass distributed on the Internet. Both of these efforts will require security cooperation with national governments and local law enforcement and civil society. The additional resources that this defense posture requires may also result in an increasing desire on France's part to share security responsibilities in the region with other foreign militaries.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

Source: “Hostage Video: AQIM Obtains the Standard of IS Group” (Vidéo d'otages: Aqmi se met au standard du groupe EI), Radio France Internationale, 23 June 2015.

The South African Stephen Malcolm MacGown and Swede Johan Gustafson, who were kidnapped by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2011 in Timbuktu, appear in a video message broadcast by the jihadist organization. This video is not dated and the locations is unknown. But for the first time, AQIM has decided to radically change its way of communicating.

The end still is with jihadist flag in the background. AQIM, through its communication arm, Al Andalous, is inspired in this video of 19 minutes by the propaganda films produced by the organization Islamic state: the use of multiple cameras, special effects, background music with powerful bass and script to get across the message. This video also has a title: “A trip to interview two Prisoners.”

It is a jihadist who is hooded and Anglophone and, like a journalist, presents the different sequences. He finds himself in a desert area with many shrubs. The three men then settle on a tablecloth. The two hostages ask the questions: “Do you have information for us? Have you news of our families? Our governments? Is there advances in the negotiations?” The jihadist replied that it was the French authorities that hamper the talks.



AQIM's communications have evolved from the former style of Abu Zeid (featured above) to a style that now is similar to, and almost certainly influenced by, ISIL. Source: http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2012/01/27/reportage-01

To Ban or Not to Ban: Burqas, Bombings, and Boko Haram

12 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: After Chad participated in the regional coalition to expel Boko Haram from areas it controlled in northeastern Nigeria in February 2015, Boko Haram, which in February pledged loyalty to the Islamic State (also known as ISIL), threatened revenge against Chad. This revenge came in the form of small-scale attacks around Lake Chad starting in February 2015. On 15 June 2015 two suicide attackers simultaneously detonated explosives at the police headquarters and police academy in Chad's capital of N'djamena; the attacks were subsequently claimed by ISIL. In response to these latest attacks, Chad adopted a new measure to ban the women's full body covering known as a burqa, which can be used to conceal weapons or explosives. Yet, on 11 July the measure was not enforced, and a man wearing a burqa carried out a suicide bombing in a market in N'djamena, killing 15 people.



The excerpted article, from Nigeria's **Punch** on 12 July 2015, discusses some of the issues that arise as a result of restrictions on women's clothing for the purpose of detecting explosives or weapons. Muslim groups in Nigeria, for example, strongly criticized the security forces carrying out special inspections of women who wear burqas and other forms of head coverings. This is despite the fact that more than 50 girls in Nigeria have carried out suicide bombings in the past year, often concealing their explosives in their clothing. Many of these girls come from families whose parents are members of Boko Haram and have died in battle, or from the millions of impoverished Nigerian cities, where education and family support may be lacking, leaving an opening for extremist groups to fill a void. Muslim groups suggest that even with searches of burqas and other head coverings, girls intending (or forced) to carry out suicide bombings will still be able to do so. Rather, they suggest a solution is in proper religious training and community solidarity.

Nonetheless, in Chad and more recently in Niger and Cameroon the burqa ban has become more commonplace. It may also be more politically viable in parts of those three countries, as Muslim groups have publicly agreed to cooperate with authorities. However, it will likely also become imperative for the security forces in the countries that impose a ban on burqas to employ more women in their security forces and heighten coordination between the national security forces and local community patrols, which are more likely to detect the networks deploying women (or men) in burqas in suicide attacks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Muslims across the country have kicked against heightened searches conducted on women wearing Islamic dresses by security men.”

In parts of Nigeria and neighboring countries full-body head coverings are replacing other forms of head coverings and being exploited by militant groups for the purpose of concealing explosives and weapons.

Source: <http://learningenglish.voanews.com/content/kidnap-nigeria-boko-haram/1953295.html#reportage-01>

Source: “Suicide Bombs: Muslims Kick as Army, Police Frisk Women in Hijab, Burka,” *Punch*, 12 July 2015.

Muslims across the country have kicked against heightened searches conducted on women wearing Islamic dresses by security men. Last year, there were about 10 cases of female suicide bombers who used the Islamic dress to conceal explosives in parts of the North. This year there have also been similar cases recorded in some parts of the country. In May, a 10 year-old girl detonated a bomb concealed under her religious veil killing five and injuring many others at Bayan Tasha motor park in Damaturu, Yobe State.

Following this development, the army and the police had deployed more female operatives for the purpose of frisking women wearing hijabs especially in states where Boko Haram have attacked more than once. A top military official confirmed the new security procedure.

But Muslim leaders flayed the security procedure. JNI Secretary-General, Dr. Abubakar Aliyu-Khalid told one of our correspondents that frisking hijab-wearing females would not solve the problem of terrorism. Similarly, the Convener, Muslim Rights Concern and Professor of Islamic Eschatology at the Lagos State University, Professor Ishaq Akintola, said the Muslim community was against the search of women wearing hijab.

Bolivarians Happy for Nuclear Iran

15 July 2015

“...The Bolivarian Republic of Iran ratifies its strategic alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran...”

OE Watch Commentary: By way of the MPPRE, Ministerio de Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores (Ministry of Popular Power for External relations), the Venezuelan government quickly expressed its enthusiastic congratulations regarding Iran's having achieved success in negotiations regarding Iran's pursuit of nuclear power. The Venezuelan government took the occasion to underline the strategic alliance it has forged with the Iranian government.

Note that while the Venezuelan statement includes peaceful purposes phraseology, it will be useful for analysts to recall the admiration that former Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez expressed for a book written by Spanish Marxist professor Jorge Verstrynge (reference b). Chávez reprinted thousands of copies of the book so that all the officers in the Venezuelan military could carry a copy, and made it required reading. That book advises countries “in resistance” (meaning resistance to the United States) to obtain nuclear weapons. Nothing is observed to suggest that the current regime of Nicolás Maduro has changed its stance away from that of Hugo Chávez. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Prensa MPPRE, “Venezuela celebra victoria de la República Islámica de Irán (Venezuela celebrates victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran), Apporeia, 15 July, 2015, <http://www.aporrea.org/internacionales/n274004.html>

“The Bolivarian Republic of Iran ratifies its strategic alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which permits it to continue with its program of nuclear development with peaceful purposes,...The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ratifies its strategic alliance with the Islamic Republic of Iran, its Government and its People, an inheritance of the foresightedness of Comandante Chávez, who knew from early on to prize the great worth of the Iranian people.”

Source: Verstrynge, Jorge. La Guerra Periférica y el Islam Revolucionario: Orígenes, reglas y ética de la guerra asimétrica. Spain: Viejo Topo, 2005, p. 27.

“For all of that [reasoning given in prior text], who would renounce such a capacity of dissuasion? Let's be clear. Real sovereignty has long since meant possessing the bomb; furthermore, today, who can, combines, in search of maximum efficiency, nuclear war, conventional war and asymmetric war.”

A Real Property Note from the Colombian War

18 July 2015

“The plots were strategically selected, accumulated and recombined in order to unify the corridor [strategic corridor or line of communication]”

OE Watch Commentary: For those interested in the dynamics of real property ownership in irregular war, here is an interesting note from Colombia, coming in the midst of the long peace negotiations that the FARC has been conducting with representatives of the Colombian government in Havana, Cuba, under the auspices of the Cuban government. The land in question is being recovered rather than condemned or expropriated in that the properties were part of the national “baldios” or unpatented lands. As the article indicates, the FARC had carefully constructed its real estate possessions to coincide with its military movement (and one can read smuggling) corridors.

It will be interesting to see if the FARC leaders succeed in establishing the FARC as a legal entity with corporate personage as a result of their negotiations with the government. Perhaps they might later prevail in some sort of adverse possession claim. Ostensibly, the land is destined for redistribution to needy campesinos (or representative organizations) by way of a national land bank established for that purpose. Analysts should be curious as to who will determine the identity and membership of a qualified receiving entity, or if a given entity is subject to political control, including by the FARC. No outcomes should be considered too strange. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Unidad investigativa, “¿Qué tenían las Farc en las hectáreas recuperadas por el Gobierno?” (What did the FARC have in the hectares recovered by the Government?), El Tiempo, 18 July, 2015, <http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/gobierno-recupera-280000-hectareas-en-poder-de-las-farc/16112675>

“Authorities have just administered a huge financial blow to the DFARD guerrillas. In a helicopter operation, that counted on the participation of the Army, Air Force and the Navy, 289,000 hectares [over 7000,000 acres] located in the FARC zone of influence, along the border of Meta and Caquetá departments....The operation's objective, conducted eight days ago, was to militarily and administratively secure nine mega-properties in which the jefes of that illegal organization [the FARC] historically had their ranches....According to President Santos [President of Colombia], the recovered terrains, near the Macarena, are a strategic zone in which aforementioned Eastern Block and Southern Block of the FARC flow together and coordinate. Senior government sources explained, ‘The plots were strategically selected, accumulated and recombined in order to unify the corridor [strategic corridor or line of communication].’”

The Colombian-Venezuelan Border

15 July 2015

“An environment of illegality prevails that permeates all administrative levels of the state...”

OE Watch Commentary: *Johan Peña, an ex-commissioner of the Venezuelan DISIP (Dirección Nacional de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención [National Directorate of Intelligence and Counterintelligence Services]), gave an interesting radio interview last month about the situation in Venezuela. It appeared on the **DólarToday** website, which added its own editorial. Peña is a known voice in opposition to the current regime, although he had been a key intelligence bureaucrat during part of the Hugo Chávez tenure. The accusatorial tone of this new video and many components of his accusations, founded or unfounded, are not new. Nevertheless, as a former intelligence chief who therefore perhaps receives information from a vestigial network and who has maintained contacts, his assertions are worth noting by analysts wishing to maintain a close eye on line and block diagrams of conflict in the region.*

*Salient in this video is the new assertion that Diosdado Cabello, head of Venezuela's Bolivarian National Assembly, has been replaced by Tareck El Aissami at the apex of what the referenced articles refer to as the Cartel de los soles, or Generals' Cartel (soles, Spanish word for suns, is an allusion to the rank insignia worn by Venezuelan Generals). Cabello had been considered almost as powerful a figure within the ruling party, Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela), as President Maduro himself. Peña's assertion fits what the **Dólar Today** commentators present as a loss of power by Cabello, who is under international indictment as a drug lord. El Aissami, meanwhile, is no less a central figure in the PSUV and is the current governor of the Venezuelan Bolivarian State of Aragua. Also featuring in Peña's assertions, and a centerpiece of the Venezuelan government's cross-border drug connections, is Colombian guerilla and drug boss Victor Ramon Navarro Serrano, known as "Megateo." Peña mentions, inter alia, the use of a rural hacienda belonging to Ramón Rodríguez Chacín (yet another senior figure in top Venezuelan socialist political circles) as a meeting place for high-level coordination among Megateo's Colombian drug cartel, the FARC, and the Venezuelan government. Peña goes on to outline an illicit international financing scheme stretching to and from the Middle East and Europe.*

(continued)

Source: Zello Mi Venezuela Heróica, "Tarek El Aissami desplaza a Diosdado: Cartel de los Soles pacta con el Cartel del Norte de Colombia (Tarek El Aissami displaces Diosdado: Cartel of the Generals pacts with the Colombian Cartel of the North) Radio VZ, June 11; Youtube, 12 June 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWpOCfUIIPA>; Dólar Today, July 7, 2015, <https://dolartoday.com/audio-tarek-el-aissami-desplaza-diosdado-cartel-de-los-soles-pacta-con-el-cartel-del-norte-de-colombia/>

[Radio VZ interview of Johan Peña] "...The situation is alarming because we see that the negotiations with Colombian drug trafficking is increasing, in spite of the advertising they've been making. The FARC are going to take power in...in Colombia, and Santos [President of Colombia] (don't know what the idea is of his pacifying the peace in order to give a bunch of money to the FARC)... The final product, which is money, is managed directly by Tareck El Aissami. Tareck El Aissami would be...has now become the head of drug trafficking in Venezuela... he has financial infrastructure in Syria, Iran that they have in Lebanon..."

[DólarToday editorial on the interview] "...All of these declarations are on a very dangerous edge, in that, if this bureaucrat is right, the implications would be extremely grave, and while time is always in charge of demonstrating who is right and who is not; given what we see today in our country it appears that this bureaucrat knows what he is talking about..."

Source: Ariel Fernando Avila (research and editorial coordinator), *La frontera caliente entre Colombia y Venezuela. (The hot border between Colombia and Venezuela)*, Bogota: Nuevo Arco Iris, 2012.

"Noticeable is that Zulia state has become one of the principal exit routes for drug trafficking... An environment of illegality prevails that permeates all administrative levels of the state and permits the continued life of diverse legal and illegal armed actors in the zone.

Source: El Tiempo, "‘Megateo’, el narcotraficante que amenaza al Catatumbo: Alianzas con bandas, Farc y Eln le permiten al ex guerrillero controlar narcotráfico a Venezuela." ('Megateo', the drug trafficker that threatens Catatumbo: Alliances with gangs, FARC and ELN allow the exguerrilla to control drug traffic to Venezuela.) El Tiempo, 1 August 2011, <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-10062486>

"This región, especially the counties of La Playa, San Calixto, La Vega, Ábrego, Hacarí, El Tarra, Teorama y Sardinata (Norte de Santander [a Colombian Department], has been sanctuary and center of operations of the exguerrilla [Megateo]. There he 'can count on infrastructure and logistic support' investigators say."

Continued: The Colombian-Venezuelan Border

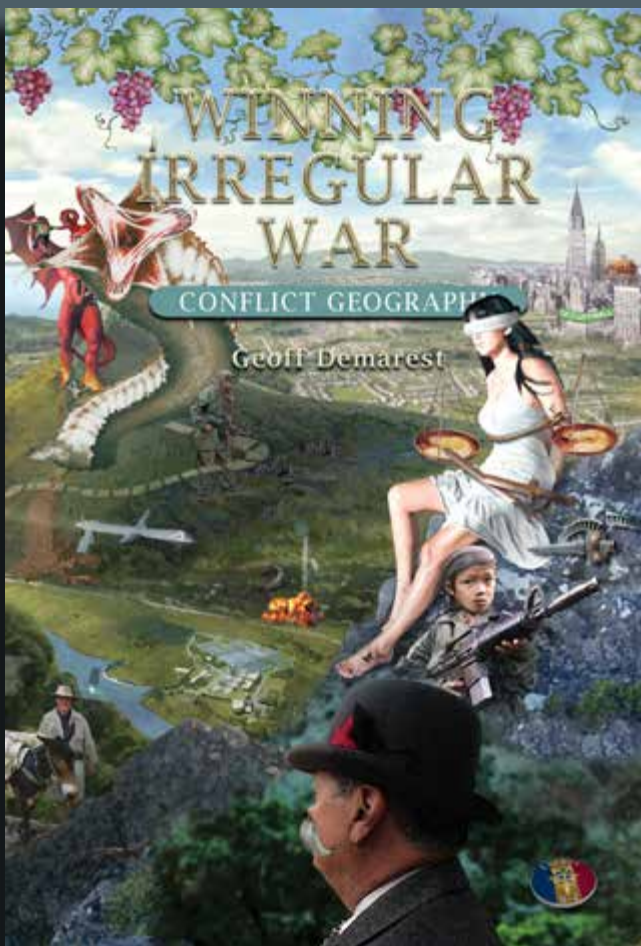
*The video, beyond the notable assertion regarding transferal of the top reins of illicit drug business of the Venezuelan government, jogged this commentator to take a closer look at a 2012 book title on the subject of the Venezuelan-Colombian border (reference b). On one hand, it is not a casual source: it is written in academic style, as an anthology, and fills over five hundred pages with ten-point font. On the other hand, it provides compelling and broad background for the Peña video, and includes both a meticulous compilation of the actor identities, relationships and recent dynamics of regional conflict, and a nuanced and thorough narrative conclusion regarding accountability for the violence of that conflict. The book also includes an array of subregional maps that give a spatial distribution of many paramilitary, gangster, and guerrilla groups, where clashes and rights violations have occurred and so on. It is not certain how accurate these maps are, but it appears from the images and accompanying text that the authors enjoyed the cooperation of some especially well-informed sources. In any case, here we have a carefully constructed Colombian academic work that, in spite of an apparently differing political start-point, lends credibility to recent observations made by a Venezuelan opposition personality. Of course, one might suppose Mr. Peña could have read the book. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: Noticiero Legal (Caracas, Venezuelan Government Gazeteer) Oficializado el cambio de nombre de la DISIP por Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional (SEBIN) [Name change of the DISIP to Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) is made oficial] Noticiero Legal (with reference to Lexicomp), 1 June 2010, <http://www.noticierolegal.com/politica-y-gobierno/presidencia-de-la-republica/2386-oficializado-el-cambio-de-nombre-de-la-disip-por-servicio-bolivariano-de-inteligencia-nacional-sebin.html> (site last visited 16 July 2015)

“Today, in Official Gazette N° 39.436 dated 01 June 2010, Decree N° 7.453 was published, by which is made official the change from National Directorate of Intelligence and Counterintelligence Services (DISIP) to Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) effective upon publication of the present decree... Now the SEBIN will be a decentralized organ, with budgetary, administrative and financial management capacity, dependent hierarchically to the Minister of Popular Power for Internal Relations and Justice...”

Source: La Patilla, ¡ALERTA EL FMI! En el mejor de casos la inflación en Venezuela será superior a 100% y la recesión de 7%, The IMF Warns: In the best of cases inflation in Venezuela will be above 100% and recession at 7%), La Patilla, 15 July, 2015, <http://www.lapatilla.com/site/2015/07/15/alerta-el-fmi-este-ano-la-inflacion-en-venezuela-sera-superior-a-100-y-la-recesion-de-7/>; DólarToday <https://dolartoday.com/alerta-el-fmi-en-el-mejor-de-casos-la-inflacion-en-venezuela-sera-superior-100-y-la-recesion-de-7/>

“the International Monetary Fund (IMF) alerted today that Venezuela will reach a rate of inflation higher than 100%, and its recession will sink to 7% this year, in the framework of some macroeconomic policies that it considered ‘unsustainable’.”



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

Drone Technology in Colombia

13 October 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *Drone use in Colombia is on the rise, and not just in the military sector, where they have been used since 2006 as a tool to fight drug trafficking and guerilla insurgencies. Today, they are also used by the Colombian National Police, as drones offer two positive advantages to both organizations.*

First, they can be easily adapted to fly at very low or very high altitudes, which allows for surveillance/intelligence gathering in remote access areas that have been traditionally challenging to monitor (rain forests, mountains and valleys). Second, they fare well in urban operations, as evidenced by their successful use in Barranquilla and Bogota, where real-time drone footage is allowing authorities to respond to crimes more quickly than calls into Colombia's 123 emergency line (equivalent to 911).

In addition, drone use and subsequent production is allowing Colombia to emerge as a regional leader in developing this technology. Current models built and designed by the state-owned Coporacion de la Industria Aeronautica Colombiana SA (CAIC) include the Navigator X2 and the IRIS. When comparing police models to military models, open source channels indicate that the police drones are not as sophisticated.

End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

Source: "Colombia desarrolla sus propios drones (Colombia to Develop Drone Technology)." Accessed on February 22, 2015 from <http://www.portafolio.co/negocios/colombia-desarrolla-sus-proprios-drones>

Military Use

Guerrilla groups and drug trafficking organizations have long sought refuge in Colombia's remote mountains and dense rain forests. This terrain, which is often impassible and difficult to access, has prompted the use of drones to conduct surveillance and gather valuable intelligence. This technology has been used by the military since 2006 and currently, the Colombian Air Force announced it has a fleet of more than 50 surveillance drones including the Israeli made Hermes 900 and the US-made ScanEagle.

Military Drone Capabilities

While most drones owned and operated by the Colombian military have been acquired from the United States and Israel, Colombia is looking currently working on developing its own technology. In fact, the state-owned Coporacion de la Industria Aeronautica Colombiana SA is currently working on a prototype known as Iris. This device was recently displayed at a defense fair in Bogota and is set to hit the market sometime in 2016. Specifications for this product include a range of 150 km, a 100 kg carrying capacity, up to eight hours of flight time, the ability to remotely transmit photos up to 100 km, and the capacity to travel up to 17,000 ft in altitude. The Navigator X2 is also a Colombian produced surveillance drone that has already flown. In comparison, it can reach altitudes up to 14,000 feet and is able to remotely transmit photos from up to 30 km.

Source: "Policía planea comprar aviones no tripulados (Police Plan to Purchase UAVs)." El Tiempo. Accessed on February 25, 2015 from <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12953662>

Police Use

Since around 2011, Colombian National Police have been using drones for operational and security purposes in different cities throughout the country. As reported by El Universal, they are most commonly utilized to monitor areas of remote access or to enhance security at public events including festivals, concerts, and protests. Such is the case in Barranquilla where they are used to enhance surveillance during Carnaval celebrations. In Ciudad Bolívar, a 90-day drone surveillance trial was implemented in November 2014 during which time the devices were used to monitor security and help police respond to crimes in real-time as indicated by El Tiempo.

Source: "Adquiriran drones en Colombia para la vigilancia urbana (Colombia to Acquire Drones for Urban Security)." El Universal. Accessed on February 23, 2015 from <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/el-mundo/2013/colombia-drones-vigilancia-938976.html>

Police Drone Capabilities

Regarding capabilities, El Tiempo reported that police drones are can travel up to 3 km from their base control. They can also fly for approximately two hours and up to 50 kilometers per hour all while filming with a high definition camera 100 meters above ground. Furthermore, cameras (day, night, and infrared) on each leg of the drone are capable of zooming up to 20 megapixels while LED lenses allow the pilot to view footage as if they were actually in the device itself. Pictures taken with these devices are reportedly so clear that individuals and vehicles can be identified without problem. Specific drone models used by the Colombian National Police were not cited in this source.



Source: "Drone filmando show" by Henrique Boney - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Drone_filmando_show.JPG#/media/File:Drone_filmando_show.JPG

Mexico's Most Dangerous Highways

June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Just the mention of the infamous Bermuda Triangle conjures up images of ships sailing away into the unknown, never to be heard from again. In Mexico a similar phenomenon is occurring, but it involves cargo trucks disappearing along key highway systems. The difference between the two is that in Mexico some of the mystery has been taken out of the equation, as it is common knowledge that drug-trafficking organizations and small criminal gangs are responsible for these so called "disappearances," which really amount to large-scale theft of commercial cargo. As reported by this source, the official "Bermuda Triangle" of Mexico is the México-Puebla-Veracruz Highway, but at least five other major highway systems (see excerpt from the accompanying article) within the country have gained unwanted notoriety for cargo/vehicle theft and kidnappings. Not surprisingly, the majority of these key roadways traverse the northern border states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon.

Why Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon?

Commonly known as part of the "frontera chica (small border)," Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon are highly valuable transit corridors along the US/Mexico border. Since their split in January 2010, Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel have fought for ultimate control of this region, with both groups still holding on to strategic strongholds, which include key highway systems. In Mexico major highway systems running up the Gulf Coast and through Central Mexico converge in Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, where they funnel cargo to key border crossing points.

Of particular interest is the Nuevo Laredo crossing point in Tamaulipas, which is currently controlled by Los Zetas. An estimated 70% of all legal Mexican exports pass through this border check-point, but, more importantly, it is the most frequently used port of entry for high-value drug shipments such as cocaine and heroin. This key trade artery connects major Mexican highway systems with US Interstate 35 to the Canadian border north of Duluth, Minnesota.

Hence, key roadways leading to and away from the border, especially along the frontera chica, are transited by cargo trucks carrying both legal and illegal shipments, which have, in turn, converted them into targets for drug cartels looking to diversify and control specific geographic regions of Mexico. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Las carreteras mas peligrosas en Mexico (Mexico's Most Dangerous Highways)." El Financiero. Accessed from <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/archivo/las-carreteras-mas-peligrosas-del-pais.html>

Widespread theft of cargo trucks along the Mexico-Puebla-Veracruz Highway has many drivers referring to the zone as the Bermuda triangle, but this is not the only plagued roadway in the country. Other highly dangerous routes known for cargo/vehicle theft, violence and kidnappings include la Rivereña which connects Reynosa with Nuevo Laredo (Tamaulipas), the Monterrey-Tampico Highway (Tamaulipas/Nuevo Leon), the Matamoros-San Fernando Highway (Tamaulipas), the Mante-Ciudad Victoria Highway, and the Hidalgo-Tampico Highway.

Modus Operandi

The modus operandi of criminals dedicated to robbing cargo trucks is as follows. A group of 8 to 10 men force a semi to stop by blocking the roadway or at gunpoint. They are also known to set up false police and military checkpoints to trick drivers into stopping. In northern Mexico, narco blockades are commonly used. This type of activity generally occurs in the evening hours between 11 PM and 3 AM as there is less traffic and fewer witnesses to the crime. One-stop, the driver is kidnapped in the semi is taken to a safe house where merchandise is unloaded. Days later, the robbers will abandon the tractor portion of the semi in one place in the trailer in another. The driver of the cargo truck may be released at this point.

Cargo theft has become so prevalent in some areas of the country that transport companies are now refusing to enter certain regions in states such as in Tamaulipas. There also adapting business practices along dangerous highways by prohibiting nighttime travel (11 PM -5 AM) when theft is most common. For valuable shipments, companies may higher security details and/ or insure the cargo.

Source: "Tamaulipas: la narcofrontera (Tamaulipas: the narco border)." Proceso. Accessed from <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=306265>

La Rivereña is 240 kilometers long, but is one of the most highly disputed highway systems in the country. Whereas theft is most common along the Mexico-Puebla-Veracruz Highway, one can expect to witness violent encounters between the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas along La Rivereña where trucks marked with the groups' logos freely transit. Some witnesses have reported seeing armed convoys with up to 70 vehicles in the area. In an attempt to mitigate violence, a Mexican Army Battalion with 600 soldiers conducts both land and air patrols along the roadway but they are frequently met with groups of armed men touting machine guns and other high-powered weapons. Auto theft and kidnappings are also common along this highway.



Mexico Highway 12 at Parador Punta Prieta.

Source: Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mexico_Highway_12_at_Parador_Punta_Prieta.jpg#/media/File:Mexico_Highway_12_at_Parador_Punta_Prieta.jpg

Female Involvement in Mara Salvatrucha Factions on the Rise in Honduras

June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Despite the dangers inherent in associating with gangs, a significant number of women in Honduras are opting for this lifestyle. A 2012 study conducted by a gang research group found that women currently comprise 20 percent of gang membership, with nearly all of these connected to the MS-13 or Barrio 18. Still, according to many former gang members interviewed as part of the study, these estimates are low. These individuals further asserted that the female role within a gang is complex, as they generally serve the organization in multiple capacities such as girlfriends, weapon/drug traffickers, extortion collectors, messengers, housekeepers, cooks, safe house guards, etc.*

Gang Gender Barriers

Although women are expected to fill multiple job roles within gangs, they are still seen as less valuable members of the group, as reported by this source. For example, a woman is expected to manage a household while still being responsible for collecting extortion payments or dealing drugs. She is also expected to dress like a man and acquire tattoos, all while playing dual male and female roles. If a female gang member becomes pregnant, she is used even more frequently to move drug and money shipments, as the belief is that she will not be as susceptible to police scrutiny. After giving birth, females are expected to return to their gang duties nearly immediately and are many times asked to give their children to family members.

*This unequal treatment becomes even more apparent in gang initiation practices, according to this source. While men are required to undergo a group beating, women are allowed to choose between this or sustaining sexual relations with multiple gang members for an equivalent length of time, but they are later harassed if they chose the second option. If dating a gang member, women are automatically initiated and treated respectfully by the rest of the gang. However, they are expected to tolerate frequent infidelity from their partner and if they reciprocate, they may be killed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)***



Source: "Mara Salvatrucha Graffiti" by Walking the Tracks - Flickr: Mara Salvatrucha. Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mara_Salvatrucha_Graffiti.jpg#/media/File:Mara_Salvatrucha_Graffiti.jpg

Source: "Más mujeres se involucran en acciones delictivas en maras (Female Involvement with Mara Salvatrucha Factions on the Rise in Honduras)." La prensa. Accessed from http://www.laprensa.hn/sucesos/788911-417/más-mujeres-se-involucran-en-acciones-delictivas-en-maras?utm_source=laprensa.hn&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=noticias_relacionadas<<http://www.nanyang.com/node/702930>>.

Female Gang Affiliation in Honduras

"Women now comprise at least 20% of gang membership in Honduras with nearly all being connected to the MS-13 or Barrio 18 ---52 percent and 45 percent, respectively."

Female Roles with Gangs

"Women serve a dual role in gangs. They are expected to take on male-associated characteristics and tasks, including perpetrating and withstanding violence and wearing men's clothing, and to act in the "female" role of cooking and caring for the men, children and the sick. Because gangs believe women are less suspicious in the eyes of authorities, they are also often tasked with acting as drug "mules," smuggling illicit goods into jails, gathering intelligence on rival gangs, and carrying arms in public spaces."

"Women are utilized to relay messages, traffic drugs and money, collect extortion fees, cook, clean, guard safe houses, care for wounded gang members, kill, steal, and attract potential kidnapping and extortion victims."

"Gangs utilize female charm to attract kidnapping victims and to carry out extortions. They are utilized as sexual objects and are expected to accept all passes made by any gang leader without question. Male gang members are expected to date within the organization but are allowed to have multiple girlfriends. On the contrary, infidelity by females is strictly prohibited and punishable by death."

"While pregnant, females are used exclusively to transport drugs and money. After the baby is born, it is expected that she will return to gang life immediately and leave the child with family members."

Female Initiation into a Gang

"As part of gang initiation, females are given two choices. To undergo a fierce beating or to sustain sexual relations with fellow gang members for the same time period. Women who choose the second option are frequently harassed after."

Mexican Drug Cartel Uses Dynamite to Kill Live Victims

20 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Mexican drug cartels are known for using excessive violence to kill rival cartel enemies. Live decapitations, dismemberment, skinning, and dissolving of the bodies of victims in acid are just a few examples of gruesome kill tactics commonly utilized by these groups. It was surprising then to find out that the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco (CJNG) had upped the ante even further by using dynamite to kill live victims, as this technique had never been seen in Mexico. Evidence of this activity came to light after authorities seized a cellular phone from a deceased CJNG leader identified as Heriberto Acevedo Cárdenas, “El Gringo,” in June 2015. News media source **Reforma** later released a gruesome video seized from the device that displays a victim with dynamite affixed to his chest. Minutes later, the slow burning fuse of the stick is lit and CJNG members are seen running from the victim and heard cheering as the detonation occurs.

In the wake of this news release, **Reforma** hypothesized that using dynamite to kill victims was likely an idea poached from Middle Eastern terrorist groups. While this is possible, it is important to note that these groups are more likely to attach explosives to martyrs as human IEDs, not as a means to kill their victims. The Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) has, however, been known to use dynamite in the form of collar bombs and has a known working relationship with the CJNG. One documented FARC case of this activity is that of Elvia Cortés, a woman who was killed in 2000 after her family was not able to come up with the 15 million peso ransom demanded by the guerilla organization. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “El cártel que usa dinamita para asesinar a sus rivales (Mexican Drug Cartel Uses Dynamite to Kill Rivals).” El Debate. Accessed from <http://www.debate.com.mx/mexico/CJNG-usa-dinamita-para-matar-a-sus-rivales--20150615-0093.html>

The New Generation Cartel of Jalisco has been classified as one of the most aggressive and violent criminal organizations in Mexico, but news that the group is now using dynamite to kill live victims was surprising even to the worst cynic. Evidence of this activity came to public light after Reforma released a video extracted from the cell phone of now deceased CJNG leader Heriberto Acevedo Cárdenas, “El Gringo” in June 2015. The first video released displays a middle-aged victim with dynamite affixed to his chest. After approximately 20 seconds, CJNG members are seen lighting the fuse and running from the explosion. In a second video, a 10-year-old boy with a collar bomb around his neck is seen nervously pacing while CJNG members taunt him for crying. Following the release of this gruesome footage, Reforma indicated that the use of dynamite by the group may have been influenced by Middle Eastern terrorist groups.

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

By Cindy A. Hurst and Robert Mathers

http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/jfq/jfq-72/jfq-72_75-81_Hurst-Mathers.pdf



JFQ | Joint Force Quarterly
Issue 72, 1st Quarter 2014

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.

Indonesia's New Military Leadership and Possible Way Forward

8 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The recent selection of General Gatot Nurmantyo to lead the Indonesian military points to a potentially more ambitious future for the country's military. According to the following article, Indonesian President Joko Widodo stirred things up a bit when he picked Army Chief of Staff General Gatot Nurmantyo to lead the military. This move was out of character and controversial because the top military post is rotated among the different branches of the Armed Forces. Prior to Gatot's appointment, the seat had been filled by another member of the Army, and everyone anticipated welcoming a member of the Air Force into the position.

Along with fixing the military's weaponry and defense systems following a recent military plane crash in Medan, North Sumatra, Gatot said he will strengthen Indonesia's Navy and Air Force to better monitor territory and improve military diplomacy with ASEAN countries to create a conducive environment for regional economic growth.

Widodo also appointed a new chief of the country's intelligence agency – retired Army General Sutiyoso. According to Sutiyoso, cybercrimes, terrorism, and radical ideology are the most pressing threats to security, and the three areas which he said he would address.

It is worth noting that both these key positions have been awarded to members with an Army background. Sutiyoso spent most of his career in the Army's special forces. It could be that these two were the most qualified to fill the positions, or it could be that Indonesia places a lot of emphasis on its Army officers' qualifications and capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“In line with Widodo's vision to transform the country into a global maritime hub, General Gatot says he will strengthen Indonesia's Navy and Air Force to better monitor territory”

Source: Devianti Faridz, “Controversy in Indonesia as Military Gets New Chief,” Channel News Asia, 8 July 2015, <<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/controversy-in-indonesia/1969512.html#.VZ3bIhje-ZM.twitter>>.

Controversy in Indonesia as Military Gets New Chief

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has created a controversy when he picked army chief of staff General Gatot Nurmantyo to lead the military.

Widodo has instructed the new military chief to immediately fix the military's weaponry and defence systems following a recent military plane crash in Medan, North Sumatra.

In line with Widodo's vision to transform the country into a global maritime hub, General Gatot says he will strengthen indonesia's Navy and Air Force to better monitor territory.

He also aims to improve military diplomacy with ASEAN countries to create a conducive environment for regional economic growth.

Sutiyoso spent most of his career in the Army's Special Forces. He later entered politics as governor of Jakarta and became head of the Unity and justice Party.

Thailand's Acquiring Subs Points to Military Ambition and Growing Ties with China

8 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: It has been just one year since a coup in Thailand dethroned former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and ultimately replaced her with General Prayuth Chan-ocha. Since then Thailand's government has been taken over by predominately military and police figures, and there are indications that the country is trying to build up its military capability while also strengthening ties with China.

An example can be found in recent reports about Thailand closing in on a deal to purchase its first ever submarines. According to the fourth article, in 2011 the Navy had looked

(continued)

Source: “ซื้อเรือดำน้ำ 3.6 หมื่นล้านบาทสารพัดคำถามที่ต้องรีบเคลียร์ !! (Submarines Procured for Bt36 Billion Raises Many Questions; It is Urgent that Government Provide Proper Answers!!,” Posted to Manager Online, Politics Section, 6 July 2015, <<http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9580000076001>>.

Submarines Procured for Bt36 Billion Raises Many Questions; It is Urgent that Government Provide Proper Answers!!

...Thailand's ties with the United States at the moment have turn soured. The United States is not happy with the fact that the Thaksin regime has disappeared, because it feels its benefits have become insecure. Under such circumstances, the Thai-Chinese ties can become even closer than before.

But there remains a question in Thai people's hearts. Does Thailand really need submarines? Are the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea appropriate for submarine deployment in terms of water depth and the environment? Given that the Thai economy is now volatile, should the country approve the budget of Bt36 billion for the submarine procurement?

The submarine procurement is a quite a “sensitive” issue, because Thai people have seen how cost-ineffective procurements of many military supplies have been. Look at the airships procured for missions in the Deep South and the GT200 bomb detectors, which were widely ridiculed and finally described as “graveyard sticks” when corruption was being exposed.

Continued: Thailand's Acquiring Subs Points to Military Ambition and Growing Ties with China

into purchasing six German-made submarines. The Yingluck administration would go on to reject the project. Following the May 2014 coup, however, the Navy revived the submarine project. According to the third article, General Prawit Wongsuwon, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister, had reportedly told the Navy that if it was unable to procure the submarines when a junta government is in power, then, "there would be no chance of getting them at all."

Some observers believe that the decision to purchase Chinese submarines is driven partly by the junta government's desire to create closer relations with Beijing "following the May 22 coup that spurred Western countries... to give the cold shoulder to Thailand." The second article, however, refutes this, pointing out that, according to Prayuth, the Navy has to protect the country's sovereignty in both the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. According to him, the purchases are not intended to strengthen ties with China because both countries already enjoy strong ties.

The first article points out that purchasing submarines from China will offer greater value for the money because China is offering to supply three submarines along with a full weapons and supply package, a transfer of technology, and free training of personnel. If Thailand were to purchase submarines from another country, it would receive only two, with no weapons package. The author believes that this "special deal" is available now due to ongoing tensions in the region. Thailand's ties with the United States are currently soured because "the United States is not happy with the fact that the Thaksin regime has disappeared, because it feels its benefits have become insecure." This, according to the author, is enabling the Thai-Chinese ties to become even closer than before. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“China says it wants to strengthen military ties with Thailand, with regular military exercises, as well as arms deals and other military assistance.”

Source: "Subs Plan 'Not Aimed at Boosting Ties with China,'" The Nation, 8 July 2015, <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Subs-plan-not-aimed-at-boosting-ties-with-China-30263988.html>>.

Subs Plan 'Not Aimed at Boosting Ties with China'

He [Prayut Chan-ocha] said the Navy has to protect the country's sovereignty not only in the Gulf of Thailand but also the Andaman Sea.

He said the country need not buy submarines to strengthen ties with China because both countries already enjoy strong ties. "Every country in the world treats me well but the issue is only the word - democracy," he said.

Source: Wassana Nanuam, "Navy's B36bn Sub Purchase Plan Firms Up," Bangkok Post, 25 June 2015, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/603464/navy-b36bn-sub-purchase-plan-firms-up>>.

Navy's B36bn Sub Purchase Plan Firms Up

Gen Prawit [Wongsuwon] reportedly told the navy that if it could not get the submarines when a junta government is in power, "there would be no chance of getting them at all".

Some say the decision to go for the Chinese submarines is driven partly by the junta government's desire to forge closer relations with Beijing following the May 22 coup that spurred Western countries including the US to give the cold shoulder to Thailand.

China says it wants to strengthen military ties with Thailand, with regular military exercises, as well as arms deals and other military assistance.

"We should not look down on Chinese submarines," a committee member said, adding China has made progress in arms research and development.

Source: Wassana Nanuam, "Chinese Win Bid to Supply Subs to Navy," Bangkok Post, 26 June 2015, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/604452/chinese-win-bid-to-supply-subs-to-navy>>.

Wassana Nanuam, "Chinese Win Bid to Supply Subs to Navy"

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwon backs the submarine project, citing a growing territorial threat and an increasing number of maritime missions. He said many neighbouring countries are also deploying submarines.



Source: "Heavy-lift ship Sea Team carrying Chinese Kilo submarine" by US NAVY - US Navy Website. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heavy-lift_ship_Sea_Team_carrying_Chinese_Kilo_submarine.jpg#/media/File:Heavy-lift_ship_Sea_Team_carrying_Chinese_Kilo_submarine.jpg

Can Malaysia Fix the Insurgency in Southern Thailand?

1 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Malaysia can serve as the “glue” to solve the conflict in southern Thailand, according to Thai Army Major General Nakrob Boonbuathong. In the excerpted article **BenarNews** sat down with Boonbuathong to discuss how Malaysia can help Thailand resolve the conflict. Boonbuathong, who is part of the Internal Security Operation Command, is closely involved in back-channel efforts by the Thai government to reopen peace talks with southern rebels.*

*Boonbuathong’s interview comes shortly after a previous interview with him in **BenarNews**, which had taken place after peace talks had stalled, with Thailand having difficulty getting different insurgent factions to the negotiating table.*

As the excerpt from the article indicates, the comments in his second interview elaborate on his first interview about the need to build uniform trust among Thailand, Malaysia, and the rebels. He says that “[Malaysia] is the facilitator that glues us together, which is very effective. We trust Malaysia and so do the dissidents living there. When we met the dissidents, Malaysia brought us together perfectly.”

Having access to those who reside in Malaysia is important, since all rebel leaders are based there. Boonbuathong comments that it has been difficult to resolve the conflict, since most dissidents are able to cross the borders. “It is hard to solve the problem because of support from within Malaysia. The ability to cross the border, to go into hiding, these make it hard for us to solve the problem.”

*As the excerpt points out, despite his goal to build mutual trust while using Malaysia as the facilitator, Boonbuathong and Thailand face a challenge to reach a common agreement with southern insurgents. Thailand’s goal is to create an autonomous region within Thailand, but, according to the article, an insurgent based in Pattani’s Nong Chik district said that rebel groups rejected the concept of autonomy and would accept nothing less than sovereignty. Given these conditions, Boonbuathong needs to identify how to achieve trust when there are separate goals between the two groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)***

Source: “Interview: Malaysia ‘Glue’ to Solving Thailand’s Southern Conflict, Official Says,” BenarNews, 26 June 2015, <http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/thai/nakrob-boontbuathong-06262015182342.html>

Thai Army Maj. Gen. Nakrob Boonbuathong is closely involved in delicate back-channel efforts by the Thai government to reopen peace talks with southern rebels.

[Malaysia] is the facilitator that glues us together, which is very effective. We trust Malaysia and so do the dissidents living there. When we met the dissidents, Malaysia brought us together perfectly.

... everyone must admit that most dissidents are residing in Malaysia. They can cross the borders. Most of them with whatever organizational names are not living in Thailand but in Malaysia

It is hard to solve the problem because of support from within Malaysia. The ability to cross the border, to go into hiding, these make it hard for us to solve the problem.

The major leaders are all in Malaysia. ...



Map of Southern Thailand
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: “Thailand: Southern Peace Talks Delayed,” BenarNews, 19 June 2015, <http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/thai/peace-talks-06192015175749.html>

Thai officials trying to restart peace talks with southern rebels are having difficulty getting different insurgent factions to the negotiating table, a person closely involved in the process told BenarNews.

Maj. Gen. Nakrob Boonbuathong, of the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC), ...

“There is a need to build triangular trust among Thailand, Malaysia and the various dissident groups,” Nakrob said.

“We need to build mutual trust,” he said, “And to verify that they are legitimate representatives. I didn’t know who is who and what type of person they are.”

In a separate interview, an insurgent based in Pattani’s Nong Chik district said that secessionists rejected the concept of autonomy, or Patani Maha Nakhon, and would accept nothing less than sovereignty over the land.

Turning Points for Two Insurgencies in the Philippines

2 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Two events in June signal a shift in favor of the Filipino government against Muslim and Maoist rebels. In mid-June the Muslim extremist rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) began decommissioning by turning over 75 weapons to an Independent Decommissioning Board, and 145 former fighters registered for decommissioning to start their transition into civilian life. Then, in late June the Filipino military killed New People's Army (NPA) commander Leonardo Pitao, an infamous communist guerilla leader, in a blow to one of the world's longest-running Maoist insurgencies. Both insurgencies have been ongoing since 1969.*

Decommissioning of Moro Islamic Liberation Front

According to the excerpted article, chief negotiator for the MILF Mohagher Iqbal said that his group will always choose the path to peace: "The MILF will comply with its obligation. If we want peace, we must prepare for peace."

The next step for the MILF is to transform into a political group. During the decommissioning ceremony, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, the MILF Central Committee Chairman, maintained that the move to decommission its former fighters is not a form of surrender. Rather, the turnover of weapons to an independent body allows them to become a political organization that is ready to govern and serve the Bangsamoro people.

New People's Army Commander Death

Pitao, who commanded 700 rebels, was the commander of the NPA's Pulang Bagani Command. His death follows a months-long operation targeting the guerrilla leader in the main southern island of Mindanao.

As the excerpt points out, Pitao's killing has seriously deepened the leadership vacuum in the Communist Party of the Philippines. Brigadier General Joselito Kakilala, the spokesman for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, said, "This is not only going to be a big setback; this is going to be what you call the fall of the NPA in the Davao region." **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: "Murad: Decommissioning marks MILF transformation not surrender," GMA News Online, 16 June 2015, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/504826/news/nation/murad-decommissioning-marks-milf-transformation-not-surrender>

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)'s move to decommission its former fighters is not a form of surrender, the group's chief maintained ...

In a speech during decommissioning ceremonies here, MILF central committee chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim said the turnover of weapons to an independent body is the first step towards his group's transformation into a political group.

"Today, we begin the long walk towards transformation, not surrender, to a higher struggle, the start of the transformation of the MILF from a revolutionary organization to a political organization ready to govern and serve the Bangsamoro people," Murad said.

... the MILF turned over 75 weapons to the Independent Decommissioning Board. A total of 145 former MILF fighters also registered for decommissioning to start their transition to civil life.

Source: "Ranking Red leader slain in Davao raid," Manila Standard Today, 30 June 2015, <http://manilastandardtoday.com/mobile/2015/06/30/ranking-red-leader-slain-in-davao-raid>

THE Philippine military has shot dead an infamous communist guerilla leader in a blow to one of the world's longest-running Maoist insurgencies, authorities said Monday.

New People's Army commander Leonardo Pitao was killed in a mountainous hamlet ...

... the months-long operation targeting the most famous guerrilla leader in the main southern island of Mindanao ended, a military statement said.

AFP spokesman Brigadier General Joselito Kakilala agreed and said Pitao's killing has seriously deepened the leadership vacuum in the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"This is not only going to be a big setback; this is going to be what you call the fall of the NPA in the Davao region," Ano told reporters.

The military said Pitao, described by the local press as about 57 years old, commanded the 700-strong Pulang Bagani Command.



The photo of a Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebel comes from "MILF militant lying prone" by Keith Kristoffer Bacongco from Davao, Philippines - war exercise.
Source: Licensed under CC BY 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MILF_

Singapore Prepares for Cyber Warfare

3 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Against the backdrop of extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda spreading radical ideology, Singapore's Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen said that Singapore has begun to reorganize its resources to counter groups that spread disinformation to achieve victory without resorting to open war. According to the excerpted article, Ng said that Singapore's Armed Forces must "keep transforming" to address the fundamental change in how information is collected and used in the today's operational environment. This reorganization comes at time when ISIS has stepped up its recruiting efforts in Southeast Asia.*

As the excerpt from the accompanying article indicates, Singapore, which is just over half the size of New York City, aims to make sure that even as a small state it can defend itself against emerging threats. Ng said that cyber threats are looming, with the "potential to wreak as much havoc." The Singapore Armed Forces' modernization drive is dubbed the Third-Generation (3G), with troops being given more precise combat information and able to close the loop between "what you see and how you effect responses."

Their strategy is to ensure that Singapore never competes only in terms of troop numbers, as "that would be weakest basis to compete, because that's what we lack", said Ng. As a global transit hub, Singapore recognizes its vulnerability to terrorism, but it also sees itself as a leading knowledge hub and intelligence center in the fight against terrorism. Ng pointed out that the island state makes up for manpower shortages with "superior skills, knowledge, intelligence, information and technology."

*The Third-Generation modernization drive comes just after the establishment of the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore in April. The Agency's goal is to strengthen cyber security in critical sectors, such as energy, water, and banking. The Third-Generation modernization and establishment of the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore allow the city-state to build its cyber security efforts as ISIS continues to recruit from within the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)***

Source: "Singapore reorganising its fighting forces in face of new threats: Ng Eng Hen," The Straits Times, 30 June 2015, <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-reorganising-its-fighting-forces-in-face-of-new-threats-ng-eng-hen>

The Republic has started to reorganise its fighting forces to ensure that even as a small state it can defend itself against emerging threats.

The revamp comes against the backdrop of extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda spreading radical ideology based on religious false precepts and carrying out hybrid warfare. This is a military concept that involves conventional weapons and unconventional tools, such as spreading disinformation, to achieve victory without resorting to open war.

Also looming are cyber threats with the "potential to wreak as much havoc", Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said in his annual media interview ahead of Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Day on Wednesday.

He said the SAF's modernisation drive, dubbed the Third-Generation (3G) transformation, is "going well", with troops being given more precise combat information and able to close the loop between "what you see and how you effect responses".

But the armed forces must "keep transforming" to address the fundamental change in how information is collected and used in the today's battle space.

The strategy is to ensure that Singapore never competes only in terms of troop numbers as "that would be weakest basis to compete, because that's what we lack", said Dr Ng, pointing out that the island state makes up for manpower shortages with "superior skills, knowledge, intelligence, information and technology".



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Source: "Sustaining the War on Terrorism: Singapore's International Counterterrorism Cooperation," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 25 July 2013, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/2027-sustaining-the-war-on-terroris/#.VZQI0WAbDeQ>

Singapore recognises that terrorism presents a tier-one national security threat to the world. As a global transit hub, Singapore recognises its vulnerability to terrorism. As a leading knowledge hub and intelligence centre in the fight against terrorism, the Singapore government and community ...

Is Cambodia Becoming China’s Pawn in Southeast Asia?

4 July 2015

“China is a big factor in Cambodia’s current relations with Vietnam.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As tensions rise along Cambodia’s and Vietnam’s 1,137-kilometer border, analysts say the Cambodian government’s newfound toughness against Hanoi reflects rising Chinese influence here. The accompanying article indicates that there is a danger of Cambodia becoming China’s pawn “in a chess match in a regional power conflict,” according to Ou Virak, founder of the Future Forum think tank in Cambodia. Virak says “China is a big factor in Cambodia’s current relations with Vietnam.”*

As the excerpt points out, since the ruling party in Cambodia has become less dependent on Vietnam for investment and military aid, the government can respond to public demand about Vietnamese encroachment on the Kingdom’s territory. Analysts also say it shows that the ruling Cambodia People’s Party needs to win political points by responding to rising anger over this issue.

According to the article, China is Cambodia’s largest source of aid, investment and tourists. Virak says, “China has full influence on Cambodia’s economy – it pours in money into the country every year.” Cambodia’s hydroelectric dams, half of its major bridges, major road reconstruction projects and Prime Minister Hun Sen’s office complex, the Peace Palace, have all been built with Chinese grants or soft loans.

China’s influence is growing as tensions increase along the border. Authorities of the southern Vietnamese province of Long An recently contacted the chief of the neighboring Cambodian Svay Rieng Province over violent actions by Cambodian extremists against Vietnamese people along the border. According to the article, the Long An administration demanded that Svay Rieng authorities take effective measures to prevent a recurrence of such actions.

*This clash comes after Vietnamese encroachment into Cambodia along the northern border area, including the building of irrigation ponds and a military post in Ratanakkiri and Kandal provinces. In June the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by issuing three diplomatic notes to Hanoi to protest alleged violations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)***

Source: “Cambodia-Vietnam Border Spat Reveals Shifting Alliances,” Khmer Times, 16 June 2015, <http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/12349/cambodia-vietnam-border-spat-reveals-shifting-alliances/>

As tension rises along an undemarcated border section with Vietnam in Ratanakkiri province, analysts say the government’s newfound toughness against Hanoi reflects rising Chinese influence here.

They also say it shows that the ruling Cambodia People’s Party needs to win political points by responding to rising anger over perceived encroachment on Cambodian soil by Vietnam.

As the ruling party becomes less dependent on Vietnam for investment and military aid, the government can respond to public clamor about Vietnamese encroachment on the Kingdom’s territory, they said.

“China is a big factor in Cambodia’s current relations with Vietnam,” Mr. Virak said. ...

“But China has full influence on Cambodia’s economy – it pours in money into the country every year,” he said.

China now is Cambodia’s largest source of aid, investment and tourists. Cambodia’s hydroelectric dams, half of its major bridges, major road reconstruction projects and Mr. Hun Sen’s office complex, the Peace Palace, have all been built with Chinese grants or soft loans.

Mr. Virak said there was a danger of Cambodia becoming a pawn “in a chess match in a regional power conflict.”

Source: “Vietnam province urges Cambodian authorities to prevent extremist violence on border,” Tuoi Tre News, 3 July 2015, <http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/29043/vietnam-province-urges-cambodian-authorities-to-prevent-extremist-violence-on-border>

Authorities of the southern Vietnamese province of Long An have sent a note to the chief of the neighboring Cambodian province of Svay Rieng over the recent violent actions by Cambodian extremists against Vietnamese people along the border.

In the note, which was sent on Thursday to Svay Rieng Governor Chieng Am, the Long An administration demanded that Svay Rieng authorities take effective measures to prevent violent actions by Cambodian extremists against Vietnamese.

Source: “Hanoi slams ‘extremists’,” The Phnom Penh Post, 2 July 2015, <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/hanoi-slams-extremists>

Yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its third diplomatic note in the last month to Hanoi to protest alleged violations, which include the building of irrigation ponds and a military post in Ratanakkiri and Kandal provinces, respectively.

Muslim Hardliners Control Indonesian Police with Bribery and Fear

6 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: John Hendri, the Senior Commander of Indonesia's National Police legal division, acknowledges that Indonesian police are reluctant to crack down on hate speech, including by hardline Islamic groups, because there are no "rewards" for doing so and they fear a backlash. According to excerpts in the accompanying article, he says, "The truth is that police officers who see, hear or experience such incidents can file a report [for subsequent investigation], but tend to be scared to because there's no reward or guarantee of safety for themselves." The article is noteworthy for two reasons: 1) bribery remains a pervasive issue among police in Indonesia, and 2) hardline domestic Islamic groups can remain active under current conditions.

As the excerpt indicates, it is believed that the Indonesian police typically demand money from anyone filing a report before they will proceed with an investigation. Hendri's comments lead us to believe that police will only take action against hate speech if they are given a bribe. In addition, according to a 2013 survey conducted by Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency, 32% of people polled view bribing police officers as normal.

According to the article, the Islamic Defenders Front is the main perpetrator of hate speech in Indonesia. Founded in August 1998, the Islamic Defenders Front is a radical religious organization in Indonesia that is known to commit hate crimes and use violence in the defense of Islam. Its goal is to implement Sharia law at the national and local levels throughout Indonesia.

Hendri says, "Without [revisions to current regulations], all they'll have to work on are the existing laws, which require that a member of the public file a complaint [about the hate speech]. But there's no way a member of any congregation is going to rat on a religious leader who threatens them." **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz).**

Source: "Police Say They're Too Scared to Fight Religious Hard-Liners," Jakarta Globe, 5 July 2015, <http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/police-say-theyre-scared-fight-religious-hard-liners>

The Indonesian police are reluctant to crack down on hate speech, including by hard-line Islamic groups, because there are no "rewards" for doing so and they fear a backlash, an official has admitted.

Sr. Comr. John Hendri of the National Police's legal division acknowledged during a discussion in Jakarta on Friday that there was a widely held public perception that the police were unwilling to take on purveyors of hate speech such as groups hostile to minority religious groups.

"The truth is that police officers who see, hear or experience such incidents can file a report [for subsequent investigation], but tend to be scared to because there's no reward or guarantee of safety for themselves," he said.

He did not specify what he meant by "reward," although it is almost universally believed that the Indonesian police typically demand money from anyone filing a report before they will proceed with an investigation.

"Without it, all they'll have to work on are the existing laws, which require that a member of the public file a complaint [about the hate speech]. But there's no way a member of any congregation is going to rat on a religious leader who threatens them."

Source: "Many Indonesians view bribery as normal," The Wall Street Journal, 2 January 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887323374504578217233571667400>

It also showed that 32% of people polled viewed bribing police officers as normal, ...



The image is a skyline view of Jakarta. It shows that police in the area have a lot of area to manage.
 Source: "Jakarta City Skyline part 2" by Vian kadal - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Thailand and the Uighur Immigration Quagmire

10 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: For most of 2014 Thailand was in a diplomatic quagmire after its border security guards detained a group of up to 400 Uighur men, women and children from China's Xinjiang Province, who were in human trafficking camps on the Thai side of the border, waiting to be smuggled into Malaysia and then flown to Turkey, where they would receive refuge and documentation. Turkish organizations and statements from its officials expressed sympathy and willingness to accommodate the Uighurs. However, the Chinese government demanded all of the Uighurs be returned to China because they violated immigration laws by sneaking overland into Southeast Asia from China.

According to the excerpted 10 July 2015 article, translated from Chinese on [sina.com](http://www.sina.com), Thailand chose a policy that it believed to be a middle way by agreeing to allow the women and children to fly to Turkey, but requiring the men to return to China. To Thailand's surprise, however, pro-Uighur groups attacked its consulate in Istanbul, while tourists believed to be Chinese (but who were actually Korean) were harassed on Istanbul's streets. As a result, according to the article, Thailand warned its citizens in Turkey not show national flags and other paraphernalia when in the country, while China raised the security threat levels for citizens intending to travel there.

As a result of this diplomatic quagmire for Thailand, it will likely seek to avoid similar immigration dilemmas with Uighur populations by cracking down on the smuggling of specifically Uighur populations from China (although not necessarily the other migrants fleeing Burma on Thailand's western border). In order to avoid pressure from China, Cambodia and Vietnam have taken a similar course to appease Chinese concerns, arresting and immediately repatriating Uighurs who cross the border without documentation. This could ultimately lead to greater intelligence sharing between Thailand and China and cooperation in other Southeast Asian regional security programs, with the objective of stopping Uighur migration at its core.

While this does not necessarily suggest such cooperation would be antithetical to U.S. interests, it could mean that China leverages its influence and closer relationship with Thailand to seek Thailand's support on other issues of regional security where U.S. and Chinese policy diverge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The Thai embassy also recommended that people not display the national flag and national symbols in public places in Turkey, to avoid going to the gathering places of protesters, and to not talk to the locals about Uighur issues.”



Escalating levels of violence in China's Xinjiang Province have drawn the attention of Turks who are sympathetic to China's minority Uighur population.

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/arrival-07012015160103.html>

Source: Thai Consulate in Turkey Attacked for Deporting Uighurs. (泰国驻土耳其使馆因“泰国驱逐维吾尔人”遭袭), [sina.com](http://www.sina.com), 10 July 2015.

Thai Embassy in Turkey Attacked for Deporting Uighurs

The Thai Embassy announced that a group of protesters broke in the night into the embassy in Istanbul destroying office facilities. The Thai embassy also recommended that people not display the national flag and national symbols in public places in Turkey, to avoid going to the gathering places of protesters, and to not talk to the locals about Uighur issues.

Turkish media claimed that after reports emerged of Uighurs being deported, a group of protesters wielding sticks smashed the Thai Embassy.

In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a regular press conference on July 9 said that illegal immigration disrupts normal international immigration order and is against the common interests of the international community in the fight against illegal immigration issues.

Japan Aims to Counter China's Diplomatic Muscle

5 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Beijing's growing financial muscle, as well as its increasing willingness to throw its diplomatic weight around, have quickened the need for Japan to step up its engagement in the battle for regional sway. As the adjacent excerpt points out, in a bid to counter China, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced a \$110 billion investment plan for infrastructure projects in Asia, including in the "Mekong Five" states.*

According to the accompanying article, Abe met with his counterparts from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Vietnam — fast-growing economies through which the lower section of the Mekong River flows — at the seventh annual "Japan-Mekong" summit in Tokyo. Through its financial support Japan aims to be seen as the benevolent giant in the region to establish a reputation as being bold enough to push back against China in territorial and other disputes.

Japan's investment plan comes shortly after China increased its push to provide financial support to the ASEAN region. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said in November that the Chinese-ASEAN strategic partnership was entering a "diamond decade leading to broader and deeper cooperation." In March Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China hoped to boost two-way trade with the ten countries comprising the ASEAN countries to US\$500 billion this year and \$1 trillion in 2020. Beijing's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has also upped the stakes, which rivals the Tokyo-backed Asian Development Bank and offers the kind of financial firepower that matches the needs of rapidly developing countries.

*As the excerpt from the article indicates, Tokyo has its own dispute with Beijing over islands in the East China Sea and is increasingly vocal over China's ambitions to control the South China Sea. In the past Sino-Japanese relations have been plagued by territorial disputes and the legacy of Japan's wartime aggression. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)***

Source: "Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Woo's "Mekong Five" With \$110 Billion Investment Plan," *Chiang Rai Times*, 3 July 2015, <http://www.chiangraitimes.com/japans-prime-minister-shinzo-abe-woos-mekong-five-with-110-billion-investment-plan.html>

TOKYO – Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will meet with his counterparts from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam — fast-growing economies through which the lower section of the Mekong River flows — at the seventh annual "Japan-Mekong" summit in Tokyo on Saturday.

Beijing's growing financial muscle, as well as its increasing willingness to throw its diplomatic weight around, have quickened the need for Japan to step up its engagement in the battle for regional sway.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said in November at a summit in Myanmar that the China-Asean strategic partnership, having experienced a "golden decade" of development, was entering a "diamond decade leading to broader and deeper cooperation".

Then in March, foreign minister Wang Yi said China hoped to boost two-way trade with the 10 countries comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to US\$500 billion this year and \$1 trillion in 2020.

Beijing's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has also upped the stakes, rivalling the Tokyo-backed Asian Development Bank and offering the kind of financial firepower rapidly-developing countries are keen to tap.

In a bid to counter the Chinese move, Mr Abe in May announced a \$110 billion investment plan for infrastructure projects in Asia, including in the "Mekong Five" states.

Japan is keen to be seen as the benevolent giant in the region and has worked hard to burnish a reputation as the nation bold enough to push back against China in territorial and other disputes.

Tokyo has its own spat with Beijing over islands in the East China Sea, but is increasingly vocal over China's ambitions to control almost the whole of the South China Sea.

Source: "Japan pledges \$6 billion to Mekong nations as China prepares new bank," *Reuters*, 3 July 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/04/us-japan-asia-aid-idUSKCN0PE05D20150704>

Sino-Japanese relations have been plagued by territorial disputes and the legacy of Japan's wartime aggression, ...



Source: "KOCIS Korea-Japan-China trilateral summit meeting (4649784748)" by Korea.net / Korean Culture and Information Service (Photographer name). Licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KOCIS_Korea-Japan-China_trilateral_summit_meeting_\(4649784748\).jpg#/media/File:KOCIS_Korea-Japan-China_trilateral_summit_meeting_\(4649784748\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KOCIS_Korea-Japan-China_trilateral_summit_meeting_(4649784748).jpg#/media/File:KOCIS_Korea-Japan-China_trilateral_summit_meeting_(4649784748).jpg)

Indian Commentary Considers China's New Military Strategy 19 July 2015

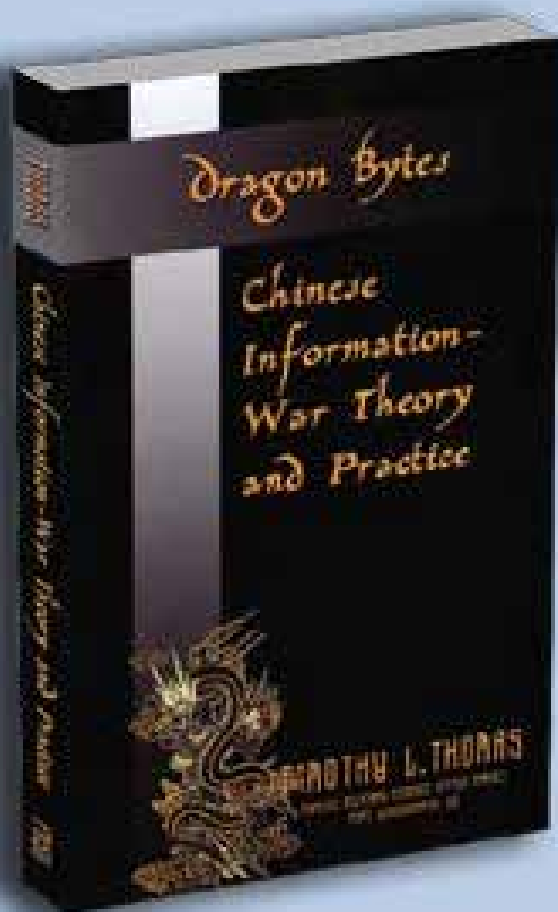
OE Watch Commentary: *This commentary from a senior fellow at the Center for Land Warfare Studies in New Delhi indicates that China's recent Military Strategy White Paper is not following a peaceful rise process, but rather one of belligerency. The author stresses that geo-strategic realities are forcing China's military to make decisions that develop its military potential to invade its neighbors and to deter them with new military forces. The subheading in the paper dedicated to "Preparation for Military Struggles" was pointed to as an implicit reference to terms such as "hotspot issues," "small-scale wars," and "regional conflicts." There is also a strong reference to the dominant role of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in the document, which is highlighted in the key quote below. End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)*

Source: Monica Chansoria, "There's a Political Message in China's Military Strategy," The Sunday Guardian Online (in English), 19 July 2015.

The White Paper consciously appears to outline the missions and strategic tasks of the PLA with the overall "national strategic goal" to accomplish building of a "moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2021," when the CCP celebrates its centenary, and further achieve the "Chinese Dream of achieving rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" as the set objective for 2049, when the People's Republic of China reaches a centennial. This directly branches out of Xi's [Chinese President Xi Jinping] larger vision, placing greater emphasis on military diplomacy as a part of China's overall foreign policy strategy, which seeks to ensure stability along China's periphery. Xi advocated in favor of effective application of growing Chinese power and influence — much in concurrence to what the 2015 White Paper suggests as well. Xi has chosen to present diplomacy as a means of effectively applying Chinese power determinants to promote overall influence in its periphery in support of a long-term strategic foreign policy agenda.

The entire discourse presented here only corroborates that China's much-debated "peaceful rise" theory remains belligerent, primarily because the direction and future course of this rise continues to remain ambiguous. Showcasing its military prowess to the world, Chinese armed forces are signaling that they have come a long way from being essentially a rustic and bucolic "Red Army" that waged a "People's War" more than six decades ago.

“Incidentally, the CCP and its centrality to the very existence of China's political structure has been accorded primacy throughout the paper, when it repeatedly, and unambiguously states, “...the Chinese armed forces will unswervingly adhere to the principle of the CCP's absolute leadership, and work to build themselves into a people's military that follows the CCP's commands...” The paper goes to the extent of interlinking firm maintenance of “social stability,” for it to remain a staunch force for “resolutely upholding the CCP's ruling position.””



***Dragon Bytes* by Tim Thomas examines China's information-war (IW) theory and practice from 1995-2003. Some specialists may be surprised that the Chinese openly discuss not only computer network attacks and electronic preemption but also the development of IW units and an "integrated network-electronic warfare" theory (which closely approximates the US theory of "network-centric warfare"). The Chinese development of an IW theory is representative of their country's philosophy and culture. By creating an "IW theory with Chinese characteristics" the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has offered an alternate way of viewing the application of IW than in the West.**

Made in China 2025

20 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: China is known as the “world’s factory” because some years ago it surpassed Germany as the world’s largest exporter and the US as the world’s largest manufacturer. What is less well known is that more than half of the value added in its exports is derived outside China and accounted for by re-exported value from prior imported components. For example, of a \$400 iPhone sold in the US but manufactured by the Taiwanese company Foxconn in its China factory, only \$9 is value derived from processing within China. The vast majority of the phone’s value is captured either in the subcomponents, virtually all of which are made in other East Asian countries and the US, and which are then imported into China, or in the sales and marketing in the country, where the phone is eventually sold at retail. Though the “re-export” trade helps the Chinese to learn by copying, it is the technology-originating and final consumption countries which are making the lion’s share of the money and maintain their lead at the technological frontier.

The Chinese government’s push for “Made in China 2025” covered in first article is motivated by the quest to break out of low-margin manufacturing and attain higher value-added exports. The second article showcases China as the world’s largest industrial robot marketplace. It also highlights the fact that 70% of those sales are imported.

There is no disputing that Chinese manufacturing is not exclusively “low cost and poor quality products.” Just look at Siemens or GE facing stiff Chinese competition in super-critical coal-fired power generation plants or Microsoft/Nokia in the cellphone market. However, if Chinese manufacturing was already significantly high value-added, then why would the Chinese government – not known for modest objective targeting – be forecasting parity 20 years from now (2035)?

In the third article, the CEO of Chinese smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi (the world’s fourth largest handset manufacturer) identifies innovation as a critical bottleneck within his market. He forecasts that this obstacle will be overcome, but his confidence is based on future market developments and future government reform efforts, all of which may not materialize as predicted.

As much as China has enjoyed phenomenal economic success over the past 30 years, for it to continue growing at rates far above those of developed countries, China must move up the value ladder. Staying with what it has already mastered manufacturing-wise will mean an inexorable slowing of both growth and job-creation. Two strategic implications can be drawn from China’s grasp for higher-end manufacturing. First, the medium- and high-tech items China does make are vulnerable to a shut-off of imported components. Think of Chinese super-computers that rely on Intel chips and military and civilian aircraft that rely exclusively on European- and Russian-made engines. Second, Chinese high-tech manufacturing is done either by or for state firms. Combined, these two factors mean that China struggles to create a broad high-tech ecosystem of manufacturers, customers (outside of the government), and financiers willing to make the repeated and long-term high-risk/high-return ventures necessary to reach parity with manufacturers in developed countries. The question is, “Can a government-centered innovation system actually deliver innovation?” **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)**

Source: “Made in China 2025: Chinese Manufacturing to Get a Makeover” CKGSB Knowledge, 21 May 2015. <http://knowledge.ckgsb.edu.cn/2015/05/21/policy-and-law/made-in-china-2025-chinese-manufacturing-to-get-a-makeover/>.

Made in China 2025: Chinese Manufacturing to Up Value Creation

China’s has been the world’s factory for quite some time and consumers all over the globe are familiar with the term Made in China. But over time the idea of Made in China has acquired negative connotations because it is associated with low cost and poor quality products.

Clearly, China’s manufacturing sector needs a push to take it to the next level, and this is where Made in China 2025 comes in. According to the government’s action plan, China will aim for a big leap in innovation as well as manufacturing efficiency and realize basic industrialization by 2025; being able to compete with developed manufacturing powers by 2035; and leading the world’s manufacturing by the 100th birthday (2049) of the New China.

Source: “China aims to be leader in robotics,” People’s Daily Online, 22 May 2015. http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0522/c202936-8896114.html?utm_source=SITC+Bulletin%2C+Week+of+May+28.

China #1 Market for Robot Sales Seeks Innovation

China, the world’s largest industrial robot market for the second year running in 2014, aims to become one of the leading manufacturers of the machines by 2030. Foreign companies dominate the Chinese market and sold 40,000 industrial robots last year, about 70 percent of total sales. The plan, under the direct supervision of Premier Li Keqiang, is designed to make breakthroughs in bottleneck areas so that the country can play an even more important role in the global manufacturing chain.

Source: “Smartphone innovation has hit bottleneck in China: Xiaomi CEO,” WantChinaTimes, 30 May 2015. <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1204&MainCatID=12&id=20150517000009&ut>.

China Encounters Innovation Bottleneck

Lei Jun, founder and CEO of Chinese smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi, said on May 13 that the smartphone market in China has encountered a bottleneck for innovation and that growth has been slowing down, reports Sina’s tech news portal.

Greece Improves Relations with Kosovo, Startling Serbia

15 July 2015

“Some other local and international officials also expressed their Serbian officials were alarmed when the Greek Foreign Minister, Nikolaos Kotzias, visited Kosovo on Tuesday and said Greece would support Kosovo’s attempts to join key international organizations.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008, all but five European Union member states have recognized its sovereignty, to include Greece. However, as noted in the accompanying article, the Greek foreign minister’s recent visit to Kosovo indicates a warming in their relationship. Although still short of recognition, the statements made by the Greek minister reveal new efforts toward greater cooperation between the two countries.

The Greek leadership’s comments supporting Kosovo’s role in international organizations are alarming to Serbia, which denies Kosovo’s independence and still views Kosovo as a province. Previously, Serbian officials had received assurances that Greece would not recognize Kosovo’s independence, even indirectly. Serbian officials maintain that Kosovar membership in international organizations, such as UNESCO and Interpol, supports indirect international recognition.

End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)

Source: Hajdari, Una. “Greek Minister Heals Breach on Visit to Kosovo.” Balkan Insight. 15 July 2015. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/greek-fm-visits-kosovo-pledges-cooperation>>

“Greek Foreign Minister Nikolaos Kotzias held a joint press conference in Pristina on Tuesday with his counterpart, Hashim Thaci, in what is seen as a landmark in relations between the two.

The Foreign Minister said that he also welcomed the idea of Kosovo opening an Office for Kosovo in Athens or Thessaloniki.

‘We support Kosovo becoming a member of international organizations like Interpol and UNESCO,’ continued Kotzias, saying that Greece had always supported ‘the creation of links between the European Union and Kosovo.’”

Source: Hajdari, Una. “Kosovo plans to join UNESCO by November.” Turkish Weekly. 18 July 2015. <<http://www.turkishweekly.net/2015/07/18/news/kosovo-plans-to-join-unesco-by-november/>>

“However, Serbian officials have reiterated that Kosovo’s membership of such an international organization [such as UNESCO] would be tantamount to indirect recognition of the country’s independence, which Serbia opposes.

... Serbian officials were alarmed when the Greek Foreign Minister, Nikolaos Kotzias, visited Kosovo on Tuesday and said Greece would support Kosovo’s attempts to join key international organizations.”



Who Is Fighting in Ukraine?

17 July 2015

“It is not a fixed fact that Kyrgyz citizens are participating in the Ukrainian conflict, but the process of verification and identification is ongoing. Recall that the participation of our citizens in any foreign conflict is a criminal offense according to article 375 (mercenary) of the criminal code.”

Source: “Участие кыргызстанцев в зарубежных конфликтах уголовно наказуемо – ГКНБ” (Participation of Kyrgyz citizens in foreign conflicts is a criminal offense – GKNB), KyrTAG, 13 July 2015. <http://kyrtag.kg/society/uchastie-kyrgyzstantsev-v-zarubezhnykh-konfliktakh-ugolovno-nakazuemo-gknb->

OE Watch Commentary: Regarding the fighting that has broken out among the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine, many suspect that Russian citizens have been traveling to the regions and volunteering in the fight against Kyiv. In addition, there have been repeated allegations that other non-Ukrainian citizens have also been involved in the fighting. As recent reports indicate, it is likely that citizens of Kyrgyzstan have been volunteering in the ranks of Donetsk separatists.

As the excerpt points out, the Ukrainian-sponsored Peacekeeper Center claims that these Kyrgyz individuals have been quite open about their participation. They felt no qualms with updating their statuses on Russian social media sites with pictures of themselves armed and in combat gear. If these photos are legitimate, then not only are the armed separatists of Luhansk and Donetsk using foreign fighters, but these foreign fighters are also participating willingly and proudly.

Some might find it odd that Kyrgyz citizens are fighting in the conflict in Ukraine. Even more curious is that the Kyrgyz government has not made any public condemnation of the men in question, considering that the government of Kyrgyzstan officially prohibits citizens' participation in illegal military organizations or conflicts. Judging from the excerpt, rather than accusing these three men of supporting separatist forces, the Kyrgyz committee on national security appears to be exhibiting indifference. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)**

The participation of Kyrgyz citizens in foreign conflicts is a criminal offense – GKNB

According to the Ukrainian-sponsored Peacekeeper Center, “D. Zenkin has participated in combat on the side of the DNR since 2014. His unit is located around the city of Horlivka, not far from Odessa. 31-year-old Alexei Pugin, native and resident of Bishkek . . . has participated in fighting against the Ukrainian army near the village area of Starobesh near Donetsk.” Ruslan Bakirov, a Kazakh native who later moved to Kyrgyzstan, is also believed to be fighting in the ranks of the so-called DNR. (read: <http://kyrtag.kg/standpoint/ustanovleny-lichnosti-troikh-kyrgyzstantsev-voyuyushchikh-na-vostoke-ukrainy-/>)

KyrTAG was informed in the State Committee on Security (GKNB) that if the participation of any Kyrgyz citizen in any sort of foreign conflict is confirmed, they will be held criminally responsible.

“It is not a fixed fact that Kyrgyz citizens are participating in the Ukrainian conflict, but the process of verification and identification is ongoing. Recall that the participation of our citizens in any foreign conflict is a criminal offense according to article 375 (mercenary) of the criminal code” noted the representative of the special service.

However, the representative of the GKNB expressed doubt that the Kyrgyz citizens mentioned in the article participated in the Ukrainian conflict, since “such information is not published in social networks” due to potential criminal liability.



Dmitri Zenkin with members of his unit near the city of Horlivka, Donetsk. Posted to his vkontakte page March 2015.
Source: https://vk.com/id31870282?z=photo31870282_360134001%2Fphotos31870282

A Future Space Component in Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense?

24 June 2015

“...We just signed an agreement with the Ministry of Defense and they are running, with us, a practical internship of specialists that have passed higher education overseas in the field of space communications.”

OE Watch Commentary: Kazakhstan's Space Agency has been in existence since 2007, and its main effort has been operating communications satellites, two of which are currently in orbit. As the accompanying articles report, there are a couple of recent developments that could have an impact on any growth of the agency. One article reports on the government of Kazakhstan moving forward on an agreement with Russia to create a launch facility called Baiterek within the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The article states that Baiterek would use rockets based on the Russian-designed Angara, which is a newer rocket system than the Zenit or Proton rockets that are typically launched at Baikonur. Angara rockets can launch heavier payloads (particularly important for different types of modern satellites) than the variants of Zenit or Proton, and getting a launch site for the Angara signifies that Kazakhstan is not just taking over an older Russian system at Baikonur. In any case, it will still be several years before Baiterek is operational.

The other article is a follow-up to the launch of KazSat-3 this past year (see: August 2014 OE Watch, “Kazakhstan's Space Agency Launches another Satellite”). It includes a couple of things that show the growth and direction of the agency. The first is that the agency has a fully functional backup control center outside Almaty to manage its satellites (the main control center is not far from Astana). How this facility is used in the event of any expansion of the agency would be worth watching. The article includes an interview with an official from the center where the satellites are operated, and he mentions a recent agreement between his agency and Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense (MoD). The internship he mentions is still at an early stage, but as a long-term goal it appears that the MoD is developing specialists who can work with communications satellites. The MoD is not likely to take over the control center, as the official says, but if the country's space agency is able to launch its own satellites in several years and the MoD continues to develop a partnership with the agency and has specialists able to operate a satellite, then the MoD could be working on adding a small space component. Many things will have to come together correctly for this happen, but it will be worth watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: “Алға, ‘Байтерек!’” (Forward, “Baiterek!”), Vremya (Time), 24 June 2015.
<http://www.time.kz/articles/zloba/2015/06/24/ala-bajterek>

Forward, “Baiterek!”

Kazakhstan ratified a protocol to a bilateral agreement with Russia on the creation of the space rocket complex “Baiterek” at the Baikonur Cosmodrome...The agreement on the creation of “Baiterek” at Baikonur, and based on the Russian “Angara” rocket, was signed between the governments of Kazakhstan and Russian in 2004. For the realization of this joint venture the Kazakh side has allocated a loan of \$223 million over 19 years...the project was delayed, and the repayment of the loan has started. At the moment work is being carried out on the Russian side to update the project...

Source: Bedenko, Grigory. “KazSat-3: второй год в космосе (KazSat-3: the second year in space),” Vox Populi, 22 June 2015.
<http://www.voxpopuli.kz/main/kazsat-3-vtoroy-god-v-kosmose-12109.html>

KazSat-3: the second year in space

A little over a year ago KazSat-3 was launched on a geostationary orbit – already the third telecommunications satellite...The first satellite was lost half a year after launch...the flights of the second and third are going according to program... Today both satellites are managed and serviced by Kazakh specialists in Kazakhstan. The Republican Center of Space Communications is located in a forest near the village of Akkol, 120 km north of Astana...

(G. Bedenko): “Are you working with higher education institutes?”

(Baurzhan Kudabayev, Vice-President of the Republican Space Center): “...We just signed an agreement with the Ministry of Defense and they are running, with us, a practical internship of specialists that have passed higher education overseas in the field of space communications...we agreed to give them this opportunity. This is in no way the militarization of our facility...We pay them a salary ourselves...We know that they may not stay with us, but that the state will get specialists...”

...there is a backup Mission Control Center, located not far from Almaty, in the area of the village of Kokterek...

The Meaning of the Day of National Unity in Tajikistan

27 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Day of National Unity was celebrated in Tajikistan on 27 June, marking 18 years since the Tajik government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) signed a peace agreement ending the five year Civil War (1992-1997). The accompanying article questions the significance of the holiday since the peace agreement was signed, and there are a couple of things to consider about it. The article reports how the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) of Tajikistan, which was a key component of the UTO, refused to mark the holiday. In addition to the IRP's leader (Kabiri) being in exile, the party did not win any seats in Tajikistan's parliamentary election in March 2015. This came alongside reports that several party members were arrested on questionable charges right before the election and that the IRP had been losing a small number of supporters because of internal issues.*

The perspective in the article that the Day of National Unity has lost its meaning might also be based on more than the IRP being recently marginalized. The experts quoted in the article could be referring to the fact that the UTO's key leaders have not been around for some time. In addition to the death of IRP leader Said Abdullo Nuri in 2006 from cancer, well known field commander Mirzo Ziyoev was killed in strange circumstances in 2009. Moreover, some in Tajikistan saw the July-August 2012 clashes in Khorog as a further deterioration of any unity that was achieved after the Civil War. The 2012 clashes took place between Tajik government forces and supporters of Tolib Ayombekov, a former UTO commander, who at the time was an officer in the Tajik border guards in a detachment near Khorog.

*Perhaps one of the more interesting points from the article is how the day is no longer viewed as something that came from the reconciliation process, but is simply another holiday on the calendar. This is not to suggest that the loss of an opposition party (the IRP) is not a serious issue for stability in Tajikistan, but rather that the day commemorating the end of the Civil War does not hold the same meaning as it used to. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

Source: “День национального единства в Таджикистане: Закрепление ценностей или обесценивание смысла?” (The Day of National Unity in Tajikistan: holding value or losing meaning?), Fergana News, 27 June 2015.
<http://www.fergananews.com/articles/8599>

The Day of National Unity in Tajikistan: holding value or losing meaning?

June 27 in Tajikistan marked the national holiday – the Day of National Unity. On this day 18 years ago the General Agreement on Peace and National Accord between the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was signed, which put an end to five years of civil war... On June 26 President Emomali Rahmon made a long speech and called on Tajik citizens, especially youth, to remember the “terrible and tragic days”...

...At the same time, experts are saying that the holiday has lost its meaning amid the background of the internal political situation in Tajikistan. The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) announced on June 22 that it will not mark the Day of National Unity... Remember that during the (Tajik) Civil War, the IRP was the backbone of the UTO. Its late leader, Said Abdullo Nuri and Rahmon signed the peace agreement...

A new conflict is brewing in Tajik society today: the IRP was declared a harmful and dangerous party... The head of the party, Muhiddin Kabiri left Tajikistan a few months ago and fears being prosecuted... Today, the Day of National Unity stopped existing as a result of the reconciliation. Now it's just a holiday on the calendar... Kabiri recent said that if authorities will not have a dialogue with the IRP, then they will appeal to the UN and the contact group countries, particularly Russia and Iran, which during the war contributed to the inter-Tajik negotiations...

“The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) announced on June 22 that it will not mark the Day of National Unity.”

A Central Asian Perspective of Security in Afghanistan

by Matthew Stein

In the ten years since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) contributed support for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations by granting over-flight rights and use of airfields for transit or search and rescue operations, and allowing overland logistics of non-lethal supplies. The drawdown of forces in 2014 from Afghanistan will affect the conduct of regional affairs and regional security, particularly for the countries of Central Asia.

However, Central Asian perspectives of the future of Afghanistan are often overlooked. There are a number of articles by security analysts and academics in Central Asia that offer detailed and candid perspectives of ISAF operations and security in Afghanistan, though these may not be noticed or well received by policy-makers in the United States. A brief examination of articles by one such author, Dr. Viktor Dubovitsky, can help better understand the Central Asian perspective of security in Afghanistan.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/CA-Perspective-of-Security-in-Afghanistan.pdf>



Rules of Engagement on the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border

9 July 2015

“The protocol of the working meeting will start on July 11, 2015 when the commanders of the Batken border detachment (Kyrgyzstan) and the Isfara border detachment (Tajikistan) will carry out joint activities on “Conduct of border guards on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.””

OE Watch Commentary: *In the past couple of years the governments of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have attempted to reduce the number of violent incidents on their borders, but with limited results. These attempts are centered on negotiations to fully demarcate the border, but, as the accompanying article reports, the two sides are also trying to reduce incidents by implementing stricter controls on the use of weapons by border guards. This comes after an incident on 6 July, when Tajik civilians clashed with Kyrgyz border guards on the Batken (Kyrgyzstan) – Isfara (Tajikistan) road, resulting in one civilian from Tajikistan being killed and a Tajik border guards officer reportedly dying of wounds received during the incident.*

The article does not go into any details on how the orders or rules of engagement for the border guards from either side will change, only that the border detachments involved in the 6 July incident are now carrying out joint activities. It is interesting to note that the Leylek and Ghonchi border detachments are also involved in joint activity, though these detachments are over 100 km to the west of where this latest incident took place.

*There are a couple of reasons that the joint activities and changes to the rules of engagement are taking place. Since negotiations between the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments to resolve and demarcate the border do not appear to be any closer to a solution, joint activity between border detachments on a local level might be one way to reduce the number of border incidents. Also, reports from Kyrgyzstan claimed that before any weapons were fired during the clash, Tajiks attempted to seize weapons from the Kyrgyz border guards while Tajik border guards did nothing. While this cannot be confirmed, it might explain why the two sides are examining rules of engagement for their respective forces as one solution to curbing violent border incidents. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

Source: “Главы погранслужб Кыргызстана и Таджикистана договорились осуществлять строгий контроль над организацией службы пограничных нарядов” (The heads of the border guards of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have agreed to implement strict control over the organization of the border guards services’ orders), Kabar, 9 July 2015.
<http://kabar.kg/rus/society/full/94444>

The heads of the border guards of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have agreed to implement strict control over the organization of the border guards services’ orders

...The meeting of the heads of the border guards was held with the goal of looking at the issue of preventing border incidents similar to what took place on July 6, 2015 in the area of Kocho-Karyn, Batken District, Kyrgyzstan...A decision was made as a result of the meeting on the implementation of strict controls over the border guards’ orders and the use of weapons on civilians and military service members...

The protocol of the working meeting will start on July 11, 2015 when the commanders of the Batken border detachment (Kyrgyzstan) and the Isfara border detachment (Tajikistan) will carry out joint activities on “Conduct of border guards on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border”... similar activities will take place for the commanders of the Leylek (Kyrgyzstan) and the Ghonchi (Tajikistan) border detachments...



“Kyrgyz-Tajik border area, Internatsional”

Source: by Nataev - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kyrgyz-Tajik_border_area,_Internatsional.JPG#/media/File:Kyrgyz-Tajik_border_area,_Internatsional.JPG

Balancing: Conscription, Contract Service, and a Reserve System

“Currently about 40 percent of recruits sent to the troops already have a military occupational specialty which they received in DOSAAF schools. It is assumed that within a few years each conscript who will serve in the army will train in a DOSAAF school and will have a military occupational specialty.”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia, as most other nations that practice conscription, is struggling to find the right balance of conscripts with contract NCOs to man the force. There has been a consensus reached that conscription will continue in the Russian Armed Forces and that abandoning the institution is neither possible nor desired. One aspect that is surprising is the way that contract NCOs are utilized. Instead of them leading conscripts, Russia has chosen a different system. Contract NCOs and conscripts typically serve in different units, with contract NCOs generally filling the “trigger puller” positions. Conscripts are typically routed to combat support and combat service support roles. The reason for this situation is that the Russian military believes that the one-year duration of conscript service is insufficient to gain basic proficiency in a combat arm. Although conscripts serve in support positions, such as cooks, drivers, etc., the short conscription duration is still seen as a problem to instill even basic militarily useful skills.

The solution for this problem has been the reinvigoration of the Soviet-era Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet (DOSAAF) program. DOSAAF is a government-sponsored sports and outdoor enthusiast organization that promotes militarily useful skills, such as hiking, camping, shooting, skiing, parachuting, driving, and athletics, for young people. Currently 40% of conscripts enter with a military occupational specialty, with the plans that eventually most conscripts will enter the military with some form of militarily useful skill. Although DOSAAF has been rife with corruption, apparently the Russian Federation sees it as an important asset for military readiness, and, as the accompanying article discusses, reforms are being made in attempt to correct deficiencies.

In addition to manning the active duty force, Russia has also been experimenting with the idea of forming an operational reserve. (See *Russia Experiments with Two-Tier Operational Reserve System* http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201412/Russia_02.html.) The accompanying article discusses the formation of a ROTC-like system that would produce MOS qualified officers and NCOs who could serve in some form of reserve system. Apparently the details of such a system are still being explored, but it could be a starting point for the development of an operational reserve capability.

Whatever the outcome of these developments, it seems clear that Russia has no desire to adopt the practices of the West. The U.S./Western officer/NCO model has been observed, evaluated, and rejected. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Military Commissars to Be Responsible for Service in Installments,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 25 Jun 2015, <http://www.ng.ru/armies/2015-06-26/1_voenkomy.html>, accessed 15 July 2015.

Military Commissars to Be Responsible for Service in Installments

Decree No. 305 by President Vladimir Putin, which applied further changes to the Provision on Military Service Procedures, recently entered into force. The document is published on the legal information website and at first glance is of a technical nature. But analysis of its content allows conclusions to be drawn about how the new system of military service (so-called service in installments), which was proposed by the head of state in December 2013, will operate. And there are a number of fundamental points...

Service in installments started from September last year at 60 leading Russian higher educational establishments with military faculties, when over 15,000 young men who had undergone selection began their studies under the new system of student military training. In just a few years all young people in higher education who wish to do so will undertake military service under this system...

This innovation has been welcomed in Russian society. After all, this lightened military service involves special theoretical training and three-month military rallies instead of a year of military work by conscription... The training of students who continue their basic studies could last 1.5 to 2.5 years. The appropriate amendments to legislation were passed in 2014. In six months the first groups of students should complete their military training and service in higher education.

Meanwhile, the country currently continues to improve the training of mobilization resources in other directions. For instance, on behalf of Defense Ministry chief Sergey Shoygu, Defense Ministry representatives and leaders of the Voluntary Society for the Promotion of the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF) have started preparing a development plan for the organization up to 2020. It is expected to conduct a full inventory of DOSAAF, and also to determine how much funding is needed to resolve the tasks involved in training the country’s mobilization resources...

Now the Defense Ministry has initiated a proposal to consider the possibility of joint use of resources by the Defense Ministry and DOSAAF to prepare young people for army service. According to Sergey Shoygu, this is necessary to ensure that “the state is not bearing double or triple the cost.”

Currently about 40 percent of recruits sent to the troops already have a military occupational specialty which they received in DOSAAF schools. It is assumed that within a few years each conscript who will serve in the army will train in a DOSAAF school and will have a military occupational specialty. It is expected from 2016 that students who opt for the service in installments will also undertake military studies at DOSAAF and Defense Ministry training centers.

NGOs and the Myth of Russia's "Hybrid War" Strategy

9 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Few issues have riled Russian military thinkers more than the description of Russian actions as "hybrid war." There is a consensus in Russian military circles that hybrid war is a completely Western concept, as no Russian military officer or strategist has discussed hybrid warfare, except to mention the West's use of the term. The Russian military has been adamant that it does not practice a hybrid warfare strategy, and many Russian commentaries have stated that this concept is nothing new and that the aspects of hybrid war mentioned by Western analysts have been practiced since warfare began. The accompanying editorial from Ruslan Pukhov, the Director of the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, convincingly argues that there was little "hybrid" or even different about Russia's actions in Crimea, as the means used to take the peninsula have been used since antiquity.*

One event that that further confused Western analysts was the publication of "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations." This article, published about a year before the Crimea invasion, by Chief of the Russian General Staff, General Valeri Gerasimov, outlined his vision of recent and future conflicts. His mention of indirect and asymmetric methods has been interpreted by the West as hybrid warfare. Undoubtedly, there is some overlap in meaning of the terms, but they are distinct. One example of the difference between them is the Russian understanding of the color revolutions and the Arab Spring. These revolutions were and are viewed as an indirect and asymmetric method used to weaken Russia and its allies. These revolutions are believed to be propagated by foreign-sponsored nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), hence, as the accompanying (continued)

Source: Ruslan Pukhov, "The Myth of Hybrid Warfare, Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 29 May 2005, <http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-05-29/1_war.html>, accessed 15 July 2015.

The Myth of Hybrid Warfare

Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine over the past year gave rise in the West to a widespread theory about some kind of "hybrid war," an innovative form of military intervention that Moscow created specifically for this crisis. However, upon closer inspection, the term hybrid war is more a propaganda tool than hard fact and any attempt to fully define it strips the idea...

It is not difficult to see that these definitions of hybrid war, and especially the characterization of Russia's actions in 2014 as such, are out of touch with reality. For example, it is unclear which special "information" and "cyber operations" — much less which "wider use of cyber space and strategic communications" Moscow employed during its operations in Crimea. No information has come to light concerning "cyber operations" in Crimea — and what need was there for them considering the archaic condition of the Ukrainian armed forces?

...The actions attributed to so-called hybrid warfare are fairly standard to any "low intensity" armed conflict of recent decades, if not centuries. It is difficult to imagine any country using military force without providing informational support, using methods of "secret warfare," attempting to erode enemy forces, exploiting internal ethnic, social, economic, political or other divisions in the enemy camp, and without the use of retaliatory economic sanctions. These have been the fundamentals of war since antiquity...

In essence, history shows that any external military intervention by a foreign army into another country's civil war has inevitably involved similar practices. Neither is this the first time that a government has used both regular army and rebel forces together. Such practices are standard when deploying military resources under specific conditions. Recall that one of the main tasks of the U.S. Special Forces is the organization and support of "friendly" rebel and guerrilla movements...

Source: Velimir Razuvayev, "Senators Approve First List of Russia's Foes," Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 9 July 2015, <http://www.ng.ru/politics/2015-07-09/3_senatory.html>, accessed 14 July 2015.

Senators Approve First List of Russia's Foes

The Federation Council yesterday asked the General Prosecutor's Office, the Foreign Ministry, and the Justice Ministry to examine a council-approved "patriotic stop list." It includes foreign organizations that, in the view of the senators, pose a threat to Russia's constitutional system...

For the time being, there are 12 organizations on the list. They are the National Endowment for Democracy, George Soros's Open Society Foundation, Freedom House, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the East European Democratic Center, the Education for Democracy Foundation, the Ukrainian World Congress, the Crimean Human Rights Field Mission, and the Ukrainian World Coordinating Council...

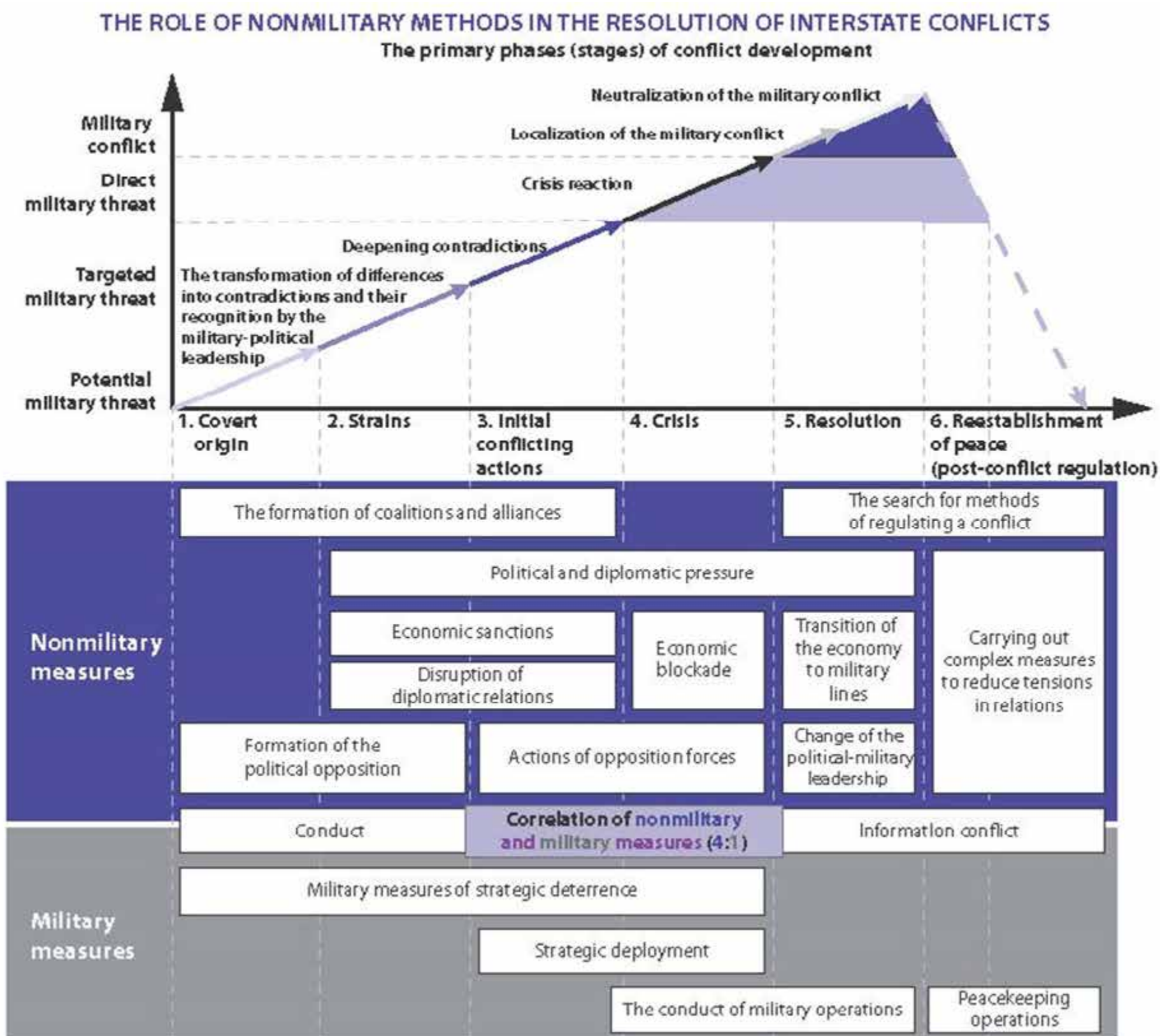
Konstantin Kosachev, head of the international affairs committee, has said that the stop list has a "signaling function." According to him, various, predominantly American, foundations are continuing with attempts to influence the situation in the country despite legal restrictions having been put in place in order to prevent that... "Three American foundations, Soros, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the MacArthur Foundation, alone have paid our noncommercial organizations half-a-billion rubles to conduct political activity," Kosachev said without mentioning the period over which this money was paid...

Meanwhile, the criteria by which organizations are added to the stop list are not completely clear. So far, it appears that it includes the most well-known organizations operating, for example, in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan. What is clear is that the list will grow as a result of organizations already operating in Russia or those trying to do so being added to it. Matviyenko also confirmed this yesterday by saying that "the list is not exhaustive."

Continued: NGOs and the Myth of Russia's "Hybrid War" Strategy

article discusses, the need to ban certain NGOs in Russia. The veracity of Russian beliefs about the nature of these NGOs is open for debate, but understanding that that Russia sees these NGOs as an indirect and asymmetric method of war makes it very clear that Gerasimov is talking about something very different than the Western notion of hybrid war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“[Hybrid War] the use of military and non-military tools in an integrated campaign designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic means; sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations; covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action; and economic pressure.”



Source: Valeriy Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 26 February 2013, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>>, accessed 15 April 2014.

Russia's Use of Unmanned Vehicles as Electronic Warfare Platforms

28 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian Federation has been very interested in increasing its UAV and electronic warfare (EW) capabilities. As the accompanying articles discuss, these two endeavors are now merging, as Russia now fields unmanned aerial and underwater platforms for EW assets. Russians have particularly focused on EW because it is seen as a way of mitigating US air superiority and precision strike capabilities. Russia believes it must blind and deafen AWACS-type long-range radar surveillance planes, satellites, UAVs, and cruise missiles to be successful in any confrontation with the West.*

In the last few years Russia has deployed the "Moskva-1," "Gimalai," "Krasukha-2," "President-S," "Infauna," "Leer-2," "Krasukha-4," and infamous "Khibiny" aircraft-mounted systems (the latter allegedly turning off the electronics on the USS Donald Cook in March 2014). EW capabilities are not only seen as a necessity to protect conventional forces, but also are routinely used to protect Ground Forces tactical-operational missiles and Strategic Rocket Forces intercontinental ballistic missiles.
End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Source: Yuri Gavrilov, "Electronic Warfare Units in Far East Will Get Leer-3 Drones," Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 28 June 2015, <<http://rg.ru/2015/06/28/leer-site.html>>, accessed 15 July 2015.

Electronic Warfare Units in Far East Will Get Leer-3 Drones

...the Leer-3 is not a separate drone but an entire technological system. In addition to two automated operator workplaces and antenna-feeder systems for command and telemetry radio communication it includes a pair of Orlan-10 drones and a catapult launch.

In addition to EW units, this system is already actively used by motorized infantry, tank, and artillery crews in the Eastern and other military districts of Russia. The Leer-3 is used for aerial surveillance of the battlefield situation and troop movements...

This system can be used in a range of up to 120 kilometers and at altitudes up to 5,000 meters. The maximum flight duration of the Orlan UAV, which is part of the Leer set, is up to 10 hours. At that point the device automatically descends to Earth by parachute.

The drone, which has a takeoff weight of 18 kilograms and a wingspan of over three meters, depending on the modification, can accelerate from 70 to 130 kilometers per hour. For EW purposes the drone can take to the skies with a payload weighing 2.5 kilograms. In the air its equipment is capable of blocking the functioning of three cellular networks...



The Leer-2 EW system on a "Tigr" Chassis
 Source: <http://ru.autowp.ru/picture/tm7uhs>

Continued: Russia's Use of Unmanned Vehicles as Electronic Warfare Platforms



Orlan-10 UAV

Range: 50 - 120 km
 Flight Duration: 10 hours
 Maximum Takeoff Weight: 15 kg
 Maximum Payload: 5 kg
 Wingspan: 3.1 m
 Length: 1.8 m
 Speed: 75-170 km/h
 Maximum Altitude: 6000 m
 Fuel: A-95 Gasoline
 Operating Temperature: -35C to + 40C
 Takeoff: Catapult
 Landing: Parachute
 Source: <http://bastion-opk.ru/orlan-10/>

Orlan-10 on Catapult Source: <http://bastion-opk.ru/orlan-10/>

Source: Nikolay Grishchenko, "A Russian Spy Robot Will Fool Submarines," Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 18 June 2015, <<http://www.rg.ru/2015/06/18/glider-site-anons.html>>, accessed 15 July 2015.

Source: Nikolai Grishenko, "Underwater Robot with Electronic Warfare Role," RIA Novosti Online, 17 June 2015, <<http://ria.ru/technology/20150617/1073989484.html>>, accessed 15 July 2015.

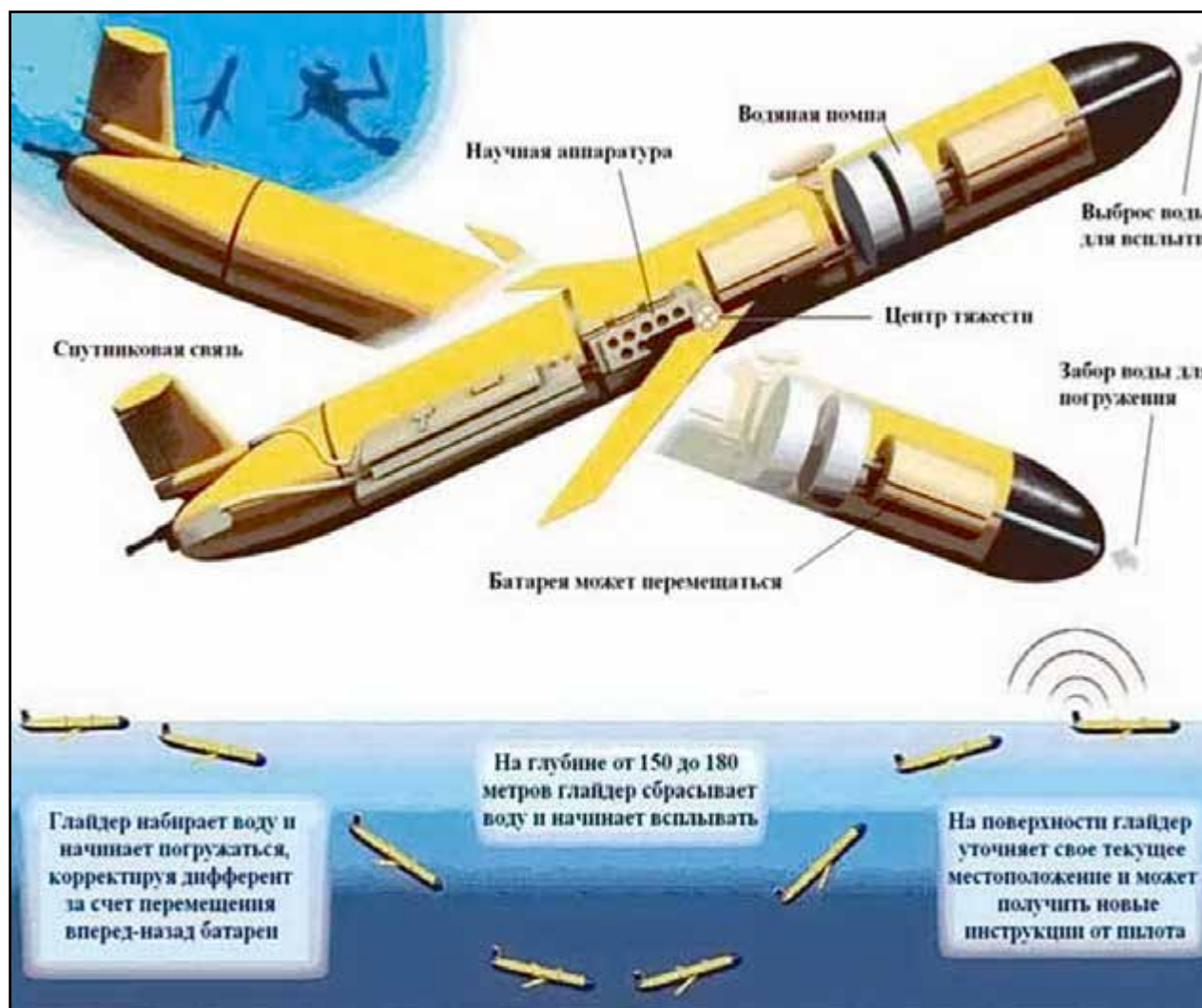
A Russian Spy Robot Will Fool Submarines

The Glider-T robotized submersible was unveiled at the Armiya-2015 international military-technical forum, the press service of the United Instrument Corporation announced...

The robotized system may primarily determine the type of passing ships by sound, tackle EW tasks, simulate decoys, and complicate the efforts of sonar and other hydro-acoustic devices of the enemy. Simply put, fool foreign submarines and "smart" torpedoes. The Glider-T's developers maintain that the robot may also patrol a defined body of water, collect water samples and determine the extent of pollution, photograph objects, and transmit information to computer facilities by GSM modem, radio or satellite. The full set of the requisite apparatus is installed on the vehicle at the client's wish...the Glider-T has been developed by the Moscow Kompas Design Bureau and built from super-strong and lightweight material which is seawater- and oil-resistant. It is fitted with an innovative engine, which permits the vehicle to move about imperceptibly for modern detection facilities.

Underwater Robot with Electronic Warfare Role

Russia's United Instrument-Building Corporation has created the Glayder-T underwater robot, which has electronic warfare functions and can operate underwater without the aid of GLONASS, a company representative told RIA Novosti. "The apparatus has the ability to determine the type of a passing ship by its sound, carry out electronic warfare tasks, imitate false targets and hinder the function of sonars and other enemy hydro-acoustic systems," a source told the agency at the Armiya-2015 military exhibition at Kubinka, Moscow Region...



Source: <http://cdn.topwar.ru/uploads/images/2013/466/etwb472.jpg>

The Orlan-10 and Artillery, Let's Ponder How They Work Together...

8 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The integration of UAVs into the Russian artillery spotting system should be of little surprise. The Russian Federation, as the Soviet Union, has put primacy on the artillery, while many Western armies focus upon the infantry. Motorized infantry and tanks are still required to capture and hold ground, but the vast majority of damage is doctrinally planned to be done by the artillery. Since artillery systems have ranges well beyond the line of site, (the Russian MSTA-C self-propelled howitzer has a range of 29-36 km), they rely on forward observers to find targets and correct fire. The use of UAVs for this purpose is an important capability for an artillery-centric way of fighting (for more information see: "Ground Forces Integrate UAVs into Artillery Reconnaissance Units" <http://fms0.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201409/201409.pdf>).*

On 7 July 2015 the TASS news service published the accompanying article about the training of officers in the use of the Orlan-10 UAV for artillery spotting purposes. The following day blogger "lopatov_45" posted his theory of how artillery spotting can be conducted with UAVs, and observed the Orlan-10 is only capable of conducting the first two methods of artillery spotting, as described in the accompanying graphic. Despite the lamentations of "lopatov_45," who is apparently one of the few individuals who has a good knowledge of both the modern battlefield and mathematics, the Orlan-10's inability to conduct the 3rd and 4th methods of UAV targeting may not be as troubling as thought. Although less desirable than some other methods, the capability to affix a target's location by relative terrain feature (method 1) is sufficient for many Russian artillery purposes, as Russian artillery batteries and battalions have several area bombardment missions that make precise target information useful, but unnecessary. In addition, the Russian Federation has a strong cartographic tradition. Undoubtedly, any Russian serviceman referencing terrain features for targeting purposes would have access to high-quality, large-scale digital maps of most places within the former Soviet Union. Although current UAV artillery spotting capabilities may be adequate for current purposes, these capabilities are very likely to continue to develop. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Shoulder Patch of The Directorate for Construction and Development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles of the Russian General Staff Source: <http://www.heraldicum.ru/russia/army/army03.htm>

Source: "Officers of Western Military District Adjusts Fire with Help of the Orlan-10 in 3D," TASS Online, 7 July 2015, <<http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/2099301>>, accessed 14 July 2015.

Officers of Western Military District Adjusts Fire with Help of the Orlan-10 in 3D

The commanders of artillery divisions of military units (войсковая часть) and formations of the Western Military District started their studies on the command and control of artillery subunits (подразделение) at the 333rd Combat Training Center in the village of Mulino, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, as was announced by Colonel Oleg Kochetkov, Press Service Chief of the Western Military District.

"During the bilateral battalion tactical exercises, commanders will work with Orlan-10 UAV subunits (подразделение) in combined arms combat in both the attack and defense." The Orlan-10 conducts aerial surveillance at a distance of 10 km, providing data to officers which facilitate timely and accurate adjustment to fires...

Source: Blog post from lopatov_45, "The Orlan-10 and Artillery, Let's Ponder How They Work Together..." Livejournal.com, 8 July 2015, <<http://lopatov-45.livejournal.com/30166.html>>, accessed 15 July 2015.

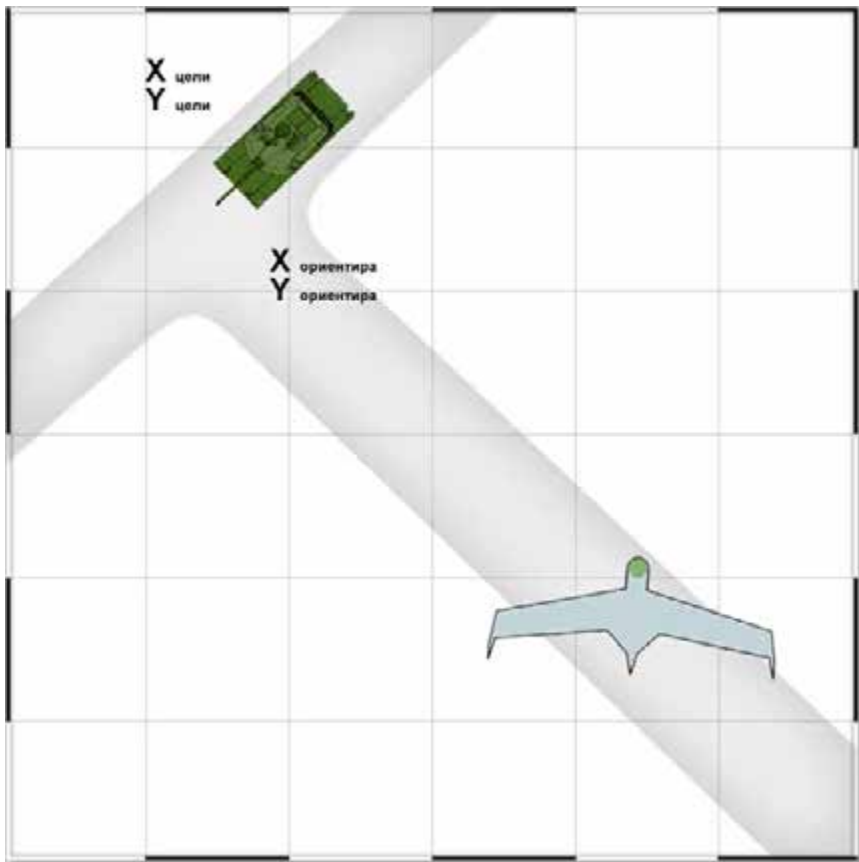
The Orlan-10 and Artillery, Let's Ponder How They Work Together...

...And now we turn to the article from ITAR-TASS. What methods for targeting [see accompanying graphic] are available Orlan-10? This UAV is only capable of conducting the first and the second methods. The Orlan-10 is not fully capable of supporting fire control for artillery units. And that's too bad...So what are they training these commanders and chiefs to do at these events?...

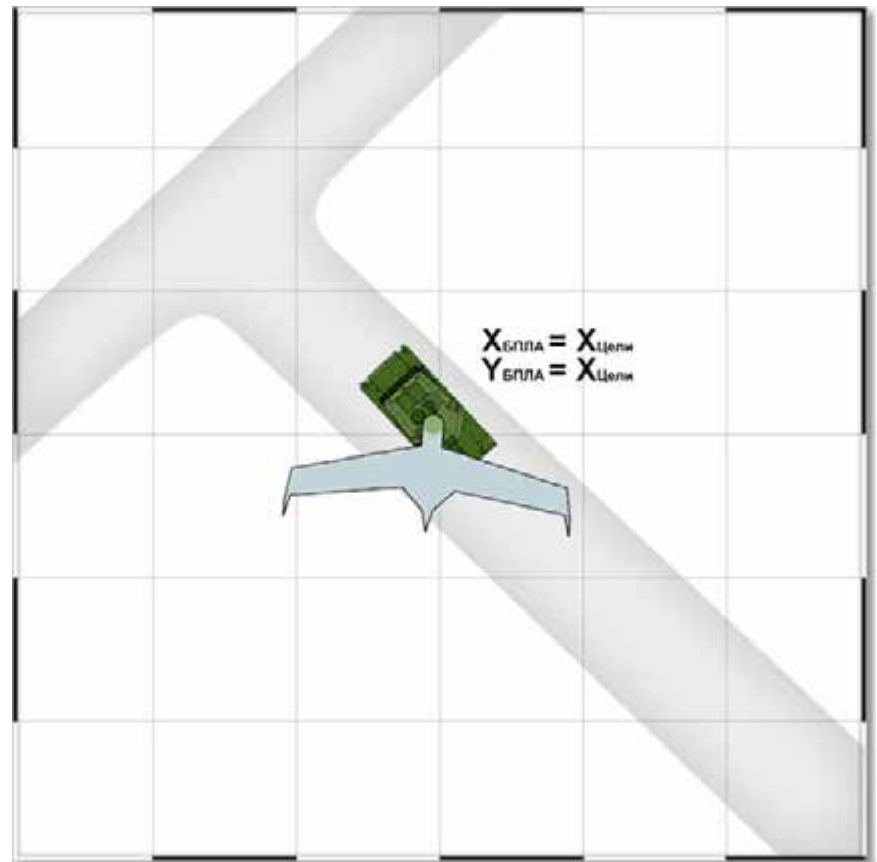
БПЛА Орлан-10 (Orlan-10 UAV) Source: <http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/500>



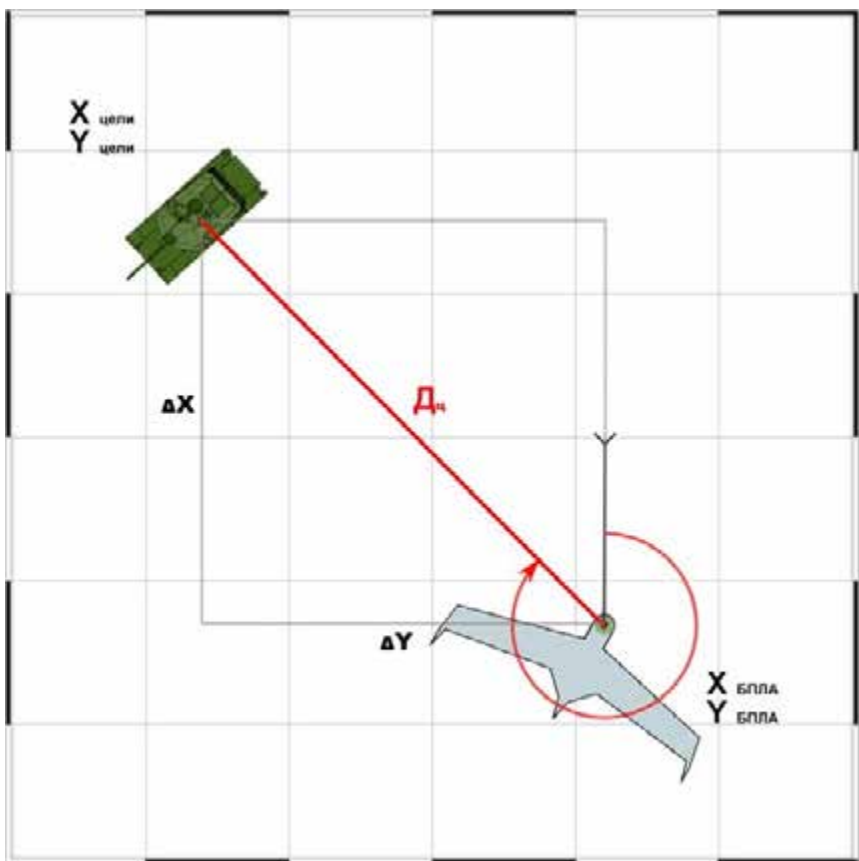
Continued: The Orlan-10 and Artillery, Let's Ponder How They Work Together...



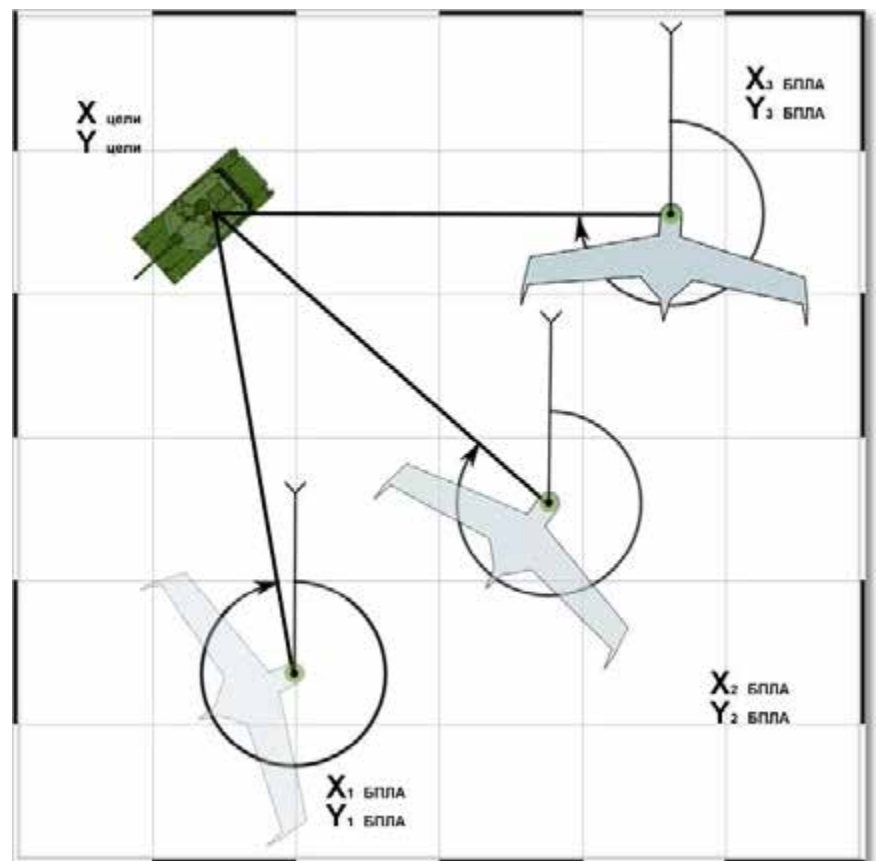
1st Method- Use of a reference point. This method can be used if the coordinates of a given reference point (landmark or intersection) are known. The disadvantage of this system is that the coordinates of the reference point must be known with certainty, requiring detailed maps and/or GIS data. In addition, target accuracy diminishes the farther the target is from the reference point. Conclusion: This method works, but is the least suitable for artillery spotting.



2nd Method- Fly above the target. The UAV flies above the target and its position is recorded. Target accuracy depends on the accuracy of the UAV's navigation system. The disadvantage of this method is that it requires flying over the target, meaning that only a limited number of targets may be acquired and that the UAV is extremely susceptible to enemy fire. Conclusion: This method works, but is most suitable for less organized adversaries, such as insurgents.



3rd Method- Use of range finder. Requires a gyro stabilized electro-optical system with a laser rangefinder. The coordinates of the target are calculated using basic trigonometry. The accuracy depends on the accuracy of the UAV's navigation system and rangefinder. This method provides good accuracy and the capability to acquire many targets, sufficient for several batteries or battalions. The disadvantage of this method is the use of an active sensor (the laser) which can be easily detected by modern military equipment. Conclusion: This method is very effective, but requires a sophisticated UAV and would be more susceptible to enemy fire.



4th Method- Use of multiple azimuths. The UAV takes several azimuths on a given target, while in flight. Trigonometry is then used to calculate the position of the target. This method provides good accuracy and the capability to acquire many targets. This method requires a sophisticated UAV, but is completely passive, an advantage that can significantly increase the UAV's life expectancy above the modern battlefield. Conclusion: this is preferred method for UAV artillery spotting.

Implications of Georgia's Cooperation with Russia and Iran in Fight against ISIS

1 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 July 2015 Kavpolit.com (Caucasus Politics) published an article by Vasiliy Papava, an independent Georgian journalist, according to the publication. He argues that Tbilisi should deepen cooperation with Russia and Iran in light of the growing ISIS threat in the Caucasus. While the broader Caucasus region receives significant attention when it comes to ISIS, Georgia, in particular, rarely gets mentioned, which makes Papava's article interesting.

Traditional reports about ISIS in the Caucasus discuss young fighters from the region leaving their countries to join the ISIS cause in the Middle East. Yet more recent reports indicate that ISIS has come to the Caucasus region itself. Indeed, according to press reports, in December 2014 the radical Sunni Caucasus Emirate's Dagestan network openly pledged loyalty to the Islamic State. Other radical regional groups had done the same. The most recent development, mentioned also in the excerpt and other press reports, is that ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani announced the creation of a new administrative unit in the North Caucasus.

According to Papava, Tbilisi responded quickly to al-Adnani's statement, and the response came from the highest government security officials. In Papava's view this speaks to the seriousness with which the Georgian government is taking the ISIS threat domestically. He adds that Western officials also had urged the Georgian government in the past to pay attention to this threat. He concludes that Georgia should deepen cooperation with Russia and Iran, even as it maintains ties to the West. He feels Russia and Iran have experience in countering the Islamic State in the region and appears to regret that Georgia and Iran, in particular, have virtually no cooperation in the military sphere.

To add additional context about Georgia, during Mikheil Saakashvili's two presidential terms between 2004-2013, Georgia took a decidedly pro-Western orientation and became the West's closest ally in the South Caucasus, while undergoing a number of pro-democratic domestic economic and political reforms. However, current Georgian president Giorgi Margvelashvili has advocated a more balanced regional approach, particularly when it comes to Georgia's relations with Russia. It is not surprising, then, that more articles are appearing in the Russian-language regional press about increasing cooperation with Russia.

To be sure, the Kremlin has experience fighting radical Islamist insurgencies in the Caucasus, but its record of success is mixed at best. Indeed, the initial struggle in the North Caucasus, which began with Chechnya's two wars of independence following the breakup of the Soviet Union, started as a secular movement and grew increasingly radical, at least in part due to Russia's heavy-handed policies. More recent reports indicate that the Kremlin continues to struggle with radical Islam, as the insurgents are increasingly successful at recruiting ethnic Russians to their cause while the Kremlin continues to rely on old methods.

As for cooperation with Iran on ISIS, many analysts point out that such a path would simply swap one form of terrorism for another, as Iran engages in sponsoring multiple terrorist activities worldwide and is competing for regional hegemony. This raises further questions about Papava's suggestion for Georgia to cooperate with Russia and Iran. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Vasiliy Papava, "Грузия: террористическая мотивация на сближение" (Georgia: Terrorist Motivation for rapprochement), Kavpolit.com, 1 July 2015. http://kavpolit.com/articles/terroristicheskaja_motivatsija_na_sblizhenie-17945/

The subject of ISIS in the Caucasus has gained new momentum. If until recently, it was viewed through the prism of participation of hundreds of young people from the Caucasus in military action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, today a new picture has formed, as ISIS has already come to the Caucasus.

A week ago, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani announced the creation of a new administrative unit - wilayet – in the North Caucasus. Abu Mohammad al-Kadari was appointed leader of the ISIS branch in the region. Note that the different groups of the North Caucasus Islamist underground had already begun to declare their oath to the "Islamic state" at the end of 2014.

After Dagestan, the underground in Kabardino-Balkaria followed, and then Ingushetia...

ISIS decision to set up its representation in the Caucasus is not accidental. Firstly, in the ISIS ranks, hundreds from the North Caucasus are fighting in the ISIS ranks, war hardened fighters with years of practice sabotage and guerrilla activities against Russia's troops. Their experience, as experience shows, is being implemented very effectively in Syria against the government army.

Secondly, the Caucasus opens up new opportunities for ISIS since in this region there are many unresolved ethno-religious issues, which may become fertile ground for realizing "Islamic State's" ideas.

In response to Al-Adnani's statement about the establishment of ISIS branch in the Caucasus, there was an immediate reaction from Tbilisi. It is symptomatic that the statements made about this came from the country's highest ranks of law enforcement agencies, which is a testament to a decisive and firm position of the Georgian authorities to prevent in Georgia's territory any activities that pose a threat to its security.

Georgian Chief of Staff, Major-General Vakhtang Kapanadze announced at a joint press conference with Deputy Supreme Commander of the European forces, NATO General Adrian Bradshaw said that ISIS' establishment of a branch in the Caucasus presents a threat.

... Georgia's Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli advised Russia to look into ISIS threats in the North Caucasus, rather than to wage a war against its neighbors ...

It should be noted foreign politicians also had urged Georgia's authorities to pay closer attention to ISIS' activities in the Caucasus...

... While it should maintain partnerships with Western countries, Georgia should deepen cooperation with the regional states that have considerable experience in resisting terrorist groups: primarily Russia and Iran. Iran is carrying out a relentless struggle against radical terrorist organizations in the Middle East by supporting the governments of Iraq and Syria.

Today's reality is such that between Georgia and Iran there is virtually no cooperation in the military sphere, and that, given Tbilisi's pro-Western foreign policy vector is not surprising.

Only contacts through the Internal Affairs Ministry between the two countries (exchange of information, fight against drug and human trafficking, etc.) are being kept and maintained. In the event of increased ISIS activity in the Caucasus, all Transcaucasian countries and regional powers who themselves have no known ties to the "Islamic state" could play a role in countering it.

Anti-Government Protests Grip Armenia

1 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Thousands of Armenian citizens took to the streets in June when the Armenian government raised the cost of electricity provided by a Russia-owned electricity company. The largest protests broke out in Yerevan, with smaller demonstrations in other cities throughout the country, including Gyumri (the second largest city in Armenia), Vanadzor, Spitak, and others. Notably, many of the protestors are from among the country's youth. While the protests have been largely peaceful, the government had used riot police to disperse the demonstrators, including, according to some reports, using water blasts and arresting at least 200 protestors.*

*For Armenia, a country of approximately 3 million, where demonstrations tend to be relatively small in scale, these protests are worth noting. That so many participants are young is also significant, as Armenia's youth tend to be more relatively pro-Western than the older generation. Indeed, the press in Russia characterized these protests as another Maidan—mass protests in Ukraine, sparked last year on Kiev's Maidan (Independence) Square, in response to the Ukrainian government's decision to abruptly change a pro-Western foreign policy course and move closer to Russia instead; the youth played a significant role there too. The Russian government officially described these protests as driven externally by the West, rather than a grassroots domestic movement. The accompanying excerpt from **Polit.ru** tellingly titles the article “This is Not Maidan, This is Bagramyan,” referring to Bagramyan Street in Yerevan, where the protests broke out. This street leads to the presidential administration building. The title implies that Armenia's protests have nothing to do with any possible external Western influence.*

*While the immediate cause of Armenia's protests is the electricity rate hike, they signify a deeper discontent among the population, particularly the youth, with its government, which took a decidedly pro-Russian orientation by joining the Russian-led Customs Union last year. The excerpt from **Polit.ru** alludes to this by pointing out that the Armenian citizens' larger grievance is with their government's corruption and lack of accountability. Western reports about these protests made this point more directly.*

*Armenia's participation in the Customs Union and a broader shift towards Russia and away from Europe have been a persistent theme in the Russian-language press in the Caucasus for well over a year now, particularly in the context where Russia had already owned most of the country's most crucial infrastructure and remained, at least from Yerevan's perspective, Armenia's closest ally in the South Caucasus and the only guarantor of Armenia's security. Another persistent theme has been the underlying tension between Armenia and Russia, despite the governments officially moving closer together. The electricity protests show that these tensions are reaching new levels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Source: Илья Карпуук, “Это не Майдан, это Баграмян” (“This is not Maidan, This is Bagramyan”), Polit.ru, 29 June 2015. <http://polit.ru/article/2015/06/29/armenia/>

...Spontaneous rallies began in Yerevan after on June 17, the Commission on Regulation of Public Services of Armenia (PSRC) had decided to grant the request of the local monopoly “Electric Networks of Armenia” (ENA) to increase electricity price by 17% (6.93 drama per kWh, about 80 kopeks) as of August 1. Now, 1 kWh of electricity will cost 48.78 drams, 5 rubles 65 kopecks in more familiar terms. In Russia electricity costs less, which is particularly upsetting to Armenians – ENA is owned by the “Inter RAO” company, and the majority of its shares belong to the Russian federal government, through certain structures.

It is unlikely that many people in Yerevan understand who actually controls the “Inter RAO.” In Armenia, the people are simply well aware that Russia bought the local power supply, as well as the railways.

The protestors, however, rightly fault not the Russian government, but their own: it was, after all, the PUC members, appointed by the president based on the Prime Minister's recommendation, who approved the decision to raise costs...



Source: “Sasuntsi Davit Metro” Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SasuntsiDavitMetro.JPG#/media/File:SasuntsiDavitMetro.JPG>

Russian Perspectives on Increased Military Cooperation with Bahrain

29 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In June 2015

Russia's and Bahrain's governments announced intentions to expand military cooperation.

The accompanying excerpt from **Centrasia.ru** reports on this and provides opinions from Russian military and policy experts, as well as additional background.

While opportunities for Russia in the Gulf should not be overestimated, according to the author, the trajectory of Russia's relations with countries in the region is still towards improving relations. Russian experts cited in the excerpt disagree on the significance of increased cooperation between Russia and Bahrain: some feel trade with Bahrain will not be enough to make a significant impact, while others feel that gross dollar amounts are irrelevant. What matters is that Bahrain, a wealthy country that can afford the best, chose Russia as a weapons supplier. "That is, it is now possible to consider Bahrain as a kind of showcase of [Russia's] military and technical capabilities," said one expert.

To put these issues into further context, Bahrain became the first in 2014 to purchase the Kornet-EM antitank guided weapon (ATGW) system from Russia. Three years prior to this, Russia's defense industry agreed, for the first time, to sell tens of millions of dollars' worth of weapons to Bahrain, primarily AK-103 grenade launchers and ammunition. As the excerpt notes, this happened when France and the UK imposed sanctions on Bahrain for a crackdown against anti-government demonstrations and protestors. This context reveals a typical pattern in relations between Russia, the Middle East, and the West: Middle Eastern countries tend to vacillate between Russia and the West, depending on how they feel they are treated by either side. Indeed, the excerpt cites one Russian expert who says, "The Arabs have always behaved in a multi-vector fashion and are used to reserving the right to maneuver." The author points to another related issue: the possibility of lifting sanctions against Iran. Should that happen, according to the author, "why shouldn't Bahrain play a military-political game by inviting Russia to cooperate? This will send a certain signal not only to Iran but also to Riyadh and Washington." **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Anton Madrasov, "Российское оружие для Персидского залива, - А.Мардасов" ("Russian Weapons for the Persian Gulf—A. Madrasov"), Polit.ru, 29 June 2015. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1434092940>

Bahrain is ready to expand military-technical cooperation with Russia. Russian Ambassador to Bahrain Vagif Garayev said this in a on June 11 interview with RIA Novosti ...

In addition, the diplomat noted, that earlier this year, Russia's Air Force Colonel-General Viktor Bondarev visited Bahrain upon Bahrain's Air Force leadership's invitation, and then the Prime Minister of Bahrain Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa stressed that "the Kingdom wishes to speed up cooperation with Russia on a bilateral level and along the lines of the Persian Gulf countries. "

It is noteworthy that in 2014, Bahrain became the first to place an order for Russian antitank guided weapon system "Kornet-AM." And earlier, in 2011, our defense industry has entered Bahrain's arms market with a contract to supply AK-103 grenade launchers and ammunition (the cost is estimated at tens of millions of dollars). This happened after France and Britain have imposed sanctions on the Kingdom for repression of the opposition...

What makes Bahrain, a Persian Gulf country, which in military terms completely follows in the wake of the US, to turn to Russia and develop military-technical cooperation in the current complicated geopolitical situation?

Chief editor of the publication "Fatherland's Arsenal," reserve colonel Viktor Murakhovski notes: even if Bahrain's armed forces were to fully transition to Russian weapons, of which of course, there is no discussion, these would still be modest in scale purchases...

Senior lecturer at the Political Science Department at the Science School of Economics, Arabist Leonid Isaev, believes that the volume of Bahrain's weapons orders, in principle, cannot be large, so neither the US nor Britain pay attention to this...

However, the first vice-president of the Academy of Geopolitical Issues Vladimir Anokhin believes that the development of cooperation with Bahrain with Russia can positively affect the future purchases of Russian weapons by countries neighboring the Kingdom.

- [said Anokhin]: The Arabs have always behaved in a multi-vector fashion and are used to reserving the right to maneuver. In addition, the Persian monarchy has lot of money so they can afford to choose the best. And the fact that they buy our small, portable anti-tank weapons, testifies to their quality. That is, it is now possible to consider Bahrain as a kind of showcase of our military and technical capabilities ...

It is clear that Bahrain historically maintains strong ties with the Saudis, Americans and Europeans, however, a turn in Russia's direction - it's still a trajectory towards developing our relations somewhat. So, we will have some opportunities in the region, although, frankly, not very significant ones...

In addition, Bahrain and other Arab countries are well aware that Iran, when all sanctions against it are lifted, will have greater chances to arriving at a completely different level. Although Iran is the leading military and political power even today, influencing all developments in the region... And why shouldn't Bahrain play a military-political game by inviting Russia to cooperate? This will send a certain signal not only to Iran but also to Riyadh and Washington...

Russia and the ISIL Threat

24 June 2015

“That is, nearly 20 percent of ISIL militants are CIS citizens connected in one way or another to Russia. And who clearly will sooner or later return to their historical homeland.”

OE Watch Commentary: *With its significant Islamic population, some Russian experts are growing increasingly concerned with the threat posed by the proximity and allure of the Islamic State (ISIL). To date, Kremlin authorities have been quite successful in assimilating those who subscribe to the Muslim faith into the larger Russian body politic. ISIL's radical message, however, posits that there can be no accommodation with those who do not share its strict interpretation of the Koran.*

Those who adhere to the Muslim faith make up approximately 12% of the total Russian population, though many are concentrated within key southern regions, particularly within the volatile North Caucasus. This region's relatively high levels of unemployment and past grievances with the Kremlin, combined with endemic corruption, have made ISIL's message of achieving social justice via violence an attractive option.

According to the first brief excerpt, approximately 1700 Russian citizens have joined the ranks of the Islamic State. These are joined by about 4,000 citizens from the post-Soviet Central Asian countries, making up nearly 20 percent of ISIL militants. The article darkly warns that these militants “will sooner or later return to their historical homeland.” The excerpt suggests that ISIL's propaganda, particularly those resources disseminated via the Internet, appear to be finding an attentive audience within Russia. The article recounts a recent incident where a young, female Russian college student with no apparent radical ties was induced to try and join the ISIL cause.

This excerpt points out that Russia lacks specialists in radical Islam and that the Russian special services must collaborate more closely with their
(continued)

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Как остановить наступление исламистов” [How To Halt Islamists' Offensive], Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 18 June 2015.
http://www.ng.ru/world/2015-06-18/3_kartblansh.html

At a session of the National Antiterrorist Committee (NAK), Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Aleksandr Bortnikov stated that over 200 Volga district inhabitants are currently taking part in the fighting in Syria and Iraq on the side of the “Islamic State” [ISIL]. . . . Although it must be admitted that so far ISIL recruiters are operating effectively throughout Russia and the near abroad. According to the FSB's official figures, a total of at least 1,700 Russian citizens are fighting in Iraq and Syria on ISIL's side. And according to the information of the International Crisis Group, there are also about 4,000 citizens from the post-Soviet Central Asian countries -- Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan -- operating there. That is a not inconsiderable force if you consider that according to CIA estimates, the ISIL military grouping numbers about 30,000. That is, nearly 20 percent of ISIL militants are CIS citizens connected in one way or another to Russia. And who clearly will sooner or later return to their historical homeland.

The events of recent months show that ISIL's ideas are taking possession of the minds not only of the Muslim population but also of representatives of other peoples. And the example of MGU [Moscow State University] student Varvara Karaulova, who left to join ISIL's ranks, is, unfortunately, not an isolated one. An analysis of open-source information on Iraq and Syria allows us to conclude that the volunteers from Russia and other CIS countries joining ISIL's ranks had no material motivation and were prepared to give their lives (and often do give their lives) for a world Islamic caliphate.

...That is enough to hold on to the territories it has seized and to maintain not only the militants but also their families. And also to organize and conduct information and ideology campaigns throughout the world, including the Russian Federation.

It becomes clear why the propaganda work of the preachers of radical Islam is now producing results. But here's the question: To what extent are our Russian society and special services prepared to counter this process?

The figures in the statistics from the reports of the NAK for the fight against terrorism and the radical militants who have been detained and taken out would seem impressive. But society and the media know of only isolated cases of the detention of ISIL recruiters. And these special ideological fighters of radical Islam are secretly and openly taking possession of the minds of thousands of Russians. Experts note ISIL's substantial propaganda resources disseminated via the Internet. . . . Yevgeniy Satanovskiy, president of the Middle East Institute, observes with regret that “it is not only in higher education establishments but also in the Internal Affairs Ministry that we lack specialists in radical Islam, and it is worth thinking about that.” And Viktor Mikhaylov, an expert from Uzbekistan and leader of the Antiterroristtoday.com news website, is convinced that there are several underground centers on Russian Federation territory for recruitment for jihad (jamaats) including the “Islamic Movement of Turkestan,” which is working very actively with labor immigrants. And of course these centers extend their influence not only to immigrants but also to Russian citizens. Mikhaylov believes that the Russian special services must collaborate more closely with their counterparts from the Central Asian countries in order to counter this.

It is already clear that it is not by strong-arm measures alone that we will succeed in combating Islamists and the disseminators of ISIL's ideas. We need a package of measures aimed at reinforcing the role of the family in educating young people, the propaganda of a healthy way of life, and the formation of genuine universal human and cultural values in Russian society. A program for supporting the ideas of traditional Islam and Muslim preachers in the Russian Federation should be created. Schools and higher education establishments should set up explanatory work regarding the true aims of ISIL and other terrorist Islamic organizations. In the North Caucasus, where there is a substantial level of unemployment among young people, it is essential to create new jobs and to form various programs for supporting healthy youth creativity and so forth.

Continued: Russia and the ISIL Threat

counterparts from the Central Asian countries in order to counter this threat. The article concludes by listing possible prophylactic measures (e.g., education, promotion of positive values, increased employment opportunities for youth, etc.) that would discourage young people from falling victim to the appeal of ISIL.

The second excerpt, from Russian Middle East expert Georgiy Mirskiy, points out that instead of focusing on the growing radical Islamist threat, Kremlin “propaganda, has been working overtime, fanning hatred against America.” This propaganda aligns well with Kremlin objectives vis-à-vis Ukraine and also helps to temper any domestic protest. He points out the recent statement of Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev, where he again repeated “the long-discredited rumor that originated from an FSB operation to ‘scan the subconscious’ of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, which discovered that the US wants to steal Russian natural resources Siberia.” Mirskiy fears that that instead of focusing on the threat which ISIL poses, the Russian leadership may have started believing its own propaganda about the nefarious designs of the West.

Yet there is no question that the Kremlin propaganda has been effective domestically. Recent polls indicate that more than 80% of the Russian population now regards the US as their country’s primary threat. Given the genuine threat which ISIL now presents to both Russia and its Islamic population, Mirskiy suggests that the Kremlin may need to alter its messaging.
End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

Source: Georgiy Mirskiy, “Присяга ИГИЛ и мысли Олбрайт” [Oaths to ISIL and the Thoughts of Albright], Echo of Moscow blog, 24 June 2015. http://echo.msk.ru/blog/georgiy_mirsky/1573028-echo/

...And our official propaganda, working overtime, fanning hatred against America, does nothing to explain to people the major difference between the great religion which perhaps, almost a fifth of Russia’s population profess - and the monstrous excrescence, the cancer of jihadism....

Instead of this, we have the Secretary of the Security Council talking about the long-discredited rumor that originated from an FSB operation to “scan the subconscious,” of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, which discovered that the US wants to steal Russian natural resources Siberia. What can you say? Unwillingly, however, the thought arises, what if the president himself begins to partially believe in such nonsense? Can Putin really believe that the US “doesn’t want Russia to exist?” Our television screams this message- and the Kremlin seems to believe it is useful for tactical reasons in the confrontation with the West on the Ukrainian question....

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://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Finch-Shoygu.pdf>



Sensitive Discussions at Army 2015

8 July 2015

“One gets the impression that the organizers who prepared the Forum “Army 2015” had not quite decided on the target audience for this large-scale event.”

OE Watch Commentary: Patriotic fervor remains at record high levels in Russia. To help maintain this high level of patriotism, Kremlin officials recently commissioned the construction of a new Patriot Park (located on the outskirts of Moscow), where people can experience Russia’s military power year-round. A combination exhibition center and museum, visitors (and prospective customers) will be able to examine Russia’s modern armaments and military exploits from the past. The park celebrated its grand opening in June, and to commemorate the event the Ministry of Defense hosted a 3-day event, “Armiya 2015” [Army 2015].

Besides the military equipment displays and live-fire demonstrations, Armiya 2015 also hosted an extensive series of roundtable discussions on a wide variety of security topics. Russian defense expert Konstantin Sivkov, the author of the accompanying excerpt, expresses his concern over mixing defense exhibitions with what he considers to be sensitive security discussions. Sivkov points out that international visitors had the opportunity to listen to Russian defense experts discuss everything from “Threats, Critically Important to the Security of Russia” to “Opposing Soft Power and Color Revolutions.” There were also more technical discussions, which covered topics like: “Key Technologies for Military Robotics” or “Breakthrough Technologies in the Production of Missile Weapons.”

Sivkov maintains that “many of these topics are not suitable for open discussion”
(continued)

Source: Konstantin Sivkov, “Техническую и научную площадки форума лучше разделить” [Better to Separate Technical and Scientific Platforms], Voennoye Promishlennoye Kurier, 8 July 2015. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/25980>

Better to Separate Technical and Scientific Platforms

One gets the impression that the organizers who prepared the Forum “Army 2015” had not quite decided on the target audience for this large-scale event. ... The most interesting thing is that this forum joined exhibition, military and scientific components. Subjects which, strictly speaking, have little in common.

80 roundtable discussions were held at the international military-technical forum “Army-2015” various subjects: nine - on the first day, 29 - second, 27 - in the third and 15 - in the

fourth and final. That is, it was extremely serious and large-scale military-scientific event. Topics of discussion covered all spheres of life of our Armed Forces, defense industry and their interaction with civil society, business and governments.

I had a chance to take part in five “round tables” for all four days of the forum in Kubinka: “Threats, Critically Important to the Security of Russia,” “Opposing Soft Power and Color Revolutions,” “The Army of the future. A look beyond the horizon,” Destabilizing the global order and

European missile defense,” and finally, “Army and Society.” Foreign representatives were not invited to participate in these roundtables.....

Moreover, many of the topics are not suitable for open discussion. Here are some sample of the “round tables”, in addition to those already named: “Key Technologies for Military Robotics,” “Breakthrough Technologies in the Production of Missile Weapons,” “Optimization of Orbital Constellation,” “Armored Weapons and Equipment: State and Development Prospects,” “Management of Airborne Rapid Reaction Forces...”.

It seems that the foreigners were invited to listen to details about our system of military security and related issues, ways and means of solving. But the information of the guests of foreign armed forces and their defense industry were not provided at all. A strange arrangement. One wonders: what to talk about on these “round tables”? After all, if one talks about real problems and ways to solve them, one might be disclosing state and military secrets - almost all the subjects covered by the relevant articles of the law. If you discuss the private opinions of the expert community, given the statements of professional soldiers and employees of defense enterprises, this will also give very interesting information to foreign visitors...

(continued)



Vladimir Putin at the opening ceremony of international military-technical forum «Army-2015» 16 June.
Source: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49710/photos>

Continued: Sensitive Discussions at Army 2015

and worries that “the statements of professional soldiers and employees of defense enterprises will also give very interesting information to foreign visitors.” He points out that the format of the discussions was all centered upon Russian perspectives and developments and that there was no opportunity for foreign visitors to share their insights. While praising the Kremlin leadership for the creation of this patriotic park, Sivkov concludes by claiming that combining such scientific roundtables with weapon exhibitions is inappropriate and that “such events become solely a platform for foreign military intelligence.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

...So why the forum was held? If the purpose was to show the power of our Armed Forces to foreign representatives, then why also include a broad military-scientific component?...

...Nevertheless, the forum “Army-2015” was held at the highest organizational level. Undoubtedly, he was instrumental in raising the profile of our Armed Forces. This played a role unique discovery - all military equipment was in service with the Russian Army was fully available for inspection....

...Such activities can and should become a good tradition of our Defense Ministry.

However, it must take into account both positive and negative aspects of the first experiment. ...Combining exhibitions and promotional activities and military-scientific discussions is impractical. In international events of military-scientific nature, a key objective should be a sharing of information with foreign partners, which allows us to obtain insights from them on issues of concern. This allows you to compare approaches, seek common ground, or at least identify the sources of conflict.... Otherwise, such an event becomes solely a platform for open-source foreign military intelligence....

Patriotic Investments Paying Off

10 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The prestige and appeal of military service in Russia continue to improve. Twenty years ago the popular image of the Russian soldier was the poorly uniformed, hungry conscript, often a victim of neglect or violence. This negative image has largely been replaced by the well fed and equipped Russian soldier who is proud to wear a uniform and who regards military service as a positive career choice. The accompanying excerpt from a recent article reviews recent poll data which reflects this improved perception and some of the reasons behind this progress.*

According to the excerpt, the overwhelming majority of Russian “respondents (86%) believe that in the event of an armed threat, their military could protect them.” More than half of those polled (59%) “believe that the military gives a person the chance to become a greater success, as a kind of social elevator.” While the poll results indicate that pride and respect toward those in uniform remains below 50%, over half (59%) of the respondents claimed that they would like to see their next of kin in the ranks of the military. The excerpt also describes the intense competition to gain admission into military academies and military departments within universities, where there are anywhere from three to thirty young Russians competing for a single billet.

The article describes some of the positive changes responsible for this transformation: “real improvement in the conditions of service and living conditions...modern military equipment and weapons...intensive combat training...” It also claims that greater “information transparency” within the military has helped to improve its image, as well as a greater presence of Russia’s Armed Forces within social media, where it has gained thousands of subscribers. The article concludes with describing how the military
(continued)

Source: Vadim Koval, “Каково доверие – таков и конкурс” [Such is Trust - So is the Competition], *Novoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 10 July 2015. http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-07-10/3_trust.html

Such is Trust - So is the Competition

Serving in the army now seems attractive as ever. Such were the results of a mid-June poll revealed by the experts of the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM).

The study showed that the number of those who would like to see their next of kin in the ranks of the military, rose to 59%, while in 2010 this figure was only 36%.... The vast majority of respondents (86%) believe that in the event of a military threat army could protect them.

Also, the survey results showed that there was a significant increase over the past year in the number of those who regard the armed forces with respect (from 34% to 40%) and pride (from 27% to 39%). And 59% of respondents believe that the military gives a person the chance to become a greater success, as a kind of social elevator.

A vivid confirmation of this sentiment is the greatly increased competition among applicants into the institutions of the military department at universities.... There are now from three to five people applying for positions associated with the scientific battalions.... Among the girls who dream of officers’ epaulettes, this figure comes to 30 people per position....

There is no doubt that such breakthroughs in changing society’s attitude towards the army and enhancing the prestige of military service was a direct consequence of the positive changes in the Russian Armed Forces. Starting from a real improvement in the conditions of service and living conditions of servicemen of all categories and ending with massive supplies to the troops of modern military equipment and weapons, and intensive combat training with
(continued)

Continued: Patriotic Investments Paying Off

has employed effective public relations, whether by sponsoring rock music festivals or the recent huge open-air display at the military-technical forum “Army 2015” in Kubinka near Moscow.

Predictably, the article contains no mention of the incessant and aggressive rhetoric which has become commonplace in the Kremlin-controlled media for the past couple of years. Russians have been inundated with bellicose propaganda which claims that the West (and the US in particular) is intent upon weakening their country. For instance, the current conflict in Ukraine has been portrayed by the Russian media as an attempt by the West/US to gain a foothold in Ukraine to better attack Russia. Faced with such a “threat,” it is not surprising that some young Russians feel compelled to help defend their country by joining the military.

*Over the past decade Russia’s political and military leadership has made a considerable investment in improving the image of those committed to defending the country’s interests. They have also worked overtime to create a narrative which claims that Russia is threatened by the West. Their efforts appear to be paying off, as a greater percentage of young Russians (and their families) regard military service in a positive light. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

the active use of the elements of competitiveness.

However, the dynamics of these positive changes would not be as obvious, if not backed up their information transparency of the military department in various fields of its activity, whether conducting unannounced inspections of troops or weekly conference calls with senior staff.

And along with the traditional sites of informing the public about the current life in the army and navy, there are new avenues of information. For example, just under a year ago, many military departments opened their accounts on a number of social networks, which in a short time gained thousands subscribers.

Recently, the armed forces, for the third consecutive year, participated in major national rock festival “Invasion”.... And the recent military-technical forum “Army 2015” in Kubinka near Moscow, visited by about 200 thousand, testifies to the great demand for user friendly displays to obtain information about today’s life of the Armed Forces...



Vladimir Putin at the opening ceremony of international military-technical forum «Army-2015».
Source: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49710/photos>

Arctic Refueling and Resupply while Underway May Get Easier

“The Zelenodolsk Construction and Design Bureau...has been directed to ‘create a multipurpose ship platform with an Ice Class hull to support the concept of an arctic ship built for the transport of fuel and dry cargo, transfer cargo and personnel, possibly using helicopter technology (including unmanned flying platforms) and to conduct life-saving operations.’”

OE Watch Commentary: Naval combat vessels cannot function for an extended period of time without ports or naval tenders to provide fuel, food and supplies. There are limited ports of call in the Arctic and Far East waters. Naval tenders need ice-class (heavily reinforced) hulls for service near floating ice. Russia has equipped the North Sea Fleet and its Icebreaker Fleet with nuclear-powered vessels to reduce the use of oil tankers in icy waters. Still, the entire North Sea Fleet is not nuclear and the fishing and commercial fleets are not. Providing fuel, food and emergency assistance at sea remains a major challenge in the Arctic. The ship is being designed for Arc4 conditions-open, floating first-year ice about 0.8 meters thick.

The Zelenodolsk Construction and Design Bureau has been in business since 1949 and is one of the leading naval designers in Russia. It was the first to use gas-turbine engines to propel ships and lately has designed a new patrol boat, gunship and rocket artillery ship. It has previously designed an icebreaker and medium tanker. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Aleksandr Vanin, Natsional'naya Oborona, July 2015, <http://oborona.ru/includes/periodics/navy/2015/0623/141916061/detail.shtml>

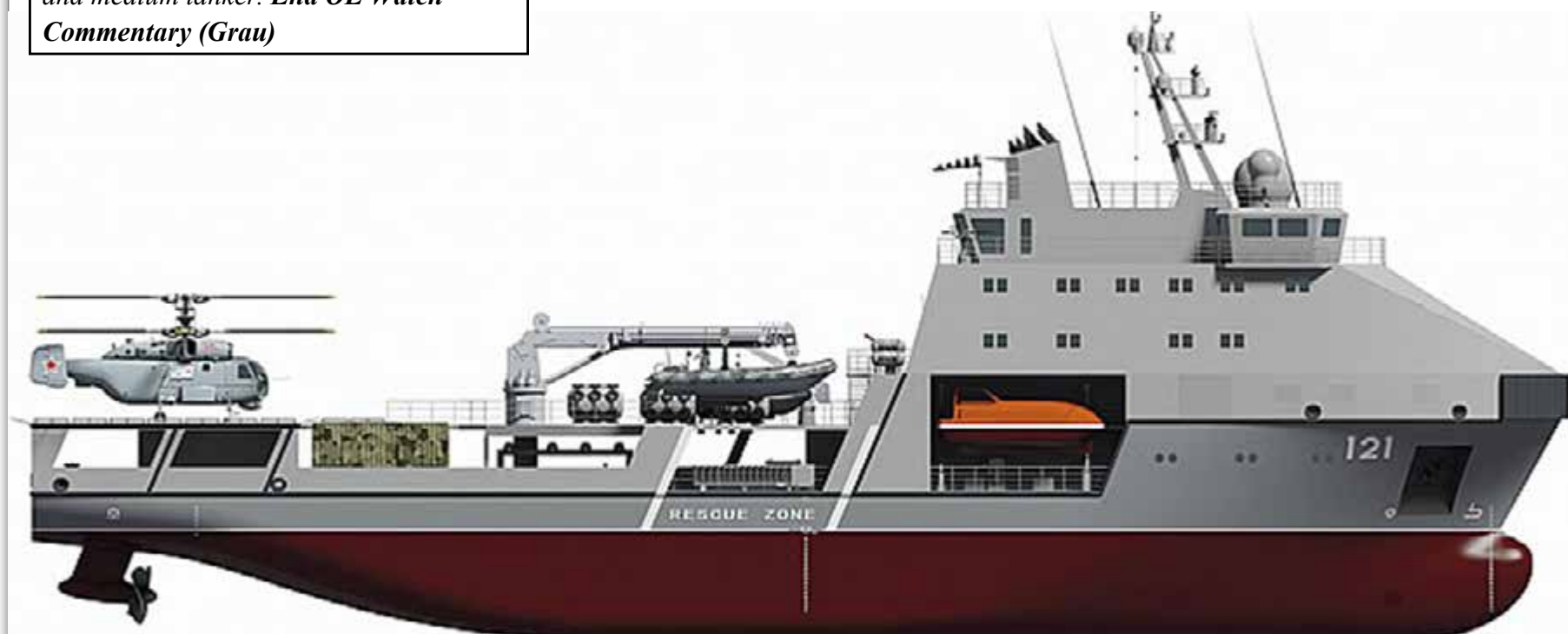
“The Arctic Platform-Multifunctional Tanker from the Zelenodol'skogo Construction and Design Bureau”

The bureau is directing its energies to the creation of a small oceanic tanker with an Ice Class hull Arc4 to support the Naval Fleet. The ship will take on, store, transport and deliver liquid cargo (diesel, fuel oil, aviation fuel, fresh water) for surface ships and submarines. It may provide ships with cargo in barrels, boxes and containers; collect dirty linen, sewage waste water, dry garbage and food waste. Tanker specifications are approximately 3500 tons, deadweight for shallow draft approximately five meters per 1560 tons, length about 75 meters, width about 15.4 meters, radius of action about 1500 nautical miles, 30 days independent operations. Crew of 24 with the possibility of accepting additional personnel if necessary.

This universal ship platform can serve not only as a tanker, but may also perform the following missions:

- provide patrolling and emergency life saving for sea lanes, fishing areas, and oil and gas platforms;
- provide search and rescue for ships in distress;
- provide technical support in hazardous navigation and fishing areas;
- provide service in transportation operations in ports;
- remove ships grounded on shoals and reefs, pump out water from flooded compartments, tow distressed ships and nautical equipment to safety, including those trapped in ice;
- serve as a fire-fighting vessel;
- supporting the Navy logistics plan, operate as a convoy vessel throughout its entire life cycle.

This ship may meet the demands of not only the Navy, but also those of the Coast Guard of the FSB [Russian Internal Security force-successor to the KGB], and also serve in the extraction of natural resources in the Arctic by conducting resupply and providing safety as an extraction platform.



Medical Support for Arctic Combat

1 July 2015

“Medical training conferences for senior Naval medical officers are traditionally held twice annually in May and November in Saint Petersburg. On this occasion for the first time the conference did not take place in the city on the Neva River, but in Northern Fleet garrisons under the supervision of Doctor of Medical Sciences Colonel Igor Mosyagin, Chief of the Naval Medical Service Command.”

OE Watch Commentary: Arctic medicine is not an over-subscribed field of study, but with the Russian expansion into the Arctic regions, the demand for Russian physicians trained in the field and general medical support is growing. It is now a matter of concern for senior Naval medical personnel. New equipment is being developed and fielded and more medical personnel are getting a first-hand look at the Arctic region.

The doctors were particularly interested in one item of the new equipment slated for Arctic duty—the Ratnik [warrior] personal survival and equipment-carrying system. The March 2015 OE Watch discussed the new “Ratnik” system of individual load bearing equipment for the Russian combat soldier. Ratnik doubles the armor protection while reducing the weight (from 34 to 24 kilograms -75 pounds to 53 pounds) of the present Russian system. The new combat gear integrates protection, firepower, life support, communications, night vision and the necessary energy to run it. Ratnik has been subjected to Arctic testing and, not surprisingly, is still a bit bulky. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Olga Vorobyeva, Krasnaya Zvezda Online, <http://www.redstar.ru>, 1 July 2015

“Ratnik Undergoes Testing in Arctic”

About 100 military medical specialists visited Severomorsk, Gadzhiyev, Polaryarnyy, and Safonov. Their discussions centered on issues involved in the medical support of ships and coastal units faced with missions in the Arctic zone. Addressing conference participants, Northern Fleet Commander Admiral Vladimir Korolev stressed how relevant this is under modern conditions.

“The preservation of the life and health of personnel largely depends on the correct organization of procedures by medical personnel and the supply of medicines and modern medical equipment in the field,” the fleet commander said.

Colonel of Medical Service Vasiliy Gavrilov, Chief of the Northern Fleet Medical Service, gave a report that certainly caught everyone’s attention, since it was about the prospects of development in the Arctic and the organization of medical services on the Arctic islands and onboard the new fourth-generation Borey submarine cruisers in service with the Northern Fleet.

Representatives of the Institute of Engineering Physics introduced advanced life support systems designed for personnel in the Arctic. This equipment has already passed army acceptance tests and now the issues concerning its supply to the units is now being addressed.

Colonel of Medical Service Nikolay Burtsev, head of the Preventive Medical Department of the Northern Fleet Medical Service, stated “Unique suits made of special thermal fiber are very promising equipment for Arctic conditions because they dramatically enhance human capabilities. We were all very impressed with what we saw.”

One of the systems introduced was designed for life support of seriously-ill patients during evacuation to emergency medical centers. It includes a heating system for warming intravenous fluids in a low-temperature environment and an electrically-heated evacuation bag.

Another life support system demonstrated was a heating kit for diving gear and dry land equipment, which enables people to spend a long time in a low-temperature environment.

Comment by Vyacheslav Ganapolskiy, head of the scientific research department of the Military Medical Academy named for S. M. Kirov :

“Military doctors are successfully testing the Arctic variant of the Russian Ratnik ‘Soldier of the Future’ kit. One of the stages of research was conducted in a unique Tabay system which makes it possible to simulate any climate on Earth: temperatures from minus 70 to plus 100 degrees Celsius [-94 degrees Fahrenheit to 212 degrees Fahrenheit], humidity 20 to 80 percent, and heights from sea level up to 40 kilometers [24.8 miles].

“The number of layers of Arctic gear for the crews inside military vehicles is six, and in combat kit about seven. This raises a number of problems, but in general the test results are more than positive.

“At temperatures of minus 40 degrees [also -40 degrees Fahrenheit] at rest, optimal wearing time was about 60 minutes, at minus 50 [-58 degrees Fahrenheit] with Russian-made boots for very cold climate conditions the optimal thermal state of the subject was maintained for about 80 minutes.

“When under physical load, this time period was up to 120 minutes and was not limited by heat loss but by the degree of fatigue of the soldier.

“Tests are still in progress and the identified problems will be eliminated. These are fairly complex technical issues.”

Russians Modifying Short-to-Medium Range Air Defense System for Arctic Use

4 July 2015

“On Saturday, 4 July, General Major Sergei Babakov, the Commander of Air Defense Missile forces, stated that a special Arctic version of the Pantsir-S surface-to-air missile and gun system will be developed for Russian Armed Forces use it in the Arctic.”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has been fielding the SA-22 Pantsir-SM GREYHOUND mobile combination short-to-medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system in the Arctic. The missile has a reported engagement range from 20 kilometers (12 miles) to 30 kilometers (19 miles). The 30mm twin-barreled gun can reach out to four kilometers. The system can reportedly function effectively below -50 degrees Centigrade [-58 degrees Fahrenheit].

So far, the Russian press has reported Pantsir battalions stationed with the 200th and the 80th Arctic Separate Motorized Rifle Brigades, as well as a battery at the Zapolyarnaya Airbase near Murmansk, facing Norway. Pantsir is also stationed in the Eastern Military District facing Alaska and Japan and on sites above the Arctic Circle on Kotelnyy Island and other locations. The Pantsir in northern service is normally found in conjunction with airfield defense, ground units, the SA-400 Triumph (SA-21 GROWLER) long-range air defense system and the 9K720 Iskander (SS-26 STONE) short-range mobile ballistic missile system. The Russians maintain an integrated air defense system incorporating anti-aircraft machine guns, short-to-long-range air defense missiles and airborne interceptors.

The Pantsir has been in service since 2012 and was originally mounted on a Kamaz 6560 8X8 truck chassis. The Arctic modification will most likely be mounted on a tracked chassis, probably the new Armata chassis. This is not the first report of modifications to the Pantsir for Arctic service. A shipboard version of the Pantsir is also under development and could become part of the Arctic air defense umbrella. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

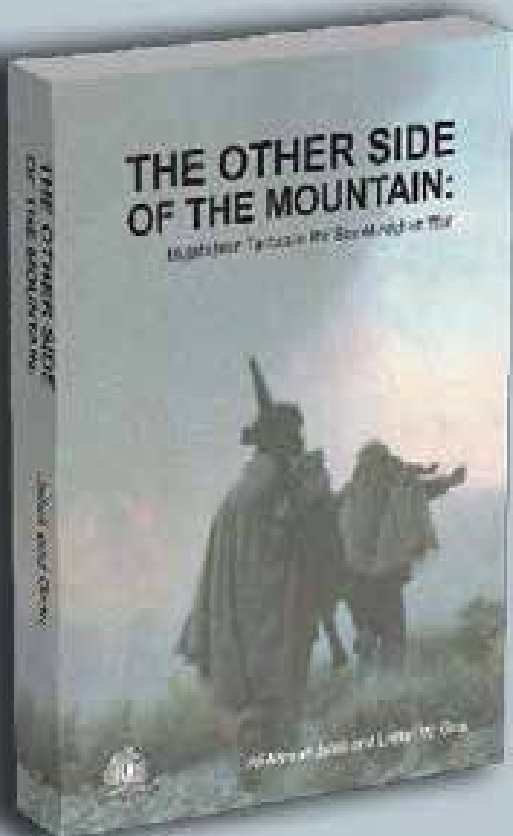
Source: RIA Novosti, <http://ria.ru/>, 4 July 2015

Russia developing Arctic version of Pantsir-S Air Defence system

“We plan to make serious modifications to this vehicle (Pantsir) for use in the Arctic zone. After these modifications, all Pantsir-S surface-to-air missile and gun systems delivered north of the Arctic Circle will be the Arctic versions” Babakov said on Russkaya Sluzhba Novostey [Russian News Service] radio. He noted that “some problematic issues” had been revealed during the deployment of Pantsir systems in the Arctic.

Pantsir-S is a Russian self-propelled ground-based surface-to-air missile and gun system intended to provide short-range protection of civilian and military assets (including long-range air defence systems) against all current and future means of air attack. It can also protect the defended asset from ground-based and water surface-based threats.

On the same day, privately-owned Russian military news agency Interfax-AVN quoted Sergey Babakov as saying that the Russian Ministry of Defense paid special attention to air defence in the Arctic. “In the Arctic zone, we have deployed a radar section to gather information. On the island of Kotelnyy, a subunit [battery] of the Pantsir-S system has been deployed, which is on combat duty there. Last year, this subunit carried out live launches, which were successful.”



Les Grau's classic *The Other Side of the Mountain*, is the most broadly distributed book on the Afghan theater. Capturing the personal stories and perspectives of Mujahedin fighters during the Soviet Afghan war, Les Grau has provided a blueprint of the belligerents in the current conflict. It is on General Petraeus's reading list and in the rucksacks of deploying soldiers.

The All-Terrain Arctic Field Kitchen

19 June 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Hot chow is especially important in the Arctic. The important news in this report, however, is how the Russians will deliver the “meals on tracks.”

The Arktika is a lightly armored, twin chassis, multipurpose articulated tracked carrier. It is lightly armored because soft-skinned logistics vehicles cannot survive enemy fire and therefore often cannot deliver fuel, food, water and supplies to the critical points of the fight, nor can they evacuate the wounded. It is tracked because tracked vehicles are essential for movement in Arctic terrain. It is articulated since more weight can be carried on an articulated vehicle rather than a similar single-tracked vehicle. It should weigh about 25 tons (trailer weight 7 tons), carry up to 12 people, and have a maximum speed of 60 kilometers per hour on land and 6 kilometers per hour in water.

Vityaz, the manufacturer of the successful DT-30P articulated tracked vehicle, showed a model of the DT-BTR at the “Army 2015” exhibition. Vityaz has a challenge, since armor adds weight and weight is anathema on boggy Arctic ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Within the next few years, Russian troops in the Arctic will be equipped with special Arctic kitchens, bakeries, tanks, and fuel-and-oil supply pumps, all capable of operating at ultra-low temperatures.”

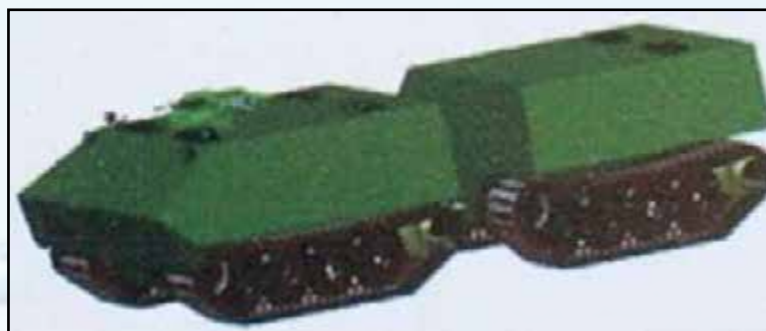
Source: Moscow Regnum, <http://www.regnum.ru>, 19 June 2015

“Army-2015: Troops in the Arctic Will Be Equipped with ‘Non-Freezing’ Kitchens”

Igor Vostryakov, a Research Fellow at the Ministry of Defense’s Logistics Support Scientific Research Institute met with a Regnum News Agency correspondent at the “Army-2015” forum.

According to him, technical equipment under development will be able to negotiate marshy terrain, deep snow cover, and terrain with no passable roads. “This technical equipment will provide guaranteed accomplishment of all assigned missions in ambient temperatures ranging from minus 50 to plus 50

degrees Celsius [-58 degrees Fahrenheit to plus 122 degrees Fahrenheit], with the capability of operating for short periods in temperatures of minus 60 degrees Celsius [-76 degrees Fahrenheit].”



“The base chassis chosen to support this technical equipment is a standardized ‘Arktika’ two-section tracked platform. The Russian Federation Defense Ministry plans, by 2017, to field the ‘Arktika’ by 2017 and subsequently deliver it to the Arctic brigades,” Vostryakov added.

The first “Army-2015” international military-technical forum took place in Moscow’s Kubinka suburb from 16 through 19 June, at the “Patriot Park” in the Armed Forces Congress Exhibition Center. Over 100 models of military equipment were on display. The “Army-2015” open exhibition occupied an area of 100,000 square meters. Delegations and representatives from more than 70 countries took part in the event.

Russia-China Information Security Cooperation

13 May 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Russian Directive No. 788-d, dated 30 April 2015, contained ten articles and an annex on information security cooperation with China. The ten articles were fundamental concepts, principal threats to information security, principal areas of cooperation, general principles of cooperation, principal forms and mechanisms of cooperation, information protection, financing, relationships to other treaties, dispute resolution, and concluding provisions. The annex defined ten terms. The directive discussed threats to critical information infrastructure facilities, such as networks, finance, power, etc., as well as the importance of illegally influencing the creation or processing of information.

Article Two was of special interest, since it outlined information security threats. Two of the threats are singled out below in the “key quotes” due to their focus on influencing the thoughts of Russian and Chinese citizens. Of special interest was that each state “shall not carry out such actions against the other Party and shall assist the other Party in the realization of the said right.” “Such actions” included the right to protect the states’ information resources against illegal utilization and unsanctioned interference, including computer attacks on them. The directive appeared to address three main areas: technological threats to the sovereignty or internal affairs of a state, ways to cooperate in regard to cyber affairs among various organizations, and the refusal to carry out cyber-attacks against one another.

End OE Watch Commentary
(Thomas)

“To disseminate information harmful to sociopolitical and socioeconomic systems and inimical to the spiritual, moral, and cultural environment of other states.”

Source: “Directive on an Agreement between the Governments of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on International Information Security,” Government of the Russian Federation website, published 13 May 2015.

“To interfere in states’ internal affairs, violate public order, inflame interethnic, interracial, and interfaith enemies, propagandize racist and xenophobic ideas and theories giving rise to hatred and discrimination and inciting violence and instability, and also to destabilize the internal political and socioeconomic situation and disrupt the governance of a state.”

1. With regard to the principal threats designated in Article 2 of the present Agreement, the Parties, the plenipotentiary representatives, and the competent agencies of the States Parties, which are defined in accordance with Article 5 of the present Agreement, shall implement cooperation in the sphere of international information security in the following principal areas:

- 1) identifying, agreeing, and implementing the requisite cooperation in the sphere of international information security;
- 2) establishing channels of communication and contacts for the purposes of jointly responding to threats in the international information security sphere;
- 3) collaborating in the elaboration and promotion of international legal standards for the purposes of ensuring national and international information security;
- 4) responding jointly to threats in the sphere of international information security designated in Article 2 of the present Agreement;
- 5) exchanging information and cooperating in the law-enforcement sphere for the purposes of investigating cases associated with the utilization of information and communications technologies for terrorist and criminal ends;
- 6) elaborating and implementing the requisite joint confidence-building measures promoting international information security;
- 7) cooperation among the competent agencies of the States Parties in ensuring the security of critical information infrastructure of the States Parties, the exchange of technologies and cooperation among the plenipotentiary agencies of the States Parties in responding to computer incidents;
- 8) exchanging information on legislation of the States Parties relating to issues of ensuring information security;
- 9) promoting the upgrading of the international legal framework and of practical mechanisms for the Parties’ cooperation in ensuring international information security;
- 10) establishing conditions for the collaboration of the competent agencies of the States Parties for the purposes of implementing the present Agreement;
- 11) deepening the cooperation of the States Parties and the coordination of their activities on problems of ensuring international information security within the framework of international organizations and forums (including the United Nations Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Standardization Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS countries, the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and others);
- 12) promoting scientific research in the sphere of international information security, conducting joint scientific research;
- 13) the joint training of specialists, the exchange of students, postgraduates, and teachers of the specialized higher education establishments;
- 14) holding working meetings, conferences, seminars, and other forums of the States Parties’ plenipotentiary representatives and experts in the international information security sphere;
- 15) establishing the mechanisms for cooperation among the plenipotentiary agencies of the States Parties for the purposes of exchanging information and the joint utilization of information on existing and potential risks, threats, and vulnerabilities in the information security field, for the purposes of the identification, evaluation, study, and mutual notification of these risks, threats, and vulnerabilities, and also for the purposes of preventing their emergence.

Competing Russian-Ukrainian Claims over MH-17

17 July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko continues to state that his country had nothing to do with the downing of Malaysian Airliner MH 17 on 17 July 2014. Meanwhile Russia continues to supply the international community with more “facts” that it did not participate in the shoot down. This time it used “new data” from the specialists of the Almaz-Antey concern, the company that produces the Buk-M1air defense system that appears to have been the culprit behind MH 17’s destruction. These two points of view are contrasted below, now a year after the incident. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Moscow Interfax, 17 July 2015

“Specialists of the concern [Almaz-Antey] have received new data based on the results of supercomputer modelling carried out taking into account the real characteristics of the Buk-M1 air defense system. New results of the research confirm once again the inadequacy of the theory that the missile was launched from the settlement of Snezhne, a statement from the company said.

“That theory does not stand up to scrutiny, as the conditions of contact between the aircraft and the missile do not correspond to the damage there is in the fragments of the Malaysian Boeing’s fuselage, and are at odds with the algorithms for how a proximity fuse works and the characteristics of the fragment cloud created by the missile’s warhead,” it said.”

State-owned Almaz-Antey produces air defense systems, including the Buk missile launcher which Dutch investigators suspect may have been used to shoot down the plane. The company is one of a number of Russian defense firms that the EU and USA have placed under international sanctions, accusing them of arming separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Almaz-Antey first provided analysis that suggested the shooting down of MH17 was not the work of Russian-backed separatists in a news conference held by company general director Yan Novikov and his adviser on 2 June. They said Almaz-Antey had analyzed the damage to the aircraft and concluded that it was shot down by a missile that could not have been supplied from Russia, launched from an area just south of the village of Zaroshchenske, rather than from near Snizhne.

Source: Moscow Interfax (in English), 17 July 2015.

“Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said that following the Malaysian Boeing crash in Donbas, probably shot down with a ground-to-air rocket, he checked three times information as to whether Ukraine had relevant weapons in the area of the tragedy.

All existing information on the tragedy has been requested from the General Staff head and the defense minister; it was checked three times that Ukraine did not have relevant weapons in this region and that no military activities were being carried out by Ukraine at the time, Poroshenko said on July 13 in an interview with Dutch news magazine Elsevier published on July 17.”

Poroshenko said he had no doubt that Russia handed over the Buk surface-to-air missile system, with which the plane flying at an altitude of 10km was supposedly shot down, so Russia carries at the very least part of responsibility for the tragedy of July 17, the newspaper said.

Following the tragedy, militia did not grant access to the crash site to Ukraine, did not cease fire, and one or two Ukrainian rescuers were injured, Poroshenko said.

Rescuers from Kharkiv, Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporizhia were sent to the crash site; the area was under fire from ‘terrorists’ at the time and one or two representatives of rescue teams were injured, the Ukrainian president said. Immediate ceasefire within a 10km radius of the catastrophe had already been proposed then but Moscow and the ‘terrorists’ did not want to hear about this proposal, he said. Ukraine also sent a train with refrigeration carriages to the crash site in order to preserve bodies but the ‘terrorists’ supported by Russia simply did not let it through, the Ukrainian president said.

At the same time, officers of Russian special services arrived at the scene to retrieve the MH17 flight data recorders, Poroshenko said. Ukraine has exact information that upon obtaining these ‘black boxes,’ the Russians tried to perform certain actions on them to baffle investigators, he said. Poroshenko said he was worried, even more so since they already had access to a large scope of wreckage and the remains of the rocket which shot down MH17.

The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

I. Introduction

The Turkish electorate went to the ballot box on 7 June to elect the 550 members of the Grand National Assembly. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) was seeking a fourth consecutive term in government and was widely expecting to win. President Erdoğan had made clear his ambitions to turn Turkey into an executive presidential system with powers that dominated the other branches of government and was hoping that the AKP would win enough seats to achieve this. Polls however, were pointing to a decline in the AKP's voter share, suggesting it may lose a number of seats and fail to allow Erdoğan an executive presidency. The elections were held at a time when Turkey is suffering from faltering economic performance and feeling the negative impact of foreign policy calculations.

What was at stake in these elections? These parliamentary elections were the last chance for Turkish citizens to exercise their voting rights until 2019. Thus, it was the citizens' last chance to voice their stance on the presidential system that Erdoğan wanted. In addition, this election was about the potential entry of a Kurdish political party into the Turkish parliament for the first time ever. In effect, it was the last chance (before 2019) for the Turkish electorate to express their position regarding the direction that Turkey was heading in.

As a result of the elections, the ruling AKP lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in 13 years. The Turkish public denied the AKP a single-party government, and denied Erdoğan's desire to become an executive president with sweeping powers. With the current distribution of votes, the AKP will not be able to form a government on its own, requiring a coalition government. In addition, with the entry of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP) into the parliament, this will be the first time since 1999 that four political parties will be represented in the Turkish parliament, a hopeful outcome for a more representative parliament and for pluralism.

II. The Parties

AKP: The ruling conservative Justice and Development Party, which has been in power since 2002.

CHP: The center-left secular opposition People's Republican Party, led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. This is the old social democratic 'Kemalist' party, and has typically been receiving about 25% of the vote.

MHP: The far-right Nationalist Action Party. This party fuses nationalism with Islam and opposes any concessions to Kurds. Among all the opposition parties, this is the one that is ideologically closest to the AKP and seems like to most likely coalition partner. Its leader is Devlet Bahçeli. This party campaigned on a platform of rejecting the executive presidency that Erdoğan wanted, and of resurrecting the corruption charges against former AKP ministers, including some people in Erdoğan's family. Bahçeli also demands that peace talks with Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan should cease. These were the 'red-lines' that Bahçeli repeated after the elections, noting that there were the only circumstances under which he would consider a coalition with the AKP.¹ This party's position regarding the peace process alienates pro-Kurds; making it fundamentally opposed to the pro-Kurdish HDP.

HDP: Pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party. The leftist group has its

roots in the Kurdish nationalist movement founded by the imprisoned leader PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. However, it has created an alliance that drew in pious Kurds, Turkish liberals, leftists, Christians, and gays.

The party's chairman was the charismatic, 42-year old former human rights lawyer, Selahattin Demirtaş, considered the most charismatic leader to emerge in Turkey since Erdoğan himself. Demirtaş appealed to both Kurds and Turks who were worried about Erdoğan's increasing ambitions. He framed his party not as just a Kurdish party, but as a mainstream liberal party. The HDP is seen as having the potential to transform itself into a greater party which embraces different identities. They have an on-going conversation with the government and the PKK about a peace process, but it has not yielded any results yet. The party also includes new forms of opposition such as the urban millennials (who were also the critical segment of society who started the Gezi park protests), women, Alevis (8-10 million people). Once a Kurdish-focused party, it has managed to broaden its support base, and include the other forms of opposition. Thus, the party has framed itself as a liberal party and appealed beyond its traditional Kurdish constituency. The HDP captured votes from Western Turkey as well as conservative Kurds who have traditionally voted for the AKP but were alienated by Erdoğan's perceived indifference to the suffering of their brethren in the northern Syrian town of Kobane.²



III. Results³

- AKP: 40.9 % of the vote, gaining 258 seats
- CHP: 25 % of the vote, gaining 132 seats
- MHP: 16% of the vote, gaining 80 seats
- HDP: 13% of the vote, gaining 80 seats

Prior to the elections the seat allocation in parliament was:

- AKP: 311 seats
- CHP: 125 seats
- MHP: 52 seats
- HDP (as independents): 29 seats
- Vacant: 15 seats

IV. Highlights of the Elections and Results

- **Voter turnout was high; around 86%.⁴**
- **President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is considered one of the losers of this election.⁵** Voters denied Erdoğan's AKP a majority, thwarting Erdoğan's dream of re-writing the constitution and granting himself more executive powers. Expert Soli Özel summarized in a televised Turkish discussion panel, following the elections that, "Erdoğan's increasing authoritarianism, and a sense of disdain for large segments of the population alienated a large part of the country."⁶ In addition, his drive to alter the constitution, to turn Turkey into a presidential system were perceived by many as a direct threat to democracy. Expert Henri Barkey noted that Erdoğan immersed himself in the campaign, and made the contest about himself, thereby violating the constitution (which stipulates that the president must be neutral).⁷ His lack of impartiality and his campaigning for the AKP appears to have backfired.
- **Why did the AKP lose so many votes?** Many claim that a declining economy, President Erdoğan's perceived authoritarian style,

(continued)

Continued: The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

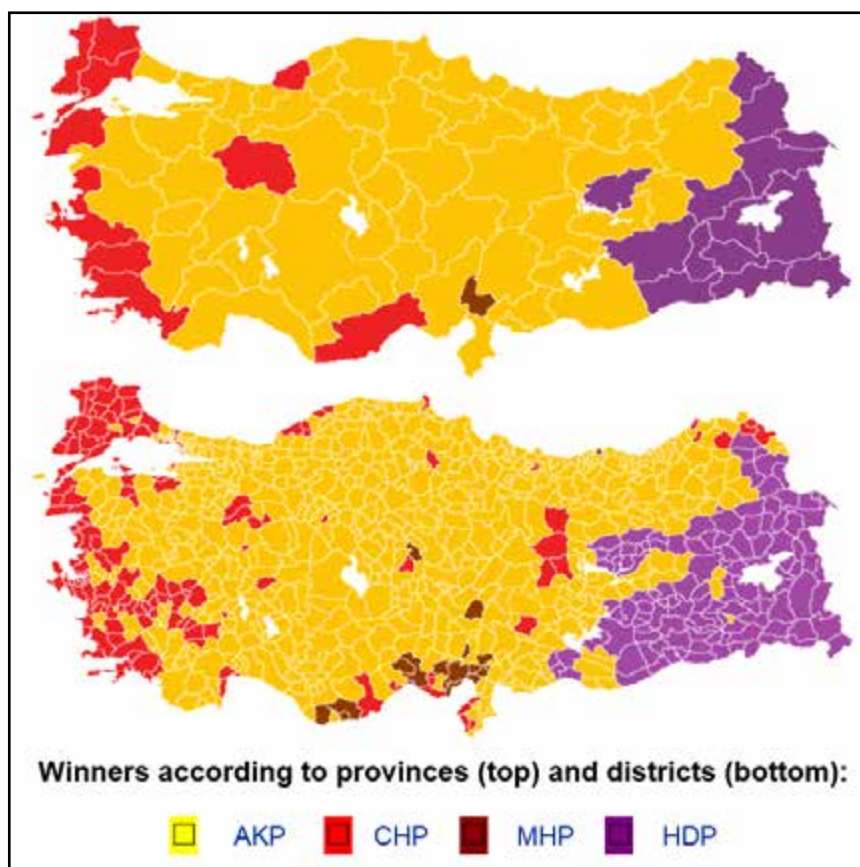
corruption allegations against certain AKP officials which were not investigated, and the fact that the former Kurdish voters of the party shifted to the HDP; all seem to have resulted in a decline in the AKP's votes.

- **The pro-Kurdish HDP and its leader Selahattin Demirtaş are considered one of the winners.** The HDP sailed through the 10% threshold required to enter parliament, gaining 13% of the votes. Compared to the previous elections, they increased their votes by 100%. They did this despite numerous obstacles, limited air-time on national TV, numerous attacks on their party offices, including a bombing attack that took place two days before the elections at a party rally in Diyarbakir, killing two and injuring hundreds. The main factor that propelled it up to 13% are a group of 'strategic voters' (also being referred to as 'votes on loan' to the HDP) – people who wanted to stop Erdoğan's ambitions and bring down the AKP's single party government.

Most of these votes came from typical CHP voters, whose main priority was to thwart Erdoğan's goals. The only way to do this was to ensure that HDP gained the 10% it needed to enter parliament, thereby distributing the votes among four parties, instead of three. There was also a significant group of former AKP voters (pious Kurds) who shifted to the HDP. HDP leader Demirtaş is considered the new star of Turkish politics. Some analysts likened him to Obama, with his novel message of change and intersecting identities.⁸

- **Why did the AKP lose its Kurdish voters to the HDP?** There are several perceived reasons for the shift of the former Kurdish AKP voters to the HDP. The main breaking points are cited as the Roboski event in December 2013 (in which the military accidentally killed 34 Kurds, thinking they were PKK members); the events in Kobane (in Syria), where the Turkish government's preference appeared to be that Kobane fall to ISIS rather than helping the Kurds who were fighting ISIS there (This led to the '6-8 October 2014 events' in Turkey, in which Kurds protested against the government's idleness and riots led to the death of over 40 people). Newly elected HDP parliament member Altan Tan said on a Turkish TV show that the pro-government media did not show any of the funerals of Kurds coming back from fighting in Kobane. He also said that the final straw was the bombing that took place in Diyarbakir (the unofficial capital of Turkey's Kurdish region) just two days before the election. He noted that the Kurdish public was disappointed in Erdoğan for failing to go to the region to express condolences or visit the wounded in the hospital; and noted that the pro-government media did not even report this event.⁹ Also, shortly before the elections Erdoğan's rhetoric was perceived to have shifted against the Kurds and the HDP, raising questions about his sincerity for the peace process.¹⁰

- **The HDP's entrance into parliament is important for Turkish democracy.** There are about 15 million Kurds in Turkey, making up almost 19 percent of the population. Despite this, there was never a pro-Kurdish party in the government until now, because the pro-Kurdish parties were unable to cross the 10 percent electoral threshold required to gain seats in the parliament. Kurdish candidates would run as independents and gain seats in the parliament; but this is the first time that they are entering as a party. Now that the HDP has entered the parliament, the votes that were cast will be reflected in the parliament in a more accurate/just fashion, and this is good for democracy. In addition, the Kurds are going to be conducting politics from within the parliament, representing their own identity, for the first time in Turkey. The parliament, for the first time ever, is more representative of Turkey's diversity.



Source: "Turkish general election 2015, provinces and districts" by Nub Cake https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_general_election_2015,_provinces_and_districts.png#/media/File:Turkish_general_election_2015,_provinces_and_districts.png

- **This is a historic moment for the Kurdish political movement.** Turkish analysts claim that Demirtaş was able to capitalize on the anti-AKP sentiment in the Western part of the country, and garner votes from liberal Turks who would normally not vote for the HDP. These are considered 'strategic voters'.¹¹

- **The HDP was the only party that was able to channel the spirit of the Gezi protests.** Many claim that this is why the HDP was so successful and was able to receive votes from various segments of society. The HDP's success is perceived as a result of the social dynamics which started with the Gezi protests.¹²

- **The HDP faces serious challenges now.** Their win poses a dilemma for Demirtaş. The Kurds have increased expectations; there is a young Kurdish generation which perceives that the West is behind the PKK (given the Kurds'

success against ISIS in Syria). The HDP has monopolized the Kurdish scene. On the other hand, there are the 'strategic voters' who hope that Demirtaş can tame the radical demands of the Kurds. How will he balance these two conflicting interests? If he doesn't balance them, he will lose the 'strategic voters' that enabled him to pass the 10% threshold, and if that happens, the HDP risks not getting re-elected into parliament in the next election. So he has to play a delicate balancing act and work to keep the 'strategic voters'. Some also still ask the question of whether the HDP is the PKK leader Öcalan's party, or if they are really the liberal inclusive party they claim to be.¹³

- **The economy was also an important factor.** Unemployment is currently at 11 percent, growth has slowed down and inflation is high. Experts are noting that people still vote based on 'bread and

(continued)

Continued: The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

butter' issues and that the economy was also an important factor in the outcome.¹⁴

- **Many claim that the elections were not held in a 'free and fair' environment.** Many Turkish journalists and observers lamented the lack of a 'free and fair' media environment, and noted that the AKP used all the resources of the state to its advantage.¹⁵ They cited that the government-owned TV channel only showed AKP speeches, and gave little to no air time to any of the opposition candidates.¹⁶
- **Even if a coalition government is formed, can it last?** The main issue with any coalition scenario is that, if Erdoğan continues to act partial to the AKP, (and not stay impartial in this process, as required by the constitution), then no coalition would last. So the main question is, will Erdoğan act in a way that is conducive to enabling a coalition government? All the parties are stipulating that Erdoğan must not act as the head of the legislative but that he must act as a neutral president. This is cited as one of the main reasons for instability in the near term. This remains a risk because Erdoğan is still the most powerful actor in Turkish politics and he can undermine any coalition government.
- **It is premature to say that 'Turkey is returning to democracy or secularism'.** While the AKP lost 9% of its votes compared to the previous elections, it still got 41% of the vote and still has the dominant position. It is still the party with the big power and resources. Why does the AKP still command such power and majority? It does so because the state of the economy compared to 10-15 years ago is still better. People vote based on the services they receive. On this front, the AKP is still considered the best and most organized party. The AKP is well connected with the urban poor and the lower-middle classes. In addition, many claim that Erdoğan is unlikely to accept these results as final.¹⁷

V. Scenarios

a- Coalition Scenarios With the current distribution of votes, the AKP will not be able to form a government on its own. Some coalition scenarios are as follows. All parties have demanded that Erdoğan remain in his constitutional presidential role and all have demanded a look into the corruption charges which emerged in December 2013 and have not since been investigated.

AKP-MHP: This is the most likely coalition scenario. However, the MHP is opposed to the peace process; and stipules that President Erdoğan to stop interfering in the political process; and act as the neutral president that the constitution foresees. If there is an AKP-MHP coalition, this would likely have a negative impact on the peace process with the Kurds.

AKP-CHP: This is referred to as the 'grand coalition' because it would include the majority of the voters (66%). But many AKP members are worried that a coalition with the 'secularists' would alienate their pious base. These two parties represent the two main 'currents' in Turkish society and politics. The new consensus will eventually have to be made between these two segments of society. As such, an AKP-CHP coalition would bring the two disparate halves of Turkish society together. Peace talks would likely continue because the CHP supports them too. However, each party is likely to be concerned about losing their 'base' in the event of a coalition with the other— the AKP of losing their pious base; and

the CHP of losing their 'secular' base.

AKP-HDP: This does not seem likely because the leader of the HDP has ruled out a coalition with the AKP.¹⁸ HDP leader Demirtaş had campaigned on the promise to stop Erdoğan's presidential ambitions and this drew the non-Kurdish voters (who would traditionally not vote for the HDP but did so to stop Erdoğan; thus helping to carry the HDP above the 10% threshold it needed to enter parliament). HDP deputies are likely to be worried that their constituents would never forgive them if they broke their promise.

b- Early Elections: If the prime minister cannot form a government in 45 days, early elections will be called. Many say this would be a waste of time and that the people have spoken. Many think another election would produce a similar outcome. If they do not produce a similar outcome, or if the HDP fails to pass the 10 percent threshold in a second round of voting, the results could lead to a legitimacy crisis and internal chaos. As of late July, no coalition was on the horizon despite negotiations and early elections were looking more and more likely.

c- A Minority AKP Government: Since the AKP did not gain the 276 seats required to form a government, this would require the support of one of the other parties. This is not likely.

VI. What's Next / Future Implications

- **Instability.** In the short term, Turkey will be consumed by coalition-formation negotiations.
- **Implications for the Peace Process with the PKK.** The peace process might hit a stumbling block. The AKP was the Kurds' best bet. Now that the AKP has lost the Kurdish vote, they may be less inclined to continue with the peace process. If a coalition is formed with any other party, the process may still be at risk. The MHP, which is seen as the most likely candidate for a coalition, opposes the peace process.
- **Erdoğan's popularity is declining.** Many observers note that the trends are not in Erdoğan's favor anymore. The Gezi Park protests of 2013 already showed that there is a dynamic, young population, unlikely to accept his desires. There will likely be more resistance down the line towards his policies. Many believe that unless the AKP distances itself from President Erdoğan, the trend is not in their favor.¹⁹
- **A possible split within the AKP.** If Erdoğan tries to keep control of the party, in effect, ignoring the election results, some say that a power struggle is likely. A growing number of people believe that Abdullah Gül, co-founder of the AKP and Turkey's former president, may return as prime minister.²⁰ According to journalists, there is a growing rift within the AKP, between the 'hawks' and 'moderates'/'doves'.²¹ The former are the more Islamist figures, who are passionate in wanting to build a Turkey more 'independent' from the West and care little about liberal critiques on freedom of the press and other liberties. Erdoğan's close circle of advisers, including Yalcin Akdogan constitute the core of this group. The 'moderates' or 'doves' are more loyal to the liberal and pragmatic line the AKP followed in its earlier years. Their outlook on

(continued)

Continued: The Turkish General Elections of June 7, 2015: Results, Significance, Implications

the world is less conspiratorial, and they see the growing polarization in Turkey as a problem. Prominent names in this camp would include Deputy Prime Minister (former speaker of the parliament) Bülent Arinc, Economy minister Ali Babacan, Minister of Finance Mehmet Simsek and former president Abdullah Gül.²²

- **Civil-Military Relations.** Steven Cook of the Council on Foreign Relations noted at a Washington D.C. event that the era of coups are over in Turkey. He noted that for the military to be able to think of coups, there needs to be civilian support and this does not exist in Turkish society anymore.²³ This military will likely stay away from any kind of intervention.
- **Can the institutional changes that the AKP introduced be undone?** “It will take years of relentless effort to undo the institutional changes that the AKP introduced, says analyst Gönül Tol says in a June 10 piece in the *New York Times*.²⁴ She writes, “Turkish democracy has to undo years of damage brought on by the AKP and tackle its Kurdish question. In recent years, the AKP has instituted policies that undermined central pillars of democracy, including separation of powers, checks and balances, government accountability to voters and freedom of speech. Since 2010, the government has approved bills designed to restructure Turkey’s top courts and give the government more control over the judiciary. The newly expanded police powers, long detention periods, violations of the right to a fair trial, excessive police force in demonstrations, financial and other pressures on news media owners and critics are all structural changes introduced by the AKP to tighten its grip on state institutions.”

VII. Conclusion

The 7 June 2015 parliamentary elections in Turkey were a message by the Turkish electorate to President Erdoğan that they do not support his ambitions to change the constitution in favor of an executive presidency. The question now is how these election results will translate into meaningful change and governance. The coalition scenarios are difficult due to the conditions set forth by each party for a coalition. Turkey will be focused inward on coalition negotiations in the short-term and will likely see some political and economic instability.

As Turkish expert Aykan Erdemir writes in Politico,

“Now that Erdoğan’s authoritarian model has suffered a significant setback at the ballot box, is it possible to reverse Turkey’s shift away from Western values? Or as some diplomats whisper in the backrooms of Ankara, is Turkey beyond the point of no return? In other words, is there any realistic chance of reversing Turkey’s “Pakistanization”. Is there any light at the end of the Erdoğan tunnel?”

The answer to these questions will surely determine not only the future of Turkey, but also the prospects of the transatlantic alliance with the United States, the viability of NATO, and the trajectory of liberal democratic values in the Muslim world.²⁵

Prior to the elections, it seemed like a foregone conclusion that Erdoğan would be president for two terms (until 2023), but now observers say that he may not get re-elected as president.²⁶ Alan Makovsky, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, says that the results are heartening to observers in the Turkey and the world, even though it is not clear if the reforms that Erdoğan made can be turned back.²⁷

Endnotes

1. “Ve Bahçeli koalisyon şartlarını açıkladı (And Bahçeli declared his conditions for a coalition),” *Cumhuriyet.com.tr*, 15 June 2015, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/295015/Ve_Bahceli_koalisyon_sartlarini_acikladi.html
2. “Al sana Yeni Türkiye (Here is the New Turkey),” *Cumhuriyet.com.tr*, 8 June 2015, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/secim_2015/294191/Al_sana_Yeni_Turkiye.html
3. Ibid.
4. “High voter turnout shows Turkish democracy’s strength - EU Commission,” *Turkishweekly.net*, 9 June 2015, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2015/06/09/news/high-voter-turnout-shows-turkish-democracy-s-strength-eu-commission/>
5. “Henri Barkey: Seçimi AKP değil, Erdoğan kaybetti (Henri Barkey: It’s not AKP, it’s Erdoğan who lost the election),” *T24.com.tr*, 12 June 2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/henri-barkey-secimi-akp-degil-erdogan-kaybetti,299500>
6. Soli Özel, “Tarafsız Bolge,” *CNNTurk.com.tr*, 8 June 2015, <http://tv.cnnurk.com/tv-cnn-turk/programlar/tarafsiz-bolge/secmen-koalisyon-dedi>
7. “Henri Barkey: Seçimi AKP değil, Erdoğan kaybetti (Henri Barkey: It’s not AKP, it’s Erdoğan who lost the election),” *T24.com.tr*, 12 June 2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/henri-barkey-secimi-akp-degil-erdogan-kaybetti,299500>
8. “Turkey: Who is ‘Kurdish Obama’ Selahattin Demirtas and what does he want?,” *International Business Times*, 8 June 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/turkey-who-kurdish-obama-selahattin-demirtas-what-does-he-want-1504942>
9. Altan Tan, “Tarafsız Bolge,” *CNNTurk.com.tr*, 8 June 2015, <http://tv.cnnurk.com/tv-cnn-turk/programlar/tarafsiz-bolge/secmen-koalisyon-dedi>
10. “AKP doğu ve güneydoğuda neden kaybetti? (Why did the AKP lose in the east and southeast?),” *T24.com.tr*, 8 June 2015, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/akp-dogu-ve-guneydoguda-neden-kaybetti,299121>
11. “HDP kimden oy aldı (From whom did the HDP get votes?),” *Radikal.com.tr*, 15 June 2015, <http://blog.radikal.com.tr/politika/hdp-kimden-oy-aldi-103728>
12. “‘Kobanê ve Gezi ruhu HDP’de birleşti’ (Kobane and the spirit of Gezi united in the HDP),” *Firatnews*, 27 April 2015, <http://www.firatnews.com/guncel/kobane-ve-gezi-ruhu-hdp-de-birlesti>
13. Alan Makovsky, “Breaking Down Turkey’s General Election,” *Center for American Progress*, 9 June 2015.
14. Ömer Taspınar, “Previewing Turkey’s Parliamentary Election: Status quo, Executive Presidency, or Progressive New Chapter?” *The Brookings Institute*, 5 June 2015.
15. Soli Özel, “Tarafsız Bolge,” *CNNTurk.com.tr*, 8 June 2015, <http://tv.cnnurk.com/tv-cnn-turk/programlar/tarafsiz-bolge/secmen-koalisyon-dedi>
16. Ibid.
17. Henri Barkey, “Failure to Relaunch,” *The American Interest*, 10 June 2015, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/06/10/failure-to-re-launch/>
18. “HDP Eş Başkanı Selahattin Demirtaş: AK Parti ile koalisyon seçeneğimiz yok (HDP Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtaş: We do not have the option to make a coalition with the AK Party),” *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 9 June 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/29237798.asp>
19. Henri Barkey, “Turkey: Parliamentary Elections and their Aftermath,” *Wilson Center Middle East Program*, 9 June 2015.
20. “Abdullah Gül dönüyor mu? Erdoğan’ın aklında ne var? (Is Abdullah Gül returning? What is Erdoğan thinking?),” *Internethaber.com.tr*, 15 June 2015, <http://www.internethaber.com/abdullah-gul-donuyor-mu-erdoganin-aklin-da-ne-var-794501h.htm>
21. Mustafa Akyol, “Turkey: The Next Six Months,” *AlMonitor.com*, 7 July 2014.
22. Ibid.
23. Steven Cook, “Breaking Down Turkey’s General Election,” *Center for American Progress*, 9 June 2015.
24. Gönül Tol, “Putting Turkey on the Road to Democracy Won’t Be Easy,” *The New York Time*, 10 June 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/09/have-turkish-voters-made-themselves-heard/putting-turkey-on-the-road-to-democracy-wont-be-easy>
25. Aykan Erdemir, “Turkey Thwarts Erdoğan,” *Politico*, 11 June 2015, <http://www.politico.eu/article/turkey-thwarts-erdogan/>
26. Aykan Erdemir, “Turkey’s Elections: Results, Consequences, and the Outlook Ahead,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, 15 June 2015.
27. Alan Makovsky, “Breaking Down Turkey’s General Election,” *Center for American Progress*, 9 June 2015.