

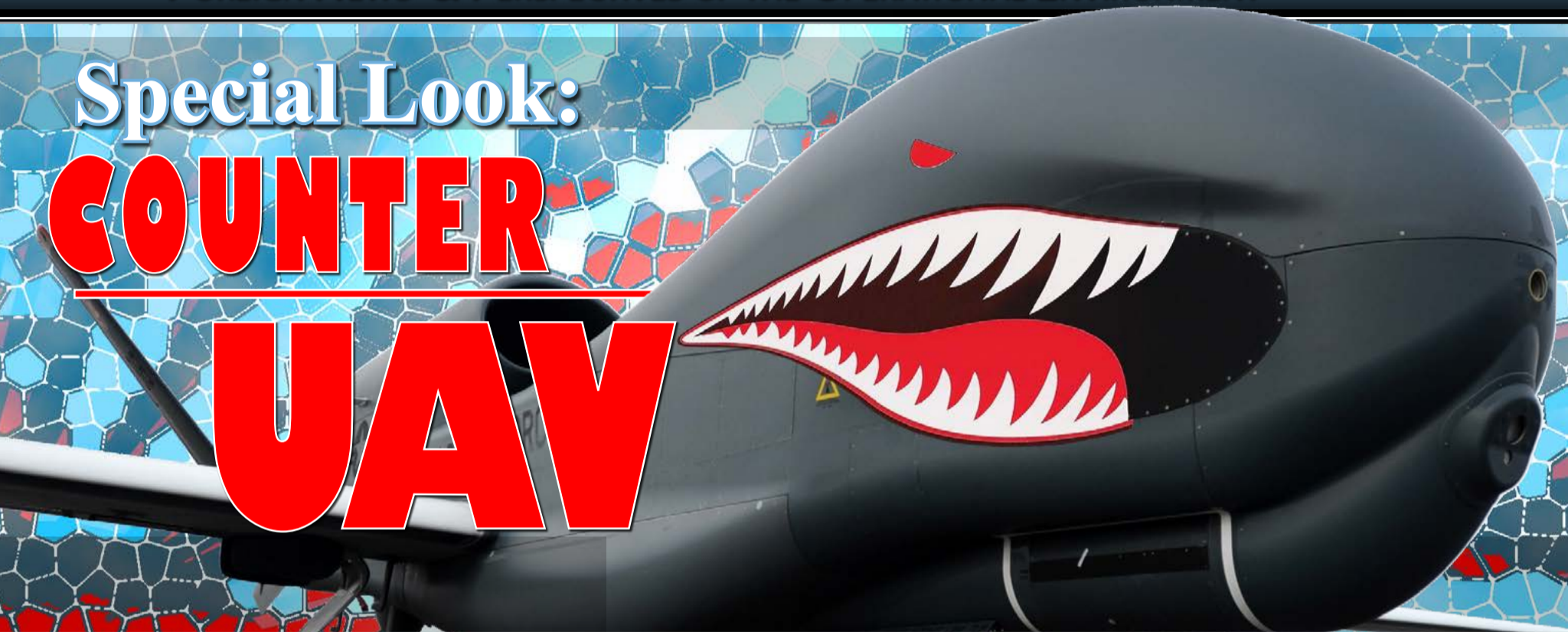
Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Special Look: COUNTER UAV



<p>TURKEY</p> <p>3 Turkish Army to Produce Laser Weapon to Defend Against UAS</p> <p>5 Turkey Begins Training Iraqi Army and Sunni Groups to Fight ISIS</p> <p>MIDDLE EAST</p> <p>7 Testing UAV Surveillance over Tehran</p> <p>8 Radar Upgrades for F-14s</p> <p>9 Army to Use Suicide Drones</p> <p>10 Creative Chaos: Egypt and the Gulf</p> <p>12 UAV Threats and Vulnerabilities in the Middle East</p> <p>14 Yemen's Game of Thrones</p> <p>16 Deepening Diplomatic Crisis between Sweden and Saudi Arabia</p> <p>AFRICA</p> <p>17 Politics, Policies, and Perhaps Some Public Confusion Restrict Drone Use</p> <p>18 The Multinational Joint Task Force: An Underperforming Overmatch?</p> <p>19 Somalia: Searching for a Political System for a Nation Comprised of Rival Clans</p> <p>20 Does Boko Haram Have a Francophone Future?</p> <p>21 From AQAP to ISIS: Trends in Nigerian Foreign Fighters</p> <p>LATIN AMERICA</p> <p>22 Buying a House in Cuba</p> <p>23 Will a Colombian Peace Agreement Contribute to Peace?</p> <p>24 Hopefully Colombia Can De-mine</p> <p>25 Is Argentina a New Paradise for Drug Trafficking Organizations?</p> <p>26 The Metamorphosis of Civil-Self Defense Groups into Cartels</p> <p>27 Los Zetas Purchase Thousands of Grenades Stolen from Guatemalan Military Bases</p>	<p>INDO-PACIFIC ASIA</p> <p>28 Poso: A Terrorist Hotspot in Indonesia</p> <p>KOREA</p> <p>29 THAAD Dilemma for South Korea</p> <p>CHINA</p> <p>31 China Develops Highly Touted Anti-drone Laser System</p> <p>32 PLA Structural Changes and Future War</p> <p>33 AIIB: China's Financing of Its Silk Routes</p> <p>CENTRAL ASIA</p> <p>35 Tajikistan's Foreign Fighters: Who Fights For Whom?</p> <p>36 Kazakhstan Takes to the Skies</p> <p>37 Outlook on Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Negotiations</p> <p>38 The State of Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces</p> <p>39 The Clampdown on Corruption in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan</p> <p>40 Is Russian Media Over-Hyping the Islamic State Threat in Central Asia?</p> <p>EUROPE</p> <p>41 Addressing Pro-Russian Sentiments in Estonia</p> <p>43 "Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics" Attempt to Legitimize Position</p> <p>44 Ukrainian's Ministry of Information Attempts to Counter Propaganda</p> <p>45 Montenegro Hopeful of NATO Membership despite Promise to the Contrary</p>	<p>RUSSIA</p> <p>46 Capabilities of Russia's "Predator" UAV</p> <p>47 Details of Russian Nuclear Triad</p> <p>49 Prompt Global Strike, Prompts Russian Air Defense Innovations</p> <p>49 Role of UAVs in Eastern Ukraine</p> <p>52 Russia Creates International SOF Training Facility</p> <p>53 Russia's Perspective on the Ways of Countering UAV Technologies</p> <p>54 Iranization of Russia: How Russia's Fundamentalism Resembles Iran</p> <p>55 Russia-Egypt Free Trade Zone Agreement</p> <p>56 Putin's Movie on Crimea's "Return" to Russia</p> <p>57 From Murmansk to Astrakhan: S-400 "Triumph" Live Fire Exercises</p> <p>59 Kremlin Denials in Ukraine</p> <p>60 Mother of All Nukes</p> <p>62 Economic Strain within Russia's Military?</p> <p>64 Expanding Russian Ties to Nicaragua</p> <p>66 Arctic Exercise and Counter Exercise</p> <p>67 Russia Expanding and Improving Forces Facing Alaska and Japan</p> <p>69 "When in Doubt, Throttle Out" on the Airborne Snowmobile</p> <p>70 Russian Troops in Ukraine: De-escalation and Withdrawal Contingent</p> <p>72 Crimea and Russia's Deep Space Capability</p> <p>73 Tanks, Planes, and—Dolphins?</p>
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Turkish Army to Produce Laser Weapon to Defend Against Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)

“The laser weapon will be used in the destruction of UAVs, guided missiles, navigation missiles and mortar ammunition.”

OE Watch Commentary: UASs have become a critical part of the defense industry. Their increasing offensive capabilities are an instigator for countries to develop defenses to be used against them. The Turkish military is considering several different projects and initiatives to counter UASs, one of which is a weapon akin to the US Laser Weapons System (LaWS), which aims to neutralize ships and down UASs. Turkey has started to develop this weapon, which is being called a weapon of the future. In 2013, TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) started to develop a High-Powered Laser Weapon System (YGLSS in its Turkish acronym). In January 2015 Turkish engineers completed its first prototype. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the details of this weapon.

According to accompanying passages from the Turkish press, the project is being

Source: “Türk ordusu lazer silahı üretecek” (The Turkish army will produce a laser weapon), Sabah.com.tr, 19 January 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/teknoloji/2015/01/19/turk-ordusu-lazer-silahi-uretecek>

“Turkish engineers have completed the first prototype of a laser weapon similar to the one the U.S. Navy recently started using.

In May 2013, the Defense and Security Technologies Research Support Group (SAVTAG) of TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) had called for a ‘High Strength Laser Weapon System’ project; following which, in 2014, technical and budget studies were conducted.

According to reporting in the Turkish press, the project is being conducted jointly by ASELSAN, TÜBİTAK and Bilkent University. The project, which has a budget of 45,5 million dollars, is in design phase, with the first prototype recently being produced. The High Strength Laser System prototype passed its first test successfully. The laser system was able to sense and track a target (not being effected by the movements of the platform on which the laser system was based). Then, it directed its high strength laser onto the target and destroyed it.”

“Turkish engineers have completed the first prototype of a laser weapon similar to the one the U.S. Navy recently started using.”

conducted jointly by Turkish defense company ASELSAN, TÜBİTAK and Bilkent University. The prototype of the YGLSS project, which has a budget of 45.5 million dollars, passed its first test successfully in January 2015. The laser system was able to sense and track a target, and then direct its high-powered laser onto the target and destroy it.

The laser weapon will detect and pursue air threat targets and neutralize them with the laser radiation. The system, which can destroy targets which are kilometers away in seconds, will also reportedly decrease the cost of various bombs. The laser weapon will be used in the destruction of UASs, guided missiles, navigation missiles and mortar ammunition. It will be used in Navy ships and Army vehicles.

Turkey was one of the first countries to integrate UASs into its inventory. While it initially purchased UASs from the U.S. and Israel, Turkey decided in 1998 to indigenously produce its own. The first Turkish UAS prototype, the “ANKA,” conducted its first debut flight in 2010 and was integrated into the Turkish Air Forces’ inventory in 2013. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Prototype YGLS

Source: “Türkiye ilk milli lazer silahını yapıyor” (Turkey is producing its first national laser weapon), Gazetevatan.com.tr, 19 January 2015, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/turkiye-ilk-milli-lazer-silahini-yapiyor-718539-gundem/>

“The project is expected to last six years and produce two separate laser weapons. The first phase will last four years and produce the first laser weapon, which will use laser systems readily available. In the first phase of the project, other high strength laser systems will also be developed, which will have different technologies. For the second phase of the project, laser sources (which are one of the most critical components of the weapon system) will be technically examined and one of the laser sources will be selected for integration into the weapon system. The second phase will last two years, at the end of which the weapon will be produced with a domestic laser source.

(continued)



Continued: Turkish Army to Produce Laser Weapon to Defend Against Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)

“Turkish engineers have completed the first prototype of a laser weapon similar to the one the U.S. Navy recently started using.”

ASELSAN will be responsible for developing the ‘target detection and target pursuit’ systems, which will enable the high strength solid laser source and laser radiation to be focused on the target until the target is damaged.

It will hit land, sea and air

The laser weapon will detect and pursue air threat targets and neutralize them with the laser radiation. The system, which can destroy targets which are kilometers away in seconds, will also decrease the cost of various bombs. The laser weapon will be used in the destruction of UAVs, guided missiles, navigation missiles and mortar ammunition. The laser weapon to be developed will be used in navy ships and Army vehicles.

It will lock in the moment it sees [the target]

- The high strength laser can focus on the target and transfer its strength
- It has the capability to destroy moving targets
- It can move in three dimensions
- ‘Wedge stabilization’ structure
- It can be modified and expanded according to need, due to its expandable architecture.”

Changing Trends in Israel – Turkey Security and Military Relations: Their Perspectives

By Karen Kaya

This article analyzes the changing trends in the military and security relations between Turkey and Israel. It identifies factors of the operational environment that influence bilateral relations and includes a thorough discussion of each of the factors from a Turkish and Israeli perspective. It argues that relations are a product of the structural changes in the two countries’ operational environments.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/universities.html>



Turkey Begins Training Iraqi Army and Sunni Groups to Fight ISIS

15 March 2015

“Turkey will extend its training program to the Iraqi army and local Sunni forces in Mosul, in addition to the 1500 Kurdish fighters the Turkish armed forces has trained since November...”

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-March Turkish Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz announced that Turkey would train Iraqi army and local Sunni forces in Mosul, with a view to their taking part in an operation to save the city of Mosul from the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS), possibly in April. As the accompanying passages point out, these forces are in addition to the 1500 Kurdish fighters whom the Turkish Armed Forces have trained since November. Turkey will give training, equipment, intelligence and logistics support to the Iraqi Army, the Peshmerga and the Sunnis as part of efforts to degrade and defeat ISIS.

The accompanying passages also note Governor of Mosul Atheel Nujaifi's comments regarding Turkish involvement in providing military training to the Sunni forces who will take part in the operation. He reportedly says that while Turkish officials promised to send weapons, the details remain unclear. He claims that the operations in Tikrit and Kirkuk had caused a serious blow to ISIS and that this would make it much easier to save Mosul. He claims that the terrorists are psychologically completely destroyed and that the experienced militants, along with the leader cadre of ISIS, had escaped from the region. He notes that there are about 5000 ISIS militants in Mosul and that the operation against them would include Kurdish forces, in addition to the newly trained forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: “Turkey Extends Military Training to Local Sunni Forces and Iraqi Army,” Hurriyet Daily News, 11 March 2015, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkey-extends-military-training-to-local-sunni-forces-and-iraqi-army.aspx?PageID=238&NID=79477&NewsCatID=510>

“Turkey will extend its training program to the Iraqi army and local Sunni forces in Mosul, in addition to the 1500 Kurdish fighters the Turkish armed forces has trained since November, Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz has said.

“We have decided to give train-equip, intelligence and logistics support to the Iraqi Army, the Peshmerga and the Sunnis,” Yılmaz told reporters on March 10, elaborating on his visit to Baghdad and Erbil last week.

The training of local Sunni tribes would take place in northern Iraq, the minister said, adding that the total number of trained Peshmerga by Turkish armed Forces exceeded 1500 and the number of trainees is open-ended upon the demand of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq (KRG).

The Turkish Armed Forces has conducted a training program for Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq since November as part of efforts to degrade and defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).”

Source: “Nuceyfi: Türkiye Sünnileri eğitmeye başladı” (Nujaiifi: Turkey has started training Sunnis), Radikal.com.tr, 15 March 2015, http://www.radikal.com.tr/dunya/nuceyfi_turkiye_sunnileri_egitmeye_basladi-1314104

The governor of Mosul Atheel Nujaiifi declared that Turkey has started providing military training to the Sunni forces that will take part in an operation to save the city [of Mosul] from ISIS, in certain camps.

Nujaiifi said, “Military advisers from Turkey are providing military training to our forces in camps. Turkey is playing a bigger role in this each and every day. But whether it will directly participate in the Mosul operation depends on the meetings it has with coalition partners. It is very important for Turkey to participate in this operation.”

Promise to provide weapons assistance

Nujaiifi, who said that they had requested weapons from Turkey also said, “...Turkish officials promised to send weapons to our forces who are being trained but they did not provide clear information about when, how or how much.”

Nujaiifi, who said that the Iraqi army would lead the operation to save Mosul, which is expected to start within the coming months, said that it might bother the local population if Shia militia participated in the operation and therefore they were trying to get Sunni forces recruited as quickly as possible.

(continued)

Continued: Turkey Begins Training Iraqi Army and Sunni Groups to Fight ISIS

Source: “Nuceyfi: “Türkiye Sünnileri eğitmeye başladı” (Nujaifi: Turkey has started training Sunnis), Cnnturk.com.tr, 15 March 2015, <http://www.cnnturk.com/haber/dunya/nuceyfi-turkiye-sunnileri-egitmeye-basladi>

Nujaifi, who said that he could not provide a clear start date for the operation, said, “It could be next month. We don’t want it to be delayed any further. During the operation, many people may end up as refugees. So it would be best for those people if we save Mosul before the hot summer months start.”

In response to a question about whether Kurdish forces (the Peshmerga) would take part in the operation, Nujaifi said, “Of course, the Peshmerga will take part in the operation. But how much and how [they will take part] will depend on the agreement.

Nujaifi said that according to the latest information, there are about 5000 ISIS militants in the center of Mosul, and a total of 20,000 ISIS militants in the Nineveh [province of Iraq]. Nujaifi said that, “ISIS cannot find militants like it used to and is facing difficulties. They are replacing their foreign terrorists killed in the fighting with new and amateur terrorists. So they are not in good shape.”

Nujaifi said that the operations in Tikrit and Kirkuk had caused a serious blow to ISIS there and that this would make it much easier to save Mosul. He said that the ‘terrorists’ are psychologically completely destroyed and that the experienced militants along with the leader cadre had escaped from the region.”

The Syrian Crisis from a Neighbor’s Perspective: View from Turkey

By Ms. Karen Kaya

This paper examines how the crisis in Syria is spilling over into neighboring countries and the possible implications for Turkey’s security. Besides dealing with huge numbers of refugees, the fighting in Syria has exacerbated religious tensions in the region and a host of other security challenges for Turkish officials.

http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20140430_art010.pdf





Testing UAV Surveillance over Tehran

23 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Iranian drone program continues to expand rapidly. The Iranian military is increasingly pressing drones into service. While most Iranian discussion regarding drones focuses on their military application against external adversaries, the excerpted article from DefaPress.ir, Iran's main defense news portal, suggests that Iranian authorities will also use surveillance drones in emergency response operations.*

The threat of earthquakes in Iran is real: every decade Iran experiences major earthquakes, some of which claim thousands if not tens of thousands of lives. Tehran's huge expansion in the years since the Islamic Revolution—it has grown from a city of two million in 1979 to perhaps 14 million today—coupled with a widespread failure to comply with earthquake-resistant engineering standards has left many Iranians fearing the inevitable “big one” will hit Iran's capital. Indeed, there is increasingly an undercurrent of serious discussion about the possibility of moving Iran's capital to reduce the danger to continuity of government after such a disaster.

*While any decision to move Iran's capital is years away, that Iranian authorities are testing drone surveillance in a disaster exercise in Tehran shows another strategy of preparation in which the Iranian government is engaged. That the drone belongs to and is operated by the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC)—a group dedicated to defending Iran's revolutionary regime from enemies foreign and domestic—suggests that drone surveillance against Iranian civilians might be employed in scenarios other than their protection. At the very least, the IRGC's ownership of disaster search-and-rescue drones suggests an unwillingness to allow civilian Iranian bodies to acquire or utilize such technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

Source: “Bargozari Razmayesh Emdad va Nejat dar Tehran az 4 ta 15 Esfand; beh Kargiri Pehpadbaraye Nakhstin Bar dar Razmayesh Sepah Tehran” (Search and Rescue Efforts Held in Tehran from February 23 to March 6; UAVs used for the first time in Tehran Revolutionary Guards Exercise), Defapress.ir, 23 February 2015. <http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/41799>

UAVs used for the first time in Tehran Revolutionary Guards Exercise

According to a report by the defense and security correspondent of Defense News, Revolutionary Guards Brigadier General Ahmad Zolghadr, deputy commander of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) unit of the Revolutionary Guards, this morning at a press conference for the search and rescue exercises for the Jerusalem and Kowsar Battalions, said that the exercises will test different organizations, and stated that by means of the maneuvers, they can reduce and lessen hazards. He added, in this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) unit of the Revolutionary Guards formed overnight new search and rescue units for Greater Tehran.

He added, the scenario is a catastrophic high-magnitude earthquake in Tehran, and that's why we're trying to conduct the exercise in an environment close to reality... He added that for the first time, we will use drones to photograph the environment, and use of an air rescue helicopter is also expected....

OE Watch Commentary: *Iran's time as a chief American ally in the Middle East, when together with Israel it was a pillar of regional security, is an increasingly distant memory for most Americans, but one legacy of that former partnership is Iran's stable of F-14 Tomcats. The Shah of Iran, who himself was a former pilot, placed a \$2 billion order for 80 Grumman F-14A Tomcats in 1974, five years before his ouster in the Islamic Revolution.*

Many F-14 pilots fled Iran during the Revolution and those in the United States for training often chose not to return against the backdrop of purges and summary execution of the Shah's senior officers. While Iranian F-14s saw some service during the Iran-Iraq War, inadequate maintenance took its toll, so that by 1986 Iran had only 25 operational F-14s.

*While the United States and much of the rest of the world retired their F-14s nearly a decade ago, the Islamic Republic of Iran—cut off from new imports for both financial and political reasons—has worked to refurbish, restore, and upgrade its remaining F-14s. From within their main F-14 base in Isfahan, the Iranian Air Force long ago modified the F-14 with bomb racks. Now, according to the excerpted article, the Iranian Air Force has upgraded its fleet with a new, more powerful radar system. While the capability of the new radar is unclear, it certainly marks a significant improvement over the F-14A's original radar technology, which is now more than four decades old. The Iranian government is likewise claiming that it can maintain and produce spare parts for every other F-14 system, suggesting that a platform that has become a museum piece elsewhere in the world will see many more years of service in the skies over and around Iran. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

Source: "Nasab-e Radar 'Melli' Ruye F-14" (Installation of 'National' Radar on F-14s), Mashreghnews.ir, 24 February 2015. <http://goo.gl/mPRIA9>

Installation of 'National' Radar on F-14s

According to a Mashregh report, Colonel Asghar Shafiei, deputy commander of the regular army's 8th Air Base in Isfahan, stated with relation to Iran's self-sufficiency, because of the complex nature of the specialties in the [Air] force and especially with regard to aircraft and equipment, before the revolution, Iran was completely and entirely at the mercy of foreign countries like America and some European countries. Yet, after the revolution, imposed sanctions cut those ties. But these dependencies had caused the Air Force to stop thinking and innovation, and so officials decided to establish an organization for [internal] jihad and self-sufficiency to combat dependency. Shafiei stated aviation science is an advanced technology, and said, they kept true to this progress, and it is necessary for equipment, expertise, and support.... The assistant operations chief for the 8th Air Wing in Isfahan said all the aircraft in this organization will have an overhaul, and we won't have any dependence on any other country. And at the Isfahan base where we have the F-14s, we have reached a point where we can say with certainty that Isfahan is the only place [where] these aircraft are overhauled and manufactured now, in the world." He added, that we have gone from zero to 100 percent of the maintenance in production of spare parts, airframe, engine, landing gear and avionics and radar and all digital systems, and we can service and replace everything that needs to be replaced, and the plane after thousands of man-hours of work is ready for flight testing.... Shafiei further stated that now we are upgrading the F-14 and we have reached a point where we have a 'national' radar and we have constructed this national radar system for the F-14, and this radar was tested on the plane, and it has passed the test, and the F-14s on which we have installed this radar system are now flying.



Iranian AF F-14 Tomcat landing at Mehrabad.
Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org>



Army to Use Suicide Drones

17 February 2015

“Iran announced... that it had successfully tested suicide combat drones.”

OE Watch Commentary: Perhaps no aspect of Iran’s overt military program has seen as much development over the past decade as Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Whereas a decade ago Iran’s UAVs and drones were largely for show, a platform with little if any capability, the Iranian military today boasts widespread use of drones, employed not only by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), but also by the regular army, both regular and IRGC navy, and the regular and IRGC air forces. In a mid-February speech excerpted here, regular army General Abdolrahim Moussavi outlined the army’s growing use of drones, with emphasis on suicide or kamikaze drones. While it is easy to dismiss the idea of a suicide drone as more symbolic than real in an age of cruise missiles and precise Predators, utilizing suicide drones is an asymmetric strategy which both allows Iran to compete on an uneven playing field and poses a risk by allowing operators to pick and choose targets of opportunity over a drone’s multi-hour flight duration. Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan highlighted the utility of suicide drones against enemy helicopters.

While Moussavi emphasized the utility of suicide drones, he elsewhere described these as but one of three categories of drones which the army operates, with surveillance and reconnaissance being the other two. At the same conference Moussavi’s colleague, Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari, told reporters that Iranian authorities had tested three different suicide drone models which they had derived from the Ra’ad [Thunder]-85 class.

Iran’s explosive emphasis on drone development promises to make American operations in both the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Aden more complicated and can also pose a proliferation concern should Iran export suicide drones to groups like Hezbollah or Bashar al-Assad loyalists in Syria, from where they might pose a threat to neighboring state helicopters. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Artesh az Pehpad Entehari Estifadeh Mikonad” (Army to Use Suicide Drones), Islamic Republic News Agency, 17 February 2015. <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81509874/>

Iran to Use Suicide Drones

According to a Tuesday report from the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Lieutenant Commander of the Iranian Army Brigadier General Abdolrahim Moussavi on the sidelines of a summit held this morning at the Air Force hotel said in response to a question from IRNA’s special defense correspondent...that the army has different types of UAVs including those which are suicide drones, and that an example of the activities of the army’s UAVs could be seen in the joint military exercises held in southeastern parts of country in December. And he said the ground forces, air forces, and naval forces all benefit from UAV units, and the use of drones in the Al-Anbia air defense base is also a goal. The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced in January that it had successfully tested suicide combat drones in the recent Mohammad Rasulallah (peace be upon him) war games held in December in the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Aden.

“... Egypt is worried following the death of King Abdullah ...”

OE Watch Commentary: According to Adel Suleiman, a retired Egyptian general turned strategic analyst, the current unraveling of the Middle East is the result of a deliberate American policy to foment “creative chaos.” This policy is part of the broader project to remake the region and hinges, according to him, on the dismantling of the Arab republics’ armies. He notes that over the past few years the project has picked up steam, as the armies of Libya, Syria, and now Yemen have joined Iraq in the graveyard of nationalist Arab armies. He concludes that Egypt is the only strong Arab army left standing among the republics of the Middle East.

Analysts throughout the region wonder where Egypt is heading. According to the second accompanying excerpt, from a Lebanese newspaper, the Egyptian military’s actions moving forward will determine whether it “will succeed in regaining its bonds and stability or it will fail and the process of disintegration will begin.” The author identifies growing distance with the United States as the key variable in this critical juncture. The strongest indicator of this, for him, was American disapproval of Egypt’s mid-February airstrikes in Libya. Laying out the red carpet for Russian President Vladimir Putin in Cairo only a few days before the strikes occurred only helped exacerbate the tensions, he believes.

Turbulence in its relations with Saudi Arabia makes Egypt’s situation all the more uncertain. In early March Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi stopped in Riyadh for a few hours to visit Salman, the new Saudi king. There was some patching up to do as a result of embarrassing leaks in which al-Sisi seemed to express disdain for Gulf leaders. On top of this, Egyptian and Saudi security interests are diverging. From the Egyptian perspective, Libya and the Sinai are the key areas that require attention; for Saudi Arabia, it is Yemen and Iraq that are of greatest concern. This divergence has created a foreign policy rift between the two countries, particularly in their dealings with Turkey and Qatar, whom Egypt views as supporters of its

Source:

شرق أوسط جديد منزوع الجيوش
Adel Suleiman. “New Middle East with Armies Stripped Away,” al-Araby al-Jadid. 12 February 2015. <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/a9ef9d5c-f4c3-4fda-b7c9-da9ef8594e1d>

It appears that an element of the “creative chaos” which is to bring about the new Middle East is the end of national armies in key Arab countries... the West considers them the main obstacle to creating a new Middle East, with the most prominent among them being Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen... the dissolution of the Iraqi Army was the first nail in the coffin of the region’s national armies, it was the test tube for the US’s “New Middle East” Project...

Source:

خيوط اللعبة | تدمير الجيش المصري بعد العراقي والسوري؟
Sami Klaib. “The Rules of the Game: Destruction of the Egyptian Army after the Iraqi and the Syrian?” 23 February 2015. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/226720>

The picture will become bleaker the more publicly President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi deepens his alliance with Russia and China and the more conflictive his relation with the US becomes... Egypt is forbidden from regaining its dignity. It is forbidden from mobilizing beyond its borders without American permission. This is an extremely sensitive moment, for either the army will succeed in regaining its bonds and stability or it will fail and the process of disintegration will begin, which will make it easier for Israel to impose a new security balance amidst a sea of blood, terrorism and the disgraceful disintegration of the Arabs.

Source:

التحول السعودي والقلق المصري
Khaled al-Dakhil. “Saudi Transformation and Egyptian Worries,” al-Hayat, 1 March 2015. <http://goo.gl/O2I7Iy>

It is clear that Egypt is worried following the death of King Abdullah... Egyptian media claims that King Salman’s position toward the Muslim Brotherhood is neither as firm nor as definitive as that of his predecessor, and that he is leaning toward re-engagement with Qatar and Turkey... in other words, there is fear that Saudi support for Egypt will either decline or be part of a different political bundle...

(continued)

Continued: Creative Chaos: Egypt and the Gulf

enemies in Libya and the Sinai. Saudi Arabia, in contrast, has begun a policy of rapprochement with Turkey and a full reintegration of Qatar into the embrace of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The third accompanying article, written by an influential Saudi columnist, highlights Egypt's concerns with Saudi Arabia's new foreign policy. The author fears that Egypt's media are working themselves into a nationalist, anti-monarchical frenzy that could have dangerous consequences.

Following Egypt's bombing of Libya, which in the final accompanying article from Qatar's al-Jazeera is referred to as "al-Sisi's mistake," dozens of additional Egyptian citizens were kidnapped in Libya. Tens of thousands have poured back across the border over the past weeks, and it is unclear how the Egyptian economy will accommodate them, particularly if Gulf funding is curtailed. Whither Egypt is anyone's guess. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source:

هل يتحمل المصريون في ليبيا أخطاء السيسي؟
 "Can Egyptians in Libya Endure al-Sisi's Mistake?" al-Jazeera, 24 February 2015. <http://goo.gl/u1CbeL>

According to Egyptian media reports, armed groups in Libya kidnapped nearly 40 Egyptians in the few days following the bombing of Derna by the Egyptian military...

A MODERN HISTORY OF THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY IN DARAA

By By Lucas Winter, Foreign Military Studies Office

This paper looks at the genesis and development of the Free Syrian Army in the southern province of Daraa, from July 2011 to July 2013.

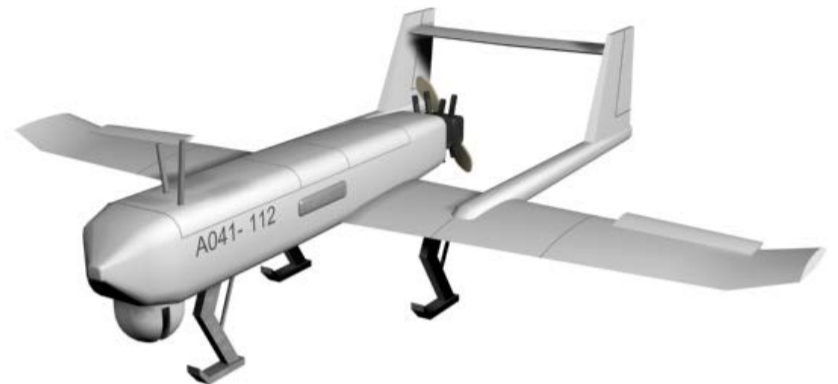
A careful analysis of the emergence and development of provincial FSA structures is merely a prelude to unraveling the complex dynamics of any given province, not to mention Syria as a whole. This study may provide a template for how to study other provinces, considering the broader Syrian conflict as a series of local conflicts rather than a single national one.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Free-Syrian-Army-Daraa.pdf>



UAV Threats and Vulnerabilities in the Middle East

“... I believe that foiling this strategy depends on three things...”



Iranian Mohajer (left) Mohajer 4 (right)
Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

OE Watch Commentary: For some time now Iranian-model surveillance drones have been regularly coming down in territory controlled by the Islamic State (IS). Over the past three months IS propaganda has shown its fighters posing alongside a variety of these systems, including a “Shahin” (variant of the Mohajer-4) in Diyala and Kirkuk, an Ababil-3 in Samarra, and another Mohajer-4 variant in Dayr az Zawr. It is not clear whether IS fighters actually brought down any of these drones, though it is possible, given that they are relatively small, slow, and low-flying.

An asymmetry arises when simple drones such as the Mohajer and Ababil face complex air defenses that are meant to detect bigger intrusions. This may partly explain why in February several drones separately penetrated Israeli airspace from Gaza and Lebanon, as the first accompanying excerpt describes. One of them, identified as an Ababil AIB, was made in Gaza, flown by Hamas’s al-Qassam Brigades and is apparently armed with miniature rockets. Reports claim that the drone was part of a team of two or three. There are no reports that Hamas or Hizbullah has attempted to send a swarm of drones across the border yet.

More advanced systems are also beginning to proliferate in the region. Iran’s Shahed-129 UAS was first spotted flying over Syria in 2014. The UAE is poised to become the first non-NATO ally to obtain advanced American unmanned aircraft system (UAS) technology in the form of the Predator XP reconnaissance system. At the IDEX 2015 weapons fair, held in Abu Dhabi in February, the makers of the Kalashnikov announced they had purchased a controlling stake in Zala Aero, a Russian UAS developer.

Source:

تل أبيب تعترف بأن ثلاث طائرات أبابيل تابعة للقسام
“Tel Aviv Acknowledges that Three of al-Qassam’s Ababil Aircraft...,” al-Rai al-Youm. 22 February 2015. <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=221348>

Israeli warplanes were scrambled to the area to target the UAVs, of which there were reportedly two or three and which by then had successfully returned to Gaza... According to al-Qassam Brigades they have flown several UAVs, some of which have rockets... last Sunday a UAV flew over Israeli airspace for twenty seconds after entering along the northern border. This was not the first time this has happened in the past few weeks....

Source:

دعماً لولاية أبين - ورشة أبحاث عسكرية
Abdullah bin Mohammed. “In support of Ibyan province (Yemen) Military Research Workshop...” 1 July 2011 (posted). <http://www.arabic-military.com/t22736p60-topic> (translation via: http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_international/_pdfs/al-qaida-papers-drones.pdf).

I believe that foiling this strategy depends on three things: The formation of a public opinion to stand against the attacks, deterring of spies and tactics of deception and blurring. These tactics are...

5. Jamming of and confusing of electronic communication using old equipment...
19. When discovering that a drone is after a car, leave the car immediately and everyone should go in different direction because the planes are unable to get after everyone.

(continued)



Continued: UAV Threats and Vulnerabilities in the Middle East

How do guerrilla fighters deal with drones? In 2011 al-Qaeda member Abdullah bin Mohammed authored a brief tract on this topic. The document was posted online, and two years later the Associated Press found a printed copy of it in Mali. The document mentions three broad strategies. The first is “tactics of deception and blurring,” which range from rudimentary technological foils to common sense reminders. Two of them are excerpted alongside this article for illustration.

The second strategy consist of deterring and disrupting spies, who help pinpoint and identify targets, while the third entails working to turn public opinion against the use of UAVs. There are several other Arabic-language materials online on how to deal with drones, including vague guidance on making electromagnetic weapons out of microwaves, instructions on bringing down planes with a “700 milliwatt laser pointer” that can be purchased in China, and general discussions of GPS jamming and spoofing.

*A more mundane vulnerability for UAS systems in hostile environments is maintaining security in the areas from which they operate. Last December, fighters from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula lobbed several rockets at the al-Anad Airbase in Yemen’s Lahj Province. Recent media reports indicate an unprecedented state of alert at the base in early March, as the accompanying excerpt notes. Drones, one might say, are not very good at defending themselves on the ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

استنفار عسكري في قاعدة العند الجوية

“Military state of alert in al-Anad Airbase,” Yemen 24. 6 March 2015. <http://yemen-24.com/news8648.html>

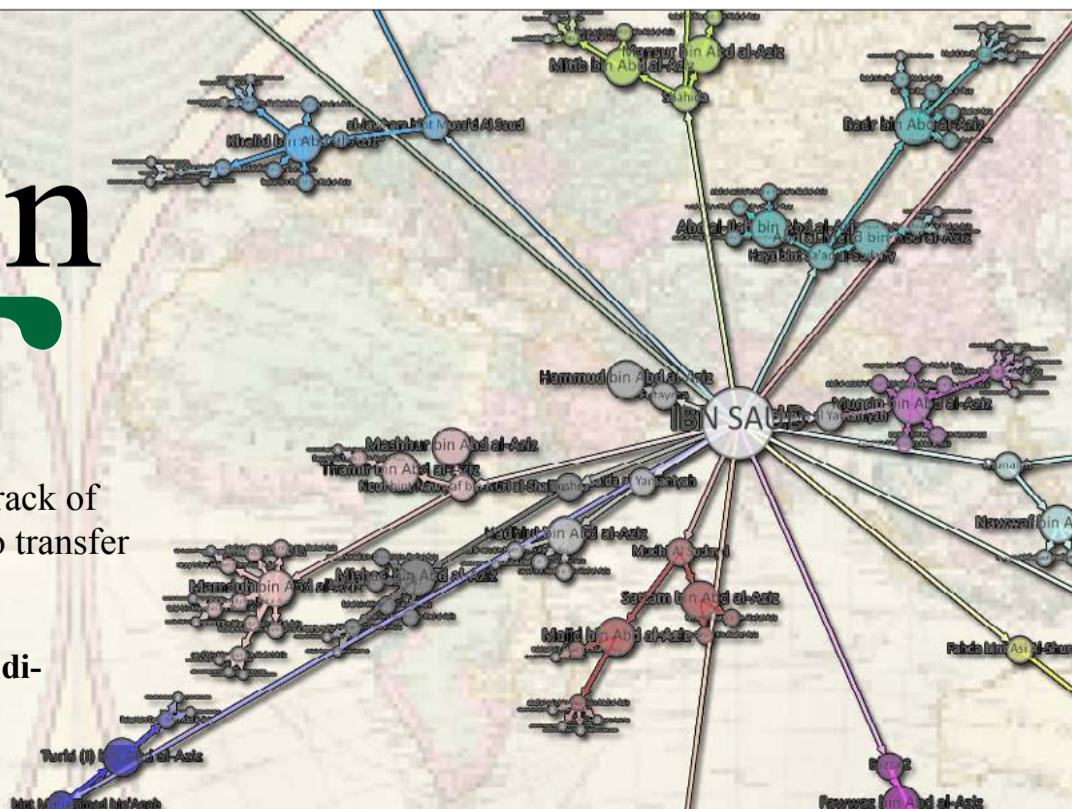
Southern officers and soldiers working in the base said that at the moment there was an unprecedented state of alert and deployment in the base, clarifying that up until now they were unsure of the reason behind these actions.

Mapping Saudi Arabia's Succession

By LUCAS WINTER
Foreign Military Studies Office

This paper aims to serve as a guide for keeping track of the key players as the Saudi royal family seeks to transfer power to a new generation of princes.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Saudi-Succession/Saudi-Succession.pdf>



“... most of the military brigades in Aden and Lahej are loyal to Saleh ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Suppose that events in Yemen over the past six months were turned into a season of the popular TV series, Game of Thrones. That season's summary might read something like this: “House of Saleh allies with House of Huthi to neutralize House of al-Ahmar and take over the Yemeni capital from King Hadi. King Hadi flees to the southern city of Aden. He and other southerners ally with House of al-Ahmar's supporters in an attempt to confront the Saleh-Huthi alliance.”

Alliances help us grasp what is unfolding in Yemen. None is as important to the country's current predicament as the alliance between the Huthis and the Salehs. This alliance is strategic, as the first accompanying article explains. It is complementary, with each party providing something the other lacks: the Huthis have religious and ideological credentials, a mass of young and zealous foot soldiers, and links to Iran and its network of allies in the “resistance axis.” The Salehs, meanwhile, bring detailed knowledge of Yemeni patronage networks (developed over more than 30 years in power), leadership of a powerful and established political party, and the loyalty of many of the Yemeni Army's best armed, trained and positioned units, particularly in and around the capital Sana'a.

After seizing Sana'a, the Huthis hoped that Defense Minister Mahmoud al-Subaihi would chair a military council to run the country, but instead he bolted the capital for his home province of Lahj, in Yemen's south. Other southern officers have joined Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the deposed president, in an attempt to consolidate power in Aden, the traditional capital of the south. As the second article notes, this will not be easy, as many of the units in the area are allies of Saleh. Meanwhile in Sana'a, the Saleh-Huthi alliance will be forced to govern. With his adversaries out of the capital, Saleh may now feel like he no longer needs the Huthis to “make a glorious comeback to ‘save Yemen,’” as the third accompanying article sardonically notes.

There are two main fault lines in Yemen. The first is the North-South divide, which is the legacy of two separate countries that unified in 1990 and fought a civil war over unification only four years later. The north won that war, and southern resentment has remained ever since. The second is the sectarian one between Wahhabi-influenced Sunni tribesmen and the Zaydi revivalist Huthis. Regional trends and Saudi-Iranian competition are enflaming this division.

Source:

الحوثيون وصالح.. تحالف الثورة اليمنية المضادة باق
 “The Huthis and Saleh... Yemen's Counterrevolutionary Forces Remain,” Mareb Press. 6 March 2015. https://marebpress.net/news_details.php?sid=107720

One might say that Saleh's interest in the Huthis come from a desire to eliminate his rivals, while the Huthis interest in Saleh comes from a desire for power and control. It appears that the first of these has been achieved, yet in terms of the second, the Huthis have yet to achieve full control.

Source:

حشد عسكري بعدن وهادي يسعى لإنهاء تمرد السقاف
 “Military Mobilization in Aden as Hadi Aims to End al-Saqqaf's Rebellion,” al-Jazeera. 12 March 2015. <http://goo.gl/V9j4Qc>

The “al-Shar'a” newspaper reported on the military mobilization in Aden. It noted that the Huthis sent some of their men to the Special Security Forces base to strengthen the position of their rebel leader al-Saqqaf. The paper added that there were fears of war breaking out in the city. It also added that Gen. Nassir Hadi, the president's brother, is mobilizing to recruit 20,000 fighters from the tribes of Abyan and Shabwah to support the local popular committee fighters loyal to Hadi. The newspaper noted that the president seeks to end al-Saqqaf's rebellion militarily, only most of the military brigades in Aden and Lahej are loyal to Saleh...

Source: Adel al-Ahmadi. “The Salehs make a play for power in Yemen,” al-Araby al-Jadid. 12 March 2015. <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/3/12/the-salehs-make-a-play-for-power-in-yemen>

Houthi knows he cannot afford a direct confrontation with Saleh, with signs of his growing influence looming on the horizon. The Houthis are now hostile to most parties in Yemen, and Saleh apparently no longer needs them as a facade to oust Hadi, his former deputy, and make a glorious comeback to “save Yemen” from the chaos which envelops it. Over the past few weeks, some of Saleh's supporters who joined the Houthi-affiliated popular fronts replaced the group's slogan on their rifles with photos of Saleh's son... Houthi's speech, meanwhile, shows he knows Saleh can tip the balance in Sana'a at any moment.

(continued)

Continued: Yemen's Game of Thrones

*The guns of the Saleh-Huthi alliance are still hot, and, barring a political compromise, they will move to control all of Yemen. This would entail defeating southerners in Aden and Sunni fighters in Mareb Province, who have formed an alliance of their own. It is precisely this type of fighting that a political solution seeks to avoid. Otherwise, as the longtime UN Special Representative to the region Jamal Benomar noted, Yemen will become "a combination of scenarios like Syria, Libya and Iraq." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

الحوثيون يصدرون بيان تهديد ووعيد ضد مارب
"The Huthis Issue Statement Threatening Mareb," al-Madar. 6 March 2015. <http://almasdaronline.com/article/69006>

The [Huthis] continued their accusations against the Islah Party, accusing it of conspiring with al-Qaeda against the public interest. The Huthis are looking for a reason to start a war with the tribes of Mareb in order to control the province, which announced its refusal to abide by any decrees issued from Sana'a and its support for President Hadi in the south.

Al-Qaeda's Road to Damascus? Syria and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades

By Mr. Lucas Winter

Since the outbreak of sustained violence in Syria over the past year, the presence of foreign Islamist fighters has become a growing concern to the crumbling Syrian government, rebels in the Free Syrian Army, NATO, and Syria's neighbors. This article examines the role played by the al-Qaeda-affiliated "Abdullah Azzam Brigades" since the start of the Syrian uprising. By doing so, it hopes to provide a context for better understanding of the dynamic interplay between the Syrian insurgency and al-Qaeda.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Al-Qaeda's-Road-to%20Damascus.pdf>

Deepening Diplomatic Crisis between Sweden and Saudi Arabia

“Osama Nugali from the Saudi Arabian Foreign ministry twittered: ‘We reject any attempts to interfere in our internal affairs.’”

OE Watch Commentary: *On 11 March 2015 Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Sweden, motivated, according to the Saudi government, by Swedish criticism of the human rights situation and the political system in Saudi Arabia. However, several German news sources attributed it to be a reaction to Sweden’s non-renewal of a military contract. Although news outlets have reported scantily on the issue, this diplomatic crisis is interesting because it reveals the rarely acknowledged long-term Saudi-Swedish military cooperation, as well as the intermingling of arms trade with democracy and human rights on a bilateral level.*

Although diplomatic relations have not been severed, according to a spokesman of the Swedish government, the head of the Swedish government, commented to a Swedish Radio station, “[t]his is not a game. It is a serious affair and must be treated seriously.” The withdrawal of the Saudi ambassador indeed seems to be only the latest step in a diplomatic dispute that escalated within a few days.

On 10 March 2015 Sweden announced that it would not renew a military contract that includes the exchange of military products, logistics, technology and training. The contract was scheduled to be renewed in May. According to Swedish Defense Minister Hultqvist, Saudi Arabia has not shown any interest in the Swedish offer to continue cooperation in medical fields and gender studies. The contract had been previously renewed in 2010, and Swedish companies had earned half a billion through the contract between 2011 and 2014. However, the contract was also domestically criticized when it was revealed in 2011 that Sweden secretly helped Saudi Arabia build an arms factory. Moreover, the arms contract has been highly controversial within the governing Social Democratic Party, which came to power in 2014, and its green coalition partner rejects it categorically.

*The diplomatic crisis was apparently triggered only one day prior, on 9 March, during a summit meeting of the Arab League in Cairo. While some sources indicate that Sweden was angry about the treatment of Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström during that summit, other sources maintain that the Swedish government made its decision to cancel the military contract only after Wallström was not allowed to speak during the Arab League Summit. Wallström, who had been invited as guest of honor because Sweden recognized Palestine in October 2014, was barred from giving the inaugural address, which she attributed to Saudi Arabia’s intervention and called “shameful.” While an Arab diplomat has confirmed to the AFP News Agency that Riyadh intervened, Saudi Arabia has pointed out that the foreign minister intended to broach the issue of democracy and human rights in Saudi Arabia. After this diplomatic affront, the Swedish government decided to publish the text of Wallström’s speech, in which Saudi Arabia is not mentioned once. Previously, Wallström had rarely publicly addressed the restrictiveness of Saudi Arabia. In January, however, she sharply criticized the sentencing of the blogger Raef Badawi to ten years in prison and 1000 lashes for the defamation of Islam. **End OE Watch Commentary (Chadwick)***

Source: “Saudi-Arabien zieht aus Schweden Botschafter ab” Frankfurter Allgemeine, 11 March 2015: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/saudi-arabien-beruft-botschafter-aus-schweden-ab-13477336.html>

“The diplomatic discord between Sweden and Saudi Arabia in the conflict about military cooperation becomes louder...The withdrawal of the Saudi Arabian ambassador from Sweden was “a reaction to the cancellation of a military contract.”

Source: “Botschafter abgezogen: Streit zwischen Schweden und Saudi-Arabien eskaliert,” Spiegel Online, 11 March 2015: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/saudi-arabien-zieht-botschafter-in-schweden-ab-a-1022963.html>

“The EU sharply criticized the ban on speaking for Wallström”



Politics, Policies, and Perhaps Some Public Confusion Restrict Drone Use

25 February 2015

“The Teal Group estimates the drone market in 2014 was split 89 percent military to 11 percent civilian and this won’t shift much in the next decade. They’re not the same type of drones, of course, but that’s a distinction without a difference given the well-documented terror that many people ... feel when living under drones.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As the accompanying article relates, the push is on from manufacturers and NGOs to use drones for humanitarian purposes in Africa. However, as the article also relates, because of the potential dual use technology of drones – to provide aid for civilians and to search out and destroy enemy combatants – there are concerns regarding their possible misuse. Thus, while there is strong encouragement from various entities to use drones, at the same time there are also attempts to restrict what they can do or where they can fly. In other words, whether the drones are for humanitarian or lethal purposes, politics and policies are restricting their use.*

Perhaps an analogy with firearms can shed light on the drone dual use issue. Though armed soldiers might afford an NGO protection, often these organizations do not allow such individuals in or near their facilities, as the presence of troops with weapons could cause these previously designated neutral areas to now become a target. NGOs would likely view armed drones in a similar manner, and would attempt to restrict their flight, even by well intentioned parties trying to provide protection

Governments, too, have imposed restrictions on drones. One manufacturer has programmed its software to include 31 no fly zones in China: thirty are airports, the other is Tiananmen Square. Closer to home, following the recent accidental crash of a drone on the White House lawn, the Federal Aviation Administration is being “nudged” to issue regulatory guidance. Additionally, drone manufacturers will now make the White House a no fly zone.

Some governments also find themselves under pressure from their citizens to limit drone use. As previously written in OEW, this has been true in parts of Africa, especially where there is mistrust of the government or concerns of neocolonialism and abuses of power. Possibly in response to these citizen concerns, if not demands, there is sometimes a hesitation on the part of African governments to allow their land to be used for drones.

*While humanitarian drone use in Africa has been described as potentially “transformative,” the dual use nature of the technology is still raising concerns. Perhaps the issue is muddied by the fact that in 2014 the market for drones was 89% military and 11% civilian, maybe leading many to automatically think “attack” as opposed to “humanitarian” when they hear “drone” mentioned. With multiple concerns and interests, it would be reasonable to expect governments to continue to restrict drone use, or at least attempt to provide guidelines for their use. This will be true for military drones, as well as those used by civilians. Thus, one of the most potent ways drones will be kept from certain areas of the sky will not be technology, but rather politics and policies. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Source: Paul Currian, “Africa: Game of Drones,” Nigeria Daily News, 25 Feb 2015, <http://www.nigeriadailynews.com/world/africa/110417-africa-game-of-drones.html>

Of course it’s grossly unfair to paint all drones with the same brush...Drones are being tested by humanitarian organizations for a range of activities such as needs assessment, aid delivery, and buzzing Bhutanese farmers. But even old warhorses like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) are getting in on the action.

One result of the White House incident was that it nudged the Federal Aviation Authority to issue long-delayed regulatory guidelines for UAVs (that sadly appear to please precisely nobody).

But these sorts of practical challenges are small compared to the range of larger legal and ethical questions that have been the subject of some healthy debate. The OCHA paper usefully compares drones to dual-use military equipment, such as armoured cars, which some humanitarian organizations will use in some situations, but this subject is by no means settled. As one NGO representative in the Democratic Republic of Congo has said, using drones would be like “handing out food aid from the back of a tank”.

Yet most humanitarian organisations have clear policies: staff don’t carry guns; vehicles don’t transport guns; offices don’t allow guns.

MSF sums this up simply: “It is crucial that no armed people are in or near the hospitals, as the presence of anyone who is armed means the facility becomes a target of war.” Of course MSF, one of the most vocal defenders of humanitarian principles, is also an active participant in a drone pilot project.

The Multinational Joint Task Force: An Underperforming Overmatch?

“If the countries participating in the Joint Task Force had a shared aspiration and common mission then their troops have the strength and military capacity to defeat the insurgents. Each party or coalition partner brings its own capabilities in understanding the region’s communities and topography. But Nigeria, it appears, prefers to work with South African mercenaries, rather than effectively partner with its neighbors.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Though several of the individual nations that comprise the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have had success fighting Boko Haram, difficulties in obtaining unity of force have prevented it from accomplishing even more. As the accompanying article relates, not only is there a lack of military coordination and mutual confidence among the nations, but at times some nations also have shown “unhappiness” with the actions of others - including accusations of one nation having links with the enemy - all of which leads to failure to achieve optimal military capability.*

An example of the discord prior to the formation of the MNJTF can be seen in January of 2015, when Chad, acting unilaterally, sent troops into Nigeria. Another example is when Niger labeled Nigerian troops “cowards,” to which Nigeria responded by calling Niger’s troops “serial looters.” The formation of the MNJTF by the African Union in February was, besides coordinating actions, supposed to prevent such acrimonious words, but it appears that to at least some degree the discord continues.

Though the article does not discuss it, previous multinational African forces have also frequently resulted in far less effectiveness than hoped for. Issues such as differences in language, equipment, command structure and so forth have hampered operations in Darfur, Somalia, and elsewhere. Regional and continental militaries such as the long-delayed African Standby Force being developed are intended, in part, to help overcome these problems.

*The article’s author feels the battlefield successes against Boko Haram have been overstressed...it is still operational and in control of a significant swath of territory. However, should the MNJTF overcome its divisive problems, its overmatch capabilities with regards to Boko Haram might prove to be quite considerable. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Source: Ahmad Salkida, “West Africa: Regional Military Cooperation Must Improve to Defeat Boko Haram,” African Arguments, 11 Mar 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201503160305.html>

In February 2015 the African Union authorized the mobilization of a multinational force drawn from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to tackle Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria and northern Cameroon.

Prior to this, a loosely-arranged multinational military collaboration between Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger had served to somewhat disrupt the activities of the group. But the greatest weakness of current multinational responses has been a lack of mutual confidence between the participant nations.

The requisite command structure does not yet exist for MNJTF to achieve sustained success. There is no effective central command from which instructions can flow to the rank and file.

In reality, the only countries in a multinational operation against Boko Haram at present are Cameroon and Chad, with General Rene Claude Meka acting as the alliance Commander. Chad also acted alone when it entered Nigerian territory in January, receiving assurances for its actions from France.

A source within Nigeria’s military command revealed that there was no need to send a contingent to join Cameroon and Chad under the existing operational command since “we will soon have an African Union 7,500 strong force from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin.”

To subdue all parts of the Boko Haram network will require a deep, strategic domestic security framework that is yet to be put in place.

Somalia: Searching for a Political System for a Nation Comprised of Rival Clans

10 March 2015



“Twenty four years after state collapse in Somalia, the basic political question remains unasked: can Somalis agree on a political system without fearing state power will turn into clan or sub-clan power?”

OE Watch Commentary: *The search for reconciliation among the various clans and factions in Somalia has taken on new urgency as foreign governments, as well as the nascent Somali one, look to build on the recent progress made in areas such as driving back – though not entirely defeating – al Shabaab. However, as the accompanying article relates, finding the best political system for a nation comprised of rival clans is proving quite difficult. Too much power granted to the clans will result in a lack of national unity, but too much centralized authority will be unacceptable to the clans, who value their autonomy.*

Perhaps not unexpectedly, when the clans met and debated as to which form of government Somalia should adopt after decades of anarchy, they went with federalism. It was not just that federalism would help ensure their local rule, but rather it was disdain for a strong central government structure where a rival clan could come to power. Unfortunately, besides the lack of national unity, with a federation there is a risk that instead of having one strong central government monopolizing power one could have multiple governments monopolizing power, each within its own separate region, with the unchecked power marginalizing smaller clans.

The opposition to a strong central government is also fueled by those who were alive when one was present. Siad Barre, Somali’s last President and a military dictator, ruled the country from 1969 to 1991. His human rights record was abysmal as he used his military and paramilitary forces to quash dissent. The risk of returning to the days of unchecked central authority is extremely unappealing.

*Despite the opposition to a strong central government, some feel it is the only way to create a sense of national unity, to preclude individual clans from dominating smaller clans, to prevent inter-clan warfare, and to fairly share the country’s economic resources. Thus, many expect there to be a compromise, with the final result falling somewhere in the continuum between federalism and a strong central government. However, where it falls, whether closer to one than the other, as well as its chance to successfully create a peaceful nation when so many previous attempts have failed, are still uncertain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Source: Liban Ahmad, Somalia: Somalis Debate the Ideal Political System for Clans, African Arguments, <http://africanarguments.org/2015/03/10/somalis-debate-the-ideal-political-system-for-clans-liban-ahmad/>

Federalism is currently the basis for Somalia’s nascent state (re)-formation. But one of the disadvantages of decentralized unitary systems, as noted by the LSE researchers, is that they “create[s] even stronger and potentially more rapacious central government than under federation” whereas one of the disadvantages of federation is that “a powerful federal government is prone to monopolize foreign aid to reinforce its own power at the expense of the regions”.

... it was found that “a substantial majority still views the current federation process as deeply flawed, because it is a largely elite-driven and externally facilitated scheme that promotes clan identity at the expense of citizenship” and that “a significant number of participants noted that social reconciliation is a prerequisite to a successful implementation of federalism in Somalia”.

Somalis’ memories of twenty-plus years of military dictatorship mean that it is not statelessness that bothers them, but state power perceived to be in the hands of a rival clan.

Many Somalis are confused by political theory words such as ‘federalism’, ‘decentralised unitary state’ and ‘secession’, not because they misunderstand the meaning of these terms, but because those who invoke them do so with their clan, rather than the nation’s interest in mind.

When some Somalis call for social reconciliation they are oblivious to substantive power in the hands of the political class, and they have misplaced confidence in the efficacy of Somali customary law to resolve political problems.

“The propaganda from Boko Haram has taken a major turn with the terrorist group, which formerly used a poor quality video on CD-ROM and USB key supports, now using Twitter releasing and better quality films.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since Boko Haram launched its new Twitter account, *al-Urhwa al-Wuthwa* (“The Indissoluble Link”), in January 2015, the militant group has shown a new Francophone orientation. Originally, it carried out virtually all of its attacks in Nigeria, but in 2013 and 2014 it kidnapped more than 15 foreigners in Cameroon and moved supplies through Niger and Chad. In addition, since announcing a jihad in 2010, it almost exclusively issued its propaganda in Hausa or Arabic. Now, however, in 2015, Boko Haram has begun tweeting in French and carrying out attacks in Nigeria’s neighboring Francophone countries, including not only Cameroon but also Chad and Niger.

One of Boko Haram’s most notorious French-language tweets was on 26 February 2015, when it advertised an upcoming video called, “The Harvest of Spies / La Récolte des Espions.” When the video was released it showed the decapitation of two members of the Civilian JTF (Joint Task Force) and included subtitles translating the spoken Hausa into English and French. The video, like other ones released through the *al-Urhwa al-Wuthwa* Twitter account, included the same special effects, graphics, and imagery as Islamic State videos, and was promoted on pro-Islamic State Twitter accounts.

As discussed in an article for African business website, Asoko Insight, on 25 February 2015, Boko Haram’s French-subtitled videos and French-language tweets that claim attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger show signs of collaboration with the Islamic State. The article emphasized that it was only since the start of this Twitter account that Boko Haram’s videos shifted from low quality to the current professional quality, like those of the Islamic State. Moreover, the article points to the fact that in some of its videos released on the *al-Urhwa al-Wuthwa* Twitter account, Boko Haram has referred to itself as Islamic State in Africa.

Given the Islamic State’s expansion into Libya, which is not far from Boko Haram’s area of operations in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, it is increasingly likely that Boko Haram’s collaboration with the Islamic State on the media front represents a broader effort by the Islamic State to expand on the African continent. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau’s subsequent bayat (pledge of loyalty) to Islamic State leader Abubakar al-Baghdadi on 7 March 2015, which was also released on the Twitter account and was subtitled in French, further substantiates the Islamic State’s influence on Boko Haram. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “Twitter Suspends Boko Haram’s Account,” Asoko Insight, 25 February 2015.

Twitter Suspends Boko Haram’s Account

Boko Haram’s twitter account had already pulled in some 5,000 followers, having been active since February 8 and posting about twenty tweets written in Arabic and English, in addition to some messages in French. Twitter became the broadcast channel for Boko Haram. A video posted on February 17 (subtitled in French and English) showed the leader of the terrorist sect, Abubakar Shekau, promising to prevent the holding of presidential and legislative elections in Nigeria scheduled for March 28.

The propaganda from Boko Haram has taken a major turn with the terrorist group, which formerly used a poor quality video on CD-ROM and USB key devices, now using Twitter for releasing better quality films. Boko Haram is now claiming to be a branch of the Islamic State (ISIS) organization, and borrowing the communication codes of the jihadist movement based in the Iraqi and Syrian territories.

“Ibrahim, who dropped out of the university and went into full-time business in his early 20s, is the most unlikely man to volunteer for the Islamic State, according to family friends.”

OE Watch Commentary: In 2010 Nigerians were shocked when the son of a wealthy Nigerian banker and former minister attempted to detonate explosives in his undergarments on a Detroit-bound flight on behalf of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Now, five years later, according to an article for abusidiqu.com, which reports on Nigerian security and political affairs, on 5 March 2015 another wealthy Nigerian joined an infamous jihadist group. This time, the son of the former Nigerian chief justice has traveled to Syria to join the Islamic State with his two wives and children.

The article suggests that his move to Syria, which involved a transit through Turkey, was planned for weeks, if not months, in advance. One of the wives reportedly had told colleagues she was planning a vacation to Dubai, while the son had even spoken out against Boko Haram publicly, both in an effort of deception. Like the Nigerian youth with AQAP in 2010, in this case the son defied the common image of an Islamic State foreign fighter as one who is poor and alienated; rather, this son was a graduate of one of Nigeria's most prestigious universities, Ahmadu Bello University, and had a stable business, and his wives had jobs in government and teaching at a private school.

This case also shows the importance of Nigerian intelligence collaboration with international partners. It was Saudi Arabia that informed Nigeria about the son's arrival in Syria, while it was Turkey that corroborated that he and his wives and children passed through Ataturk airport in Istanbul. This intelligence collaboration may become even more important, given that, according to the article, Nigeria is expressing concern that other wealthy Nigerians may be sending funds to Boko Haram from abroad in a way that is difficult to trace. Intercepting such transfers would inherently require more collaboration between Nigeria and the intelligence services in the countries that are the sources of this funding. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “How Son Of Nigeria's Ex-Chief Justice Left For Syria To Join ISIS,” Abusidiqu.com, 5 March 2015.

How Son Of Nigeria's Ex-Chief Justice Left For Syria To Join ISIS

Ibrahim, described as a 41-year-old “reserved and committed Muslim”, has two wives and four children. His elder wife was the head of a private school in Abuja while the younger worked with the Debt Management Office (DMO). When he took the decision to go to Syria to team up with the “jihadists” of the Islamic State, he reportedly called his wives aside and told them they were free to return to their parents. “But both of them said they would go with him,” a source in the know of the development said, adding that they took all their children with them.

The Turkish embassy in Abuja was compelled to disclose the details of Ibrahim's movement through a court injunction. The embassy confirmed that it issued visas to Ibrahim and members of his family. The details of his arrival in Turkey were made available, while images of CCTV recordings were also said to have been analysed by the Turkish security agencies to establish their movement.

Ibrahim, who dropped out of the university and went into full-time business in his early 20s, is the most unlikely man to volunteer for the Islamic State, according to family friends. “He hated everything Boko Haram stood for, and often queried why they would be killing innocent women and children in the name of Islam,” a source said. “With the benefit of hindsight, he was probably trying to cover up his plans. There was no way you would have suspected that he was ever going to be a fundamentalist himself.”

One of the toughest nuts for us to crack is how Boko Haram has been able to recruit thousands of fighters. Given the number of Boko Haram fighters that have been killed by the military in north-east operations, the group should have been completely incapacitated by now, but they keep getting fresh recruits. While this category of recruits is believed to be ordinary people, the involvement of the children of the northern elite “is definitely new and a source of worry”, an officer said. According to him, “It is not so much about the recruitment of fighters... but the source of funding for the terrorists. If the elite or children of the elite are sympathetic to them, it will be easy to get funding across to them because it would be very difficult to trace.”

“...no juridical guarantees exist in Cuba for anything...”

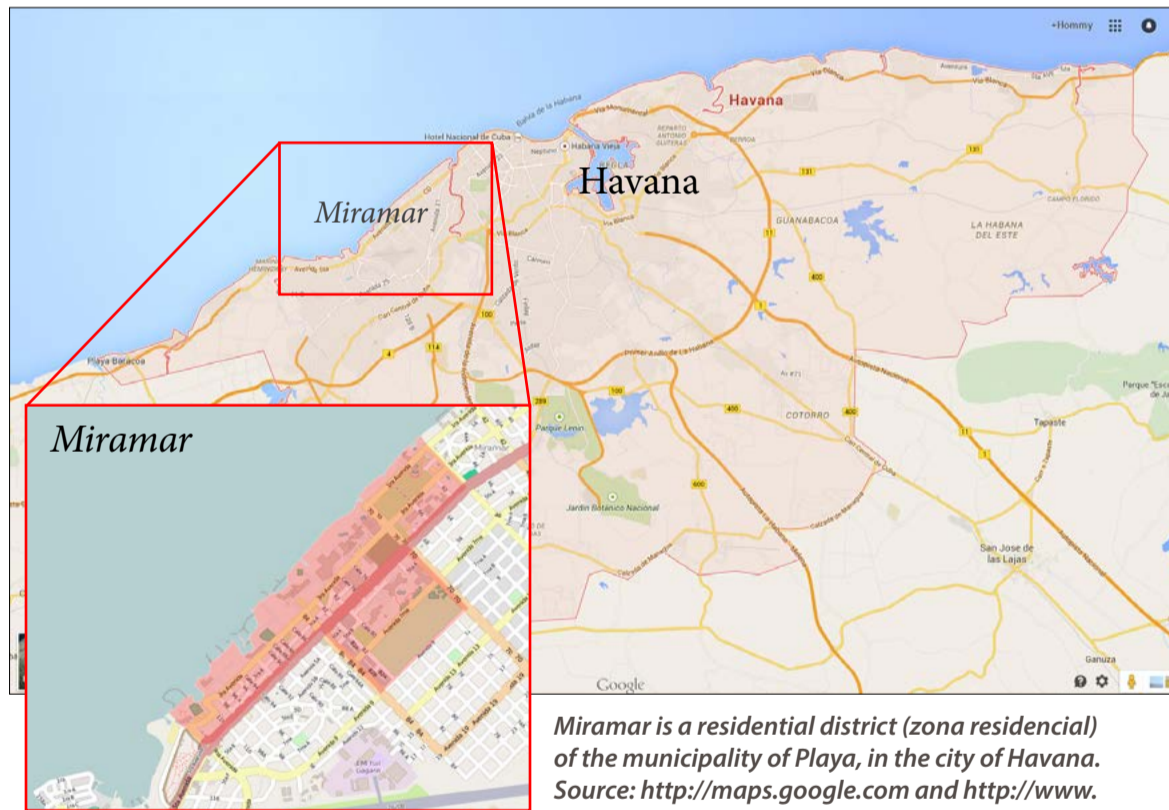
OE Watch Commentary: *This past year the United States government took strides to normalize relations with the government of Cuba. The 2015 National Security Strategy (February 2015) states, “Our opening to Cuba will enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security.” Although changes have not been exactly precipitous, the moves seem to be sparking the imaginations and energies of some entrepreneurs.*

Recently, a fascinating and informative real property advertisement and a subsequent discussion appeared on Puerto Rican television, in which a panel discusses a beachfront six-bedroom, nine-bath, two-kitchen home that has come onto the market near Havana. Selling for a “super cheap” 2 million Cuban convertible pesos, the sale sparked considerable news interest. The discussants cover a full range of issues, and the discussion could be taken as a primer for the nature of the Cuban real estate market and for the greater problems likely to be faced in a hoped-for Cuban transition or in further efforts to normalize relations. The discussants consider if the sale is a result of a family inheritance quarrel or a typical effort of moneyed interests to profit from speculation in anticipation of an acceleration of prices in Cuba. They also touch on the greater juridical and social contexts, asking what kind of documentation comes with the house, what kind of protections, the rules for being allowed to purchase, what kind of taxes might there be, and so on.

*It is apparently the perception in Puerto Rico that there are no commercial guarantees to be found in Cuba, that buying would be a risky venture, and that one is called to wonder about the number of luxury homes available in a socialist paradise where extended families still live in squalor on a few dollars a month. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: Cibercuba Videos, “Cuba ‘For Sale’ - El precio de las casas en Cuba (Parte 1)” (Cuba ‘For Sale’ - The price of houses in Cuba Part 1), El Espejo, América TeVé, 12 March 2015, <http://www.cibercuba.com/videos/noticias/74/cuba-sale-el-precio-de-las-casas-en-cuba-parte-1>

“I believe that beyond analyzing the juridical guarantees, no juridical guarantees exist in Cuba for anything -- that social framework doesn’t exist, neither economic nor political...but to me what comes to mind... What can one of us say to a Cuban who lives with not just his immediate family, his mother, his father, his grandmother, his child, (but) twenty, thirty persons inside a residence, that in Cuba they are selling a house for two million dollars, when a whole Cuban family including the pension of that grandmother and the salaries of those parents doesn’t reach a hundred or two hundred dollars a month?...This is a lesson...there is an opening, but what an opening!...”



“...bombardments by the Air Force FAC and by Army Aviation that have as their objectives installations or encampments of the FARC are prohibited...”

OE Watch Commentary: *Regarding the process of peace accords between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), many Colombians express that they are not of the opinion that an agreement with the FARC will lead to a positive resolution of the conflict.*

The agreement process, the talk-site for which is in Havana, Cuba (the Cuban government being a major host and sponsor of the process), began years ago, although it was originally billed as a surrender-like event that would last but weeks. Oddly and ominously, according to the sentiment of Colombian commentators, the government of Colombia is viewed as having made more and more concessions to the FARC as though the FARC were in the dominant position. Meanwhile, these pundits claim that the FARC has seemingly conceded nothing. As it apparently stands, the FARC members are unlikely to do any jail time, might be protected from extradition, will not have to pay restitution to victims, might be given control over significant swaths of rural territory, to include inhabitants thereof, and will not have to turn in their weapons. To many Colombians the exercise has passed strange. The government even floated (unsuccessfully) the idea of categorizing the FARC's massive cocaine business as a “political” crime and thus subject to amnesty. In his latest bidding to secure FARC signatures, Colombian President Manuel Santos ordered that air operations (bombings) against FARC targets inside Colombia be halted. He also suspended extraditions of FARC members and has assisted in assuring safe movement of FARC leaders to the Cuba negotiation site.

To many observers, it seems that, rather than pressure the FARC toward concessions, the Colombian government has incrementally and now precipitously surrendered leverage.

*It is hard to understand what exactly is going on or why President Santos has taken this path. It is clear to many Colombians that gratuitous surrender to a group of ruthless criminal thugs does not, without a much better set of explanations, equate to a promise of peace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: Jaime Jaramillo Panesso, “Nuevas bombas del Presidente” (The president’s new bombs), Periodico Debate, 13 March 2015, <http://goo.gl/bHX3kN>

“First bombshell: extraditions requested by the United States for guerrillas (accused of) drug-trafficking are suspended. Second bombshell: bombardments by the Air Force FAC and by Army Aviation that have as their objectives installations or encampments of the FARC are prohibited, during a trial month, in recognition of the unilateral guerrilla ceasefire. Third bombshell: A Peace Advisory Commission will be created and convoked wherein political parties will have seats, to include opposition parties and personalities, so that it (the commission) serve to advise and support the process.”

Source: EFE, “Santos agradece a Pastrana presencia en Comisión Asesora de Paz en Colombia” (Santos thanks Pastrana for his presence on the Peace Advisory Commission in Colombia), ABC.com, 15 March, 2015, <http://www.abc.es/agencias/noticia.asp?noticia=1816608>

“...what he [President Santos] wants is to listen to ‘many voices and that they help me get it right’ as to the decisions he makes regarding the peace...For his part, the leader of the opposition party, Centro Democrático, Óscar Iván Zuluaga, rejected becoming part of the commission that is to advise the Government in a peace process about which he had indicated his opposition.”

Source: Noticiero NTN24, “La orden de Santos de detener bombardeos sobre las FARC es “un acto de traición a la patria”: Gral. (r) Harold Bedoya” (Santo’s order stopping bombardments on the FARC is ‘an act of treason against the nation’: General [retired] Harold Bedoya), Noticiero NTN24, 11 March, 2015, <http://www.ntn24noticias.info/video/general-harold-bedoya-43061>

“Ex-commander of the Armed Forces of Colombia, General (retired) Harold Bedoya, and the ex-Minister of Defense, Marta Ramirez, questioned, on the La Tarde de NTN24 [radio] program, the controversial decision of President Juan Manuel Santos to suspend bombing of the FARC. ‘All of Colombia’s big operations were achieved thanks to military air support.’ For her part, Ramirez added asserted that ‘air power is a strategic advantage of the Public Forces’. She added, ‘It seems to me an erroneous decision because it went against the constitutional mandate of the Public Force to combat illegal armed groups.’”

“Of tragic stories caused by landmines Colombia is full.”

OE Watch Commentary: *We have to hope that if something good comes out of the Colombian peace process it will be the de-mining of that country. Like everything else, the issue is wrapped in controversy. There appears to be honest doubt that the FARC (which, along with the smaller ELN guerrilla organization, is overwhelmingly responsible for the vast majority of landmines and the victims of the maiming they have caused) will not participate directly in the de-mining and will not pay for it either. End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)*

Source: Xavier Alexander Macías, “En Colombia hay 23 municipios en alto riesgo por las minas” (In Colombia there are 23 counties at high risk due to landmines), El Colombiano, 10 March 2015, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/paz-y-derechos-humanos/en-colombia-hay-23-municipios-en-alto-riesgo-por-las-minas-KY1463149>

“Of tragic stories caused by landmines Colombia is full... The scourge of the antipersonnel landmines, called by the Army the silent enemy, places Colombia as the number one country in the world with the highest number of military victims (6,817), second with the highest number of new victims and highest number of victims under 18 years of age, and the third highest in the accumulated number of victims between 1999 and 2013. In addition, 890, 139 square kilometers are affected, and inside this territory there are 688 counties with some affectation by antipersonnel landmines, unexploded munitions, and improvised explosive artifacts.”

Source: El Pais, “Colombia sin minas ” (Colombia without landmines), El País, 10 March, 2015, <http://www.elpais.com.co/elpais/opinion/editorial/anonimo/colombia-sin-minas>

“Now it is hoped that the collaboration of the FARC will be effective, locating the sites where they have installed the mines and contributing the resources to be rid of that threat, that according to those who are informed will cost two hundred million dollars. And that the actions that are furthered do not signify the acceptance of a bilateral ceasefire, as has been explained by spokesmen for the Government in Havana.”

Source: Thania Vega de Plazas, “Serios interrogantes sobre el desminado en Colombia” (Serious questions about de-mining in Colombia), thaniavega, 10 march, 2015, <http://www.thaniavega.co>

“According to what is understood, the guerrillas will not participate physically in the demining, they will do so from offices, giving simple location information, when the truth is that even they do not know where thousands of their mines are thousands of hectares. Why don't they assume the risk that our heroic military and police have to run? Others will be writing the history, it terrifies me that now the FARC are the ‘brave ones that de-mined the countryside’, when the truth will be that the Army De-mining Battalion will risk the lives of its men.”

(Special thanks to Eduardo Mackenzie and Colombia News for assistance with this entry)

Is Argentina a New Paradise for Drug Trafficking Organizations?

OE Watch Commentary: Since 2010 criminal organizations dedicated to a multitude of illegal activities have successfully established operational centers in multiple areas throughout Argentina, including Rosario and the Tri-Border region. As operational centers grew, so did the need for synthetic cocaine conversion labs, and today Argentina is classified as the third largest cocaine producer in the world, despite the fact that relatively small amounts of coca leaves are grown in the country. Apart from its role in producing powder from coca base, Argentina also serves as a key exportation hub for large cocaine shipments to Europe. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Source: “¿Es Argentina un nuevo paraíso para el narcotráfico?” (Is Argentina a New Paradise for Drug Trafficking Organizations?), La Prensa. Accessed on 29 December 2014 from <http://laprensa.peru.com/actualidad/noticia-argentina-nuevo-paraiso-narcotrafico-27522>

Is Argentina a New Paradise for Drug Trafficking Organizations?

According to a report released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2013, Argentina is the third-largest cocaine producer in the world despite the fact that almost no coca leaves are grown in the country. Instead, Argentina is home to thousands of synthetic conversion labs where coca paste is converted into powder form prior to its departure to European markets. In addition to its burgeoning cocaine business, Argentina is also becoming a hotspot for criminal groups from Mexico, Colombia, China and the Middle East who benefit directly from widespread impunity in areas with little to no governmental interference such as Rosario and the Tri-Border region.

Key Hubs of Operation

Rosario, a city located in the Santa Fe Province, is home to 950,000 individuals. It is also a strategic location for drug traffickers as roads within the city converge with international connections in Bolivia and Paraguay. Furthermore, the province has several private ports located along the Paraná River where cocaine shipments are exported to Europe. A study conducted by the University of Rosario further indicated that there are at least 400 drug kiosks in the city that generate an estimated €230 million per year. And almost daily, authorities discover new high capacity synthetic drug laboratories in the province.

But it is not just the city of Rosario that is known for drug production. The Triple Frontier where the borders of Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil converge is also known for this activity as it serves as a jumping off point for cocaine shipments to Europe as well as a center for money laundering activities. It is also likely that large shipments of cocaine are flown to the Triple Frontier as in 2013 alone, authorities dismantled 1,400 clandestine airstrips in the area.

Argentina and the International Drug Market

According to a drug trafficking expert from the University of Rosario, Argentina cannot be compared to Colombia or Mexico in terms of drug trafficking activity, but she asserted that drug trafficking is definitely more prominent in the country now than it was in previous years. She further indicated that increased drug trafficking activity may be directly related to the dismantling of Colombian cartels, the rise of Mexican cartels, and new drug routes departing from South America to Africa, Europe and Asia. As for the routes to Africa, shipments generally pass through Bolivia and Paraguay into Argentina where coca paste is refined into powder form at conversion labs. The finished product then ships to West Africa where it is funneled into the European market.

The Metamorphosis of Civil-Self Defense Groups into Cartels

12 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In February 2013 self-proclaimed civil self-defense groups (*fuerzas autodefensas*) began proliferating in Michoacan and other states with significant drug cartel presence in central Mexico. Members of these groups claimed they had no choice but to take security matters into their own hands as police and the federal government turned a blind eye or even supported increasingly brazen criminal groups such as *La Familia Michoacana* and *Los Caballeros Templarios*. As stated by one civil self-defense group operator, federal authorities sent to control violence acted more like referees who sat on the sidelines while watching a civil war unfurl in Michoacan. This perception further outraged already frustrated citizens who already felt they had been abandoned by the government. It also bolstered the burgeoning civil self-defense movement.

By mid-2014 dozens of civil self-defense groups were operational in Michoacan and surrounding states. In an attempt to reign in the proliferating vigilante force, the federal government sent federal police and military reinforcements to dismantle these groups, but were quickly faced with fierce opposition. In the following months confrontations subsided, civil self-defense groups became instrumental in providing accurate intelligence regarding the location of *Los Caballeros Templarios* operators, and they even began participating in high profile arrests. Then in May 2014 the Mexican federal government took an unprecedented step in legalizing civil self-defense groups into what are now known as *Rural Police*.

Vigilantes who decided to join this government-supported enterprise were required to identify themselves, register weapons, and undergo additional training before their official integration into the *Rural Police* force. The solution seemed ideal, as many of the groups consisted of well intentioned citizens eager to protect their families. However, as this source points out, former criminal organizations, including *Los Caballeros Templarios*, saw the *Rural Police* as an opportunity to legitimize themselves and used their new status to advance illicit interests. What has resulted from

Source: “La batalla del narco por Michoacan” (The Ongoing Narco Battle in Michoacan), Blog del Narco. <http://www.elblogdelnarco.org/2015/01/la-batalla-del-narco-por-michoacan-la.html>

Motives of civil-self-defense groups vary from one region to the next, but one commonality that draws legitimate groups together is the desire to protect their families from crimes commonly carried out by local drug trafficking organizations such as kidnapping, extortion, and rape. In Michoacan where the civil-self-defense movement has quickly morphed into a regional phenomenon, groups such as *La Familia Michoacan* and *Los Caballeros Templarios* have splintered into smaller offshoot groups and are now joining the ranks of legitimate self-defense groups that were previously institutionalized by the federal government as *Rural Police*. What is becoming rapidly apparent is that criminal organizations such as *Los Viagra* and *La Tercera Hermandad* are operating under the legal umbrella of the *Rural Police* force. Furthermore, key leaders within these “legal” groups are former cartel operators from the *New Generation Cartel of Jalisco*, *La Familia Michoacana* and *Los Caballeros Templarios*.

Los Viagra

This criminal group was founded in Buenavista Tomatlan, Michoacan by the Sierra Santana brothers and is headed by Nicolas, aka El Nico and/or El Gordo. The group has worked as security elements for drug trafficking organizations including *La Empresa*, the *New Generation Cartel of Jalisco* and most recently, *Los Caballeros Templarios*. As an organization, they are recognized as professional mercenaries willing to provide services to the highest bidder. Today, they are publicly recognized as *Rural Police* and community advocates in Apazingan and its surrounding areas although many residents still speak openly about their criminal past. They also form part of an elite task force that was created by the federal government to hunt down Servando Gomez, the fugitive leader of *Los Caballeros Templarios*. Most recently, the group received high-profile media attention after taking control of the Apazingan City Hall in Michoacan. Subsequent gunfights with federal police left nine dead in this incident.

Source: “Auto defensas dan origen a otro cártel; nace en Michoacán La Tercera Hermandad o H3” (Civil-Self-Defense Groups Morph Into Cartels: La Tercera Hermandad in Michoacan), Milenio. Accessed on January 12, 2015 from <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2014/05/06/957619#imagen-1>

La Tercera Hermandad (H3) - The Third Brotherhood

This group is comprised of formally legitimized civil self-defense groups and former members of the *New Generation Cartel of Jalisco* and *Los Caballeros Templarios*. According to this source, there is speculation that the formation of H3 is not simply a case of preexisting civil self-defense groups criminalizing to fill the absence of *Los*

(continued)

Continued: The Metamorphosis of Civil-Self Defense Groups into Cartels

this activity is that it has become difficult to distinguish the legitimate self-defense groups from the illegitimate ones, as they are operating under the same umbrella. This is the case with Los Viagra and La Tercera Hermandad. End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

Caballeros Templarios. Instead, it is believed that H3 was formed even before the emergence of these groups in January 2013 and was a premediated action by Servando Gomez, the fugitive leader of Los Caballeros Templarios.

Leaders within the group include civil self-defense leader Miguel Angel Gallegos, alias “El Migueladas”, Luis Antonio Torres Gonzalez, alias “El Americano,” and Servando Gomez.

Los Zetas Purchase Thousands of Grenades Stolen from Guatemalan Military Bases

11 August 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *In recent years grenades have achieved “preferred” status by Los Zetas and other Mexican cartels likely because they can be built in Mexico or purchased from Central American countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador, where large supplies still exist from past civil wars. This is evidenced by investigations regarding the alleged theft of an estimated 6,500 grenades from Guatemalan military bases since 2012. As cited by this source, Guatemalan soldiers may have supplied the stolen explosives to Los Zetas for as little as \$(USD) 30 each. Despite the fact that many of the grenades stolen in Central America were originally manufactured in the late 80s and early 90s, grenades have a shelf-life of 30 years if properly stored. However, mismanagement may result in grenades that do not detonate, which is a common occurrence in Mexico.*

Source: “Las granadas del Ejército que armaron a los narcos” (Military Grenades Used to Arm Drug Traffickers), El Periodico. <http://www.elperiodico.com.gt/es/20140811/investigacion/208/Las-granadas-del-Ej%C3%A9rcito-que-armaron-a-los-narcos.htm>

Inventory checks conducted at Guatemalan military bases between October 2012 and March 2013 uncovered a massive weapons theft ring dedicated to supplying arsenal to Los Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel. According to an official military report, 1,449 grenades (40mm) were stolen and subsequently sold to the cartel sometime in 2013. However, investigators involved in the case indicated that an upwards of 6,500 grenades were likely stolen and later sent to Mexico, Huehuetenango, Alta and Baja Verapaz (Departments in Guatemala with high cartel presence). Prices paid for the stolen grenades ranged between \$(USD) 20-30. A military official with access to the investigation further revealed that attempts by soldiers to report weapon theft were met with administrative sanctions including suspension or transfers to other bases.

In terms of use, grenades are most commonly employed to protect drug shipments and to intimidate the local populace into assent. For example, cartel operators may throw grenades containing warnings. These grenades are not detonated, but serve their purpose in effectively scaring citizens who may have considered reporting illegal activity. In more extreme cases, grenades have been detonated in crowded areas where they can inflict mass casualty, as was the case with the 2008 cartel attacks during an Independence Day celebration in Morelia, Michoacan. End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

OE Watch Commentary: According to the first article highlighted, in late October 2014 Central Sulawesi Police found video footage purportedly showing ISIS supporters conducting combat training in a jungle in Poso, Indonesia. Authorities believe the footage is genuine.

In the footage, members of the group claim they joined the ISIS movement, while warning people living in the mountainous area not to inform the police “on pain of death.” The group can be seen shooting long-barreled firearms. According to the article, the video and other items were left behind by the terrorist group as it fled into the jungle following an exchange of gunfire with security forces.

Poso is seen as a top terrorist site in Indonesia. Between 1998 and 2000 over 2,000 people were reportedly killed or disappeared in sectarian violence. While no new sectarian conflict has arisen since, new radical groups have emerged in the region.

The article goes more in-depth into the problems facing Poso and explains that terrorism has been a problem for the Indonesia Police Force (POLRI) over the past ten years. As a result, the government has recently decided to change its policy. In an order that comes directly from President Joko Widodo, any groups affiliated with ISIS will be immediately destroyed. In January 2015 the Indonesian Armed Forces’ special elite squad began deploying to assist POLRI, which had been struggling to contain terrorist activity prior to that. As of late February, the operation, known as Operation Camar Maleo 2015, had seized explosives, guns, and other items suspected of belonging to terrorists operating in Poso Pesisir, North Poso Pesisir, and South Poso Pesisir.

At least 100 foreigners are believed to have entered Poso to take part in jihad. Officials fear that ISIS will be smuggling arms through its borders. One terror group discussed is believed to be led by Daeng Koro (AKA Sabar Subagyo), a former member of the Special Troops Commando (Kopassus) of Indonesia, who brought 200 of his men with him. He is the mastermind behind a series of armed conflicts and guerilla warfare.

These and other media accounts coming out of Indonesia paint a grim picture of the situation in Poso. If the government cannot gain adequate control over the situation, it will only deteriorate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Ruslan Sangadji, “Police Release Video of IS Supporters Training in Poso,” Jakarta Post, 27 February 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/02/27/police-release-video-is-supporters-training-poso.html>.

Police Release Video of IS Supporters Training in Poso

He [Central Sulawesi Police chief Brig. Gen. Idham Azis] said the video material was left behind along with other items by the terrorist group, led by most-wanted terror suspects Santoso and Daeng Koro, as it fled into the jungle after an exchange of gunfire with the security forces.

The members of the gang are recorded stating that they have joined the IS movement, also known as ISIS or ISIL, and warning people living in the mountains not to inform the police on pain of death.

The joint operation, according to Idham, had so far seized explosives, guns and other items suspected of belonging to terrorists operating in Poso Pesisir, North Poso Pesisir and South Poso Pesisir.

Source: Selamat Ginting, “Loreng Darah Mengalir di Balik Gunung Poso (Camouflaged Blood Flowing Behind Mount Poso),” Republika, 16 January, 2015, <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/teraju/15/01/16/ni94gc36-loreng-darah-mengalir-di-balik-gunung-poso>.

Camouflaged Blood Flowing Behind Mount Poso

... Through the Minister of Internal Affairs Tjahjo Kumolo, the government firmly stated its intentions to immediately destroy terrorist groups that are affiliated with ISIS in Poso, Central Sulawesi. The order to destroy came directly from President Joko Widodo...The government has also detected 100 foreigners who entered Poso for jihad. Kumolo said, “They joined ISIS. Feeling that conducting jihad with ISIS in Syria is impossible, they changed to conduct jihad in Poso.” Therefore, all of the armed forces will be deployed to Poso to give assistance to the Indonesian Police Force (POLRI). On Sunday, 28 December 2014, while in Jayapura, Kumolo said, “Why have we simply neglected the problem, and why has it not been resolved by now? Starting January 2015, the TNI [Indonesian Armed Forces] will be deployed and will wipe out those terrorist groups.”

The government also suspects that there will be arms smuggling involved on the borders by ISIS. Kumolo said, “It is strongly believed that they are supplied by ISIS. Therefore, all the armed forces of the TNI will be deployed to hunt them down. Moreover, they are led by a deserter, a former member of the Special Troops Commando (Kopassus), and he brought 200 of his men with him.” This former member of the commando troops used to be called Daeng Koro. His real name is Sabar Subagyo, aka Mas Koro aka Abu Autat aka Autat Trawah. He was considered the most dangerous among the Santoso, aka Abu Wardah-led East Indonesia Mujahidin (MIT) group in Poso, Central Sulawesi. Daeng Koro is also accused of being the actor behind the series of the MIT’s armed conflicts and its guerilla warfare in the forests of the region along the coast of Poso...

“Nevertheless, Beijing is exerting heavy pressure on Seoul to speak out against any such deployment, claiming that it would endanger their bilateral relationship and threaten regional peace and stability....”

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past decade repeated attempts have been made by the global community to force the leadership in North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Despite a mixture of both sticks and carrots, Pyongyang has continued to develop its nuclear weapons capability and, according to conservative estimates, allegedly possesses 6-8 weapons and a variety of delivery systems.

To counter this threat, the South Korean military is considering deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries, which will conceivably be able to intercept and destroy a North Korean nuclear missile launch before it reaches its target. This plan, however, has raised concerns in China, where security officials in Beijing argue that this system could ultimately be used to deteriorate or neutralize Chinese ballistic missile defenses. As the second excerpt points out, “Beijing is exerting heavy pressure on Seoul to speak out against any such deployment, claiming that it would endanger their bilateral relationship and threaten regional peace and stability.”

It has also raised concerns among South Koreans, who for centuries have been forced to consider the security interests of their more powerful neighbors. South Korea is thus faced with the predicament of defending against the North Korean nuclear threat while not offending its large Chinese neighbor. Meanwhile, North Korea responds predictably.

Pyongyang understands that the THAAD system has the potential to severely degrade its ability to partake in nuclear saber-rattling, and is searching for additional measures to prevent its deployment. As such, the first accompanying excerpt from DPRK media alleges that the US’s desire to deploy THAAD in South Korea is actually

Source: Ri Kyo’ng-su, “The Hysterical Frenzy of War Maniacs,” Rodong Sinmun Online, 21 February 2015.

The Obama regime, faced with this pressing situation, has driven everyone involved in policy toward the DPRK to the harping on our “threats” in unison, in order to drive North-South relations toward not improvement but confrontation....

...One such maneuver of the United States is their scheme to deploy the Theater (sic) High Altitude Area Defense “THAAD” in South Korea by taking issue with our “ballistic missile threats.”

Not long ago, the US deputy secretary of state rambled that the “THAAD,” which the United States is attempting to deploy in South Korea, is aiming at our country and constitutes an important foundation for regional stability.

Source: Sukjoon Yoon, “Are China’s THAAD Fears Justified?” The Diplomat, 20 February 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/are-chinas-thaad-fears-justified/>

There is speculation that the U.S. will deploy its THAAD batteries to South Korea. Should China be worried?

The U.S. has been giving out ambiguous signals on whether it intends to deploy Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries to South Korea. For its part, China has repeatedly expressed serious concerns and deep unhappiness about the prospect. From a South Korean perspective, this is regarded as a political rather than a military matter. Would China’s strategic security really be compromised by such a deployment?

On February 4, Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan delivered China’s first official response to ongoing speculation about the prospective deployment of the U.S.-developed THAAD to South Korea, during the bilateral “cooperative” defense ministers meeting. General Han Min-koo, his South Korean counterpart, attempted to allay Chinese concerns by reiterating that there has been no agreement between South Korea and the U.S. on this issue. Nevertheless, Beijing is exerting heavy pressure on Seoul to speak out against any such deployment, claiming that it would endanger their bilateral relationship and threaten regional peace and stability....

...South Korea represents a significant strategic wedge, balanced between China’s declared vision of a New Asian Security and the U.S. implementation of its rebalancing to Asia. It is true that South Korea hosts U.S. forward military forces on the Korean Peninsula, but these number fewer than 30,000. Again, China should take up the issue of THAAD deployment in South Korea directly with the U.S., through the recently established bilateral military-to-military channels. It should refrain from pressing South Korea to directly oppose the U.S.: Chinese interests are better served by allowing South Korea strategic autonomy, while China continues to hedge its bets between the two Koreas.

(continued)

Continued: THAAD Dilemma for South Korea

“aiming at neighboring countries, and the theory of the DPRK’s ‘threats’ is merely a pretext for easily stepping up its deployment.” The second excerpt, however, suggests that to resolve the issue over THAAD “Beijing should take the matter up directly with Washington, instead of leaning on Seoul and thereby fuelling the ongoing speculation about the possible deployment of THAAD.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Kim and Finch)

Experts, however, assert that the claim that the “THAAD” -- whose application range far exceeds the Korean Peninsula -- is necessary for defense against the DPRK’s ballistic missiles is a lie.

The “THAAD,” which [the United States] is attempting to deploy in South Korea, is aiming at neighboring countries, and the theory of the DPRK’s “threats” is merely a pretext for easily stepping up its deployment....

Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners

By Ms. Karen Kaya

In late September-early October 2010 Turkey and China held a bilateral military exercise in Turkey, the first such exercise that China conducted with a NATO member. This, coupled with the numerous high-level diplomatic and military visits between the two countries since 2009, has led to talk of a new “strategic partnership” between Turkey and China. While it is debatable whether the two countries are really at the level of a strategic partnership, the burgeoning Sino-Turkish relationship, which has remained unconsidered and understudied, is worth examining in order to assess the implications it may have for the U.S. and its defense community. This article analyzes the Turkey-China relationship in light of their strategic interests and discusses why it is unlikely that they will become true strategic partners, given the wide divergence between these interests.

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





China Develops Highly Touted Anti-drone Laser System

22 January 2015

“A laser defense system developed by Chinese researchers that can intercept and attack small drones was named one of the top ten technology breakthroughs last year by the Chinese government...”

OE Watch Commentary: *The following two articles discuss China’s newly developed anti-drone laser system. According to the articles, the China Academy of Engineering Physics and the China Jiuyuan Hi-tech Equipment Corporation joined forces to develop a system that can intercept and attack small drones. According to a statement released by the China Academy of Engineering Physics, the laser defense system, which the Chinese government has touted as one of the top ten technology breakthroughs in 2014, was designed to shoot down small aircraft within a two-kilometer radius. It can accomplish this within five seconds of locating the target. It is capable of destroying small drones flying within an altitude of 500 meters, at speeds of less than 50 meters per second. It is reported to be highly accurate, having shot down 30 small aircraft in tests with a 100 percent success rate.*

*According to the first article, intercepting such drones is normally done through the use of snipers and helicopters. However, “their success rate is not as high and mistakes with accuracy can result in unwanted damage.” Further improvements on the technology can be expected. The company is developing similar laser security systems with greater range and power. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

Source: “China Develops Anti Drone Laser,” Xinhua, 2 November 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/02/c_133760714.htm.

Xinhua: China Develops Anti Drone Laser

The machine is able to shoot down various small aircraft within a two-kilometer radius and can do so in five seconds after locating its target...

Characterized by its speed, precision and low noise, the system is designed to destroy unmanned, small-scale drones flying within an altitude of 500-m and at a speed below 50m/s, it said.

“Intercepting such drones is usually the work of snipers and helicopters, but their success rate is not as high and mistakes with accuracy can result in unwanted damage,” said Yi Jinsong...

The new laser system, which will either be installed or transported in vehicles, is expected to play a key role in ensuring security during major events in urban areas, the statement said, adding that a recent test saw the machine successfully shoot down more than 30 drones -- a 100 percent success rate.

Source: “Anti Drone Laser Named Among China’s 2014 Tech Breakthroughs,” Want China Times, 22 January 2015, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150122000144>.

Anti Drone Laser Named Among China’s 2014 Tech Breakthroughs

A laser defense system developed by Chinese researchers that can intercept and attack small drones was named one of the top ten technology breakthroughs last year by the Chinese government, reports China’s nationalistic tabloid Global Times...

The system, first revealed to the public in November last year, was co-developed by the China Jiuyuan Hi-tech Equipment Corporation and China Academy of Engineering Physics. It is able to shoot down various small aircraft flying at speeds below 50 m/sec at altitudes of up to 500 meters within a two-kilometer radius and can do so in five seconds after locating its target. It reportedly shot down 30 small aircraft in tests with a 100% success rate.

The company has been developing another system with more powerful and longer-range lasers and plans to coordinate a single or multiple laser systems in the future to provide air security for a wide range of urban areas, the report said.

“In future war, there will be more and more activities in the air and sea directions, so the further tilting of the PLA’s force structure toward the directions of the sea and air is an unstoppable future trend.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is undergoing significant changes in its organizational development. These changes are the result of the PLA’s belief that in future war scenarios the predominant roles will be played by the Navy and Air Force. These changes are to be made while taking into account the fact that the PLA is forced to operate with a somewhat limited defense budget. In the words of PLA some officers, external protection must be balanced with internal stabilization. This requires the elimination of some corps (bugler, railway, construction engineering, air defense searchlight, etc.) and the expansion of others. Chinese scholars have stressed that with the development trend concentrated on the informatization of the force, an overall transformation of combat power will occur, and the focus of the change must be on the sea and air vectors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)***

Source: “Shining a Light on the Sword (Part 1): Combat Power That Comes from Structure—Observation of Changes to the PLA’s Forces,” Chen Zhiyan, Nanfang Zhoumo Online, 27 February 2015.

“China’s path of defense modernization requires reducing the size of the Army and increasing the size of the Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery.” This is the judgment made by Ma Dingsheng, a military commentator from Hong Kong. The most important reason for this is to “closely adhere to the requirements of actual combat.” In his view, it will be less likely that foreign militaries would dare to land forces on Chinese territory in the future, so the role played by the Army will be limited. However, whenever it is required to project forces overseas, the key will be whether or not the Navy and Air Force can be deployed outwardly, while the quantity of Army forces to be delivered overseas will not be so high.

Chinese military expert Li Jie believes that people currently have an insufficient awareness of the special characteristics of modern warfare and are often stuck in traditional operations concepts and too rigidly focus on ground war.

“Future warfare will definitely start in the directions of the sea and air, while there will definitely be less and less ground combat and formation combat. The development of force structure and armaments will also definitely see changes as warfare becomes more informatized and intelligent,” analyzed Li Je.

In the view of researcher Yang Guihua of the Academy of Military Sciences, in terms of future system organization adjustment and reform, the PLA will transform from a “large standing army oriented system [ti zhi]” to a “military construction and operations system [ti zhi] in informatized conditions.” This will require that the goals of the next stage of the PLA’s structural optimization must be set as “adjusting functions, smoothing relationships, optimizing structure, and raising effectiveness.” It must combine leadership and administration institutional reform with joint operations institutional reform closely following the new requirements of military construction and the new changes in the evolution of warfare.

OE Watch Commentary: *Within the past few weeks the formation of the Chinese-sponsored Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has gained a significant boost as the largest European Union members have made application to join. AIIB is a new multilateral bank put forth by China, to be headquartered in China, and modeled along the lines of the long-existing Asia Development Bank. Its current 30 founding members are all from Asia, with the UK, Germany, France, and Italy all pending applications. Australia is also said to be considering an application, with potentially other countries to follow.*

Explicit in its name, AIIB is specifically targeted at financing infrastructure projects throughout Asia. In the first article, the Asia Development Bank estimates there to be \$8 trillion of Asian infrastructure projects that will seek financing in 2010-2020. China is well placed to be involved in these infrastructure projects on a number of levels. First, the vast majority of these projects are exactly the sort of rail, road, and port developments on which China itself has spent trillions of Yuan over the past 30 years within its own borders. It has both the financing expertise and construction firms necessary to execute many of these projects. Second, China has significant foreign exchange reserves that could be redeployed into financing Asian infrastructure projects. Third, in 2013 Chinese President Xi Jinping announced his Silk Roads initiative to connect Asia via the ancient Central Asian and Indian Ocean trade routes. Yet, Asia is lacking in sufficient infrastructure capacity to handle significantly increased trade flows among the region's nations. Xi's Silk Road initiative has both an economic and a political component of binding the countries of the greater region through a system in which quite literally all roads lead to China.

In the second article, the desire of the major Western countries to join AIIB is testament to the attractiveness of the Chinese-sponsored infrastructure bank. The Europeans are motivated to participate in large part because they believe that China is serious about putting its significant financial weight behind the new bank to ensure its success. Also, they hope that through their governments' participation in AIIB their own infrastructure companies will benefit from AIIB lending to future massive Asian infrastructure projects. As highlighted in third article, not to be forgotten is the domestic aspect of Chinese AIIB sponsorship that is ascribed to be analogous to China acceding to the World Trade Organization in 2001, a move widely seen as assisting China to improve the functioning of its own economy.

Source: "A Second Wind for an Ancient Route," Beijing Review, 2 February 2015. http://www.bjreview.com/Cover_Story_Series/2015-02/02/content_667018.htm.

A Second Wind for an Ancient Route

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, both put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, signify China's commitment to further opening up its economy and revitalizing the ancient Silk Road in a mutually beneficial fashion, experts say. "With China playing a more important role in global trade, the new Maritime Silk Road will be a new type of trade route linking China and the rest of the world in a new globalized era," said Han Feng, Deputy Director of the CASS' National Institute of International Strategy. The establishment of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in October last year demonstrated the regional desire to cooperate. The Asian Development Bank estimates infrastructure financing demand in Asia will be around \$8 trillion between 2010 and 2020.

Source: "France, Italy, Germany All Confirm to Join AIIB," Crienglish, 17 March 2015. <http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/03/17/4083s870460.htm>

France, Italy, Germany All Confirm to Join AIIB

France, Italy and Germany have all confirmed their intention to become the founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Meanwhile, the Australian government has also suggested it may be interested in being involved in the China proposed AIIB, which marks a conspicuous U-turn from the cabinet's previous stance.

In addition, South Korea, Switzerland and Luxembourg have reportedly been pondering whether to join the new international initiative.

Source: "AIIB will invigorate China's opening-up," Global Times, 19 March 2015. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/913091.shtml>.

AIIB will invigorate China's opening-up

China has made key achievements in the initial stages of the AIIB. It will carry out down-to-earth work such as rule-making. As an initiator, China faces multiple challenges, such as how to play its leading role and how to develop this bank into a world-class multinational financial mechanism. The establishment and operation of the AIIB will inevitably lead China to become more open to the world. The AIIB is an opportunity for China to raise its international financing capability and will push China to integrate more with the world.

(continued)

Continued: AIIB: China's Financing of Its Silk Routes

*The logic behind the formation of an entity like AIIB seems strong, and China's ability to finance much of the bank's operations is in little doubt. Two serious questions remain to be answered in time. First, will the new bank actually deliver on its promise to finance sustainable investment projects or will its financing execution be bogged down in poor relations among members and will it allocate financing to white elephant projects that do not improve trade flows? Second, how will AIIB's operations fit with the efforts of existing multilateral and private lenders and the associated geopolitical aspects of these usually Western-dominated institutions? **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)***



The Strategic Implications of Chinese Companies Going Global

By COL Heino Klinck, U.S. Army; Edited by Cindy Hurst, FMSO

China's overseas direct investment (ODI) has become one of the biggest economic stories of the 21st century. In a relatively short time span, China has become the number one overseas investor amongst developing countries as well as the world's sixth largest overseas investor overall with \$150 billion invested in foreign markets. This marks a development of strategic significance with implications that go beyond simple economics. This paper explores China's economic and political strategies of going global as well as the geopolitical implications for national security in political, economic, and diplomatic terms for the United States and other countries.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/FAO/Strategic-Implications.pdf>

“However, it concerns only those citizens of Tajikistan who enter into the composition of illegal military formations . . . Citizens of Tajikistan officially engaged in contracts of service in the ranks of the Russian Military and serving in so-called ‘hot spots’ will not face criminal punishment.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Since the proclamation of statehood made by the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, thousands of Central Asian migrants working abroad (particularly in Russia) have joined the fight in the service of IS. While these foreign fighters are risks to the stability of governments in Iraq, Syria, and neighboring countries in the Middle East, they are also risks to the stability of the homelands. They have stated that whether or not IS is successful in Iraq and Syria, they will return to Central Asia and bring violence to the government forces of the region and eventually to Russia. Much like other governments in Central Asia, Tajikistan is seeking its own answers to the problem.*

Recently, government officials in Tajikistan have taken measures to neutralize the threat of Tajik foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. In January 2014 Tajik Prosecutor General Yusuf Rakhmanov announced that criminal investigations would be opened concerning Tajik foreign fighters serving in the ranks of IS. Most recently, in March 2014, the Tajik government has offered amnesty to those Tajik citizens who repent, quit serving illegal military organizations abroad (e.g., IS and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) and return to Tajikistan. The message from the Tajik government to its citizens who are fighting abroad as jihadists: return now, before it is too late. At present, no media sources indicate that any Tajik jihadists have taken the offer. Given the likelihood that Tajik security forces would not be inclined to allow even formally repentant jihadists to roam freely in Tajikistan after their return from abroad, it is doubtful that these Tajiks do believe the offer will be honored.

*There are other legal avenues for Tajiks seeking to fight abroad. In terms of official international military cooperation, Tajikistan has a history of committed military partnership with Russia, where many Tajiks serve together with Russian military forces. In its recent amendments to the criminal code, Tajik legislators are granting legal protection to those Tajiks serving in formal military contracts in cooperation with the Russian military in points of conflict throughout the world. At the same time, they are communicating a distinction between those who are serving in official arrangements and those who are fighting for illegal opposition forces such as IS. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)***

Source: “Таджикистан амнистирует своих граждан, воюющих в других странах, если они возвратятся с покаянием” (Tajikistan amnesties its citizens fighting in other countries if they return with repentance), ASIA-Plus, 5 March 2015. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tadzhikistan-amnistiruet-svoikh-grazhdan-voyuyushchikh-v-drugikh-stranakh-esli-oni-vozvratyatsy>

Tajikistan Amnesties Its Citizens Fighting in Other Countries if They Return with Repentance

The upper house of Tajikistan's parliament supported the government's proposed amendments to the criminal code of the republic. According to the head of the Executive Office of the President Bakhtiyor Khudoyorzoda, Tajik citizens who are serving in the ranks of illegal military groups may avoid criminal prosecution if they immediately end their service and return to their homelands.

“The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported earlier that according to available information over 200 Tajik citizens are fighting in the ranks of illegal military groups in Syria and Iraq.”

“Head of the Lower House Makhmadali Vatanov mentioned that the amendments proposed on May 21, 2014 . . . provide criminal punishment for participation in wars and armed conflicts in other countries.”



Kazakhstan Takes to the Skies

17 February 2015

“By the way, industrial production of unmanned aerial vehicles is established in Russia, the US and Israel. Kazakhstan may become the fourth country on that list.”



OE Watch Commentary: *Recently, governments through former Soviet space have depended on purchasing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from the United States, Israel, China and Russia. UAVs are a highly valuable asset sought by Central Asia's leaders. In the city of Ural'sk, Kazakhstan, UAVs and training in UAV production will increase as a result of joint Kazakh-Russian cooperation.*

Production of UAVs in Kazakhstan is presently highly contingent on the support of the Russian Scientific Center of Applied Aeronautics. Russia will provide the bulk of logistical and software support for their manufacture, while the Ural'sk factory will produce the mechanical and other physical components. According to factory director Erbulat Abdulov, Kazakhstan will depend on these drones for monitoring its broad expanse of gas pipelines and highways. (See: <http://www.kazpravda.kz/fresh/view/nam-po-silam-visokii-polet>)

*Kazakhstan certainly appears to have a place in the future of UAV development as Kazakh industrial entrepreneurs collaborate with Russian scientific and technological organizations. As economic partnerships between Russia and Kazakhstan further develop under the emerging aegis of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), there may be similar opportunities for growth in other standing and acceding member-states of the EEU, such as Kyrgyzstan. However, as Kazakhstan's military-industrial capacities and sophistication increase, what will be curious to see is how Uzbekistan, which presently prefers military and technical partnerships with the US and China and often emerges as a contender in the competition for the acquisition and display of military capacities, will react to these new developments. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)***

Source: “Беспилотные летательные аппараты начнут выпускать в Казахстане” (Kazakhstan is beginning to produce unmanned aerial vehicles, Kazakh TV, 17 February 2015).

Kazakhstan Is Beginning to Produce Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

“They will produce UAVs at the Ural'sk factory ‘Omega.’ At the base of production they also plan to open an education center for the training of specialists.”

According to Andrey Klimov, Director of the Russian Scientific Center of Applied Aeronautics: “If, say, by Russian standards an hour of flight for a helicopter costs in the area of 320 thousand rubles. Ours complex can fly for ten hours for that money.”

According to Erbolat Abdulov, Director of the Omega Factory: “Currently it is the mechanical part. In the future will be the localization, installation, commissioning, and servicing of vehicles. For now, that which is associated with the provision of software is supplied by the Russians. That which is associated with machining, mechanical assembly, and adjustment will be at the ‘Omega’ base.”



“...the commission discussed mainly two bilateral agreements –
 “On strengthening measurements of trust on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border”
 and “Joint use of border roads.””

OE Watch Commentary: The series of violent incidents on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in 2013 and 2014 resulted in the governments of both countries conducting periodic negotiations to resolve the disputed border areas. The accompanying article mentions a recent negotiation that took place and considers what results might be achieved. The statements in this article by government officials and the goals of the commission might sound too diplomatic, but the part of the agreement on the joint use of border roads may have some substance to it.

One of the causes of the recent violent incidents is construction of a road by Kyrgyzstan just north of Tajikistan’s Vorukh enclave (in the Batken Province, southern Kyrgyzstan). Tajik officials and local residents believe the road is being illegally constructed in Tajik territory, which has caused tension and occasionally violence.

While the two sides discussed the issue of joint use of roads on the border, construction of a bridge was completed near the border that allows Kyrgyz citizens to reach a village without entering Tajik territory. The government of Kyrgyzstan funded 75 percent of the construction, while Tajikistan paid for the rest (see: <http://turmush.kg/ru/news:117430/>). This follows a similar pattern of reporting of activity on the border, in which much attention is focused on high-level officials, while local effort may have just as much significance. Even after the incidents where border forces exchanged fire this past year, border detachment commanders from both sides met at checkpoints the following day to try to resolve the situation.

Another key part of these negotiations is how the two sides never mention the border maps that both requested this past year from archives in Moscow. Both governments believe that maps produced by Soviet cartographers would support their claim to a particular area of the border, though one of the main problems with this is that each side cites maps made in different years with different borders (see: January 2015 OE Watch, “Incidents of Violence on Kyrgyzstan’s Borders: A Year in Review”). It is possible that one or both governments have yet to receive a copy of the maps or that they were left out of the negotiations because of additional problems they could cause. In any case, there is another meeting set to take place later this year in Bishkek, and if the results of this recent negotiation are any indication of what to expect, a resolution to the border dispute may result from efforts taking place at the border as much as at any high-level negotiation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Yuldashev, Avaz. “Таджикистан и Кыргызстан подписали план совместной работы по решению приграничных споров на 2015 год” (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have signed a joint plan of work on solving border disputes in the year 2015), Asia-Plus, 6 March 2015. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tadzhikistan-i-kyrgyzstan-podpisali-plan-sovmestnoi-raboty-po-resheniyu-prigranichnykh-sporov-n>

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have signed a joint plan of work on solving border disputes in the year 2015

The bilateral commission of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on demarcation and delimitation of the border between the two countries that began on March 5 in Dushanbe will last until March 8...the commission discussed mainly two bilateral agreements – “On strengthening measurements of trust on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border” and “Joint use of border roads.”

Representatives of the two countries signed a joint work plan on solving the border disputes in 2015...The Deputy Prime Minister noted that Kyrgyzstan puts significant meaning on the deepening and development of all around cooperation with the Republic of Tajikistan...the government delegations of the two countries are expected to further discussion and the building of a defined legal framework for bilateral demarcation of the previously disputed border...



“The officers are mostly to blame for bullying and driving soldiers to suicide. On the other hand, the military has been trying to survive as best as it is able...”

OE Watch Commentary: Military experts often evaluate Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces as being ineffective, which a number of them trace back to living conditions and morale for service members. The accompanying article discusses the results of a recent report put together by the Kyrgyz NGO “Kylym Shamy” and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which shows that living conditions and morale continue to be a problem.

Overall, the report offers a harsh assessment of the country's Armed Forces and cites the examples of violence and cases of desertion by service members, who were reportedly hazed by their superiors, as proof of the need for additional reforms. It has been over a year since the government restructured the leadership of its Armed Forces and created the new position of Chief of the General Staff, which oversees the Ministries of Defense, Interior, Emergency Situations and the National Security Committee (including the Border Guards). General Asanbek Alymkozhoyev, a well-known officer with combat experience, was appointed as the first Chief of the General Staff and there was optimism that additional reforms would soon follow.

While some of the cases of violence and desertion happened well before this restructuring, the report suggests that any reforms have not had much of an effect. They point to the number of suicides in the force in 2014, which is half the total that happened in the three years prior. It is worth noting that the General Staff reportedly cooperated and gave researchers access to military facilities and seemed receptive to the report's results. This might seem trivial, but “Kylym Shamy” has produced reports in the past that could be perceived as critical of the government, including detailed reports on the number of people killed during the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan and the list of weapons and ammunition lost during the violence and during the April 2010 revolution. Lastly, the author puts most of the blame on officers for soldiers' suicides and notes how only a small percentage of these cases result in criminal charges. If there are additional reforms in the country's Armed Forces, this could be one area to keep an eye on. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Ivashchenko, Yekaterina. “Армия Кыргызстана: Бедность, суициды, дедовщина” (The Army of Kyrgyzstan: Poverty, suicides, dedovshchina), Ferghana News, 20 February 2015. <http://www.ferghananews.com/articles/8416>

The Army of Kyrgyzstan: Poverty, suicides, dedovshchina

The situation in military posts in Kyrgyzstan demanded monitoring a long time ago, and finally, with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the NGO “Kylym Shamy”, a report was presented on February 18 in Bishkek. The report talks, in particular, about frequent sad incidents in recent years – massive desertion and the deaths of soldiers – and it becomes obvious that the country's armed forces need to be fully reformed.

We can remember some of the most visible cases in recent years: on August 20, 2012 a border guard from the Karakol detachment shot five people...on February 4, 2013 there were 39 conscript soldiers who were guarding the president's residence that deserted. Later, they said that the reason was because they were abused by officers...on January 17, 2015 a service member conducted an armed attack on the Aykol border detachment and killed the commander and wounded two others...The monitoring covered 70 posts throughout Kyrgyzstan, 22 under the command of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defense, 34 in the State Border Guards, 6 in the National Guard and the security of the State Penitentiary Service, and 2 in the Ministry of Emergency Situations...

...According to information from the Military Prosecutor's Office – for the period from 2010 to October 2013 there 50 reported deaths...causes were listed as suicide (26 soldiers), murder (8)...In 2014 there were 13 cases of suicides reported...prosecutors bring up criminal charges in only 30 percent of cases...The officers are mostly to blame for bullying and driving soldiers to suicide. On the other hand, the military has been trying to survive as best as it is able...

The Clampdown on Corruption in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan



“The former head of the KNB (National Security Committee) Border Guards Nurlan Zhulamanov was sentenced to 11 years in prison.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Corruption in the defense and security sectors in Kazakhstan has become a high-profile issue in recent years, even to a point that President Nazarbayev mentioned it as a security threat in a March 2014 address. The accompanying article reports on the recent corruption case of Lieutenant-General Nurlan Zhulamanov, the head of the country’s Border Guards service, who was recently sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of accepting bribes and creating a criminal network. Zhulamanov had previously served in various positions in the Ministry of Defense, but the case against him took place while he was head of the Border Guards.*

This is a unique case for a couple of reasons. There have been other recent corruption cases that involved senior officers or high level civilians (often related to corruption in procurement), but this marks one of the more high-profile cases involving a head of an agency or ministry to receive a prison sentence. Former Minister of Defense Serik Akhmetov is currently under house arrest after being charged with corruption in November 2014, but there has been no timeline of when his trial will begin.

Another significant aspect of this case is how Kayrat Balmagambetov, the commander of a border detachment near Almaty and another defendant in this case, appears to have avoided punishment by pleading guilty and, in the words of the article, showing repentance. He was arrested around two months before Zhulamanov. Additionally, Zhulamanov not only faces 11 years in prison, but also has been stripped of financial assets and property (mostly apartments and vehicles), will be barred from civil service positions in the future, and could be stripped of his rank. The article does not mention any negotiations for a plea agreement that might have taken place between the prosecutor and Zhulamanov, who maintained his innocence throughout the trial.

*Lastly, when Zhulamanov was arrested last October there was some initial shock and disbelief in Kazakh media and around the country. This was followed by a few months of speculation on other motives behind the case, in particular, that the government wanted to make an example out of him. There has not been much coverage of Zhulamanov’s case since the sentence was announced, but one article questioned whether his case would end with a period or a comma. With the trial of former Defense Minister Akhmetov yet to take place, Zhulamanov’s case could have additional repercussions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

Source: Satayeva, Asel. “К 11 годам тюрьмы приговорен экс-глава Погранслужбы КНБ Джуламанов” (The former head of the KNB Border Guard Service Zhulamanov has been sentenced to 11 years in prison), Tengri News, 6 March 2015. http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/11-godam-tyurmyi-prigovoren-eks-glava-pogranslujbyi-knb-271213/

The former head of the KNB Border Guard Service Zhulamanov has been sentenced to 11 years in prison

The former head of the KNB (National Security Committee) Border Guards Nurlan Zhulamanov was sentenced to 11 years in prison...the sentencing in the high-profile case was announced today in a military court in Astana today...the second defendant – Kayrat Balmagambetov – was released from criminal charges in line with the requirements of Article 65 of the Criminal Code in connection with repentance...

...the daughter of Zhulamanov said after the verdict that the family will challenge the court’s decision. “There is no evidence. All those who took bribes are not facing criminal charges...This was a personal reprisal...”...

...Zhulamanov repeatedly spoke of his innocence during the trial, that he did not take bribes and did not form an organized criminal group...the case of the former head of the Border Guards began on January 26, 2015. He has been incarcerated since October 2014. The total amount of the bribes that he is charged with taking is more than \$300,000

Is Russian Media Over-Hyping the Islamic State Threat in Central Asia?

6 March 2015

“Afghan heroin acts as a renewable financial resource for the functioning of the Islamic State.”

OE Watch Commentary: *In a Russian-language article written on 6 March 2015 for ca-news.org, which reports on Central Asian affairs, the author cited a Russian officer who said that the Islamic State was making large profits from the sale of heroin in Afghanistan. According to the analyst, Afghan heroin passes through Iraq, where it becomes one of the financial resources for the Islamic State, while other routes for the illicit heroin trade pass through East Africa and contribute to piracy on the seas there. If this is true, it would seem to support the theory that further instability in Afghanistan would also negatively impact the security situation in the Middle East by increasing the Islamic State’s financing.*

While this analysis rightly recognizes that the heroin trade is a global concern, it also seems to present information that is otherwise unsubstantiated. There are few other reports about heroin moving between the Taliban and Islamic State, and the two groups have never pledged allegiance to one other. In fact, they appear to have contrary Islamist visions of the Caliphate. While reports of the Islamic State gaining influence among ethnic Turkmen on the Afghan side of the border, where poppy is grown, may have validity, the idea that they are shipping it from Afghanistan via Islamic State networks in Iraq is likely an exaggeration.

*It is possible that some Russian officers and the government may seek to over-hype Islamic State influence in Afghanistan so as to justify a greater Russian military presence in the Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan and in Afghanistan itself. Nonetheless, the possibility of such collaboration in the heroin trade in the future warrants further counternarcotics trafficking efforts on the part of NATO and Western security forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)***

Source: “Исламское государство» каждый год получает до \$1 млрд прибыли от перевозок афганского героина” [Islamic State” each year receives up to \$ 1 billion profit from the traffic of Afghan heroin], ca-news.org, 6 March 2015.

“Islamic State” each year receives up to \$ 1billion profit from the traffic of Afghan heroin

Islamic State each year receives one billion dollars in profit from operations with Afghan heroin, said the head of the Russian drug police Viktor Ivanov. As previously reported by the Federal Drug Control Service, the large-scale transit of Afghan heroin acts as a renewable financial resource for the functioning of the Islamic State, which received the grand profits by providing half of the total of heroin supplies to Europe through unstable countries like Iraq and some African countries. In addition, the handling of Afghan heroin through the Gulf of Aden to the African continent, in particular Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, has led to the emergence a many gangs on the sea with small and fast ships, whose existence is based on revenues from drug trafficking.

“Narva [border town in Ida-Viru County, northeastern Estonia] is a receptive soil for Russia’s information war.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its ongoing involvement in Eastern Ukraine, much has been written and discussed regarding how other countries in Eastern Europe might defend against a similar Russian incursion. With their relatively large ethnic Russian minority populations, the discussions have been particularly intense within the Baltic countries of Latvia and Estonia. There are fears that the Kremlin could exploit the sense of injustice and discrimination felt by some ethnic Russians in these countries to spark either a separatist or pro-Russian movement similar to the situation in Eastern Ukraine.*

Leaders within the Baltic countries are continuing to adopt a series of security and military measures to defend against such a threat. Defense planning and military exercises have increased, and greater emphasis has been focused on countering the Kremlin’s one-sided portrayal within the Russian information space. Equally important is a sober and honest assessment of those social issues within the Baltic countries which provide fuel for the Russian propaganda machine. The accompanying excerpt from an Estonian source addresses some of the key social problems experienced by ethnic Russians who live in the border region of Ida-Viru County in northeastern Estonia.

The article describes the sense of alienation which many of the residents (both ethnic Russians and Estonians) feel within this county. Besides high levels of poverty and unemployment, many residents feel as though they have been politically marginalized, believing that they are unable to improve their situation via the political process. The author also addresses language and cultural issues, pointing out that only 27% of the “Russian-speaking population in Ida-Viru... speak Estonian,” stressing that the “inability to speak the official language leads to feelings of exclusion” and a lack of trust.

The article concludes by offering a handful of practical suggestions to help improve

Source: Kristina Kallas, “Dangerously Forgotten Ida-Viru,” Eesti Paevaleht, 12 March 2015.

Narva [border town in Ida-Viru County, northeastern Estonia] is a receptive soil for Russia’s information war.

...The roots of the east-Ukrainian conflict are much deeper than just the language issue, which has been used as an excuse. Poverty, rampant corruption, lawlessness and the resulting mistrust of the central government. It was easy to provoke a conflict between the central government and the locals based on such a mood of the residents because “rescuers” only had to put on a robe of a noble knight.

I felt similar moods in Ida-Viru County during my election campaign. People were disappointed, resentful and bitter, while some were just tired and had given up on everything. Both Estonian and Russian-speaking residents accused the Government of neglect and the unwillingness to improve people’s living standard. People felt powerless. They had no faith in the election, and it was demonstrated by the traditionally smallest turnout [compared with other regions].

Such a mood in itself is nothing new or characteristic of only Ida-Viru County. Disappointment in Estonian leaders, as well as bitterness and feelings of giving up are felt everywhere in Estonia. Residents in other areas of Estonia accept the situation in silence because who else can they count on, but the residents of Ida-Viru County, in particular the Russian-speaking population, have a state which will come to their rescue if necessary.

Leaving aside the topic of an information war which has been much talked about, I would rather like to focus on issues that create a receptive soil for a successful information war. The problem of Ida-Viru County is multilayered marginalization, which has made the residents feel excluded, and is the cause of their low self-esteem and sometimes resentment. What is then the problem?

First of all, [it is] poverty. If the number of the poor among the population is high, the entire community becomes vulnerable. Ida-Viru County is very vulnerable. In 2013, a third of the population in Ida-Viru (33.7%) lived in relative

Location of Ida-Viru County.
Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/>



(continued)

Continued: Addressing Pro-Russian Sentiments in Estonia

the overall situation in this county. Besides establishing policies to alleviate unemployment and poverty, the article says that the Estonian government needs to establish a robust presence in this region and ought to consider providing more venues for the local population to learn Estonian (e.g., a cultural house in Narva, language learning within Russian schools, free Estonian newspapers, etc.). By improving social conditions for ethnic Russians living within Ida-Viru County, the Estonian government might be able to assuage separatist sentiments.

End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

poverty, while Estonia's average was 22%. The number of people in absolute poverty, i.e. those whose monthly income is less than 205 euros, was 14% in Ida-Viru County (the same percentage as in [southeastern] Voru County), while Estonia's average was 8%.

The cause of poverty in Ida-Viru County is the immature labor market. Only 52% of the county's working age population is gainfully employed, and that puts Ida-Viru County in not so honorable second place, behind Voru County. The unemployment rate, however, was 13% in Ida-Viru last year. This was almost twice the national average....

...The second problem is political marginalization. Overall, 54% of Ida-Viru residents are Estonian citizens; 17% do not have the citizenship of any country [it is their own choice], and 28% are Russian citizens. Thus, just barely the majority of the residents can fully have a say at the national level in decisions affecting their lives and take responsibility as citizens by working in positions that shape Estonia's social and economic life. Interacting with the locals, I often heard that "no one takes an interest in us, we do not belong" or "no one allows us to vote, we are of secondary importance"...

...The third problem is linguistic and cultural isolation. There is no well-functioning theater or concert hall in Narva, which is Estonia's third largest city; neither is there a stadium nor a swimming pool.... However, it is very alarming that, according to the [latest] census data [2011], the Russian-speaking population in Ida-Viru say that only 27% of them speak Estonian while as much as 65% do not speak any foreign languages, including Estonian.

Estonia's public life, including education and culture is essentially only in Estonian. [There are 77 Russian-language schools in Estonia, including two vocational schools, and 423 Estonian-language schools; the number of students is less than 100 in 40% of schools irrespective of the language of studies] There is no information about how many Russian-speaking Ida-Viru residents watch "Topical Camera" in Russian [Aktualnaya kamera, daily Estonian news program of public broadcaster ERR's national television channel ETV], read Estonia's Russian-language news portals or listen to public Russian-language Radio 4. But we do know that many of them regularly watch Russian news channels. ...

The Estonian Government is faceless in Ida-Viru County because the Government is not in the picture for the locals. In addition to a lack of information, inability to speak the official language leads to feelings of exclusion, because you do not trust the people whose language you do not understand. The language is the precondition of mutual trust.

What to do about it? The next Government must recognize the seriousness of the situation and not hide behind a false tranquility. The residents of our country are in a vulnerable situation and their problems must be addressed right away. Fighting poverty is a long-term process but the people in Estonia expect the first steps to be taken now. Changing the linguistic environment in Ida-Viru County is also a long-term task, which requires significantly more resources than have so far been invested there.

Some time ago I suggested in an interview that an Estonian language house be built in Narva. I still believe that it would help create a natural language environment there. Also, schools shape the language environment and Russian schools need significantly more financial support to improve [students'] Estonian skills.

The Government must be physically present in Ida-Viru County. For example, they should consider the establishment of a Government Office bureau in Narva. The bureau could be the eyes and ears of the Government while also implementing an open-door policy. The publication of a free of charge Government Gazette in Russian for Ida-Viru residents would be a good addition to the information spread by "Capital"....

“Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics” Attempt to Legitimize Position

16 March 2015

“Any bill, or document submitted to the President of Ukraine/ parliament on the situation in the Donbass, must be coordinated with the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republic.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Although the February cease-fire is constantly violated, the use of heavy weaponry in the Debaltseve area has died down. There has been a deliberate effort by the Ukrainian government to remove weaponry from the front line of the Donbass conflict. This coincides with the EU announcing that it may discontinue sanctions as long as the terms of the Minsk Agreement are met.*

The leaders of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People’s Republic and the Donetsk People’s Republic are seeking to have a recognized voice in carrying out these terms. This signifies a unification of the republics in their relations with Ukraine and President Poroshenko himself. If Poroshenko recognizes the republics’ leaders and concedes to them an independent status, this could de-escalate the fighting in the region. If independent status is not granted, rebel forces may continue attacks, as they have concentrated forces in southern Ukraine near the towns of Shyrokyne and Maruipol. The shift in locations suggest that the rebels will focus on gaining and securing access to the Sea of Azov.

Regardless of Poroshenko’s way ahead, the rebel leaders have appealed to European leaders for assistance with implementing the Minsk terms. This essentially forces the EU and Ukrainian leadership to address the stoppage of bloodshed, as well as determine their own commitment to the desired end-state.

End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)

Source: Donetsk News Agency (Донецкое Агентство Новостей), 16 March 2015, <http://dan-news.info/politics/lyuboj-dokument-o-statuse-donbassa-dolzhen-byt-soglasovan-s-dnr-i-lnr-zaxarchenko.html>

Any Document on the Situation in the Donbass Should be Consistent with Luhansk People’s Republic and Donetsk People’s Republic – Zaharchenko

Donetsk, March 16 - Donetsk News Agency. “The resolution of the Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada) concerning the status of the separate regions of Donbass, as well as any other document relating to the situation in the region, must be agreed upon by representatives of Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics.” This was stated today to journalists by the head of Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) Alexander Zakharchenko. “Any bill, a document submitted to the President of Ukraine to the parliament on the situation in the Donbass, must be coordinated with the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republic.”

“If there is not an agreed upon document along with signatures of myself and Igor Plotnitski, head of the Luhansk People’s Republic’s (LNR), it will be considered a violation of the Minsk agreements. I’ll wait for tomorrow, when they (LNR) will have considered this recommendation and then I’ll make a statement, “- he said.

According to Zaharchenko DNR text of the resolution still has not been seen. “This is the very meaning and spirit of the Minsk agreement - all points of the agreement were agreed upon by us as with the residents of the DNR and the LNR. This is the entire point. This also applies to the constitutional reform and the law concerning special status, and all the other things, “- said the head of the DNR.

“According to paragraph 4, the set of measures to implement the agreements of Minsk from February 12 to March 14 must be the accepted decision of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which determines the areas of Donbass with special political and economic status. However, the decision was not taken in time. The leaders of the DNR and LNR - Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitski appealed to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande to guarantors of the Minsk Agreement to exert pressure on Ukrainian leadership to ensure that it fulfills the Minsk agreement. At present, the decision on determining the boundaries of individual districts, where the line of contact is, the Minsk agreements make special arrangements for local government, which are supported only by National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.” The next plenary session of the Ukrainian parliament is scheduled for March 17.

Ukrainian's Ministry of Information Attempts to Counter Propaganda

25 February 2015

“Russia spends hundreds of millions of dollars on its television channels. We cannot compete with them. This is why at the first stage we lost the information war, which is a most important component of the hybrid war against Ukraine.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The article describes how Ukraine was and still is at an information operations disadvantage against rebel forces. As expressed in the article, broadcast funding and audience access are decidedly in favor of the rebels, but the Ukrainian government has now officially taken steps to counter the rebels' information war. Ukraine's Ministry of Information has launched "i-Army" to counter rebel-based propaganda. It will comprise volunteers and bloggers interested in supporting the cause. It should be noted though, that pro-Ukrainian social media have existed since the EuroMaidan Revolution, but have not been effective since the outbreak of the current conflict.*

One can join the i-Army through its website, contribute to it, and partake in assigned tasks. Its purpose is to counter the "bots" and "fake" reports that allegedly originate from Russians or pro-Russians who are paid to disseminate misinformation.

The Information Ministry created the program and is itself an attempt to counter alleged Russian propaganda and create transparency within the Ukrainian government. The article does not, however, address how i-Army information is vetted or filtered. This opens the possibility of the Information Ministry countering propaganda with unverified information or being accessed by hostile parties. Ukrainian cognizance that there may be misinformation on behalf of both sides will affect how information warfare is conducted and the degree to which it is given credibility. For the analyst, i-Army provides a timely and relevant example of the way information operations are being conducted in the region and will possibly be reflected in future information operations campaigns.

End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)

Source: Tatyana Ivzhenko, "Right Sector Will Proceed Through Kyiv With a March of Peace. The Ukrainian Authorities Are Forming Information Troops," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 25 February 2015. [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2015-02-25/1_kiev.html]

Taras Berezovets, campaign adviser and director of the Berta Communications consultancy, told NG that Ukrainian information resources cannot be compared with Russia's: "Russia spends hundreds of millions of dollars on its television channels. We cannot compete with them. This is why at the first stage we lost the information war, which is a most important component of the hybrid war against Ukraine." The expert observed that at this stage the authorities have understood that it is possible to bank not on financial, but on human, resources: "The volunteer movement is extraordinarily well developed in Ukraine, there are well-known bloggers who are opinion leaders. There is the active part of society, with which the authorities need to cooperate." The initiative for the formation of information troops, the expert believes, is a first step in the direction of such cooperation and interaction.

The i-army.org website is just one page headed as follows: "Each of your information messages is a bullet in the mind of the enemy". The visitor is invited either to register with the information troops or to learn about the initiative in more detail. In the latter case the interested party is told: "Russia's war against Ukraine is called a hybrid war. All because the war is real, and the information about it, false. Many fronts have been opened against us, and the information front is one of the most important."

Those who register as a "warrior" have to give their name and e-mail address, to which, they are promised, will be sent messages or assignments. The first is to tell their friends and acquaintances about the information troops. Artem Bidenko, deputy minister for information policy, told NG that approximately 20,000 persons registered at the site in the first 24 hours: "We know that a significant part of them are bots and trolls, of course."

There are also those who registered out of curiosity, but do not intend to do anything. But there will be tens of thousands of people who will really avail themselves of a platform to obtain, discuss, and convey to other people truthful information." He observed that there will be no centralized information newsheet but the activists will be able to discuss the subjects which are of real concern to society. The authorities, for their part, intend to help the information troops respond on a timely basis to messages and to answer inquiries.

Source: Information Forces of Ukraine (Інформаційні війська України) <http://i-army.org/>

Montenegro Hopeful of NATO Membership despite Promise to the Contrary

6 March 2015



“Montenegro expects an invitation to join NATO by the end of the year.”

OE Watch Commentary: Montenegro began the process of trying to join NATO in 2003, first with NATO's Partnership for Peace, then adopting an Individual Action Plan, which allowed the country to contribute troops and equipment. However, it was denied membership in 2014, as some members of the NATO alliance are against further expansion.

Nevertheless, Montenegrin authorities are still optimistic about joining NATO even without encouragement from Brussels and in the face of internal disagreement among Montenegro's population. A majority of ethnic Serbs in Montenegro, about 29% of the population, are against joining NATO due to NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999.

The accompanying article suggests that a reason behind NATO's freeze on membership may stem from Russian actions in Ukraine and the desire of some NATO members to assuage Kremlin concerns over further NATO enlargement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

Source: “Montenegro Shrugs off French Veto on NATO Enlargement” Balkan Insight. 6 March 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-blunts-french-veto-on-nato-enlargement>

“Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic on Wednesday said Montenegro expects an invitation to join NATO by the end of the year and is working hard to meet the conditions.

Commenting on the French President's statement of opposition to NATO enlargement, Djukanovic said he did not see in Francois Hollande's words any intention to revise NATO's policy towards Montenegro.

Hollande said after a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in Paris on Monday that ‘France's position for the moment is to refuse any new membership.’

‘The statement was likely influenced by current efforts to resolve the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and by concerns about antagonizing Russia, which has been critical of NATO expansion plans,’ Djukanovic said.”



Capabilities of Russia's "Predator" UAV

17 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian Federation has made the integration of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies into the Russian Armed Forces a high priority. It recently announced plans to spend 9.2 billion on the technology.*

Presently, Russian UAV technologies are mostly used for communications, intelligence, electronic warfare, reconnaissance, and artillery spotting, but this may be beginning to change. The accompanying article discusses Russia's Dozor-600, a UAV very close in size, shape, and purpose to the US "Predator" UAV. The Dozor-600 is not scheduled to be fielded until 2017-2018, but if fielded it would be the first Russian UAV with a weapon capability.
End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Dozor-600 UAV Will Overtake MQ-1 Predator

...Until recently the United States of America held the hegemony in the design and use of UAVs, but its leading position looks like it is coming to an end soon. Or, more precisely, flying to an end -- on the wings of Russia's Dozor-600 reconnaissance and attack UAV...

The first prototype of the new Russian UAV was shown to the public at the international air and space show in Zhukovskiy in 2009. The Dozor UAV completed a demonstration flight lasting only a few minutes, but talk about its technical specifications and comparisons with foreign analogues have continued unabated for more than five years now.

The Dozor and its transatlantic counterpart, the MQ-1 Predator, are similar in basic shape, both having similar aerodynamic layouts and fuselages. The Russian UAVs wings are almost one-third shorter than the MQ-1 Predator's -- 12 meters as against 17. Its modest dimensions carry through to its small payload and maximum takeoff weight. At first glance this compactness is a defect, since a smaller takeoff weight means fewer missiles, which for an attack UAV are a determining factor. But that is only at first glance. Smaller dimensions also mean less visibility to detection systems. The smaller takeoff weight, which theoretically restricts the type and quantity of missiles, can be balanced out by special compact air-to-ground missiles or PTURs (antitank guided missiles), which are rumored to be already in development specifically for the Dozor-600. And even without specialized missiles it is possible to install, for example, four Shturm- or Ataka-type antitank guided missiles, which weigh no more than 50 kg. The Predator, in turn, is armed with two AGM-114 Hellfire antitank missiles, which gave a good account of themselves in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One interesting feature is that the engine capacity is identical on the Russian and American UAVs at 115 hp, which means that, given its smaller weight and dimensions, the Dozor-600 will feel more comfortable in flight: It has a greater maximum speed (150 kph against the Predator's 130) and greater maneuverability. These indicators could also be called determining, since in addition to potential target destruction the vehicle's tasks also include reconnaissance and detection, and in that context "agility" is acutely necessary...

The Dozor-600 will have an entire complex of devices on board for terrain observation and reconnaissance: a hydrostabilized optical and thermal imaging system (video camera and thermographic camera), forward and side-view radar, a high-resolution photographic camera with interchangeable lenses, and a target acquisition and automatic tracking system. In fact the range of equipment that it will be possible to install on the Dozor-600 is quite extensive, since the apparatus could also be used in the civilian sector, for example to photograph the seats of fires or to compile maps of inaccessible places.

In 2013 Defense Ministry head Sergey Shoygu ordered the designers to speed up work on the advanced UAV, and 2017-2018 is now being named as the approximate date when the Dozor-600 will enter service with the troops.

Dozor-600

Take-off weight: 640 kg
Range: 3,700 km
Speed: 210 km / h
Service ceiling: 7,500 m
Length: 6.7 m
Height: 2.3 m
Wing span: 12 m
Payload: 220 kg
Engine: Rotax 914, 115 hp
Flight duration: 30 hours

Dozor-600

Source: <http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/231>



Source: Ilya Shchegolev, "Dozor-600 UAV Will Overtake MQ-1 Predator," Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 17 February 2015, <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/17/dozor-site.html>, accessed 5 March 2015.

Source: Col-Gen (Ret) Viktor Yesin, “Russian Federation Academy of Military Sciences professor: “Peace Vehicles -- Part I: Voyevoda Will Hold Out to the Last,” Voenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer Online, 18 February 15, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/23904>>, accessed 10 March 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia has not only been growing its conventional military capabilities, but also enhancing its nuclear capabilities. As the accompanying article describes, the most important leg of Russia's strategic nuclear triad is the Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN) that operate silo-, ground- (road mobile), and, soon, rail-based assets. In 2014 the RVSN added 16 RT-24 Yars ICBMs (4 silo/12 ground) to replace aging RT-2PM2 Topol ICBMs. There are also plans in 2017 to start field testing the Sarmat missile, the heavy ICBM replacement for the R-36M Voyevoda. In addition, the Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces (MSYaS) are fielding a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the RSM-56 Bulava. In short, although Russia is growing its conventional military capabilities, it still believes a strong nuclear deterrent is a necessary guarantor of sovereignty. End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)*

Peace Vehicles -- Part I: Voyevoda Will Hold Out to the Last

As defined in the updated Russian Federation Military Doctrine, nuclear weapons remain a factor for preventing both nuclear conflicts as well as conflicts using conventional weapons. Inasmuch as the Strategic Nuclear Forces make the primary contribution to Russia's deterrence potential, it appears interesting to provide an assessment of their current status based on accessible open Russian and foreign sources.

Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces (SYaS) are intended for global nuclear deterrence and include the Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN), Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces (MSYaS), Air Strategic Nuclear Forces (ASYaS), and systems supporting their employment.

Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN)

By virtue of its geostrategic position, the Soviet Union and later also Russia traditionally placed and is placing main emphasis on the ground component in forming the SYaS structure. The RVSN's leading role in the strategic nuclear triad is determined not only by its preponderant number of deployed delivery vehicles (more than 60 percent) and number of nuclear warheads (up to two-thirds of the cumulative amount), but also by supreme operational readiness to execute combat missions, their all-weather execution, and command and control stability under conditions of an aggressor's possible countermeasures.

The RVSN includes three missile armies (RA's): 27th Guards (headquarters in Vladimir), 31st (headquarters in Orenburg), and 33rd Guards (headquarters in Omsk).

As of the end of 2014 they had 12 missile divisions armed with a combined total of around 400 launchers (PU's) of silo-based and mobile-based missile complexes (RK's). The number of deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles is on the order of 350, with approximately 1,200 nuclear warheads (YaBZ's) on them. Up to 96 percent of this attack grouping is kept ready for immediate employment...

Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN)

ICBM Type	Number of Launcher	Locations
Voyevoda (RS-20V)	58	Dombarovsky, Uzhur
Stilet (RS-18)	66	Kozelsk, Tatishchevo
Topol (RS-12M)	145	Vypolzovo, Yoshkar-Ola, Yurya, Nizhniy Tagil, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, Irkutsk
Topol-M silo-based (RS-12M2)	60	Tatishchevo
Topol-M mobile (RS-12M1)	15	Teykovo
Yars mobile (RS-24)	45	Teykovo, Nizhniy, Tagil, Novosibirsk
Yars silo-based (RS-24)	4	Kozelsk
Total	396	

(continued)

Continued: Details of Russian Nuclear Triad

Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces (MSYaS)

The MSYaS form the greater part of the deep retaliatory strike potential of Russia's SYaS, inasmuch as heightened survivability is inherent in them a priority thanks to high concealment of operations when at sea. Weak aspects of the MSYaS, and not just of Russia's, are considered to be the vulnerability of strategic missile submarine cruisers (RPKSN's) when in basing facilities as well as poor reliability of communicating centralized battle management orders to them in a submerged condition. Moreover, due to the considerable weakening of potential of the Russian Navy's general-purpose forces during 1999-2010, substantially less combat stability is inherent in Russia's RPKSN's in ocean expanses than in similar US ballistic missile submarines...

As of the end of 2014 the Russian Navy had 12 RPKSN's of four classes: 2 Project 667BDR (Kalmar), 6 Project 667BDRM (Delfin), 1 Project 941U (Akula), and 3 Project 955 (Borey). All submarine cruisers of projects 667BDR and 667BDRM and one Project 955 (Yuriy Dolgorukiy) had ballistic missiles aboard (a total of 144 deployed SLBM's with more than 400 nuclear warheads on them)...

Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces (MSYaS)			
Strategic Missile Submarine Class	Number	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles	
		Type	Number
Project 667BDR(Kalmar)	2	RSM-50	32
Project 667BDRM (Delfin)	6	RSM-54	96
Project 941U (Akula)	1	-	-
Project 955 (Borei)	3	RSM-56	16
Total	12		

Air Strategic Nuclear Forces (ASYaS)

The ASYaS rightly are considered a flexible means both of global as well as regional nuclear deterrence. No other components of the strategic nuclear triad possess such capabilities. A weak aspect of Russia's ASYaS is the limited number of airfields for basing heavy bombers (TB's) and tanker aircraft.

As of the end of 2014 the order of battle of Russia's strategic aviation numbered 66 heavy bombers: 11 Tu-160 and 55 Tu-95MS bombers. All of them as well as the regiment of Il-78M tanker aircraft are part of the Air Force Long-Range Aviation Command. Permanent basing locations of the heavy bombers are air bases in the city of Engels, Saratovskaya Oblast, and Ukrainka Settlement, Amurskaya Oblast, and that of the tanker aircraft the air base at Ryazan.

A regiment of Tu-160 and Tu-95MS heavy bombers is stationed at Engels and two regiments of Tu-95MS heavy bombers at Ukrainka. There are 200-300 long-range nuclear air-launched cruise missiles [ALCM's] warehoused at these bases and intended for installation on heavy bombers. The overall reserve of nuclear ALCM's for heavy bombers, counting those stored at RF Defense Ministry 12th Main Directorate arsenals, is around 800...

Air Strategic Nuclear Forces (ASYaS)				
Heavy Bomber Type	Number	Air Launched Cruise Missiles		
		Type	Number	Total
Tu-95MS6 (Bear-H6)	27	Kh-55	6	162
Tu-95MS16 (Bear-H16)	28	Kh-55	16	448
Tu-160 (Blackjack)	11	Kh-55M	12-	132
Total	66			742

Prompt Global Strike, Prompts Russian Air Defense Innovations

7 February 15

Source: Dmitriy Smirnov, "A Difficult But Solvable Problem: The Search for Nontraditional Methods of Information Support to Combat Operations of SAM Troops Units in Combating Low-Observable and Hypersonic Offensive Air Weapons," *Vozdushno-Kosmicheskaya Oborona Online*, 07 February 15, <<http://www.vko.ru/taktika/zadacha-trudnaya-no-reshaemaya>>, accessed 5 March 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine has made it clear that it still must maintain a strong nuclear deterrent. In this spirit, the doctrine stated that the threats to this deterrent are "the creation and deployment of global strategic antiballistic missile systems that undermines the established global stability and balance of power in nuclear missile capabilities, the implementation of the 'prompt strike' concept, intent to deploy weapons in space and deployment of strategic conventional precision weapons."*

The proposed US "Prompt Global Strike" mentioned in this statement has especially irked Russia, as it provides a means of destroying a significant portion of Russia's nuclear deterrence assets without the use of US nuclear weapons. The accompanying article discusses some countermeasures to one potential component of "Prompt Global Strike," a hypersonic (extremely high-speed) missile program. Russia believes its current air defense capabilities are incapable of providing sufficient warning time for the launch of counter missiles, so it is brainstorming some new early warning capabilities ranging from high-flying aerostats to low-flying satellites. End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

A Difficult, But Solvable Problem

The Prompt Global Strike (PGS) concept proposes to accomplish the mission of eliminating a military threat on Russia's part using only conventional weapons without crossing the "nuclear threshold." Technically the operation may look as follows: a simultaneous launch of weapons for destroying Russia's nuclear potential. These are high-velocity missiles covering hundreds of kilometers in a minute, and the enemy simply has no time to make a decision on retaliatory actions. Nuclear weapon delivery vehicles -- silo and mobile launchers, submarines, and strategic bombers -- are attacked. Other targets may be destroyed only if this is required for destroying primary targets. Herein lies a fundamental difference of plans for PGS conflicts from "conventional" ones, where priority targets of attack were considered to be the opposing side's leadership; command and control systems; military industry, power supply, and transportation facilities; and the population. Pentagon plans for nuclear attack against the USSR which are known today included tens of thousands of targets, but the targets are fewer by an order of magnitude in the new concept of a disarming PGS, since according to its provisions, facilities of the nuclear industry and nuclear weapon storage are not important: they are incapable of inflicting damage on US territory and Armed Forces without delivery vehicles. There is no requirement either for occupation of the opposing side's territory or for a ground operation on it.

Consequently, fewer than a thousand precision hypersonic missiles with nonnuclear warheads are needed to carry out a successful US attack...

Thanks to hypersonic speed and a flight altitude on the order of 40 km, it is impossible to down the FALCON [Advanced Hypersonic Weapon] system aerial vehicle with existing active fire elements of Russia's VKO systems. Military experts and specialists note that almost all Russian reconnaissance assets in the inventory have limited capabilities to detect hypersonic aerial vehicle, and much work lies ahead here. The goal of the attackers is not to become absolutely invisible to active fire elements of VKO

systems, but to shorten the time spent in zones of visibility of reconnaissance assets to such an extent where the enemy no longer will be able to intercept a high-speed attack aerial vehicle. In this case the defenders need means of radar and electro-optical reconnaissance and target designation (TsU) with an effective range of thousands of kilometers.

Calculations show that to successfully combat hypersonic targets, target designations must be issued from air defense systems command and control systems to missile guidance stations from the 1,033.5 km... research confirms that one version of long-range reconnaissance of Advanced Hypersonic Weapon's is the use of nine artificial Earth satellites in constellation with small multichannel, multispectral electro-optical systems uniformly stationed in near-Earth space in three sun-synchronous elliptical orbits spaced in longitude with an inclination of 60° and altitude of 1,500 km.

...Stratospheric aerostats (stratostats) under the purview of the Air Force Aeronautical Service are capable of hovering in the sky for days without needing airfields with runways. Considering the altitude changes of wind velocity in the atmosphere (minimum wind to 10 km/hr at the level of 21.3-21.4 km, limit 21.33 km), it is advisable to give a long-range passive reconnaissance dirigible a flight altitude of around 21.3 km in a geostationary position, and here the line of sight range (radio horizon) will be 1,425.3 km...

Role of UAVs in Eastern Ukraine

Source: “Kasyanov: Following The Logic of War Imposed by Putin, We Lose” Liga.net (Online), 3 March 2015, <http://news.liga.net/interview/politics/5222507-kasyanov_sleduya_logike_voyny_navyazannoy_putinyem_my_proigraem.htm>, accessed 10 March 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *The accompanying article discusses the role of Ukrainian and Russian UAVs being fielded in Eastern Ukraine. These UAVs are not capable of functioning as weapons platforms, and are relatively primitive by Western standards, but their capabilities are substantial force multipliers in the armies which they serve.*

Unlike Western Armies that are somewhat infantry-centric, post-Soviet Armies (including Russia and the Ukraine) emphasize artillery. Post-Soviet maneuver brigades (or regiments) will typically have as many artillery battalions as maneuver (tank and infantry) battalions. Although, infantry and tank units are still important assets necessary for capturing and holding ground, in terms of actually causing combat damage post-Soviet armies prefer to rely on their artillery. Since these armies doctrinally plan on their artillery severely diminishing the enemy's combat power before its maneuver units begin decisive engagement, and most artillery systems can fire more than 20 miles from their intended targets (far out of the line-of-sight), target acquisition (artillery spotting) and communications are essential for post-Soviet armies to conduct successful combat operations.

*As the accompanying article describes, relatively low-cost UAVs are becoming the preferred means for artillery spotting on both sides of the conflict. The apparent success of UAVs as an enabling technology for the use of artillery in Eastern Ukraine will likely lead to organizational changes in artillery formations throughout the Russian Federation, and possibly for other armies that practice Soviet doctrine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Kasyanov: Following The Logic of War Imposed by Putin, We Lose

Yuriy Kasyanov, a founder of the SOS Army volunteer movement, believes the country's government and military command have been handling the Russian aggression in an ineffective way... Unmanned aerial vehicles of the SOS Army volunteer movement are helping Ukrainian troops along the entire delimitation line. Volunteers work with artillery and reconnaissance commanders in the field... Now, in Ukraine, he is trying to persuade the General Staff to develop aerial reconnaissance, all to no avail. Kasyanov says supplying all of the Ukrainian Armed Forces with UAVs and associated equipment would cost 10 million dollars. However, the General Staff prefers old-school methods of warfare. In the meantime, Ukraine's enemy, Putin's Russia, is aiming to provide each company of troops with aerial reconnaissance assets.

On UAV operations in the Ukrainian Army

[Liga Novosti] How many UAV groups does SOS Army have in the antiterrorist operation (ATO) area?

[Kasyanov] There are two at the moment, but we will eventually have three. We can do more but there is a shortage of UAVs, they crash and require maintenance. In addition, we do not have enough time. We both build UAVs and operate them. Right now, our groups are working on the frontline. Here we have various models being prepared for operation. We are building a new UAV production workshop.

[Liga Novosti] Can you also train military officers [as UAV operators]?

[Kasyanov] We have a flying arm, people associated with us. We sell our UAVs to them, and they train our own operators, as well as military personnel. The courses are based at training ranges in Kyiv.

[Liga Novosti] Is it realistic to set up a UAV detachment in every military brigade?

[Kasyanov] Of course it is. Russia is planning to have a UAV in every company. They have already built hundreds of them. It is just as realistic in Ukraine, too. We only need 10 million dollars to meet the demand on the frontline.

[Liga Novosti] To buy the vehicles and train people in their operation?

[Kasyanov] We are talking about UAVs, ground equipment and spares kits. This sum does not include the training, but training is the cheapest element.

[Liga Novosti] Will 10 million dollars be enough to provide every unit in the army with UAVs?

[Kasyanov] ...What we need is one or two UAV squadrons, with 15 vehicles in each. This will suffice. They will be moving around just like we do: they will have ground

transport, equipment, maintenance bases, UAVs and operators. There is no need to set up such detachments everywhere. There is no point in reconnoitering frontline sections where nothing is happening. This would only scatter assets.

On SOS Army's interaction with military command

[Liga Novosti] What can you say about your current interaction with the army?



Continued: Role of UAVs in Eastern Ukraine

[Kasyanov] We have no problems interacting with specific detachments in the field. I primarily mean the artillery, we reconnoiter targets for them during the active phase of hostilities. For example, our UAVs adjusted artillery fire the Donetsk Region, including during the period when our troops were withdrawing from the town. We lost one vehicle right over the battlefield. When the active phase is on, we work in the interest of the artillery. We also reconnoiter for other military detachments, such as the 17th armour brigade, Aydar volunteer battalion, and the National Guard.

On withdrawal of artillery

[Liga Novosti] ...what are the risks associated with the withdrawal of artillery [in reference to the Minsk agreement]?

[Kasyanov] You want to hear the truth? Nobody will be withdrawing the artillery, neither we nor the enemy. At the very best, it will be moved a couple of kilometers back. I have reports from our people on the other side. They say the Russian hardware withdrew towards Lutuhyne during the day but the following night it returned to new, more convenient and better protected positions. Do not take my word for it, but I suppose that we are doing the same.

The thing is, artillery is not needed everywhere. Without reconnaissance and surveillance, it is a threat primarily to our population on the occupied territories. You cannot argue with statistics. Even if you know the exact location of an enemy tank, only one shell out of a hundred will hit the target. I have lost count of the times I got under artillery fire, but I am still alive and unharmed. In other words, artillery hits are very much random.

Public Perception of the Sea Breeze Exercises and Ukraine's Prospects in the Black Sea Region

By Alisa Moldavanova

This paper focuses on the changing Ukrainian public perceptions of Sea Breeze. By closely examining six Ukrainian regional and national newspapers from 2001 until 2013, this study uncovers several underlying themes that explain varying public support and resistance to these exercises. The results suggest that Ukrainian public opinion is not uniform, and emphasize the importance in keeping these regional differences in mind when conducting a public information campaign regarding the Euro-Atlantic prospects of Ukraine.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/Ukraine/Sea-Breeze-exercise.pdf>

“Of course such a center could be opened wherever you like but we understand perfectly that the Chechen Republic has great experience in the work of combating international terrorism, they understand this problem, and they know all the modern means of combating it.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The accompanying article discusses plans for the establishment of a new special operations forces (SOF) training facility near the city of Gudermes in Russia's Chechen Republic. Interest in Russian SOF has risen recently due to Russian operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.*

In addition, Russia announced in 2013 that the Russian Defense Ministry has begun the creation of a special operations command. Although details have been few and far between about this new command, it appears that it will have two major functions. The first is to serve as a branch proponent for Russia's elite SOF in Russia's various ministries, services, and agencies with military forces, in order to develop a common baseline of SOF proficiency. The second is to directly control the Ministry of Defense's new SOF unit, which numbers approximately 1000 personnel (support forces included).

*The establishment of an inter-ministerial training facility continues recent Russian trends of attempting to remove excess administrative capacities and harmonize existing military capabilities in the myriad of militarized intelligence and security agencies that exist in the Russian Federation. Of particular note in this article is the reference to how this facility will be funded. The inclusion of foreign partners is likely as much for political as financial reasons, but the most interesting statement is: “The project will be implemented using private investments and does not require the allocation of resources from either the local or federal budget.” It is difficult to surmise the reasons for a privately funded SOF facility, but in Ramzan Kadyrov's Chechen Republic anything is possible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Source: Igor Molotov and Anastasiya Kashevarova: “Spetsnaz to be Trained in Chechnya for Russia and Other Countries. Unique Training Being Created in Republic for Preparation of Special-Purpose Subunits' Fighters,” *Izvestiya (Online)*, 16 February 2015, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/583052>>, accessed 6 March 2015.

Spetsnaz to be Trained in Chechnya for Russia and Other Countries. Unique Training Being Created in Republic for Preparation of Special-Purpose Subunits' Fighters

Chechnya can become an international center for the training of special-purpose forces. To this end, a spetsnaz training center, unique in terms of its equipment and unparalleled in Russia at the moment, is being built in Gudermes. According to Ramzan Kadyrov, head of Chechnya, the complex should be completed within a year. It is proposed that the center will train spetsnaz subunits of all Russia's branches of service and combat arms and special services. Other countries will also be able to use the new site for the training of their own special services...

According to the plan, the highlight of the center will be the unique tactical installation -- a whole complex where it is possible to practice skills in the freeing of hostages from a residential tower block, a school, a hospital, a kindergarten, and a movie theatre. In addition, parachute, mountaineering, forest, aquatic, and other types of training will be able to be held at the center. The plans also include the construction of a wind tunnel for practicing operations in various physical conditions.

The center will occupy a considerable territory -- 35 hectares have been allocated for the shooting ranges alone and the main building will be 55,000 square meters in area. Around 500 people will be able to live and train in the center at the same time and over 1000 fighting men will be able to train at the same time...

The project will be implemented using private investments and does not require the allocation of resources from either the local or federal budget. The spetsnaz training must be carried out on a paying basis with the conclusion of official contracts. In the specialists' opinion, the main partners could be countries of the Arab world and Latin America and also CIS countries. Preliminary talks are already being held with representatives of Belarus and Kazakhstan now...



Russia's Perspective on the Ways of Countering UAV Technologies

Source: Oleg Falichev, "Substantive Response to Global Strike: Ground Troops SAM Brigades Will Be Equipped with S-300V4 SAM Systems Before 2020," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 11 March 2015, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/24155>>, accessed 18 March 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *In the Russian system, Air Defense duties are split between the Aerospace Defense Troops and the organic air defense units of ground maneuver units (Ground Forces, Naval Infantry, Airborne, etc.). In practice, protection from strategic bombing, missile defense, and other strategic-level threats are the responsibility of the former, while protection from tactical aviation is the responsibility of the latter. The accompanying article is based upon an interview with an individual who could roughly be described as the chief of the branch proponent for tactical air defense of the Russian Ground Forces- Air Defense Troops Chief Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Leonov.*

*At one point in the interview, the interviewer specifically asks: "[What] special methods [are] being developed for combating unmanned aerial vehicles." Interestingly, the Russian Air Defense Troops chief does not see air defense artillery and missiles as being the primary counters to UAVs; instead he believes electronic warfare and other ways that disrupt UAV navigation and communications should be the first means employed to counter hostile UAV technologies, with air defense assets only filling in if needed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Substantive Response to Global Strike

Interview with the Air Defense Troops Chief of the Russian Ground Forces, Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Petrovich Leonov by Oleg Falichev... Interest in tactical air defense (PVO) increased considerably following the disaster in the sky over Ukraine of the Malaysian Boeing-777, which much information indicates could have been downed by a Ukrainian Armed Forces Buk-M1 ZRK (Surface-to-Air Missile System). What does Russian Federation Armed Forces Ground Troops tactical air defense represent today, what weapons does it have, and with what will it be augmented in the near future? Chief of Ground Troops Air Defense Troops Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Leonov spoke about these and other questions in an exclusive interview with *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*...

[VPK] One other means of surprise air attack which appeared relatively recently are state-of-the-art drones, which can have even less of a radar cross-section than cruise missiles. Are special methods being developed for combating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), especially attack UAVs?

[Leonov] This perhaps will be an unexpected revelation for some, but there is no special weapon in the tactical air defense inventory to combat UAV's. Existing SAM complexes cope successfully with this mission.

The fact is that combating those types of airborne targets is not the prerogative of air defense; this mission is accomplished in an integrated manner with the involvement of electronic warfare, engineer, and other troops.

In general, stopping the flight of a UAV by suppressing its command and control radio channels or distorting the GPS navigational field is one of the most attractive methods.

I will dwell briefly on the capabilities of tactical air defense weapons for combating them.

Considering the altitudes of combat employment of large UAV's such as Global Hawk, Reaper, Sky Warrior, or Hermes-1500, the S-300V and Buk types of SAM complexes are the most effective weapons.

Choice of a complex in firing against medium-size UAV's such as the Predator or Hermes-480 basically depends on their flight altitude. With flights at maximum altitudes, it is possible to combat those UAV's by the aforementioned S-300V and Buk. Tor and Osa (missile systems) are the most effective weapons at altitudes up to 5,000 m.

The Strela-10 and Igla-S (missile systems) are capable of engaging such UAV's at altitudes of no more than 2,500 m, as a rule with pursuit firing.

The primary difficulty in combating small UAV's such as Hunter, Shadow-200, or Hermes-150 is the difficulty of their detection by radar and optical means because of the low radar cross-sections, low thermal signatures, and overall dimensions.

Employing the S-300V and Buk complexes against these UAV's is unreasonable and economically unsound. Their primary mission is coordinate support of the Tor as the most effective complex for executing such missions. The Strela-10 and Verba also are capable of combating this class of UAV's, but they can be used only in visual contact with the target.

Employment of the Tunguska (self-propelled air defense gun-missile system) gun armament and Shilka ZSU (self-propelled air defense gun) also is possible, but is inefficient in view of the great expenditure of ammunition.

Iranization of Russia: How Russia's Fundamentalism Resembles Iran

Source: “Моральное государство Путина. Чем Россия похожа на Иран?” (Putin’s Moral Nation. How is Russia Similar to Iran?), Gigamir.net, 22 January 2015 <http://gigamir.net/print/1442701>

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 January 2015 Gegamir.ru published an article titled, “Putin’s Moral Nation. How is Russia Similar to Iran?” In the accompanying excerpts of the article, the author draws parallels between authoritarianism in Iran and Russia in what he describes as the process of “Iranization” in Russia.

In Iran, according to the article, the court recently banned the Iranian newspaper, Mardom-e-Emrooz, after it published a front-page photo of Hollywood actor George Clooney marked with Je Suis Charlie on his lapel. “In the Iranian court the role of legal basis plays a moral judgment by itself. It is sufficient: in totalitarian regimes dictatorship of law gives way to the dictatorship of morality,” writes the author.

Similarly, according to the author, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov had said that there are “more important things than the law” when the Kremlin ordered cable providers to stop broadcasting opposition-leaning TV channel Dozhd [Rain] in January 2014. In January 2015 regional authorities in Russia followed the same line of reasoning for banning the Oscar-nominated movie Leviathan, which portrays corruption in present-day Russia, while the “outraged” public urged the movie director to “publically repent on the Red Square.”

In Russia, as in Iran, there prevails an “archaic, fundamentalist notion that any alternative to the only true point of view is inherently immoral. It is not the point of view that needs arguments and affirmation, but its opponent – needs exposing and condemning.”

Ultimately, however, “it is very difficult to find an adequate analogy for the progressive Russian fundamentalism, which itself is hardly yet aware of being in this state.” For the author, Russia is ultimately worse than even other authoritarian countries: Iran and China are undergoing reforms, and even in the Stalinist era the Soviet government not only used fear to control the population, but also talked about the future. The current Kremlin regime, by contrast, has not laid out a concrete vision for a future Russia. The author concludes, “No one, starting with the head of state and ending with TV news announcer or a hat-wearing biker, wants to think through this terribly dreary thought to the end.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

In China, a trial is ongoing of Shen Hao, chief editor of a major business newspaper 21st Century Business Herald ... And in Iran the newspaper Mardom-e-Emruz has just been closed: the court considered unacceptable that the paper published a front-page photo of George Clooney marked with Je Suis Charlie on his lapel.

... Two episodes of censorship in two unfree societies. What is the difference between them? Obviously, in the role that formalities play in them. The Chinese situation is a well-known to us case of selective application of the Criminal Code - an example of the very same dictatorship of the law, with which Vladimir Putin came to power, and which came into full force for the first time in the Yukos case. In the Iranian court the role of legal basis plays a moral judgment by itself. It is sufficient: in totalitarian regimes dictatorship of law gives way to the dictatorship of morality. The “public outrage” becomes a conductor of morality, the court, on its behalf, is guided not so much by the law as by notions of good and evil. The law here only carries procedural meaning: it explains why the court’s verdict holds power and is final.

Which of these two episodes is more likely in Russia? Both are possible, but five or six years ago, we would say first. And today, it seems, is the second. Iranization Russia removes formalities by the wayside. There are more important things of the law, in the words of a spokesman for Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, when cable operators turned off the TV channel “Rain”. For the same reason the regional authorities in advance ban on their estates zvyagintsevskogo “Leviathan”, and representatives of the most outraged public urging him to publicly repent on Red Square. As in the old days, which has long been neostalos living witnesses....

Which of these two episodes is more likely to happen in Russia? Both are possible, but five or six years ago, we would have said: the first. And today, it seems, the second. Iranization of Russia moves formalities to the wayside. There are more important things than the law, in the words of Vladimir Putin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, when cable operators turned off the TV channel Dozd [Rain]. For the same reason the regional authorities ban in advance on their estates Zvyagintsev’s “Leviathan,” and representatives of that outraged public urge him to publicly repent on the Red Square. As it was in the old days, of which living witnesses have long since gone...

There are things more important than the law. And most important of all—is archaic, fundamentalist notion that any alternative to the only true point of view is inherently immoral.

It is not the point of view that needs arguments and affirmation, but its opponent – needs exposing and condemning...

...And herein lies the problem: it is very difficult to find an adequate analogy for the progressive Russian fundamentalism, which itself is hardly yet aware of being in this state... who or what is present-day Russia beginning to resemble? No one, starting with the head of state and ending with TV news announcer or a hat-wearing biker, wants to think through this terribly dreary thought to the end.

OE Watch Commentary: On 9-10 February 2015 Russian President Vladimir Putin travelled to Egypt for a bilateral meeting at President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi's invitation. The two leaders discussed a wide range of issues, from security, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, to economic cooperation on a number of fronts, including plans for Russia to build a nuclear power plant in Egypt.

While the Western press widely reported on the talks, the accompanying excerpt from Medianews.ru highlights as the most notable outcome of the meeting an event which received less attention—an agreement on the creation of a free-trade zone between Egypt and the Russia-led Eurasia Economic Customs Union, a precursor to a Eurasian Union, which the Kremlin aims to set up as a counterweight to the European Union. According to the article, Egypt's entering the Eurasian Union's orbit caused "chagrin" to the United States.

Russia and Egypt have significantly improved relations since the military ouster of former president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, as Cairo's relations with the West grew strained. Talk of a free-trade area between Cairo and Moscow began as early as 2011, but gained traction in the summer of 2014, when Sisi travelled to Moscow.

The Customs Union, which until recently consisted of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, has recently expanded to include Armenia. The article also includes Kyrgyzstan as a fifth member, perhaps in an effort to present the Customs Union as large as possible. Technically, however, Kyrgyzstan has not yet ratified the accession treaty, unlike the Armenian government, whose treaty came into force in January 2015.

Putin's trip to Egypt was on the eve of his summit in Minsk with Ukraine's and Europe's leaders on the situation in Eastern Ukraine. The accompanying excerpt highlights that politically the trip to Egypt was a signal to the West that Putin remains an influential global leader, despite the negative impact of Western sanctions and Russia's economic downturn due to low energy prices. "...[the] Russian-Egyptian summit was a symbolic gesture of disdain for Western leaders' criticism of Russia's activity in Ukraine and human rights violations in Egypt... Even in a circumstance where the impact from Western sanctions for the role in the Ukrainian conflict is quite noticeable, Russia continues to do everything possible to strengthen its own diplomatic clout in the international arena." **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: "Египет входит в орбиту Евразийского союза" (Egypt Enters Eurasian Union Orbit), Mixednews.ru, 26 February 2015 <http://mixednews.ru/archives/73226>

Even in a circumstance where the impact from Western sanctions for the role in the Ukrainian conflict is quite noticeable, Russia continues to do everything possible to strengthen its own diplomatic clout in the international arena. One of the last steps in this direction was the involvement of Egypt in the orbit of the Kremlin-led Eurasian Union, much to the chagrin of the United States.

During the recent two-day visit to Cairo, President Vladimir Putin and his Egyptian counterpart Abdul-Fatta Al-Sisi signed several new agreements aimed at deepening bilateral cooperation in the areas of trade, energy, security and tourism. Most notable was the agreement on the Egyptian side on the creation of a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union, joining Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan.

The conclusion of this agreement was the culmination of a process of strengthening relations between the two countries. In 2014, trade between Russia and Egypt exceeded \$4.5 billion. This is an 80 percent increase from the previous year. Bilateral cooperation also includes efforts to combat terrorism, the construction of the Russian industrial zone near the Suez Canal and preparatory work relating to the joint construction of the first nuclear power plant in Egypt.

In addition to tangible progress in the establishment of strategic relations, Russian-Egyptian summit was a symbolic gesture of disdain for Western leaders' criticism of Russia's activity in Ukraine and human rights violations in Egypt

Putin's Movie on Crimea's "Return" to Russia

10 March 2015

OE Watch Commentary: On 8 March 2015 TV channel Russia 1 aired an announcement of an upcoming Russian film, "The Path to Homeland." According to the accompanying excerpt from Top.rbc.ru, the movie provides Russian President Vladimir Putin's point of view on the events in the weeks prior to annexation of Crimea. He discusses "how the work began to return Crimea to Russia." This article appears to suggest that, contrary to the Kremlin's previous statements, its work to annex Crimea began prior to the referendum held in Crimea on 16 March, not after it.

The second accompanying excerpt, published within days of the first article on Haqqin.az, an Azeri information, analysis and monitoring portal of the non-profit "For Human Rights" association, provides a response to Putin's viewpoint on Crimea that is rarely seen in the Russian-language press, though it appears unrelated to the film in particular. Its author, Nair Aliev, responds on Putin's earlier comment about the referendum on Crimea's annexation ("[If] the people want this, then so be it ... we acted as we were required to act"), or, as the Kremlin-controlled press writes, Crimea's "joining" Russia. Aliev writes sarcastically that if a vote took place on territory giving people a choice of living, for example, in Russia or Switzerland, the majority would choose Switzerland; by that logic, Switzerland should absorb the territory where the vote took place. "[L]et's 'self-determinate' by regions, cities... neighborhoods and individual houses. Residents of my house, for example, would choose Japan (I know for sure, I have conducted a poll already)... [L]et's ask everyone! All the residents of the territories of Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and the same those of Switzerland and America (North and South) - where they want to live?" The first excerpt presents an interpretation of Crimea's annexation that has been dominant in Kremlin-controlled Russian-language press for approximately a year now. Aliev's article, by contrast, adds a voice of opposition to Crimea's annexation from the South Caucasus rarely-heard in the Russian-language media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Polina Khimshiavili "Почему Крым наш: как Путин уточнял свою версию присоединения полуострова" (Why Crimea is Ours: How Putin Clarified His Version of Accession of the Peninsula), Top.rbc.ru, 8 March 2015 <http://top.rbc.ru/politics/09/03/2015/54fdb8879a79470d8658f970>

On March 8 TV channel "Russia 1" showed announcement of the film "The Path to Homeland." In the televised fragment President Vladimir Putin talks about how the work began "to return Crimea to Russia." Putin discussed how he "invited to the Kremlin leaders of our special services, the Ministry of Defense" and tasked them with saving the life of Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich, otherwise "he would just be annihilated."

A referendum was held in Crimea on March 16, where the majority voted for joining the peninsula with Russia, which was formally documented on March 18 by Putin in the Kremlin.

During the year that passed since the beginning of Crimean events, Putin has described Russia's role and reasons for Crimea's entering its territory in a variety of ways. Commenting for the first time on the events of the peninsula at the press conference on March 4 in Novoye-Ogaryovo, president denied membership in the Russian armed forces of the "little green men" and at the same time said that Crimea's joining Russia is not planned.

Among the reasons cited during the year were— the need to protect the Russian-speaking population, restoration of historical justice, sacred meaning of Crimea to Russia...

Source: Nair Aliev, "Счастье по-путински: Азербайджан вступит в Швейцарию, Армения - в Японию, а Грузия - в Мадагаскар..." (Happiness According to Putin: Azerbaijan will Join Switzerland, Armenia—Japan, and Georgia—Madagascar...), Haqqin.az, 10 March 2015 <http://haqqin.az/news/41079>

Let's imagine a situation where someone is conducting a poll, and a very simple one at that: Where would you want to live - in Russia (Azerbaijan, Armenia Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, ...) or, say, in Switzerland? ... I think it will be clear: most would prefer Switzerland. And why not? Nature, abundance, and a good climate ...

But does this mean that the Swiss government is downright obliged to urgently accept the territory in which the vote took place?

The question is odd, but Russia's President Vladimir Putin provided a response. Commenting on the question of annexation ("return") of Crimea to Russia, he said, "if the people want this, then so be it ... we acted as we were required to act" (RIA Novosti)

Well, let's "self-determinate" by regions, cities... neighborhoods and individual houses. Residents of my house, for example, would choose Japan (I know for sure, I have conducted a poll already)....

... Let's ask everyone! All the residents of the territories of Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and the same those of Switzerland and America (North and South) - where they want to live?

And happiness will come! ... Of course, some may be unhappy, but you can bring constitutional order by using armed forces...

From Murmansk to Astrakhan: S-400 “Triumph” Live Fire Exercises

OE Watch Commentary: According to an article in the Murmansk-based news agency Bi-Port, the closed territory of Alexandrovsk is going to be conducting live fire exercises on 21 March with the S-400 “Triumph”(NATO Designation SA-21 Growler) missile systems that were recently received by the northern naval air defense compounds.

On 11 March 2015 Russian news agency TASS report that CIS member states will be conducting live fire exercises of air defense weapons on the Ashuluk proving grounds south of Astrakhan; the exercises are planned for September. They are to test the capabilities of surface-to-air weapons systems such as the S-400, as well as the S-300 and the Panzer-S weapons platforms.

Murmansk.mk.ru stated on 9 January 2015 that the S-400 weapons platforms of their northern air defense brigades are scheduled to travel to the Astrakhan states to conduct live fire exercises sometime in the summer. Both the MK.RU and Bi-Port articles offer details about the S-400 platforms, claiming that the new missile systems are capable of defeating almost any type of modern air attack: strategic bombers, intelligence planes, ballistic and cruise missiles, and stealth and fighter jets, including aviation assets with smaller radar cross-sections like drones. **End OE Watch Commentary (Croft)**

Source: “В Мурманской области готовятся принять ЗРК С-400 «Триумф»” [Murmansk Territory Prepares to Receive AAM S-400 “Triumph”], Bi-Port.com News, 16 March 2015. <http://www.b-port.com/news/item/149560.html#ixzz3UpGmpHhj>

21 March in the closed territory of Alexandrovsk the interception zenith-missile system s-400 “Triumph”(NATO Designation Sa-21 Growler) is being prepared for active duty. They are receiving these weapons in the air defense bases of the Northern Navy.

The 3RK S-400 “Triumph” new generation system is designed for the defeat of every modern and prospective means of air and orbital attack: Intelligence planes, stealth fighters, fighter jets, strategic bombers, ballistic and cruise missiles, drones and hypersonic targets. Every zenith missile system provides simultaneous firing on 36 targets of up to 400 kilometers from the guidance of their 72 missiles....

Source: “Зенитные системы С-300 и С-400 задействуют в учениях объединенных сил ПВО СНГ” [Zenith Systems S-300 and S-400 Involved in Joint CIS Exercises], Tass Information Agency of Russia, 11 March 2015. <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/1819705>

The Zenith Rocket Systems S-300 “Favorite” and S-400 “Triumph”, as well as the Zenith Missile/Cannon System “Panzer-S” will be put to use during a weapons exercise of CIS countries known as “Combat Commonwealth-2015”, stated the Ministry of Defense Representative to the Colonel Aleksey Zolotukhin of the Air and Space Defense Unit.

He explained that these weapons were being introduced to countries entering into the CIS, they also discussed preparations to go on maneuvers, which should begin in September on the Ashuluk Proving Grounds south of Astrakhan.

Officers, in particular, “reviewed in detail preparations for practical training exercise for systems specializing in applications and operations of Zenith Missile Systems such as the S-400 ‘Triumph’, the S-300 ‘Favorite’ and the Zenith Missile/Cannon ‘Panzer-S’, which are being used in the joint exercises of ‘Combat Commonwealth-2015’, at the meeting Zolotukhin also brought up the topic of preparation for interacting with the skilled officers cadre of the countries entering into the CIS, they also considered the perspective

of developing these systems, automating the control process of troops in the deflection of massive air bombardments, air and airspace based terror attacks, the capture or hijacking of air vessels. Earlier it was reported that ‘Combat Commonwealth-2015’ will be one of the most important combat training for the army aerospace defense...

Source: Vlad Severniy, “ЗРК С-400 прикроют северные просторы Арктики,” [Anti-Air System S-400 to Cover the Northern Arctic], MK.RU Murmansk, 9 January 2015. <http://murmansk.mk.ru/articles/2015/01/09/zrk-s400-prikroyut-severnye-prostory-arktiki.html>

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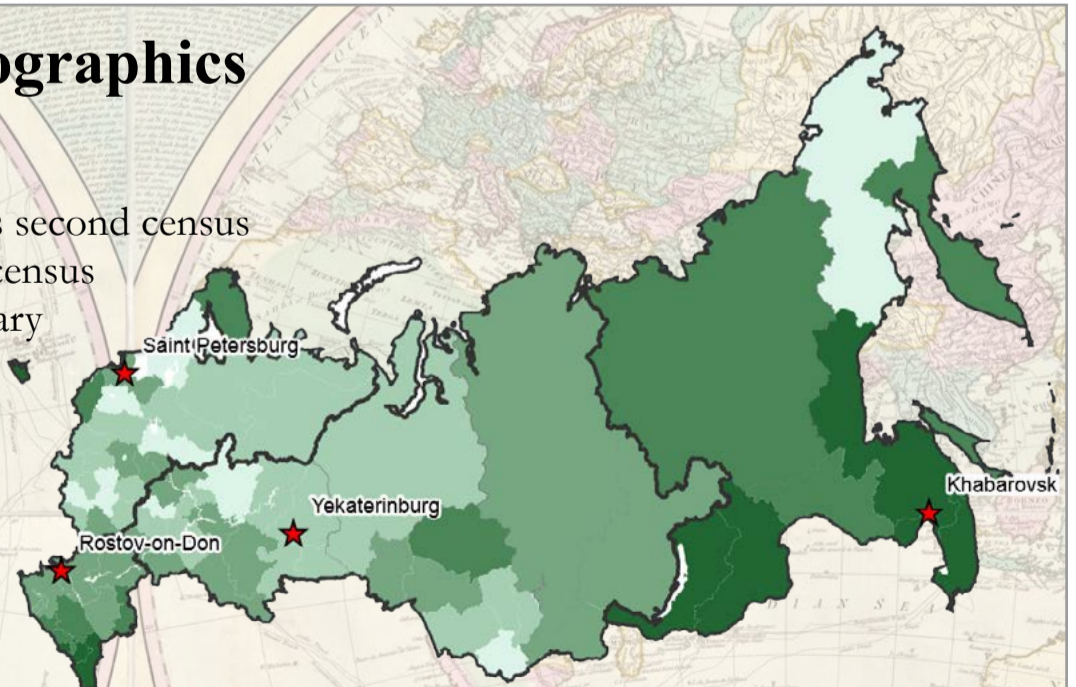
Continued: From Murmansk to Astrakhan: S-400 "Triumph" Live Fire Exercises

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Russian Conscription Demographics

By Charles K. Bartles, FMSSO

In 2010, the Russian Federation conducted its second census since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The census included a wealth of data about Russia's military demographics. Using the census data, this monograph makes a number of important estimates regarding Russia's future demographics.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Russian%20Conscription%20Demographics/Russian-Conscription-Demographics.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past year Russian political and military authorities have repeatedly denied any military support to the pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, Russian officials maintain that they have only provided humanitarian aid to the suffering civilian populations in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions. While the Kremlin officials do not deny that individual Russians have volunteered to help defend against “Ukrainian aggression,” they remain adamant that there are no regular Russian military units involved in this fighting.

The brief accompanying excerpt reflects the standard Kremlin denial. Not surprisingly, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) representative refers to the conflict as a “civil war” as opposed to battle between Ukrainian security forces and Russian-supported separatists. By asserting that this conflict is merely a Ukrainian domestic struggle, the Kremlin has been trying to absolve itself from any responsibility. In the official Kremlin-sponsored account, Russia is merely a disinterested third party, laboring to bring the warring Ukrainian sides to peaceful negotiation. The MoD spokesperson then selectively quotes a Ukrainian military source to support this claim of non-involvement, conveniently leaving out mention that this source was making a distinction between “regular” Russian military units and those involved on an individual basis.

The refutation continues by claiming that the latest US charges of Russian military involvement are an attempt by Washington to scuttle the stabilization process. In the Kremlin-supported narrative, the US has been exploiting the conflict in Ukraine to weaken its Russian geopolitical rival. In this rendition the US has a vested interest in prolonging the conflict to both discredit Russia’s peacekeeping efforts and possibly provoke the Kremlin into a wider war. The Russian media have consistently portrayed US political (and also claims US military) involvement in Ukraine as the ultimate source of this conflict. The excerpt concludes on a condescending tone, claiming that US officials “actually live in some other world known only to them” and that any Russian-American dialogue to resolve this crisis “is like drawing water in a sieve.” As long as Kremlin security officials continue to deny any military involvement in the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and persist in their belief that the US wants to weaken Russia via this conflict, finding a long-term political resolution will indeed be “like drawing water in a sieve.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Russian Defense Ministry Denies US Allegations of Presence in Ukraine,” Interfax-AVN Online, 12 March 2015. <http://www.militarynews.ru>

Russian Defense Ministry Denies US Allegations of Presence in Ukraine

The accusations by representatives of the US Department of State and Pentagon about the alleged involvement of the Russian Armed Forces in combat operations in the southeast of Ukraine do not correspond to reality, the Russian Defense Ministry’s official representative Maj-Gen Igor Konashenkov has said.

“We have already ceased to be surprised even by the most improbable accusations voiced by representatives of the US Department of State and Pentagon in the past two weeks about involvement of the Russian forces’ units in the civil war in Ukraine. Ukrainian Chief of General Staff Gen Viktor Muzhenko, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and Western journalists working in the [self-proclaimed] Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics do not see them there, but everyone in Washington does...” Konashenkov said.

At the same time, he said “it is characteristic that as the situation in southeastern Ukraine is beginning to stabilize, the degree and frequency of such accusations against Russia rise sharply”.

“Generals Philip Breedlove and Ben Hodges or Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland cannot explain how or where the units of the Russian Armed Forces have supposedly been seen in Ukraine. But they stubbornly call on everyone not to doubt anything, as in the [Russian] song ‘Children, You Just Have to Believe in Miracles,’” the general said.

He said “it is difficult to escape the impression that representatives of the Department of State and Pentagon actually live in some other world known only to them, the world of dreams and adventures, like the gas planet Pandora”.

“However, even in this case it is unclear with whom exactly we have been trying to have a dialogue on the situation in Ukraine all this time - with real creatures or with their Washington’s avatars. So, all we can do is strictly follow [Russian poet] Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov’s immortal covenant: “Shaming a liar, making fun of a fool or arguing with a woman is like drawing water in a sieve. Deliver us, oh God, from these three now!” the general said.

Mother of All Nukes

24 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Ever since the violent protests in Ukraine led to a change of government in Kiev, the Russian media have practically been on a war footing. In the Kremlin-supported portrayal, the West (the US in particular) sparked regime change in Ukraine in order to establish a foothold from which it could attack Russia. To defend against this “Western-sponsored aggression,” not only have Russian volunteers been helping ethnic Russians in Eastern Ukraine, but also the Kremlin has continued in its plans, despite Western-imposed economic sanctions, to modernize its military. A key component of Russia’s military modernization effort lies in the realm of nuclear forces, which many Russian pundits claim as the ultimate guarantee of the country’s sovereignty.

The first adjacent excerpt captures some of the Russian concerns about maintaining a robust nuclear deterrent and the necessity of developing a new heavy ballistic missile. The rhetoric resembles the frostiest period of the Cold War, with talk of “serious weapons” that “can scorch a sizable chunk of the globe,” and which “people are seriously afraid of.” Even though this new missile is still in the planning phase, the author assures the reader that the US “has no equivalent.”

The second excerpt points out that the severing of military trade relations with Ukraine may also have prompted Russian officials to develop a new heavy ICBM. Prior to 2014, maintenance and servicing of the Sarmat’s predecessor, the SS-18, had been performed by Ukrainian technicians. “Responsibility for the serviceability of the missiles has now been entrusted to the Makeyev State Missile Center” located in Russia. As the article suggests, there are some doubts as to whether “the Makeyev personnel would cope with the challenge.”

Over the past year, the Kremlin-sponsored media have become much more casual in their references to the employment of nuclear weapons. Hardly a week goes by without some new report describing additional Russian measures to fortify, or perhaps even use, its nuclear capabilities. While some of this ballistic rhetoric is designed to bolster and strengthen domestic support for the Kremlin, some of it may also reflect an increasing willingness to include the employment of nuclear weapons in future military operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Anton Valagin, “Сармат” против “Трайдента” [Sarmat Versus Trident] Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 24 February 2015. <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/24/sarmat-site.html>

Flight tests of a new Russian heavy ballistic missile, the Sarmat, are to begin in 2017. It is due to enter service before the end of the decade. According to Deputy Minister of Defense Yuriy Borisov, its power reserve will enable it to fly over both poles. “This is a serious weapon and people are seriously afraid of it,” Yuriy Ivanovich remarked. We have compared Sarmat with its closest rival, the American Trident II ICBM.

The new missile is to replace the legendary R-36M2 Voyevoda, to which NATO gave the name Satan because of its capabilities. The fourth-generation Voyevoda ICBM is also a unique missile: the most powerful, the heaviest, and the longest-range missile in the world. It hurls 10 x 750-kiloton warheads 11,000-16,000 km. Together they can scorch a sizable chunk of the globe. There is also a single warhead yielding 25 megatons. Several payload options have been created for the R-36M2, including a mixed payload of unguided and guided warheads -- the latter fitted with a homing system....

...The R-36M’s intended replacement, the Sarmat, is a fifth-generation strategic system. This means that all its components will be more sophisticated and its characteristics higher. Details of the design are classified, it is known only that the missile will be liquid-fueled, two-stage, and fitted with a minimum of eight maneuvering warheads.

Production of the Sarmat will be handled by the Krasnash plant, the new missile will first enter service with RVSN [Strategic Missile Troops] units in Krasnoyarskaya and Orenburgskaya Oblasts....

The United States has no equivalents of Voyevoda and Sarmat. The Pentagon retired the last silo-housed heavy ICBMs, the MX, in 2005, putting its money on submarines. Submarines armed with the most powerful American ICBMs, the Trident II, constitute over half the US strategic nuclear forces....

Source: Denys Tel’manov, “Изгнание Сатаны: Ракетный комплекс Р-36М оказался под угрозой уничтожения,” [Banishing Satan. R-36M Missile System Has Found Itself under Threat of Destruction] Gazeta.ru, 12 March 2015. http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/11_a_6446729.shtml

The world’s most powerful nuclear missile system, the R-36M, which in NATO parlance has been nicknamed Satan, has found itself under threat of destruction because of the severance of relations between Russia and Ukraine. Ukraine’s Yuzhnoye KB [Design Bureau] and Yuzhmash Plant, which manufactured it during the Soviet years, have abandoned designer and technical support for the project. Responsibility for the serviceability of the missiles has now been entrusted to the Makeyev State Missile Center....

...One such missile can wipe 10 major cities off the face of the Earth. Vladimir Degtyar, general director of the Makeyev GRTs, has confirmed for Gazeta.ru that the enterprise has assumed responsibility for the missile’s life extension....

(continued)

Continued: Mother of All Nukes

...Spokespersons for the management of the Yuzhnyy Mashinostroitelnyy Zavod im. Makarova [Makarov Southern Machine Building Plant] (Yuzhmash), which manufactured the Satan up until 1991 and performed an annual life extension through 2014, expressed doubt that the Makeyev personnel would cope with the challenge.

“First, they do not possess the requisite design documentation, it only exists at the Yuzhnoye Design Bureau. Second, all the subtleties and nuances are known only to the people who manufactured this missile -- our specialists, that is to say. The Makeyev GRTs has worked on different missiles and cannot be aware of all the specifics of the R-36M system,” a Yuzhmash spokesperson said.

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>



Economic Strain within Russia's Military?

11 March 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *In response to Russian aggression against Ukraine, a number of Western countries have applied economic sanctions against specific individuals, companies and sectors close to the Kremlin. These sanctions, combined with declining fossil fuel prices, have had a negative impact upon the Russian economy, but apparently not enough to change Kremlin policies regarding Ukraine. Indeed, the Kremlin has proved to be extremely adept at exploiting the application of sanctions as further "proof" that the West is determined to weaken Russia, and is therefore determined to not only defend its interests in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, but to also continue in its military modernization efforts.*

The brief excerpt points out that, despite the current economic challenges faced by the Russian government, defense expenditures for the training of new defense cadre and the acquisition of new military equipment are scheduled to increase during the period 2015-2020. Just as Russia's defense-industrial complex (OPK) deteriorated during the difficult 1990s, so have the overall personnel qualifications required to staff these enterprises. As the excerpt points out, "the average age of OPK workers is over 55, and in defense scientific research institutes it is 60." To address this challenge, various incentives have been proposed, such as allowing OPK workers a deferment from military service or the creation of "science companies," where college students can work on defense-related projects while gaining credit for military service.

*The article concludes on a skeptical note, asking how defense expenditures for equipment and personnel will increase, given the current budget challenges. The article suggests that other sectors of the defense budget will be modified or reduced to offset any shortages. For instance, instead of having the Ministry of Defense "invest in construction of official apartments now, when financial resources are insufficient, [it will] lease them en masse where possible." Pay increases for pensions and active duty personnel will also be scaled back in 2015. Despite the loud pronouncements to the contrary, it appears that Russia's military will have to tighten its economic belt for the foreseeable future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, "Оборонку укрепят кадрами и рублем" [The Defense Establishment Will Be Strengthened by Cadres and the Ruble], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 11 March 2015. http://www.ng.ru/armies/2015-03-11/1_oboronka.html

The Defense Establishment Will Be Strengthened by Cadres and the Ruble

Expenditures of defense-industrial complex (OPK) enterprises in 2015 will not be optimized, but to the contrary, will increase. No small part of the expenditures will go to increase the gosoboronzakaz [State Defense Order], modernize the OPK, and train cadres. Beginning in 2015, 17 vuz [higher educational institution] facility departments [bazovaya kafedra] in defense establishment enterprises will train at least a thousand specialists annually in various types of arms. Those data were voiced at a conference held yesterday under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev devoted to cadre support and modernization of the OPK.

Russian Federation [RF] Deputy Defense Minister Tatyana Shevtsova stated on the eve of the conference that the proportion of the State Armaments Program (GPV-2020) in the Defense Ministry budget structure "increases from year to year: from 37 percent in 2013 to almost 62 percent by 2015.

"I will point out that this is the block of expenditures that will not be subject to sequestration today and is a top priority for our modern Armed Forces." "Defense expenditures in Russia today are not just for upkeep of the Army and Navy, they are an instrument of support to the most high-tech part of national industry," Shevtsova stressed.

It turns out that not only GPV-2020, but also planned expenditures for modernizing OPK enterprises as well as training young cadres for them will not be sequestered in draft changes to the budget for 2015....

...The fact that despite the economic crisis the government concerned itself with the cadre status of OPK enterprises indicates that many problems have built up here and have to be solved systematically and without delay, because according to Dmitriy Rogozin, "by various estimates, the average age of OPK workers is over 55, and in defense NII's [scientific research institutes] it is 60." Young people are training in various specialties connected with military production without great desire as yet, inasmuch as appropriate conditions had not been created for this until quite recently, but now the government is planning to train defense establishment specialists annually by including them in an appropriate plan. Incentives are being created for consolidating young people at OPK enterprises....

...The Defense Ministry is establishing science companies in which more than 500 gifted privates and sergeants are working to improve arms and create new ones. Students of vuz's in which military service is envisaged for them have been involved in this process. Many students also take such training in military vuz's.

...But questions arise here as to what kind of resources are proposed to be used to solve OPK problems and increase the GPV [State Armaments Program] if national defense expenditures will be scaled down by 3.7 percent (R122 billion) in the changed

(continued)

Continued: Economic Strain within Russia's Military?

draft budget for 2015, which President Vladimir Putin already approved.

...It became clear from this meeting that retiree pensions will be indexed in 2015 as had been planned, and in addition to complete fulfillment of GPV-2020, funds will be allocated for “final” resolution of the official housing problem. It turns out that Shoygu proposed not to invest in construction of official apartments now, when financial resources are insufficient, but to lease them en masse where possible. Compared with construction, leasing is cheaper by several orders of magnitude, which means this option will help solve the “official housing” issue in the Army and Navy already this year. And this is the option Putin approved.

Meanwhile, it is unclear for now how much military pensions will be indexed. Captain 1st Rank Oleg Shvedkov, chairman of the All-Russian Trade Union of Servicemen TsK [Central Committee], told NG [Nezavisimaya Gazeta] that it had been proposed earlier in the 2015 budget to increase servicemen's pay and military pensions by 5.5 percent as of 1 October 2015. Now it turns out that there will be no pay increase for active-duty servicemen, and a 5.5 percent increase in pensions is below the inflation level. “Of course there will be dissatisfied people,” Shvedkov notes, “although in the serious economic crisis it is problematic to demand something above what already has been placed in the budget.”



Biographical Sketch: Dmitry Rogozin and Russian Nationalism

By Ray Finch, FMSO

Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has struggled with developing a new national idea. The political and economic trauma of the 1990s discredited the idea of liberal democracy, and for the past decade Russian nationalism has become more prominent. While there are a number of Russian leaders who have been lifted up on this wave of nationalism (to include the current president, Vladimir Putin), few have been as successful in riding this surge as Russia's new Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the country's military-industrial complex, Dmitry Rogozin. This paper briefly reviews Rogozin's biography, and in particular, the implications of his increasing political power for Russia and the United States.

<http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Rogozin.pdf>

Expanding Russian Ties to Nicaragua

17 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: As reported in the March 2015 OEW special essay (“Growing Military Relations between Russia and Nicaragua”), the Kremlin continues to expand military and security cooperation with Nicaragua. The accompanying brief excerpt highlights some additional rationale behind this increased collaboration and describes some of the immediate objectives behind the visit of Russia’s minister of defense in February 2015.

The article begins by positing that the Kremlin leadership’s renewed involvement in Nicaragua is a “symmetrical response to the United States... to what it considers to be interference in the territory of the CIS.” From the Kremlin’s perspective, the US has taken advantage of Russian weakness over the past two decades by gaining allies and establishing a military foothold in countries of the former USSR. By establishing closer military ties with Latin American countries, Russia will ostensibly threaten American interests in this region.

The article goes on to describe possible Russian participation in the construction of the Nicaraguan Canal, claiming that Russia may provide security for this multi-billion dollar, multi-year project. The Russian security will presumably be directed against America, since the article implies that the US does not want new competition with the Panama Canal, which

Source: Yevgeniy Bay, “Что Искал Шойгу В Латинской Америке?” [What Was Shoygu Looking for in Latin America?] Politkom.ru, 17 February 2015. <http://politkom.ru/18591.html>

What Was Shoygu Looking for in Latin America?

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu has visited three Latin American countries -- Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. The official film of his meetings with the leaders of these states gave only a very approximate idea of the content of the talks. It is reported that they were focused on questions relating to military and military-technical cooperation.

However, the fact that Shoygu started his tour on the very day that a prolonged and exceptionally difficult meeting of the “Normandy Four” was taking place in Minsk with the aim of achieving an end to the bloodshed in southeastern Ukraine is noteworthy.

What was Shoygu actually looking for in that distant region at a time when the political and military leadership of Russia is fully occupied with looking for a solution to the extremely difficult conflict with a neighboring country?

As usual, the main idea among numerous analysts both here and abroad is that Moscow is trying to find a symmetrical response to the United States in response to what it considers to be interference in the territory of the CIS, that is, in Russia’s historical sphere of control....

...The most important part of Shoygu’s Latin America tour was, however, Nicaragua, with which Russia has hitherto had no major contracts of a military nature.

Last summer the world media drew attention to the unexpected and unplanned deviation from the itinerary for the visit by Vladimir Putin, who, on his way from Havana to Buenos Aires, made a brief stop in Managua. But after brief talks with President Daniel Ortega there, it was only announced that Russia would build a GLONASS station in this Latin American country. Did Putin decide to change his route just for that?

During Shoygu’s visit the two countries signed an agreement on a simplified procedure

Proposed Nicaraguan Canal.
Source: Wikimedia Commons



(continued)

Continued: Expanding Russian Ties to Nicaragua

that author claims “is completely under US control.” Moreover, providing security for the new canal’s construction will allow the Kremlin to maintain a “mobile military bridgehead in the region that America is accustomed to calling its own backyard.”

*The article ends on a less ideological and more pragmatic note, asserting that Russian influence in Latin America will have less to do with “taking over ‘other people’s’ territories” than with strengthening the Russian economy to the point that the Kremlin has the “ability to make its partners offers they cannot refuse.” Given the recent economic forecasts out of Moscow, Russia still has a considerable way to go before it will be able to make such offers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

for Russian Navy ships to call at the country’s ports. In addition the Russian minister attended the opening of a new topographical center for which the equipment was supplied and installed by Russian specialists. A Nicaraguan officer showed Shoygu a topographical atlas and explained that the place where the Nicaragua Canal is to run is marked on it.

It is possible that during the visit the two sides clarified their positions concerning Russia’s participation in the construction of this canal, which is designed to be an alternative to the Panama Canal, a very important artery linking the two oceans. But whereas the Panama Canal is completely under US control, the Nicaragua Canal, in the event of its successful completion, will be under the control of China, the main contractor for the construction, as well as Russia, which will provide security for the artery. That is when Russian warships will be needed at the entrance to and exit from the canal, through which oil and other strategically important role materials will be transported.

So the international experts are not far from the truth. Russia does indeed intend to strengthen its military presence in Latin America. But not through the construction of military bases, something that is extremely costly and politically unfeasible, because even the constitution of a country such as Nicaragua prohibits the siting of foreign military bases on its territory, but through the strengthening of the “mobile” military bridgehead in the region that America is accustomed to calling its own “backyard.” However, the future of the rivalry between Russia and the United States will be decided not by promptness in taking over “other people’s” territories, but by the country’s economic weight and its ability to make its partners offers they cannot refuse.

RESTRUCTURING THE TACTICAL RUSSIAN ARMY FOR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

By Lester W. Grau, PhD, TRISA Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO)

Russian wars in Afghanistan (1979-1989) and Chechnya (1994-1996 and 1999-2006) reintroduced their ground forces to nonlinear warfare that lacked a clear front line and a rear area. This paper examines how this combat was fragmented into close-combat fights, and how battles were fought both within urban centers and remote locations.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/restructuring-for-unconventional-warfare.pdf>



Source: Trude Pettersen, Barents Observer, <http://barentsobserver.com>, 17 March 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The December 2014 OE Watch covered the Norwegian announcement of an exercise involving 5,000 Norwegian service personnel beginning on 9 March 2015. It is being conducted in the Finnmark, the farthest northern and eastern county in Norway, bordering Russia on the East and Finland on the South. The Norwegian city of Kirkenes, site of the largest land battle in the Arctic during World War II, is 225 kilometers from the Russian port city of Murmansk. The Norwegians announced that they will conduct this exercise in order to test their ability to shift forces to the north and to exercise interoperability among their Army, Navy and Air Force. Vladimir Putin responded to this exercise by conducting a large short-notice readiness exercise far outnumbering the Norwegian force. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)*

“On [9 March], President Vladimir Putin, as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered all units of the Northern fleet to higher combat readiness. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said 38,000 soldiers, 3,360 vehicles, 41 naval vessels, 15 submarines and 110 aircrafts are involved in the inspection exercise.”

High Russian Activity in the North

Paratroopers from Ivanovo to the Arctic

More than ten Il-76 transport planes will bring paratroopers from Ivanovo outside Moscow to an airport in the Arctic. Crews from the Military Transport Aviation have already been relocated from the Pskov region to the Severny airport in Ivanovo to load personnel and equipment from the airborne forces, the Ministry of Defense’s web site states. It is not known which airport the paratroopers are heading for. The 98th Guards Airborne Division is based in Ivanovo. In March 2014, paratroopers from this unit took part in one of Russia’s biggest airdrop operations in the Arctic, when 350 soldiers were dropped over the island of Kotelny in the New Siberian Islands. In April 2014 90 paratroopers from this unit jumped from an Ilyushin Il-76 onto the drifting research station Barneo close to the North Pole.

Landing operations

The Northern Fleet’s Naval Infantry will as part of the exercise conduct landing operations on Arctic shores. Soldiers have moved from the readiness area to the embarkation area and entered the landing craft “Kondopoga”, RIA Novosti reports. The vessel will land the personnel “at a place that will be decided by the General Staff officers carrying out the inspection of the Northern Fleet”. The landing operation will include BTR-80 and MTLB-V amphibious armored carriers and vehicles.

Russian media has so far not reported where the landing operation is to take place. The Northern Fleet’s Naval Infantry, which is based in the Sputnik camp in the Pechenga valley, has earlier had a tradition of sailing out the Pechenga fjord and conducted landing operations on the Rybachy peninsula. “Kondopoga” was involved in live-fire exercises and landing drills in the same area in July 2014.

In 2012 units from the Naval Infantry conducted Russia’s first ever amphibious landing on the Arctic archipelago of the New Siberian Islands. A similar operation was held in 2013.

Jet fighters relocate to reserve airfields

The short notice exercise includes relocation of several military aircraft to reserve airfields. In the coming days 50 planes and helicopters will be rebased at distances from 400 to 4000 kilometers, according to the Ministry of Defense’s web site. Jet aircraft of the types Su-27 (Flanker) and Su-24M (Fencer) and Mi-8AMTSh and Mi-24 helicopters will participate in the exercise. Lead crews of aviation specialists have already arrived at the airfields to prepare them for the arrival of the aircraft.

Anti-submarine missions in the Barents Sea

The Northern Fleet’s naval aviation is conducting anti-submarine operations in the Barents Sea using Il-38 aircraft and Ka-27 helicopters. The aircraft are searching for submarines in the area where the Northern Fleet will be training as part of the alarm preparedness exercise. The naval aviation will also be using drones for aerial reconnaissance of the Barents Sea.

In addition, crews at military transport planes are ready to fly cargo to the Northern Fleet’s tactical groups that are based on islands in the Arctic Ocean.

Russia Expanding and Improving Forces Facing Alaska and Japan

Source: Interfax, 25 February 2015, <http://www.interfax.ru/> and Aleksandr Kuzmin, “Russia builds up forces on Chukotka Peninsula,” Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Segodnya, 17 February 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian force build-up opposite Norway has been well publicized, but the Russian Far East has also been getting new equipment and a revitalized mission. The Chukotka Peninsula, across the Bering Strait from Alaska, has experienced a steady upgrade of systems, including the KH-35 Bal-E mobile anti-ship missile launcher.*

*Further south, the disputed Kurile Islands, particularly Sakhalin Island, are being similarly strengthened. Japanese diplomatic efforts to reincorporate some of these islands appear stalled. The article opens with a statement that echoes the Russian sentiment toward recently re-incorporated Crimea. It then outlines the significant upgrades in training and equipment on Russia's Pacific island outposts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)***

“Russia builds up forces on Chukotka Peninsula”

Shoygu stated that, in order to improve the combat power of the Eastern Military District, last year four brigades of the Aerospace Defense Troops were transformed last year into air-defense divisions. Additionally, nuclear, chemical and biological defense units were set up in combined-arms formations.

Radar squads and aviation guidance stations have been deployed to Wrangel Island and Cape Shmidt in the Arctic region. They have been on combat duty since October 2014. In addition to this and in line with the modernization plan out to 2020, new and upgraded weapons, including modern Su-30SM and Su-35 fighter jets, Ka-52 combat helicopters and Bal coastal missile systems, were delivered to units of the military district last year.

“The domestic history of Sakhalin and the Kuriles is inseparably linked with the Army. The discovery of the islands by Cossacks of the Russian Empire, the deadly battles and the defeat in the war with Japan of 1904-1905, the liberation of the islands from the Japanese in 1945, and the postwar security of the USSR's eastern borders – you can't list everything. But what does the country's Pacific Ocean shield look like today?”

After the end of the Second World War, the armed forces grouping on Sakhalin was impressive: a tank division at Leonidovo, a fighter regiment at Smirnykh, a military airfield at Sokol, and other border and combined arms units. But the wholesale reduction of the island army began in those days of bitter memory of the 1990s.

The reduction was aggressive and devastating and entire population centers were depopulated because of it. Exercises were practically non-existent until recently and the prestige of service was depressingly low. The desertion of soldiers, hazing of recruits and the destruction of old munitions evoked resentment in society, since the forests in the island's north were constantly burning along with the ammunition.

Meanwhile, the might of the U.S. Pacific Ocean armed forces and of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces steadily increased. Moreover, the divergent positions of Russia and the Land of the Rising Sun remained fixed on the issue of the sovereignty of the Southern Kuriles.

The attitude toward the island army fundamentally changed after 2012. It began with the replacement of the Russian Defense Minister – Sergei Shoygu was appointed. And it began. No-notice troop combat readiness inspections swept throughout the entire country and also shook up Eastern Military District including the units on Sakhalin. At that time, the country's leadership announced that the development of the military infrastructure on the Pacific Coast and the islands was a priority task for the Eastern Military District. Financing followed.

The district plans to build 150 state-of-the-art military garrisons on Sakhalin and the Kuriles to transform the island army by 2016. This includes housing, social, cultural-leisure and athletic facilities. The Ministry of Defense is not disseminating the details on the development of the 68th Army Corps, however from open sources, one can arrive at certain conclusions. For example, a combat engineer battalion is deploying to Khomutovo and two air assault battalions – airborne and naval infantry - could appear at Aniva and Korsakov in the near future.

Weapons of the Present and the Future

The equipment of the armed forces on Sakhalin and in the Kuriles will also be upgraded. In modern war with the predominance of precision-guided and long-range weapons, thousands of tanks blocking the enemy's advance does not always fit in. The powerful Bastion and Bal coastal anti-ship missile systems will cover the islands from attack from the sea out to 150 kilometers. For comparison: it is 43 kilometers from Sakhalin to the nearest Japanese Island of Hokkaido and from there to Kunashir - a total of 30 kilometers.

(continued)

Continued: Russia Expanding and Improving Forces Facing Alaska and Japan

Tor-M2 air defense missile systems will keep watch over the sky above the islands. State-of-the-art Su-35 and Su-30SM fighter aircraft, Ka-52 attack helicopters and Mi-8AMTSh transport-assault helicopters, S-400 Triumf air defense missile systems, and also Pantsir-S missile-gun complexes and Iskander-M operational tactical missile complexes arrived in the Eastern Military District inventory a year ago. Some of these powerful types of weapons are already standing guard on the borders of Sakhalin Oblast.

T-80 tanks have replaced the obsolete T-55s in the motorized rifle division on Sakhalin and in the Kuriles machinegun-artillery division. Besides the heavy equipment, the motorized riflemen received several sets of Leer-3 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Their mission is reconnaissance and jamming of enemy communications systems. They have already recently managed to upgrade these drones, making them unobservable and “sharp-sighted”.

The signals specialists have received state-of-the-art digital radio-relay stations, mobile videoconference complexes, and new medium-range and satellite communications radio stations. The Krasukha, Borispol, and Rtut complexes and systems are arriving at the electronic warfare units. These unique systems blind and jam enemy aircraft and missiles within a radius of a hundred kilometers. The air defense personnel, who are deployed on the islands, are armed with state-of-the-art Igla and Strela-10 missile systems and the Tunguska gun-missile systems.

They Have Been Ordered to Learn

It is not enough to build military garrisons and deliver new weapons to units. They also need to teach the soldiers, army warrant officers, and officers to use the weapons so that the enemy won't know what hit him. They must coordinate the actions of the various types of troops, set tasks, and cooperate with the actions of the civilian authorities in the event (God forbid) of a military conflict. The Administration of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, while increasing the city's mobilization training level, is also making its contribution to increasing defensive capabilities.

Regular exercises occur within the island army's military units and at the ranges now, one of which Supreme Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Putin visited. In particular, the refinement of live fire at air, ground-based, and surface naval targets, which are sometimes located hundreds of kilometers away, are occurring. Last year's Vostok-2014 exercises, the largest-scale exercises in recent history, culminated when tens of thousands of servicemen and hundreds of pieces of equipment rehearsed various missions throughout the entire Far East, including on Sakhalin and the Kuriles.

Nevertheless, based upon the experts' assessments, there is still inadequate military might on the islands for a full-fledged confrontation with the potential enemies. That is precisely why a gradual expansion, rearming and training of the island army – our army - has begun.

“When in Doubt, Throttle Out” on the Airborne Snowmobile

19 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Conducting tactical reconnaissance is a key task for airborne forces after landing. The scouts need to move rapidly from the drop zone to determine enemy locations and intent. Russian paratroopers have been a mechanized force almost from their Soviet inception. A Russian airborne force includes self-propelled artillery and personnel carriers. The scouts have been using small, tracked armored carriers, but the snowmobile provides the optimum mobility platform for Arctic reconnaissance. Getting it from the aircraft to the drop zone is the challenge.*

The Russians are not the first army to look for ways to improve their tactical reconnaissance capability. While the US Army was developing its airmobile forces, it tested the use of air-delivered motorcycles for its scout platoons. The soldiers loved them, but the concept never caught on. The Russians may be on to something with their airborne snowmobile.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: “Olga Prokhorova, “Airborne snowmobile flies, shoots and keeps the driver warm,” Komsomolskaya Pravda Online, 19 February 2015, <http://www.kp.ru/>

“What do we expect from normal snowmobiles? The Russian Army requires that they... fly! Airborne Troops [VDV] Commander Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov gave this order to the Rybinsk Russkaya Mekhanika plant after he arrived for a snowmobile exhibition and saw what the plant workers can do. But Shamanov and his paratroopers need to drop their snowmobiles from an airplane or helicopter.”

“Airborne snowmobile flies, shoots and keeps the driver warm”

The Russkaya Mekhanika designers are considering the best way to do this. It will require a special platform on which to attach the snowmobile. However, while this is not “inspired” it does look impressive. Production of the Taiga snowmobile for the Armed Forces of Russia has been begun. Plant deputy chief designer Andrey Zhogin described how the military modification differs:

“First, this snowmobile has an armored fuel tank like those on combat helicopters. If shot through, it ‘self- heals.’ Second, it has a special cooling system that prevents the engine from overheating.”

This means that, even when the weather is warmer and the snow becomes wet and dense, the Taiga can still safely travel on it without getting bogged down. Nor does the army snowmobile shy away from cold - it can start up even at temperatures of minus 50 Celsius. The driver does not freeze, either. The Taiga has heated steering handles and gas lever. It uses regular AI-92 gasoline.

And, of course, the snowmobile is prepared for full combat - it has an attachment for skis, machine gun, and grenade launcher. It remains only to lift it into the sky.

Taiga-551 Specifications

- Length - 2,950 cm.
- Width with skis - 1,150 cm.
- Height with windscreen - 1,460 cm.
- Weight - 320 kg.
- The engine has 65 horsepower, is liquid-cooled, and has two-carburetors.
- The front suspension is reinforced, which smooths the ride over surface irregularities, and provides stability and control.
- The rear suspension is adjustable for the load weight and number of passengers.
- Fuel tank capacity is 55 liters, there a spacious rear trunk and under-seat compartment.
- Maximum speed is 100 km/hour.

Russian Troops in Ukraine: De-escalation and Withdrawal Contingent

“The process of withdrawal of these weapons must be carried out under OSCE observers’ obligatory supervision.”

- Lt-Gen of the Russian Armed Forces, Aleksandr Lentsov

OE Watch Commentary: Russia’s official stance concerning its troop disposition in Ukraine is there are none there. In December, however, the Russian press reported that there were some troops in the Donbass region for de-escalation purposes.

According to the first article a meeting between Russian Army officers and military attaches from unnamed countries resulted in an agreement on sending a group of Russian officers to eastern Ukraine. The officers would be deployed for the purpose of de-escalating the conflict. Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Lentsov, the head of the Russian group in Ukraine, states that he and his group have had no part in the fighting and are working with the OSCE to implement the details of the 12 February ceasefire agreement. He goes on to say that a request from a Ukrainian colonel in Debaltseve was received in December, asking for Russian assistance. Debaltseve became the most contested space in the conflict. In February there were reports of as many as 40 Ukrainians killed and the forced withdrawal of surrounded Ukrainian troops from the Debaltseve pocket. This was a tipping point in the conflict and appears to be the western-most point that the rebels wish to hold.

The acknowledgement by the Russian military that there are actual Russian troops in Ukraine coincides with Russian media reports of Russian soldiers joining the rebels in the Donbass region. Since Debaltseve now appears to be controlled by the rebels, we can expect to see them solidify and expand their logistical system, as well as stabilize the existing Ukrainian-Russian border. The desire to use rail for logistical purposes has been expressed by rebel leaders and observed for months. If the westward limits of the rebels’ advance can be assumed, we can expect to see an increasing buildup in southern Ukraine, particularly Mariupol, which is valued for its port on the Sea of Azov and its rail and road access to interior Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)**

Source: The Russian Army Contributes to De-escalate the Conflict in Ukraine, Interfax Agency of Military News, 10 December, 2014

Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly stated the direct participation of Russian troops in the armed conflict in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The Russian Defense Ministry, in turn, has denied all such accusations. On Wednesday however at a meeting with foreign military attaches, the chief of the Russian General Staff, Army General Valery Gerasimov, confirmed the presence of Russian troops in the east of Ukraine, but only in order to de-escalate the conflict and at the request of the Ukrainian authorities.

“At the request of the chief of Ukrainian General Staff Colonel-General Viktor Muzhenko in Debaltsevo Donetsk region, we have sent representatives of the Russian Armed Forces, headed by Lieutenant General Alexander Lentsov” - Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Army General Valery Gerasimov at a meeting with military attaches of several countries.

“All this (conflict) is happening against the backdrop of the desire to turn Ukraine into a source of long-term controlled instability, causing direct damage to Russia’s geopolitical interests and integration processes in the post-Soviet space” - said V.Gerasimov.

Source: Russian General Coordinates Weapons Withdrawal in East Ukraine, Moscow Interfax in Russian, 19 February 15, <http://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=0&nid=360449>

Russian and Ukrainian military representatives are working together to coordinate a plan for withdrawal of heavy weapons in east Ukraine, a Russian general said on Russia’s official state television channel Rossiya 1 on 19 February. Speaking live on the phone in Rossiya’s primetime evening news program, head of the Russian group for coordinating ceasefire issues Lt-Gen Aleksandr Lentsov said: “At the joint center, we have worked together with our Ukrainian colleagues on coordinating a sector-by-sector plan for the opposing sides to withdraw heavy weapons to a safe distance. I can confirm the sides’ mutual interest in an organized withdrawal, as quickly as possible, of artillery systems from the line of contact in accordance with the Minsk Agreements of 19 September and the agreements of 12 February. The process of withdrawal of these weapons must be carried out under OSCE observers’ obligatory supervision. Therefore we calling on the OSCE in Ukraine to actively cooperate with the joint center for monitoring and coordinating ceasefire, in the interests of a full and rapid implementation of all provisions of the Minsk arrangements by both sides of the conflict.”

(continued)

Continued: Russian Troops in Ukraine: De-escalation and Withdrawal Contingent

Source: Russian General Denies Involvement in Ukraine's Debaltseve Fighting, Ekho Moskvyy Radio in Russian, 19 February 2015,

A man resembling Lt-Gen of the Russian Armed Forces Aleksandr Lentsov has been spotted among the separatists in the Ukrainian town of Debaltseve, Gazprom-owned, editorially independent Russian news agency Ekho Moskvyy reported on 19 February. However, the general has denied being involved in the fighting. According to Ekho Moskvyy, journalists of the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta noticed this man while they were watching a video footage that appeared on the internet on 17 February. "We have identified the man with the face of a Hemingway-style old man, who is standing near Kiselyov, a DPR [self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic] representative. He says: We have been shot at, We have been betrayed. In this text, he absolutely identifies himself with the DPR side. To us, he looks like Lentsov," the Novaya Gazeta editor-in-chief, Dmitriy Muratov, told Ekho Moskvyy. He added that his colleagues had sent an official request to the DPR in order to find out "who is the man that DPR representative Kiselyov looks back at as if he was some senior". The official reply was that the DPR did not know the name of that man, Muratov said, adding that they had learned only his nom-de-guerre - Yustas. Meanwhile, official state channel Rossiya 1 showed a man it described as Lt-Gen Lentsov in its news bulletin on 18 February. He denied the reports about his involvement in DPR military operations. "The information that emerged in the media today, I not only deny it, it is a blatant lie. Because the work that was done today, we arrived in Mayorsk, from Mayorsk to Horlivka, from Horlivka to Donetsk. The coordination group, [changes tack] I departed from here about an hour ago. But I was told while travelling that I should definitely speak in public and deny that I am or even was in Debaltseve. I could not physically arrive there today," the man captioned as "head of a group from the Russian side on coordination of issues related to the ceasefire, Lt-Gen of the Russian Armed Forces Aleksandr Lentsov" was shown saying. A Rossiya 1 reporter noted, for his part, that an official Russian mission was monitoring the cease-fire in eastern Ukraine.



The Afghan Guerilla's Dilemma: Tying up loose ends after the Soviets left

By LTC (R) Lester W. Grau, PhD

In February 1989, as the Soviet vehicles ground their way homeward over the snow-covered mountains of the Hindu Kush, the Afghan Mujahideen guerillas were suddenly without a foreign enemy. Their focus of over nine years of combat was departing. What does a guerilla do next? As the US begins to make its departure from Afghanistan, this paper explores what happened to these guerrillas in Afghanistan when Soviet forces left.

**[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/
documents/Guerrilla%27s-dilemma.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Guerrilla%27s-dilemma.pdf)**

“Crimea itself due to its geographical position is important, widening the communications zone by several minutes for west-to-east passes of the International Space Station—an irreplaceable capability—and adding one northwest to southeast pass daily, which is only replaceable if Russia builds a brand new station around Sochi or Novorossiysk.”

OE Watch Commentary: *With the acquisition of Crimea, Russia, in addition to securing its Black Sea Fleet ports, obtained the ability to restore and activate its space control facilities that it had left behind when the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s. During Soviet times space officials had built a tracking facility in the Crimean Peninsula to conduct robotic exploration of deep space. Powerful radio dishes were built, which were required to send and receive command data from probes. The loss of Crimea in the 1990s caused Russia to lose control of these deep space communication capabilities.*

*The Yevpatoriya complex in Crimea, where the tracking is located, will have its computer facility and engineering and technological systems modernized, hopefully by 2020. The center's location will significantly enhance Russia's ability to monitor its spacecraft, to include those in low-Earth orbit, such as the Soyuz spacecraft, the International Space Station and its satellite constellation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)***

Source: Matthew Bodner, “Opinion,” The Moscow Times Online (in English), 5 March 2015.

Without these assets Russia's space program could only communicate with spacecraft as they pass over Russian territory. The only other option was to have NASA patch them into the sprawling U.S. satellite-based tracking and communications network.

But the annexation of Crimea last year has given Russia an opportunity to boost its ability to communicate with its spacecraft and military satellites, and the Defense Ministry has been working to reactivate the tracking and control stations on the peninsula.

The Yevpatoria tracking station, known as NIP-16 — a collection of radio dishes as large as 70 meters in diameter — is the crown jewel of Crimea's space infrastructure left behind by the Soviet Empire.

Russia abandoned the facility in 1992, but Ukraine's national space agency has continued to operate it, leasing it out to foreign astronomers seeking to use its powerful radio telescopes to search for new planets and even extraterrestrial life.

The dish has a range of 300 million kilometers into deep space. At its closest point to Earth, Mars is 50 million kilometers away.

A similar facility exists in Primorsky Krai on the Pacific and another is being built in Uzbekistan, though it has not yet been completed due to lack of funding. The Uzbekistan facility is estimated to cost anywhere from \$60 to \$100 million.

Tanks, Planes, and—Dolphins?

5 March 2015

“Member of the Public Council under the RF Ministry of Defense Igor Korotchenko emphasized that the Russian military establishment has been quickly fulfilling the tasking of the President to create the appropriate military infrastructure following the annexation of Crimea to Russia. ‘The capabilities of the grouping [of forces] will allow the defense capabilities of Russia to be reliably ensured and, most importantly, this potential is a guarantee that the status of the Crimea as a part of Russia will not be put in doubt,’ said Korotchenko.”

Source: “The Group of Armed Forces in the Crimea has been Armed with the S-300, Su-30, and Military Dolphins,” RIA Novosti, 3 December 2014.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia’s military buildup in Crimea includes air defense, anti-ship, and ground-based equipment. Included in the mix are the S-300 air defense system, Bal and Bastion anti-ship systems, Su-30 fighters, T-72B tanks, electronic warfare equipment, and Ratnik combat gear.*

*Of special interest is the addition of military dolphins, which are used to locate mines and to swim up next to foreign ship with listening equipment or other gear. The buildup of military equipment in Crimea appears to support Defense Minister Shoygu’s statement that a growing foreign presence along Russia’s borders are causing “certain corrections” to its equipment demands. Shoygu’s positioning of forces with electronic warfare and mobile assets will offer Russian decision-makers a rapid reaction force capability if there is a need to conduct additional operations in Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)***

Over the past six months the grouping of Russia’s Armed Forces in the Crimea was strengthened by S-300 PMU systems, the Bal and Bastion anti-ship systems, Su-27 and Su-30 fighters, and other types of weaponry and military equipment.

RF [Russian Federation] Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu stated in September that the escalation of the situation in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea to Russia and the growing foreign military presence along the RF borders have imposed “certain corrections” in the work of the high command of the Southern Military District.

Still earlier, in August, RF President Vladimir Putin reported that the program for the creation and development of the grouping of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation [VS RF] in the Crimea would not be excessive.

In November the peninsula’s air defense grouping was augmented by the S-300 PMU air defense systems, the source reported. Earlier the air defense forces of the Black Sea Fleet had only ship air defense systems and the wheel-based Osa short-radius systems at its disposal. This system was developed as early as the 1960’s in the USSR. “With the acquisition of weaponry of the S300PMU systems, it can be said with confidence that a fully capable air defense able to ensure the security of the forces and assets of the Black Sea Fleet from the air has been created on the peninsula,” said the source.

The coastal troops of the Black Sea Fleet, which had the obsolescent “half-blind” Rubezh and Redut ground-based anti-ship systems in their inventory, obtained the latest Bal and Bastion long-range systems.

In August 2014 an artillery regiment was formed in the Black Sea Fleet. The approaches to the military bases are protected by medium- and close-range systems. New REB [radio electronic warfare] systems have been deployed on Cape Fiolent (Sevastopol) and the Ground Troops grouping has acquired modernized T-72B tanks. The naval infantry of the Black Sea Fleet is expecting to acquire the Ratnik combat gear into the inventory, as well as the BTR-82 armored personnel carriers.

Combat dolphins are also helping to ensure the security of the ships of the Black Sea Fleet. In November the Black Sea Fleet conducted the first exercise with combat dolphins since the transfer of the Sevastopol Oceanarium to the jurisdiction of the Black Sea Fleet, reported the Crimean armed forces source.

In his words, following the testing of the animals, training is now being conducted with a family of ten bottle-nosed dolphins. “They actually had to repeat the previously learned materials and teach the bottle-nosed dolphins again how to search for underwater objects, because this work was practically abandoned by the Ukrainian Navy,” said the source.