

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Special Look :

BMPT "TERMINATOR" & RUSSIA'S VICTORY DAY PARADE-70TH ANNIVERSARY

- RUSSIA**
- 3 The BMPT Terminator: A New Type of Vehicle
 - 5 Cyber Troops in the Russian Ministry of Defense
 - 7 Details of Russia's Spring 2015 Conscription Campaign
 - 9 Force Structure of Russian Military Units in Crimea
 - 12 Commentary on Iran Nuclear Talks from Kremlin-Controlled Site
 - 13 Can Russia Rehabilitate Fighters Who Return to Caucasus from Syria and Iraq?
 - 14 Underlying Tensions in Armenia-Russia Relations
 - 15 The Northern Navy's Two Step Strategy for Underwater Anti-Sabotage Operations
 - 16 Surprise Readiness Tests
 - 18 Victory Day Parade-2015
 - 20 Extreme Sport: Arctic Airborne Exercises
 - 21 Ice Airstrip for Transport Jockeys
 - 22 Russian Arctic Air Defense Upgrades
 - 23 Russian Air Defense in the Arctic
 - 24 Russian Robots
 - 25 Russian Command and Control Procedures under Adjustment
- EUROPE**
- 26 Heavy Shelling Near Mariupol
 - 27 Establishing Command and Control over Volunteer Units in Ukraine
 - 29 Troubles for the G36 – the Standard Rifle of the German Federal Armed Forces
- TURKEY**
- 30 The Emergence of a Joint Arab Alliance?
 - 32 Perspectives on Turkey's support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen
 - 33 The Future of Turkey's UAVs
 - 34 Turkey Facing Pressure for Role as a Militant Transit Point
- MIDDLE EAST**
- 35 Qassem Soleimani Voted Man of Year in Iran
 - 36 Iran Releases Qassem Soleimani Documentary
 - 37 Commemorating Afghan Shi'ites Killed in Syria
 - 38 Sisi's Gamble
 - 40 Tunisian Border Security
 - 42 What is Yemen's Southern Resistance?
- AFRICA**
- 44 A One Sided Wall: Kenya Builds Security Barrier Somalia Doesn't Want
 - 45 Underlying Causes of Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa
 - 46 Fragile Hope for a Fragile Peace: Central African Republic
 - 47 New Nigerian President Buhari and the War on Boko Haram
- LATIN AMERICA**
- 48 FARC is Still Considered a Terrorist Organization
 - 49 Might Evo Morales' Bolivarianism be Vulnerable?
 - 50 People Vote with Their Feet if They Can
 - 51 Latin America as an Emerging Cyber-Crime Threat Region
 - 52 Brazil is Home to the Largest Number of Cyber-Attacks in Latin America
 - 53 Neologisms Born from Narco Culture in Mexico
 - 55 The Sinaloa Cartel Remains Intact Following Arrest of Chapo Guzman One Year Ago
 - 56 Argentine Air Force Considering Gripen Purchase
 - 57 Chinese Vultures Circle as Petrobras Rots
 - 58 Political Turmoil Heightens in Brazil
- INDO-PACIFIC ASIA**
- 60 India Evacuates Citizens from Yemen – Indicators of Operational Strengths and Weakness
 - 62 Philippines Police Commandos in Costly Counterterror Raid
 - 65 Thailand Reinforces Relations
- KOREA**
- 67 North Korean Leader at Russian Victory Parade
- CHINA**
- 69 With Increasing Confidence, China's Newest Submarine About to be Unveiled
 - 70 Will Pyongyang Allow Access to Other Countries in Pursuit of Rare Earth Elements?
 - 71 Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Continues to Grow
 - 72 China Considers Cyber Warfare and the Law of Armed Conflict
 - 73 China's Silk Road: Logic of the State Leaves Little Room for Market's 'Invisible Hand'
 - 75 A Chinese Perspective on Possible Lifting of Iran Sanctions
- CENTRAL ASIA**
- 76 Islamic State Causes Russia to Ramp up Central Asian Security
 - 78 Russia Increases Military Presence in Tajikistan
 - 79 A Paramilitary Organization in Kyrgyzstan?
 - 80 The Capabilities of Kazakhstan's Caspian Border Guards Detachment
 - 81 The Impact of Indian Security Cooperation in Central Asia

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact FMSO at:

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

OE Watch

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 5 | Issue 05

May | 2015

Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Africa	Robert Feldman Jacob Zenn
Middle East	Michael Rubin Lucas Winter
Turkey	Karen Kaya
China, Korea	Cindy Hurst Youngjun Kim Tim Thomas Jacob Zenn
India, Southeast Asia	Ivan Welch
Mexico, South America	Geoff Demarest Brenda Fiegel Kevin Grilo
Central Asia	Michael Rose Matthew Stein
Russia, Eastern Europe	Chuck Bartles Anna Borshchevskaya Christina Chadwick Adam Croft Ray Finch Les Grau James Harvey Alyssa Jackson Emily Kangas
Editor-in-Chief	Tom Wilhelm
Editors	Ray Finch Harry Orenstein
Design Editor	Hommy Rosado

The BMPT Terminator: A New Type of Vehicle

March 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's recent announcement that the Armata heavy track chassis would be entering field trials as part of the T-14 main battle tank, and that the T-14 would be displayed in the annual May military parade has fueled some speculation about what other weapons systems could find themselves mounted on the Armata chassis. One idea is that the BMPT Terminator could be reborn, but this time on an Armata chassis. Despite the closeness of the acronyms, the BMPT is not classified by Russia as an infantry fighting vehicle (BMP— боевая машина пехоты (БМП)), but instead as a tank combat support vehicle (BMPT) (боевая машина поддержки танков (БМПТ)). The accompanying article notes that the system is also referred as a combat fire support vehicle (BMOP— боевая машина огневой поддержки (БМОП)). There has been some speculation this system was developed to skirt restrictions on tanks and infantry fighting vehicles found in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, from which Russia has recently withdrawn, but is unlikely, as Russian armored personnel carriers (BTR— бронетранспортер (БТР)) and BMPs are designed to transport infantry squads to the battlefield, dismount their squad, and then begin fighting alongside their dismounted squad. The BMPT has only a five-person crew who are not intended to exit the vehicle.

Development of the BMPT was in direct response to Russia's counterinsurgency experience in the North Caucasus. In 1995 the 131st Maykop Brigade was almost completely wiped out when the armored column became mired in the streets of Grozny as Chechen grenadiers destroyed approximately 50 tanks, BMPs and BTRs. Russia quickly realized additional capabilities were required to engage the enemies in urban environments. (As an ad hoc measure, the Russians used Shilka self-propelled anti-aircraft guns to provide additional firepower, as the Shilka's guns could traverse higher angles, enabling it to fire upon targets on upper stories and roof tops, unlike the tanks.) In addition to urban warfare applications, the adoption of a BMPT also seems to make sense for more conventional operations. Technological improvements have made it possible for infantryman to carry antitank missiles (PTURs) capable of damaging or destroying even the most advanced main



Tank Combat Support Vehicle (BMPT) Source: VitalyKuzmin.net

Source: "Lev Romanov, "Recall the 'Terminator,'" *Oborona*, March 2015, <http://www.oborona.ru/includes/periodics/armament/2015/0216/180015213/detail.shtml>, accessed 15 April 2015.

A Total Recall of the 'Terminator'

The civil war eastern Ukraine revived army specialist's interest in (боевым машинам поддержки танков (БМПТ)) Tank Combat Support Vehicles (BMPTs), or as they are now called боевым машинам огневой поддержки (БМОП) Combat Fire Support Vehicles (BMOPs). During fighting in the Donbas, Infantry Fighting Vehicles (BMP) and Armored Personnel Carriers (BTRs) showed to have survivability problems in opposition to Anti-Tank Guided Missile (PTURs) and hand-held Antitank Grenades (RPGs). In turn, the main battle tanks [that these vehicles supported] were provided insufficient combat power to fend off enemies armed with PTURs and RPGs, especially in urban settings.

In conflicts it would be useful to have such a capability, but was earlier rejected by former officials of the Ministry of Defence... The BMPT "Terminator" was created by the designers of the Ural Transport Machine-Building Design Bureau (Uralvagonzavod)...on the basis of the T-90A main battle tank. This vehicle was designed for effective suppression of enemy personnel equipped with grenade launchers, anti-tank systems, and small arms. The BMOP is capable of firing on the move and can fill some tank roles such as the destruction of armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, pillboxes, bunkers and other hardened targets.

The BMOP has great firepower. The unmanned turret has twin 2A42 30-mm automatic cannons (900 rounds of ammunition), a 7.62-mm machine gun, and four anti-tank missiles "Ataka-T" with laser beam, and equipped with a thermobaric or shaped-charge warhead. In the front, two 30-mm automatic grenade launcher AGS-17D (with 300 rounds)...The crew of "Terminator" is composed of five members: commander, gunner, the driver and two operators grenade launcher systems...

(continued)

Continued: The BMPT Terminator: A New Type of Vehicle

battle tanks. BTRs or BMPs make easy targets for PTURs, as they are easily destroyed due to their significantly lighter armor, and as an additional hindrance can have difficulty keeping up with tanks in certain terrain. For these reasons, Russia has considered the BMPT as a way to provide needed support to tanks in differing conditions (they could also be equipped with mine or obstacle plows), while not suffering from the mobility and protection issues that BTRs and BMPs can have.

After testing BMPT Russian military experts believe the combat effectiveness of a single tank support combat vehicle exceeds that of two motorized-rifle platoons (six BMPs/40 personnel). The introduction of “terminator” of the tank battalion would increase the effectiveness of combat units by 30%. The military had planned to use the machine as follows: two tanks and one BMPT in the field and two BMPTs and one tank when fighting in urban environments...

If BMPTs are integrated into the Russian order of battle, Russian force structure, tactics, and doctrine will likely change for both tank and motorized rifle units. Conventional wisdom requires tanks to be supported by dismounted infantry while in urban settings in order to protect them from PTURs. Unfortunately for the dismounted infantry troops, they are exposed to small-arms fire and explosives while providing this support. The BMPT could possibly eliminate or reduce this need for dismounted infantry. Although tactical deployment of BMPTs and tanks are currently only in the theoretical stages for the Russian Ground Forces, some commentaries have suggested a 2:1 ratio in urban environments and a 1:2 ratio in more conventional environments would be likely employments. The accompanying article claims the BMPT has approximately the same combat power as 6 BMPs and 40 personnel. On an organizational level, BMPTs would likely be found as a company (platoon) in a tank battalion (company), and would be attached as needed to the supported tank platoon.

*Russia seriously considered the adoption of the BMPT, and at one point even announced that the first BMPT company would be created in 2010, but the program was later cancelled by the Russian Ground Forces, although the BMPT has been sold on the export market. Initial statements about abandoning the BMPT mentioned the problems with building a new weapon system upon the venerable, but reliable, T-72 chassis, while Russia was in the design process for the next generation chassis, the Armata. If the Armata chassis is accepted into the Russian arsenal, the BMPT may yet find a home in the Russian Ground Forces and could become one of Russia’s most interesting new technologies to watch, as Russian tactics and doctrine adjust to its fielding. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Russia’s Strategic Mobility

Supporting ‘Hard Power’ to 2020?

By Roger N. McDermott

http://www.foi.se/ReportFiles/foir_3587.pdf

Roger N. McDermott’s Russia’s Strategic Mobility: Supporting ‘Hard Power’ to 2020? examines the rapidly changing Russian military’s strategic capabilities for logistics, combat service support, and force projection. McDermott’s work for The Russia Studies Programme of the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) sheds light on the unglamorous, but vitally important logistic backbone upon which the Russian military relies. Roger N. McDermott is a Senior International Fellow for the Foreign Military Studies Office.



APRIL 2013



Source: Aleksandr Stepanov, "Defense Ministry Announces Recruitment for Science Troops: Students Will Be Put to Cyber Arms," Moskovsky Komsomolets Online, 6 April 2015, <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/04/05/studentov-postavyat-pod-kiberruzhe.html>, accessed 15 April 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has recently activated its first cyber unit in Tambov, Russia. Although this development can simply be traced to the increasing importance of information technologies in modern warfare, it can also be seen as another way the Russian MoD is now looking at threats other than traditional military ones.

In the past, these sorts of activities would fall solely under the Russian intelligence services; now the MoD is becoming an active participant in such operations, as the accompanying article explains. Since 2013 Russia has fielded "science companies," which are manned by academically gifted conscripts. The purpose of these science companies is to make better use of human capital and introduce needed talent into the ranks. They may be possible gates for ascension into the cyber troops in the future.

One interesting aspect of Russia's cyber troops is their doctrinal place in the Russian military. As opposed to being part of the intelligence or signal corps, as in many other countries, Russian cyber falls under the electronic warfare proponent.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Defense Ministry Announces Recruitment for Science Troops: Students Will Be Put to Cyber Arms

Possibly the most surprising Ministry of Defense subunit is scheduled to acquire a new science troop this very year. Smart young soldiers will be taught how to wage... computer wars! There is only one subunit in Russia doing this -- the Combined-Arms Center for the Training and Use in Combat of Electronic Warfare Troops, which is located in Tambov. It trains experts who can both erect barriers against Internet attacks and also impede the likely adversary's troop command and control and utilization of weapons...

It is not out of the question that future soldiers in scientific troops will be the first building blocks of the Russian cyber troops whose creation was announced back in 2013. The new structure is supposed to be based on programmers, mathematicians, cryptographers, electronic warfare officers, and communications experts. In addition to repulsing attacks from the Internet, these troops are supposed to prevent cyber attacks on classified military networks -- the missile defense system's network, for example. It is well known that the Pentagon is allocating enormous resources for the development of spyware that can penetrate totally classified networks, which poses a threat to the Russian Federation's national security...

"We already have candidates -- primarily future graduates from the Tambov Polytechnic University whose since their second year have been working on areas of scientific activity that have been coordinated with us -- and seven other Russian higher educational establishments have also confirmed their participation in this program," Gubskov said. "We are interested in seeing as many proficient experts as possible joining the science troop; they are primarily guys from technical colleges who feel at home with physics and mathematics."

Officers proudly show people around the Combined-Arms Training Center, where the personnel for waging smart wars are being forged. There are several electronic warfare vehicles standing by the entrance to the center. It is on board them that the future experts will learn how to counter attacks by a hypothetical enemy -- for example, to blind an aircraft that is ready to home in on a target and attack a facility.

"The crew's task is to disable the aircraft's radar and ensure that the pilot cannot see the target on his instruments," one of the officers explained. "When we disable the radar the

pilot can only observe the target visually and, given the speed at which the aircraft is flying, he can no longer attack the target and flies past. The center's students practice the same tasks, only in a training class and in simulators. They 'track' a flight of fighter aircraft on computer screens and attempt to 'blind' them when ordered to do so by their instructor."

Anatoliy Balyukov, one of the center's teachers, feels that Internet wars have been taking place in the world for a long time already. And cyber troops and cyber commands are developing actively in many countries, including the United States, China, and Britain.

"In foreign countries a cyber command is a serious system that is targeted primarily at disabling such strategic facilities as gas distribution networks, disconnecting the electricity supply, and, of course, attacking classified military networks," the teacher said. "So the main objective of the guys who will be trained here is to study these methods and erect a reliable barrier against them."

There are many rumors in Russia about the actions of electronic warfare subunits. For example, people say that thanks to our cyber maestros an ultra-modern American aircraft carrier can be suddenly "blinded" or the latest drone may lose control and go off course for no visible

(continued)

Continued: Cyber Troops in the Russian Ministry of Defense

reason, and even a satellite can be suddenly reprogrammed. We have honestly attempted to dispel these rumors, but unfortunately...

“Take my word for it, we do our job, and do it pretty well,” Colonel Yuriy Gubskov, chief of the Combined-Arms Center for the Training and Use in Combat of Electronic Warfare Troops, told Moskovskiy Komsomolets. “We cannot talk about any specific details of operations in order to avoid giving our likely adversary food for thought.”

In the words of the center’s staffers, electronic warfare means, among other things, disrupting and confusing troop and weaponry command and control systems, and the fact that Russian experts know about the likely adversary’s troop and weaponry command and control systems, despite all of their tricks, enables them to cope with their tasks. At the same time, “new blood” is needed in order to continue this intellectual duel. And great hopes here are being pinned on the science troop that is scheduled to appear in Tambov this year.

Brothers Disunited: Russia’s Use of Military Power in Ukraine

ROGER N. MCDERMOTT

*Senior International Fellow,
Foreign Military Studies Office*

United Kingdom

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

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia's spring draft campaign is reportedly underway, and is expected to induct 150,145 conscripts into the Ministry of Defense and military formations in Russia's militarized intelligence and security services. The accompanying article is an interview with Major-General Yevgeniy Vladimirovich Burdinskiy, chief of Russia's draft system. Of particular interest is Burdinskiy's explanation of Russia's thoughts on continuing the draft. Since the Yeltsin years, there has been discussion of abolishing the draft and utilizing only professional (contract) service members. In the last few years this has changed: no longer is abolishment of the draft seen as necessary or beneficial, even if there were sufficient financial resources for the effort. He states that a ratio of two conscripts per one contract soldier is the desired future force structure. (In the Russian system, officers and "contract NCOs" are legally considered types of contracted service members.)*

Burdinskiy also discusses solutions to the problem of reduced conscription durations (from 24 to 12 months). The brief conscription duration has been the subject of many complaints from Russian commanders, as a year is seen to be far too little time to train and employ a soldier. To solve the problems of integrating contract NCOs (a relatively new concept in the Russian military) and successfully utilizing short-term conscripts, Russia is experimenting with different ways to place these soldiers in the ranks. The current trend is placing contract NCOs in "trigger puller" positions, while having the conscripts serve in combat service and combat service support roles.

Russia is also trying to develop some militarily useful civil institutions similar to some Soviet-era institutions that have atrophied since the collapse of the Soviet Union. These institutions

(continued)

Source: Aleksey Durnovo, "Features of Organizing the Spring 2015 Draft of Citizens for Military Service," Ekho Moskv Online, 4 April 2015, <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/voensovet/1522994-echo/>, accessed 20 April 2015.

Features of Organizing the Spring 2015 Draft of Citizens for Military Service

[Durnovo] ...Today we are talking about features of organizing the spring draft of citizens for military service, this spring draft launched literally a few days ago. Major-General Yevgeniy Burdinskiy, first deputy chief of Armed Forces General Staff Main Organization-Mobilization Directorate. Yevgeniy Vladimirovich, good afternoon.

[Durnovo] ...Yevgeniy Vladimirovich, it probably is too early to sum up first results of the draft, so let's talk about figures. What are the plans? How many persons are you calling up in this draft?

[Burdinskiy] In the spring of this year 150,145 persons will be called up and sent to perform military service. This criterion was established by presidential edict and is formed based on the requirement of the state's military organization for servicemen performing conscripted service.

[Durnovo] By the way, will graduates be given an opportunity to choose two years of contract service or one year of conscripted service? Are there conditions for such a choice at all?

[Burdinskiy] Of course, the young person has the right to choose, and he expresses his wish and the draft board considers it. Young people took advantage of that opportunity last spring and in the fall draft campaign, and more than 1,000 persons with a higher education went to perform contract military service.

[Durnovo] By the way, until very recently the term of conscripted service specifically was two years, then they made it one, and very many were saying that this changed the situation in the Armed Forces very greatly in general. Is this indeed so?

[Burdinskiy] ...Indeed, the changes occurred, as I repeatedly have said on this broadcast, in an effort to train young people for military service. Young people have begun to prepare for service more objectively. Each year we send more graduates of Military Higher Educational Institutions (VUZs) and secondary vocational schools that gives graduates skills equivalent to military occupational specialties. There is also Voluntary Society for Promotion of the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF) that provides military related skills. We send conscripts for service in the troops with consideration of their specialty [skills acquired before entry into military service]...And the basic training program has also has been changed so young people can become more adapted in a short time specifically in the period of establishment in performing military service, and can gain more skills in the period of service itself...

[Durnovo] Three people at once are asking when the Armed Forces will give up the draft entirely? In general, are there such plans to give up the draft entirely?

[Burdinskiy] There are no such plans to give up the draft entirely, nor is there a need for this... Then it will turn out that if we man only by contract, we deprive the citizen of the right to perform military service...we remain of the opinion that we must man by a mixed method: by draft and by contract. Defense Ministry plans have an annual increase in the

Continued: Details of Russia's Spring 2015 Conscription Campaign

include the Voluntary Society for Promotion of the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF, a sponsor of after school activities such as flying, parachuting, skiing, etc.), military higher educational institutions (VUZs, military high schools), and vocational-focused high schools. These institutions are intended to instill militarily useful skills and occupations to potential conscripts and contract soldiers before they begin service in the ranks.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

percentage of contract personnel, and by the end of this year, counting officers, it is planned that we will have a 2 to 1 ratio of contract servicemen to draftees.

[Durnovo] Please tell me, has the practice of training students in a training program not as officers, but as sergeants and privates of the reserve, proven itself?

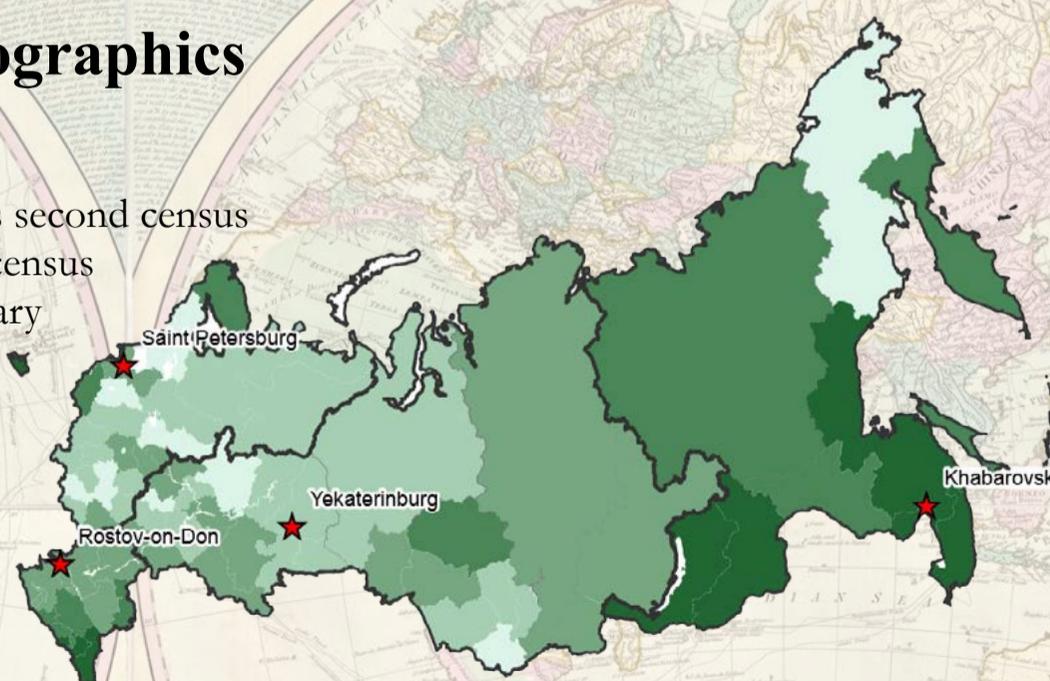
[Burdinskiy] It's too early to sum up results as to whether or not it has proven itself.

I want to talk about the demand and about how this is perceived in society. They began training reserve privates and sergeants in military departments only last year, and only in those VUZ's where there is a military department. Very great popularity was generated among students, and we have a lot of requests to the Defense Ministry to open a military department in VUZ's where there is no military department. This is the desire of the student community and of the rector. We are studying these issues, i.e., the first thing is that it is popular among the youth and among instructors, but we will evaluate effectiveness based on the first graduations from VUZ's, because young people who took the theoretical course -- and for now only the theoretical course is being studied -- will begin practical classes in 2016; these are training conferences. And when there are training conferences we will perform efficiency ratings, we will hold an exam, we will see what kind of practical skills they received, and we will evaluate their level. Then, in 2016, is when it will be possible to draw the first conclusions.

Russian Conscription Demographics

By Charles K. Bartles, FMSO

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>

“Before 2020 Black Sea Fleet will receive a total of around 30 combatant ships of various types, and support vessels.”

Source: Dmitriy Boltenev, “Fortress Crimea: Combat-Effective Grouping of Forces and Assets Created on the Peninsula in a Year,” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 25 March 2015, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/24412>, accessed 15 April 2015.

OE Watch Commentary:

Before Russia's annexation of Crimea in March of 2014 there were approximately 200 military units (соединение) and subunits (подразделение) of the Ukrainian military (including the Ministry of Defense and military units in other ministries) on the Crimean Peninsula. After the annexation the approximately 18,800 Ukrainian servicemen were given three choices:

- 1. Swear allegiance to Russia and join the Russian military, retaining all rank and titles.*
- 2. Retire and remain in Crimea.*
- 3. Continue service in the Ukrainian military, but leave Crimea.*

70-80 percent of Ukrainian servicemen chose the first option and transitioned to the Russian Army, unsurprising considering the large Russian population that has resulted from generations of Russian service members settling in the area since Tsarist times. In addition, about 900 Ukrainian servicemen from Crimea who were serving in the Ukrainian military outside of Crimea decided to return home and join the Russian military. Only 2000-3000 Ukrainian servicemen took the third option, and left Crimea for Ukraine.

As the accompanying article describes, Russia has increased the size of its military forces in Crimea, now part of the Russian Southern Operational Strategic Command (OSK). These gains have come from incorporating previously Ukrainian-flagged units, increasing the size of

Fortress Crimea

On 19 December Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu announced that “a self-sufficient grouping of troops has been established in the general-purpose forces in Crimea. Seven formations [Соединение- approximately units that are brigade sized and above] and eight military units [Войсковая часть- units that are approximately regimental to independent battalion sized] for various purposes have been created on the peninsula in addition to existing forces and assets.” Russia’s military department has done an enormous amount of work in a year...

Russia’s military-political leadership was faced with a very difficult task of activating a full-fledged Armed Forces grouping in the new Federation components, and some of its elements essentially had to be created from scratch...

Renewed Black Sea Fleet

Crimean Naval Base Headquarters was reactivated on 1 December 2014. Its zone of responsibility included the Black Sea from the border with Ukraine in the west to Kerchenskiy Proliv in the east... The Black Sea Fleet will be augmented with two new Project 11356 frigates, Admiral Grigorovich and Admiral Essen, in 2015. Another four patrol ships -- Admiral Makarov, Admiral Butakov, Admiral Istomin, and Admiral Kornilov -- are being built. According to known information, all six were supposed to become part of Black Sea Fleet before 2017. It is not excluded that Project 22350 frigates and Project 20380 corvettes also will appear in Black Sea Fleet...

The Fleet received the first two Project 636 submarines, B-261 Novorossiysk and B-237 Rostov-na-Donu, in December 2014. In this connection the submarine division which previously was part of 68th Offshore Defense Force Ship Brigade was reorganized as 4th Brigade. It will be stationed on territory of the submarine basing facility built at Novorossiysk. In addition to the new Project 636 submarines, the brigade also includes Project 877 Alrosa and formally two submarines, B-380 and B-435. Before 2017 the brigade will be augmented with B-262 Staryy Oskol, B-265 Krasnodar, B-268 Velikiy Novgorod, and B-271 Kolpino.

In the period up to 2020, six Project 22160 Vasiliy Bykov patrol ships will become part of Black Sea Fleet...Up to 2020 the 41st Missile Boat Brigade will receive six Project 21631 MRK small missile boats armed with the Kalibr attack missile complex. The first two ships, Zelenyy Dol and Serpukhov, will arrive already this year. The Fleet is being augmented with Project 21980 counter sabotage boats...Before 2020 Black Sea Fleet will receive a total of around 30 combatant ships of various types, and support vessels.

The Ukrainian large landing ship Konstantin Olshansky, command ship Slavutych, anti submarine warfare corvettes Ternopil’ and Luts’k, ocean minesweepers Cherkasy and Chernihiv, and others are in Sevastopol’ bays. They are flying Russian Navy flags, they have been included in Black Sea Fleet, and have skeleton crews aboard. The Ukrainian Defense Ministry leadership repeatedly declared a lack of interest in these ships. The question of whether or not they will be returned to the previous owner remains open. Some of these ships unquestionably are of interest to the Russian Navy...

(continued)

Continued: Force Structure of Russian Military Units in Crimea

existing Russian units, transferring units from the Russian mainland, and creating completely new units. Although Russia has increased its forces, the total number of personnel is likely not much different from the previous total of Russian and Ukrainian Forces. Of particular note, the peninsula's Coastal Defense Troops (part of the Black Sea Fleet) are about the equivalent of a Russian Ground Forces' combined arms army.

*The Black Sea Fleet recently appointed Lieutenant-General Yuriy Petrov as Deputy Fleet Commander, likely a nod to how important these coastal defense assets are perceived, and there have even been reports of possibly establishing a Coastal Defense Troops Command for the peninsula. The accompanying graphic depicts the major Russian Ministry of Defense units that were mentioned in the article (military forces of other government entities are not shown). **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Air Force and Navy Aviation

There were around 20 military airfields on the territory of Crimea in Soviet times, but up to February 2014 Russian Naval Aviation used only Kacha and Gvardeyskoye airfields and Ukraine used Bel'bek, Dzhankoy, and Kirovs'ke..

In July 2014 the 7057th Naval Aviation Air Base that was in Black Sea Fleet was reorganized as two air regiments, to which previous names and honorific titles were returned, specifically the 318th Composite Air Regiment (Be-12 and An-26 aircraft and Ka-27 and Mi-8 helicopters) stationed at Kacha Airfield and 43rd Naval Ground Attack Regiment (Su-24 and Su-24MR aircraft). The 43rd Separate Naval Ground Attack Regiment was rebased from Gvardeyskoye to Saki. It consists of two squadrons -- Su-24's and Su-24MR's...

... the Naval Aviation command decided to restore Khersones (Sevastopol'), Donuzlav, and Saki airfields. Runways are being renewed there and control towers are being outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment. Donuzlav Airfield, which is on the shore of the lake by the same name, is a seaplane base from which the Be-200 aircraft which will become part of Black Sea Fleet Naval Aviation in 2015 can be employed... An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) detachment was established in Black Sea Fleet Naval Aviation in December 2014. Orlan-10 UAVs entered its inventory in particular. This year the detachment will be reorganized as a UAV regiment.

The Southern MD 27th Composite Air Division, 4th Air Force and Air Defense Command, was deployed at Bel'bek, Gvardeyskoye, and Dzhankoy airfields during the preceding half-year. It has three regiments: 37th Composite, 38th Fighter, and 39th Helicopter...

Deployment of air defense units began on the territory of Crimea in March 2014 and was completed in December. Air defense units were brought together in 4th Air Force and Air Defense Command's 31st Air Defense Division. It included two SAM regiments: the 12th is located in Sevastopol and the 18th in the center of Crimea. Subunits of 3rd Radiotechnical Regiment are stationed throughout the peninsula...

Coastal Defense Troops

A year ago Black Sea Fleet had only the one 810th Naval Infantry Brigade in Crimea. At the same time, the Ukrainians had the 36th Coastal Defense Brigade, 406th Artillery Group, and two naval infantry battalions; 70-80 percent of the personnel of these units went over to the RF Armed Forces. Initially the 128th Coastal Defense Brigade was established based on the Ukrainian 36th Brigade with the previous basing location in Pereval'nyy. Later this brigade was given the number 126 to commemorate the Gorlovo 126th Coastal Defense Division, which existed as part of the USSR Armed Forces and Black Sea Fleet from 1989 through 1996. The 126th Brigade has seven [maneuver] battalions and [artillery] battalions and five companies, and on the order of 2,000 persons serve in it, approximately 90-95 percent under contract. The brigade is the main force of the RF Coastal Defense Troops...

The 501st Separate Naval Infantry Battalion in Feodosiya was activated from the Ukrainian 1st and 501st naval infantry battalions... The Ukrainian 406th Coastal Artillery Group became the 8th Artillery Regiment... the previously existing naval engineer company was reorganized as the 68th Naval Engineer Regiment at Yevpatoriya... The 4th Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Regiment was activated at Inkerman... the 127th Intelligence Brigade was activated in Sevastopol' in December 2014... At present there are several battalion task forces of the Russian Ground Troops and VDV [Airborne Troops] on the Perekop and Chonhar isthmuses separating Crimea from the mainland.

Much work lies ahead both for building a full-fledged basing infrastructure of troop units as well as for increasing combat readiness of the newly activated and integrated units and reoutfitting them with new and advanced equipment.

Continued: Force Structure of Russian Military Units in Crimea

Charles Bartles (FMSO) Source: http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/russiaGraphics/Crimea2015_15APR15-01.png



Commentary on Iran Nuclear Talks from Kremlin-Controlled Site

25 March 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *As diplomats from Iran and the P5+1 countries—the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, and Germany—were rushing to conclude a nuclear agreement before the self-imposed deadline at the end of March, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini addressed a large gathering of people in Iran’s holy city of Mashhad. He discussed Western sanctions against Iran’s nuclear program. On 25 March 2015 Kremlin-controlled news site Iran.ru published a commentary on his remarks, specifically on the possibility of cooperation with the United States on issues separate from Iran’s nuclear program. The accompanying excerpts are from this commentary, where the author had also bolded and italicized some text for emphasis.*

According to this commentary, which quotes Khomeini’s remarks, Iran has no interest in cooperating on nonnuclear issues with the West regarding, for example, the fight against the Islamic State in the Middle East. The cleric claimed that the goals and objectives of the United States in the region directly oppose those of Iran and are deeply hostile to it.

Commenting on US policy towards Iran, the Russian author feels that the United States is demanding a lot from Iran while offering nothing in return. He writes that Tehran must give up not only the expansion of its influence in the region, but also those positions that it has already won, and calls the recent “thaw” of relations between Iran and the West superficial at best and a “triumph of Western duplicity.” According to him, the United States has nothing to offer to Iran in return; he therefore endorses Khomeini’s response to the United States on cooperation on regional issues, “Don’t hold your breath.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: “Али Хаменеи о сотрудничестве с США: «Не дожидетесь!»” (Ali Khomeini on Cooperation with US “Don’t Hold Your Breath”) Iran.ru, 25 March 2015. http://www.iran.ru/news/analytics/96726/Ali_Hamenei_o_sotrudnichestve_s_SShA_Ne_dozhdetes

...The voice of the 75th Rahbar, as usual, was not loud. But all of Iran heard his words. ***“The ongoing negotiations with the United States apply only to the nuclear program. And nothing more,”*** said Ali Khamenei.

In the case of successful completion of negotiations, can a rapprochement occur between the positions of the US and Iran on regional issues? Moreover - will cooperation between Tehran and Washington over the most acute problems of the Middle East, primarily the fight against Islamic state be possible? ***“No way. The goals and objectives of the United States in the region are completely the opposite of the objectives of Iran and are deeply hostile to it,”*** said Rahbar, answering the unspoken question that troubled all the participants.

The spiritual leader not only answered the unspoken question of the audience. Communicating with the people who enthusiastically welcomed his words, he at the same time gave an answer to Barack Obama, with its allusion to the fact that an agreement on Iran’s nuclear program could lead to cooperation in the fight against the Islamic state....

If we discard the verbal shells, the understanding of “cooperation” of the American political elites about which Barack Obama hinted to the Iranians, looks very peculiar: Tehran must give up not only the expansion of its influence in the region, but also give up even those positions that it has already won. Even the decorative thaw of relations between Iran and the United States, in which there were far more words than deeds, for the most part, is a triumph of Western duplicity and the mentioned “bullying” in Rahbar’s speech—not so much over the Iranian negotiators, but over common sense—has caused panic and hatred among Washington’s main regional allies: Riyadh and Tel Aviv....

And he [Obama] and John Kerry have to make every effort in order not to completely ruin relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. And the issue is not only with them, but the point is, that for each of these allies there is a powerful lobby in America, multibillion-dollar contracts and group interests of local businesses and multinational corporations. In the US policy toward Iran and the Middle East, Obama and Kerry are not the only, nor the most important players.... ***But in reality, what can the White House offer Iran? Upon closer examination—nothing....***

... So what’s the bottom line? Obama’s speech on regional cooperation, the possibility of establishing a close and friendly relations with Tehran in fact hide a proposal to Iran to capitulate. And to add to that, give up its allies - Bashar Assad, Hezbollah and Shiites of Iraq. The reward for this—is the possibility of partial lifting of sanctions, which the United States itself enacted. The guarantee of completion of this deal—is only Obama’s and Kerry’s promise. And the Supreme Leader, and most Iranians know the value of their words. Therefore, Rahbar’s response was so brief and categorical in response to speculation about the “secret deals” with the United States, “Don’t hold your breath!”

Can Russia Rehabilitate Fighters Who Return to Caucasus from Syria and Iraq?

OE Watch Commentary: On 30 March 2015 news site Kavpolit.com (Caucasus Politics) published an article by Akhmed Yarlykapov, senior associate at MGIMO University's Center on the Caucasus and Regional Security. Yarlykapov begins by commenting on the recent statement of Sergei Melikov, Russia's envoy in the North Caucasus, to Russian reporters about militants from the North Caucasus fighting for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Yarlykapov feels that, judging by Merlikov's statement, Russia is unlikely to be able to rehabilitate fighters who return to the Caucasus from Syria and Iraq. He spends the rest of his article more broadly discussing Russia's situation regarding fighters joining the ranks of ISIS.

The topic of rehabilitation of militants is an interesting one, but is rarely discussed in the press. Little reliable data are available on this topic. Yarlykapov's commentary is useful in this regard. He says that only very few militants from the Caucasus underground have undergone rehabilitation in Russia. More importantly, however, in his view, these individuals subscribe to a different ideology—ISIS fighters in his view are much tougher (he does not elaborate further on what that entails) and presumably more difficult to re-educate. Russia, therefore, is unprepared to rehabilitate those fighters who return to the Caucasus from Syria and Iraq.

Furthermore, information on how many domestic fighters remain active in the Caucasus is also unavailable. Yarlykapov also points out that Russia's officials are very concerned about these issues, despite outwards appearances of calm, particularly in the context of widely voiced concerns in Europe about their own returning fighters. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Akhmed Yarlykapov, “Боевики ИГ действуют гораздо жестче, чем «Имарат Кавказ»” (ISIS Militants Act Much Tougher than Caucasus Emirate) Kavpolit.com, 30 March 2015. http://kavpolit.com/articles/boeviki_ig_dejstvujut_gorazdo_zhestche_chem_imarat-15406/

... Judging by Melikov's statement, Russia is unlikely to try to rehabilitate those who will return from Syria and Iraq. Because this is a different ideology, and hence a completely different approach.

Only very few terrorists from the underground in the Caucasus have gone through [Russia's] rehabilitation program. And here, those who will come back [from Syria or Iraq] were indoctrinated into a completely different ideology.

The issue is, the ideology of those who are fighting in the Caucasus, and those who fight for the Islamic state, is absolutely different. ISIS militants are much tougher than the Caucasus Emirate.

... Russia's calm against the backdrop of European countries - is only superficial. In fact, there is no calm [in Russia], but there is awareness and understanding of the problem. And the problem is very serious and, indeed, Russia has given many people to the ranks of the Islamic state.

...At the same time, Russia should not forget that remnants of the underground [from the Caucasus] remain on its territory. And quite a successful war is ongoing with them. It is very difficult to understand whether it [the underground] is laying low or if it is broken.

OE Watch Commentary: Russia remains a prominent topic in the South Caucasus' Russian-language press. In Armenia's Russian-language press in particular, there is an emphasis on Russia's positive influence in Armenia. Such reports have increased since Armenia agreed in 2014 to join the Russia-led Customs Union, and later formally entered the organization in January 2015.

Nonetheless, voices of dissent in the region, or simply news that highlight negative trends in the Armenia-Russia relationship, remain in the press as well. The first excerpt, from Haqqin.az, is one such example. It points out that trade between Russia and Armenia decreased in January-February 2015 as compared to the same period in the previous year, which is precisely the period when Armenia formally joined the Customs Union.

The remaining two excerpts are examples of the typical news that focuses on the positive Russia-Armenia relationship in Armenia's Russian-language press. The first is a statement from Armenian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Economic Integration and Reform Vache Gabrielyan, who stresses the "complete understanding on key issues" between Russia and Armenia. The second is an article about an exhibition due to open at Russia's National Library in St. Petersburg, which will reveal, for the first time, unique documents in Russian and Armenian that highlight the positive role Russia played for Armenians between 1916-1923, the years critical to Armenia's history.

It would be a bit harder to find in the Russian-language press that, for example, Armenia's president Serzh Sargsyan was not invited to the 20 March 2015 meeting in Astana between the remaining Customs Union leaders. Sargsyan had also said earlier in the month that he is worried about Russia's weapons sales to Azerbaijan, and expressed concern about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin will come to Yerevan on 24 April, which commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. To be sure, this has not gone unnoticed by Armenian analysts, but public statements about the positive side of the Russian-Armenian relationship are far more common. The underlying tension, however, will be important to watch in the coming months.

End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

Source: "Россия и Армения стали меньше торговать" (Russia and Armenia are Trading Less) Haqqin.az, 31 March 2015. <http://haqqin.az/news/42389>

Foreign trade turnover between Armenia and Russia for January-February 2015 amounted to 138.7 million dollars, a decrease of 35.4% compared to the same period in 2014 ... the share of foreign trade turnover between Armenia and Russia in the total foreign trade turnover for the period is 23.4%, or approximately 592.4 million dollars, a decrease of 27.7% compared to the same period in 2014.

Source: "Ваче Габриелян: По ключевым вопросам между Россией и Арменией есть полное взаимопонимание" (Vache Gabrielyan: On Key Issues, There is Complete Understanding Between Russia and Armenia) Newsarmenia.ru, 31 March 2015. <http://www.newsarmenia.ru/politics/20150331/43188309.html>

... "The relationship we have [with Russia] is very good, dynamic and strategically important for us. And for Russia, in my opinion, they are also important, as the presence in the region is of great importance for Moscow," said [deputy prime minister, minister of international economic integration and reform of Armenia Vache] Gabrielyan. According to him, of course, there are some problems, but they are common to all "live" relationships.

Source: "Российская благотворительность и Армения в 1915-1923 гг." (Russian Charity and Armenia in 1915-1923) Argumenti.ru, 31 March 2015. <http://argumenti.ru/culture/2015/03/394221>

According to the news agency "ProArtInfo" tomorrow, April 1, in the National Library of Russia (St. Petersburg) an exhibition will open, entitled, "Russian charity and Armenia in 1915-1923," which will take place in the cycle of events dedicated to 100th anniversary of Armenian Genocide in 1915.

Unique documents devoted to the activities of charitable committees in Russia and publications from NLR funds in Armenian and Russian languages will be presented for the first time at an exhibition in the NLR.

These are magazines published between 1916 - 1918, to raise funds and awareness to the events in Turkish Armenia "Armenian Bulletin" and "Armenians and the War." Among the exhibits - an appeal to the citizens of Petrograd for donations for Armenian refugees, statutes of charities, census of refugees, reports of organizations on collected funds....

The Northern Navy's Two Step Strategy for Underwater Anti-Sabotage Operations

5 April 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian Federation's drone development programs have continued to expand and grow into multipurpose roles. As the excerpt from Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Russia's official government newspaper, points out, the Russian intelligence drone "Tachyon" was specifically designed for reconnaissance use of the Northern Fleet, with both optical and IR cameras designed for spotting targets on land, sea and under the surface of the water, during both daytime nighttime operations, and in extreme weather conditions.*

The brief excerpt also describes the recent development of the surface-to-subsurface DP-64 grenade launcher for anti-sabotage operations, intended as an antipersonnel weapon for underwater divers, as well as for the destruction of submersible delivery vehicles.

Coordinated employment of these weapons indicates that the Northern Navy can identify and disrupt underwater sabotage operations more quickly and efficiently, even in extreme climates. End OE Watch Commentary (Croft)

Source: Ivan Petrov, "The Diver Doesn't Swim Under the Ice: On the Northern Navy's Specially Designed Drone for Handling Saboteurs" Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 5 April 2015. <http://rg.ru/2015/04/05/bespilotnik-site.html>, accessed 17 April 2015.

The Diver Doesn't Swim Under the Ice:

On the Northern Navy's Specially Designed Drone for Handling Saboteurs

Training unique to its kind began at the end of this week in the Northern Fleet. Specialized Naval personnel conducted practical tests of the "Tachyon" aerial drone in order to deal with underwater sabotage operations. The drone is designed for aerial reconnaissance and the detection of small and hard to detect objects both on land as well in and under the water.

"The device was specifically designed for use in the Far North; it is equipped with a thermal imager and camera. It is small and lightweight and can be used in a wide range of altitudes and temperatures, as well as at high wind speeds," – explained Northern Fleet Captain Vadim Serga...

According to him, anti-sabotage drone tests took place in the bays along the coast of the Kola Peninsula. First of all, appreciate the ability of "Tachyon" to detect divers and delivery vehicles at various depths. In addition, the drones were looking for maneuvering the base of subversive groups and camouflaged ambush, including at night. Unmanned vehicles equipped with an infrared camera and video modules that can be used to detect even a well-camouflaged enemy, so are able to perform combat missions at any time.

Recall in one of the last issues of "RG" [Rossiyskaya Gazeta] already covered the theme of confrontation with underwater saboteurs. This issue regarded the beginning of serial production of the double-barreled anti-sabotage grenade launcher DP-64 "Nepryadva." Earlier this launcher has come into service, but only in small batches – current priority arms orders are for ship marine units, some parts of the FSO [Federal Protective Service] and the Federal Border Guard Service. Soon, such grenade launchers will be equipped to units of the regular Navy.

In this case, "Nepryadva" has no analogues in the world. Its uniqueness lies in its ability to fire from on board a ship onto underwater targets. According to the developers, grenades fired from DP-64, capable striking divers at a distance of 500 meters and all kinds of light surface targets. With this in mind the crew is capable of organizing a defensive perimeter all around a vessel. Grenade launchers can be mounted on a turret and manage remotely. Due to its design grenade is virtually a silent weapon....

“From my own experience of military service I will say that a no-notice inspection is the only real opportunity in peacetime to make an objective assessment of an army’s combat readiness.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since Sergey Shoygu became Russia’s minister of defense in November 2012, the military has staged more frequent large-scale, no-notice training exercises designed to test the readiness of the country’s Armed Forces. Although these exercises may be a surprise to those in uniform, they are usually very well publicized by the Russian media, impressing upon viewers the military’s growing strength and preparedness to defend against an enemy attack. They also demonstrate the resolve of the Kremlin’s leadership to modernize the country’s Armed Forces.

The brief accompanying excerpt examines the results of a major no-notice exercise conducted in mid-March 2015 involving more than 80,000 men, 12,000 pieces of military equipment, 80 surface ships and submarines, and over 220 aircraft and helicopters. Elements from all of the major joint commands were alerted, testing everything from strategic nuclear forces to naval infantry, from reinforcing the defense of Crimea to conducting maneuvers in the Arctic sector.

Despite the impressive breadth and scope of this training, the article questions the effectiveness of these no-notice exercises and whether or not they actually reflect a unit’s combat readiness. One of the experts quoted (General Sobolyev) contends that the usefulness of these exercises is often limited, since the units are not engaging with a theoretical foe, where umpires can “rigorously monitor the process of the maneuvers.” He points out that without some nominal form of resistance, where an aggressor or umpire can play the opposing side, these exercises often devolve into “political PR.”

Sobolyev also points out that directing these exercises from Russia’s new command and control center in Moscow could prove hazardous “because in the event of a real armed conflict this National Defense Management Center would be promptly destroyed.” He goes on to suggest that, despite the façade of defense readiness, the Defense Ministry has not fully exercised mobilization

Source: Anton Mardasov, “Армия показательной готовности: Внезапные проверки Вооруженных сил РФ: политический пиар или эффективное средство боевой подготовки?,” [Army of Demonstration Readiness: No-Notice Inspections of RF Armed Forces: Political PR or Effective Combat Training Device?] Svobodnaya Pressa, 25 March 2015. <http://www.svpressa.ru/war21/article/116586/>

No-Notice Inspections of RF Armed Forces

...President of Russia Vladimir Putin expects work on no-notice readiness inspections of the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces to be continued this year. He announced this 24 March at a meeting with Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu and Chief of General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov, at which the results of large-scale exercises that concluded 21 March were summarized. The defense minister reported to the supreme commander in chief on the course of the maneuvers and their results, noting that this was the first no-notice inspection to be staged this year. ...

...Let me recall that, on orders from President Vladimir Putin, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu announced 16 March the start of a no-notice inspection of the Northern Fleet and a part of the ZVO (Western Military District) troops. The aim was to inspect the Northern Fleet’s combat readiness and to evaluate capabilities for augmenting the troop grouping in the Arctic from the central regions of Russia and accomplishing missions in challenging climatic conditions.

The maneuvers were supplemented 17 March by strategic command staff exercises that affected all five operational-strategic commands, as well as formations under central command. An extensive troop redeployment was staged in the Western, Northern, and Southern sectors. Specifically, strategic Tu-22M3 missile-armed aircraft flew to Crimea. Aircraft of fighter and bomber aviation were redeployed to Kaliningrad Oblast, the ground forces grouping in the Baltic was reinforced with Iskander operational-tactical systems, which were delivered by large amphibious warfare ships belonging to the Baltic Fleet. In addition to the maneuvers in the Arctic sector, the reinforcement of Crimea’s defense -- with engineer troops erecting a raft and ferry crossing of the Kerchenskiy Proliv -- and the strengthening of Kaliningradskaya Oblast’s defense were rehearsed. ...

In the words of Andrey Kartapolov, chief of the Main Directorate for Operations of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, all in all more than 80,000 men, 12,000 pieces of military equipment, 80 surface ships and submarines, and over 220 aircraft and helicopters took part in the exercises.

The no-notice exercises have been held, the Defense Ministry leadership has reported their results to the president. One would like to understand, however: How effective are these no-notice inspections that have recently become a regular feature in the field? Are they really no-notice events, or is a division, say, that is to be put on alert in line with General Staff plans forewarned about the upcoming redeployment some days beforehand? To what extent do no-notice exercises model combat operations, and are the units that have been mobilized for maneuvers sufficient to repulse aggression by a potential adversary?

(continued)

Continued: Surprise Readiness Tests

plans because the military is hugely undermanned. He points out that in the Ground Troops' total inventory of "39 motorized infantry and tank brigades throughout Russia, only one battalion in a brigade is more or less in a state of combat readiness." He contends that this shortage of trained personnel could have catastrophic consequences in the event of major hostilities.

*Even with these critical observations, however, the article concludes on a positive note, pointing out that there will always be a "certain degree of compromise with realism" when testing military readiness in the absence of actual conflict. Besides their public relations value, unannounced military readiness tests allow Russian commanders and soldiers "to understand what to expect in the event a real war breaks out." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Svobodnaya Pressa asked Lieutenant General Viktor Sobolev, former commander of the 58th Army, to comment on the large-scale exercises staged by the Russian Federation's Armed Forces. ... "So no-notice exercises are useful. But in order to inspect actual combat readiness it is necessary for the exercise director's staff and the umpires to be located beforehand directly in the zone of the maneuvers. And they must rigorously monitor the process of the maneuvers.

"For example: During the no-notice inspection of troops that concluded a couple of days ago a battalion of naval infantry was put on alert and embarked on amphibious warfare ships. But what then? Then we are shown the following piece on television: The ship approaches right up to the shore unimpeded, following which the landing force debarks right onto the coast. But if this is a no-notice inspection the aim of which is to examine the troops' combat readiness, then it has to model the actual conditions of combat operations!

..."By and large I am not opposed to no-notice inspections. It's a good thing that with Shoygu's arrival they have begun to be conducted on a regular basis. But in order for this to be of real benefit the General Staff -- I repeat -- must put together umpire personnel whose officers would be capable of rigorously monitoring the troops' operations. And not only monitoring but also competently instructing the personnel and the staffs. But in the absence of this, exercises become an exercise in political PR.

"What is also not clear is this -- during an armed forces combat readiness inspection, just what was the Defense Ministry and General Staff leadership doing in a downtown Moscow building housing the country's National Defense Management Center, a building that is unprotected against attack from the air? Surely the defense minister and his deputies and so forth should be occupying hardened command and control facilities and not sitting on Frunzenskaya Embankment in their office attire. Because in the event of a real armed conflict this National Defense Management Center would be promptly destroyed....

..."To say nothing of mobilization readiness issues and the fact that our army is hugely undermanned. And bringing the troops to full combat readiness scientifically speaking means bringing units and formations up to prescribed wartime strength levels, preparing armament and equipment for combat employment, loading munitions, and assigning combat missions. Yet nothing of the sort was done in the course of the past maneuvers.

"As a rule, in our Ground Troops only one battalion in a brigade is more or less in a state of combat readiness. And yet in all there are just 39 motorized infantry and tank brigades throughout Russia....

..."Whom to inspect, to what extent, and at what time? This is determined in advance. But only an extremely limited circle of individuals must be in the know," Viktor Murakhovskiy, military expert and member of the Expert Council under the chairman of the Russian Federation Government's Military-Industrial Commission, says. "If we exclude the president, this circle of individuals will number five or six people. So for the troops being inspected this really is a surprise event.

"I understand Viktor Sobolev, although he, too, needs to realize that a certain degree of compromise with realism will nonetheless always be present in no-notice inspections. If maneuvers are being conducted that involve full-scale field firing, then a large volume of preparatory measures is required, including the installation of a target field, the provision of safety zones, and so on. This is by definition impossible if we're talking about a no-notice inspection.

...From my own experience of military service I will say that a no-notice inspection is the only real opportunity in peacetime to make an objective assessment of an army's combat readiness. Not for the purpose of presenting assessments. But to understand what to expect in the event a real war breaks out."

Victory Day Parade-2015

14 April 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Memories of the Great Patriotic War (WW II) are ever present in Russia today, and May 2015 will mark the 70th anniversary of the end of this devastating conflict. Not surprisingly, the Kremlin authorities plan to mark this gala with a huge parade in Red Square and in a number of other commemorations and displays throughout the country. As the first excerpt points out, the parade in Moscow's Red Square will be the largest ever, with more than 15,000 from Russia's Armed Forces, nearly 200 army vehicles/weapon systems and 150 different aircraft.*

Besides honoring the veterans from this war, the first article suggests that the parade will display Russia's growing military strength, featuring new ground weapon systems, including the Armata tank, Coalition-SV self-propelled artillery system, and the Kurganets-25, Boomerang and BMD-4M infantry/armored fighting vehicles. Rounding out this display of firepower will be the YARS intercontinental (nuclear) missile system.

While the number of those attending the parade on Red Square will be limited to high-level dignitaries and veterans of the Great Patriotic War, the ceremony will be broadcast

Source: Viktor Baranetz, "Каким будет Парад Победы 2015," [What will the 2015 Victory Parade be Like] Komsomolskaya Pravda, 14 April 2015. <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26288/3167218/>

... The military parade on Red Square will host more than 14 thousand troops (for comparison, in 2010 there were 11,000)... Participating will be units from Ground Forces, Air Force, Navy, Strategic Rocket Forces, Air Defense Forces, Airborne Forces, cadets from military academies, the presidential honor guard, Federal Security Forces and units from other power ministries....

...The mechanized part of the parade will involve some 194 pieces of military equipment... including the Tiger, BTR-82A, T-90A, self-propelled howitzers "MSTA-S," anti-aircraft missile systems "Buk-M2," anti-aircraft missile and gun complex "Carapace-C1," anti-aircraft missile launchers missile system "S-400," and intercontinental missile "Yars"....

For the first time on Red Square will be coastal missile systems "Ball" and "Bastion", self-propelled artillery "Coalition-SV", the new version of the car increased the vulnerability of "Typhoon" and other new items. It is expected that the parade on Red Square will also feature examples of such forward-looking armored tank "Armata," infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers "Kurganets-25" and BMP "Boomerang"....

(continued)



Victory Day Parade, 2014. Source: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/photo/2490>

Continued: Victory Day Parade-2015

from start to finish on nearly all of Russia's major television media. Indeed, preparations and media coverage for this parade have been building for months, with frequent reports describing all of the detailed planning and training behind this armed spectacle.

However, the foreign guest list for the festivities has shrunk over the past few months. As the second excerpt points out, while leaders from China, India, South Africa, Vietnam, Mongolia, Cuba and North Korea plan to attend, many Western leaders have declined to participate after Russia's annexation of Crimea and its ongoing involvement in Eastern Ukraine. While not directly referred to in these excerpts, many Russians interpret the refusal of Western leaders to attend as an affront. This sense of outrage is reflected in the anecdote at the end of the first excerpt. The 9 May Victory Day parade on Red Square may now symbolize more than the Soviet triumph in WW II.
End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

...Anecdote in the subject

A senior Russian military chief was irritated by the fact that his colleague at the Pentagon accused the Russian Defense Ministry of organizing an "invasion" of Ukraine. The Russian general called his American counterpart on the phone and said to him:

- Regarding the situation in Ukraine, - I'm inviting you to the 2015 Victory Parade!!!
- Should I fly to Moscow? - Asked the American.
- No! We are going to celebrate in Washington! – the Russian general replied.

Source: "9 мая в России пройдет 70 Парадов Победы," [May 9 in Russia will hold the 70th Victory Day Parade] Komsomolskaya Pravda, 17 March 2015. <http://www.kp.ru/online/news/2003104/>

The Kremlin is discussing the preparation for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II... It is expected that leaders from at least 26 countries will attend on 9 May. Already invitations have been accepted from the leaders of China, India, South Africa, Vietnam, Mongolia, Cuba and North Korea....

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



OE Watch Commentary: *The 98th Guards Airborne Division continues its Arctic insertion training. In March 2014 paratroopers from this unit took part in one of Russia's biggest airdrop exercises 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 division jumped from an Ilyushin Il-76 onto an ice floe close to the North Pole, where the drifting research station Barneo is located. In the late March 2015 short notice exercise in the Arctic, paratroopers from the 98th Guards Airborne Division conducted combat training missions on Novaya Zemlya and Franz Josef Land. Companies of the division then redeployed to the Kol'skiy Peninsula, where they conducted security and defense of the Olenegorsk military airfield, a major naval reconnaissance facility south of Murmansk. This was in clear response to Norway's announced military exercise in the Norwegian Finnmark. Ten IL-76 CANDID aircraft (Russia's equivalent of the C-17) supported the division during this exercise.*

The 98th Guards Airborne Division is becoming the go-to division for rapid ground force reinforcement in the Russian Arctic. It is located south of St. Petersburg, so it is not that far from the Murmansk Peninsula, as the CANDID flies. While most of the drops use the standard D-10 parachute (with a hemispherical deployed canopy), the Arbalet [crossbow] standard steerable sports parachute is being used increasingly in Russian Arctic jumps. They jump the Arbalet from as high as 3000 meters, using a drogue chute for initial stability. The airborne battalion and scouts of the Northern Fleet's Arctic Naval Infantry Brigade are also conducting jump training during April.
End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)

Source: RIA Novosti, <http://ria.ru/>, 1 April 2015; Interfax, <http://www.interfax.com/>, 4 April 2015; and Ministry of Defense of the Russian, <http://www.mil.ru>, 1 April 2015.

“Pskov Airborne Troops Preparing for Drops in the Arctic”

“Training sessions are being conducted in connection with possible drops by VDV formations that were scheduled for April, and further activities in the Far North and the Arctic. During the training sessions the VDV will perform more than 500 jumps with Arbalet special-purpose parachute systems and carry out about 50 hours of training at airborne complex sites,” the release said.

In addition, they are to undergo special training for action on snowshoes and skis.

The last unscheduled inspection of combat readiness took place in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation from 16 to 21 March with emphasis on practical activities in the Arctic. They involved forces of the Northern Fleet, the Western Military District, and VDV - about 80,000 troops, thousands of ground combat vehicles, dozens of surface ships, submarines, aircraft, and helicopters.

Paratroops to land on ice floe as part of Russia-CSTO exercise

Russia's Airborne Forces and the Collective Operational Reaction Forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization plan an exercise this month to involve the parachuting of troops on an ice floe in the central part of the Arctic Ocean.

The parachuting, the first landing of paratroops on an ice floe, will be the starting point of an exercise to train a search and rescue expedition moving toward the North Pole, Russian Airborne Forces spokesman Lt. Co. Yevgeny Meshkov told Interfax.

Russian Air Force military transport and the expedition center of the Russian Geographical Society will also be involved in the exercise, he said.

Over 400 Northern Fleet Marines Take Part in Parachute Jumps

Over 400 servicemen of the airborne battalion and the separate airborne-reconnaissance company of the Northern Fleet naval infantry brigade have started carrying out parachute jumps.

The Northern Fleet naval infantrymen are carrying out jumps from military transport aircraft and Mi-8 helicopters at a range of altitudes -- from 500 to 1,200 meters. The airborne operations are carried out in groups numbering up to 30 men.

During the training, the servicemen rehearse the skills of carrying out airborne operations in full combat gear and with regular-issue weapons.

The practical parachute jumps were preceded by serious training of the airborne assault force members at simulators on the ground. At the beginning of the winter training period, the servicemen studied the characteristics, arrangement, and packing procedure of the parachute. On a multi-purpose parachute simulator, the naval infantrymen rehearsed in practice elements of exiting from the airplane and touching down.

The airborne training for the Northern Fleet naval infantrymen was planned in such a way that every airborne assault force member would carry out at least two parachute jumps in the training period. The winter parachute jumping will carry on until the end of April.

Ice Airstrip for Transport Jockeys

9 April 2015

“The Russian Ministry of Defense stated that a temporary seasonal airfield covered with ice will be built on the Alexandra Zemlya Island of the Franz Josef Archipelago. It will provide takeoff and for Russian Air Force transport aircraft.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The October 2014 issue of OE Watch discussed Russian interest in Soviet experience with ice floe airfields during the early part of the Cold War. Past is prologue in Russian military thought, and the Russians are now revisiting the use of ice airfields in the Arctic. Presumably the ice airfield will be a 1000-meter extension of the old Nagurskoe meteorological station's 1,500 meter strip. A long runway is essential for iced surfaces. In December 1996 an AN-72 COALER Antonov cargo STOL aircraft crashed while landing at Nagurskoe. During World War II the Germans established the Schatzgrüber meteorological station on the island. It was abandoned after most of the members were stricken with trichinosis after eating raw polar bear meat.*

Reopening and extending an airfield this far north is expensive and difficult. Why is the Ministry of Defense making the effort? It does not look like an ideal location to station MIG-31 or SU-24 interceptors. It would, however, be an ideal site for supplying the Northern Sea Fleet, since it is roughly halfway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: “Interfax, <http://www.interfax.com/>, 9 April 2015

Russia to build first ice airstrip in Franz Josef Land - Ministry

An Air Force spokesperson stated, in a statement obtained by Interfax-AVN “The length of the runway is 2,500 meters, the airfield is designed to deliver personnel and cargo to the Arctic region”.

“Snow clearing operations are underway to ready the airfield for taking in aircraft,” the spokesperson said. One crew “has started practicing takeoffs and landings at its permanent base under near-Arctic conditions, the Ministry spokesperson said.

“Military transport aircraft crews will be landing under difficult geographic conditions, considering the hills and rocky surface of the island. During landing, pilots will rely on marker beacons with mandatory runway visual control and only in visual flight weather conditions,” the spokesperson said.

Russian Arctic Air Defense Upgrades

4 April 2015

“We have now deployed Pantsir firing systems there. The plan is to deploy the MiG-31 on Arctic airfields,” stated Major General Kirill Makarov, Deputy Commander of the Aerospace Defense Troops on the “Genshtab” [General Staff] radio program broadcast by the Russian News Service.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian air defense efforts in the Arctic continue to expand and improve. The announcement of the testing of maintenance-free, automated radar stations would certainly ease the manning problems for Russian air defense forces in remote Arctic sites. The deployment of functioning automated sites would enhance northern air defense.*

The February 2015 edition of OE Watch reported the fielding of the SA-22 Pantsir-SM GREYHOUND mobile combination short-to-medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system in the Arctic. The missile has a reported engagement range from 20 kilometers (12 miles) to 30 kilometers (19 miles). The 30mm twin-barreled gun can reach out to four kilometers. The system can reportedly function effectively below -50 degrees Centigrade [-58 degrees Fahrenheit].

The Russian Ministry of Defense had previously announced plans to station a regiment of MIG-31 FOXHOUND interceptors in the Arctic. The MIG-31 has been around since 1979 and has reportedly intercepted the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird. It has look-down, shoot-down radar and apparently the capability of engaging cruise missiles.

**End OE Watch
Commentary (Grau)**

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

Arctic: Russia to deploy MiG-31 interceptor fighters, automated radar stations

In further comments reported by RIA Novosti separately, Makarov said Russia plans to deploy a network of Arctic radar stations in the near future that can operate virtually unmanned.

“We will deploy maintenance-free radar in the Arctic, which is very important in the Far North,” Makarov said. “According to him, the state tests of one of these stations will begin soon, which ‘can run for days virtually unmanned’”.



“Among the division’s primary missions was to conduct combat operations to repel massive enemy missile and air strikes and cover facilities of the infrastructure of Northern Fleet, - 1st Air Defense Division Deputy Commander Colonel Sergey Vladimirovich Denisov”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia is continuing its air defense build-up in the Arctic. A recent interview with 1st Air Defense Division Deputy Commander Colonel Sergey Vladimirovich Denisov demonstrates the focus on emplacing a long-term and robust air defense footprint in the region. Infrastructure being set up in Russian Arctic facilities includes schools, churches, and gyms, signifying permanent operations.

As per its doctrine, Russia has always stressed the importance of air defense in conventional conflict. Now we are seeing its most advanced air defense systems and even UAVs being integrated in the Arctic to protect its future activities in the Arctic Sea. Specifically, Russia will deploy an S-400 air defense regiment, a UAV unit (Orlan-10), for area coverage. Russia will also deploy the Pantsir-S1 air defense system for defense of an airfield. Additionally, Russia’s defense minister says that it will construct 13 airdromes and 10 radars in the Arctic in 2015. In the article, Colonel Denisov mentions the growing tensions over foreign reconnaissance flights over the Arctic and the international race for access to the region.

Three SAM battalions participated in a “snap” exercise in December 2014. Successful SAM live fires were also conducted on 8 April. Russia is also monitoring the Arctic airspace with radio-technical units on the Kola Peninsula. These troops are also reinforced with SAM air defense systems. Kola’s facilities are meant to address not just future Arctic activities, but also current foreign surveillance of Russian naval assets. Kola Air Defense Division Commander Colonel Sergey Moskvichev fully expects joint operations between the Northern Fleet and land forces to increase in frequency and capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)**

Source: ‘Arctic Air Defense Vector’, Krasnaya Zvezda Online in Russian, 11 Apr 15, <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/23025-arkticheskij-vektor-pvo>

Arctic Air Defense Vector

[Red Star] What missions face the division this year?

[Denisov] “The priority mission is to activate a SAM regiment at Rogachevo on Novaya Zemlya and bring it on line so it goes on alert duty already by year’s end. We are to receive new armament: Pantsir-S1 ground-based self-propelled air defense missile-gun complex and radar equipment. In general, the division technical pool will be 50-percent updated this year, and all 100 percent before 2020.”

“I wish to note that our subunits on Zemlya Aleksandry and in Rogachevo went on alert duty on 1 December 2014. In the months that passed since then, we have become convinced of how high foreign states’ interest in the Arctic is now: reconnaissance aircraft are constantly flying in high latitudes.”

For the full interview; <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/23025-arkticheskij-vektor-pvo>

“At present, the combat module of the Nerekhta system mounts the Kalashnikov PKTM machine gun or the Kord machine gun, exactly the same as those installed in other armored vehicles. In the future, however, the plan is to improve this armament substantially, specifically with the robotic systems in mind. The machine gun needs to have additional systems and sensors in order to organize fire control, as we call it, so as to analyze the weapon’s rate of fire, how much ammunition remains, that is to say how many rounds it has fired, and various other data such as the temperature of the weapon, for the operator to be able to obtain this data from the machine gun at his fire control station. In addition, the magazine needs to be larger, the service life of the machine gun needs to be made longer, and it has to be possible to reload it remote-controlled.”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia’s Advanced Research Foundation, an organization similar to the US DARPA, continues to impress the leadership with its ability to engineer new weaponry. Recently a robotic combat vehicle was demonstrated on TV as part of the “Russian Weapons” program. The vehicle can shoot a grenade launcher or machine gun before evading its pursuers. It is hoped that the complex will make life easier for infantry commanders, since it will expand their combat capabilities.

The robotic vehicle is planned for late 2015. The concept includes plans to develop several Nerekhta modules that can work together all at once, with the ability to find and destroy targets at will. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Report from the “Russian Weapons” program, Rossiya 24 Television, 28 March 2015.

The module is controlled by an operator. The command post can be housed in a separate motor vehicle...the computer controls the robot at up to 20km away. There are up to 18 different modules, not all of them combat ones. The Nerekhta robotic system can provide fire support for a motor-rifle subunit, feed it reconnaissance data, or supply it with ammunition.

Right now, the platform mounts a transport module. In effect, it’s a truck that can carry ammunition, weapons, medical supplies and so on, its load capacity up to 700 kg. If required, in addition, it can also evacuate a casualty from the battlefield. All the robot versions are based on a universal platform. It can mount a combat module, a reconnaissance one or a transport one. This makes it easier to maintain and operate the system.

Stealth is one of the main tasks, so its motor is silent, electric. In combat conditions, however, it is not always possible to find where to recharge it from. For this prototype, once it completes its combat mission, no socket will have to be searched for. The fact is that it has its own diesel generator. That is to say, if required the vehicle will be able to recharge its flat batteries itself.

The operational temperature range of this particular assembly is 50 degrees Celsius below zero to 50 above. It can withstand impacts and vibration of up to 10 g, 10-g loads. If you look closely, you will see that it is quite sturdy, so if it falls, there’s no way it will break.

OE Watch Commentary: Particular attention is being paid to improving the standard of military command and control activities in Russia. The nation's military leaders recognize that the forms and methods for conducting military operations are under adjustment, and command and control issues have become more dependent on informatized operations. According to reports, specific generals and officers have been placed on a preapproved list due to their operational expertise, and they are brought to the command and control center to offer their advice on potential future military actions. The process of clarifying a situation and determining a concept are "carried out virtually simultaneously."

These meetings can take place literally two or three days before the initiation of hostilities. Naturally one wonders if such a meeting took place in regard to the decision to intervene in Crimea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Major General Vladimir Yatsenko, "24 Hours to Ponder. The Mechanism for Adopting a Decision for an Operation to Repulse Aggression Needs to Work like Clockwork," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 1 April 2015.

The operations directorate embarks on formulating a decision chart (experience demonstrates that it is necessary to prepare three such charts simultaneously). After the commander has been briefed and the proposals for the utilization of subordinate troops have been approved, each chief comes to the combat command and control center and enters his troops' tasks on the decision chart together with the chief of the operations directorate.

Usually the concept for an operation is personally formulated and specified by the commander. Together with the chief of the operations directorate, the chief of staff specifies tasks for armies. The chiefs of categories of troops and services include tasks for their subordinates in their sections. The chief of the operations directorate handles the organization of command and control, coordinating them with the chief of staff.

So a priority task must be to staff the combined strategic command with highly trained generals, officers, and operators from the various armed services (preferably following the completion of special courses run by the General Staff Academy). In 2015 particular importance would be attached to the holding of a demonstration exercise under the leadership of the minister of defense or the chief of the General Staff to examine the work of the combined strategic command when adopting a decision for an operation to repulse aggression and subsequently devise a training aid for military districts and Russian Federation Armed Forces academies on the basis of its results.

“Studies conducted during operational-strategic exercises in the 1980s-1990s confirm that the final clarification of the plan for an operation or the formulation of a new approach need to be carried out within a short period of time -- within two or three days before the start of hostilities, when the front command has reliable information about the position and correlation of enemy troop groupings and the possible nature of enemy actions. In this case working in parallel would be the natural method for planning the operation. It requires a high degree of coordination of the actions of staffs, directorates, and front command and control sections and services.”

Heavy Shelling Near Mariupol

19 April 2015

“In the village of more than 500 shells exploded. Due to the shelling, the OSCE mission was forced to leave town, the remaining situation is not secure”- Donetsk News Agency spokesman”

OE Watch Commentary: Mariupol has long been considered key terrain in the Ukrainian conflict. Its position is strategic, allowing access to the Sea of Azov, and a port/rail head that could supply both Crimea and mainland Ukraine. Mariupol has been under threat as it borders the rebel-held Donetsk oblast. Recently Aleksandr Zakharchenko, the head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, provided an update to his troop disposition. He announced that the formation of the republic’s army is nearly complete. He claims to have as many as 50,000 troops in the vicinity of Mariupol, prepared for combat. The Organization for Security and Peace-Europe (OSCE) has made an effort to observe the situation from nearby Shirokino. The village is the location of the Joint Control Center for observation of activity and violations of the Minsk II agreement. One of the Joint Center’s goals is to establish a demilitarized zone, which would cease hostilities from Shirokino, north to the Donetsk Airport.

The OSCE and other volunteers have allegedly come under fire repeatedly. As the Donetsk News Agency reports, on 19 April the OSCE mission was forced to leave due to heavy shelling, in which 500 shells were launched from Ukraine’s “Azov” Battalion. Other local media report that the cease-fire ended in Shirokino on 18 April, when militants used mortars, small arms and RPGs. The Ukrainian media claim that Ukrainian forces were able to repel the attack after five hours. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)**

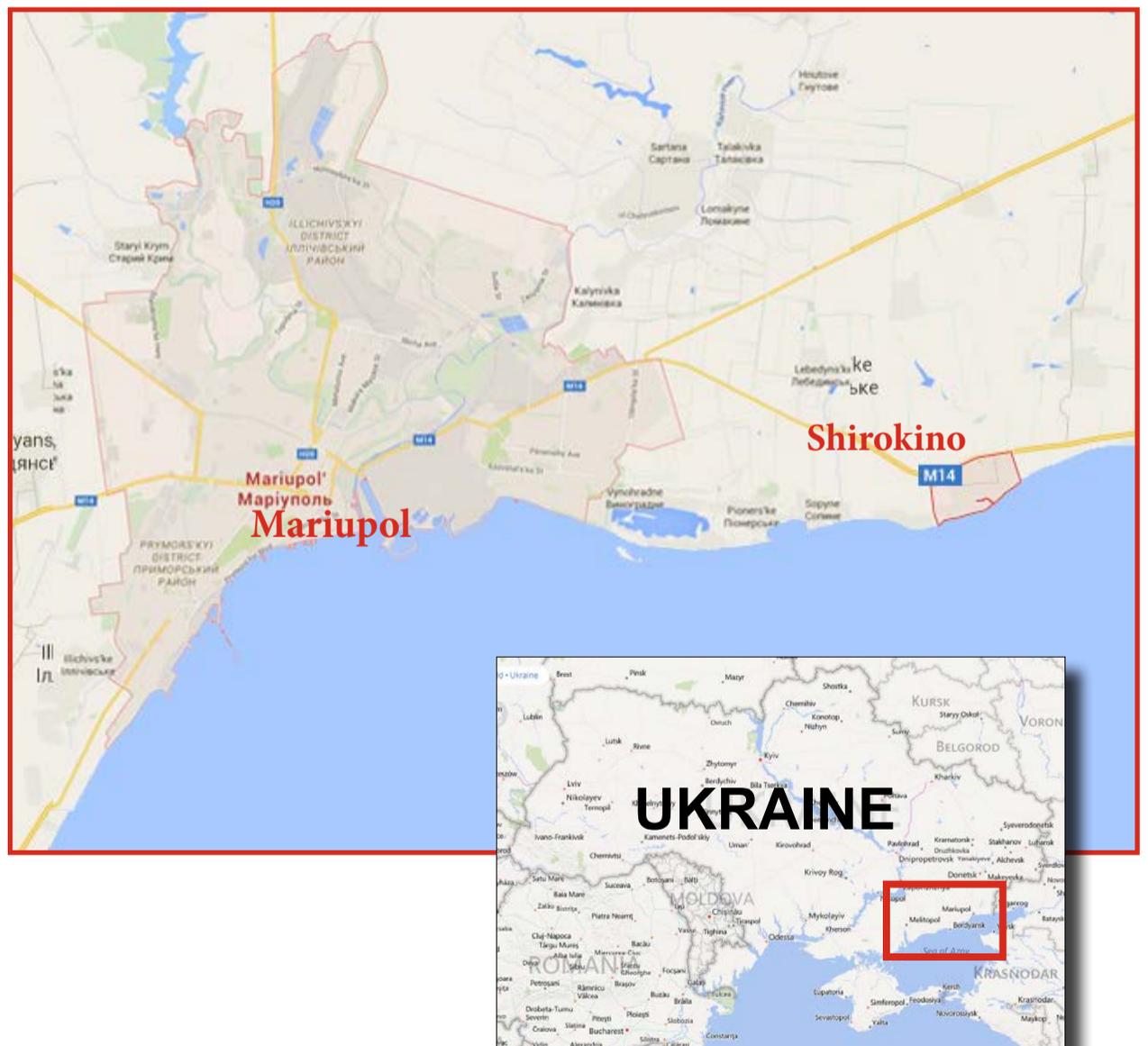
Source: “Militants Azov Conduct Heavy-shelling on Shirokino during Night,” Donetsk News Agency, 19 April 15. <http://dan-news.info/defence/boeviki-azova-nochyu-podvergli-shirokino-intensivnym-obstrelam-istochnik.html>

“Azov Fighters Conducted Heavy Shelling of Shirokino During the Night”

“This trip will take place without journalists to avoid the recurrence of an accident that occurred in Shirokino April 14 with the operator of the Russian TV channel” Star “Andrei Lunev (journalist was blown up by” stretching “- approx. DAN),” - said the source.

Shirokino village is located between the occupied Mariupol and the DNR-controlled New Azov, is one of the most stressful areas of the front. In the day before, on April 18 militants of “Azov” also fired on Donetsk People’s Republic positions, and representatives of the OSCE also came under attack.

For complete story: <http://dan-news.info/defence/boeviki-azova-nochyu-podvergli-shirokino-intensivnym-obstrelam-istochnik.html>



Establishing Command and Control over Volunteer Units in Ukraine

7 April 2015

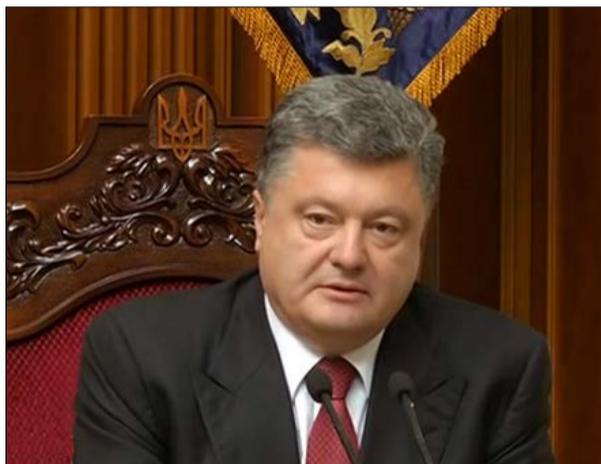
“Last weekend it became known that Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of Right Sector (Right Sector is banned in the Russian Federation) and a Supreme Council deputy, has become an adviser to the chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The overall situation in SE Ukraine remains perilous. The overall Ukrainian economy borders on collapse, while the economic situation in the pro-Russian separatist regions of Donetsk and Lugansk is even worse. While major combat operations have largely ceased, sporadic fighting continues, with each side blaming the other. There has been little constructive movement toward determining the final political status of the rebel-held regions, as both sides are wary that the ceasefire protocols of the Minsk II agreement will hold. The ill-observed truce could spark into a wider conflict at any moment.*

Countless factors have prevented the full implementation of the Minsk II agreement, which was signed in February. One key challenge has dealt with the question of leverage and the degree to which political leaders truly exercise authority over military forces in the field. While this challenge is applicable to all sides, it has been particularly daunting for those fighting under the Ukrainian flag. The relatively new government in Kiev has continued to struggle to establish its mandate over all the disparate forces fighting for an independent Ukraine.

The accompanying excerpt (from a Russian source) describes some of the challenges the Ukrainian government faces in instituting control over these volunteer units. To date, these independent units have played an important role in defending Ukrainian territory against separatist advances. Not surprisingly, these units tend to be overtly nationalistic and reluctant to obey leaders in Kiev, whom they often deem as corrupt or insufficiently patriotic.

Rather than trying to forcefully disband these units, the article describes how the Ukrainian government is now trying to assimilate these independent battalions into the country's armed forces. One key element in this process is to offer high-level military positions to those who command these autonomous units. As the article points out, “Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of Right



Ukrainian President Petro Oleksiyovych Poroshenko. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Tatyana Ivzhenko, “Порошенко испугался махновщины: Украинская власть пытается избежать военного мятежа,” [Poroshenko Frightened of Anarchy: Ukrainian Regime Trying to Avoid Military Revolt] Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 7 April 2015. http://www.ng.ru/cis/2015-04-07/1_poroshenko.html

Poroshenko Frightened of Anarchy

...The Ukrainian regime is currently engaged in subordinating the volunteer detachments to the official Armed Forces chain of command.

Last weekend it became known that Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of Right Sector (Right Sector is banned in the Russian Federation) and a Supreme Council deputy, has become an adviser to the chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff. And the Right Sector battalion, which participated in the counterterrorist operation, is preparing to become part of the Ukrainian Army.

Since last fall the media have been reporting on negotiations between the regime and the Right Sector leadership about the need to legitimize this formation. But Yarosh did not accept the proposal and repeatedly voiced criticism of the security structures' leadership....

...Explaining why the volunteer detachments had resisted legitimization for a long time, Yarosh said that formal resubordination would in fact mean liquidation: “I have some battalion leaders who do not have a higher military education and some who have no higher education at all. They would immediately lose their posts. But they are more effective than those who are two ranks higher than them. Often discipline among our guys is greater than in the army. It is a normal phenomenon to see a commander at the front, on defensive or offensive lines. Find me generals who would go there and lead the fighters in the trenches.”

A military expert also told Nezavisimaya Gazeta on condition of anonymity about other reasons why the volunteer battalions, which were created exactly one year ago, have been in no hurry to become part of the MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] or

(continued)

Continued: Establishing Command and Control over Volunteer Units in Ukraine

Sector (Right Sector is banned in the Russian Federation) and a Supreme Council deputy, has become an adviser to the chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff.” Yarosh is a highly controversial figure, known for his strong nationalist and anti-Russian sentiments. Prior to this appointment Yarosh had also voiced strong criticism against Ukraine’s security leadership, claiming that it was both corrupt and incompetent. By bringing him into the command structure, Ukrainian authorities likely hope to mute such criticism and use his authority to strengthen the military.

The excerpt points out the difficulties with incorporating units like Right Sector into the Ukrainian military. Because of their checkered backgrounds some members of these units would be ineligible to join the military. More importantly, many soldiers from these independent units have pledged personal loyalty to a particular leader and are wary of transferring this loyalty to the larger Ukrainian military. This skepticism has yet to be removed, and while these units may be registered as belonging to the Ukrainian military, questions remain regarding actual command and control. As a quote from a Right Sector spokesperson indicates, “to directly become part of the chain of command -- so that, for example, some general is sent to Right Sector to give orders -- of course such a thing must not happen.”

*Effective command and control over the employment of armed force remains a key hallmark of a state’s viability. The young Ukrainian government continues to struggle to establish this control. As long as some Ukrainians pledge allegiance to individual leaders rather than the state, serious doubts remain regarding the effectiveness of assimilating independent units within the Ukrainian military. Yet until the process of fully incorporating independent units like Right Sector into the Ukrainian military is completed, negotiating a realistic peace settlement will prove impossible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Armed Forces structure. “The first is a numerical strength and personnel mix. In the battalions people come and go freely, and nobody asks them for background details. Many have convictions received during Yanukovich’s time in office -- for participating in the Maydan protests. ...A second important reason is the leadership. The battalions are a brotherhood in which commanders have been through fire with their fighters; they are trusted. And the fighters are afraid that a transition to becoming part of the Armed Forces will entail the replacement of current field commanders and the appointment of outsiders,” he explained.

In the words of Nezavisimaya Gazeta’s interlocutor, right now the Ukrainian regime is still trying to find a legitimization format that would suit the battalions. But most such formations have already been subordinated to the MVD or the Defense Ministry. “Three battalions -- OUN, Right Sector, and Karpats’ka Sich -- were still without a home recently. But now they too will receive registration as part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces,” he said.

A few days ago Right Sector Press Secretary Artem Skoropadsky confirmed the battalion’s readiness to be legitimized, but only on the following condition: “The volunteer Ukrainian corps will remain an integrated structure and we will continue to be directly subordinate to Dmytro Yarosh. That is to say, everything will be as it is now: We are cooperating with both the Ministry of Defense and the Ukrainian Security Service anyway. But to directly become part of the chain of command -- so that, for example, some general is sent to Right Sector to give orders -- of course such a thing must not happen.”...

...Experts note that Poroshenko has not opted to disband the volunteer battalions but has decided to settle the problem by peaceful means. “The fact that Yarosh has become an adviser to the chief of the General Staff makes it possible to allow for the possibility of a reform in the leadership of the security structures. There will probably be surgical personnel decisions,” political analyst and suggested.

Troubles for the G36 – the Standard Rifle of the German Federal Armed Forces

18 April 2015

“One could also say: The G36 endangers the life of German soldiers in combat”

OE Watch Commentary: On 17 April 2015 a 372-page expert opinion on tests of the G36 prepared by the Bundeswehr Research Institute for Materials, Fuels and Lubricants, the Fraunhofer Ernst-Mach-Institute and the Bundeswehr Technical Center for Weapons and Ammunition became available to the German Federal Ministry of Defense. The conclusions reached by the expert report about the Heckler & Koch G36, the standard weapon of the German Federal Armed Forces, are straightforward and devastating. According to the experts, the accuracy of the rifle is no longer reliably guaranteed after two magazines have been fired. The accuracy of the G36 decreases to 53% when fired while the barrel is “hot.” In other words, only every other bullet hit the target aimed at, and after the third magazine it was only every third bullet.

According to the standard of the test, the tested weapons were required to meet an accuracy of 90% at a distance of 300 meters. The G36 did not meet this requirement. The experts also refute the assertion of Heckler & Koch that the loss of precision through heating during fast bursts of fire is a normal physical effect that affects each rifle.

Especially the conclusion that the G36 endangers the life of German soldiers has put German Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen under pressure to take action. According to a spokesperson, the evaluation of the different reports will take several weeks. Subsequently, commissions will be established in order to determine why the problems of the G36 that have been known since 2011 have not been addressed earlier. The defense minister is already facing harsh critique. Agnieszka Brugger, the defense expert of the Green Party, for example, questions whether von der Leyen is willing and able to change the course of the Ministry of Defense. According to Brugger, after coming to office in December 2013 the new defense minister initially continued to purposefully obscure the issue, as did her predecessor.

Meanwhile, the planning office of the Ministry of Defense demands the immediate purchase of other assault rifles for foreign missions of the German Armed Forces. The report advises to initiate the purchase of suitable assault rifles, including ammunition, as an interim solution for current foreign missions and suggests that the G36 should only be used until an alternative has been found to equip all soldiers. A closer reading of the report reveals, however, that not all experts concur. The Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support, for example, suggests that the G36 should continue to be used and even regenerated because the introduction of a new weapon may take up to ten years. It even advocates that the stop on buying new G36 models imposed by the appropriations committee be lifted and the service life of the G36 be extended beyond 2016.

However, according to the article, such a request from the ministry will be very difficult to convey in light of the publicized results of the recent reports on the rifle. **End OE Watch Commentary (Chadwick)**

Source: “Probleme beim G36-Gewehr: „Für den Einsatz nur eingeschränkt tauglich” Spiegel Online, 18 April 2015: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/g36-sturmgewehr-gefaehrdet-leben-von-bundeswehr-soldaten-a-1029343.html>

“The outlook is gloomy: ‘In demanding encounters’ the “precise placement of fire on the enemy’ is not possible, the G36 “for operations of limited suitability” and “in the fullest sense not ready for use.”

“In Bundeswehr-language this means that ‘in the sense of survivability and sustainability...a substantial capability gap’ is found in the G36”

“Soldiers were and are inadequately equipped”

“One could also say: The G36 endangers the life of German soldiers in combat”



Heckler und Koch Gewehr Model 36 - the main weapon of the German army (Bundeswehr). Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Emergence of a Joint Arab Alliance?

30 March 2015

“The Sunni Arab world is trying to deal with ISIS on the one hand and Iran’s expanding hegemony on the other; while trying to establish a strategy independent of the US, and have the dominant [say] in the future of the regional order.”

OE Watch Commentary: In late March Arab leaders meeting at the 26th Arab summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, decided to “establish a joint Arab military force against regional security threats against peace.” The accompanying passages from the Turkish and international press discuss the significance of this, how likely it is to succeed and what it means for regional geopolitical dynamics.

As the first passage explains, the military force is expected to form some kind of leadership command within three months. Membership of Arab countries will be voluntary. The command center will be managed from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The force’s main mission will be to conduct operations against terrorist organizations in Arab countries.

Operation “Decisive Storm,” which began against the Houthi militants in Yemen by ten countries, led by Saudi Arabia, will continue until peace is established. Due to Saudi Arabia’s lead in this operation, the author claims that the decision comes at a time when the Saudis have emerged as a leader in the Arab world. It is not clear how this initiative will be realized, and it may take a long time. The author says that strength of the armies of Arab countries (except for Egypt and Jordan) is questionable, claiming that the Sunni Arab world is trying to establish a strategy independent of the US and to have some influence over the future of the regional order while fighting ISIS and Iran’s increasing hegemonic expansion.

The second passage, from the Turkish mainstream daily Sabah, quotes an Egyptian official as saying that the force would consist of volunteers from Arab nations and that it would have 40,000 soldiers, war planes and warships. It also notes the words of Secretary General of the Arab League Nebil Arabi: “..the operation in Yemen will continue until the Houthi coup is over...the Joint Arab Force will also be mobilized against radical groups in Iraq, Syria and Libya.”

Source: Soli Özel, “Arap ortak askeri gücü kuruluyor (A joint Arab military force is being formed),” Haberturk.com.tr, 30 March 2015, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1059695-arap-ortak-askeri-gucu-kuruluyor>

“The decisions taken during the summit, which was chaired by the Egyptian President Abdulfettah al-Sisi, are as follows:

- The military force will form a leadership command within three months. Membership of Arab countries are voluntary. The command force will be managed from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The force’s main mission will be to conduct operations against terror organizations in Arab countries.
- Operation ‘Decisive Storm’, started against the Houthi militants in Yemen, by 10 countries, especially Egypt, led by Saudi Arabia, will continue until peace is established.
- Palestinian-Israeli peace will be established within one year. Israel’s withdrawal of the territories it has occupied and the establishment of Jerusalem as Palestine’s capital will be added to the list of decisions in the next meeting.
- Another meeting of foreign and relevant ministers will be held to establish a free trade agreement among Arab countries.
- Iran should resolve the ‘islands problem’ which has led to a political crisis between it and the United Arab Emirates.”

.....

“...At a time when Saudi Arabia’s leadership position in the Arab world is becoming secure, the Arab world, or rather, the [Arab countries] other than Iraq and Syria, will establish a joint force. How such a force, which has been tried before, will be established is unclear. It can be expected to take a long time. In particular, the armies for countries other than Egypt and Jordan are questionable.... The Sunni Arab world is trying to deal with ISIS on the one hand and Iran’s expanding hegemony on the other; while trying to establish a strategy independent of the US, and have the dominant [say] in the future of the regional order.

Source: “40 bin askerden oluşacak Arap Birliği ordusu geliyor (A United Arab military, of 40 thousand soldiers is coming),” Sabah.com.tr, 30 March 2015, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2015/03/30/40-bin-askerden-olusacak-arap-birligi-ordusu-geliyor>

“It is being noted that 5 months is needed for the army to be established. An Egyptian official said that the force would consist of volunteers from Arab nations and that the force would have 40,000 soldiers, war planes and war ships... The Secretary General of the Arab League Nebil Arabi said that “..the operation in Yemen will continue until the Houthi coup is over” and that “the Joint Arab Force will also be mobilized against radical groups in Iraq, Syria and Libya.”

(continued)

Continued: The Emergence of a Joint Arab Alliance?

However, there are doubts about whether this can succeed. As the final passage discusses, this has been tried before, but has not been successful. The author, a scholar, claims that it is more likely that military cooperation will be more bilateral and ad-hoc than the plans of a joint Arab force. End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

Source: Bruce Reidel, “Can this joint Arab military force succeed where others have failed?” Brookings.edu, 30 March 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/03/30-riedel-can-joint-arab-military-force-succeed-yemen-saudi-arabia>

“It is more likely that military cooperation will be more bilateral and episodic than the ambitious plans laid out in the Arab summit. Ad hoc arrangements blessed by Arab summits seem more likely than a NATO-like joint force and integrated command structure.”



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

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/documents/Changing-Trends-in-Israel-Turkey-Security-Relations.pdf>



Perspectives on Turkey's support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen

“By dragging Turkey into a sectarian war as a backup to [the] ‘Sunni camp’ in the region, Erdoğan steps into a sharp confrontation with Iran.”

OE Watch Commentary: In late March Turkish President Erdoğan declared his support for a Saudi-led military operation in Yemen targeting Houthi rebels. At a press conference he claimed that the group's links to Tehran were evidence of Iranian efforts to dominate the region. The accompanying passages by Turkish analysts discuss this move, what it means and why they think it is a bad foreign policy move for Turkey to join a sectarian fight.

The first accompanying passage, by Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, a respected journalist and columnist for the daily Milliyet, claims that providing logistical support to the Sunni block that Saudis have established against Houthis in Yemen is wrong. She argues that joining the Saudis would be a sectarian-based alliance and claims that the Saudis' only goal is to protect their regime and prevent democratic initiatives in the Arab geography. She points out that in Libya Turkey had advocated not interfering in a civil war, whereas now, in Yemen, and is thus being inconsistent. She argues that it is quite inappropriate for Turkey to become part of this sectarian war.

The second passage, by Fehim Tastekin, a respected Turkish journalist and analyst, claims that by dragging Turkey into a sectarian war the president is stepping into a sharp confrontation with Iran, unprecedented even in the era of Turkey's secularist-Kemalist governments. He claims that one possible reason for Turkey's stand could be that Erdoğan is approaching the issue with anger towards Iran, due to his view that Iran is responsible for the failure of Turkey's plans in Syria and Iraq. He points to remarks that Erdoğan made on March 27 in which he said, “Iran is virtually trying to dominate the region... Could this be allowed? This has begun to annoy many countries- us as well as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. This is not really tolerable...” He also quotes a university professor who points out that “joining this camp will make Erdoğan one of the leaders containing the very Arab uprisings he had supported from the outset.”

While Erdoğan's words attracted a harsh reaction from Iranian officials, his planned visit to Tehran, where he downplayed the two countries' foreign policy differences, took place in April. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, “İncirlik’i nasıl açtık? (How did we open Incirlik?),” Milliyet.com.tr, 30 March 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/incirlik-i-nasil-actik-/siyaset/ydetay/2035996/default.htm>

“A sectarian-based alliance

...providing logistical support to the ‘Sunni block’ that Saudis have established against Houthis in Yemen, is in my opinion, totally wrong. This is a dirty alliance which is against democracy and based on sectarianism. Those ruling Turkey know that the Saudis' only goal is to protect their regime and disallow any democratic attempt in the Arab geography. When this is the case, what are we doing there? The things that are happening in Yemen are bad but it should not be forgotten that those Houthis, about whom you say “should leave Yemen immediately” make up 40% of Yemen's population. It is one thing to object to the things happening in Yemen; and quite another to get arm-in-arm with oil kingdoms and [those supportive of] coups. Just last month, Ankara was saying about Libya, “Do not [interfere with] in a civil war with bombs”; but when it comes to Shi'ite opposition in Yemen, it has said, “Do it!”. I don't know when Ankara, who has been wanting to see change in Syria for years, subtly appears to have switched to accepting the “stability instead of democracy!” thesis. All I know is that it is not appropriate for Turkey to dive into this sectarian fight and be part of this picture.”

Source: Fehim Tastekin, “Turkey's misguided Yemen move,” Al Monitor.com, 31 March 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/turkey-yemen-move-seeks-to-avenge-iran-gulf-money.html>

“By dragging Turkey into a sectarian war as a backup to King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud Salman's drive for a “Sunni camp” in the region, Erdoğan steps into a sharp confrontation with Iran, unprecedented even in the era of Turkey's secularist-Kemalist governments.

In this Saudi-led coalition, no one has been as explicit as Erdoğan in voicing the hostile sentiments against Iran. The Saudi king seems to be leading the actual war, and Erdoğan the war of words. It is an attitude aimed at strengthening bonds with Gulf states at the expense of burning the bridges with Iran, the country with which Turkey has had its most stable relationship.

....

Fulya Atacan from Istanbul's Yildiz Technical University who specializes on Egypt, told Al-Monitor that “Tragically, joining this camp will make Erdoğan one of the leaders containing the very Arab uprisings he had supported from the outset.”

“In the civilian air space, fully autonomous flights are not allowed. It is inevitable that this regulation will evolve according to the technological developments in the fields of robotic and artificial intelligence.”

OE Watch Commentary: The March 2015 issue of MSI, a Turkish monthly military journal on defense technologies, featured a piece analyzing UAV-related developments in Turkey's defense industry in the last ten years. The piece also discusses the future of UAVs and what the Turkish defense industry needs to focus on if it wants to be a player in this field in the next 5-10 years. The passages below feature some highlights from this article, including a discussion of the integration of UAVs into civilian air space.

Apparently, all of the current regulations regarding the integration of UAVs into civilian air space require a pilot on the ground who manages the air vehicle. Thus, fully autonomous flights are not allowed in civilian airspace. The article notes that it is inevitable that this regulation will evolve in parallel with technological developments in the fields of robotic and artificial intelligence.

The piece claims that for Turkish UAV producers to be competitive in the future they must be equipped with modern systems to detect and escape, and they must be able to quickly adapt to various tasks. For a 10-year horizon, it claims that UAVs must have extraordinary autonomous capabilities, the ability to ascend and descend vertically and the ability to stay in the air for over 72 hours. The article says that these are the guidelines that the Turkish UAV industry must follow, regardless of whether they want to be a producer for just the Turkish market, an exporter or a global player in this field.

Turkey produces its own military UAS and has been involved in countermeasure research and development as well. These include kinetic attack munitions, improved detection systems and high-energy lasers. Turkish interest in the topic extends to research and development in other countries and even architectural counters to UAS surveillance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



TAI Anka UAV on display at 2014 Farnborough Air Show. Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAI-ANKA-UAV-FAR14-3659.JPG>

Source: “Türk Savunma ve Havacılık Sanayisi'nin IHA'lı 10 Yılı! (10 Years of UAVs in the Turkish Defense and Aerospace Industry!),” MSI Aerospace Defense Technologies and Strategy, March 2015

“One of the most frequently discussed topics today is the integration of large UAVs into civilian air space. All of the current regulations regarding the integration of UAVs into civilian air space require a pilot on the ground that manages the air vehicle. Thus, in the civilian air space, fully autonomous flights are not allowed. It is inevitable that this regulation will evolve according to the technological developments in the fields of robotic and artificial intelligence.

In the coming five years, for a UAV to be competitive in global markets it must have the following:

- Civil certification
- Equipped with modern systems to detect and escape
- Able to adapt quickly to armed and unarmed tasks;

In the coming 10 years, for a UAV to be competitive in global markets it must be a flying robot with the following capabilities:

- Extraordinary autonomous capabilities
- Capability to stay in the air for long periods of time (72 hours+)
- Capability to vertically ascend and descend

In our opinion, whether it wants to just produce for the domestic market, or export to a few Muslim countries, or be a global player in world markets, Turkish UAV producers must follow this roadmap.

“Militants who entered Turkey with these fake passports are hosted either in hotels or guesthouses for a day before they join [Islamic State] in Syria.””

OE Watch Commentary: *Since the civil war in Syria broke out in 2011, it is well documented that thousands of foreign fighters have transited Turkey for jihad in Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State has claimed that 400 of these foreign fighters are Chinese – likely referring to Uyghurs – while other sources suggest there are up to 1,000 Uyghurs in Syria and Iraq. From the Chinese perspective, the reality that several hundred to one thousand of its citizens are in Syria and Iraq acquiring militant training and issuing violent anti-Chinese propaganda to encourage attacks against China is a security concern. Dozens of other countries, from the US to Europe to East Asia, similarly are concerned about their citizens fighting in Syria and Iraq and returning home to launch attacks.*

An article in Turkey’s Today Zaman on 9 April cited a Uyghur source knowledgeable about illegal passports in the Zeytinburnu section of Istanbul, which is home to many Uyghurs and Central Asians. The source said that up to 100,000 fake Turkish passports have been illegally given to Islamic State militants. While this number is almost certainly an exaggeration, the fact that several hundred Uyghurs have received illegal passports, as evidenced by Uyghurs captured with Turkish passports in Thailand and Malaysia, is a cause of some friction between China and Turkey. Moreover, if Turkey is unable to effectively prevent fraudulent or black market Turkish passports from being spread among militant networks, it will lead to Turkey becoming further entrenched as a haven for militants in transit to jihad. This will increase tensions between Turkey and other countries who see their citizens traveling via Turkey to Syria and Iraq.

*The article also points out that the ruling AK Party in Turkey is facing increasing pressure from the opposition party about the country’s role as a transit point for militants. Taken together, the article highlights a catch-22 for Turkey. If the country cracks down on illegal passports and militants transiting the country, the militants may target Turkey for attack. However, if Turkey allows the current course to continue, its diplomatic relations with other countries and internal political situation will sour. Nonetheless, the growing international and domestic concern about this issue is rising with no clear solution in sight. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)***

Source: “More than 100,000 fake Turkish passports given to ISIL” Todayszaman.com, 9 April 2015.

More than 100,000 fake Turkish passports given to ISIL

A Uyghur Turk working for ISIL to provide militants with passports worldwide, Nurali T.’s office in İstanbul’s Zeytinburnu district functions as an ISIL passport office. Each passport was sold for \$200. More than 50,000 Uyghur Turks came to Turkey with these fake passports from China via Thailand and Malaysia and entered Syria after staying a day in İstanbul, according to a story in Meydan Daily.

A.G., an aide to Nurali T., claimed that most of the Uyghurs with fake passports were caught by police in Turkish airports but they were released in Turkey after their passports were seized. A.G. further said that Nurali T. organizes recruits from around the world from his İstanbul office. Militants who entered Turkey with these fake passports are hosted either in hotels or guesthouses for a day before they join ISIL in Syria.

The Turkish government’s stance toward ISIL has so far been ambiguous. The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government has been accused of supporting the terrorist organization by turning a blind eye to its militants crossing the border and even buying its oil. The NATO ally has also been facing a backlash for its reluctance to join US-led coalition efforts to eliminate ISIL, feeding speculation that this reluctance may be an indicator that some Turkish officials are ideologically close to the terrorist group. A 2014 report, Sezgin Tanrikulu, deputy chairman of the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP), said that ISIL terrorists fighting in Syria have also been claimed to have been treated in hospitals in Turkey. However, publicly, Turkish authorities have strongly condemned the terrorist acts of ISIL militants and say these actions have nothing to do with Islam.



“Dialogue...and combat are the two wings that are able to fly together and give this country victory.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Qassem Soleimani, head of the Qods [Jerusalem] Force, the elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) charged with export of revolution, has for almost 20 years commanded the organization. Given the secretive nature of Qods' Force operation, it made sense that for years Soleimani remained in the shadows. There were few photographs of him, and he would actively keep himself out of the headlines.*

This has changed in recent years. Soleimani has become a public figure. He has allowed himself to be photographed first among forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and then in Iraq among Shi'ite volunteers fighting to regain ground lost to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. He has sought out the limelight and cultivated a personality cult within Iran which depicts him as a soldier's soldier and a man who sacrifices everything to defend oppressed Shi'ites.

It is therefore not surprising that in recent polls conducted by Iranian press outlets, Soleimani has emerged as one of the most popular men in Iran. In one poll conducted by Khabar Online, Soleimani edged out last year's winner, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. In the poll cited in the excerpted article, Soleimani is runner up to Zarif, the chief face of Iran's nuclear negotiations. The significance of the Tabnak.ir poll, which the excerpted article cites, however, is both that Tabnak is a “pragmatic” outlet closely associated with former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and that the poll claims to represent the more educated elite within Iranian society. Hence, Soleimani seems to have real grassroots support across Iranian society.

*While Iranians are more open than their neighbors and will participate in polls more forthrightly, state control over newspapers and websites means that only those with approved results can be published openly. That Soleimani is featured as either man of the year or runner-up in prominent polls then raises the question as to why are such polls being published. Few Iranian officials—especially those with the portfolio that Soleimani oversees—would expose themselves without purpose. With regard to Soleimani's growing public presence, one intriguing possibility is that he is readying himself as a potential presidential candidate. The Iranian system is hardly democratic—less than one percent of candidates on average are cleared to run. Whenever one faction gets too powerful, the Supreme Leader privileges other factions to maintain a balance of power. Hence, former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, close to the Revolutionary Guards, replaced the more reformist-minded Mohammad Khatami, purging many of his supporters in the process. Current President Hassan Rouhani behaved likewise, replacing many of Ahmadinejad's IRGC supporters with a mix of pragmatists and Intelligence Ministry veterans. Soleimani's rise suggests Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is looking for an alternative to become president should Rouhani and Zarif push their international agenda beyond Khamenei's comfort zone. Given Soleimani's history in the Qods Force, a Soleimani presidency might complicate Iran's relations not only with the United States and Europe, but also with Iran's immediate neighbors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

Source: “Mohammad Javad Zarif va Sardar Qassem Soleimani Chehreh-haye Sal 93 Shodand,” (Mohammad Javad Zarif and Gen. Qassem Soleimani were the faces of 2014) [tnews.ir](http://tnews.ir/news/A23739030808.html), 21 March 2015. <http://tnews.ir/news/A23739030808.html>

Zarif and Soleimani were the men of the year for 2014

A rational and balanced society is perhaps the best description of the people of Iran these days... According to a report by “Tabnak,” Tabnak conducted a survey to determine the man of the year; the audience was asked to comment on the most famous men of the year, and eight individuals were put forward for the poll and comments. They were [Qods Force head Qassem] Soleimani; [Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad] Zarif, [Tehran MP Ali] Motahari; [Health Minister Hassan] Qazizadeh Hashemi; [President Hassan] Rouhani; [Former President Ali Akbar] Hashemi [Rafsanjani]; [Former Science Minister Reza] Faraji Dana; and [Iranian mathematician] Maryam Mirzakhani were the eight people presented by Tabnak. For the sake of ease and time, the top four and four runners up were decided, and only the top four were presented in the final survey, and Mohammad Javad Zarif and General Qassem Soleimani were selected as the winners by the Tabnak audience. The remarkable thing about the poll was unlike those of some political factions and analysis, the audience was drawn from the most educated strata of society... And they decided that dialogue with the world and, when necessary, jihad and combat are the two wings that are able to fly together and give this country victory.

““Commander” depicts that it is a strategic approach which will destroy the Zionist regime and the Islamic State.”

OE Watch Commentary: Qassem Soleimani is the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)'s Qods [Jerusalem] Force, the IRGC's elite unit charged with export of revolution. In 2007, the US Treasury Department designated it as an organization in support of terrorism and also singled out Soleimani. He remains on the Treasury's Specially Designated Nations and Blocked Person List. Annex One to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1747 likewise cites Soleimani as a key IRGC individual subject to sanctions. That the Islamic Republic maintains a website dedicated to Soleimani suggests that, regardless of any other rapprochement, it very much supports Soleimani and his activities.

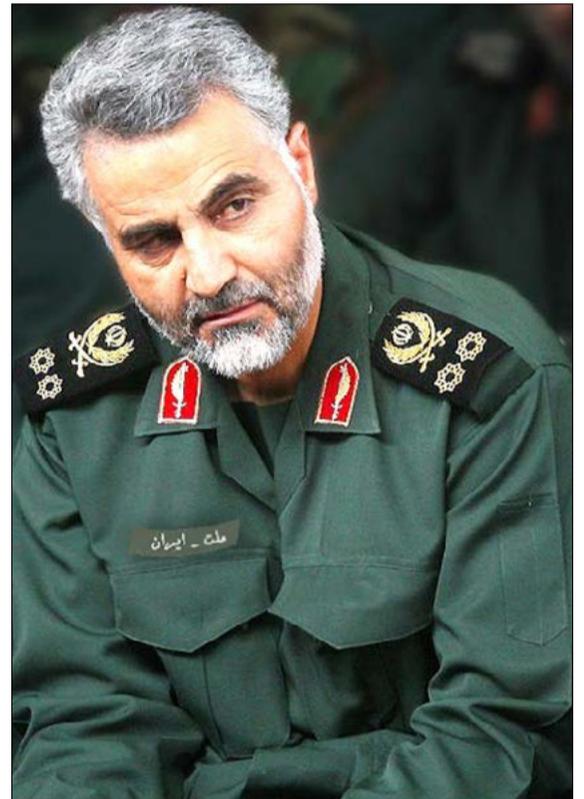
On an April 7, 2015 story, the website announced production on “Commander,” a biopic of Qassem Soleimani and his efforts to counter the Islamic State as well as promote “resistance” against Israel. Indeed, the description of the film in the excerpted article suggests equivalence between fighting the Islamic State and destroying the “Zionist regime,” i.e., Israel. This suggests that antipathy toward Israel remains an ideological pillar of the Islamic Republic and the IRGC. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) the IRGC declared its war aims not simply to be expulsion of Iraqi forces from Iranian territory or defeat of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime in Iraq, but rather the liberation of Jerusalem.

That “Commander” focuses on Qods Force efforts to conquer Jerusalem indicates that Iranian efforts to arm and train terrorist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and elements on the Golan Heights and perhaps even in the Sinai Peninsula will continue, and that the IRGC will use such a campaign to ensure it remains front and center in the competition for power and resources within Iran. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Zendigi Hajji Qassem Soleimani Film Mishavad” (The Life of Hajji Qassem Soleimani Made into a Film), QasemSoleimani.ir, 7 April 2015. <http://qasemsoleimani.ir/article/2590.html>

Commander: The Life and Times of Qassem Soleimani

Sayyid Sa'id Hassanpour, director and documentary filmmaker, spoke to Tasnim about the production of the movie “Commander,” which focuses on the international activities of the Qods Force and aims to depict the conquest of Jerusalem by the forces of resistance, and the Iranian commanders and especially Commander Hajji Qassem Soleimani. The film has begun production. The film “Commander” depicts that it is a strategic approach which will destroy the Zionist regime and the Islamic State. He added, Hassan Abbadi, Jamal Shorjeh, Abulqassem Talabi, Nader Talabzadeh, and Shahryar Zenshanas were members of the production council who accompanied me in this first cinematic experience. He added that due to the special circumstances of the axis of resistance, the proxy war to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Zionist regime is led by the strategic and military power of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



“Their goal was first pilgrimage to... and second, defense of the holy places in Damascus.”

OE Watch Commentary: Qassem Soleimani's website bears watching, given what the head of the Qods [Jerusalem] Force represents within the Iranian political context. One article/ interview excerpted here announces the March 2015 death of one Ali Reza Tavassoli, the commander of Afghan jihadists fighting in Syria. The article, however, may raise more questions than it answers. Tavassoli's photograph suggests that he is an Afghan Hazara, a Shi'ite Afghan ethnicity with a large presence in Kabul but traditionally hailing from the mountainous area of central Afghanistan.

The excerpted article, which is actually an interview with associates of Tavassoli, reports that he was buried in Mashhad. It was unclear whether this means he was recruited in Iran. This would be a troubling development, as Iran still hosts perhaps one million Afghan refugees. Should they become indoctrinated and fodder for Qods Force recruitment, this would expand Iran's ability to fight by proxy not only in battlegrounds like Syria, but also in Afghanistan itself.

Whether recruited in Iran or Afghanistan, the presence of an Afghan Shi'ite force in Damascus also suggests significant Iranian assistance with regard to logistics: it is much more difficult for an Afghan to travel to Syria than an Iraqi who speaks the language and needs only cross a single border.

The excerpted article does dispel the notion often voiced that military-age men captured by opposition groups in Syria are mere religious pilgrims, as the memorial article to Tavassoli makes clear that he and his band sought not only to visit prominent Shi'ite shrines in Syria, but to defend them militarily as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Agar Tip Fatamioun Nabud, Chizi as Haram Hazarat-e Zaynab Baqi Namandeh Bud” (If it were not for the Fatamioun Brigade, there would be Nothing Left of the Zaynab Shrine), QasemSoleimani.ir, 8 April 2015. <http://qasemsoleimani.ir/article/2614.html>

Commemorating Afghan Shi'ites Killed in Syria

Cleansing of the body of the martyr Ali Reza Tavassoli, commander of the Fatamioun Brigade (The Afghan Jihadists in Syria), buried in Holy Mashhad on 14 Esfand of this past year [March 5, 2015], the correspondent of Mashregh engaged in a conversation with one of the friends and comrades of the Martyr Tavassoli.

Martyr Ali Reza Tavassoli (“Abu Hamid”), Martyr Bakhshi (“Fatah”), Martyr Hussein, and Martyr Kalani were from the Fatamioun Brigade that was formed in partnership by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and their goal was first pilgrimage to the [Sayyid] Ruqayya [Mosque] and the Zaynab Shrine, and second, defense of these holy places in Damascus.

Question: How old were the Martyrs Tavassoli and Bakhshi?

Martyr Tavassoli was around 45 years old, and Martyr Reza Bakhshi was 38 years old. Tavassoli was married, and had three children, and they are 6, 7, and 9 years old, and the rest of the martyrs were single....

“... The time for talking, promises, accolades and pleasantries has ended ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Suppose the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen were to incorporate a ground component in the near future. Armchair strategists in the Arabic-language cybersphere generally agree that the key mission for such a force would be to secure Aden so that deposed Yemeni president Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and his backers can assemble and regroup. As to the composition of this theoretical construct, most commentators believe that after being rebuffed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia is counting on Egypt to contribute to any hypothetical ground component. The decision is a weighty one for Egypt's leadership, as the ghosts of Abdel Nasser's failed military campaign in Yemen in the 1960s (blamed for Egypt's 1967 military defeat by Israel) loom large in the national consciousness. Although in public Egyptian leaders have offered unwavering support for the Saudi campaign, consensus at the highest levels should not be taken for granted, as the first accompanying article explains.

Historical burden is not all that makes this a complicated decision for Egyptian leaders. There are practical reasons too: for well over a year, the Egyptian military has been unable to put down a domestic insurgency in the Sinai. Fighting in Yemen, even if as part of a coalition, is unlikely to be any easier and may weaken Egypt's position in the Sinai. Egypt's only stated national security interest in Yemen is ensuring unimpeded maritime transit flows through the Red Sea. In a recent interview published in the daily al-Masry al-Youm, Mohab Mamish, a former head of Egypt's Navy who was recently appointed to head the Suez Canal Authority, makes clear that Egypt shares this interest with the great powers and hence is not overly concerned with having to assert its position on this issue. Egypt's participation in “Decisive Storm” is therefore not framed in the language of imminent threats to national security, but rather the language of alliances and the importance of halting both Iranian expansionism and religious extremism while preserving the status quo in the Gulf.

On 30 March Egyptian Defense Minister



Egyptian Defense Minister, GEN Sedqi Sobhi, visiting the Rapid Deployment Forces, 11 April 2015. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Egy.Army.Spox/photos/pcb.641970185933967/641969765934009/?type=1&theater> (Egyptian Army official spokesman Facebook page).

Source:

هل قررت مصر المشاركة بقوات برية في اليمن؟!
Gamal Sultan. “Has Egypt decided to send ground troops to Yemen?” al-Mesryoon. 6 April 2015. <http://goo.gl/xUXOns>

The time for talking, promises, accolades and pleasantries has ended. [Sisi's] decision will have a high cost regardless and thus the hesitation and worry is understandable. What is most notable is the seeming disagreement within Egyptian sovereign institutions on this issue, as some appear clearly against intervention, particularly a ground intervention. Retired GEN Samih Saif al-Yazal, who is close to a known state institution realizes this and has clearly and firmly rejected the idea of participating in the war, considering doing so a major strategic blunder.... Saif al-Yazal would not be allowed to

(continued)



Egyptian Defense Minister, GEN Sedqi Sobh meeting with Saudi Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman, 14 April 2015. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Egy.Army.Spox/photos/pcb.643456312452021/643455472452105/?type=1&theater> (Egyptian Army official spokesman Facebook page).

Continued: Sisi's Gamble

General Sedqi Sobhi met with a contingent from the country's Airborne Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF), who were preparing to deploy to the UAE and participate in the latest round of the "Righteous Arrow" (Siham al-Haq) exercises, hosted by their Emirati counterparts. A joint Egypt-UAE force conducted airstrikes over Libya earlier this year, and one would expect this partnership to underpin any deepening of Egyptian involvement in Yemen. On 11 April, upon returning from a brief trip to meet with his Pakistani counterparts, Sobhi attended a military parade of the RDF (for background on the RDF see: http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/OEWatch/201406/MiddleEast_05.html). Egypt's Ministry of Defense uploaded video highlights from the event. The images portray a well armed force with firepower to match or exceed that of anyone on the ground in Yemen. The RDF also includes elements from the country's elite anti-terrorism 777 and 999 units. Following the parade Sobhi headed to Riyadh, where leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia agreed to form a committee to discuss holding a joint military exercise in Saudi Arabia. The countries have held three other joint exercises since 2008, as the third article notes. According to an analyst cited in the article, a key goal would be to get Egyptian forces to interface with their Saudi counterparts while also getting acclimated to a Yemen-like environment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

speaking on such a matter on his own or without a green light, thus we should understand his words to represent the viewpoint of an important part of Egypt's leadership... it is clear that Egypt has moved from the era of festivals, celebrations, songs and political calm that followed the deposing of Morsi and the Muslim Brothers, to a stage of difficult and fateful decision-making....

Source:

ميمش يكشف تفاصيل تصدي البحرية لقوات أمريكية
 "Mamish reveals details of the navy confronting American forces," al-Masry al-Youm. 23 March 2015. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/686340>

Q: Isn't it possible that the United States would use the Huthis to pressure Egypt with the threat of Bab al-Mandab, especially following the recent American-Iranian rapprochement?

A: Even if that were true, would countries like China, Japan, Korea, Russia and India allow the United States or its proxies in the region to close Bab al-Mandab?...

Source:

المناورات المصرية السعودية.. تدريب أم تمهيد لدخول اليمن؟
 Mohammed Naser. "The Saudi-Egyptian exercise... training or paving the way for going into Yemen?" Masr al-Arabia. 16 April 2015. <http://goo.gl/toHtDH>

The Tabuk-1 maneuvers took place in Tabuk, northwestern Saudi Arabia, from 7-22 November 2008. Tobuk-2 took place in Hamam, near the Egyptian city of Alexandria, on 21 October 2010. Tobuk-3 was held in Saudi Arabia and lasted from 8-20 May 2013. This last one is the largest joint exercise in history for the two countries... Hossam Sawailim, a strategic analyst, said that the expected exercise between Egypt and Saudi Arabia aims to train Egyptian troops in difficult terrain in preparation for a ground war against Huthi forces in Yemen... it will allow participating countries to exchange military experiences and train in a variety of settings...



Egyptian Defense Minister, GEN Sedqi Sobh meeting with Pakistani counterparts, 6 April 2015. Source: (Egyptian Army official spokesman Facebook page). <https://www.facebook.com/Egy.Army.Spox/photos/pcb.639844799479839/639844562813196/?type=1>

“... the Tunisian army has many needs...”

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article from the French newspaper, Le Figaro, on 18 March 2015 Tunisia’s foreign minister was in Paris discussing an agreement for his country to buy French weapons and equipment. That same day, gunmen stormed the Bardo Museum in the capital Tunis and slaughtered 21 people, mostly foreign tourists. This event, combined with growing regional turmoil and uncertainty, has put Tunisia’s military and security forces in the spotlight. The process of upgrading these forces is already underway, with military aid to Tunisia set to double in the next year.

A key area of concern for the Tunisian government is border security. With this in mind, Tunisia and Algeria have recently increased cooperation along their shared border. As the second accompanying excerpt notes, in the aftermath of the Bardo attack Tunisian and Algerian forces worked together to kill Luqman Abu Sakhr, the alleged mastermind of the attacks who was based in the mountainous border area of central Tunisia. A few days later militants shot and killed three Tunisian soldiers at a checkpoint in the flashpoint province of Kasserine, allegedly as a reprisal.

Tunisia’s main concern, though, is its 459-km-long eastern border with Libya. According to the third accompanying article, from the Qatari newspaper, al-Quds, Tunisia is engaged in negotiations with Thales, a French company, to build a surveillance wall along the border. The author of the fourth accompanying article is skeptical, calling the project “bogus, extremely expensive, and totally ineffective.”

The borders of North Africa and the Sahel are and will remain difficult to police. Still, no one is about to start building anything resembling the gigantic booby-trapped berms dividing Moroccan-controlled areas of the Western Sahara from the desert beyond. Instead, the search for electronic solutions is likely to continue. Algeria, for one, is taking this technology seriously. In October 2014 the country set up a joint venture with a German company to locally manufacture electronic

Source: Georges Malbrunot. “Des armes françaises pour la Tunisie” (French Weapons for Tunisia), Le Figaro. 27 March 2015. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2015/03/27/01003-20150327ARTFIG00300-des-armes-francaises-pour-la-tunisie.php>

In preparation for the visit to France by [Tunisian] premiere Beji Caid Essebsi on 7 and 8 April, several meetings took place in Paris over the past few weeks between French, Tunisian and also Emirati officials. The goal of these secret meetings is to set up a three-way deal to allow Tunis to buy French weapons and equipment with UAE financing... somewhat like the deal Paris struck with Saudi Arabia to furnish the Lebanese Army, only at a much smaller scale, as we are talking here of a shopping list of a few hundred million Euros... According to a French military official, the Tunisian army has many needs, including “assault rifles, radars, sensors, night-vision goggles, small ships, etc...”



Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Yaqin Hussam al-Din. “Algeria and Tunisia join forces to fight ‘terrorism’,” al-Araby al-Jadid. 30 March 2015. <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/politics/2015/4/1/algeria-and-tunisia-join-forces-to-fight-terrorism>

A special anti-terrorism unit is understood to have killed the three Algerians, and six other suspected militants, while the gunmen were travelling to the Libyan border to pick-up materials for car bombs... “Joint analysis of documents found by the Tunisian army in a terrorist hideout, and the arrest of two members of the Uqba bin Nafi Battalion, helped identify the route members of the terrorist group took to collect the car bombs,” said Algerian security sources. The same sources explained that troops from both countries encircled the two-car convoy along a mountain pass in Gafsa, near the shared border. Tunisian forces then engaged the group while Algerian forces stopped its members fleeing into Algeria. [Tunisia’s interior minister Najem] Gharsalli has previously thanked Algerian authorities for supporting Tunisia’s “anti-terror” activities. Algeria, meanwhile, recently gave Tunisia military equipment to help form a counter-terrorism tracking unit...

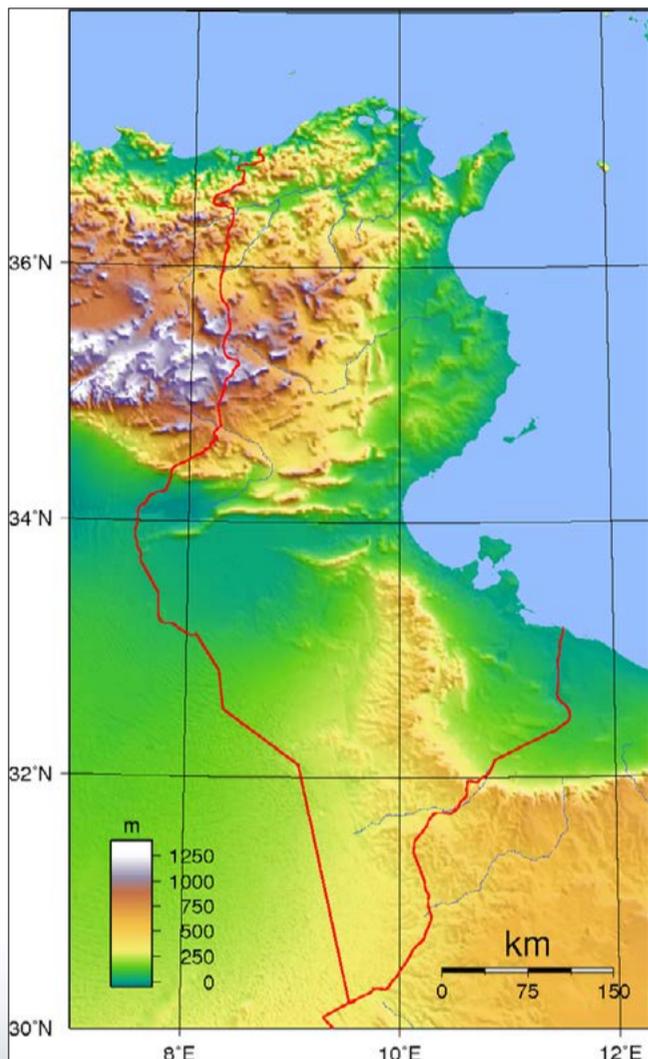
(continued)

Continued: Tunisian Border Security

systems and equipment for the Algerian Army. It is unclear, though, whether anything of use has been produced there yet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source:

إقامة سياج إلكتروني على طول الحدود لمنع تسلل المتشددين
Mohammed Wamusi. "Electronic border fence to keep out infiltrators..." al-Quds al-Arabi, 7 April 2015. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=323243>



French newspapers noted that the French company Thales is currently engaged in negotiations to build an electronic fence along the Tunisia-Libya border aimed at monitoring and preventing armed extremists from sneaking across the border into Tunisia...

Source: Nebil ben Yahmed, "Frontière électronique entre la Tunisie et la Libye, un leurre du groupe Thales" (Electronic border between Tunisia and Libya a delusion of the Thales Group), Tunisie Secret. 30 March 2015. http://www.tunisie-secret.com/Frontiere-electronique-entre-la-Tunisie-et-la-Libye-un-leurre-du-groupe-Thales_a1391.html

The negotiations were begun under the government of Mahdi Jomaa, who did not have time to approve this bogus, extremely expensive, and totally ineffective project... Neighboring Algeria, which borders six countries (Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Niger, Mauritania, Mali) has treated the problem by mobilizing men and weapons. This is what the current Tunisian government ought to do to truly secure the border with Libya and avoid the worst possible outcome, an ISIL invasion.

(Above) Tunisian Topography.

Source: "Tunisia Topography" by Sadalmelik - Own work. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

(Below) View of Chaambi mountain, on the western border between Algeria and Tunisia, Kasserine Province
Source: "Chambi1" by Nabucodonosor - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

What is Yemen's Southern Resistance?

12 April 2015

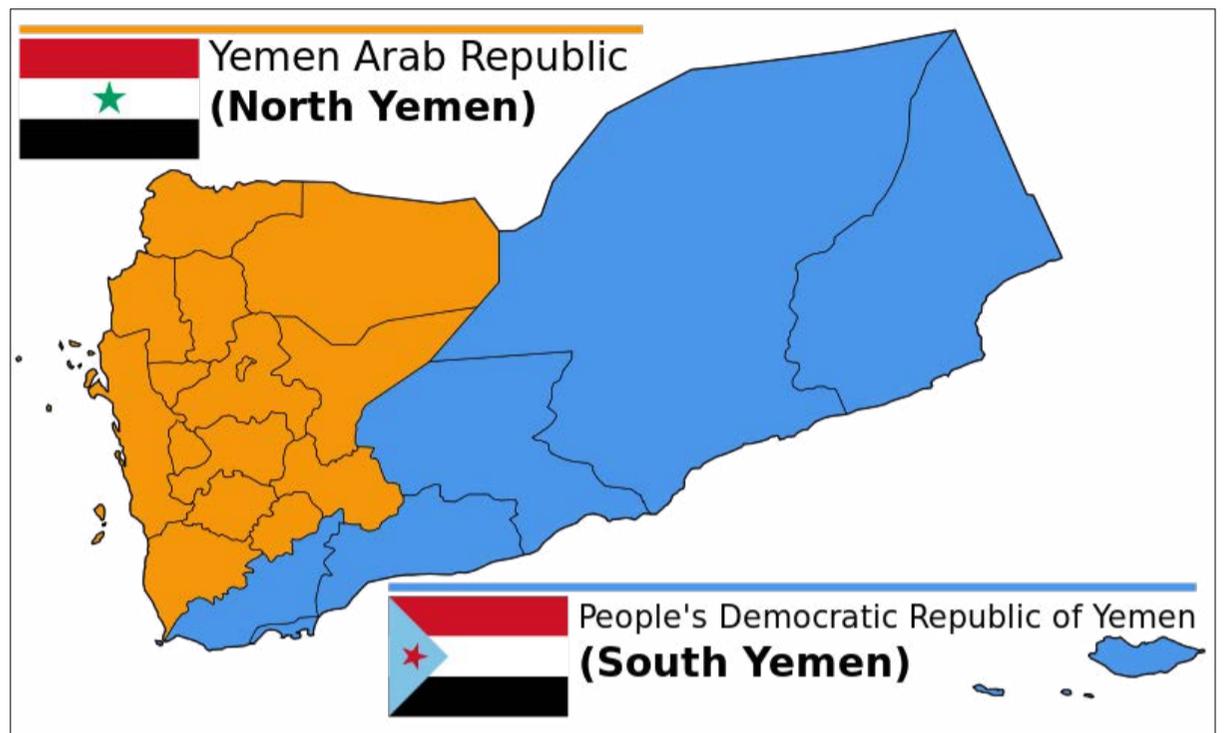
“... As soon as promises made to the leaders of these groups (often involving money) go unfulfilled, they turn the weapons obtained from the state against it ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Much of Yemen's ground war is a fight between militias calling themselves “popular committees” or “popular resistance.” Groups on both sides of the conflict use this or similar terminology. Recently, though, the focus has turned to southern militias that have resisted and in some cases expelled the Huthis and their allies from several parts of Aden. These groups, which call themselves the “Southern Resistance” and/or “Southern Popular Committees,” have become the key on-the-ground partner for the Saudi-led “Decisive Storm” bombing campaign. Who are they?

The emergence of the contemporary southern armed resistance can be traced to the tumultuous 2010-2012 period, when Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants took over several important parts of Abyan and Shabwa Provinces. Unable to regain the areas alone, the Yemeni military bolstered its ranks by enlisting locals to form militias, called “popular committees.” Once major operations against AQAP ceased in 2013, some of the southern militias began attacking the very government forces that had armed them in the first place. As the first article notes, this was often due to disputes over unfulfilled payments.

The proliferation of militias is not the only reason southern rebel unity should not be taken for granted. Since the 1986 civil war in what was then South Yemen (PDRY), the political class of Yemen's south has been divided into two broad camps. The first of these may, roughly speaking, be called the secessionist group (referred to as the “Tughma” faction in Arabic). They are led by Ali Salem al-Beidh and enjoy strong support in the provinces of Lahj and Dalie. The second group accepts a unified Yemen but calls for greater southern autonomy (known as the “Zumra” faction in Arabic). Their public face is Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi and they have historical support in the provinces of Shabwa and Hadramout. In 2012 President Hadi began a program to reincorporate former military officers from the Tughma faction who had left the country following South Yemen's defeat to the North in the 1994 civil war. Most prominent among them was Mahmoud al-Subaihi, whom Hadi named defense minister in 2014 and whose whereabouts are currently unknown.

The Aden-based, Saudi-backed southern resistance recently issued a statement, excerpted alongside this article, on unifying its ranks and renaming itself the “Southern Popular Force.” While the Syrian conflict has taught us that statements of unity alone are meaningless,



“Divided Yemen” by Map of North and South Yemen. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source:

اللجان الشعبية في اليمن: برميل الحروب والصراعات
Faraa al-Musalimi. “Popular committees in Yemen: barrels for war and conflict,” al-Masdar. 12 April 2015. <http://almasdaronline.com/article/70715>

... one of the main features of the current and future conflict in Yemen is the flourishing of the Popular Committees which the Huthis have called by different names, such as “popular committees” sometimes and “revolutionary committees” others... another set of popular committees was formed between 2010-2012 in the provinces of Abyan and Shabwa in the south of the country to support the army in its fight against al-Qaida. Many of their fighters were recently moved to Aden to help defend the city against an expected attack by pro-Huthi popular committees... As soon as promises made to the leaders of these groups (often involving money) go unfulfilled, they turn the weapons obtained from the state against it, as occurred when the main roads were blocked by tribal groups that had participated in the fight against the Huthis in the Hashid tribal areas in the north, or the popular committees in Abyan Province who took over government buildings there and prevented them from regaining them since they had not received a promised payment from the government...

(continued)

Continued: What is Yemen's Southern Resistance?

the prospects for a unified southern armed resistance to emerge seem as good as ever. Were the peaceful southern autonomy movement ("Hirak") to fully transform into an armed resistance, as the third accompanying article claims has already happened, these prospects would look even better. The Saudi-led "Decisive Storm" campaign is thus betting on a force whose ultimate goal is reasserting the independence of South Yemen by force. Add the irony of a former Soviet ally being reborn with Saudi help to the growing list of strange and dangerous developments in the region.
End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

Source:

المقاومة الشعبية الجنوبية تعقد اجتماعاً هاماً وتشكل مجلس القوة الشعبية الجنوبية

"The southern popular resistance holds an important meeting and forms the Council for the Southern Popular Force," Aden al-Ghad. 9 April 2015. <http://adenalghad.net/news/157829>

... leaders of the Southern Resistance Movement called for a meeting on 5 April 2015 where they discussed recent developments in the south in general and Aden in particular. Several measures aimed at finding an organizational structure were taken

Source:

مسارات: الحراك ينتقل إلى المقاومة المسلحة لتحرير الجنوب والحوثي يقود اليمن إلى ثلاث دويلات

"Masarat: the Hirak is turning into an armed resistance to liberate the south as the Huthis push Yemen to become three small states," Aden al-Ghad. 28 March 2015. <http://adenalghad.net/news/156609/>

According to the Masarat Center for Strategy and Media, all indications in the south point to the transformation of the Southern Movement from peaceful struggle to armed rebellion...

A One Sided Wall: Kenya Builds Security Barrier Somalia Doesn't Want

“Director of Immigration Services Gordon Kihlangwa on Monday said the wall will demarcate the Kenya-Somalia border besides securing the country from al Shabaab militants.”

OE Watch Commentary: Kenya, which is still reeling from the recent attack by al-Shabaab on Garissa University, wants a wall to protect it from the Somalia-based terrorists. Somalia, feeling it is making progress against al-Shabaab, does not want a wall and is disappointed it was not consulted with regards to this project. However, as the following article relates, despite Somali objections, construction of the barrier has begun.

To be fair, the wall, which will stretch approximately 700 kilometers, has received criticism from some Kenyans as well, who have described it as an exercise in futility. Though the wall presupposes al-Shabaab is mostly an external threat which can be kept out of Kenya, many believe the organization is actively recruiting disaffected and disenfranchised Kenyan youths, thus making the barrier's prime objective moot. Additionally, some question how effective a physical barrier would actually be in keeping al-Shabaab from launching cross-border attacks.

The wall itself will be an engineering feat. According to an April 2015 report by IRIN, there will be obstacles, trenches, closed circuit television, and other impediments to crossing the traditionally porous border. As the accompanying article mentions, The National Youth Service will help construct this fully funded project.

Even as construction begins the debate continues over whether this is a wise project to fund or if the money should be directed elsewhere, perhaps to more border police or efforts to prevent radicalization of their own youth. For now it appears the pro-wall construction forces are in charge, and whether the wall ultimately proves to be an impregnable barrier offering protection from future terrorist attacks or another Maginot Line that provides a false sense of security will have to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: “Construction of Kenya-Somalia Security Wall Begins,” The Star (Kenya), 13 April 2015, <http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/construction-kenya-somalia-security-wall-begins#sthash.rgFsbFrq.dpbs>

Construction of the Kenya-Somalia security wall has started.

[The wall] would not bar cross border movements, as there would be designated exit and entry points.

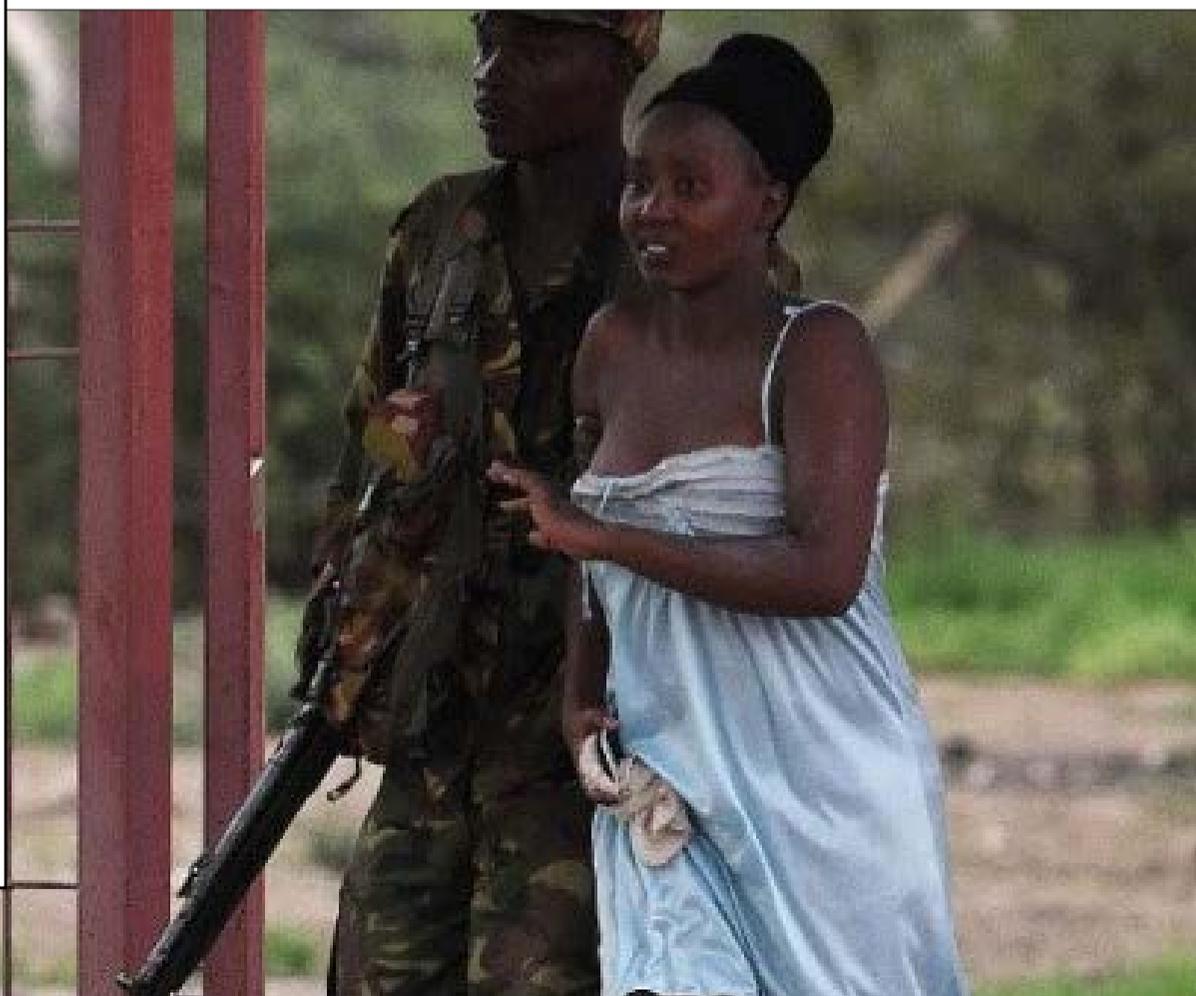
“We will ensure that our borders are secure by preventing illegal immigrants and proliferation of small arms into the country,” he said.

“The project is fully funded by the government with relevant government departments chipping in, the ministry of transport, the National Youth Service and KDF have given in their support to this noble task,” he said.

The team will clear structures constructed along the area designated for the wall, as much of the land at the border has been encroached by both Somali and Kenyan communities.

Kenya hopes the wall it is building on its border with Somalia will protect it from attacks, such as the recent one on Garissa University, by al-Shabaab. Here, a student who hid in a wardrobe during that attack is escorted by a soldier.

Source: <http://hopeforafricaonline.com/2015/04/04/female-student-emerges-from-wardrobe-2-days-after-attack/>



“Despite the solidarity and comradeship between black South Africans and the rest of the people of sub-Saharan Africa during the decades of struggle against apartheid and for liberation, foreigners, mostly of African descent, are being subjected to brutality and detention.”

OE Watch Commentary: *There have long been tensions between South Africans and immigrants from neighboring countries who have come to South Africa in search of work. However, recently there has been a sharp rise in xenophobic attacks against these foreigners, with the death toll at the time of this writing standing at six, while many more are fearful and either leaving South Africa or contemplating doing so. Though there are many commentaries discussing what factors are driving this xenophobia, the accompanying article puts the blame squarely on a lack of visionary leaders, along with a worsening economic situation.*

The irony of South African blacks who were oppressed under apartheid now oppressing black, non-native South Africans has not been lost in the African press. The outcry has been both critical and sustained. Some African countries, such as Zimbabwe, are evacuating their citizens, while others, such as Malawi, are pushing for a boycott of South African goods.

Though it is difficult to say how all this will play out, five scenarios created by the Institute for Global Dialogue for an exercise in 2000

attempted to peer two decades into the future of southern Africa. Of the five, only one, “a regional renaissance under visionary leadership,” offered a positive outlook, with the other four painting a grim picture. A significant portion of that regional renaissance was supposed to be economic development, much of it fueled by cross-border trade among cooperating nations. However, the economic slowdown that has plagued much of the rest of the world has also struck southern Africa, and the powerful economic engines that would help lift large numbers of people in the region out of poverty have, while not completely shut down, periodically sputtered. Though not an excuse for xenophobia, the lack of jobs aggravates the situation, as many people in countries bordering South Africa migrate across for what they perceive are brighter prospects in their wealthier neighbor, and South Africans, with their own economic problems, find themselves competing for jobs with increasing numbers of foreigners.

*The call from other countries is for South Africa’s leaders to rise to the occasion and put an end to the xenophobia that is increasingly plaguing parts of South African society. Coupled with the implementation of economic policies that promote growth, especially for the poorest segments of the population, it is hoped the renaissance envisioned by the Institute for Global Dialogue will take hold in this region of vast potential. For now, however, the pictures in the newspapers are of frightened foreigners fearing for their lives as South Africa struggles to contain the violence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Source: Ozias Tungwarara, “Xenophobia in South Africa: A lack of visionary leadership,” Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (Johannesburg), 15 Apr 2015, <http://www.osisa.org/general/blog/xenophobia-south-africa-lack-visionary-leadership>

A few days later African foreigners were fleeing their homes seeking refuge at police stations and other places of safety. They were under onslaught from their South African neighbors.

Recently King Godwill Zwelithini, King of the Zulu nation said “We are requesting those who come from outside to please go back to their countries”. He made these remarks while addressing community members in the province against a backdrop of rising tensions between foreigners and locals. The Police Minister implicitly endorsed the King’s remarks when he said that the King had only been referring to undocumented foreigners and that it was true that most crimes were committed by illegal immigrants.

In 2000 a major scenario exercise: “Southern Africa in 2020” painted a grim picture of the southern Africa region in two decades, suggesting that only a new generation of visionary and democratic leaders as well as a spurt in economic growth would reverse the region’s fortunes. We have had very little if any of both these drivers needed for a positive scenario in the sub-region. If anything we are seeing much more of the other scenarios that would be driven by: violent conflict; corruption and patronage; authoritarian rule; uncontrolled globalization; ineffectual governance; extreme poverty and inequality; cyclical droughts; economic mismanagement; and rapid rural to urban migration.

“President Kenyatta [of Kenya] pointed out that the signing of the peace agreements was a first step and there are still many issues that have to be tackled for the stability of CAR.”

OE Watch Commentary: *There is good news for the Central African Republic (CAR). As the accompanying article relates, peace agreements between two warring parties, the Christian militia, known as “anti-balaka (anti-machete),” and the Muslim fighters of what was once Séléka, have been signed. Should the peace hold, it could help open up the CAR, one of the world’s poorest countries despite the presence of enormous mineral deposits, to significant investment and development.*

The history of the CAR is replete with numerous struggles, with the overthrow of President Francois Bozize in early 2013 being one of the most significant. The president, a Christian, was forced to flee when a coalition of Muslim groups known as Séléka, angry with the Bozize government for not honoring a previous agreement, seized the capital. Michel Djotodia was then installed as the nation’s first Muslim president, but, despite his dissolving Séléka, many of its former members went on a rampage, committing rape, murder, and other crimes. In response, Christian “anti-balaka” vigilante groups formed and began hunting down Muslims in revenge attacks.

Unfortunately, as another paper reported, those who have signed these peace agreements may not have full control over all the elements of their respective groups. Thus, the possibility exists that fighting could continue by rogue members, sabotaging a recent series of peace agreements that have been difficult to come by. The absence of the CAR’s transitional government at the signing, as well as problems implementing previous agreements, has also helped dampen some of the optimism.

*Still, as the accompanying article relates, there is hope that these latest agreements, brokered by Kenya, may last. The CAR has been in political turmoil for about two decades, and it is possible that the warring parties may finally realize that, as the Kenyan president related at the signing ceremony, while there are still many obstacles to peace, the maturity exhibited by the two parties coming together bodes well for the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Source: Jibril Adan, “Central Africa Republic groups sign ceasefire pact in Nairobi,” Capital News (Kenya), 8 April 2015, <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2015/04/central-africa-republic-groups-sign-ceasefire-pact-in-nairobi/>

Warring groups in the Central Africa Republic on Wednesday signed a peace agreement to stop hostilities and open a new chapter of political stability in their country.

President Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto witnessed the signing of two agreements between Anti-Balaka led by Joachim Kokate and Ex-Seleka led by former president Michel Djotodia.

The two agreements, Nairobi Agreement on Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities between Ex-Seleka and Anti-Balaka, and the Nairobi Engagement Declaration Adherence to the Transition Roadmap in Central African Republic, were signed at State House, Nairobi.

“The spirit of brotherhood which you have developed here in Nairobi should continue even to Bangui forum,” the President added.

The President said rapid and substantial progress has been made towards a political settlement which will restore CAR into the community of peaceful states.

They said their country has been in political turmoil for the last 20 years pointing out that the commitment by the Kenya leadership will definitely bear positive results.

Some 5,600 African Union peacekeepers and about 2,000 French soldiers are deployed in the country.



Keynan President, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta.
Source: Wikipedia

“Buhari has called Nigeria’s reliance on neighbouring armies a disgrace and has vowed to restore the territorial integrity of Africa’s most populous nation.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 April 2015 Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that Muhammed Buhari defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan in the country’s presidential election. Two of Buhari’s core campaign promises were to eliminate the corruption that was draining the resources needed to combat Boko Haram and to decisively defeat Boko Haram on the battlefield. A former military ruler of Nigeria in the 1980s and a northerner Muslim from the region where Boko Haram operates, Buhari, according to the Nigerian electorate and the country’s neighbors, has the best credentials to fulfill his campaign pledges.

An article for Nigerianeye written on 6 April discussed the perspectives of Niger and Chad on Buhari’s victory. These two countries, which have suffered from Boko Haram attacks and have joined a multinational coalition to combat Boko Haram in Nigeria, welcomed Buhari’s victory. The Nigerien and Chadian armies have been dissatisfied with the Nigerian army’s performance over the past few years and criticized the Nigerian army for not fighting alongside their armies and re-occupying towns when Nigerien and Chadian forces expelled the Boko Haram militants. Niger and Chad expect that Buhari’s leadership will bring change to the Nigerian military and reverse the situation of the past few years in which Boko Haram controlled territory in Nigeria internally and established an alliance with the Islamic State externally.

Buhari has vowed to end what he calls the disgrace of allowing foreign troops on Nigerian soil by relying solely on the Nigerian military to quell the unrest. The article suggests, however, that one of the main challenges that Buhari will have to overcome is mistrust between Nigeria and its neighbors. The inability of these countries to coordinate their efforts, at least in terms of border security, could undermine the counterinsurgency effort and allow Boko Haram to retreat into Nigeria’s borderlands to regroup for counterattacks in the future. As such, Buhari will have to demonstrate that he has not only the leadership capability to defeat Boko Haram at home, but also the diplomatic tact to play a leading role in the multinational coalition’s strategy to counter Boko Haram’s efforts if the militants disperse into the border region.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)



Muhammed Buhari intends to rebuild trust with international partners, such as the US (pictured here from a training in 2009), in order to defeat Boko Haram. Source: <http://www.africom.mil/newsroom/photo/1455/US-AFRICOM-Photo>

Source: ““Chad, Niger Hope for Fresh Start with Buhari,” Nigerianeye.com, 6 April 2015.

Chad, Niger hope for fresh start with Buhari

Boko Haram’s six-year insurgency in northern Nigeria, and incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan’s failure to decisively counter the threat, were a key issue in the Nigerian election. Gains by the Islamist movement [Boko Haram], which is seeking to carve a caliphate out of Nigeria’s northeast, even forced a poll delay as a regional force launched an offensive to drive them back. But it has been Chad’s battle-hardened troops, and not Nigeria’s, that have led in the offensive, expelling Boko Haram from the major towns in the north in just a matter of weeks.

Buhari has called Nigeria’s reliance on neighbouring armies a disgrace and has vowed to restore the territorial integrity of Africa’s most populous nation. There is still work to be done. But they have also struggled to overcome distrust between armies that have not always fought on the same side.

“Cuba rejects and condemns all acts of terrorism in all its forms...”

OE Watch Commentary: Spanish-language media observed that not long after Colombian President Santos put a moratorium on combat air operations against FARC guerrilla units, a FARC unit ambushed and killed eleven Colombian Army soldiers during what was supposed to be the FARC’s unilateral ceasefire. A firestorm of negative Colombian press, as well as some discomfoting protests, followed when it was alleged that air support requested during the action by the besieged soldiers had perhaps been denied by higher-ups. Even some left-leaning Colombian political voices called for a reactivation of government combat air operations against the FARC, a response the Colombian president indeed took. For its part, the FARC, from the peace negotiations venue in Havana, dismissed the ambush as an act of self-defense and termed prudent (*sensata*) the American administration’s decision to take Cuba off the US State Department’s list of state supporters of terrorism. In the same breath it floated the inverse logic that the FARC was therefore not terrorist. Most Colombian commenters categorize the FARC as a terrorist organization, and most regional commenters, whether or not they tend to support the FARC and whether or not they would wish to see improved US-Cuban relations, consider the Cuban government to be a stalwart historical, continuing ally and ongoing material supporter of the FARC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Radio Caracol, “Sectores políticos piden reactivar bombardeos contra las Farc (Political sectors ask for the reactivation of (aerial) bombings against the FARC), Radio Caracol, 15 April 2015, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/sectores-politicos-piden-reactivar-bombardeos-contra-las-farc/20150415/nota/2718737.aspx>

“Congresswoman Claudia López, of the Green Alliance (political caucus) stated, ‘if the FARC violates the unilateral ceasefire and ambushes our soldiers point blank, the government should reactivate bombing against them.’ Iván Cepeda, co-president of the Congressional Peace Commission, said, ‘We hope they give us explanations of what happened and that they give us elements for better understanding this lamentable event.’...”

Source: El Tiempo, “Cuba considera ‘justa’ la decisión de Obama” (Cuba considers Obama’s decision to be just), Eltiempo.com, 14 April 2015, <http://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/latinoamerica/negociaciones-entre-ee-uu-y-cuba/15571675>

“‘The Government of Cuba recognizes the just decision taken by the President of the United States of eliminating Cuba from a list on which it should never have been included.’ ...As the Cuban government has reiterated on multiple occasions, Cuba rejects and condemns all acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as whatever action that has as its object furthering, supporting financing or concealing terrorist acts,’ the declaration added, which was read on the television news...”



“...subnational elections (counties and autonomous areas) were full of good news for the Bolivian opposition.”

OE Watch Commentary: *What may have seemed like an electoral lock owned by a socialist incumbent has brought back into view what many observers of Bolivia have known -- that the country has a politically varied and sophisticated electorate capable of surprises. Combined with what seems to be an historic tendency in Latin America to experience broad-arc ideological pendulum swings, perhaps news from the recent Bolivian elections is ominous for the future prospects of the Forum of Sao Paulo and the political parties and programs which currently dominate many of the hemisphere's governments.*

*In local elections, President Evo Morales' Movement To Socialism (MAS) political party lost a number of seats. The Forum of Sao Paulo, an umbrella organization comprising and coordinating the region's left-socialist and communist political parties, including MAS, has faced only weak organized opposition across the region since the Forum was founded in the early 1990s. It may be misleading to label what little opposition to the Forum has existed as "right-wing," even while it is habitually tagged as such by the radical left. Intellectual leadership of opposition to the Forum, and perhaps an impeller/accelerator of the pendulum's swing away from socialism, is more of an anti-statist conglomerate of classical liberals, libertarians and conservatives (some of the latter reasonably deserving categorization as "rightist" under traditional Spanish political protocol). The ideological and political center of gravity for this counter-socialism movement is not easy to pinpoint, but one node in that opposition movement is, logically, named after a geographical, social and ideological hinge city in Bolivia -- Cochabamba. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***



Bolivian President Evo Morales in 2008. Source: Wikipedia

Source: Fernando Molina, "La oposición boliviana gana espacios clave en las elecciones regionales" (Bolivian opposition gains key seats in regional elections), Elpais.com, 30 March, 2015, http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/03/30/actualidad/1427673912_141810.html

"This Sunday's (the 29th of March) subnational elections (counties and autonomous areas) were full of good news for the Bolivian opposition, not long after they were largely beaten by Evo Morales in the presidential elections last October. Various opposition parties snatched mayor seats from the Movement To Socialism (MAS) in El Alto and Cochabamba, as well as the governorships of La Paz and Tarija, which to this point had been under officialist control..."

Source: Periodismo sin Fronteras, "Compromiso de Cochabamba: Antítesis del Foro de São Paulo" (Commitment of Cochabamba: Antithesis of the Forum of Sao Paulo), Periodismo sin Fronteras, 18 March 2015, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/compromisso-cochabamba.html>

"We, classic liberals, supporters of limited government, free markets and private property, firmly commit ourselves to end the political and cultural hegemony of the Forum of Sao Paulo in the region... We commit ourselves to introduce an increasing number of classic liberals in the parliaments of each country, in order to debate bad laws, and to form parliamentary blocks in order to remove them and to further reforms. This is our Political Plan. Thus, the national congress or assembly is the focus and the principal target of our political action. For now, participation in regional and county government and executive power are secondary objectives, subject to the first..."

“in the last ten years more than 1,500,000 persons have left Venezuela ...”

OE Watch Commentary: *A strategic effect of bolivarian socialism in northern South America has been significant net out-migration from Venezuela. Within the body of that pronounced outflow is a significant slice of the most highly educated and technically qualified. Colombia's oil industry, for instance, has been greatly advanced by the presence in Colombia of Venezuelan experts, while, concomitantly, Venezuela's oil production has deteriorated. One can suppose that at least a few Colombians notice how much so many capable persons choose to not stay in places like Venezuela and Cuba (otherwise beautiful lands) so long as those places are being mismanaged as socialist dictatorships. One can understand that the Bolivarians would prefer it if Colombia could be made to adopt the same form of centrally directed political and economic system that Bolivarians have been implementing in Venezuela, perhaps thereby greatly reducing differentials in exchange, commodity and inflation rates between the two countries. Such a revolution could perhaps staunch the outflow of talented citizens (at least from Venezuela to Colombia) that the more attractive economy of Colombia currently presents to educated, talented and ambitious Venezuelans. The propositions made by the FARC for its participation in and influence over Colombian social and economic organization (especially along the border regions with Venezuela) are welcomed by Bolivarians generally. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: Mimi Arriaga, “Masiva migración de venezolanos en Colombia gana espacios en la economía de ese país (Massive migration of Venezuelans in Colombia gains space in the economy of that country), *Semana*, 9 April 2015, <http://www.losreportesdelichi.com/masiva-migracion-de-venezolanos-en-colombia-gana-espacios-en-la-economia-de-ese-pais/>

“The presence of the Venezuelans in Colombia, and in particular in Bogota, has stopped being a simple curiosity to become a phenomenon...it is one of the few cases of high impact that migration that Colombia has had in in two centuries of republican history... The exodus had a first major breakpoint starting in 2005, when the petroleum experts who had been mercilessly fired in mass by PDVSA (Venezuela's national oil company) began to arrive. But really, the high point has been 2011, since which every business day DAS (office administering Colombian immigration) is issuing and average of 46 resident work permits to Venezuelans to live in Colombia...”

Source: Jose Guerra, “La emigración venezolana” (The Venezuelan Migration), *Noticierodigital.com*, 29 March 2015, <http://www.noticierodigital.com/2015/03/la-emigracion-venezolana/>

“...it is (now) the Venezuelans who are emigrating en masse, toward several destinations on all the continents. It may be that Professor Ivan De La Vega of Simon Bolivar University has dedicated the most time studying and quantifying this relatively new phenomenon. It is worth mentioning that every time a government announces that it is going to apply a socialist system, people always leave frightened....According to Professor De la Vega, in the last ten years more than 1,500,000 persons have left Venezuela...The case of the (Venezuelan) universities is pathetic. Thousands of professors have marched off to other countries where their work and qualifications are more highly prized, because remunerations in Venezuela don't even compete with those in Haiti, when valued in dollars....”

Source: DolarToday, “¿POR QUÉ SERÁ? Venezuela: La peor economía de América Latina (cifras del FMI)” (WHY IS IT? Venezuela: The worst economy in Latin America), *DolarToday.com*, 17 April 2015, <https://dolartoday.com/por-que-sera-venezuela-fue-por-mucho-la-peor-economia-de-america-latina-cifras-del-fondo-monetario-internacional/>

“...For 2015, only Venezuela with 96.8% and Argentina with 18.6% will have inflation rates in double digits in South America, the rest of the countries' inflation less than 10%, Uruguay leading this group with 9.7%. As far as growth is concerned, the IMF expects a severe contraction of -7% for the country, accompanied by Brazil (-1.0) and Argentina (-0.3). The other countries of America will grow...The unemployment numbers in Venezuela will increase from 8.0% for 2014 to 12.8% in 2015, and, according to IMF projections, will reach as much as 16.1%, double what was seen in 2014.)These are) truly frightening and disappointing numbers, keeping in mind that Venezuela will be the only country in America with an unemployment rate higher than 10%...”

OE Watch Commentary: *Latin America is a new and emerging cyber-crime threat region with capable cyber criminals who are now producing their own malware. In fact, according to this source, reported cyber attacks increased anywhere from 8 to 40 percent last year in Latin America and the Caribbean, depending on the country.*

*Still, these numbers are not completely accurate and may actually be much higher for two reasons. First, not all governments want to report cyber-crime issues even if they know the threat is present. Second, not all governments realize attacks are occurring in the first place, as in Latin America new Internet hacking schemes are constantly evolving as the government, new Internet users and businesses expand the amount of work they conduct in a cyber-setting. Other factors that are perpetrating cyber-crime in Latin America include low risk of prosecution, quick profit, and an economy where salaries do not meet the needs for day-to-day living expenses. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)***

Source: “Latinoamérica enfrentará un mayor número de ciberataques en 2015,” [Latin America Will Experience an Uptick in Cyber-Attacks in 2015] Excelsior. Accessed on 1 April 2015 from <http://www.dineroenimagen.com/2015-01-04/48711>

Strategic sectors that will be most vulnerable to cyber-attacks in Latin America during 2015 are chemical, manufacturing, and mining. The vast majority of anticipated cyber-crimes will be conducted for financial, political, and social gain. Comparing past cyber-attacks with those seen in recent months, Latin American hackers are using more sophisticated methods to steal intellectual property and private information. An example of this is that in 2013, cyber security companies reported that hackers were developing their own malware and programs to better conduct cyber-attacks in Latin American countries including México, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brasil.

Attacks on critical infrastructure in the region are also on the rise. This is likely because countries such as Argentina, Peru, and Colombia use Internet-facing industrial control systems which are not always password protected. Additionally, it is not uncommon for these same systems to run patched or out-of-date software. As for financial systems, hackers are using sophisticated Trojan attacks to corrupt computers and steal data. In recent years, banks in Latin America have lost an upwards of \$(USD) 93 million to cyber-crime and are likely to lose more in coming years if ample protective measures are not taken.

Brazil is Home to the Largest Number of Cyber-Attacks in Latin America

18 August 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *This source reports that within Latin America, Brazil is the target of an estimated 33-43% of all cybercrimes. In 2013 malware attacks alone exceeded 500,000, which is not surprising, considering that more Trojan malware has been detected in Brazil than in any other country in the world. This may be because Brazil-based cyber criminals have been very successful in copying malicious software programs used in Eastern Europe to steal bank information, as this source points out. Furthermore, they have learned from the mistakes of their counterparts, which has resulted in the creation of a rapidly evolving malware enterprise.*

In 2014 Brazil became a key financial target as the host of the World Cup, during which time hackers worked feverishly to steal banking information from thousands of unsuspecting Internet users. One technique used to do this was to silently change the domain name setting of internet routers in home and business settings. End OE Watch Commentary: (Fiegel)

Source: “Brasil es el país con más ciberataques en América Latina,” [Brazil is Home to the Largest Number of Cyber-Attacks in Latin America]. Accessed on 7 March, 2015 from <http://www.elmundo.com.ve/noticias/tecnologia/internet/brasil-lidera-en-latinoamerica-como-el-pais-mas-ex.aspx>

In 2014, Brazil experienced the highest number of malware attacks in Latin America and fell victim to an estimated 33-43% of all cybercrimes in the region. These attacks have been attributed to opportunistic hackers using phishing tactics, malware, and home routers to steal banking passwords and large amounts of cash from businesses. During the World Cup alone, 10.9 million registered malware attacks were detected. These same attacks affected an estimated 30% of all internet users in the country during that time. As for businesses in Brazil, billions of dollars are being stolen yearly as companies fall victim to digital thieves; many of which have been identified as employees of the business they are stealing from. In 2011 alone, 32% of all businesses in Brazil were financially affected by some type of cyber-crime.

Brazil has also fallen victim to recent ongoing attacks which lure home internet users into visiting malicious websites that attempt to silently change the Domain Name Setting (DNS) of their home internet routers. If successful, routers are simply reconfigured to use rogue DNS servers which redirect the user to phishing pages when they open their banking websites. Investigations regarding widespread theft of bank information via home computers revealed that internet service providers in Brazil commonly lend their customers old and vulnerable network devices which further enables cyber-criminals to reconfigure servers. Additionally, ANATEL, Brazil’s national telecommunications agency is known to verify the functionality of its rented equipment but has not yet addressed security concerns that enable criminals to easily change DNS settings.

Source: "Narco Language," [Narco Language] Blog del Narco. Accessed on February 28, 2014 from <http://www.elblogdelnarco.org/2015/01/el-narco-lenguaje.html>

OE Watch Commentary: *In Mexico narco culture is evident in mainstream media, music, clothing, and even language. It seems that almost daily, narcos coin neologisms, which some claim serve to anesthetize the public and make escalating violence seem routine. Take for example the narco word "levanton." This word literally means "pick-up," but it is well known that in the narco world it refers to a kidnapping. As noted in this source, referring to a kidnapping as a levanton somehow makes it seem less violent, as the word can be easily used in a nonviolent context.*

According to this source, a second reason narco neologisms are being used with increased frequency is because they may make a specific event more manageable. In the case of Ciudad Juarez, where one of Mexico's most intense drug battles was waged from 2009-2011, residents commonly referred to victims of the drug war as "muertitos" which translates to "the little dead ones." Raul Avila, a linguistics professor at the University of Mexico, further explains that narco neologisms are more like linguistically sensible euphemisms, as they help people to explain the harsh realities around them.

In the coming years it is likely that new narco words will be coined, but what is evident now is that narco language is becoming more universal. In fact, the Academic Association of Spanish Language dictionary now includes definitions for narco language including levanton, plomear, and ejecutar (see definitions below).

End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

How does one describe horrific acts of violence with a specific word when it does not exist? In the case of Mexican drug cartels, they have solved the problem by creating an in-depth glossary of neologisms specifically tailored to represent gruesome acts carried out by cartel operators. In fact, these words have become so popular that they are used by society and main stream media sources. Some claim that these neologisms take away from the seriousness of the actual crimes while others claim the words serve to make horrific actions more manageable. Whatever the reasons, a new working glossary containing dozens of narco specific words is evolving as evidenced by the entries below.

Words that Begin with a "Narco" Prefix:

Some of the most common narco words actually use narco as their prefix. The placement of narco before the actual word is used to describe language that already exists in day-to-day vocabulary but specifies that the noun is somehow associated with cartel related activity. Take the followings words as examples:

Narco-corrido: songs with content that may refer to specific events and dates regarding drug related violence, extortion, or murder. These songs may also be used to praise/glorify a specific drug cartel or leader.

Narco-manta: refers to a missive that is generally handwritten on a large piece of white cloth and hung in public places for intimidation purposes. These messages are generally directed to rival drug cartels or authorities. Narco-mantas were first made popular by Los Zetas in 2008. Today, they are used by virtually every cartel in Mexico.

Narco-fosa: refers to a common grave used to bury multiple victims killed at the hands of drug traffickers. In recent years, narco-fosas containing hundreds of bodies have been found in states including Coahuila, Tamaulipas, and Nuevo Leon.

Narco fiesta: refers to opulent parties thrown by drug traffickers. It is not uncommon for traffickers the contract popular musicians to play at these events.

Words used to Describe Drug Transport, Storage, Use and Characteristics

Burrero: a drug mule

El clavo: used to describe a location in which drugs are being stored or hidden

Formar rayas: refers to cutting cocaine into individual lines

Doctor de esquina: is used to identify smalltime drug dealers assigned to a specific area within a city

Hacer lodo: refers to the preparation of heroin

El pase: a single dose of cocaine

Libreta verde: a pound of marijuana

(continued)

Continued: Neologisms Born from Narco Culture in Mexico

Street Names for Drugs:

Cocaine: el alacrán, la blanca, blanca nieve, harina, nieve, el perico

Heroin: chiva, goma, negra, piedra negra

Marijuana: gallo, pastura, mota, borrego and yesca

Words to Describe Cartel Hierarchy:

Jefe de Jefes: the key drug lord. There is no one higher than this individual in the organization.

Los pesados: pesados literally translates to heavy and in the case of cartel hierarchy, refers to high-ranking cartel leaders.

Los dueños de la plaza: these individuals are assigned to control a specific region or city. A plaza in this sense does not refer to a city center seen in most Mexican towns, but instead, is a coveted smuggling stronghold where drugs are sold, stored, or transited through.

Sicarios: Individuals hired to work as armed guards for cartels. In other words, they are basically assassins for hire.

Los chacas: usually refers to flashy traffickers from Sinaloa who carry multiple weapons, drive flashy SUVs, and wear expensive clothing.

Halcones: lookouts used by cartels to report on activity in a specific plaza. This may include police and/or military activity or encroachment by rival cartels in a specific territory. In Mexico, halcones are demographically diverse and may range in age from young children to grandparents.

Words Used to Describe Traitors:

El soplón: refers to a snitch

Las ratas: refers to a snitch or a traitor

Quienes saben cantar (those who know how to sing is the literal translation): In the cartel world, individuals that sing are informants that are actually providing information to police, soldiers, or rival cartels.

Words Used to Depict Violent Acts or Describe Weapons:

Cuerno de Chivo (goat horns): used to describe an AK-47. It is named as such because of the curved shape of the magazine. This weapon is a preferred choice amongst cartels.

Levantones: cartel kidnapping victims who are either tortured for information, held for ransom, or killed for pertaining to a rival cartel and/or for acts of betrayal.

Plomear: In Spanish, plomo is lead. Hence, the verb plomear literally translates to filling someone with lead in the form of bullets.

Los encajuelados: “Cajuela” translates to the trunk of a car. The prefix “en” translates to in, into, on, onto, or covered. In this context, it is used as a cartel term to identify the body of a murder victim that is found in the trunk of a car.

Encobijados: Cobija, the word in the middle, is a blanket. Again, the “en” as a prefix changes this word to denote a murder victim who has been wrapped in a blanket.

Enteipados: Teip, the word in the middle is a mix of Spanglish that refers to “tape.” Adding on the “en” prefix, it refers to a murder victim who has been wrapped in tape around the mouth, hands, and feet.

Ejecutar: The verb “ejecutar” is used to describe murders committed by organized crime groups. “Asesinar” is used to describe murder not committed by organized crime groups.

The Sinaloa Cartel Remains Intact Following Arrest of Chapo Guzman One Year Ago

4 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Arrests of key drug lords within Mexican cartels have the capacity to disrupt operations in the short term while a quick reorganization occurs and one leader takes a definitive step forward. However, this source reports that following the arrest of Chapo Guzman in February 2014, the transition of leadership which placed Ismael El Mayo Zambada at the helm of the Sinaloa Cartel was flawless and left no significant gaps. This is likely because the cartel has traditionally operated on a decentralized leadership hierarchy, which means that small cells with little-to-no knowledge of each other operate independently to reduce disruptions in cartel activity in the case of arrests. Select news media sources have further reported that since the arrest the Sinaloa Cartel has maintained territory, power, and operational capacities.

Other sources have released information indicating that disputes for control of key territories among decentralized Sinaloa Cartel cells have become apparent in Baja California Sur, Sonora, and Tijuana. This information directly contradicts the theory that decentralization has maintained stability, as it is the leaders of the small cells who are seeking independence to run their own operations. However, when comparing information gleaned from both open-source channels cited below, the rifts appear to be both regional and transitory. Furthermore, Sinaloa Cartel operations in Mexico and abroad have maintained stellar operational capacities, which indicates that the overall strength of the cartel is similar to what it was at the time of El Chapo's arrest. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Pese a los reveses, el Cártel de Sinaloa se mantiene incólume," [Sinaloa Cartel Maintains Structure despite Setbacks] Blog del Narco. Accessed on March 10, 2015 from <http://www.elblogdelnarco.org/2015/01/pese-los-reveses-el-cartel-de-sinaloa.html>

Mexican news media sources are reporting that the Sinaloa Cartel is intact despite the arrest of Joaquín El Chapo Guzmán nearly 14 months ago. In fact, there has been no apparent financial strife, no decrease in operational tempo, and no loss of territory. One security source interviewed reiterated this point by stating: "we have not seen any changes within the operational structure of the Sinaloa Cartel. They are still using the same controls and modes of transport as before the arrest of Guzmán. Even the same people are responsible for moving shipments." This source further indicated that the only apparent change since El Chapo's arrest is that El Mayo Zambada has replaced some of the former leader's direct employees with his own in the Nogales Plaza and in the western sector of the Sonora desert.

Source: "Ajustes y división en cártel de Sinaloa," [Changes and Divisions within the Sinaloa Cartel] Zeta Tijuana. Accessed on April 05 2015 from <http://zetatijuana.com/noticias/reportaje/8817/ajustes-y-division-en-cartel-de-sinaloa>

Although the Sinaloa Cartel remains strong, this source is reporting territorial rifts between independent Sinaloa Cartel cells operated by five separate leaders. These rifts are allegedly occurring in Baja California Sur, Sonora, and Tijuana and are said to have begun shortly after El Chapo's arrest. They then reached critical points in August 2014 when shootouts occurred between opposing Sinaloa Cartel members in Tijuana and Baja California Sur. This source further indicated that in Tijuana, the majority of cells are headed by Ismael Zambada Garcia. This is significant because they operate on a decentralized hierarchical basis leading many to believe that Zambada Garcia will allow the fighting to continue and see who prevails.

Argentine Air Force Considering Gripen Purchase

7 April 2015

OE Watch Commentary: According to www.Defesanet.com.br, Brazil may be well on its way to its first sale of the Gripen NG 4th Generation multipurpose fighter to Argentina. The issue of the possible Gripen Sale was raised on 7 April during newly installed Brazilian Defense Minister Jaques Wagner's visit to Argentina, his first foreign visit as defense minister (see excerpt below). While there, Wagner met with his Argentine counterpart, Agustin Rossi. Although no agreement was reached on the sale of the Gripen, the defense ministers agreed to formally open negotiations for the eventual transfer of 24 airframes in a subsection of the joint-declaration that was signed by both ministers concluding the meeting. The Gripens would presumably replace Argentina's aging fleet of Mirages and A-4Rs.



Pictured from Left to Right: Brazilian Minister of Defense, Jaques Wagner, and his Argentinean counterpart, Agustin Rossi.
Source: Wikipedia

Jane's Defense reports that the Argentine Air Force currently has an estimated 30 A-4Rs and 13 Mirage III/Vs in its fleet with an air-force-wide 17 per cent availability rate. Other topics mentioned in the joint declarations included:

- recommitment to the purchase of 6 KC-390 aircraft by the Argentine Air Force;
- recommitment to the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, specifically, the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction in the South Atlantic;
- recommitment to UNASUR's South American Defense College.

The Brazilian Air Force originally signed its contract with Swedish Defense Firm SAAB for the purchase of 36 Gripen Airframes (28 single-seat, 8 dual-seat) in October 2014. The \$5.4 billion deal stipulated that the majority of the airframes would be built in Brazil in partnership with Brazilian aerodefense firms, facilitating technology transfer to the Brazilian defense industry. Delivery of the first aircraft to the Brazilian Air Force is set to occur in 2019, with the final being delivered in 2024.

Still to be seen is how the Argentine government would potentially pay for the aircraft, given its limited access to international debt markets since its technical default in July 2014, or British reaction to the potential purchase in light of Argentina's continued claims on the Falkland Islands. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grilo)**

Source: "Brazil and Argentina Sign Democracy and Peace Declaration and Begin Gripen NG Sales Negotiation", [http://www.defesanet.com.br/br_ar/noticia/18682/BR-AR---Brasil-e-Argentina-assinam-a-Declaracao-pela-Democracia-e-a-Paz"-e-iniciam-negociacoes-para-a-venda-de-cacas-Gripen-NG/](http://www.defesanet.com.br/br_ar/noticia/18682/BR-AR---Brasil-e-Argentina-assinam-a-Declaracao-pela-Democracia-e-a-Paz)

In his first official foreign trip as the Minister of Defense, Jaques Wagner highlighted the choice of Argentina as his choice for his first foreign visit as testament to the character of the strategic alliance with that country (Argentina), and its (the alliance) fundamental to the regional integration in south America. The minister said that it was a political decision that reinforces our (Brazil's) interest in strengthening the partnership and cooperation in Defense.

OE Watch Commentary: *Priced out of international credit markets by questions about its accounting practices due to the Lavo-Jato scandal, Petrobras has turned to its lender of last resort: the China Development Bank (CDP). On 3 April Petrobras finalized a contract for a \$3.5 billion loan from the CDP, the terms of which were not publicly released.*

Though these loans have become commonplace with fellow MERCOSUL member Venezuela, this is only the second time that Petrobras has solicited a loan from the CDP. In 2009, when capital was significantly scarcer in the international markets, the CDP loaned Petrobras \$10 billion. At the time the loan terms required that Petrobras both use the funds to purchase Chinese manufactured equipment and guarantee China would receive an undisclosed quantity of the crude produced at an undisclosed price. Given the restrictive nature of its last experience with the CDP, this was not a choice that Petrobras made easily or even willingly (see excerpt-right). Instead, it was one of the few options remaining following a fiscal year that has seen:

- *Petrobras unable to release its financial records from the fourth quarter of 2014 due to international and American auditors refusal to validate and inability to substantiate the books put forth by Petrobras;*
- *Petrobras's credit rating downgraded twice by Standard and Poor's and remaining at risk of losing its credit rating all together.*
- *increasing cost of financing through traditional sources due to its credit rating downgrade, as well as anticipated drop in revenues due to the dramatic drop in oil prices.*

*Despite the loan from the CDP and further loans to be sought on the international market, it appears that it may still not be sufficient to keep the state-majority-owned company afloat. Petrobras currently plans to shed \$13 billion worth of both domestic and international assets in 2015. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grilo)***

Source: "What Does the Chinese Rescue Mean," 4 April 2015. <http://www.defesanet.com.br/brasilchina/noticia/18623/O-que-significa-o-socorro-chines/>

...The short note with which Petrobras announced the completion of the transaction with the CBD - the largest development bank in the world, with assets estimated at \$ 1.33 trillion at the end of 2013 - describes it as the first "cooperation agreement" to be implemented during 2015 and 2016, "announces the disposal of the parties to" develop new business in the future "and justifies the loan as the continuation of a partnership that strengthens" the synergies between the economies of both countries. But contains no information about business conditions or, much less, about the responsibility of Petrobras counterparts...

...Oil Producing Latin-American nation experiences, and those of Petrobras itself, with Chinese Financing institutions do not leave a doubt that the Peking government is always significantly more interested in securing the oil supplies that China needs in order to maintain its economic growth than it is in the recipients of its loans. The recipient nation credit ratings only interest Chinese lenders if they are sufficiently poor enough that Peking can impose loan conditions very favorable to themselves...

Political Tension Heightens in Brazil

14 April 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Dilma Rousseff may only be six months removed from an impressive re-election campaign where she successfully fended off challenges from both her political right and left, but right now that may seem like years ago. A nearly surreal confluence of different scandals, circumstances outside her control, and political maneuvering by both her political opponents and middle and upper class Brazilians have left the Brazilian president scrambling for allies to help her hold off increasingly likely impeachment proceedings.

As the accompanying articles detail, Operation Lavo-Jato (Car Wash), the first and most consuming of the scandals, originally began with the execution of mass arrest warrants by Brazilian Federal Police on 14 March 2014. Reaching back at least 15 years, state-majority-owned oil company Petrobras had been bribing Brazilian federal and state politicians in exchange for overpriced state contracts. Though President Rousseff had been president of Petrobras's board of directors for several of the years (2003-2010) during which the scheme took place, she was initially and quickly exonerated of any wrongdoing by investigators. However, as arrests within her own ruling Partido Trabalhador (Workers Party) and the scope of corruption (\$22 billion in questionable contracts and accounting) have continued to mount, investigators and the Brazilian populace alike have become increasing incredulous of her innocence. The culmination of the investigation to date was the 16 April arrest of Worker's Party national treasurer Joao Vaccari Neto on corruption charges excerpt .

Even after this, a new scandal has recently reared its head and shaken the little confidence the public had left in the administration. As pointed out in the accompanying article (Excerpt 3), on 15 April, the Federal Audit Court (TCU) found that the Government of Brazil's practice of using funds from public banks to artificially inflate the results of the government's accounts is a crime of fiscal responsibility. This latest question, coupled with the rupture of trust resulting from the Lavo-Jato scandal and the austerity measures, has the Brazilian street and rival politicians smelling blood in the water.



The above still is taken from a web news broadcast discussing a video released by Brazilian Reserve Army General Paulo Chagas calling for a military intervention to remove the Worker's Party from power in October 2014. The full video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThWZ6D2YGn8#t=147>

Source: O Dia article "Brazilian Military Ignoring Calls to Intervene Says Minister of Defense" published 14 April. <http://odia.ig.com.br/noticia/brasil/2015-04-14/militares-brasileiros-ignoram-pedidos-de-intervencao-diz-ministro-da-defesa.html>

...the military is ignoring the requests for a "military intervention" against the government that have been heard in the recent protests against President Dilma Rousseff, Defense Minister Jaques Wagner affirmed this Tuesday (14April2015). This call has a membership "with zero support" in the barracks, Wagner said in remarks to reporters and given the presence of several generals, after attending the opening of the LAAD Defense & Security conference.

Source: Excerpt from political Op-Ed piece titled "God Save the Queen" originally published by O Globo on 13 April. <http://noblat.oglobo.globo.com/meus-textos/noticia/2015/04/deus-salve-rainha.html>

What a sad way to celebrate your first 100 days governing. 6 out of every 10 Brazilians view Dilma's administration as "bad" or "terrible". Almost 6 in 10 believe now believe that she knew of corruption at Petrobras and did nothing. For 8 in ten, inflation increased. Unemployment increased for 7 in ten. 2 out of every 3 are open to impeachment proceedings against Dilma. The street protests, like yesterdays, are supported by 7 of every 10.

If the election to choose Dilma's successor (Analyst's note: Brazilian Presidents are constitutionally prohibited from serving more than 2 consecutive 4 year terms, but may serve an unlimited amount of non-consecutive terms) had occurred last week, Aécio Neves would have defeated Lula (Former President Luna da Silva and presumed PT nominee for the 2018 elections) 33% to 29%, according to Datafolha's most recent poll.

(continued)

Continued: Political Turmoil Heightens in Brazil

A 15 March nationwide protest against the government drew an estimated 1-2 million Brazilians out of their homes and into the street across more than 200 cities. Among them, a small but vocal minority were calling for Dilma's ouster. A smaller nationwide protest held 12 April only drew 700,000 Brazilians into the street across the country, however, the demands for the ouster of President Rousseff by impeachment or other means were significantly louder. In fact, as the accompanying article describes, so vocal had the calls for "a coup" become that newly minted Minister of Defense Jaques Wagner felt the need to publicly address the calls and unequivocally state that there was no support for a military coup within the barracks (Excerpt 1). Unfortunately, at least one Brazilian Reserve Army General, General Paulo Chagas, disagrees and released a 6-minute video calling for a military intervention in the government (Figure 2). His views have significant support, as a cursory Facebook search revealed at least 20 Facebook groups calling for a military ouster of the Dilma Regime. The largest of these groups has in excess of 26,000 members (Figure 3).

Although a military coup is not likely in this instance, political turmoil is heightened. With Rousseff's low approval ratings, there is talk of bringing former President Luna da Silva (her predecessor and mentor) into the administration in some capacity just to restore credibility. However, Aécio Neves, PSDB (Brazilian Social Democrat Party) opposition leader and principal rival in the 2014 election, announced on 15 April that he is now open to considering Rousseff's impeachment and announced his intention to explore the possibility of building a coalition among other parties to execute it (Excerpt 4). Neves, however, may just be reacting to the Brazilian street, as a 12 April Datafolha poll reports that 63% of Brazilians surveyed now support impeachment (Excerpt 2). **End OE Watch Commentary (Grilo)**



The above "screen capture" is of the largest pro-military Intervention group on Facebook, Intervencao Militar Ja, as of 17 April 2015. As can be seen on the left side of the capture, the page had 23,544 "likes" as of the capture date. The banner message translates as: "I refuse to accept being a slave of the corrupt. I refuse to be governed by bandits. I refuse to allow Brazil to be turned into a republic of scoundrels." (Left) Brazilian Minister of Defense, Jaques Wgner. Source: Wikipedia



Source: "Federal Audit Court" Rules Financial Maneuvers Are Crimes" originally published in the Folha de Sao Paulo on 15 April, 2015. <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2015/04/1617121-tribunal-de-contas-da-uniao-aponta-crime-nas-manobras-fiscais.shtml>

The Plenary of the Federal Audit Court (TCU) unanimously decided that the fiscal maneuvers conducted by the Ministry of the Treasury with accounts in federal public banks constitute a crime of responsibility.

17 government officials will have 30 days in order to present explanations to the Federal Audit Court for the irregularities cited in the case...

Source: "White Coup" originally published in the Folha de Sao Paulo on 18 April, 2015. Original article can be found here: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/colunas/andresinger/2015/04/1618253-golpe-branco.shtml#_=_

On the eve of the March 15 protests, the President of the PSDB, Aécio Neves, assumed the Democratic position. He made it clear that impeachment was not on the Party's agenda. A month later, without any reasonable justification, he changed position and became a coup supporter [sic.]. The objective appears clear: block the government, deny it even a breath, and eventually cause its fall.

... On Thursday, April 16, according to the reporters Dimmi Amora and Valdo Cruz, Aécio suggested there is now a third point for which the PSDB to advocate for impeachment on. If it is proved that the President participated in the supposed fiscal maneuvers impugned by the Federal Audit Court relative to the 2014 exercise, the party would enter the request to open the impeachment process, whether Eduardo Cunha accepts it or not...

India Evacuates Citizens from Yemen – Indicators of Operational Strengths and Weakness

16 April 2015

“PM Twitter – ‘Salute the services of our civilian & defence officials...Continue your efforts!’”

OE Watch Commentary: During the most recent meltdown of civil security in Yemen, the Government of India responded with air and naval assets to evacuate Indian citizens working and living there. From 3-10 April 2015 the Indian Government coordinated commercial and military aircraft to evacuate some 2700 people from Sana'i, Yemen. The Indian Navy also participated in the humanitarian effort through the port of Aden and Al Hudaydah. The quick response into an unsecure and war-torn area points to Indian executive and military capabilities not often recognized in the West.

Another interesting development is how both India's President Modi and the external affairs minister used personal Twitter accounts to praise the efforts of the military and civil airlines during the operation. A fast moving and sensitive operation was communicated via social media in real time by the central government. Reports from ZeeNews chronicle these events tweet by tweet.

Air operations included several landings of Air India commercial aircraft into the uncertain conditions of the Yemen airports. The open sharing of operational information by officials on Tweeter is noteworthy. The spokesman for the External Affairs Ministry shares detailed timings, locations, and identity of units involved. Another ZeeNews article provides a gripping account of civilian leadership in a military-supported evacuation. The Tweet, "...evacuation by Naval Ships from Al Hudaydah port for remaining nationals over next two days, Embassy in Sana'a will need to shut operations and relocate its personnel," must have given the ship commanders and embassy security some pause as to the broadcast of their intentions and requirements.

Indian Navy ships entered Yemen's ports under less than certain security to evacuate Indian citizens and other foreign nationals during Operation Raahat. Three of the recently acquired C-17 Globemaster III aircraft of the Indian Air Force played an extensive role in the operation. NDTV reported that some 150 air hours were flown by these premier cargo aircraft. For reasons of safety the military

Source: ZeeNews, "PM Modi lauds Yemen evacuation efforts, says this shows India's willingness to serve its people," April 6, 2015 http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/pm-modi-lauds-yemen-evacuation-efforts-says-this-shows-indias-willingness-to-serve-its-people_1574168.html

... On microblogging website Twitter, PM wrote: "Salute the services of our civilian & defence officials & organisations in helping evacuate our citizens from Yemen. Continue your efforts!"

In another tweet PM congratulated the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, Air India, Shipping, Railways & State governments for pitching into the rescue operations.

..."I am also glad that India has rescued several non-Indian citizens from Yemen," PM further tweeted.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said, "Almost all Indians to be evacuated from Yemen by this evening."

He also praised the Indian Navy for their commendable job in the rescue operations.

"The Indian Navy has been doing a great job. Almost 3,000 Indians stranded in Yemen have been evacuated. The Indian nationals, including some foreigners, have been shifted without injury or a single loss of life," he said.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had on Sunday assured that all Indian nationals would be evacuated from Yemen.

"We shall evacuate all Indian nationals from Yemen. Nobody will be left behind for want of travel documents," she tweeted.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had yesterday confirmed that 488 Indians had been evacuated from Sana'a, while a further 182 were rescued from coastal town Ash Shihr.

This followed the rescue of 439 Indians by the Indian Navy's guided-missile destroyer INS Mumbai from Yemen's port city Aden earlier on Saturday.

“After Indians stranded in Sana'a are evacuated the embassy will be shut”

Source: ZeeNews, "India concludes evacuations from Yemen, rescues over 5600 people: MEA," April 10, 2015 http://zeenews.india.com/news/india/india-concludes-evacuations-from-yemen-rescues-over-5600-people-mea_1576203.html

India on Thursday completed air evacuation from Sana'a as situation worsened in Yemen with a bomb blast rocking the Aden port, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed.

(continued)

Continue: India Evacuates Citizens from Yemen – Indicators of Operational Strengths and Weakness

cargo planes did not enter Yemeni airspace, but rather landed in Djibouti to pick up passengers unloaded from Air India flights. The C-17s then returned with their humanitarian cargos to India.

Many global voices are applauding India's bold, timely, and very successful humanitarian rescue of thousands of displaced expatriates from the current violence in Yemen. What remains to be heard is the regional thoughts regarding the newly proven operational capabilities for power projection in the Indian Ocean that has been demonstrated by the Indian military. End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)

In a series of tweets, MEA spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin informed that air evacuations had culminated and staff at Indian embassy in Sana'a will now be relocated.

Informing about the situation in war-torn Yemen, Akbaruddin tweeted: "Security situation in #Yemen deteriorates further with bomb blast at Aden port today. India completes its air evacuations from Sana'a."

...tweeted: "The following evacuation by Naval Ships from Al Hudaydah port for remaining nationals over next two days Embassy in Sana'a will need to shut operations and relocate its personnel."

... wrote: "With the airlifting of over 630 persons from Sana'a today by three special Air India flights, India has concluded its evacuation by air."

...he added, "The total no. of Indians evacuated from Sana'a by air has crossed 2900 by 18 special flights since the beginning of the air operations."

..."Indian Naval Ship INS Sumitra evacuated 349 persons, including 46 Indians and 303 foreign nationals from Al Hudaydah port on 9 April," read another tweet...

“The Air Force personnel ... are working round the clock to manage sorties by three C-17 planes ... bringing back evacuees from Djibouti,”

Source: NDTV, "C-17 Globemasters clocked 150 hours in Yemen evacuation," April 7, 2015 <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/c-17-globemasters-clocked-150-hours-in-yemen-evacuation-753059>

As part of a massive rescue operation, three C-17 Globemaster aircraft of Indian Air Force have clocked nearly 150 flying hours in the last few days bringing back over 1,300 Indians from Djibouti after their evacuation from strife-torn Yemen.

..."The C-17 Unit of 81 squadron has pressed three planes for evacuation operation that have clocked 150 flying hours carrying back evacuated Indians", said Commanding Officer of the unit, Group Captain BS Reddy.

...Reddy who is one of the four pilots who took off for Djibouti, said the evacuation sorties were avoiding air space over the troubled region and reaching Djibouti through a detour over Somalia for safety reasons.

"The aircraft cockpits are fortified with special steel armours to meet accidental hostile situations while flying over troubled region. The planes are also equipped with early warning systems to ward off missile attacks," Reddy said.

...Use of the biggest and the best cargo planes available to the IAF has an added advantage as Yemen and Saudi Arabia have expressed reservations over any type of foreign military presence in the region, officers said.

“Pursuit operations are underway against lawless elements who figured in an encounter with our troops in Maguindanao ... even as we mourn the loss of some police commandos of the PNP-SAF who offered the supreme sacrifice for peace,”

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 January 2015 the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (SAF) lost 44 police commandos killed in action during a counterterrorist raid near Mamasapano in Maguindanao. This incident is proving to be very instructive in terms of the challenges faced by the counterinsurgency and counterterrorist operational elements of the government on the Island of Mindanao. Operational security appears to have trumped coordination and liaison with the Philippines Armed Forces and other agencies. Early reports in the Manila Standard characterized the raid as a “law enforcement operation ...to arrest a high-value suspected terrorist.” The National reports more details of the role of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the breakaway Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in the day-long firefight resulting in significant casualties all around.

Almost immediately after the tragic events, voices arose in the Philippines’ press pointing to government knowledge and approval of the National Police’s unilateral actions. Editorials in the Philippine Star speculate on President Aquino’s direct involvement in approving the ultimately deadly operation. Follow-on reporting in the Strait Times points out that the Philippine Senate investigation and police panel hearings have bolstered claims of liability and may result in charges being filed against the national leadership. Further reports from that source repeat how President Aquino “blamed a police general for giving him wrong information about a botched secret mission against Islamic rebels that led to the deaths of 44 commandos.”

Recriminations between the SAF and the Philippines Armed Forces are also apparent.

What remains to be seen is the impact of this government fiasco on the current peace process with the MILF and the popular opinion in the Philippines regarding the current government as elections approach. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)**

Source: Manila Standard, “Palace Okayed SAF Raid,” January 27, 2015 <http://manilastandardtoday.com/mobile/2015/01/27/palace-okayed-saf-raid/>

...“They (SAF) conducted a law enforcement operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao to arrest a high-value suspected terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir also known as Marwan who was allegedly a member of the Markaziyah, Jemaah Islamiyah’s central command. The PNP-SAF performed this mission with courage and professionalism,” Coloma said.

...But when pressed if he was saying that the SAF elements killed were being viewed as “collateral damage,” Coloma said: “We have no such conclusion. We should be more circumspect in making conclusions.”

... the PNP SAF unit should have properly coordinated with military authorities in Maguindanao considering that it was a top-level operations sanctioned by higher authorities.

Maguindanao is under the jurisdiction of the Army’s 6th Infantry Division.

Marwan, who carries a bounty of \$5 million the United States had offered for his capture, was reportedly killed during the encounter, but the SAF suffered the bigger damage, with seven officers killed and several others wounded in the day-long clashes at the outskirts of Pidsandawan, Masasapano,

Another terrorist, Abdul Basit Usman, who carries a \$1 million reward, allegedly escaped during the firefight.

...Confident that they had neutralized Arwan, the SAF members were about to leave the area when they were ambushed by another group and were forced to scamper to different directions but later ended up in the rebel camps, triggering another firefight.

The clashes lasted until Sunday late evening, and by then, the SAF had suffered 47 casualties.

The SAF contingent were reportedly pinned down by a barrage of gunfire from the 108 base command and 105 based command of the MILF under commanders Resbak and Visaya.

...The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, meanwhile, branded the “special operation” by the SAF as a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

...In a separate statement, government chief negotiator Miriam Ferrer, deplored the death of the policemen but did not offer any condemnation.

“Our aim is to normalize the situation as soon as possible in order to prevent the displacement of civilians and give full swing to the humanitarian effort. This incident and other recent acts of violence by other armed groups manifest the diverse security challenges that confound the peace process,” Ferrer said.

“But our resolve to see through the process of legislating the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and implementing the different normalization programs, including the security

(continued)

Continued: Philippines Police Commandos in Costly Counterterror Raid

components, is only further strengthened. With better cooperation we will be able to prevent these kinds of incidents,” she added.

...Once passed, the BBL would implement the peace agreement between the government and the MILF - abolishing the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and creating a new Bangsamoro political entity.

“Unfortunately their plan to exfiltrate [pull out] before being seen by the various forces there failed.”

Source: The National, “Philippines Probes Slaughter of 44 Police Commandos,” February 4, 2015 <http://www.thenational.ae/world/southeast-asia/philippines-probes-slaughter-of-44-MANILA//>

The Philippine military and police defended their actions ... as an angry nation demanded answers following the slaughter of 44 police commandos in a bungled anti-terror operation.

The policemen were attacked by at least two Muslim rebel groups, including one that signed a peace treaty with Manila last year, during a January 25 mission to capture or kill one of the world’s most wanted militants – Malaysian bomb expert Zulkifli bin Hir.

Giving his first public account, military chief of staff General Gregorio Catapang said troops could not respond in time to save the police unit that raided Zulkifli’s hideout in the southern island of Mindanao.

“We did not know the exact place where the [police] forces had to be extricated ... they were not telling us their exact location so it was difficult,” Mr Catapang told a news conference.

...Police say Zulkifli was killed in the raid...

The US department of justice indicted Zulkifli in 2007 on terrorism charges and offered a reward of as much as \$5 million for information leading to his arrest or conviction.

Zulkifli is accused of having been a leader of the Al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah organisation and is suspected to have been involved in a 2002 nightclub bombing on the resort island of Bali in Indonesia that killed 202 people.

“Another unresolved issue is the fact that while reinforcements from the military were requested as early as 5:30 a.m., none was sent until 13 hours later in the afternoon.”

Source: Philippines Star, “Senate Investigation Finished,” February 26, 2015 <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/2015/02/26/1427729/senate-investigation-finished>

... an emotional Major General Edmundo Pangilinan expressing his bad feelings about his 6th Infantry Division men, who has jurisdiction over Maguindanao, being blamed for the death of 44 Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF) troopers.

...Senator Alan Peter Cayetano berated ... officials for not making a formal demand for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to surrender their rebels who are responsible for the killing of the thirty-five 55th Special Action Company (SAC) members.

...The question now: Since General Purisima and General Napeñas were singled out as accountable for their alleged failure to coordinate their mission called Oplan Exodus with the military, what disciplinary action will be taken against them?

The other big question is will Justice Secretary Leila de Lima be able to file charges against the MILF rebels who did the killings, especially those who brutally finished off the wounded SAF troopers?...

...So many other deficiencies indicate poor planning, including the lack of helicopters and guns to back up the SAF troopers.

(continued)

Continued: Philippines Police Commandos in Costly Counterterror Raid

“Senate, police reports lay blame on Philippine leader”

Source: Strait Times, “Philippine President Aquino’s approval rating plunges after botched police raid,” March 18, 2015 <http://www.stasiareport.com/the-big-story/asia-report/philippines/story/philippine-president-aquinos-approval-rating-plunges-aft#sthash.WjSvVjR0.dpuf>

President Benigno Aquino’s approval and trust ratings have plunged to their lowest levels since he came to power in 2010 after several reports found him liable for a botched police raid in January that left more than 60 people dead.

The findings by a Senate committee and a police panel could be used in lawsuits that may be filed after he steps down as president next year.

A Pulse Asia survey showed Mr Aquino’s approval rating sank to 38 per cent this month from 59 per cent in November, while his trust rating fell to 36 per cent from 56 per cent.

Reacting to the survey, Mr Aquino’s spokesman Herminio Coloma told reporters: “We will continue to explain aspects of what happened where there is much doubt. The process of explaining will not stop because our people need to understand exactly what transpired and know the whole truth.”

“It was very clear, I was fooled”

Source: Strait Times, “Philippine President Aquino says he was ‘fooled’ about deadly botched commando raid,” March 9, 2015 <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/philippine-president-aquino-says-he-was-fooled-about-deadly-botched-#sthash.vg8jZsoh.dpuf>

Philippine President Benigno Aquino on Monday blamed a police general for giving him wrong information about a botched secret mission against Islamic rebels that led to the deaths of 44 commandos.

Mr Aquino is facing his biggest political crisis over the operation to capture a wanted militant with some lawmakers, Roman Catholic bishops, civil society groups and activists calling on him to resign. “It was very clear, I was fooled,” Mr Aquino told reporters. “The truth is, I was given the wrong information by the people who knew most what was happening. Unfortunately, the others who did not know anything could not give any further information other than very raw information.”

On Jan 25, police commandos sneaked into a rebel area in the south to capture Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, an Al-Qaeda-linked bomb maker with a US\$5 million (S\$6.9 million) United States bounty on his head. The commandoes, members of the Special Action Force, were ambushed by Islamic rebels and 44 were killed.

The operation was led by General Getulio Napeñas, who, Mr Aquino said, had deviated from a plan presented to him two weeks before the operation. He said “appropriate charges” would be filed against Gen Napeñas for insubordination.

Thailand Reinforces Relations

16 April 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *In the midst of reports that relations between the current Thai government and the West continue to cool, Prime Minister Prayut (former Army General and head of the latest coup) is looking to seek a “business as usual approach,” but with little success. Since the beginning of 2015 regional voices have pointed out the current government’s missteps as they seek political reform and rewrite the constitution after the coup. The Nation has one such report, where commentators analyze the detrimental outcome of the “continued imposition of martial law and electoral ambiguity.” Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krua-Ngam revealed in January 2015 that planned elections would be delayed until 2016. “It did not go down well with the US and European Union. Later Washington said the new timeframe was unwise,” say these sources. The article goes on to explain how the reaction from ASEAN and other regional nations is far more understanding. This article is an excellent foundation piece for understanding the current Thai diplomatic dilemma.*

Both in the region and without Prayut has taken to the road to drum up economic and political support for Thailand. His recent trip to China is recorded in the Bangkok Post and reveals new interest in weapons purchases along with expanded joint exercises between the two nations. The visit of the Russian prime minister to Thailand in April has required the deputy prime minister and Foreign Minister Tanasak Patimapragorn to “insist that Thailand remains neutral when it comes to foreign affairs.” Additional reporting in the Bangkok Post points to the continued efforts of the Thai government to deflect any critics who point out a loss of Western support and a turn toward other allies.

Quantity of trade, frequency of military

Source: The Nation, “Thai diplomacy faces uphill tasks,” January 5, 2015 <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Thai-diplomacy-faces-uphill-tasks-30251168.html>

....Both the US and EU have been pressing Thailand for an early poll by the end of this year. However, the countries in East Asia and Asean have expressed understanding of the difficult tasks the current government must overcome before a general election can be slated. China’s diplomatic response towards the Prayut government was warm and quickly rewarded. The Thai-Chinese leaders have also established a strong personal rapport that even the 182-year US-Thai relationship could not equal. US allies Japan and South Korea, have decided to conduct business transactions with the government at the highest levels despite their initial criticism of military adventurism. Prayut is scheduled to visit Japan early in February. This is the first time that Thailand’s foreign policy has zeroed in on East Asia exclusively.

...This will be the international environment the Thai government has to contend with and work on until the lifting of martial law and the scheduled election for the next 14-15 months. It will be restrictive with small room for diplomatic manoeuvres. In October, Thailand failed miserably to get sufficient votes to win its second bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. That was a big loss of face. Before the May 22 coup, Bangkok was confident of winning with overwhelming votes. As it turned out, six Western friends changed their minds and enabled Qatar to win.

...If this trend continues, the perception of Thailand in the regional and international arena will be greatly diminished....

...It did not go down well with the US and European Union. Later Washington said the new timeframe was unwise,...

“...a planned submarine purchase is in line for discussions with Beijing.”

Source: Bangkok Post, “Prawit off to China to build defence ties,” April 5, 2015 <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/518587/prawit-off-to-china-to-build-defence-ties>

.... the minister’s trip ... comes at the invitation of China’s Defence Minister Chang Wanquan. It is his second visit to China in six months and the third meeting between the two ministers.

.... Relations between Thailand and China have been strengthened since the military coup last year when Gen Prawiyt took over as Thailand’s leader.

This time Gen Prawit will take with him all military commanders, including navy chief ADM Kraisorn Chansuwanich, to China for the first time.

...The navy renewed a push to buy two submarines late last year with strong support from the defence minister, and China has offered its version with financing which could be repaid in 10 years.

.... plans to foster defence ties by holding more joint exercises between their army, navy and air force which now are held separately twice a year, the source said....

(continued)

Continued: Thailand Reinforces Relations

“...the free-trade agreement between Thailand and the EU, which was almost achieved before the coup, has been completely halted”

exercises, and diplomatic support in international forums have always been a reliable measure of Thailand's bilateral relations. The outcomes of initiatives with South Korea, Japan, and China will tell the story about any significant shifts before the planned elections in 2016.
End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)

“It's not surprising Thailand has opted to purchase more weapons from Russia especially after the US cut down on so-called 'military assistance' to Thailand,”

Source: The Bangkok Post, “Foreign minister denies Russia, China pivot,” April 13, 2015
<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/526351/foreign-minister-denies-russia-china-pivot>

... critics suggested the country is leaning towards Russia and China.

Thailand maintains its usual foreign policy and has never chosen sides, said Gen Tanasak.

Russia has been a friend of Thailand for 118 years, he said. The US and Thailand have maintained close relations for over 180 years.

...”We're open and always play it straight with any sides. We've never befriended anyone because we want to make others jealous. I can insist this government is honest and frank. We are willing to cooperate with every country in the international community. And of course we play by the rules,” Gen Tanasak said.

The visit of the Russian prime minister, the first of its kind in 25 years, resulted in joint agreements in a number of areas, from energy to military hardware. These agreements prompted critics to suggest Thailand's foreign policy was shifting at a time when the US was putting pressure on the government over the May 22 coup and its impact on the Thai political situation. The US wants Thailand to return to a democracy.

...When Thailand purchased a large volume of weapons from the US, that country called the purchases “military assistance” and the deals normally came with many conditions, said Mr Paisal. If Thailand chooses to buy weapons primarily from Russia and China, Asia will become the number one customer of those two countries, he said. The US would lose out as demand for its dollars would decline.

OE Watch Commentary: *There has been considerable speculation over the past few months whether the North Korean leader will attend the Victory Day parade in Moscow on 9 May. This would prove to be the first foreign visit by Kim Jong Un since he assumed the role of supreme leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and, as such, would send a strong message to its large neighbors. While the regime in Pyongyang has tried to balance its relations between Russia and China, over the past two decades it has relied most heavily for support from China. By visiting Moscow before visiting Beijing, the North Korean leadership may be signaling a desire to draw closer to Russia.*

Relations between North Korea and Russia are at their warmest level since the end of the Cold War. For instance, Russia has recently expedited the visa process for those applying for a worker visa. There are already some 25,000 North Korean workers in Russia. In March the Russian Ministry of Defense released plans for joint military drills with North Korean forces. Last February Ri Yong Nam, a North Korean trade official, attended a newly formed Russian-North Korean business council where he discussed Russia's electricity exports to North Korea's Special Economic Zone in Rason. The two countries are aiming to develop \$1 billion in bilateral trade by 2020.

While still good, relations between North Korea and China have cooled over the last several months. The regime in Pyongyang may be trying to reduce its dependency upon its large Chinese neighbor. For instance, when Kim Jong Un purged his powerful uncle, Jang Song-thaek, North Korean media blamed Jang, claiming that he had sold North Korean natural resources to China at bargain prices. North Korea's foreign policy now resembles that of the country's founder, Kim Il Sung, who tried to maximize benefit by keeping a balance between China and Russia.

The brief excerpt from a North Korean article provides another reason for closer cooperation between North Korea and Russia: defense against a common enemy. According to the article, Kremlin leaders are struggling to defend against "the United States and its

Source: Ri Ch'o'l-hyo'k, "Preparatory Work in Russia for the Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the War Victory," Rodong Sinmun Online, 30 March 2015. <http://www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/>

Preparatory Work for the 70th Anniversary of the War Victory

Russia has stepped up the preparatory work to splendidly celebrate the 70th anniversary of the great fatherland war victory. Russia has held various celebratory events annually to mark 9 May, day of the great fatherland war victory, but bigger significance has been attached to the occasion this time around.

Russia has already commenced the work to meaningfully celebrate this year's War Victory Day by last year establishing a commemorative medal for the "70th anniversary of the victory of the great fatherland war of 1941-1945."

Parades to celebrate the War Victory Day will be held in 28 cities of Russia, and around 78,500 people and approximately 2,000 items of military technical equipment are expected to be mobilized for this. Parades will also be held in the cities of the Community of Independent States, such as Minsk and Bishkek.

Reportedly, about 15,000 soldiers will participate in the Moscow parade, which is twice the number of participants in the celebratory parade held on the 65th anniversary. The 70th anniversary of the war victory will be adorned with varied events including a celebratory banquet and a gun salute.

In order to further highlight the significance of the celebratory events, Russia has sent invitations for the war victory celebratory events to the heads of scores of countries and chiefs of international organizations, and the leaders of many countries have already expressed their intention to attend the events....

...As is well-known, Russia has been facing grave challenges and provocations infringing upon the interests and safety of the homeland in recent years....

...Russia is attempting to display the country's potential and power of unity before the dominationist forces, who are further obsessed with sanctions and pressure toward the homeland, through the events celebrating the 70th anniversary of the war victory.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine situation, the United States has expanded international cooperation for politically isolating and economically suffocating Russia through sanctions and pressure based on this, in a step by step manner, while increasing the level of threats through NATO's military actions....

...What the United States and its follower forces are aiming at is weakening Russia's national power by applying pressure politically, economically, and militarily and easily putting a ring in its nose by escalating internal conflict and strife. Russia, well aware of such an attempt, has been trying to show that the ambition of hostile forces is no more than a daydream through the events of War Victory Day. In other words, it is attempting to display at home and abroad that no one can subjugate Russia by displaying the comprehensive national power of the country, including military power, and demonstrating the unified strength of the government, army, and people.

(continued)

Continued: North Korean Leader at Russian Victory Parade

follower forces [which] are aiming at weakening Russia's national power by applying pressure politically, economically, and militarily..." Like similar staged events in Pyongyang, the Victory Day parade in Moscow will "display at home and abroad that no one can subjugate Russia by displaying the comprehensive national power of the country, including military power, and demonstrating the unified strength of the government, army, and people." End OE Watch Commentary (Kim and Finch)

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 US 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>

(continued)

With Increasing Confidence, China's Newest Submarine About to be Unveiled

7 April 2015

“Judging from the vessel’s design, the Type-093G should have strong anti-ship and counter-submarine capabilities... It is also likely to be upgraded with the capability of striking land targets with cruise missiles in the near future.”

OE Watch Commentary: China continues to make strides in military-based technologies while also becoming more transparent about its capabilities. Following are two articles discussing the commissioning of the Type-093G, a new, cutting-edge nuclear-powered attack submarine. The first article is from China’s US version of China Daily and the second offers an analysis from Taiwan’s point of view.

The first article explains that China established its nuclear-powered submarine force in the early 1970s. However, the country had maintained silence on the capability until 2009, during which time two nuclear submarines participated in a parade marking the 60th anniversary of the PLA Navy’s founding. The article cites several other sources in describing the capabilities of the submarine. The Type-093G’s wing-shaped cross section is designed to improve speed and mobility while also reducing noise. It has a vertical launcher capable of delivering China’s YJ-18 supersonic anti-ship missile.

The second article goes further by stating that, while the new Type-093G might not be powerful enough to engage a US carrier battle group in the Asia-Pacific, it would be powerful enough to defeat Japan’s new helicopter destroyer Izumo in a naval confrontation over the disputed East China Sea. Izumo is said to be Japan’s largest warship since World War II.

It is interesting to note China’s growing transparency as the country strengthens. It could be a show of force, or an increased confidence in its capabilities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Zhao Lei, “Navy to Get 3 New Nuclear Subs,” China Daily USA, 3 April 2015, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-04/03/content_19989106.htm

Navy to Get 3 New Nuclear Subs

China established its nuclear-powered submarine force in the early 1970s but had never shown it to the outside world until 2009, when two nuclear submarines took part in a parade marking the 60th anniversary of the PLA navy’s founding.

Cui Yiliang, editor-in-chief of Modern Ships magazine, said: “Though China was comparatively late in developing advanced nuclear-powered submarines such as the Type-093G, we used a lot of the most cutting-edge technologies and equipment on our submarines, enabling them to compete with their foreign counterparts.”

“Judging from the vessel’s design, the Type-093G should have strong anti-ship and counter-submarine capabilities,” said Yin Zhuo, a senior expert with the navy. “It is also likely to be upgraded with the capability of striking land targets with cruise missiles in the near future.”

Liu Jiangping, a naval equipment expert in Beijing who had served in the PLA navy for decades, said the vessel’s vertical launching system enables the submarine to launch long-distance strikes from underwater, increasing the vessel’s survivability in war.

Source: “PLA’s Type 093G Submarines ‘Could Destroy Izumo,’” Want China Times, 7 April, 2015, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150407000124&cid=1101>

PLA’s Type 093G Submarines ‘Could Destroy Izumo

China’s new Type 093G nuclear-powered attack submarine would be powerful enough to defeat Japan’s new helicopter destroyer Izumo in a potential naval confrontation over disputed East China Sea territory, according to the state-run China News Service (CNS).

With a vertical launching system similar to the Los Angeles-class, nuclear-powered fast attack submarines of the US Navy, the Type 093G can fire beneath the surface of the water. It may not be powerful enough to engage the US carrier battle groups in the Asia-Pacific, but it is certainly capable of dealing with Japan’s helicopter carrier in the region. The Japan Maritime Self Defense Force is currently unable to intercept China’s long-range anti-ship cruise missiles.

Will Pyongyang Allow Access to Other Countries in Pursuit of Rare Earth Elements?

“North Korea walks a rare earth tightrope among China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia.”

OE Watch Commentary: Access to rare earth elements has been a hot topic since 2010. These strategic elements are critical to hundreds of high-tech applications, including military-based technology. Over the past several decades China has taken steps to corner the market. The country now produces nearly 90 percent of the world's rare earth elements.

The following article talks about a potentially “monolithic reserve” of rare earth elements located in North Korea. While the actual amount of reserves located within the country is questionable, this could impact the regional geopolitical playing field. In the article the author explains that growing territorial disputes have prompted Japan, which is heavily dependent on China for rare earth elements for its production of high-tech products, to seek out alternate supplies. According to the article, the increasing territorial disputes have “opened North Korea’s eyes to the opportunity present to it.” Meanwhile, while North Korea’s late leader, Kim Jong-il, favored Japan due to his mother having lived there, relations between the North and Japan have been tense due to “issues surrounding the regime’s abduction of Japanese citizens decades ago.” Meanwhile, as the article points out, “China pays close attention to rare earth exports from North Korea, and it is not pleased to see that North Korea could be a new supply line for Japan, forcing it [China] to lose leverage.”

The article also talks about relations between North Korea and South Korea and the possibility of the two countries cooperating on developing the North’s rare earth reserves. However, “South Korea does not appear to have any interest in developing rare earth minerals with the North, particularly with ties as tense as they are...”

Russia is another possible player. According to the article, in October Russia and an unspecified North Korean company embarked to repair North Korea’s inland railway system.

China still holds the key to the rare earth industry and influence over North Korea, importing some 60 metric tons from the country last year. It will be interesting to see which way North Korea turns and how its actions might impact regional relations.

End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)

Source: Ko Soo-Suk, “Regional Players Eye Pyongyang’s Rare Earth Mineral Reserves,” Korea JoongAng Daily, 6 April 2015, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3002750>

Regional Players Eye Pyongyang’s Rare Earth Mineral Reserves

As ties between China and Japan have progressively soured over the past few years, Tokyo has increasingly turned its eyes toward North Korea’s natural resources.

...As Japan searched for a more secure supply (than China) of rare earth minerals in Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Estonia, it eventually locked its sights on North Korea...

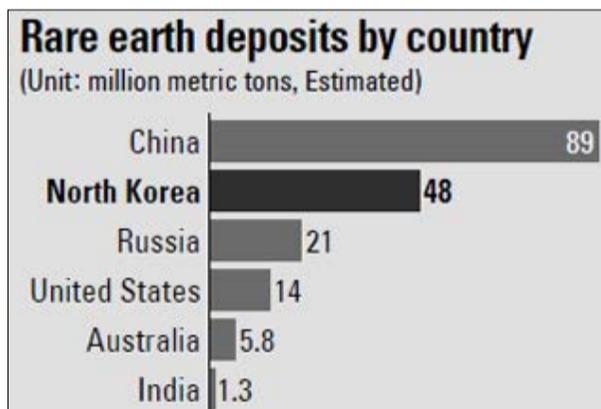
...the increasingly heated territorial dispute between Japan and China opened North Korea’s eyes to the opportunity present to it.

... North Korea walks a rare earth tightrope among China, Japan, South Korea and Russia...

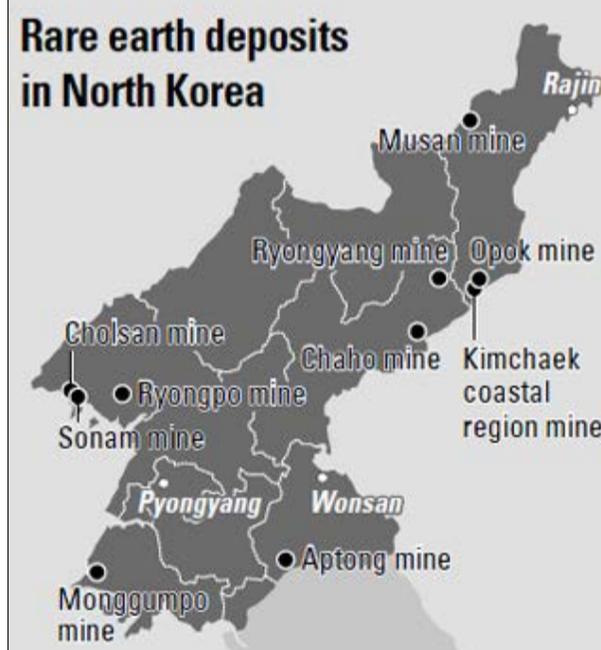
... North Korea’s options now are limited and its allies dwindling.

China pays close attention to rare earth exports from North Korea, and it is not pleased to see that North Korea could be a new supply line for Japan, forcing it to lose leverage.

So China has now opted to import rare earth minerals from North Korea in small quantities. According to statistics released by the Korea Foreign Trade Association, North Korea rare earth exports to China last year added up to about 60 metric tons.



Source: JoongAng Ilbo Unification Culture Research Institute



Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps Continues to Grow

15 April 2015

“...the new city will play an important role in the transition of the corps to garrison (provide with troops) China’s western border regions from cultivation to industrialization.”

OE Watch Commentary: *In its continued push to urbanize parts of Xinjiang, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a quasi-military organization founded in 1954, formally opened its eighth “Corps city” recently. The first article announces that achievement. The new city, called Kokdala, covers a land area of 980 square kilometers (378 square miles) in Lli Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, near the Kazakh border in Xinjiang, and has a population of about 80,000. The article goes on to explain that XPCC maintains military structural titles such as divisions and regiments and has its own administrative and judicial bodies. It now has more than 4,000 enterprises and a total population of more than 2.45 million.*

In the second article the authors report that since 2010, each of the eight cities have played “an important role in building the core region of the Silk Road Economic Belt and in realizing social stability and long-term peace.” The article goes on to explain that “as early as the First CPC Central Committee Conference on Xinjiang Work, the CPC Central Committee clearly stated that it supports the Corps in choosing central cultivated land area towns with important strategic positions, good economic foundations, and great potential for development.”

Over the past 61 years the XPCC has been growing in numbers, strength, and control. It is a movement that is worth tracking. End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)

Source: “China’s Xinjiang Establishes Eighth ‘Corps City,’” Xinhua, 13 April 2015, http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2015-04/13/content_35306610.htm

China’s Xinjiang Establishes Eighth ‘Corps City’

XPCC Commander Liu Xinqi said the new city will play an important role in the transition of the corps to garrison China’s western border regions from cultivation to industrialization.

The XPCC maintains military structural titles such as divisions and regiments, and has its own administrative and judicial bodies. It now has more than 4,000 enterprises and a total population of more than 2.45 million.

Source: Yao Tong and Yang Yingchun, “近几年，新疆陆续新设立市为新型城镇化建设增添新的活力 (In Past Few Years, Xinjiang has Added New Vitality to New Urbanization by Successively Establishing New Cities),” Xinjiang Ribao Online, 15 April 2015, <<http://epaper.xjdaily.com/detail.aspx?id=8975795>>.

(The cities established by the XPCC) play an important role in building the core region of the Silk Road Economic Belt and in realizing social stability and long-term peace.

[Xinjiang] Production and Construction Corps cultivated land areas have had problems with a certain degree of restrictions and limitations on their administrative management authority. As early as the First CPC Central Committee Conference on Xinjiang Work, the CPC Central Committee clearly stated that it supports the Corps in choosing central cultivated land area towns with important strategic positions, good economic foundations, and great potential for development, and to add county-level cities directly administered by the Autonomous Region in the Shihezi model.

China Considers Cyber Warfare and the Law of Armed Conflict

Date

“Baidu Encyclopedia defines cyber warfare as follows: ‘Cyber warfare refers to a series of activities to attack and defend networks in order to jam and disrupt the enemy’s networked information system and to ensure the normal operation of our own networked information system.’” [<http://baike.baidu.com/>]

OE Watch Commentary: China has written extensively on cyber operations over the past decade or more, developing concepts such as system sabotage and integrated network-electronic warfare. The article under discussion here was published in China Military Science and is one of the first open source Chinese attempts at tying cyber war to the Law of Armed Conflict. Therefore the article will be dissected and presented in four parts: definitions and characteristics; whether cyber war should be regulated by the Law of Armed Conflict; how cyber war restricts the Law of Armed Conflict; and self-defense and liability in cyber war.

The article seeks to answer four questions according to the abstract: How should cyber warfare be defined in the context of the existing Law of Armed Conflict? What is the relation between cyber warfare and the prohibition on the use of force under the Charter of the United Nations? Should cyber warfare be regulated and curtailed by the existing Law of Armed Conflict? How should legal liability for cyber warfare be determined and investigated? **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Xie Dan and Chen Xingyu, “Considerations Triggered by Cyber Warfare on the Law of Armed Conflict—A Case Study and Jurisprudential Exploration,” China Military Science, No. 5 2013, pp. 130-139.

...within the context of the Law of Armed Conflict, cyber warfare should refer to hostile operational actions taken directly in coordination with military actions, or as standalone military actions, by a state or a warring group or individuals controlled by a state to utilize its computer network attack capability through non-material means, such as “disruption, deprivation, control, weakening or destruction” to specifically attack information stored in enemy computers or networks, or enemy computers and networks.

Based on the analysis illustrated above, we can see that as a novel operational mode, cyber warfare has a number of distinctively different characteristics. First, there is some novelty in cyber warfare media and the battlefield environment. . . In cyber warfare, virtual network space is used as a carrier for operations. . . Next, the operating time of cyber warfare is long lasting in nature. . . Next, cyber warfare involves a variety of subjects. . . Fourthly, the warring process in cyber warfare is abrupt in nature. . . Fifthly, cyber warfare is significantly “asymmetric” in nature. . . Sixthly, cyber warfare is anonymous in nature.

In conclusion, cyber warfare has its unique connotations and attributes. It is significantly different from conventional operational modes. As a result, it becomes a “multiplier” of combat capability and the “top choice” for every country in enhancing its military might. To this end, there is obviously a need to include it into the regulatory domain of the Law of Armed Conflict in order to prevent its abuse to cause undue harm to human society.

“Presently, according to more authoritative doctrine, cyber warfare, otherwise known as network confrontation, refers to operational actions taken in information network space to disrupt enemy network systems and network information, or to weaken its capability, in order to protect our own network system and network information.” [PLA Military Terms, Beijing: Military Science Press, 2011, p. 286.]

China's Silk Road: Logic of the State Leaves Little Room for Market's 'Invisible Hand'

OE Watch Commentary: *Arms of the Chinese state financial sector seem to be mobilizing to fulfill Chinese President Xi Jinping's 2013 launch of his One Belt One Road (IBIR) initiative. The initiative centers on a series of interconnecting infrastructure projects by which China intends to better connect its western provinces with Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Europe beyond. Strategically, China hopes to not only foster development in its relatively less prosperous western half, but also participate at various levels in the development of the Central Asian states through which the "Road" would traverse. To realize its aims, China is allocating about \$90 billion in state funds: \$40 billion for its own "Silk Road Fund" and \$50 billion as its contribution to the "Asian Infrastructure Development Bank," a new multilateral lender principally sponsored by China.*

China is boldly striking out with massive amounts of state capital into a region where both global investors and development banks hesitate to lend and where Western, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian infrastructure companies severely limit their activities. Insecurities abound in the Central and South Asian region. Legal as well as physical insecurities have long discouraged most other large-scale infrastructure companies from pursuing projects in the region that puts their capital – or their staff and equipment – at risk. So, in what way are these Chinese-sponsored projects different?

In the first article, the chairwoman of China's Silk Road Fund states that her fund "will stick to market principles." Can the large amounts of capital involved in China's Silk Road initiative be deployed profitably? Is there sufficient local demand for these projects and therefore the ability to pay for them? Or will China be the demand generator that makes these projects sustainable? Given the region's low per capital incomes, high levels of political instability, and low levels of property rights, it is doubtful that local demand will generate sufficient surpluses. Reality likely lies closer to the assertion that China is building this infrastructure for its own use. It intends to create an alternate land route for its imports and thereby decrease its vulnerability to potential interdiction of the Straits of Malacca. At least as important, it hopes to expand its export markets to include currently poorly served Central Asia and beyond.

According to the second article, China is recapitalizing its state-owned development banks in order to arm them with the funds necessary to begin the decadal work of funding Silk Road infrastructure projects. An interesting indicator that Silk Road projects will not "stick to market principles" is the reversal of the prior moves to commercialize these banks' lending decisions. A market-oriented entity would look upon

Source: "Silk Road Fund to Launch Soon," Crienglish, 13 March 2015. <http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/03/13/3781s869860.htm>.

Silk Road Fund Launching

Jin Qi is the head of board of directors of the fund. "The Silk Road Fund is not an aid fund or a donation fund. We will stick to market principles, invest in profitable projects, ensure reasonable returns for our long-term investments, and safeguard shareholders' interests." The new fund is designed for investment in areas such as infrastructure, resource development, and industrial and financial cooperation through various financing methods.

Source: "China PBOC To Recapitalize Policy Banks With Fx Reserves," MNI News, 20 April 2015. <https://mninews.marketnews.com/print/1174566>.

How Silk Road Projects Will Be Funded

The central bank will inject \$32 billion into China Development Bank and another \$30 billion into the Export-Import Bank of China, sources said. The report quoted a CDB source who said that the banks need long-term foreign exchange funds to support the government's plan to tie Central and East Asia into a vast trading area, an initiative dubbed "one road, one belt". The State Council recently approved reform plans for the three policy banks in a move that analysts said effectively ended earlier moves to become commercial entities.

Source: "Results of PPP Investment Model Don't Match Early Enthusiasm," Caixin, 10 April 2015. http://english.caixin.com/print/print_en.jsp.

Private Sector Avoidance of White-Elephant Projects

A highly anticipated model that would see partnerships between public and private investors set up to get infrastructure projects built has fallen far short of expectations in practice. A policy researcher close to the NDRC, China's top economic planner, said that without proper legal protection of private companies' long-term interests in PPP projects and a clarification of supervision responsibilities, firms will hesitate to take part.

(continued)

Continued: China's Silk Road: Logic of the State Leaves Little Room for Market's 'Invisible Hand'

Central Asian infrastructure as an extreme risk venture.

The third article gives another indirect but telling indicator that China's IBIR projects are more strategic calculus than market analysis. Even in China itself, when the government is not assuming the full cost of infrastructure, the private sector shows no enthusiasm for projects that do not have clear ownership and rules on both income generation and its distribution.

*It is highly likely that China will deploy its financial might and build this infrastructure to further its regional agenda. It is also likely that these works will in some fashion be gainfully used by the host countries, as well as Chinese merchants and potentially armed forces. The question is how will China's subtle but deliberate blending of economic and strategic power mechanisms translate into its ability to influence Central and South Asia? **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)***



The Strategic Implications of Chinese Companies Going Global

By COL Heino Klinck, US Army; Edited by Cindy Hurst, FMSSO

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>

“Once the lifting of sanctions is in effect, China is likely to benefit from Iran’s harbor. The Iranian nuclear issue reaching a final agreement is conducive to China.”

OE Watch Commentary: In a Chinese-language article written on 10 April 2015 for sina.com, Wang Jin, a Chinese scholar, discussed his country’s perspectives on possible outcomes of the lifting of Western sanctions on Iran in return for some Iranian concessions on its nuclear program. According to him, the lifting of sanctions on Iran would allow Chinese companies to engage in more infrastructure development in Iran and provide oil exploration and production technology to Iran. While this would be a boon for Sino-Iranian relations, he suggested that the flooding of goods that are “Made in China” to Iran would fatigue Iranian customers and ultimately lead them to preferring higher-quality Western products.

In addition, the lifting of Western and possibly UN sanctions would allow the Beijing-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to consider inviting Iran as a member (no country under UN sanctions is allowed to be a member at present). In 2015 the SCO is expecting to decide on the candidacy of both India and Pakistan, and if Iran also joined it would lead to the expansion of the SCO and elevate its status as a bona fide Eurasian security institution. Although Wang Jin does not mention SCO expansion specifically, there is a strong likelihood that China would welcome using the SCO as an institution to project a Beijing-led regional foreign policy deeper into Eurasia.

The article also discusses possible strategic consequences of the end of the sanctions. One consequence is that Iran’s Chabhar Port could supplant or at least complement Pakistan’s China-built Gwadar port as the key entry point for maritime supplies from Africa and the Middle East to Central Asia. This would especially be the case if Pakistan remains unstable due to militancy. As a result of the increased role of Chabhar Port, Central Asia would become less trade-dependent on Russia and China, while China would benefit from having the port as another option for importing resources via Central Asia in the case of a major conflict in the South China Sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “中国能从伊朗获利多少：多项目或将面临巨大冲击 (China Can Gain a Huge Profit from Iran: Many Projects or Face a Great Attack, sina.com.cn, 10 April 2015.

China Can Gain a Huge Profit from Iran: Many Projects or Face a Great Attack

US and EU trade sanctions on Iran made it struggle for more than 30 years. If there is a significant loosening of sanctions, the situation will change, but the long-term effects of seeing goods “Made in China” will bring fatigue to Iranian consumers and will subtly reinforce Iranian customers’ tendency to prefer Western products. However, Iran’s Chabhar port and China and Pakistan’s Gwadar port project would be tremendously impacted. Goods coming from China’s Xinjiang Province to Pakistan’s Gwadar port go along difficult terrain and have been long harassed by the Taliban in Pakistan and Balochi separatist groups, and the security environment in the future is unlikely to change. In contrast, the Chabhar port project between India and Iran has a distinct advantage. Geographically speaking, Iran’s harbor is only a few hundred kilometers from Gwadar Port, but has excellent natural harbor conditions, and Iran’s relatively good social order is stable. Once the lifting of sanctions is in effect, China is likely to benefit from Iran’s harbor. The Iranian nuclear issue reaching a final agreement is conducive to China.

China and Iran have always had a long history of traditional trade links. From Iran’s perspective, China is Iran’s largest trading partner, and Iran needs China’s financial and technical support. Second, Iran needs China’s oil technology. Third, Iran needs China to provide help and support for infrastructure development in the country.

“This threat is not just a consequence of the departure of the Americans and their allies from beyond the Panj River.... Far more radical supporters of the so-called “Islamic State” turned up in Afghanistan... They announced that they were opening a “third front” in Central Asia. Along with Syria and Iraq.”

Source: Sergey Ishchenko, “Armageddon on Russia’s Southern Underbelly: Tajik Army and Our 201st Military Base Next to Afghanistan Are Living as Though Tomorrow Were 22 June,” Svobodnaya Pressa Online, 06 April 015, <http://svpressa.ru/issue/news.php?id=117858>, accessed 15 April 2015.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia has had mixed feelings about the presence of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan, Russia’s perceived backyard. On one hand, these forces diminish Russian influence in the region and create a feeling of encirclement; on the other hand, these foreign forces mitigate the threat of Islamic extremism that Russia fears will flow from Afghanistan to Post Soviet Central Asia and eventually to Russia itself. In general, Russia has generally seen the latter choice as the lesser of the two evils and has permitted the Russian railways to be used for the transfer of supplies to support these foreign forces via the Northern Distribution Network.*

The looming withdrawal or drastic reduction of these foreign forces has been of concern to Russia for quite some time. It has made efforts at increasing multilateral security cooperation in Central Asia through the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Council of Border Guards. It is also expending resources on a bilateral basis in Central Asia by engaging in security cooperation activities to increase Central Asian military capabilities. The biggest benefactor of these programs, as the accompanying article describes, is Tajikistan, which will reportedly receive 1.2 billion dollars of Russian security assistance - about six times the annual Tajik defense budget. Russia has already increased the

Armageddon on Russia’s Southern Underbelly

Tajikistan is feverishly preparing for war. Sadly, every day brings more and more news attesting to just this.

Military exercises – simply grandiose for such a small country – were held on this republic’s territory in mid-March on the border with Afghanistan (with a total length in excess of 1,300 km) and throughout the Khatlon region. Some 50,000 people participated in the maneuvers at once. Not only soldiers and officers but also reservists urgently called up from the reserve. In addition, representatives of the Tajikistani Defense Ministry traveled to villages and urged the local population to participate voluntarily in what was happening...

Tajik Ground Forces (approximately 8,800 personnel)

Dushanbe- 7th Airborne Brigade, 12th Artillery Brigade, Mountain Rifle Brigade

Qurghonteppa- 1st Motorized Rifle Brigade

Khujand-The 3rd Motorized Rifle Brigade

Tajik Ground Forces Equipment

30 T-72 tanks, seven T-62 tanks, eight BMP-1s, 15 BMP-2s, 23 BTRs,

10 122mm D-30 howitzers, three BM-21 MLRS, 10 120mm PM-38 mortars

Tajik Airforce (approximately 1,500 personnel)

1 Tu-134A, four Mi-24 combat helicopters, 12 Mi-8 and Mi-17 transport helicopters.

In addition, training of Tajikistani commanders and gunners of Grad multiple rocket launchers on the local Lyaur Range is being completed under the leadership of Russian officer-instructors. Their training is calculated to take three months.

Tajikistani border guards were switched to an intensified state border protection regime in February.

Citing an unnamed source on the Russian General Staff, Russian media reported recently that Moscow had made the decision to give Tajikistan military assistance to a total value of 70 billion rubles (\$1.2 billion). Is this a lot or a little?

The “defense expenditure” section of the law on Tajikistan’s budget for this year is stamped “Not for publication.” This in itself makes you think. Because Dushanbe used to give these figures with no problem.

(continued)

Continued: Islamic State Causes Russia to Ramp up Central Asian Security

*size and capabilities of Russia's 201st Military Base in Tajikistan, but now, due to an increasing perceived threat from the Islamic State, it is providing additional training and material support to Tajikistan to fend off invasions from Islamic militants coming out of Afghanistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Russia's 201st Military Base in Tajikistan (approximately 7,500 personnel)

Dushanbe Garrison- The 92nd Motorized Rifle Regiment (consisting of three motorized rifle battalions, sniper company, tank company, artillery battalion, surface-to-air missile battalion, engineer company, and medical company), reconnaissance battalion, rocket-artillery battalion, and support units

Qurghonteppa Garrison-The 191st Motorized Rifle Regiment

Kulob Garrison- The 149th Motorized Rifle Regiment

It is known, for example, that in 2013 the republic's military budget amounted to a scanty \$170 million. The year before -- \$112 million. This just about made it possible to maintain the local army of 8,800 soldiers and officers united in three motorized rifle brigades, one artillery brigade, and one airborne brigade of the Ground Forces and also a helicopter regiment of the Air Force.

Now it turns out that Moscow is ready to present Dushanbe with weapons and military hardware worth seven times this country's defense budget as of 2013. Not at once, naturally, not in the space of one year. But, all the same, such a large-scale decision requires an explanation.

However, it is self-evident: Since the rumble of, to date, training shots is to be heard increasingly frequently next to the border with Afghanistan, this means that both Moscow and Dushanbe are expecting the blow to come from there. At the same time this threat is not just a consequence of the departure of the Americans and their allies from beyond the Panj River. The evacuation of the NATO coalition from Afghanistan before the end of last year was known about long ago. It had long been clear that Taliban extremists would at once try to fill the military-political vacuum that has arisen in Central Asia.

Both Dushanbe and Moscow prepared for this. But the reality proved far worse. Far more radical supporters of the so-called "Islamic State" turned up in Afghanistan...They announced that they were opening a "third front" in Central Asia. Along with Syria and Iraq.

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoliy Antonov recently made the following comment on this: "We can see how they are starting to press our allies – above all, the Collective Security Treaty Organization countries and Tajikistan – toward the southern borders." Further: "We can see what is happening in Afghanistan and how complex the situation there is. We can see how various terrorist organizations are being reformatted."

OE Watch Commentary: *Afghanistan's tenuous stability grows all the more uncertain. Most recently the Islamic Movement Uzbekistan (IMU) has sworn an oath of fealty to the Islamic State (IS). Military command, especially among members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), is picking up on these developments. The CSTO is expected to commit more military support to its member nations along Afghanistan's borders, but Russia especially is committing to direct increases in personnel and equipment at its 201st Motorized Rifle Division, based in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.*

Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan all share Afghanistan's northern border. As a result, the security services of these states have long been on edge in anticipation of resumed conflict in the region. Lately, Russia was reported by Turkmen news media to have collaborated with Uzbek security services (see: <http://www.fergananews.com/news/23194>) by sending border guards to the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border. Russia is lending even more overt support to Tajikistan. Ethnic Tajik fighters believed to be fighting for the IS in Syria and Iraq lately have issued numerous statements threatening to bring jihad back to Tajikistan. While it could be difficult for many ethnic Tajik fighters serving for IS in the Middle East to return to Tajikistan, IS patronage of the IMU could jeopardize security in Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan.

*Increasing the numbers of soldiers in the 201st, as well as outfitting them with updated equipment, could alleviate some of Tajikistan's anxieties stemming from its neighbor to the south. Major General Evgeny Tubol, Commander of the 201st base in Dushanbe, made clear that Russia intends to use the 201st to initiate defensive operations on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border in coordination with Tajik military forces in the event of any incursions made from Afghanistan. According to Tubol, improvements made to the base will be done in order to work toward the formation of a united Russian and Tajik military force. As Russia is allegedly cooperating with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on defense of their southern borders, Russia is increasing its capacity to police Afghanistan's northeastern border, indicating a renewed interest in influencing the state of security in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)***

Source: “Командующий 201-й РВБ: К 2020 году численность военных будет увеличена до 9 тыс.” [Commander of the 201st Russian military base: By the year 2020 the number of the military will grow to nine thousand] ASIA-Plus, 3 April 2015. <http://news.tj/ru/news/komanduyushchii-201-i-rvb-k-2020-godu-chislennost-voennykh-budet-uvlichena-do-9-tys>

Commander of the 201st Russian military base: By the year 2020 the number of the military will grow to nine thousand.

At the briefing, commander of the military force Evgeny Tubol talked about plans and tasks of the base, reporting that for the purpose of modernization and technical rearmament the Russian military base will receive new modern equipment until 2020 and that its staff will increase to nine thousand soldiers.

The major general reported that currently the staff of the base numbers approximately 5,900 people. . . The commander stressed that the base is composed exclusively of military personnel and civilians on contract from Russia. . . Evgeny Tubol reported that in the framework of the signed agreement, every year up to 1,000 specialists will be trained for the Tajik army – tank operators, air defense units, communications and other forms of military.

Tubol stressed that the main responsibility of the base is providing national security for Russia and its allies in the Central Asian region, providing cooperation with the military forces of Tajikistan in the event of aggression from the territory of Afghanistan, defense of important state and military objectives in the country that they are located in, receiving Russian units on the territory of Tajikistan that are assigned to crisis situations and joint action in the form of a united group of military force.

In the words of the major general, in the case of necessity and of adoption of a political decision by member countries of the CSTO, units of the base may arrive to the Tajik-Afghan border within a day in order to deflect possible attacks.

“...the rebirth of semi-criminal, paramilitary citizens groups is the consequence of revolutions and seizures of power that took place in Kyrgyzstan in the last decade”

OE Watch Commentary: The Kyrgyz group “Kyrk Chorolor” (Forty Warriors) made headlines last December when its members went into a nightclub in Bishkek and temporarily detained a few dozen people, mostly Chinese nationals and Kyrgyz women, the latter of whom they accused of being prostitutes. The group claimed it carried out its raid in order to protect the dignity and culture of Kyrgyz people and that it was acting with the support of Kyrgyzstan’s Interior Ministry (MVD) and National Security Committee (GKNB). The accompanying article reports on similar groups that have recently appeared in Kyrgyzstan, including one that has said it will utilize athletes to form a paramilitary organization. The article provides some background on how these groups have formed over the past several years and offers a warning on what might happen if the groups are allowed to continue to operate.

The article implies that the government, or some government officials, are behind these kinds of groups. In the case of “Kyrk Chorolor” there was no order or endorsement of the group’s activities, but officials acknowledged that the group had signed a memorandum with authorities, which leaders of the group interpreted as permission to carry out their goals as they saw fit, including their raid in December. One of the heads of “Kyrk Chorolor” has since been arrested and charged with hooliganism because of the raid. The group “Kalys” (a Kyrgyz word which roughly translates as impartial) has been active for over a year, but it was the recent announcement in this article that it will become paramilitary and work to combat external threats that has caused alarm. A few days after this article appeared, representatives of the GKNB and MVD announced that they will not allow this type of organization to carry out law enforcement in the country.

Lastly, the author of the article connects the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010 to the rebirth of these kinds of groups. The word “rebirth” could be referring to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when funding and opportunities for athletes dried up and some became involved in providing “muscle” for racketeering groups. The groups mentioned in this article claim to be focused on apparent threats (including external threats) to Kyrgyz culture and the stability of the country and not necessarily carrying out the same function as the racketeering groups that preceded them. The author also offers a warning on being able to control these groups in the future. While it cannot be verified where in the country Kalys is active or how many members it has, it is worth remembering how civil unrest in Kyrgyzstan can quickly take place and adjust to tactics of police and security forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Gromskiy, Pavel. “К чему приведет радикализация молодежи? (What is the radicalization of youth leading to?),” Vesti.kg, 19 March 2015.
http://www.vesti.kg/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=33025:k-chemu-privedet-radikalizatsiya-molodezhi?&Itemid=125

What is leading the radicalization of youth?

As reported by “Vesti.kg” the leader of the semi-criminal group “Kalys”, Jenish Moldokmato, said that it will help some athletes to create a “paramilitary” organization to take action against external threats...the movement will move toward cleansing the state of terrorists and child rapists, and protesting non-governmental organizations and individuals...to all who fall into the category of “deserving” there will be “preventative conversations”, and, if necessary, the application of force...the group is prepared to take action anywhere in the country on short notice.

...“Kyrk Choro” is another group with a nationalist mentality, and is under investigation for an attack on a private establishment. Members of the group “Patriot” have been prosecuted in Russia for abusing Kyrgyz women who had met with men of other nationalities...the rebirth of semi-criminal, paramilitary citizens groups is the consequence of revolutions and seizures of power that took place in Kyrgyzstan in the last decade...

...“The danger is that politicians think that they can manage and control the marginalized, but this is a delusion – crime is not possible to control” – noted Cholpon Jakupov, head of the legal organization Adilet.



The Capabilities of Kazakhstan's Caspian Border Guards Detachment

“In comparison to previous years – this is a reduction in the number of offenders. This is a result of complex application of force and equipping the coastal force.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The legal status of the Caspian as a lake or a sea by its littoral states has yet to be resolved, but as the accompanying link to a photo essay by Vox Populi shows, the unclear status does not prevent Kazakhstan from patrolling along the country's coast. The legal dispute over the Caspian, in short, is whether or not it is defined as a lake or a sea. If the five littoral states (Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan) agree to define the Caspian as a lake, then they would share an equal portion and resources, including access to oilfields in the Caspian seabed. If they reach an agreement to define it as a sea, then it would be divided up based on each state's coastline, which would give Kazakhstan a significant share of the Caspian and access to resources. In 2014 the five governments reached an agreement that allows each of them to patrol a section of the Caspian 15 miles out from their respective coastlines. The focus of the photos is how the Kazakhstan's Border Guards deal with poachers in the Caspian, while offering a more in-depth look at how the detachment operates and a few of its capabilities.*

It is well known that poachers are a problem in the Caspian, but the steps that the Kazakh Border Guards have taken to deal with the problem and the fact that even though poachers' ships are impounded, they often wind up back in use with the same crew because of a lack of prosecution and other legal loopholes for offenders and owners of the ships have not always been known. More importantly, the ships and helicopters shown in the photos appear to be as well armed as the country's Navy, except for the Kazakh Navy's recent acquisition of a rocket-artillery ship. One of the photo's captions notes how the detachment recently acquired the armed variants of the Mi-8 transport helicopter. The photos of the Border Guards apprehending and in pursuit of poachers do not suggest that they are going up against armed groups. The author photographed warning shots being fired from a ship to prevent poachers from fleeing, and violent resistance has been mentioned as an issue in the past, though no major incidents have been reported. Ultimately, the Border Guards' capability to use force in the Caspian appears to be increasing alongside that of the country's Navy (see: June 2014 OE Watch, “The Growth of Kazakhstan's Navy”).

End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

Source: “Bedenko, Grigoriy. “Браконьеры убивают Каспий (Poachers are killing the Caspian),” Vox Populi, 18 March 2015. <http://www.voxpopuli.kz/main/brakonery-ubivayut-kaspiy-11830.html>

Poachers are killing the Caspian

Spring is here and it is a busy time for the Kazakh border guards...every year the unique bio system of water goes through catastrophic activity from poachers...the population of Caspian sturgeon and other species are on the verge of extinction. If not for the efforts of Kazakhstan's Border Guards, this would have long ago become a fact...

In 2014 the border guards detained 60 violators of the state border and more than 40 small ships. In comparison to previous years – this is a reduction in the number of offenders. This is a result of complex application of force and equipping the coastal force.



Kazakh Naval Force emblem. Source: Wikipedia,

“Four years ago 20 of our soldiers went to the city of Nahar in India in the framework of bilateral cooperation”

OE Watch Commentary: The governments of Central Asia conduct the majority of their security cooperation activity with Russia, the US, and China, but, as the accompanying article shows, India has occasionally been involved in the region through various efforts. The article reports on a recent joint exercise between Kyrgyzstan and India that involved special forces units from both sides in a scenario of combating a terrorist group in mountainous terrain. This scenario is what the government of Kyrgyzstan sees as one of its biggest threats to security, and it is similar to the majority of joint exercises Kyrgyz forces have conducted for over ten years, but it is worth looking at why Indian forces participated in an exercise like this and what Kyrgyzstan might get out of it.

The bulk of India's past security cooperation in the region has been with Tajikistan, where the Indian government assisted in refurbishing the Ayni Airbase outside of Dushanbe in the 2000s and a hospital on the Tajik-Afghan border for wounded members of the Northern Alliance during the Afghan Civil War. This is in addition to a less publicized joint exercise India conducted with Tajikistan in 2003 and Tajik officers in attendance at Indian military academies since the late 1990s, though how many have continued to attend is unknown. The article mentions how the Indian and Kyrgyz militaries conducted a joint exercise in India four years ago, though it does not mention how some Kyrgyz officers have been in academies in India, reportedly to learn English. It has been widely believed that India's continued interest in Central Asian is related to the situation in Afghanistan and the subsequent effect actions there have on Pakistan. While this security cooperation may benefit India in that regard, Kyrgyzstan has its own goals in working with multiple partners.

In November 2013 Kyrgyz forces conducted an exercise similar to this recent one with members from the General Staff of Turkey's Armed Forces. That exercise was one of the largest to take place between Kyrgyzstan and Turkey as part of a bilateral security partnership dating back to the 1990s. There could certainly be a benefit for Kyrgyz forces (including special operations units) to learn additional tactics, but the exercise might ultimately open the door for additional cooperation to the level that Tajikistan had prior to renegotiating the lease of the Ayni Airbase to Russia. It was believed that Tajikistan utilized its partnership with India as leverage against Russia in order to gain a better compensation deal for use of Ayni. Kyrgyzstan does not currently have the same level of security cooperation with India that Tajikistan did, but if a stronger partnership were to develop, it could enable the Kyrgyz government to follow a similar path. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Jumasheva, Aida. “Кыргызстанский спецназ поделился опытом с индийскими коллегами (Kyrgyzstan's special forces shared experiences with Indian colleagues),” Vecherniy Bishkek, 18 March 2015, http://www.vb.kg/doc/306760_kyrgyzstanskiy_specnaz_podelilsia_opytom_s_indiyskimi_kollegami.html

Kyrgyzstan's special forces shared experiences with Indian colleagues

The special forces unit “Scorpion” is continuing with the anti-terrorism exercise “Kanzhar-2015” on a base in the city of Tokmok. Around 50 special forces soldiers from India are participating with them...“...Four years ago 20 of our soldiers went to the city of Nahar in India in the framework of bilateral cooperation...In particular, we teach (them) combat conditions in the mountains, in addition to medical training in stressful conditions.” – said the unit's commander Col. Talantbek Talipov.

...The main difficulty for the Indian soldiers became the weather conditions... The Indian soldiers received a huge experience of carrying out fighting in snowy mountains...“...your forces serve in difficult conditions...You have pretty modern equipment and weapons...,” said Indian Sgt. Narendera.

...the material and equipment of “Scorpion” allowed it to carry out the exercise with minimal cost. According to the deputy chief the country's armed forces, Janybek Kaparov, 290,000 Som (around \$4650) was spent. These costs were for the purchase of fuel and provisions for the guests...



Para Commandos insignia.
Source: Wikipedia