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Russia's Moves in Syria Complicate Turkey's Position

21 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: On 16-17 September Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirolioglu visited Sochi to meet with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, to discuss a range of issues, including Syria's future. While Russia expands its military presence in Syria to boost Assad's position, Turkey would like to see Syrian President Assad depart as soon as possible. In addition, Turkey would like to see a safe zone established north of Aleppo in northern Syria, but Russia's expanding military presence in this area would make this impossible. The accompanying articles from the Turkish and international press discuss Turkey's increasing divergence with Russia on the Syrian issue.

The first excerpted article claims that Russian unmanned aerial vehicles have started conducting reconnaissance flights over Syria. The piece cites Syrian Foreign Minister Valid Muallim as saying that Russia's support in the fight against groups like ISIS and the al-Nusrah Front would be a potentially game-changing development on the ground in Syria. As the second excerpt points out, Russia's recent involvement in Syria includes renovating and expanding the airport at Latakia, the dispatch of hundreds of military advisers to train regime forces and the supply of advanced weaponry to the Syrian Army. The piece claims that these have compounded Turkey's frustration with this ongoing crisis and represent an obstacle to Turkey's desire to see the earliest possible demise of Assad and his regime.

The third accompanying excerpted article quotes Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's claim that, "The idea that all the problems will be resolved if Assad goes, is a utopia for us." He also says that he and his Turkish counterpart were unable to come to an agreement on Assad's future because Russian officials believe that the Syrian people should be the ones to decide that.

Despite disagreements on other issues, and despite mounting tensions between Russian President Putin and the West, Turkish-Russian relations continue based on realpolitik. Aside from Syria, there are fundamental disagreements between Ankara and Moscow on important regional issues, such as Egypt, Cyprus, the Armenian issue, the Crimean Peninsula and Ukraine. Energy ties and bilateral trade, however, force the sides to "compartmentalize" their issues. Turkey depends on Russia for much of its energy needs and, unlike other members of NATO, did not impose sanctions on Russia after the Crimean crisis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

"... Moscow's activities... represent another spanner in the works thwarting Turkey's desire to see the earliest possible demise of Bashar al-Assad and his regime."



Turkish Foreign Minister (left) Feridun Sinirlioglu and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.
Source: <http://tr.sputniknews.com/politika/20150917/1017798767.html>

Source: "Rusya Suriye'de keşif uçuşlarına başladı" (Russia has started reconnaissance flights in Syria), *Radikal.com.tr*, 21 September 2015, http://www.radikal.com.tr/dunya/rusya_suriyede_kesif_ucuslarina_basladi-1438301

"U.S. officials said that unmanned aerial vehicles belonging to the Russian air force have started conducting reconnaissance flights over Syria. Syrian Foreign Minister Valid Muallim said that Russia's support in the fight against groups like ISIS and the al-Nusrah Front was a new development, and that if Moscow were to participate in operations, 'all plans for Syria would be disrupted.' "

Source: Semih Idiz, "Russia deepens Turkey's Syrian impasse," *Al Monitor.com*, 15 September 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-russia-deepening-syrian-impasse-military-support.html>

"Russia's latest military moves in Syria — which include renovating and expanding the airport at Latakia, the dispatch of hundreds of military advisers to train regime forces and the supply of advanced weaponry to the Syrian army — have compounded Turkey's frustration with this ongoing crisis. Moscow's activities... represent another spanner in the works thwarting Turkey's desire to see the earliest possible demise of Bashar al-Assad and his regime."

Source: "Rusya ve Türkiye, Esad'ın geleceği konusunda neden anlaşamadı?" (Why were Russia and Turkey unable to agree on the future of Assad?), *Sputniknews.com*, 17 September 2015, <http://tr.sputniknews.com/ortadogu/20150917/1017800259.html>

"Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the two countries [Turkey and Russia] were not able to come to an agreement on the future of Syrian President Bashar Assad because the people of Syria should be the ones to decide that.

Sergey Lavrov, who spoke during a joint press meeting following his meeting with Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioglu in Sochi, said, "The idea that all the problems will be resolved if Assad goes, is a utopia for us."

PKK Employs New Tactics against Turkish Military

18 September 2015

“The PKK has introduced its concept of “self-government,” a bottom-up approach, to confront the state and security forces with urban guerrilla techniques.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 6 and 8 September roadside bombs laid by Kurdish fighters killed 30 Turkish soldiers and policeman in Dağlica, in the Hakkari Province of Turkey, near the border with Iraq. While PKK attacks against Turkish military and police forces had re-started on 20 July, effectively ending the two-year cease-fire, the Dağlica attack marked a turning point in many ways. The accompanying articles discuss the clashes and violence that are paralyzing eastern Turkey, focusing on the group’s new tactics.

The 6 September attack was more sophisticated than the group’s old hit-and-run attacks with IEDs. It entailed planting IEDs along a road on the side of a cliff and setting them off to create a blast, thereby sending the military vehicles off a cliff. This was repeated when another military vehicle came to support the first one. The group is also boosting its presence in urban areas and setting up neighborhood forces, while military operations against them are taking place in several cities.

As the first accompanying passage discusses, it appears that the PKK has prepared extensively for violence. It has introduced

a concept of “self-government,” a bottom-up approach, to confront the state and security forces with urban guerrilla techniques. It has called on people to form armed “self-defense forces” in their neighborhoods and districts. The piece claims that this new approach allows the PKK, which keeps 10,000 of its militants in northern Syria, to save on manpower and resources, while compelling Turkish security forces to deal with a new and unfamiliar style of struggle. The PKK is withdrawing into city centers and challenging the security forces to take them on there. The article notes that the Turkish security forces, which are experienced in rural combat, are having to adjust.

The second accompanying excerpt also discusses that the rebels have shifted tactics and boosted their presence in urban areas. It notes that in recent weeks armed Kurdish gangs known as the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement have targeted security personnel in towns and cities, killing an unknown number of policemen. Fighting in urban centers is relatively new and makes today’s confrontation particularly volatile. The third passage also notes that the same youth group had dug ditches and planted booby traps in residential areas to block access to security forces.

The Dağlica attack was also a turning point because it led to the reversal of an earlier government decision, taken in March 2013, to transfer authority from military to local governors after the cease-fire. After the attack a new executive order transferred the authority to determine, plan and execute operations to the military in 13 provinces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Map showing Dağlica, Hakkari.
Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7055004.stm>

Source: Metin Gürcan, “Turkey, PKK clashes continue, but will there be a winner?” *Al Monitor.com*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-pkk-clashes-worsening-balance-sheet.html>

“The PKK has prepared extensively, at both the strategic-political and field levels, for violence. In towns such as Cizre, Silopi, Sirnak, Yuksekova and Semdinli, the PKK has introduced its concept of “self-government,” a bottom-up approach, to confront the state and security forces with urban guerrilla techniques. This PKK model calls on people to form armed “self-defense” forces in their neighborhoods and districts. This new approach allows the PKK, which keeps 10,000 of its militants in northern Syria, to save on manpower and resources while compelling Turkish security forces to deal with a new and unfamiliar style of struggle. The PKK is withdrawing into city centers and challenging the security forces to take them on there. This is why the Turkish security forces, which have gained considerable experience in rural combat, are having problems adjusting.

Another important dynamic of the PKK’s decision to set up neighborhood forces is its unusual granting of authority to local, military and political decision-makers to take action.

With this “franchising of violence,” the PKK is able to maintain its operational pace...”

Source: “Turkey and the Kurds: The hatred never went away,” *The Economist*, 12 September 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21664225-civilians-join-fight-between-soldiers-and-guerrillas-burying-years-calm-hatred-never>

“In recent weeks armed Kurdish gangs known as the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) have targeted security personnel in towns and cities, killing an unknown number of policeman. Fighting in urban centers is relatively new and makes today’s confrontation particularly volatile.”

Source: Mahmut Bozarslan, “Kurds demand answers after battles in Cizre,” *Al Monitor.com*, 18 September 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-kurds-pkk-cizre-curfew-civilian-demand-answers.html>

“Reha Ruhavioglu, a senior member of the Association for Human Rights and Solidarity with the Oppressed,... said the PKK’s youth branch, the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H), had dug ditches and planted booby traps in residential areas to block the access of the security forces...”

Turkey's Defense Industry Goes into Attack Mode

21 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-September 14 Turkish defense firms participated in the Defense and Security Equipment International (DSEI) fair, which took place in London. The accompanying excerpt from the Turkish press discusses Turkey's plans to cooperate with leading firms in the defense industry for its defense projects, particularly its national combat aircraft project.

The excerpted passage, from an article entitled, "We Went into Attack [Mode] in Defense!," quotes Deputy Undersecretary for the Turkish Defense Industry Dr. Celal Sami Tüfekçi as saying that Turkey was present at the DSEI in London to make future plans with and cooperate with leading firms in the world, such as Rolls Royce, for its national combat aircraft. The article also notes that Turkey is now looking to partner with countries for which it was only a market before.

In the last decade, Turkey has made it a strategic priority to reduce dependence on foreign weapons and become more self-sufficient and more competitive in the defense industry. To this end, the Turkish military industry has been promoting strategies that would allow Turkey to design and develop its own weapons. The goal of becoming more self-sufficient in this field is meant both as a deterrent and a way to reduce dependence on foreign companies. In addition to serving the Turkish Armed Forces, the goal is also to increase export and transfer technology.

Turkey, with the second largest army in NATO, has initiated various national military and defense projects, including the national combat aircraft project, the national unmanned aerial vehicle, helicopters, missile and rocket systems, battleships, armored personnel carriers, infantry rifles, satellites and logistic support systems, designs simulations, software and communication systems, and much more. With such initiatives Turkey hopes to become one of the top ten countries in the world in the military industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "Savunmada hücumla geçtik! (We went into attack [mode] in defense!)," *Haberturk.com.tr*, 21 September 2015, <http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/teknoloji/haber/1130989-savunmada-hucuma-gectik>

"The Deputy Undersecretary [of the Defense Industry] Dr. Celal Sami Tüfekçi said, 'We are here to make future plans with and cooperate with leading firms in the world.' Tüfekçi, who noted that they are conducting studies on how they could cooperate with the British Rolls Royce [company] for the Turkish national combat aircraft project FX, also stated that companies like Boeing, Airbus, Saab also work with Rolls Royce, and that Turkey is now also one of those [countries] who was looking into how to work with this model as well. Tüfekçi also mentioned that Turkey has plans to produce its national combat aircraft project, saying, 'We are conducting research on who we can conduct serious cooperation with for the indigenous war plane FX project.'"

"We are conducting research on who we can conduct serious cooperation with, for the indigenous war plane FX project."



Source: <http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/teknoloji/haber/1130989-savunmada-hucuma-gectik>

Jordanian Jabhat al-Nusra Leader Assassinated

25 August 2015

“Al-Falouji is one of the young leaders in the Jihadist Salafist movement in Jordan, and he was among the first who joined al-Nusra after the beginning of the events in Syria in March 2011.”

OE Watch Commentary: Conflict dynamics in southern Syria remain complex, and a recent series of assassinations has targeted high-level leaders among armed opposition groups operating in the area. The accompanying excerpt from an article from the Jordanian independent daily *Al-Ghad* discusses the assassination of Jordanian national Ahmed Mohammed al-Falouji (also known as Abu al-Ezz), who had been a key security officer for Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahli ash-Sham (also known as the Nusra Front or The Support Front for the People of Ash-Sham). The Damascus branch of the Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham claimed responsibility for the assassination.



Jordanian national and leader in Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahmed Mohammed al-Falouji, also known as Abu al-Ezz

Source: *Zaman Al Wasl* <https://en.zamanalwsl.net/news/11214.html>

Al-Falouji's death was likely covered by Jordan's press due to his nationality, but his death also highlights the role of Jordanian nationals in the Syrian conflict. Analysts estimate 1200-2000 Jordanians have joined the Syrian opposition to President Assad. Many are affiliated with Jabhat al-Nusra, which has links to Jordan's Salafist community and support among Jordan's population more broadly. *Al-Ghad's* coverage of Al-Falouji's death is indicative of Jordanian popular sentiment towards the two groups. The article refers to Jabhat al-Nusra by the organization's full Arabic name. The Islamic State, however, is referred to as the "terrorist organization" or "the organization" and by the pejorative Arabic acronym Daesh. The term Daesh—coined by regional activists in 2013—challenges the political and religious legitimacy of the Islamic State by replacing its full name with an acronym similar in pronunciation to an Arabic word for 'someone or something who crushes or tramples.'

The accompanying excerpt from a February 2015 public opinion poll conducted by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies also illustrates the dynamics of Jordanian public opinion on armed groups in the region. 83 percent of respondents felt Daesh was a threat to the region's security and stability, compared with only 33 percent considering Jabhat al-Nusra to be a threat.

Source: Kamal, Mufa. "Salafioon: Daesh ightaal al-qiaadi al-urduni bil-nusra Abu al-Ezz al-Falouji" (Salafists: Daesh assassinated Jordanian leader of al-Nusra, Abu al-Ezz al-Falouji), *Al-Ghad*, 25 August 2015. <http://goo.gl/MYVnKf>.

Salafists: Daesh assassinated Jordanian leader of al-Nusra, Abu al-Ezz al-Falouji

Not more than one month after Jabhat al-Nusra (Support Front for the People of ash-Sham) inflicted a painful defeat the terrorist organization "Daesh", the latter carried out by means of affiliated security groups a campaign of targeted assassinations of leaders of al-Nusra, among them Jordanian security official Abu al-Ezz al-Falouji.

According to sources in the Jihadist Salafist movement, the assassination of al-Falouji occurred while "he was at a field hospital in the Der'a region of Syria, where a Daesh security group managed to storm the hospital in stealth and assassinate him after firing approximately twenty bullets into different parts of his body."

Al-Falouji is one of the young leaders in the Jihadist Salafist movement in Jordan, and he was among the first who joined al-Nusra after the beginning of the events in Syria in March 2011.

The same sources told Al-Ghad, "The assassination campaign carried out by the organization of the Islamic State in ash-Sham and Iraq, also included two leaders, one of whom was an al-Nusra sniper. [The campaign] came in response to the painful defeat inflicted on the Yarmouk Brigades in Der'a, which is considered the military organization and the only Daesh affiliate in the south of Syria."

The Damascus branch of Daesh issued a statement accepting responsibility for the operation killing al-Falouji last week.

The Front's Emir, Abu Mohammed al-Joulani ordered al-Nusra leaders to avoid lax security, follow intelligent methods in executing dealings and military operations without disclosing names or identities, and to refrain from publishing on social networking sites.

Sources said, "al-Joulani expressed dismay at the assassination of al-Falouji," vowing to respond in an appropriate time. Likewise, he established security steps to protect the leaders of the Front during their movements outside their military camps.

(continued)

Continued: Jordanian Jabhat al-Nusra Leader Assassinated

Jordan's political climate makes it difficult to take the poll numbers entirely at face value, but the trends over time are worthy of analysis. The poll indicates that Jordanian concern about Daesh rose six percentage points from December 2014 to February 2015, no doubt partly a result of Daesh's murder of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh in January 2015. However, the number of respondents reporting that Daesh was not a threat rose by eight percentage points during the same period. The reported shift in opinion seems not to have come from Daesh supporters becoming disillusioned with the group, but rather from a decrease in "undecideds" and those reluctant to respond. This indicates increasing polarization of the issue in Jordan.

Jordanian views of Jabhat al-Nusra, however, appear to have grown more positive. In December 2014, 37 percent of respondents felt the movement was a threat to regional security and stability. In February 2015 that number was 33 percent. Concurrently, the number of respondents reporting that Jabhat al-Nusra was not a threat had grown from 28 percent in December, to 44 percent in February. The number of "undecided" had also fallen, but not enough to account for the reported growth in those respondents who did not feel the movement posed a threat.

The United States Department of State designated Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist organization in December 2012, considering the group a new alias for Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The dynamics of the group's public perception in the region will be important considerations as efforts to facilitate a diplomatic solution to the Syrian civil war continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Beeny)**

Source: "Istatlaa' li-lra'i al-a'am hawl ba'ad al-qadaiya al-wataniya al-raahina" (Public Opinion Poll on several issues of national concern), Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, February 2015. <http://www.jcss.org/Photos/635608184642126765.pdf>.

Public opinion poll on several issues of national concern

With respect to whether the actions and policies of these organizations constitute a threat to the region's security and stability, 83 percent of respondents reported that the policies and actions of "Daesh" constitute a threat to the region's security and stability. In comparison, 77 percent [of respondents] thought that in December 2014's poll.

33 percent of respondents believe the policies and actions of Jabhat al-Nusra a threat to security and stability in the region, while 44 percent said it does not constitute a threat. 47 percent of respondents believe the policies and actions of the organization Al-Qaeda constitute a threat to the security and stability in the region, while 40 percent say it does not constitute a threat. 27 percent of respondents believe the policies and actions of the al-Houthis, and 32 percent that the policies and actions of Hizballah, and 23 percent that the policies and actions of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq constitute a threat to the security and stability of the region. Table 2 shows these results.

	Yes		No		I don't know. / Refused to answer.	
	DEC 2014	FEB 2015	DEC 2014	FEB 2015	DEC 2014	FEB 2015
Daesh (Islamic State)	77%	83%	7%	15%	16%	2%
Jabhat al-Nusra (Syria)	37%	33%	28%	44%	35%	24%
Al-Qaeda	33%	47%	35%	40%	32%	13%
Al-Houthis (Yemen)	29%	27%	33%	46%	38%	26%
Hizballah (Lebanon)	29%	32%	41%	50%	30%	18%
Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (Iraq)	28%	23%	28%	41%	44%	37%

Iran Exporting Night Vision Goggles to Asia, Africa

12 September 2015

“Companies...found good customers to which to export their products.”

OE Watch Commentary: Even under sanctions the Islamic Republic emphasized bolstering its indigenous military capabilities. Much of Iran’s military industry was run by companies affiliated with Khatam al-Anbia, the economic wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. United Nations weapons sanctions prohibited the Islamic Republic from exporting weaponry, but did not prevent Iran from developing its own or importing most weaponry. Regardless, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, agreed unanimously on July 20, 2015, replaced six previous Security Council resolutions sanctioning Iran and its military industries. The new resolution sought to incorporate new developments in light of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in which the permanent five members of the Security Council, Germany, and Iran negotiated a new understanding to resolve past disputes the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Security Council had with regard to Iran’s covert work and its possible military dimensions.

With the lifting of many sanctions, and the imminent lifting of still more, Iranian military industries are looking to join the international market in order to both support potential allies and earn greater hard currency. It is against this backdrop that this excerpted article is interesting. It suggests that Iranian companies will hesitate to establish new relations, especially in the developing world. That these export markets include the former Soviet states and that the deals have been struck at a conference in Russia suggest that the Kremlin approves of the Iranian outreach.

Over the past decade, Western governments, including Great Britain and France, have exported night vision goggles to the Islamic Republic under a UN program to help Iran interdict drug smugglers. It is an interesting side note that Iranian companies now export the same technology. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin).**

Source: “Asiayi-ha va Afriqayi-ha Mostari Dawbin-ha-ye Didarshab Irani” (Asians and Africans are Clients for Iranian Night Vision Goggles), *Fars News Agency*, 12 September 2015. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13940618000885>

Asians and Africans Are Clients for Iranian Night Vision Goggles

Amin Salari, president of Iran’s Aerospace Industries Union, in a conversation with the defense correspondent of the Fars News Agency, referring to the presence of Iranian companies at the Max Aerospace Exhibition 2015 [in Zhukovsky, Moscow] Russia in the last week of August, said, the private sector companies belonging to the Union that came to this exhibition found good customers to which to export their products....

Salari continued, “Some customers from Africa, Asia and the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] have ordered the products of one of our night-vision-goggle manufacturing companies.



Iranian night vision goggles intercepted off the coast of Yemen
Source: Daily Star (Beirut, Lebanon): http://www.dailystar.com.lb/dailystar/Pictures/2013/02/06/143078_img650x420_img650x420_crop.jpg

Iran: Revolutionary Guard Brags of New Range to UAVs

15 September 2015

“The IRGC possesses a drone that has a range of 3,000 kilometers.”

OE Watch Commentary: Perhaps no element in the Iranian arsenal has seen such rapid advances in recent years as Iran’s unmanned aerial vehicle program. While Iranian claims about reverse engineering a downed CIA RQ-170 drone are likely hyperbole, Iranian television and press have shown footage (without apparent doctored) of a number of different Iranian UAVs: Iran unveiled a long-range Karrar UAV in 2010, a long-endurance model christened the Shahed-129 two years later, and a Fotros model in 2013, designed as an air-to-surface missile platform, capable of flying 25,000 feet and with an operational range of approximately 1300 miles. That same year Iran also began mass production of the reconnaissance Yasir model, which can operate at a ceiling of 15,000 feet and range of approximately 120 miles.

It is against this context that comments by Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Hossein Salari, speaking about both Iran’s missile developments and its UAV advances, are most worrying. Salari has suggested that some Iranian UAVs—he did not specify model—now have a range of nearly 2000 miles, putting Israel and the Eastern Mediterranean well within its strike range.

The constant drumbeat of announcements every few months regarding Iran’s UAV program suggests that the IRGC will continue to emphasize its development, perhaps seeking parity with other powers. Increasing money and technology flow to the IRGC as Iran’s isolation decreases might mean that Iran’s already robust UAV research and development program will develop even more rapidly into the future.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

Source: “Sepah Hich dar Shalik Mohaduditi Mushak Nadarad” (The Revolutionary Guard Have No Restrictions in Firing Missiles), *Fars News Agency*, 15 September 2015. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13940624001731>

Revolutionary Guard Have No Restrictions in Firing Missiles

According to a report by the defense correspondent of the Fars News Agency, Gen. Hossein Salari, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces, during a televised interview, said with reference to the movement of foreigners in the waters around Iran, that “We are able to photograph all their movements around the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, parts of the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, that are directly or indirectly linked to our national security.” He said, “These are coordinated by intelligence and security patrols, drones, and modern radar, and sophisticated tools based on electronic warfare.

The commander of the IRGC army said, “Any US airbase whose airplanes can reach the Iranian airspace as well as their aircraft carriers can be targeted by Iran’s unique high precision striking ballistic missiles and drones.”

Salari continued, “The IRGC possesses a drone that has a range of 3,000 kilometers [1864 miles] round trip and which can conduct both reconnaissance and combat missions.”



An Iranian Arabil-II UAV.

Source: *Wired.com*, http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/2011/09/airshow_26_20100813_1813881504-660x439.jpg

12 September 2015

Iran: Rouhani Doubles Down on Military-Dominated Economy

“The resistance economy fundamentally aims at mobilizing the capacities of all institutions and forces of the regime.”

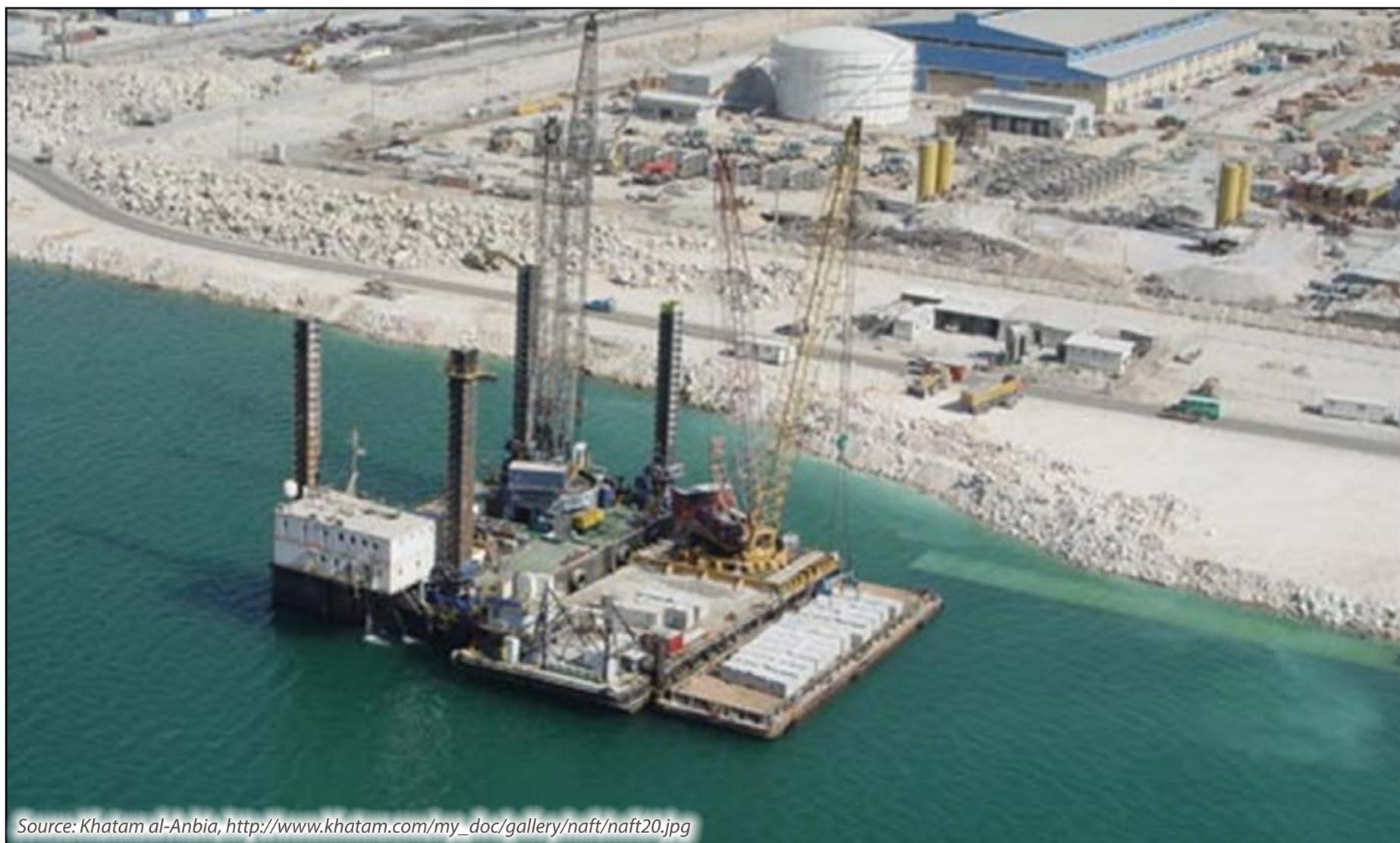
OE Watch Commentary: While Iran’s regular army is charged with territorial defense, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is charged with defense of the revolution and with countering threats both external and internal. The IRGC has long interpreted its mandate as expanding beyond the military realm and into the political and economic spheres. Iranian President Rouhani’s speech, excerpted here, suggests that the Islamic Republic has no intention of reforming its economy or tying it more closely to the West; quite the contrary, his speech suggests a broad-based understanding that the IRGC will have a prominent role in Iran’s financial strategy and economic development.

With the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the IRGC entered the civilian economy. Khatam al-Anbia, its economic wing, grew to dominate heavy industry, manufacturing, oil, infrastructure and electronics. While the IRGC is powerful enough to act autonomously if need be, the fact that Rouhani suggests no political interference with the expansion of its economic role, but rather suggests support, implies a concerted effort to expand that role and double down on its indigenous capability. The IRGC has long been xenophobic and this is something that foreign businessmen will need to take into consideration regarding the Iranian economic landscape. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Ra’is Jomhuri dar Majmu’ Sarasar-e Farmandehan va Mosawlian-e Sepah” (The President Speaks to an Assembly of Commanders and Authorities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), *President.ir*; 15 September 2015. <http://www.president.ir/fa/89345>

...Rouhani said “The government is asking the Armed Forces for help to execute the resistance economy.” He stated, “A resistance economy, that is to say a deterrence economy means that just as the country should establish, as today, a military deterrence that makes the enemies not even think of attacking Iran, we must also reach a degree of economic deterrence which would make the enemy feel that sanctioning and refusing to cooperate with Iran in the economic field harms them

The President of Iran reiterated, “As the children of the nation, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Basij, the Army and the Law Enforcement Forces must help the government and the people in production, development and economic growth...The resistance economy fundamentally aims at mobilizing the capacities of all institutions and forces of the regime... The government is asking all institutions, including the Armed Forces and in particular the Guards and the Basij, to help us to create great economic enthusiasm in the country.”



Source: Khatam al-Anbia, http://www.khatam.com/my_doc/gallery/naft/naft20.jpg

Egyptian Military on the Offensive

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: On 7 September the Egyptian military went on the offensive in the Sinai Peninsula, launching a comprehensive operation to eliminate terrorists in the North Sinai towns of Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid, and al-Arish. Dubbed “Martyr’s Right” (Haq al-Shahid), the operation is Egypt’s first coordinated offensive against the Islamic State (IS) “Sinai Province” (SP). The first excerpted article, from the daily *al-Araby al-Jadid*, illustrates the pessimism with which some have greeted the offensive.

A key element to the Egyptian military’s fight in the Sinai is message control. Domestic media reports are limited to official statements issued on the army spokesperson’s account, which at the time of writing had over five million followers. SP, however, has challenged the official narrative with its own information campaign. On 1 September the group released a nearly forty-minute video of sniper, roadside IEDs and ATGM attacks on the Egyptian military. On 18 September it issued its monthly report, including number of destroyed armored vehicles (24), successful targeted killings (3), and ATGM launches (1).

In mid-September, less than a week after the launch of “Martyr’s Right,” the IS made its first appearance in Egypt’s Western Desert. Although the Egyptian Army had previously been attacked in this area, as the second excerpt notes, the IS had never before issued an official statement from there. The mid-September statement described how IS fighters had “repelled the apostate Egyptian army’s campaign in Egypt’s Western Desert.” As the third excerpted article explains, the clashes occurred after unknown masked gunmen abducted a police informant from the Bahariya Oasis and the attempt to rescue him by local forces was repelled. The IS-affiliated kidnappers filmed themselves shooting RPGs and heavy machine guns at the rescue party and appended several images of the fighting to their statement. Local security presumably called in help, and shortly thereafter Egypt’s military shot up a convoy of mostly Mexican tourists, apparently mistaking it for the IS militants.

By nearly any measure, the IS threat is growing in Egypt. Both in the North Sinai and the Western Desert SP/IS teams and cells operate near borders, in Gaza in the first case and Libya in the second. Indeed, Egyptian officials and media figures are usually quick to deflect and even pre-empt criticism by highlighting the foreign dimensions of these groups, as shown by the fourth excerpted article, from the semi-official *al-Ahram* newspaper. As it continues its bloody battle with SP in the North Sinai, the Egyptian military may also be drawn into combat along its vast western border with Libya. In its fight with SP/IS, the Egyptian military has committed several tactical and informational mistakes, and the opening of new front near the border with Libya would make the success of its “comprehensive offensive operation” in the Sinai all the more difficult. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...the military’s latest campaign failed before it even started, given the absence of a target and a plan...”

Source: المدنيين ضحايا حملة الجيش المصري في سيناء
“Civilians the Casualties of Egyptian Military Campaign in Sinai,”
al-Araby al-Jadid, 10 September 2015. <http://goo.gl/aFfhhA>

An anonymous expert told *al-Araby al-Jadid* that “the military’s latest campaign failed before it even started, given the absence of a target and a plan.” He added that the “crisis can be summarized by a desire for showing in the media that operations are taking place and gunmen are being pursued. The reality on the ground, however, does not confirm this.” He noted that “Sinai Province has over the past few months developed significantly, and the crisis is linked to an absence of intelligence on the group’s movements. As a result, all campaigns that are launched without confirmed and precise intelligence will fail.”



IS propaganda image of fighters in Egypt’s Western Desert (9/13/15).

Source: أسبوع على “حق الشهيد” ... والصحراء الغربية ساحة قتال جديدة
“One Week into ‘Martyr’s Right’ ... the Western Desert Becomes a New Battlefield,” *al-Akhbar*, 15 September 2015. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/242103>

This mistake comes at the same time as ISIL’s announcement of its presence in the Sahara near the border with Libya, representing a new challenge and a new front for the Egyptian military, alongside the open fight against ISIL - Sinai Province. The western desert is frequented by many tourists and at the same time is a haven for gunmen. Security operations in the oasis area are less violent than in the Sinai. The most recent was in August of last year, when the Egyptian military announced that four members of the Egyptian Air Force had been killed after their aircraft was brought down while pursuing gunmen near the Siwa Oasis. Prior to that, in July 2014, a border patrol checkpoint in the Farfara Oasis suffered a major attack that killed 22 soldiers.

(continued)

Continued: Egyptian Military on the Offensive

Source: "Salih Qassim": the Secret Word in the Killing of the Mexican Tourists," *Dot Misr*, 14 September 2015. <http://goo.gl/ZYtcjZ> "صالح قاسم" كلمة السر في حادث مقتل السياح المكسيكيين

"Yesterday, as someone drove in his car looking for Qassim, in the far west along the desert tracks on the Oasis Road, he saw 15 heavily armed men dressed in blue." He continued, "They showered him with bullets, leading him to retreat. He went to the oasis residents and told them he had identified the spot where Qassim was being held." He added: "We told the police, and a security force followed us. We went in 4x4s, and when we arrived we found two campsites and a large quantity of weapons and ammunitions. Less than five minutes later, they showered us with bullets from several directions, forcing security services to retreat."



IS propaganda image of fighters in Egypt's Western Desert (9/13/15).

Source: "Military Experts: This Is the Largest Operation to Destroy Terrorism," *al-Ahram*, 12 September 2014. <http://www.ahram.org.eg/News/121661/136/NewsPrint/432745.aspx> خبراء عسكريون: العملية هي الأضخم للقضاء على الإرهاب



"Whose interests are served by what is occurring in the Sinai?" MAJ GEN [Nasser] Salem asks. He answers that this is an American-Israeli plan to take over the Sinai... There are three types of terrorists in Sinai: the first are the original ones, who were sent to Egypt by the United States... the second are Ansar Beit al-Maqdis and Hamas members and those released by Morsi... the third are young men from the Sinai who have been brainwashed or made to believe in an Islamic State...

IS propaganda image of local security forces fleeing (9/13/15).



SP propaganda images of training on use of ATGMs (left) and MANPADs (right) (9/9/15).

The GCC's Uphill Battle in Yemen

13 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In late August Arabic-language media lit up with speculation that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and their Yemeni allies were about to launch a multi-pronged ground offensive to take the capital Sana'a. As explained in the first excerpted article, from the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, the plan called for approaching the capital from the northeast, the west and the south in order to dislodge the Huthi Movement and forces loyal to former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. News of the planned Sana'a offensive came at a time of optimism for the GCC and its Yemeni allies, after having expelled Huthi-Saleh fighters from the southern port city of Aden in mid-July and successfully marched northward about halfway to Sana'a thereafter.

The clearest sign of intent to advance on Sana'a was the massing of forces in the oil-rich province of Marib, located east of the capital. In mid-August large contingents of GCC armor and heavy weapons were moved from Sharurah in Saudi Arabia, through the al-Wadi'a border crossing and across the Hadhramaut desert, to a forward operating base (FOB) near the oil facilities in Saffer, around 60 miles east of Marib's provincial capital. According to media accounts, by early September the Saffer FOB had around 40,000 well-armed fighters (10,000 of them from GCC militaries), a few thousand elite trained and equipped Saudi forces, and several hundred tanks and armored vehicles, as well as minesweepers, Apache helicopters, and loads of heavy weaponry.

On 4 September, with a GCC-led offensive to take full control of Marib Province looming, Huthi-Saleh allies struck the Saffer FOB with an OTR-21 Tochka (SS-21 Scarab) tactical missile, allegedly launched near the town of Beihan. Over sixty GCC soldiers were killed, along with an unspecified - likely high - number of Yemeni fighters. The second accompanying excerpt, from the Huthi media channel *al-Masirah*, discusses the Saffer attack. The article's main takeaway is that superior on-the-ground intelligence explains the successful launch and remains a key advantage for the Saleh-Huthi camp over its adversaries.

The third excerpt was published in the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar* before the attack on the Saffer FOB. The author argues that by failing to understand Yemen's different battlefields, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are embarking on a war that will at best yield a Pyrrhic victory. He explains that the GCC coalition's victories in the south in late July were the result of Huthi-Saleh withdrawals. Fighting an experienced and committed enemy up the mountains into Sana'a is a challenge of an entirely different magnitude, "whose cost and spillover will be much greater than what the attackers imagine." The fourth excerpt comes from a news report in Yemen's *al-Masdar*, as the first day of the offensive in Marib drew to a close. It is optimistic, poetically noting in its title that "the desert is moving in on the mountains," while at the same time shying away from the bombast of taking Sana'a within days that featured so prominently in pro-GCC media only a few weeks earlier. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: مصادر لـ {الشرق الأوسط}: الهجوم على صنعاء من 3 محاور "Source Tells al-Sharq al-Awsat that the Attack on Sanaa Will Be along 3 Axes," *al-Sharq al-Awsat*. 17 August 2015. <http://goo.gl/k8KovR>

The source told al-Sharq al-Awsat that the attack on Sana'a will occur along three axes: the first is Shabwa-Marib-Nahem-Arhab north of Sana'a; the second is the al-Hodeidah western coastal axes and which involves a maritime siege and naval landing; the third axis is Taiz-Ibb-Dhamar to the south. The source noted that the plan can change depending on facts on the ground and the results of any given day.



Missile launcher with Yemeni and Huthi flags
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0imanagLvb>

Source: تفاصيل تنفرد بها صدی المسيرة: محرقة صافر.. الخبر اليقين والتفوق المخابراتي "Al-Masirah's Exclusive Details: the Burning of Saffer... Confirmed News and Intelligence Superiority," *al-Masirah*, 7 September 2015. <http://www.almasirahnews.com/?p=3323R>

The major operations by the army and the popular committees in Marib prove a clear Yemeni intelligence superiority. The army and popular committees follow precise and studied plans and achieve their goal with unparalleled success. This comes in light of an embarrassing American intelligence failure, for America promised the Saudis to oversee intelligence and information in their attack on Yemen while also providing logistical and informational help... what stands out from this attack in Marib are not the number of casualties or the military losses, although these are also important. Most important is it shows Yemeni operational and intelligence-gathering superiority over their Saudi, Emirati, Bahraini, Emirati and American counterparts.



Tochka missile launch
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0imanagLvb>

(continued)

Continued: The GCC's Uphill Battle in Yemen

Source: المستنقع: كيف سيكسر اليمن ظهر الخليج
 "The Quagmire: How Yemen Will Break the Gulf's Back," *al-Akhbar*., 26 August 2015. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/240803>

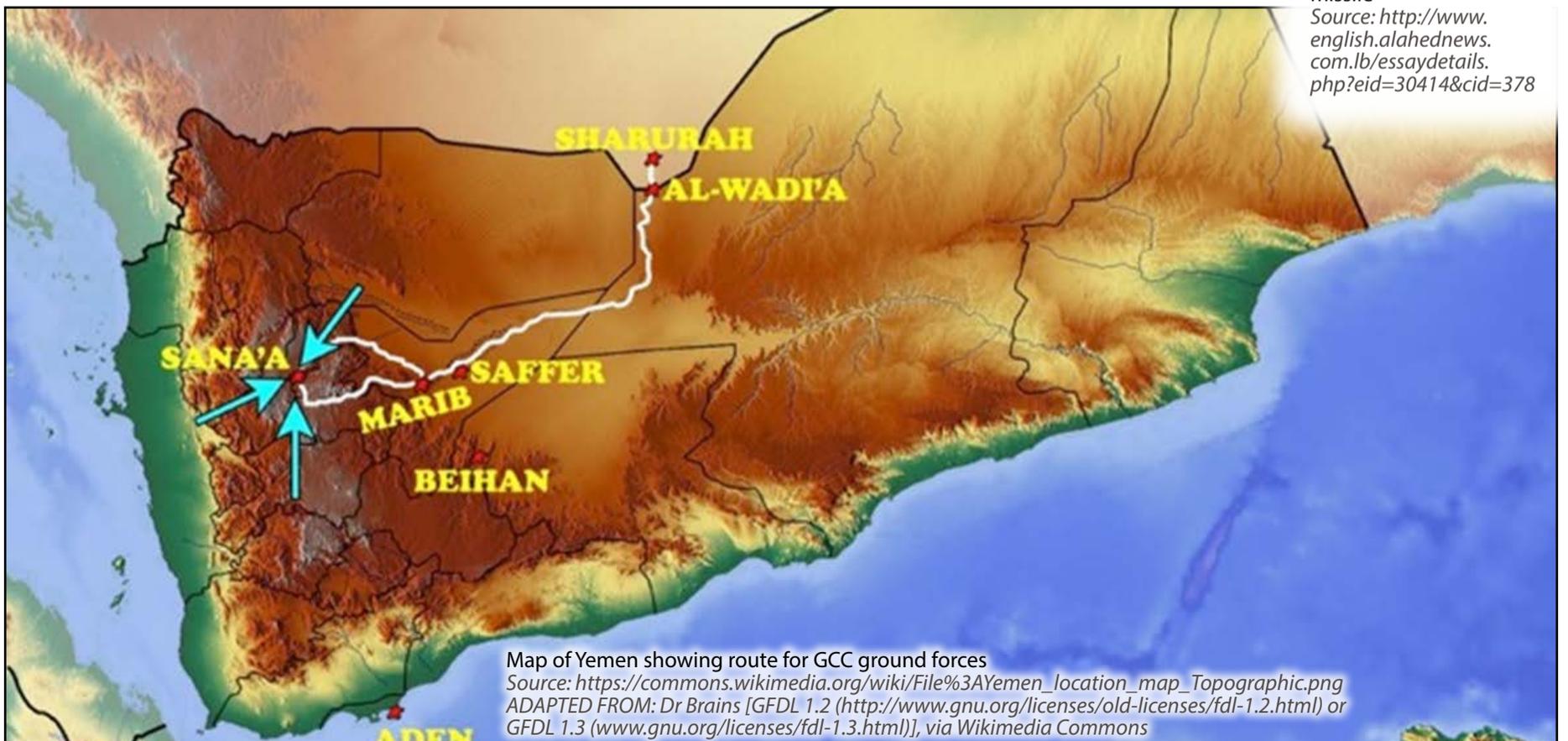
Saudi and the UAE may be entangling themselves - at least militarily - in a quagmire that will be difficult to extricate from and whose cost and spillover will be much greater than what the attackers imagine...it makes no sense for the [pro-Saleh] Yemeni Army and Ansar Allah [the Huthis] to defend in a classic manner in the face of an armored column supported by unlimited airpower... what those celebrating the fall of Taiz over a week ago did not notice, for instance, was that the city was not ruled by Ansar Allah for a single day. The city fell, but all the mountains and high-points surrounding it and looking over it are in the hands of the Yemeni Army and Ansar Allah.



Saffer FOB after being struck
 Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0imanagLvbc>

Source: تفاصيل اليوم الأول من معركة الحسم في مأرب.. الصحراء تزحف نحو الجبل
 "Details on the First Day of the Decisive Battle in Marib... the Desert Moves in on the Mountains," *al-Masdar*, 13 September 2015. <http://almasdaronline.com/article/75277>

... making Marib the launching pad for the final arrow that will strike the coup alliance's soft flank and those areas considered of influence and havens for them. The Marib front extends from al-Jadaan in the north to al-Ashraf in the south, extending for a total of around 120-130 kilometers.



Map of Yemen showing route for GCC ground forces
 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AYemen_location_map_Topographic.png
 ADAPTED FROM: Dr Brains [GFDL 1.2 (<http://www.gnu.org/licenses/old-licenses/fdl-1.2.html>) or GFDL 1.3 (www.gnu.org/licenses/fdl-1.3.html)], via Wikimedia Commons

“... Yemeni operational and intelligence-gathering superiority over their Saudi, Emirati, Bahraini, Emirati and American counterparts...”



Infographic on Tochka missile
 Source: <http://www.english.alahednews.com.lb/essaydetails.php?eid=30414&cid=378>

Somalia: Fighting on Empty...Attacked AMISOM Soldiers Had Not Been Paid for Months

19 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: : Terrorist group Al-Shabaab's 05 September attack against the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) base in the town of Jamaale, manned by Ugandan troops, garnered a great deal of international attention, with reports ranging as high as over 50 soldiers killed. However, as the accompanying article notes, not as well known is that those soldiers had not been paid for months.

There is some uncertainty as to how long Ugandan soldiers assigned to AMISOM have gone without pay, with estimates ranging from five to nine months. Even if the smaller number is correct, it is still a long time for their salary to be in arrears, and there are reports of grumbling and even rage among the troops, as they no longer are willing to wait patiently and quietly for their pay.

Funding for AMISOM is through the European Union (EU), which pays for allowances, and the United Nations, which pays for logistics, including wear-and-tear of equipment. In July 2014 the EU released approximately one billion dollars to the African Union, which is responsible for channeling the money to the individual troop-contributing countries. Soldiers are supposed to receive \$1,028 minus \$200 for government administrative costs. It appears, however, that at least among the Ugandan soldiers, many never received their \$828.

This is not the first time Ugandan troops serving under AMISOM have come under scrutiny. In 2011 a UN monitoring group reported Ugandan soldiers were selling their weapons, many of which eventually wound up in the hands of insurgents. More recently, Ugandan troops have been accused of massacring Somali civilians. At least one report claims al-Shabaab's attack on Jamaale was in retaliation for those killings.

With so much depending on AMISOM's ability and willingness to fight, this longstanding pay issue, as well as other problems, could threaten to derail some of the very difficult progress, including territorial gains, that has been made against al-Shabaab. Low morale, angering the civilian populace, and selling weapons which find their way to the enemy are surely not a formula for success.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

“According to sources in African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM), the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) troops under Uganda Battle Group 14, have not received their wages for nine months.”



Going months without pay has led to discontent among Ugandan troops serving with AMISOM. Source: <http://thecontinentobserver.com/defence/07/10/2266/>

Source: “UPDF in Somalia not paid for nine months,” *Saturday Monitor (Uganda)*, Sept 19, 2015, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/UPDF-in-Somalia-not-paid-for-nine-months/-/688334/2859660/-/93v1xq/-/index.html>

Ugandan soldiers in Somalia operations have not been paid for several months, which has sparked rage and grumbling among the rank and file of the peacekeeping troops.

Uganda has three Battle Groups in Somalia, including Ugabag 14, 15 and 16, whose detach in Jamaale was attacked on Tuesday by al-Shabaab, who inflicted heavy casualties on the Ugandan peace troops.

For Ugandan Amisom soldiers under Ugabag 15, which deployed in Somalia in October last year, have not been paid for five months.

The UPDF spokesperson, Lt Col Paddy Ankunda, confirmed the Ugandan Amisom soldiers had not been paid but put the outstanding arrears to five months, not nine as sources told this newspaper.

The European Union (EU) pays allowances for all Amisom peacekeeping troops in Somalia through the African Peace Facility, while the United Nations (UN) pays for logistics, including food, transport and reimburses troop-contributing countries for tear and wear of the military hardware.

Since 2004, the EU has provided more than €1.2 billion (\$1.6 billion) to Somalia peace operations. Uganda has the biggest contingent of soldiers in Somalia and a number of police personnel.

Nigeria Using Drones to Combat Oil Theft

2 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The issue of oil theft has long frustrated Nigeria. However, a new program that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation is about to launch is intended to rectify some of those problems. In short, Nigeria has announced the inauguration of a new program to use surveillance drones, along with support by the Nigerian Navy, to effectively halt the theft of oil, especially in the Niger Delta, within the next eight months.

At its core, Nigerian oil theft has been perpetrated within the southeastern oil-rich Niger Delta by local populations, who have long argued that the Nigerian government and international corporations that have contracts to buy this oil have excluded those local populations from reaping benefits from it. They live in poverty while the Nigerian state and international businesses get wealthy. Indeed, Nigeria is currently the largest oil producer in Africa and the eighth largest producer of crude oil in the world, with approximately 70-80% of its GDP coming from oil revenues. However, oil theft has long been a problem, with an estimated 100,000 to 250,000 barrels (or between 5% and 12.5% of the overall total) being stolen per day.

Nigeria has made previous attempts to stop oil theft. One of the largest programs aimed indirectly at stopping such theft came at seeking a resolution to the issue of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) insurgency, which afflicted the Niger Delta for years during the late 1990s and 2000s. By offering amnesty to former MEND fighters, who had financed their activities via illegal oil bunkering, the Nigerian government did succeed in at least reducing the amount of stolen oil.

However, two factors have led to oil bunkering becoming an increasing problem again. On one hand, with the drop in global oil prices that began in 2014, Nigeria was forced to devalue its currency, the naira, which has led those stealing oil to “need” to steal even more to maintain their previous standards of living. Simultaneously, under President Muhammadu Buhari the Nigerian government has stopped paying out amnesty to the former MEND militants, instead suggesting that the funds that had been earmarked for them will now be going to the proposed amnesty program for Boko Haram.

Though the new program might offer some solutions to the oil-bunkering problem, some in Nigerian civil society and international rights groups have expressed concerns about it. For one, fears remain that drone technology might quickly move from surveillance to assault capacities, especially given the heavy military presence in the region and high stakes involved. Second, rights groups further worry that the drone program could also serve to allow the state to more effectively monitor Nigerian populations, whose grievances about exclusion from the use of oil revenues are thought to be justified by many in the international community. Whether these concerns are justified - and whether the drone program will even materialize at all - are yet to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“Oil theft is a major issue for us. We lose on average of about 50,000 barrels of oil. We lose about \$3-\$4 billion of revenue and that is just in terms of crude oil itself.”

Source: Omonobi, Kingsley et al. 2015. “Nigeria: NNPC GMD to End Oil Theft in Eight Months, to Use Drones to Monitor Oil Vessels. *Vanguard (Lagos)*. September 2. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201509021258.html>.

Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, Dr Emmanuel Kachikwu has disclosed that oil theft would be eradicated in the next eight months...

....According to the NNPC boss, some of these measures include the introduction of drones to monitor the pipelines as well as patrol the country’s coastal waters; equipping and increasing the capabilities of the security services to carry out their responsibilities and the engagement of communities to police pipelines in their areas.

....“Oil theft is a major issue for us. We lose on average of about 50,000 barrels of oil. We lose about \$3-\$4 billion of revenue and that is just in terms of crude oil itself.

...“In the last one year, we have lost about 350 lives - NNPC staff, policemen, community members - as a result of attempts to breach these pipelines.

...“It is a major concern for the President and a major concern for all of us in the industry and we are focused on trying to find solutions. We have marshaled out an armada of approaches to this which include incorporating drones to check movement within our territorial waters towards the ship; we are looking at logistical ways of changing something at our crude oil loading bays; we are trying to equip the Navy sufficiently, in terms of skills and not in terms of arsenal. We are trying to take the bull by the horns to ensure that they patrol within the maritime zone.

“But more fundamentally, the pipelines that carry oil and crude will have to be policed. The present attempt at policing them has not worked, so we are thinking of changing the personnel, using more of the military but also getting into dealing with the community which ultimately is the best security in dealing with these pipelines, as we try to create more incentives for them to own the pipelines,” he said.

....Meanwhile, the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ibok Ibasi said, yesterday, that the Nigerian Navy will collaborate with other security agencies to ensure that any measure that will result to checkmating illegal oil bunkering and pipeline vandalization is nipped in the bud.

....Secondly, the Navy has standby response teams ready to move at the quickest deployment because even if the drones are deployed as disclosed by the NNPC GMD, it is the Navy that will be required to implement the response aspect”.

Nigeria to Receive Jungle Warfare Training from Brazil

1 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: South-South cooperation is apparently alive and well in Africa, evidenced by the fact that the Brazilian Army has offered to put Nigerian troops through its rigorous and world-renowned jungle war-fighting courses in the hopes of helping Nigeria combat Boko Haram.

The offers of training are beneficial to both countries. From Nigeria's perspective, the training that Brazil has offered is a boon: Boko Haram operates in and around the Sambisa Forest in the northeastern Borno State. While the Sambisa Forest is far less dense and verdant than Brazilian jungles - more akin to thick savannah - additional training from the Brazilians is being framed in a way that suggests that it is relevant to the fight. From the Brazilian perspective, making inroads with Nigeria is a boon to its larger grand strategy in Africa. While Brazil has articulated its desire to extend its presence on the continent beyond its typical spheres of influence in Lusophone Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe), it has thus far failed to overcome the profound presence of the European powers, the US, and, increasingly, China. The visiting Brazilian delegation articulated as much, relaying that it considered Nigeria an important center of activity in the West African subregion.

Apart from the jungle warfare training, Brazil has also offered to help develop Nigeria's domestic defense industry more broadly. On this front, Nigeria is also likely pleased. Abuja has long been interested in establishing a more robust domestic defense industry. Currently, the main Nigerian weapons manufacturer is a modest facility in Kaduna, which produces rifles and "civilian tools." However, recent Nigerian interactions with the US - namely, Washington's refusal to sell Apache attack helicopters to Nigeria to fight Boko Haram in 2014, as per the Leahy Act, preventing US sale of weapons to countries with poor human rights records - infuriated Abuja. To that end, Nigeria derided the US decision not to sell it the weapons it desired as abetting Boko Haram. Thus, especially since that episode, and since the election of President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria seems to be taking more and more seriously its domestic defense industry development. As reported in last month's *Operational Environment Watch*, in August 2015 (see: Jason Warner, "Nigeria Announces Creation of Weapons Factory") Buhari announced plans to develop "a modest military industrial complex" to produce light arms, with the end goal of reducing Nigeria's dependence on foreign weapons providers. Brazil's new offers to help it increase such capabilities thus come at an opportune time.

Given Brazil's less threatening status on the continent, especially as compared to Western powers and China, a Nigerian state that has historically been reluctant to partner with outside powers might well have found a partner with which it can engage on more equal footing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“The Nigerian and Brazilian armies have commenced talks on collaboration to improve Nigeria's Defence industry and training of personnel on jungle warfare.”



The Brazilian Army has recently offered to help train the Nigerian Army in jungle warfare. While Nigeria's Sambisa Forest is less dense than Brazil's Amazonian jungles, both sides recognize the value of additional training in helping Nigeria to defeat Boko Haram.

Source: <http://thenationonlineng.net/sambisa-forests/>

Source: Mutum, Ronald. 2015. "Nigeria Army to Partner Brazil on Jungle Warfare." *Daily Trust* (Abuja, Nigeria). September 1. <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/news/nigeria-army-to-partner-brazil-on-jungle-warfare/108912.html>.

The Nigerian and Brazilian armies have commenced talks on collaboration to improve Nigeria's Defence industry and training of personnel on jungle warfare. Nigeria army spokesman Colonel Sani Usman on Tuesday said the discussion started on Monday when Deputy Chief of Army Staff for International and Special Affairs, Brazilian Army, Major General Pereira Junior met the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai at the Army Headquarters in Abuja.

...General Buratai also "used the opportunity to request the Deputy Chief of Army Staff's assistance in facilitation of training billets for Nigerian Army personnel particularly in jungle warfare due to the present security challenges in the country," the army statement said. In his remarks, General Pereira Junior stated that his country started reaching out to African countries and considered Nigeria to be the first to be visited because of its strategic importance in the West African sub-region, Colonel Usman said.

(continued)

Continued: Nigeria to Receive Jungle Warfare Training from Brazil

Source: Ogunwale, Gbade. 2015. "Nigeria, Brazil to Partner on Defence Industries." *The Nation* (Abuja, Nigeria.) 2 September. <http://thenationonline.net/nigeria-brazil-to-partner-on-defence-industries/>.

The authorities of the Nigerian Army may seek assistance from the Brazilian Army to resuscitate the Defence Industry Corporation.

The discussion came up on Monday when the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Tukur Buratai, received a delegation of the Brazilian Army in his office.

Gen. Buratai and the Brazilian delegation, led by the country's Deputy Chief of Army Staff for International and Special Affairs, Major Gen. JoarezAlves Pereira Jnr explored the possibilities.

A statement issued on Tuesday by the Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Sani Usman, said Gen. Buratai acknowledged the Brazilian example as a typical area of interest in the defense industries.

President Muhammadu Buhari had few weeks ago charged the military authorities to explore ways of resuscitating the Nigerian Defence Industry Corporation, with the view to local production of light military equipment.

Gen. Buratai assured the visitors of the Nigerian Army's readiness to cooperate with Brazil and the country's determination to end the Boko Haram terrorism soon.

The Nigerian Army Chief described the existing cooperation between the two countries as a good step in the right direction, stressing that there were a lot of things for the two countries to learn from each other.

He also used the opportunity to request the Brazilian Army's assistance in the facilitation of training billets for Nigerian Army personnel, particularly in jungle warfare due to the present security challenges in the country.

The AU and the African Standby Force: Accomplishing the Mission, Just Differently Than Imagined

14 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The African Standby Force (ASF) is intended to be a pan-African intervention force, directed by the African Union (AU), which has been in the process of standing up to full operational capability since it was proposed in 2003. However, as of late 2015 only certain African regions are ready to deploy their contingents in the event of a conflict, and the ASF has long been critiqued for being an overly-optimistic schematic that will never be realized, due to a lack of AU funding and coordination capabilities, and, most importantly, a dearth of political will. However, as Walter Lotze, the author of the accompanying excerpted article, notes, observers get it wrong when they think that the AU and the ASF have been failures in the promotion of collective security: the AU has been accomplishing the tasks that the ASF has set out to achieve, but simply in ways that deviate from what the ASF's creators had imagined.

Lotze details two ways in which the AU's role in peacekeeping has differed from what was expected when the ASF was proposed in 2003. The first relates to the relationships among the AU, African regions, and troop-contributing countries. In short, the AU had envisioned itself to be not only the mandating authority, but also in charge of coordinating activities of regions, which would themselves be in charge of coordinating the contributions of troop-contributing countries. While this hierarchical model (AU-region-country) model was used in the cases of AU interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic, most other AU missions have not followed this model. As he notes, "In Darfur and (continued)

“The realities of current AU operations are very different from what was anticipated a decade ago, and for what the ASF has been built for.”

Source: Lotze, Walter. 2015. "The African Standby Force Beyond 2015: Ideals Versus Realities." *Institute for Security Studies* (Pretoria, South Africa). September 15. <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/the-african-standby-force-beyond-2015-ideals-versus-realities>

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, has a difficult problem to resolve. By January 2016, she will be expected to declare that the African Standby Force (ASF) – the continental peace support operations structure which has been under development since 2003 – has reached full operating capability and is ready to be deployed to various crisis situations across Africa

...Through the establishment of the ASF and investment in its development, uneven as that may have been at times, the AU and its regions have positioned themselves as indispensable actors in continental peace operations. A lot of lessons have been learnt as well. When it was first developed and conceptualised, two pillars underpinned the ASF.

First, the AU would provide continental guidance, while regions would be responsible for working with their member states to generate and retain standby capabilities required for operations, which could be activated and deployed when required. Second, six scenarios informed the ASF doctrine.

These ranged from providing military advice to political missions right through to the deployment of large, multidimensional operations, and even rapid intervention in situations characterised by grave circumstances. On both counts, things unfolded quite differently.

Of all the operations deployed to date, only those in Mali (continued)

Continued: The AU and the African Standby Force: Accomplishing the Mission, Just Differently Than Imagined

Somalia, the AU followed the UN model of peacekeeping, working directly with contributing countries to generate and deploy the capabilities required for the missions. In Burundi and the Comoros, the AU used a 'lead nation model', where one country (here South Africa and Tanzania respectively) provided the core structure and a few other countries provided smaller contributions. In the cases of the operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram, the AU authorized coalitions of the willing to conduct operations, while providing limited forms of strategic and financial assistance." The second way that the AU has deviated in expected engagement with peacekeeping is the sorts of missions it was intended to take part in. While certain missions have fallen within the purview of what it had expected to engage in (e.g., in Burundi, Darfur and Somalia), it has also undertaken activities like counterterrorism efforts and security-sector reform that were not within the scope of its original plans.

A final point is that this article is unique in that it counteracts some of the prevailing discussions that suggest that the AU has largely been a failure when it comes to standing up the ASF specifically, and working to provide collective security more broadly. In short, the author makes the worthwhile point that, while the ASF has yet to stand up in a fully operational way, the AU's actions in peacekeeping suggest that the ideals of the ASF are indeed at play, simply outside of the formal dictates of the ASF structure. This point is particularly useful insofar as it brings a new perspective to assessments of the AU and the ASF, which are typically viewed in negative terms that suggest impotence, inaction, and a lack of follow-through.

In short, when it comes to thinking about the AU and the ASF, this very thoughtful piece offers a new perspective that suggest that the AU is far more successful than it is given credit for: it is simply doing things in a different way than originally anticipated. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

and the Central African Republic (CAR) can be categorised as having resembled the ASF model, where the AU worked with a region (ECOWAS and ECCAS respectively in these cases) to plan and deploy an operation. All the other operations undertaken followed very different models.

In Darfur and Somalia, the AU followed the UN model of peacekeeping, working directly with contributing countries to generate and deploy the capabilities required for the missions. In Burundi and the Comoros, the AU used a 'lead nation model', where one country (here South Africa and Tanzania respectively) provided the core structure and a few other countries provided smaller contributions. In the cases of the operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram, the AU authorised coalitions of the willing to conduct operations, while providing limited forms of strategic and financial assistance.

Realities on the ground required alternative solutions from what had originally been conceived. Apart from deployments models, mandates also change. The early deployments to Burundi (support for the implementation of a peace agreement), Darfur (support for the implementation of a humanitarian ceasefire agreement) and Somalia (support for the establishment of a transitional government) largely adhered to the deployment scenarios and the original doctrine.

This has changed rapidly in recent years. Currently, AU peace support operations engage in offensive operations against armed actors, undertake counter-terrorism actions, operate in contexts characterised by the use of asymmetric tactics, are charged with stabilisation roles, undertake security sector reform and serve as bridging operations. The realities of current AU operations are very different from what was anticipated a decade ago, and for what the ASF has been built for....



Though the African Standby Force has been stood up, the African Union has engaged in many peacekeeping missions. However, the ways that the AU had planned on engaging in peacekeeping have been markedly different than it anticipated.

Source: <https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/the-african-standby-force-beyond-2015-ideals-versus-realities>

East Asian Rivalries But in East Africa

29 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: It is well-known that China and Japan are jostling for influence in East Asia with an open territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, among other issues. However, these two countries are also becoming rivals for economic influence in East Africa. This may spur China to further boost its military footprint in East Africa to compete with not only the West but also Japan.

The excerpted article from 29 August 2015 in Kenya's *Daily Nation* says that investments of major powers in Kenya are increasingly overlapping—and conflicting. The article cites Japanese discontent over the Kenya Ports Authority (KTA) reconsidering an agreement with Japan to rebuild the port in Mombasa. Now the KTA may give the tender to China instead. Japan is, however, still expected to build an oil export pipeline from Uganda to Kenya's coast, which nonetheless may also serve Chinese interests.

This economic competition between China and Japan for influence in Kenya also translates into military affairs in East Africa. For example, Djibouti was a French colony and now hosts French and US troops at Camp Lemonnier. In 2009 Japan also came to an agreement with Djibouti to set up its first overseas military base there. After that, however, China expressed interest to set up its own base in Djibouti ostensibly to engage in counterpiracy operations in the Indian Ocean and secure Chinese naval routes for oil shipments from East Africa to the port China is building in Gwadar Port, Pakistan.

China is also eager to open up northern Kenyan transit routes to export resources from South Sudan and Ethiopia through Kenya to either the Mombasa or Lamu ports. With Chinese economic projects comes the need to secure the infrastructure to transport the resources in Africa. Nudging Japan – and possibly also the West – out of East Africa would not only allow China to further its influence in East Africa, but, from a strategic perspective, would also further reaffirm China's global power projection. This could therefore translate to China becoming more confident in its relations with Japan and other countries in the East Asian theatre. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Disquiet is brewing among development partners as the Kenyan Government attempts to distribute mega projects among competing global powers.”



In this adjacent photograph from 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta stand together in a meeting in China to improve bilateral relations, which have continued to grow ever since.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/kenyan-president-seeks-an-ally-on-trip-to-china/1732537.html>

Source: “Kenya Risks Souring Ties With Partners Over Projects,” *Daily Nation*, 29 August 2015.

Kenya Risks Souring Ties With Partners Over Projects

Disquiet is brewing among development partners as the Kenyan Government attempts to distribute mega projects among competing global powers. The [Kenyan] Jubilee Government seems to be attempting a delicate balancing, and potentially risky, strategy of awarding different facets of mega projects to companies from different countries. And, in some instances, development partners have questioned the changing of procurement rules midway through the process.

The Japanese have expressed disquiet in a letter to the National Treasury after the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) was ordered to introduce new conditions in bidding documents for the Mombasa port tender, which appeared to undermine the interests of the Asian giant. Kenya risks rattling relations with China whose growing trade ties with Africa have dwarfed Western powers like the US. The chief representative of the Japan International Corporation (Jica), Mr Hideo Uguchi, has since protested against the manner in which the National Treasury had meddled in the process and warned that the meddling could affect Tokyo's aid to Kenya.

President Buhari in France: To Recognize or Not Boko Haram-ISIL Linkages

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: President Muhammed Buhari of Nigeria visited President Francois Hollande in France on 15 September 2015. The priority of their discussion on security was Boko Haram, which in March 2015 pledged allegiance to and formally became a “province” of ISIL. Prior to this, governments and security forces were hesitant to publicly recognize that Boko Haram and ISIL were one and the same. There was concern that it would add to Boko Haram’s international legitimacy. According to this argument, acknowledging the Boko Haram-ISIL link de-facto allows ISIL to expand its operational environment globally, with international actors combating ISIL not only in its core areas of Iraq and Syria, but also in others parts of the world where it claims “provinces,” including Sinai, Egypt, Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, and the new so-called Khorasan Province of ISIL in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, as the adjacent article from 15 September 2015 in Nigeria’s *Daily Independent* discusses, during Buhari’s visit to France, both leaders agreed that Boko Haram and ISIL were part of the same battle. Hollande vowed greater cooperation on Boko Haram and ISIL after Buhari stated that Nigeria wanted French support for its counterinsurgency campaign. The article also explains that France has, as a result, agreed to provide greater intelligence and more equipment to Nigeria.

The strengthened alliances that are forming between Nigeria and international and regional partners like France as a result of the Boko Haram-ISIL alliance may face criticism on grounds that ISIL and Boko Haram should be fought separately, because even if their ideologies, strategic communications, and tactics, such as holding territory, are increasingly similar, their areas of operations are distinct. Nonetheless, ISIL’s rapid expansion in Iraq and Syria since taking over Mosul, Iraq, in 2014 and its subsequent co-optation of groups via declarations of loyalty, such as Ansar Beit al-Maqdis in Sinai, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan in Afghanistan, suggests that an increasing number of groups are adopting ISIL narratives and tactics, techniques, and procedures, and receiving forms of financial support from the resource-rich ISIL coffers.

Thus, the mutual understanding of Presidents Hollande and Buhari about combating ISIL and Boko Haram may reflect a new trend of cross-regional partnerships between Nigeria and other African countries and Western militaries in coordinating counterinsurgency campaigns in theaters where ISIL “provinces” exist, beyond only Iraq and Syria, such as in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“President Francois Hollande of France said it is no longer easy to distinguish Nigeria’s Boko Haram sect from the Islamic State (ISIL), given the link between both groups.”



Nigerian President Muhammed has not only reasserted authority of the Nigerian military domestically (showing the adjacent image) but has also reached out to international counterparts in the USA, Europe and Africa.
Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-nigeria-military-moves-anti-boko-haram-headquarters-to-maiduguri/2811945.html>

Source: “Boko Haram, ISIS The Same, Says French President,” *Daily Independent*, 15 September 2015.

Boko Haram, ISIS The Same, Says French President

President Francois Hollande, who received visiting President Muhammadu Buhari on a three-day visit to France at the Elysee Palace, was quoted as saying during a joint press conference: “Boko Haram is linked to Daesh [ISIL]. It receives aid and support from this group. The fight against Boko Haram is the fight against Daesh. It is no longer possible to distinguish terrorism from regions. It’s the same terrorism inspired by the same death ideology.” He stressed that the fight against Boko Haram and Islamic State jihadists is the same battle.

Buhari, seeking support for his battle against the deadly sect that has terrorised three states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe mainly, since 2006, warned that the jihadist group had expanded “after declaring its loyalty to IS[IL]” in March 2015. France’s military base in Chad’s capital, N’Djamena, has become the hub of its operations against jihadists in the Sahel region, and last month Hollande proposed to host an international meeting on tackling Boko Haram.

Colombia Might Change Its Constitution to Help the Bolivarians

20 September 2015

“...the Congress would be reduced to being a simple ‘ornament’...”

OE Watch Commentary: Truly understanding the ins and outs of Colombian constitutional logic and legislative intrigue would be an expensive and almost unique achievement. OE Watch readers will want to be aware that *lawfare* (use of legalistic maneuvers to attain strategic goals that might have otherwise seemed military or geopolitical in nature) is being practiced at the highest levels of sophistication in northern South America as part of the ongoing irregular war in that region. According to a number of Colombian experts who apparently do understand the complexities, the lawfare is being won by the extreme leftist Bolivarians. It seems that the agreement that the FARC has negotiated with the administration of President Santos would not pass muster in the Colombian legislature, a step that would be required in order for the agreement to take effect. The Colombian public is apparently none too pleased with the status of the FARC accords, and the Colombian legislature is in line with that opinion.

The response of the Colombian administration, perhaps pressured by the Bolivarians (FARC-Cuban regime-Venezuelan regime), is now to mount what is being referred to as the nuclear option -- an effort to upend the constitutional legislative requirements. The administration's effort to change the constitution (reducing the role/power of the legislative branch) in order to empower the FARC seems to be causing an intense level of ideological stress. What to some may seem like a clever and agile set of political maneuvers on the part of the President may be the seed to a new round of accelerated internal discord and political violence.
End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

Source: Rafael Nieto Loaiza, “Bomba nuclear” (Nuclear Bomb [the nuclear option]), *El Colombiano*, 20 September 2015, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/bomba-nuclear-HL2739548>

“The legislative bill accepts every qualifier: clumsy, ignorant, shameful, authoritarian. But above all, it constitutes a frontal attack, to the jugular, against the Constitution of `91, against the Congress of the Republic and against Colombia's democratic regimen. Nothing has presented such a danger to our country's democracy since the coup d'état of Rojas Pinilla [1953] and the taking of the Palace of Justice by the M-19 [1985]...”

...It is an inversion of the usual democratic logic in which...an absolute majority is required for approval. Here it is the reverse: approval will be by a minority and can only be negated by an absolute majority!...

...The other article is no less grave: it is an enabling law that gives Santos during 180 days the power to expedite, with force of law, all decrees ...that are necessary 'to facilitate and assure the implementation of the Final Accords' ...

...The monster, in summation, castrates Congress, establishes an almost absolute power for minorities that are in agreement with what the administration and the FARC have approved, and gives to Santos powers corresponding to a dictatorship.”

Source: Hernando Yepes, “El jurista Hernando Yepes advierte sobre los peligros del proyecto de Santos para implementar acuerdos” (Jurist Hernando Yepes warns about the dangers of Santos's bill to implement the accords), radio interview by Fernando Londoño Hoyos on the show *La Hora de la Verdad*, *Radio Red RCN*, 18 September 2015, <http://www.lahoradelaverdad.com.co/hace-noticia/abogado-hernando-yepes-hablando-de-los-peligros-del-proyecto-de-a-l-presentado-por-el-gobierno-para-implementar-los-acuerdos.html>

...He addresses, from the juridical point of view, the constitutional mechanisms that belong to President Juan Manuel Santos to affirm the Havana accords with the FARC narco-guerrilla....

...The first of them [legislative bills] refers to the creation of a legislative commission, made up of members of the Congress of the Republic. The second intends to grant extraordinary faculties to the President in order to implement the accords....

...the Congress would be reduced to being a simple ‘ornament’ that will facilitate the president to impose the agreements with the narco-guerrilla.”

President of Guatemala Resigns, Faces Arrest

3 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Guatemala has a long history of interrupted presidencies and associated scandals, but this appears to be the first time in modern history that the president has resigned and been put under arrest for alleged criminal behavior. Outgoing President Otto Molina Perez was a highly touted and widely admired military officer who was elected to the presidency in 2011. He professes his innocence and faces a difficult prosecution, *(continued)*

Source: EFE, “Renunció Otto Pérez Molina, presidente de Guatemala” (President of Guatemala Otto Perez Molina Resigns), *El Colombiano*, 3 September 2015, <http://www.elcolombiano.com/internacional/america-latina/renuncio-otto-perez-molina-presidente-de-guatemala-LA2651490>

“...The official spokesperson for the Presidency, Jorge Ortega, specified that the president signed the letter of resignation at 19:00 local time Wednesday (01:00 GMT Thursday).”...

...The objective, he asserted, was ‘to maintain institutionality and order appropriate within the State’, as well as to confront ‘in an individual manner’, the due process against him...

...The retired general lost his privileges and immunity Tuesday after a unanimous vote of 132 congressmen, after the Public Ministry (MP) and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) accused him of corruption on August 21st.”

Continued: President of Guatemala Resigns, Faces Arrest

one aided by a unique, hybrid NGO/ arm of the United Nations called the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The accusation relates to an alleged customs scam that seems to have involved almost thirty government officials, including ex-Vice-President, Roxana Baldetti, who is now hospitalized due to an apparent emotional breakdown. The interim president is 79 year-old jurist Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre. New elections took place on September 6 of this year; as of this writing, the results are not yet known. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“The retired general lost his privileges and immunity Tuesday after a unanimous vote of 132 congressmen...”

Source: Gustavo Illescas, “Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre: el nuevo Presidente de Guatemala” (Alejandro Maldonado Aguirre: The new President of Guatemala), *Centro de Medios Independientes*, 3 September, 2015, <https://cmiguate.org/maldonado-aguirre-el-nuevo-presidente-de-guatemala/>

“Upon the resignation of Rozana Baldetti [the Vice-president] a power vacuum was left within the executive branch in the midst of a powerful social and political convulsion. If Perez Molina were to fall, it was very important to be certain that the Executive branch was not going to collapse, or that some persons might be positioned who could carry things to places undesired by the groups in power.” For this reason Maldonado Aguirre arrived: as product of a broad negotiation...”

Bolivarian Strategic Reality?

14 September 2015

“The FARC are no longer a guerrilla movement. The FARC are the government of Venezuela armed with Sukhoi 35...”

OE Watch Commentary: A number of things worth reading about have been going on in the Caribbean and northern South America this past month, e.g., changes in US-Cuba relations, Venezuela’s continued economic and political collapse, intensification of the Colombian administration-FARC power negotiations, et al. These events, while on the surface distinct one from another, are interrelated as parts of an overall regional power struggle, a broad irregular war that to many foreign observers may not be going well for allies of the United States or for Colombia as a liberal country.

It appears to some analysts that the FARC are not merely allies with the regime controlling Venezuela, they control much of the Venezuelan government, and together with Cuba constitute a single competitive entity. The Venezuelan government, moreover, is an ostensible guarantor of the “peace process” being conducted in Havana between the FARC and the administration of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. Nevertheless, as a clumsy response to the economic chaos in that country, the Venezuelan regime has been forcing the mass deportation of Colombian citizens living in Venezuela (while cynically claiming to invite thousands of Syrian refugees). The Colombian government has found it nearly impossible to gain the support of international organizations like the OAS (Organization of American States) or UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) in the refugee debacle, apparently because Venezuela and Cuba have since placed key people in positions of influence in those organizations.

Many Colombians do not look to Europe for assistance, the latter being tied to Venezuelan deals of various types. Now the Venezuelans have begun military provocations against Colombia in order, apparently, to bring home to the Colombians that they expect to prevail in any test of wills. Many Colombians fear that their own leaders are either not up to that test or are, in fact, beholden or sympathetic to the Bolivarian movement. They do not want the Bolivarians dominating their country, a goal the Bolivarians seem to be achieving, despite their evident failures of governance in Venezuela and Cuba. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Fracaso en la OEA y proceso de paz” (Failure in the OAS and peace process), *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 2 September 2015, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/fracaso-en-la-oea-y-proceso-de-paz.html>

“It is evident that there is a direct connection between the failure of Colombian diplomacy and the so-called peace process with the FARC. An organ of the Organization of American States (OAS) just denied the government of Colombia the possibility of convoking a meeting of ministers to discuss and find a way out of the crisis created by the tyranny of Nicolás Maduro n forcing the mass exodus of Colombian citizens from Venezuela, which has led to the forced displacement of 10,000 persons in only twelve days...”

...Colombia exits from this not only humiliated but dangerously isolated and not just on the Continent. Facing the blackmail and pressures from Caracas, no European democracy had the capacity to come out in defense of Colombia given their fear of reprisals from Maduro against European companies invested in Venezuela...”

Source: Editorial, “Maduro nos amenaza” (Maduro is threatening us), *El Universal*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.eluniversal.com.co/opinion/editorial/maduro-nos-amenaza-9265>

“The FARC are no longer a guerrilla movement. The FARC are the government of Venezuela armed with Sukhoi 35 (Russia warplanes) and long range missiles’...

...The Sukhoi are the military soul of the Maduo regime and also its source of pride, as well as being the arm that compensates for Colombia’s greater military experience, the larger size of our military forces and the capacity of the navy. Maduro is saying to Colombia with its overflights that the Sukhoi that it is able to strike wherever it wants and whenever it wants without our being able to respond effectively. And it is probable that that is indeed so.”

The Operational Scheme of Las Maras and Other Criminal Groups in Honduras

18 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *El Heraldo*

reports that gang presence in Honduras is on the rise and indicates that Mara Salvatrucha factions and other criminal gangs have successfully taken control of key territories throughout the country. This source further reports that gang control is so far-reaching in some areas that Mara factions are even imposing curfews, all while enjoying impunity offered to them as a direct result of police failure to provide security.

When comparing present gang activity to ten years ago, it is apparent that gangs have evolved territorially, as they are operational in 40% of Honduran territory, with major strongholds in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Another factor that has changed over the last decade is that instead of only controlling impoverished neighbourhoods, as was common in the past, gangs are now targeting the middle class and are even forcing families to pay extortion fees to live in their own homes. The end result of this extortion is that entire sectors of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula previously inhabited by middle class families are nearly empty, as they have chosen to flee for their own safety.

Gang activity in Honduras has increased in the last decade for multiple reasons. First, the country serves as a major transit point for drug shipments moving north from South America. For this reason Mexican drug cartels such as Los Zetas and the Sinaloa Cartel are contracting local gangs to manage the logistics aspect of shipments. In fact, groups such as the MS-13, Barrio 18, Los Chirizos and Los Benjamines are key organizations now used by Mexican drug cartels in Honduras. Second, socio-economic factors have stimulated gang growth, as Honduras is home to a booming youth population faced with poverty and unemployment. Third, endemic corruption and extreme security budget cuts have resulted in one of the most plagued police forces in Central America. In an attempt to thwart police corruption, the Honduran government is using the military with increased frequency to provide security, but this tactic has failed to produce tangible change. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “Pandillas imponen “toque de queda” en capital de Honduras (Gangs Impose Curfews in Tegucigalpa, Honduras).” *Hoy Digital*. Accessed from <http://hoy.com.do/pandillas-imponen-%C2%93toque-de-queda%C2%94en-capital-de-honduras/>

Honduran gangs have expanded in the last decade and are now in 40 percent of the Central American country’s territory, with gang members increasingly targeting people in the middle class. Special prosecutor for common crime Kenia Reconco said gangs first began extorting money and killing residents of the working class neighborhoods where the gang members lived but as they grew they began targeting the middle class. Residents of several neighborhoods in west Tegucigalpa have complained that the Barrio 18 gang, and emerging local gang Los Chirizos, are forcing residents to stay off the streets starting in the early evening, reported Hoy. “At 7 p.m. we want to see these businesses closed and the people in their homes,” stated announcements posted around the area. Stores, transport companies, and even churches have been forced to shut down early because of the threats.

Source: “Así operan las maras y bandas en la capital de Honduras (The Operational Scheme of Las Maras and Other Criminal Groups in Honduras).” *El heraldo*. Accessed on 28 May 2015 from <http://www.elheraldo.hn/pais/739126-331/as%C3%AD-operan-las-maras-y-bandas-en-la-capital-de-honduras>

The Barrio 18 and the MS-13 street gangs are the most prominent in Honduras and maintain well-defined territories. However, as both groups continue to grow, they are encroaching on each other’s territory in an attempt to gain control of drug trafficking and extortion activities in key parts of the country. In addition to the Mara factions, criminal organizations such as Los Chirizos and Los Benjamines are also growing as they work directly for Mexican drug cartels to control drug shipments. These groups maintain a similar modus operandi to that of Las Maras as their criminal income is derived from extortion, drug sales, coordinating drug shipments, murder for hire, automobile and motorcycle theft, kidnappings, weapons trafficking, and illegal appropriation of real estate.

18th Street Gang

The 18th Street gang maintains its principal stronghold in southern Tegucigalpa. Neighborhoods where this group is prevalent are San José de El Pedregal, La Peña, La Vega, 14 de Marzo, San Isidro, La Cañada, Óscar A. Flores, and Monterrey. In these areas, the gang has forced middle class families out of their own homes as many cannot afford to pay the steep extortion fees demanded by this group. This practice is noteworthy in the 14 de Marzo neighborhood where many homes are abandoned and in ruins. According to this source, some of the abandoned properties are currently being used as murder and torture centers.

MS-13, Los Chirizos, and Los Benjamines

Principal MS-13 territories within Tegucigalpa are San Miguel, La Sosa, La Travesía, La Era, 30 de Noviembre, and part of El Sitio and La Izaguirre. In the last two neighborhoods, the Barrio 18 Street gang also maintains presence which results in frequent confrontations. As for Los Chirizos, they are known to operate in markets around Comayagüela. They also have presence in Francisco Morazán, Obrera, La Soto, El Sipile, and El Chiverito. Los Benjamines are said to control areas in the same sectors as Los Chirizos which means they are constantly battling for territory.

Narco-Juniors Change the Rules of Drug Trafficking in Mexico

16 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: A report released by the United Nations in late 2014 indicated that Mexican drug cartels generate an estimated 320 billion dollars in annual revenue. This same source reported that these traditional “family businesses” that built Mexican drug trafficking empires in the 70s, 80s and 90s are undergoing transition periods, as they are being passed onto their children, who are popularly referred to as “narco-juniors.” This phenomenon is proving to be problematic in curbing drug-trafficking activity because even if the leader of a criminal group is captured, his dynasty remains, as the narco juniors are the ones who will take over and so continue the unstoppable development of this illegal activity and all that it entails.

This source further reported that the new generation of narco juniors is different than their parents. For example, these individuals are identified by the extensive use of technology and, compared to their predecessors, they lead carefree lives and have a positive public image, as they do not see themselves as criminals but as entrepreneurs. They are also known to maintain close and public friendships with government leaders and key decision makers in Mexico and abroad. Another difference is that juniors are almost always highly educated and commonly graduate with Master’s and Doctoral degrees from prestigious universities, due to the idea that school will help them manage their businesses and establish political contacts. They also tend to possess behaviors of those who have grown up within a criminal family with enormous wealth and may be extreme narcissists or display antisocial behaviors. These traits, along with their prominent social contacts, will make narco juniors a force to reckon with in the coming years.

End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)

Source: “Narco-juniors, su círculo de amigos incluye diputados, senadores, federales y de la defensa (Narco-juniors Have Senators, Deputies, and Ministers of Defense in their Circle of Friends).” *Revlucion tres punto cero*. Accessed from <http://revoluciontrespuntocero.com/narco-juniors-su-circulo-de-amigos-incluye-diputados-senadores-federales-y-de-la-defensa/>

In Mexico City, narco juniors frequent the exclusive Reforma 222 mall and walk down the Champs Elysees toward the Avenue Montaigne, where they shop in boutiques such as Cartier, Christian Dior, Gucci, Fendi, Hugo Boss, Valentino, and others. They are also known for their international flair and are commonly seen attending boxing matches in Las Vegas or traveling to Dubai to purchase luxury cars. They pay in dollars, pesos, and euros.

But, this type of life signifies responsibilities that revolve around succession of the family business. To prepare for this life, the young heirs, who range between 18 and 33 years, often choose to study business administration so they are able to successfully market the marijuana and poppy they are taught to grow at home. They know the main drug routes used in the Sierra de Durango and work in the family business. Many times, they are the face of the cartel and run meetings with buyers and sellers from United States and Colombia. Narco juniors also study languages, mainly English and French and learn how to carry out gruesome kill tactics including beheadings. They speak in grams, kilos, and tons, and to achieve their goals, maintain a close circle of friends that includes deputies, senators, members of the Federal Police and defense secretariat, and candidates for the presidency of the Republic. But unlike their parents, these narco juniors do not hide from authorities. Instead, they walk the streets freely because they feel their family and criminal history is “safe,” since they are not publicly identified in criminal databases. Instead, they pass themselves off as children of major entrepreneurs unbeknownst to others where the family fortune really comes from.

Personality of Narco Juniors

Sara Montalban, a psychophysiology and neuropsychology expert asserted that narco juniors display “the behavior of a person who has lived and grown within a criminal family.” She further asserted that they are commonly narcissistic, egocentric, misogynistic and arrogant. The PGR of Mexico echoed a similar message in referring to this group of new narco leaders as having anti-social personalities as they frequently violate the rights of others and display a continuous pattern of rule-breaking.

Caltrops Used as Tactical Tools by Criminal Organizations in the Federal District

15 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Caltrops became a drug cartel tactical staple in 2009 when Los Zetas introduced them as tools to impede police and military pursuit. Today they are used by nearly every major cartel operating in Mexico for the same purpose. What has changed regarding this technique is that in the past six months smaller criminal groups have begun using them to conduct (continued)

Source: “Ponchallantas, tecnicas del narcotrafico en el DF (Caltrops Used as Tactical Tools by Drug Trafficking Organizations in the Federal District).” *Excelsior*. Accessed from <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/comunidad/2015/06/16/1029708>

Using caltrops to cause flat tires in the vehicles of pursuing police/soldiers is a common tactic used by drug cartels but in recent months, authorities have reported that this technique is now being used by small criminal organizations in and around the Federal District. However, these groups are not using caltrops for the same reasons as cartels. Instead, they are used in robbery/theft cases where they are placed underneath the tires of a vehicle while its owner is drawing cash from an ATM. The victim is then followed and offered assistance to replace the flat tire by the gang members. At that time, they are robbed. Javier Oliva, a security expert at the UNAM indicated that criminal tactics are commonly copied from one group to another, and that in this case, it is likely that smaller criminal groups simply adapted the caltrop technique to accommodate their needs. He further indicated that criminal groups in Mexico have evolved just as drug cartels have in recent years.

Continued: Caltrops Used as Tactical Tools by Criminal Organizations in the Federal District

robberies in the Federal District and surrounding states. Hence, the emergence of the “caltrop technique” is significant in the sense that it demonstrates the evolution of cartel tactics into the day-to-day operations of smaller criminal organizations.

The “Caltrop Technique” in Criminal Groups

In March 2015 three Japanese tourists were robbed by members of a “flat-tire gang” in Aguascalientes, Mexico. This group was later dismantled, but prior to their arrests the gang successfully robbed multiple victims, many of whom were identified as tourists. As reported by this source, the modus operandi of the group was to wait outside ATM locations, where they would scout potential victims. Once identified, a gang member would place caltrops wrapped in a plastic bag under one of the car tires, which would cause a flat minutes later. As the car departed from the bank, the assailants would follow the victim, warn them about their flat, and offer assistance, during which time they would distract the driver and subsequently steal the cash previously withdrawn from the ATM. Similar cases of caltrop-assisted robberies have been reported in areas throughout the Federal District, with the highest number of cases in Miguel Hidalgo, Cuajimalpa, and Álvaro Obregón. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Mexican Drug Cartels and the FARC: United Through Weapon- and Drug-Trafficking

18 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: This source reported that the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Mexican drug cartels maintain business relations to traffic weapons and drugs, but dismissed the idea that the guerrilla organization provides the latter with military training. Initial open source rumors regarding potential training ties surfaced after the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco (CJNG) perpetrated high-impact attacks against military personnel in Mexico utilizing RPG’s, grenade launchers, and Barrett .50-caliber weapons in April, May, and June 2015. Sources citing the alleged training ties could not provide exact numbers as to how many CJNG members received training, but they speculated it was around 50 individuals. To date, training ties between the two groups have not been legitimized, and this source used security experts to support the unlikelihood of this activity.

CJNG Capabilities

The CJNG has evolved since 2008 from a security wing for the Milenio and Sinaloa Cartels to an independent organization as of 2011. Today, this group has a strong grip on the cocaine and synthetic drug market in Europe and Asia, along with the financial clout to buy enormous quantities of weapons, which may explain its success in past attacks against police and military personnel in Mexico. However, there are no indicators that this group possesses any tactical superiority when compared to other Mexican drug cartels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “Carteles mexicanos y las FARC, unidos por el trafico de drogas y armas (Mexican Drug Cartels and the FARC United by Drug and Weapon Trafficking).” *Excelsior*. Accessed from <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2015/08/18/1024813>

“These groups (the FARC and the CJNG) work together for business and commercial means to traffic weapons and drugs, but that the FARC has provided the CJNG with military type training is unlikely,” according to security expert Javier Oliva from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

“I find it to be very unlikely that the FARC has provided the CJNG with military training. It would be more relevant to look at the ties that these groups maintain to traffic cocaine,” according to UNAM professor and defense expert Ricardo Ravelo.

Source: “El CJNG, alumno de la guerrilla colombiana (The CJNG: Student of the Colombian Guerilla).” *La Policiaca*. Accessed from <http://www.lapolicia.com/nota-roja/el-cjng-alumno-de-la-guerrilla-colombiana/>

Over the last decade, the CJNG took advantage of the fact that nearly all Mexican based cartels (Sinaloa, Gulf, Juarez, Tijuana, Los Zetas, La Familia Michocana, and Los Caballeros Templarios, ect) were utilizing significant financial resources and manpower to gain control of the US drug market. During that same time, the CJNG forged relationships with the FARC and now controls cocaine and synthetic drug operations in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Today, the FARC continues to traffic cocaine, but to state that they are experts in tactical insurgence or that they have trained CJNG operators is not accurate. However, even if the FARC had trained members of this group, it is hard to classify CJNG members as highly dangerous when other Mexican cartel operators have received training directly from the Mexican Marines or Army.

Perceptions of Thailand's Power Development Plan 2015-2036

8 September 2015

“...by 2070 Bangkok will lie seventh among cities most exposed to the effects of climate change ... Because of the size of Bangkok, the effect on the national economy is expected to be disastrous.”

OE Watch Commentary: Thailand's Power Development Plan (PDP) 2015-2036 is designed to meet the country's future energy needs, taking into consideration expected economic growth and expected energy needs. According to the Thai government, now being run by a military junta, the plan was based on three major criteria: security (of national power systems), ecology (e.g., global warming), and economy (e.g., supply, demand, and cost). Over the past few months the plan has drawn some criticism from certain observers.

The following articles represent examples of that criticism. The first article reports on the opinions of a group of 25 activists and representatives from 18 networks affected by the plan's proposals to develop coal-fired power plants and two dams. The second article is a commentary written by John Draper, an analyst based in Khon Kaen, Thailand, and Dr. Peerasit Kamnuansilpa, founder and former dean of the College of Local Administration, Khon Kaen University. It points out that “the country is locked into a future based on another 20 gas power stations (17,728 MWe), another nine ‘clean coal’ power stations (7,390 MWe), then 14,206 MW of renewable energy, including hydro, a large proportion of which will be imported from Laos or Myanmar.” The plan also calls for two nuclear plants, described as a first for the country.

Both articles express concern that these measures are not necessarily environmentally friendly and that they are excessive. They argue that Thailand does not need as much power as the new plan will provide. According to the PDP, Thailand's power reserves are to be maintained at over 15 percent, the standard in many countries. The plan, however, says that reserves could reach up to 39 percent in some years.

The authors of the second article also argue that certain projects have the potential to foster corruption: “large centralized mega-projects are favoured in Thailand. They benefit the centralized system of project approval, and with a public sector corruption rate of 25 per cent, according to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, they can be very beneficial for unscrupulous officials.”

The authors add that Thailand, ranked as the 23rd largest polluter of carbon dioxide, should play a key role in trying to protect the climate. Referencing a study done by the Organization for Cooperation and Development, they write that “by 2070 Bangkok will lie seventh among cities most exposed to the effects of climate change (including all environmental and socio-economic factors). Because of the size of Bangkok, the effect on the national economy is expected to be disastrous.”

These and other criticisms, should they hold true, beg the question of what the military-based leadership hopes to accomplish in the long run. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Paritta Wangkiat, “Activists Urge Govt to Scrap Energy Plan,” *Bangkok Post*, 8 September, 2015, <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/environment/684080/activists-urge-govt-to-scrap-energy-plan>>.

Activists Urge Govt to Scrap Energy Plan

The plan exaggerates the extent of future power demand and makes allowance for excessive power reserves, they said. More power plants and dams would have to be built than are necessary according to more conservative estimates.

“Energy security is supposed to improve the well-being and quality of life of the people while maintaining natural resources,” said Isdares Hayeeda, deputy mayor of Thepha district municipality where a 2,200-megawatt coal-fired power plant is planned.

He said the PDP failed to deliver in these areas. Instead, it focuses on building large power plants to support unreasonable predictions of increased power demand.

Source: John Draper and Peerasit Kamnuansilpa “Thailand's Power Dilemma Amid a Climate of Fear,” *The Nation Online*, 26 August 2015, <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Thailands-power-dilemma-amid-a-climate-of-fear-30267497.html>>.

Thailand's Power Dilemma Amid a Climate of Fear

Thailand, now ranked 23rd of carbon dioxide polluters, potentially has a key mission - to exemplify the role a socially and environmentally responsible medium-sized economy can play.

... One major OECD study indicates that by 2070 Bangkok will lie seventh among cities most exposed to the effects of climate change (including all environmental and socio-economic factors). Because of the size of Bangkok, the effect on the national economy is expected to be disastrous.

However, Thailand's energy future under the military junta seems to already be set. According to the new Power Development Plan for 2015-2036, the country is locked into a future based on another 20 gas power stations (17,728 MWe), another nine “clean coal” power stations (7,390 MWe), then 14,206 MW of renewable energy, including hydro, a large proportion of which will be imported from Laos or Myanmar. Up to two nuclear plants are also scheduled, which will be a complete step into the unknown for Thailand, especially considering that the majority of accidents at nuclear plants are due to the human factor - poor training and maintenance.

...This (related to the planned building of large coal power plants) raises the question of why Thailand wants to build a few very large coal power plants when it should be following safer, quite possibly cheaper routes, such as biomass reactors, like the 40MWe plant operated by Double A in Prachin Buri using wood and offcuts. Quite simply, large, centralised mega-projects are favoured in Thailand. They benefit the centralised system of project approval, and with a public sector corruption rate of 25 per cent, according to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, they can be very beneficial for unscrupulous officials.

Indonesian Sovereignty vs. Singaporean Jobs: Dispute Over Regional Airspace in Southeast Asia

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In an attempt to assert its sovereignty, Indonesia plans for its authorities to take over airspace that is currently controlled by Singapore. According to the excerpted article in the *Jakarta Post*, Indonesian Military Chief General Gatot Nurmantyo said the planned takeover was essential because Indonesia was now capable of managing the airspace and the “country’s sovereignty must be respected,” adding that the international framework on aviation allowed such a takeover if the two countries agreed. The city-state controls airspace up to 110 nautical miles from its position, covering Batam, Dumai and Natuna in Indonesia. According to the accompanying article in *The Straits Times*, Singaporean Law and Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam counters Gatot’s plans, by commenting that agreements negotiated by Singapore are vital to regional air safety and the interests of the countries involved, including tens of thousands of jobs in Singapore.

As the excerpt from the accompanying article points out, Gatot warned Singapore not to conduct air force training in the area without permission from Indonesia, saying that, in line with the 1944 Chicago Convention on flight information region, Singapore had only the authority to manage operational air traffic navigation. The article reported that jet fighters from Singapore have continued military exercises above Indonesia’s territory, assuming that the agreement on a Military Training Area between the countries was still effective, although it expired in 2001.

As the excerpts indicate, Shanmugam said the current set of regulations was put in place with the approval of the International Civil Aviation Organisation. He also said Singapore had been in control of flights in the airspace above some areas in Riau, such as Batam, Tanjung Pinang, Bintan and the Natuna islands, since 1946.

Shanmugam further justified Singapore’s interests in Indonesian airspace with comments about the city-state’s employment in the aviation industry. He noted that tens of thousands of jobs are dependent on Singapore’s position as a regional aviation hub and any change in the current arrangements would have implications. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: “Jokowi wants airspace taken over in three years,” *The Jakarta Post*, 9 September 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/09/09/jokowi-wants-airspace-taken-over-three-years.html>

The city-state controls airspace up to 110 nautical miles from its position, covering Batam, Dumai and Natuna.

In his efforts to assert supremacy over Indonesia’s airspace, Gatot warned Singapore not to conduct air force training in the (flight information region) FIR area without permission from Indonesia, saying that Singapore had only the authority to manage operational air traffic navigation, in line with the 1944 Chicago Convention on FIR.

Gatot said the planned takeover was essential because Indonesia was now capable of managing the airspace and the “country’s sovereignty must be respected”, adding that the international framework on aviation allowed such a takeover if the two countries agreed.

It was reported that jet fighters from Singapore continued doing military exercises above Indonesia’s territory, assuming that the agreement on an Military Training Area (MTA) between the countries was still effective although it expired in 2001.



An A-4E Skyhawk of the Indonesian Air Force.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/46/TNIAU_A4.JPG.

Source: “Singapore’s air deals vital to aviation safety: Shanmugam,” *The Straits Times*, 10 September 2015, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/singapores-air-deals-vital-to-aviation-safety-shanmugam>

Law and Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam said agreements negotiated by Singapore are vital to regional air safety and the interests of the countries involved, ...

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He noted that tens of thousands of jobs are dependent on Singapore’s position as a regional aviation hub, and any change in the current arrangements would have implications.

Rebels in Indonesia's Restive Papua Province Continue their Low-Level Insurgency

16 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The rebel leader accused of kidnapping two Indonesian loggers and fleeing with them across the border to Papua, New Guinea, has denied any involvement in the incident, hinting he was being framed by the armed forces, according to excerpts in accompanying article in the *Jakarta Globe*. Jefry Pagawak, said to be a local commander of the Free Papua Organization (OPM) and wanted by the authorities since 2006, said that he had nothing to do with the group that attacked three loggers on 9 September in the Indonesian province of Papua, on the border with Papua, New Guinea. During the attack the group killed one logger and abducted two others. According to another article in the *Jakarta Globe*, this incident preceded an attack on 15 September, where an unknown assailant stabbed to death an Indonesian soldier stationed outside the main military base in the Papuan capital of Jayapura in the early morning hours. Separatists in Papua have been waging a low-level insurgency since the 1960s.

As the adjacent excerpts point out, Indonesian police alleged that Jefry's wing of the OPM is responsible for the attack and kidnapping, and that the rebel leader has a history of targeting civilians. "I'm trying to find out who's behind this attempt to tarnish my name by carrying out this shooting and kidnapping," Jefry told the *Jakarta Globe* by phone. "You'll have to ask the police and the military about that, because I wasn't there and I'm not part of that group," he added, saying he would never carry out such an attack "because then I wouldn't be safe."

According to a *Jakarta Globe* article, in the more recent incident a lone assailant is believed to have jumped the soldier, who was carrying out a routine patrol of the base's perimeter. The assailant then stabbed him repeatedly with a knife, just 300 meters from the base's main guard post, out of sight of the other soldiers gathered there. Lieutenant Colonel Teguh Pudji Raharjo, a spokesman for the base, said the military and police had launched a joint force to hunt down the perpetrator.

Both of these incidents follow Indonesian President Joko Widodo's May 2015 decision to pardon five political prisoners in Papua and lift decades-old media restrictions, according to excerpts in *The Straits Times*. Despite Widodo's gesture, violence continues in Papua. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: "Wanted Rebel Leader Denies Role in Papua Kidnapping Case," *Jakarta Globe*, 15 September 2015, <http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/wanted-rebel-leader-denies-role-papua-kidnapping-case/>

The rebel leader accused of kidnapping two Indonesian loggers and fleeing with them across the border to Papua New Guinea has denied any involvement in the incident, hinting he was being framed by the armed forces.

Jefry Pagawak, said to be a local commander of the Free Papua Organization (OPM) and wanted by the authorities since 2006, said on Wednesday that he had nothing to do with the group that attacked a group of loggers in Papua's Keerom district, on the border with Papua New Guinea, on Sept. 9, killing one person and abducting two.

"I'm trying to find out who's behind this attempt to tarnish my name by carrying out this shooting and kidnapping," Jefry told the Jakarta Globe by phone.

"You'll have to ask the police and the military about that, because I wasn't there and I'm not part of that group," he added, saying he would never carry out such an attack "because then I wouldn't be safe."

Police alleged that Jefry's wing of the OPM is responsible for the attack and kidnapping, and that the rebel leader has a history of targeting civilians.

Source: "Soldier Killed in Jayapura Stabbing Incident," *Jakarta Globe*, 15 September 2015, <http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/soldier-killed-jayapura-stabbing-incident/>

Security forces in Jayapura have launched a manhunt for an unknown assailant who stabbed to death a soldier outside the main military base in the Papuan capital in the early hours of Wednesday.

The incident occurred at around 1:25 a.m. as the soldier, identified as Master Pvt. Langgeng, was carrying out a routine patrol of the base's perimeter.

A lone assailant is believed to have jumped him and stabbed him repeatedly with a knife, just 300 meters from the base's main guard post, out of sight of the other soldiers gathered there.

Lt. Col. Teguh Pudji Raharjo, a spokesman for the base. ... Teguh said the military and police had launched a joint force to hunt down the perpetrator.

... Similar attacks on the armed forces in Papua have typically been blamed on separatists, who have been waging a low-level insurgency since the 1960s.

Source: "Indonesian president Joko Widodo lifts foreign media restrictions in Papua," *The Straits Times*, 10 May 2015, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-president-joko-widodo-lifts-foreign-media-restrictions-in-papua>

Indonesia's president said on Sunday that foreign journalists no longer need special permission to travel to the politically-sensitive Papua province, lifting decades-old restrictions imposed due to a long simmering secessionist movement.

The announcement comes a day after President Joko Widodo pardoned five political prisoners in Papua ...

Erawan Shrine Bombing Investigation: Local Muslims in Bangkok are Already Feeling a Negative Impact

16 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The recent revelations that key suspects of the deadly 17 August Bangkok bombing lived in Min Buri, a usually quiet suburb in eastern Bangkok, has unsettled many in the community, according to excerpts in the adjacent article from *Channel NewsAsia*. As Thai authorities have widened their search for new suspects while gradually building up a clearer picture of how it took place, the public re-enactment of the crime with suspect Yusufu Mieraili brought the shocking discoveries even closer to home in Min Buri. Min Buri district is home to a high concentration of Muslims, mostly Malay-Muslims from Southern Thailand, who first settled more than 200 years ago. More recently, many Muslim migrants are also drawn to the area due to cultural and religious links.

Source: “Muslim Community in Bangkok on Edge without Explanation for Blast,” *Jakarta Globe*, 16 September 2015, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/muslim-community-in/2129576.html>

Recent revelations that key suspects of the deadly Aug 17 Bangkok bombing lived in Min Buri - a usually quiet suburb in eastern Bangkok - has unsettled many in the community.

Thai authorities have widened their search for new suspects, gradually building up a clearer picture of how it took place, but the public re-enactment of the crime with arrested suspect Yusufu Mieraili brought the shocking discoveries even closer to home.

On Aug 29, police raided the Poon-anan apartment in Nong Chok, Min Buri, which they claim is the base of operations for the suspects, and discovered a mountain of evidence including bomb-making materials and fake passports.

Investigators also identified another flat in the same area that the suspects, mostly foreigners, used as a base.

The Min Buri district is home to a high concentration of Muslims, mostly Malay-Muslims from Southern Thailand who first settled more than 200 years ago. Many Muslim migrants are also drawn to the area due to cultural and religious links.

But the Min Buri connection in the bomb investigation has resulted in police searches of homes, sometimes with little explanation.

Local leaders have urged authorities to be sensitive in their investigations, to avoid breeding mistrust within the community.

“This issue can lead to two things. Some people may try to link this area with external problems. And secondly, it will destroy our friendly environment and create distrust within the community,” said Bundid Sama-un from the Kamalul Islam Mosque in Min Buri.



The aftermath of the Erawan bombing on August 17th. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Bangkok_bombing#/media/File:2015_Bangkok_bombing_VOA.jpg.

As the excerpt points out, on 29 August Thai police raided the Poon-anan apartment in Min Buri, which they claim is the base of operations for the suspects, and discovered a mountain of evidence, including bomb-making materials and fake passports. Investigators also identified another apartment in the same area that the suspects, mostly foreigners, used as a base.

Additionally, the article states that the Min Buri connection in the bomb investigation has resulted in police searches of homes, sometimes with little explanation. As a result, local leaders have urged authorities to be sensitive in their investigations, to avoid breeding mistrust within the community. “This issue can lead to two things. Some people may try to link this area with external problems. And secondly, it will destroy our friendly environment and create distrust within the community,” said Bundid Sama-un from the Kamalul Islam Mosque in Min Buri.

Local distrust of Thai authorities has the potential to create resentment among Muslim communities in Bangkok. As they continue their investigation into the Erawan Shrine bombing, local officials should be careful not to damage an already fragile environment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Widening Network Behind Bangkok Bombing

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Less than three months after a bomb killed more than 20 people at a shrine in Bangkok, including a group of Chinese tourists, the suspects involved in the bombing have been reported seen in Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Turkey. According to the excerpted article from *Bangkok Post* on 15 September 2015, Thailand is investigating leads in all of these countries. The masterminds of the bombing are reportedly based in Istanbul and likely connected to the mob that assaulted the Thai consulate there in July 2015.

The article makes clear that details on the bombing remain unclear. However, the motive behind the bombing was not only to exact revenge against Thailand for expatriating Uighur men back to China after they were caught in human-trafficking camps near the Malaysian border, but also – and possibly more relevant – because Thailand proceeded to break up the trafficking network that had for years been smuggling Uighurs, Rohingyas and others through Thailand.

This discovery of a wide geographic reach in this human-trafficking network does not come as surprise. Most such networks work transnationally. However, the article’s description of the investigation shows how security agencies, such as Thailand’s in this case, struggle to keep pace with the movement of people in and out of their borders. Thai authorities, for example, believed they located the main suspect who planned the bombing – a Uighur man originally from Xinjiang, China named Ihsan – in Dhaka, Bangladesh. By the time the investigation continued, they found out that he already traveled onwards from Dhaka via New Delhi to Istanbul.

In broader perspective, the article shows how trafficking networks can easily shift from smuggling people to terrorism because they are already engaged in criminality, bribery, forgery, and often violent coercion. This was likely the case for the human trafficking network that is suspected in the Bangkok bombing. It also raises lessons to learn for Europe, which sees abundant trafficking networks facilitating travel for Syrians, Afghans and other nationalities into Europe. Moreover, with the Thai authorities cracking down on human trafficking as a result of this bombing, it may force Uighurs to re-explore routes out of Xinjiang through Central Asia when they seek to leave for Turkey, Syria or elsewhere. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Put simply, we destroyed their business,’ the police chief told his daily media briefing.”



Uighurs who fled China (depicted in the adjacent photo) were supported by human trafficking networks that now seek revenge against both China and Thailand for those two countries’ efforts to dismantle their business..

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/court-rules-suspected-uighur-family-must-remain-in-thai-custody/2696530.html>

Source: “Ishan Led Uighur-Trafficking Network, Somyot Says,” *Bangkok Post*, 15 September 2015.

Ishan led Uighur-trafficking network, Somyot says

National police chief Somyot Pumpunmuang said that Turkey denied that Mr Abususataer, better known as “Ishan”, flew from Dhaka to Istanbul via New Delhi and Abu Dhabi on August 30, as asserted by a joint investigative team of Thai police and the Bangladeshi embassy in Bangkok.

The August 17 blast at the Ratchaprasong intersection shrine and the failed bombing of the Sathorn pier the following day are connected to the July 9 attack on the Thai consulate-general in Istanbul, he said. Both stem from Turkish anger over Thailand’s forced repatriation of 109 Uighur Muslims to China in July, Pol Gen Somyot added.

Thailand disrupted the network’s movement of the migrants when it captured them and placed them in a detention camp in southern Thailand last year before deporting them blindfolded and under armed guard. The country then launched a major crackdown on human traffickers following the discovery of mass Rohingya Muslim and Bangladeshi graves on the Malaysian border on May 1.

“Put simply, we destroyed their business,” the police chief told his daily media briefing. Pol Gen Somyot said today he could not confirm a report that the yellow-shirted bomber had fled to Pakistan, one of several countries the Royal Thai Police is coordinating search efforts with. A Pakistani and two Malaysians were arrested in Malaysia in the past few days and deputy police chief Chakthip Chaichinda and a team of investigators today left for Kuala Lumpur to determine if the men had any useful information on the bombings, Pol Gen Somyot said.

300,000 PLA Troops to be Cut Amid China's Growing Military Might

OE Watch Commentary: During China's recent military parade to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Second World War victory, Chinese President Xi Jinping made the surprising announcement that 300,000 troops would be cut from the People's Liberation Army (PLA). While attracting worldwide attention, it also generated a number of questions. The following article, which is based on a news conference with Yang Yujun, a spokesman of the National Defense Ministry, offers some insight into China's decision to cut the troops and the military's path forward. It also is a clear indication that China's plan to cut 300,000 troops is an important step in its military reform initiative.

According to Yang, the cuts are among a series that have been performed over the past three decades. Since the mid 1980s China has cut its troops successively by 1,000,000, 500,000, and 200,000. After this next round of cuts, expected to be complete by the end of 2017, the number of Chinese forces will stand at 2,000,000. This still will rank the country number one in military troops. Yang defends China's large-scale of military troops by explaining that the country continues to face "diversified and complex security threats." (Note: For a country that has not fought a major war since 1979, this could be perceived as a bit excessive). He lists the PLA's responsibilities as safeguarding national unification, maintaining territorial integrity, protecting developmental interests, and conducting non-combat military operations, (e.g., emergency rescue, disaster relief, international peacekeeping, and international rescue missions). There is also the need to "cope with the threats of terrorism, separatism, and extremism..." While Yang paints the PLA as being faced with a heavy burden, it is also clear that China, which has been modernizing its military systems, is aiming to develop smaller, more efficient and streamlined armed forces.

Xi's decision to announce the cuts during the victory parade shows an increased level of confidence. This is evidenced by Yang's statement that China has "the confidence and ability to deal with various security threats and risks, and to safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests." He points out that the PLA intends to "make its formations more scientific" and "construct a modern military force system with Chinese characteristics." He goes on to stress the country's goals of achieving the "Two Centenary" and the "China Dream." China's two centenary goals are to double the 2010 level of gross domestic product per capita income and build a moderately prosperous society by 2021, which will mark the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China; and to turn China into a complete modern and socially advanced country by 2049, which marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. The "China Dream" signifies the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

While the article concludes with Yang restating that "China always upholds the banner of peace, pursues the national defense policy that is defensive in nature..." it is clear that we should expect to see more reforms, and perhaps even at an accelerating pace. Yang offers a heads-up that "for the next step, the PLA will launch a series of new reform initiatives in succession to push forward the national defense and military reform in an active and steady way." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"Since the '80s of the last century, China has proactively carried out military cuts several times, slashing the number of its soldiers successively by one million, 500,000, and 200,000. Currently, the total number of Chinese forces stands at 2.3 million."

Source: Sun Yanxin, Wang Jingguo, and Li Xuanliang, "(军事) 国防部举行新闻发布会详解阅兵和裁军等问题 (The National Defense Ministry Holds a News Conference to Explain in Details Questions About the Military Parade and Military Cuts)," *Xinhua*, 3 September, 2015, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-09/03/c_1116457865.htm>.

The National Defense Ministry Holds a News Conference to Explain in Detail Questions About the Military Parade and Military Cuts

Since the '80s of the last century, China has proactively carried out military cuts several times, slashing the number of its soldiers successively by one million, 500,000, and 200,000. Currently, the total number of Chinese forces stands at 2.3 million. Based on the decisions and arrangements made at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee about deepening national defense and military reform, the party Central Committee, the Central Military Commission, and Chairman Xi, having conducted in-depth investigations and scientific studies, decided to cut the armed forces by another 300,000 and reduce the number of the troops to two million. This decision is in keeping with our national and military conditions. Through reducing the number of the armed forces, we can further adjust and optimize the scale and structure of the PLA, make it more streamlined and efficient, and make its formations more scientific. We can construct a modern military force system with Chinese characteristics, strive to realize the party's objective to build a strong military under the new situations, and provide a steadfast support for achieving the "Two Centenary" goals and the China Dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

... For the next step, the PLA will launch a series of new reform initiatives in succession to push forward the national defense and military reform in an active and steady way.

Sino-India Confrontation: A Stand-off or Simply a War of Words?

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: India media have widely reported on a Sino-Indian standoff in the Burtse area along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. According to the first excerpted article, 15 September marked the fourth day of the standoff, at which time the India Defense Ministry was asking troops to “stick to their ground and don’t retreat till the last Chinese soldier withdraws.” Both sides are said to have stood their ground in anticipation of a flag-level meeting that was to take place later in the week. The article explains that India had increased the presence of both its troops and the paramilitary Indo-Tibetan Border Police in the area. This and other Indian reports claim that the standoff took place after Indian troops demolished a watch tower constructed by China “on Indian soil.”

While the India media reported widely on the situation, there has been practically no mention of it in the Chinese media, the only comment being, as seen in the second excerpted article, a denial that any such standoff had ever taken place. The second article quotes Jiang Jingkui, Director of the Department of South Asian Languages at Peking University, as saying, “This is not the first time that India media has reported ‘confrontations’ that do not exist in the Sino-Indian border area.” He goes on to explain, “These news are often untrue, negative, misleading, and aimed at provoking public opinion, and are harmful to the relationship between China and India.” China accused the Indian media of frequently reporting disputes between both sides. “They often accuse Chinese troops of ‘intruding’ and describe the troops of both sides as having a ‘face-off.’” China continues to describe relations with India as stable; India, on the other hand, seems to paint a graver picture.

While we may never know the truth of what actually took place, the face-off is certainly plausible. The first article explains that if China can make inroads into the Burtse area, it will give the PLA the ability to monitor activities of Indian troops based in “Old Patol base,” as well as an ability to deny India the advantage of overlooking the Karakoram Highway linking the territory, which it claims is illegally occupied by China with Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“China has been trying to make inroads in Burtse area as it will give access to the PLA to monitor the activities of Indian troops based in Old Patol base...”

Source: “China Denies Sino Indian ‘Face Off’ Claims,” *Global Times*, 15 September, 2015, <<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/942446.shtml>>.

China Denies Sino Indian ‘Face Off’ Claims

“This is not the first time that Indian media has reported ‘confrontations’ that do not exist in the Sino-Indian border area. These news are often untrue, negative, misleading and aimed at provoking public opinion, and are harmful to the relationship between China and India,” said Jiang Jingkui, director of the Department of South Asian Languages at Peking University.

Indian media frequently report disputes at the border with China. They often accuse Chinese troops of “intruding” and describe the troops of both sides as having a “face-off.”

“There is a certain group of people, including the military, who are hostile towards China. Unlike the Indian government and local citizens who are supportive of Sino-Indian relations and peaceful development, they believe that a war with China is inevitable as they want to avenge the Sino-Indian confrontation that took place in 1962,” Jiang said.

Source: Sanjeev Pargal, “DM Tells Army to Hold on to Their Position Very Firmly,” *Daily Excelsior*, 15 September 2015, <<http://www.dailyexcelsior.com/dm-tells-army-to-hold-on-to-their-position-very-firmly-2/>>.

DM Tells Army to Hold on to Their Position Very Firmly

... the two sides agreed to hold Sector Commanders level flag meeting this week but the date hasn’t been finalized as yet even as the Defence Ministry asked the troops to stick to their ground and don’t retreat till the last Chinese soldier withdraws.

China has been trying to make inroads in Burtse area as it will give access to the PLA to monitor the activities of Indian troops based in Old Patol base besides trying to deny an advantage to India to overlook the Karakoram highway linking the territory illegally occupied by China with Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir(PoK).

China’s New Attack Helicopter to be Developed over the Next Five Years

11 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: China is reportedly developing a fourth-generation attack helicopter, which it plans to deliver to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) around 2020. According to the accompanying excerpt, the chairman of AVIC, the state-owned company developing the helicopter, says the new aircraft will have stealth capability and “will reshape the combat patterns of the PLA ground force.” According to Wu Ximing, the helicopter’s chief designer, it will possess supreme maneuverability in complicated environments, outstanding survivability, and joint operational ability.

According to a number of sources, such as *Military Today*, China’s Z-10, third-generation helicopter ranks among the top ten attack helicopters in the world. The new fourth-generation aircraft will reportedly help to ease a shortage of this type of aircraft in both the Chinese Ground Forces and Navy. In addition, as reported, the PLA will become more dependent on these aircraft as it grows in military and logistical capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Zhao Lei, “AVIC Begins Work on New Attack Helicopter,” *China Daily*, 11 September 2015, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-09/11/content_21842752.htm>.

AVIC Begins Work on New Attack Helicopter

Lin Zuoming, AVIC’s chairman, said on the sidelines of the expo that the new aircraft will have stealth capability and will reshape the combat patterns of the PLA ground force.

“It is a trend that the ground force will become increasingly dependent on helicopters because they have better strike capability and mobility than armored vehicles, and can transport supplies to frontier troops in a timely manner,” he said.

Wu Ximing, chief helicopter designer at the State-owned defense contractor, said the new helicopter will also feature supreme maneuverability in complicated environments, outstanding survivability and joint operational ability.

Disparate Views in Chinese Press About US-Chinese Cyber Issues

15 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: From 10-21 September 2015, just a few weeks before Chinese President Xi Jinping was to arrive in the US for a meeting with President Obama, there was a disparity in Chinese commentaries regarding US-Chinese cyber issues. Some journalists continued to lambast Western statements about Chinese cyber intrusions against US private and government entities. Two such headlines stated that “US Hawks Full of Bluster Ahead of Xi’s Visit” and “US Needs to Alleviate Paranoia in Cyber Security Talks.” Other statements, however, were more contrite, with one noting that a cyber deal would end the current dispute between the two nations and another stating that the meeting should focus on cooperation and not contradictions. One of each of these different points of view is listed below. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

“At this crucial point, if the United States could exhibit its sincerity and take more real concrete steps in protecting cyber security with China, rather than level groundless allegations against it, the US will bear positive significance for bilateral ties and for a better and improved Internet.”

Source: Zhou Jiying, “Obama Has Remarkedly Wildly: United States able to Completely Defeat China in China-US Cyber War,” *Huanqiu Wang*, 16 September 2015.

Yang Xiyu said that US President Obama has “remarked wildly” that if China and the United States were to have a cyber war, the United States would certainly defeat China completely. Yang Xiyu assessed that remark as extremely “irresponsible.”

Yang Xiyu stressed that “the threat of a China-US cyber war is far greater than a nuclear war.” He said that “I bluntly say that first, (Obama is) boasting and second, ignorant.” He then explained that were a cyber war to occur, there would be no winners just as in a nuclear war, and both sides would be losers. Also, the consequences would be even more terrible than a nuclear war. Yang Xiyu indicated that compared with a so-called weapon of mass destruction, the consequences caused by a cyber war would be “super-mass destruction.” Yang Xiyu said: “There would be large-scale paralysis in the event of a cyber [war], and it is hard to list all the areas it would damage.” The method for cooperation would be to establish rules. As cyber powers, China and the United States should also lead the way in advocating for the demilitarization of cyberspace. This is more urgent than preventing the militarization of outer space, because cybersecurity affects everyone. Meng Jianzhu stressed that...any people who carry out cyber-attacks and online commercial espionage within China’s borders are in violation of state law and should all be subject to legal prosecution.

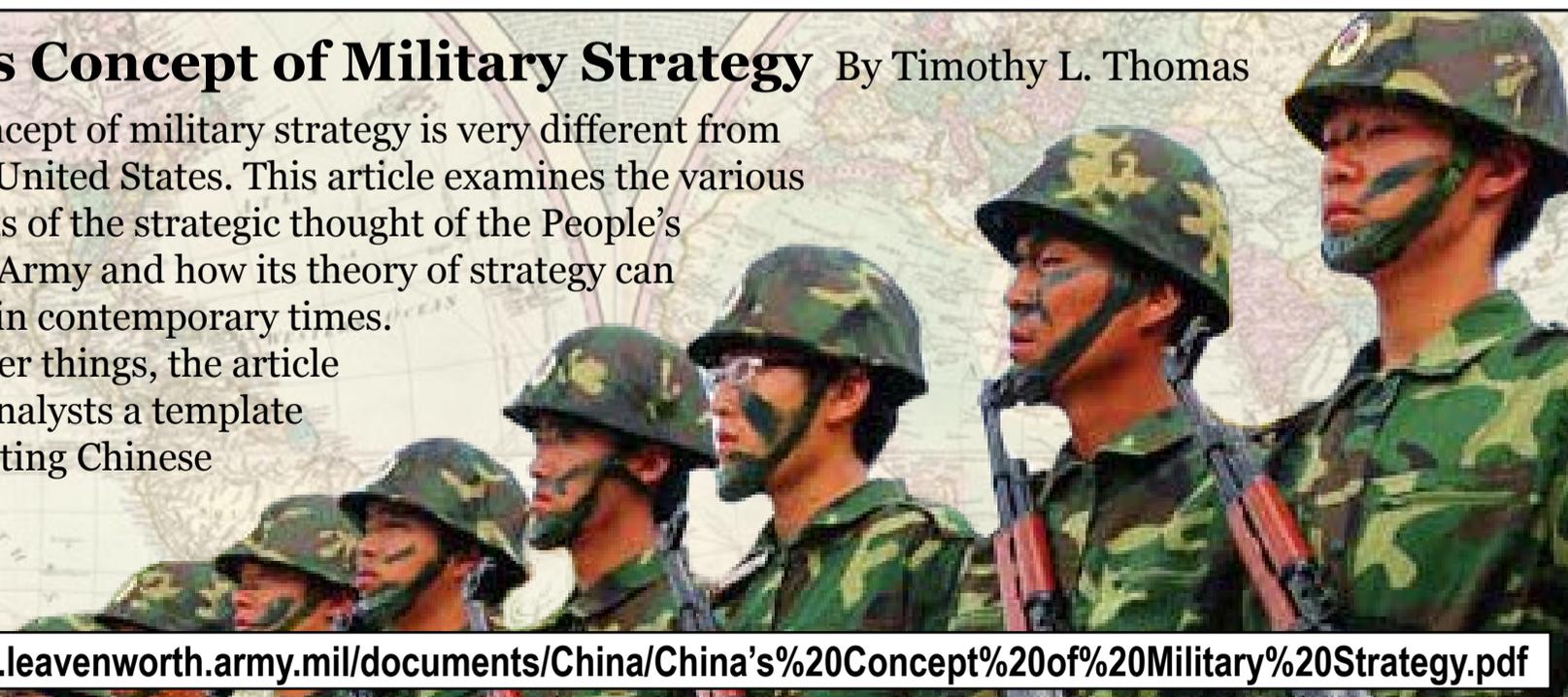
Source: *Xinhua* (in English) 15 September 2015.

Actually, in safeguarding cyber security, China and the United States, two pivotal players on the realm, have a lot to cooperate, rather than to make it a contradiction focus. However, some US agencies and media have never stopped preaching about the so-called Chinese cyber-attacks.

U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said China and Russia posed the most advanced cyber threats and that Chinese cyber espionage continues to target a broad spectrum of U.S. interests. Some U.S. media even said Chinese firms and individuals could face sanctions for cyber-attacks against U.S. commercial targets. It is obvious that these irresponsible remarks and groundless accusations are not conducive to bilateral ties and will stymie finding solutions to the problem. China has repeatedly stated that it is against all forms of cyber-attacks and will crack down on them, as it has long been a major victim of such illegal activities. Facing cyber security, a new problem puzzling almost the whole world, China has also called for conducting cooperation with the U.S. side and any other country to protect the security and its peaceful order.

China’s Concept of Military Strategy By Timothy L. Thomas

China’s concept of military strategy is very different from that of the United States. This article examines the various components of the strategic thought of the People’s Liberation Army and how its theory of strategy can be applied in contemporary times. Among other things, the article offers US analysts a template for confronting Chinese strategy.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/China/China's%20Concept%20of%20Military%20Strategy.pdf>

Chinese Thoughts on Near Space

July 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In July 2015 the website of the Communist Youth League of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee published an article on near space. It discussed China's interest in the various applications and strategic value of near space, as well as what various countries were doing to maximize their abilities to maneuver space vehicles there. It was noted that near space has become a key area for battlefield reconnaissance and for offensive and defensive uses of the area.

End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)

“Near space, also known as ‘subspace,’ ‘ultra-high altitude,’ ‘near-space,’ and ‘suborbit,’ refers to the region between 20-100 kilometers from the surface of the earth. It is the conjunction between the traditional area of aviation and the area of aerospace... Because of the influence of physical altitude and air density; neither traditional aircraft nor spacecraft are able to fly within this space zone. Therefore, near space has become a unique area between the maximum flight altitude for general aviation aircraft and the minimum orbital height for space-based satellites.”

Source: Wang Peng, Cheng Jian, and Zhang Meng, “Near Space Becomes New Strategic High Ground under Careful Management by Various Countries,” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* Online, 3 July 2015, p. 9.

Near space, also known as ‘subspace,’ ‘ultra-high altitude,’ ‘near-space,’ and ‘suborbit,’ refers to the region between 20-100 kilometers from the surface of the earth. It is the conjunction between the traditional area of aviation and the area of aerospace... Because of the influence of physical altitude and air density; neither traditional aircraft nor spacecraft are able to fly within this space zone. Therefore, near space has become a unique area between the maximum flight altitude for general aviation aircraft and the minimum orbital height for space-based satellites.

Therefore, it is suitable for the stabilized flights of aerostats and air-breathing powered aircraft. This space zone is also particularly appropriate for supersonic and hypersonic flights...near space offers unique military application values and strategic position. Near space vehicles consist of two types. The first type includes those with a low speed of less than Mach-1, such as high altitude balloons, stratospheric airships, and solar energy drones. The second type includes those with speed exceeding Mach-1, such as supersonic and hypersonic cruise aircraft as well as suborbital aircraft. At present, equipment and various near space vehicles under development around the world are mainly used to accomplish operations such as reconnaissance and surveillance, long-range strikes, and anti-missile early warning; in addition, they are also employed to conduct communications relay, force projection, and other support tasks.

In reconnaissance and surveillance, the most outstanding advantage of near space reconnaissance platforms is the long dwell time in the air, very applicable for a long-term continuous surveillance of fixed targets or specified areas. Regarding long-range strike, near space hypersonic strike weapons are able to launch attacks on any target in the world in a very short time. Regarding anti-missile early warning, near space early warning platforms are claimed to have the advantages of broad vision, anti-stealth capability, and ultra-low altitude target detection. They are able to effectively overcome drawbacks such as the limited sustained flight of early warning aircraft, the insufficient maneuverability of early warning satellites, and the short operational range of ground early warning radars. Regarding communications relay, near space communication platforms can be used as high altitude communications relay platforms for the battlefield because they can receive stronger communication signals than satellites and wider band communication signals that are free of ionospheric reflection impacts. In force projection, near space vehicles -- with the airship as a representative -- can be used on a large scale and with high maneuverability to deliver heavy equipment and materials, and even operational forces.

In the future, with the continued development of near space related technologies, near space vehicles may undertake more battlefield tasks and play a greater strategic role; they may even breed new operational patterns and military theory. Various nations will attach greater importance to the strategic management of this new military high ground.

Chinese Economic Reform: Giving with the Left, Taking with the Right

23 September 2015

“As long as the state owns a controlling interest, it counts as a state-owned enterprise.”

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to the US in September was full of the hard-power aspects of the world’s most important bilateral relationship. Given the development over the past 15 years of the world’s perception of China, it may seem odd to ask why, as a middling power in most aspects of national power, is China so central to great power relations? Is the size of China’s population so important? That was a minor criterion for global power 50 years ago as it was 150 years ago. Certainly in terms of its influence on international diplomacy, the power of its culture to attract global “hearts & minds” and its military’s modest ability to project power, China remains a middle power. The answer to China’s current importance is that the one category of national power in which China is first tier is the size, capability, and financial resources of its economy. Therefore, to forecast the country’s possible future paths, all eyes must focus on how it manages the waxing and waning of its economic power. As China’s economy either surmounts or fails to surmount obstacles to growth, so goes its ability to develop and acquire weaponry, exert influence on global conventions and organizations, and coerce others to follow and not oppose its national interests.

A key aspect of China’s economy is the financial health and capacity for innovation of its manufacturing and infrastructure firms. These companies represent the bulk of its state-owned enterprises (SOE) and are crucial to China’s power development. The first article provides broad coverage of China’s recently announced plan to reform its SOEs due to their falling productivity. These SOEs are all large enterprises with diverse and oftentimes unrelated business lines. In addition to economic logic, their one commonality is they cannot deviate too far from their political master, the Communist Party of China (CPC). As for-profit businesses beholden to the CPC’s political aims, SOEs are laden with conflicts of purpose and execution. This, in turn, leads to management inefficiencies and the muddling of business practices. As the “visible hand” of the Chinese economy, the CPC realizes this and would like to improve SOE economic performance while never surrendering control of enterprises through which at the strategic level they exert decisive economic and political power throughout Chinese society.

In the second article we learn that devising a system that balances economic and political masters is a difficult policy issue. How can the SOEs be made more efficient and productive – something that requires they allocate resources based on the difficult to read “invisible hand” of the market while still effectively obeying the political demands of the CPC? In the past 30 years of spectacular growth, China has surprised the world with the degree that it is not one’s average developing country, yet it is hard to imagine how Chinese policy makers will successfully – and durably – manage the conflict between the logic of the marketplace and that of politics. Moreover, their job is getting more difficult as China’s economic growth slows and technology advances.

The third article speaks to the technological advances that will challenge China’s attempt at a grand bargain between the need for technical innovation – increasingly driven by the employment of decentralized and highly dynamic human capital – and its desire to retain political control of business decisions. World economies are discovering that as technology improves, labor is either re-employed or made redundant. For its part, what will China do with those from its SOE sector left behind? Also, the very process of making sustainable new technology requires a freedom of thought and action difficult to fit into political control. In relation to SOE reform, either China gets it right and its SOEs improve rather than hinder growth in its economic power, or the policy makers get it wrong, in which case China tears a page out of the story of the demise of the Soviet Union. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)**

Source: “SOEs in China to adopt state-owned, private-run structure,” *Want China Times*, 15 September 2015. <http://wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150915000114>.

SOEs in China to adopt state-owned, private-run structure

In China, SOEs have been given clear advantages over private firms for decades but this is set to change with private firms being given the green light to foray into sectors traditionally dominated by state players. Despite their size, SOEs have long been seen as weak in China. There are currently 155,000 of them in the country, including 52,000 central government firms. The total assets of China’s SOEs amount to 104 trillion yuan (US\$16.3 trillion). The director of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Committee, Zhang Yi, has stated, “As long as the state owns a controlling interest, it counts as a state-owned enterprise.”

Source: “Mergers without overhauls may do little to further reform” *Nikkei*, 20 September 2015. <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Economy/Mergers-without-overhauls-may-do-little-to-further-reform?page=1>.

Mergers without overhauls may do little to further reform

China has begun moving to consolidate state-owned enterprises. Beijing’s scramble to consolidate state-owned enterprises stems from a combination of stiffer international competition and the emergence of financial troubles at some businesses. Sasac’s plan deals only with the central companies, leaving the regional companies alone. Local governments are unwilling to consolidate these businesses, fearing a loss of jobs and tax revenue.

Source: “Rise of the robots inevitable in China,” *China Daily*, 14 September 2015. <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0914/c90000-8949292.html>.

Rise of the robots inevitable in China

As China’s population declines, experts are calling for more research into artificial intelligence, big data and smart manufacturing to maintain an economic and industrial edge and to drive development.

Serbia and Kosovo Reach Municipality Agreement But Differ on Details

26 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Since Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, the two countries have engaged in negotiations to normalize relations and ease tensions. Recent agreements addressed disagreements around ownership and operation of communications and energy companies previously run by the Serbian state, and now including some privatized Kosovar companies.

In addition, the agreements addressed freedom of movement across their shared border, as well as created an Association of Serbian Municipalities. However, neither country currently agrees on the powers of the Association, which the accompanying article explains will be a legal entity created to support ethnic Serbs living in Kosovo. While Serbian officials intend the Association to have a measure of autonomy, as indicated in the excerpt, Kosovar officials do not give the Association such powers. Although a draft is scheduled within the next four months, it is clear that negotiations are not yet complete. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

“The Serbian Prime Minister said it was agreed that the association of majority Serbian municipalities in Kosovo would have broad powers ... Kosovo’s Mustafa insisted that it would not.”

Source: Jovanovic, Igor. “Serbia and Kosovo Reach Four Key Agreements.” *Balkan Insight*. 26 August 2015. <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-kosovo-reach-four-key-agreements-08-26-2015>>

“The Serbian Prime Minister said it was agreed that the association of majority Serbian municipalities in Kosovo would have the broad powers, including a president, vice-president, assembly, council, coat-of-arms and flag.

‘The association will decide on all four questions ... from healthcare, education, urban and rural planning and economic development, to financing it from Serbia. It [the agreement] states unambiguously that Serbia has a right to finance it, without taxes and fees,’ Vucic told Serbia’s national broadcaster, RTS.

Kosovo’s Mustafa insisted that it would not have such broad powers and would merely ‘help municipalities with Serbian majorities in Kosovo’.

The agreement on the Association, published by the EU, said that it will be a legal entity defined by a statute and will promote the interests of the Kosovo Serb community in its relations with the Kosovo central authorities.”

Challenges in Handling the Exodus of Refugees

4 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The significant increase in the number of refugees entering into Southeast Europe has placed considerable strain on the capacity of those countries to register and provide services. Many refugees are entering into Macedonia from Turkey, and then crossing into Serbia in the hopes of eventually finding their way into the more prosperous EU countries such as Germany. When the Macedonian, Austrian, Hungarian and Serbian interior ministers met recently to discuss the situation, they agreed that this is an issue for Europe as a whole. The accompanying excerpts highlight both the strain that the influx of refugees has put on the resources available in the transit countries (Serbia and Macedonia) and the role of organized crime and how this exodus has encouraged trafficking groups.

While the vast majority of migrants entering into Macedonia and Serbia do not intend to stay, the rate at which they are entering causes concern regarding their well-being and the border security of the region. The barrier that Hungary recently constructed along the Hungarian-Serbian border in an attempt to stem the flow of refugees will only intensify the challenges faced by these transit countries as they work to provide adequate food and shelter for all the migrants.

In the second excerpt, Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner points out that the region needs a “joint approach to dealing with the challenges posed by the refugees, particularly the organized crime that appears from the illegal human trafficking.” Human traffickers have taken advantage of the crisis by charging refugees in exchange for smuggling them across borders and out of the Balkans. European countries will continue to have a difficult time balancing the need to provide humanitarian assistance with the necessity of maintaining border security and preventing an increase in organized crime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Manes)**

Source: “Bosnian Agencies Assessing Refugee Inflow Risks, Potential Measures,” Sarajevo *FTV*. 31 August 2015. [cn/china/2015-09/11/content_21842752.htm](http://china/2015-09/11/content_21842752.htm)>.

“The practice so far has shown that refugees are not staying in transit countries for a long time. However, the transit itself poses considerable security, humanitarian, and financial challenges.” (Nerminka Emric)

Source: “Macedonia, Austria, Hungary and Serbia Discuss Ways To Deal With the Issue of Refugees,” 4 September 2015. <http://www.mia.mk/en/Inside/RenderSingleNews/61/132789409>

“We need intense joint approach to dealing with the challenges posed by the refugees, particularly the organized crime that appears from the illegal human trafficking.” (Johanna Mikl-Leitner, Austrian Interior Minister)

Maintaining Chinese Security Cooperation in Central Asia

28 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The military parade that took place on 3 September in Beijing, China, marking the 70th anniversary of China's victory in the Second World War received a lot of attention in the media for the weapons systems and equipment that appeared, particularly the DF-21D ballistic missile. The military contingents from an estimated 17 nations that marched in the parade did not receive much attention, but, as the accompanying articles report, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan each sent an honor guard company and Kyrgyzstan sent members from its National Guard to march in the parade. Their participation reiterates and summarizes the security cooperation between China and the governments of Central Asia and what can be expected from this in the future.

Security cooperation between China and the Central Asian states takes place in a couple of different areas. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have all participated in joint military exercises with Chinese forces, most often through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but a few bilateral exercises have taken place. This is in contrast to the relationship between China and Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, neither of which sent a unit to participate in the parade, though Uzbek President Islam Karimov was in attendance. Earlier this year it was reported that Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan would be purchasing the HQ-9 surface-to-air missile system from China, but there were no details on when the purchases would be finalized and delivered. Uzbekistan is a SCO member, but has rarely taken part in joint exercises.

One of the articles notes how members of Kyrgyzstan's National Guard are studying in Chinese military academies, and while this is worth noting, Kyrgyzstan's participation (much less that of Kazakhstan or Tajikistan) in the parade is not something requiring a long-term commitment or effort. It is also not likely to interfere with security cooperation with other partners and in certain circumstances, as demonstrated in the past, allows the Central Asian states some leverage in dealing with other partners. Ultimately, the parade shows that China and some of the Central Asian states are maintaining a level of security cooperation; this could help facilitate exercises or engagements in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“We trained with the help of the military attaché of China Embassy in Kyrgyzstan,” — Satybaldyev

Source: Mosunov, Igor. “На 30-градусной жаре казахстанские военнослужащие готовятся к параду в Пекине” (Kazakhstan's soldiers are getting ready for the parade in Beijing in 30 degree Celsius heat), *Inform Buro*, 28 August 2015. <http://informburo.kz/novosti/na-30-ti-gradusnoy-zhare-kazahstanskije-voennosluzhashchie-gotovyatsya-k-paradu-v-pekine-11164.html>

Kazakhstan's soldiers are getting ready for the parade in Beijing in 30 degree Celsius heat

76 soldiers of the Honor Guard Company of the Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan are in Beijing...they are preparing for the massive celebration in honor of the 70th anniversary of victory in World War II on September 3...

Source: “Рота Почетного караула Минобороны РТ примет участие в военном параде в Пекине (The Honor Guard Company of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Tajikistan will take part in the military parade in Beijing),” *Avesta*, 19 August 2015. <http://www.avesta.tj/security/34809-rotapochetnogo-karaula-minoborony-rt-primet-uchastie-v-voennom-parade-v-pekine.html>

...the press center of the Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan reported that the Honor Guard Company, made up of 83 officers and soldiers, flew to China on August 16 to participate in the parade...the Tajik soldiers will be led by the Deputy Commander of Training, Ilhom Mahsumov...

Source: “Военнослужащие Нацгвардии Кыргызстана примут участие в параде в Пекине (Soldiers of the National Guard of Kyrgyzstan will take part in the parade in Beijing),” *Xinhua*, 20 August 2015. http://russian.news.cn/2015-08/20/c_134535254.htm

Soldiers of the National Guard of Kyrgyzstan will take part in the 70th anniversary of the Victory of the Second World War, said the National Guard commander Melis Satybaldyev...special training will take place in that the march of the Chinese military is 112 beat a minute, while in Kyrgyzstan it is normally 120. “We trained with the help of the military attaché of China Embassy in Kyrgyzstan,” – said Satybaldyev...He also reported that members of the National Guard are involved in joint courses with the military of China and study at military academies there...



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chinese_honor_guard_in_column_070322-F-0193C-014.JPG#/media/File:Chinese_honor_guard_in_column_070322-F-0193C-014.JPG

Making Sense of the Collective Security Treaty Organization's Exercises

30 August 2015

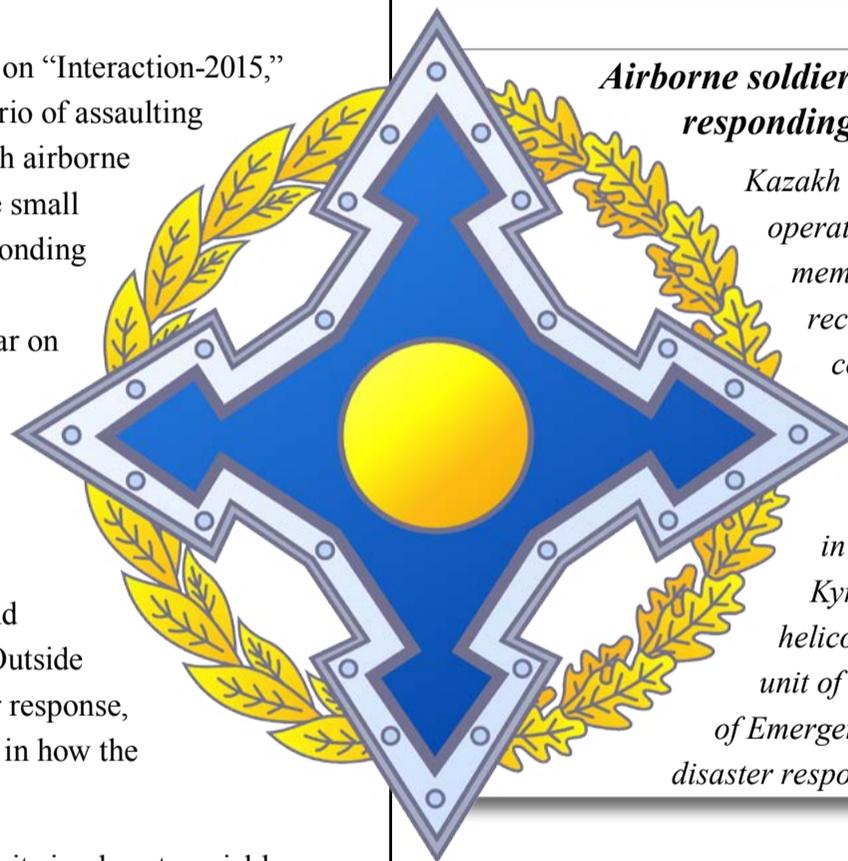
OE Watch Commentary: The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) holds regular joint military exercises that typically involve member states' airborne or air assault units that have been designated for the organization's Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF). As the accompanying articles demonstrate, other units from the security ministries of member states are also sometimes involved in these exercises. The articles report on two recent CORF exercises, "Interaction-2015" and "Grom-2015," which took place around the same time, and provide an idea of what kind of threats the CSTO continues to believe it will face and how the CORF could be utilized.

The Inform Buro article reported on "Interaction-2015," which involved an often used scenario of assaulting and eliminating an enemy force with airborne and special forces units, though one small difference was the inclusion of responding to a disaster while the mock assault took place. The article from Red Star on "Grom-2015" mentions how it was an exercise that involved the drug control agencies of Tajikistan and Russia, with additional personnel from ministries of both countries, in a scenario of seizing narcotics and eliminating a group of traffickers. Outside of the narcotics seizure and disaster response, "Grom-2015" shared similar tactics in how the opposing force was eliminated.

The CORF was created to have units in place to quickly deploy in the event of an attack by an external threat, which could include a state or terrorist group, against a CSTO member state. While the scenario in "Interaction-2015" has yet to happen during the reaction force's existence, there is occasional violence on the Tajik-Afghan border related to drug trafficking. Based on news reports when violence takes place, the traffickers involved in clashes with Tajik border guards and drug control agents have been from the northern provinces of Afghanistan. The threat from a group of traffickers from Afghanistan could fit the criteria for a CORF deployment, and this is possibly the reason for the "Grom-2015" exercise scenario. Nevertheless, Tajik forces have proven capable of dealing with the small groups of drug traffickers for some time. Lastly, "Grom-2015" claimed to be a CORF exercise, but only Russian and Tajik personnel actually took part, while other members sent observers. It appears that the CSTO is preparing for different kinds of threats to happen in quick succession, but which units are available for the CORF might be another matter. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Members of the special detachment of the Federal Drug Control Service of Russia and the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan participate in the exercise."

Source: Lugovskoy, Vitaly. "Ликвидацию последствий ЧС отработали войска ВДВ Казахстана" (Airborne soldiers of Kazakhstan worked out responding to the effects of disasters), *Inform Buro*, 30 August 2015. <http://informburo.kz/novosti/likvidaciyu-posledstviy-chs-otrabotali-voyska-vdv-kazahstana-11202.html>



Airborne soldiers of Kazakhstan worked out responding to the effects of disasters

Kazakh soldiers carried out a joint special operation with the paratroopers of CSTO members (in the Pskov Oblast)...After receiving a specific and timely location, composition and character of the enemy force, the commander tasked units to block and destroy the militants... scouts of Russia and Belarus landed in an assigned area, paratroopers from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were inserted by helicopters for fire support, and an airborne unit of Kazakhstan with the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations worked out issues of disaster response...

Source: Tikhonov, Alexander. "Кинжальный удар по наркомафии (A precision strike on drug traffickers)," *Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star)*, 3 September 2015. <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/news-menu/v-armiyakh-sng/tadzhikistan/item/25585-kinzhalnyj-udar-po-narkomafii>

...The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) counternarcotic exercise "Grom-2015" marked the start of the final phase of the strategic counternarcotic operation "Dagger Retribution" to eliminate channels of Afghan heroine through Tajikistan to Russia. On August 27 at the Fahrabad range (Kulob, Tajikistan) the counternarcotic agencies and services within the CSTO's Collective Rapid Reaction Forces began the active phase of the exercise...

Members of the special detachment of the Federal Drug Control Service of Russia and the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan participate in the exercise. Additionally, members and service members of the FSB and Russian Ministry of Defense were involved as well as the National Security Committee, National Guard, Interior Ministry, and Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan...Representatives from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan observed...

The Engineering Capabilities of Kazakhstan's Defense Industry

4 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: While Kazakhstan's defense industry has worked to become more self-sufficient in meeting the government's defense and security needs, it has been limited in its growth over the past several years due to not having enough engineers capable of designing and producing technology for weapons systems or equipment (see: September 2014 OE Watch, "The Impact of the Growth of Kazakhstan's Defense Industry"). The accompanying article reports on recent upgrades to the T-72 main battle tank currently in the inventory of Kazakhstan's Ground Forces and updates the issue of engineering capabilities in the defense industry.

The article does not mention how many of the estimated 300 T-72s in the inventory received the engine, fire control system, GPS and radio communications upgrades, or how much money was spent overall. The article does note how the fire control system comes from an Israeli defense company and that the radios were from Tadiran, which is also Israeli. If this news is any indication of the current engineering capabilities within the Kazakh defense industry, then the MoD is continuing to purchase and utilize technology from international defense companies and integrate them into its existing inventory. Previous agreements and purchases by the government of Kazakhstan have included a stipulation that some manufacturing take place in Kazakhstan so that technical expertise and capabilities in the defense industry would improve, but it is unknown if that happened here.

Lastly, Kazakhstan's defense expenditures are closely tied to the state of the country's economy, with expenditures usually coming in at around one percent of the GDP. While Kazakhstan's economy experienced significant growth from 2009 through 2014 (from \$115 to \$231 billion) and defense spending increased, the GDP has been dropping in 2015, and there are estimates that it will continue to do so. The cost of these upgrades may have come out of a defense budget from a previous fiscal year and fully implemented recently. If the economy continues to decline, defense expenditures for upgrades or maintenance like those for the T-72s would be reduced, and this could have a long-term impact on the engineering capabilities and growth of Kazakhstan's defense industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“According to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the range of target identification increased 10 times in addition to the range of effective fire of modified version of the tank”

Source: “Танк Т-72КЗ “ШЫҒЫС” ПОЯВИТСЯ В КАЗАХСТАНСКОЙ АРМИИ” (The T-72KZ “Shyghys” tank will enter service in Kazakhstan's Army), *Inform Buro*, 4 September 2015. <http://informburo.kz/novosti/tank-t-72kz-shyys-poyavitsya-v-kazahstanskoy-armii--11527.html>

The T-72KZ “Shyghys” tank will enter service in Kazakhstan's Army

A modified tank based on the T-72 has been put together in Kazakhstan. The official name for the T-72KZ modified tank is “Shyghys” and the engine reaches up to 840 horsepower...Kazakhstan Engineering and Kazakhstan Aselsan Engineering carried out joint work on the modification...

According to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), the range of target identification increased 10 times in addition to the range of effective fire of modified version of the tank...“... an enhanced fire control system TISAS of Israeli production, a GSP navigation system and Tadiran radios,” – the MoD reported...

...the MoD of Kazakhstan continues the implementation of a set of steps to improve the combat effectiveness through modern weapons and equipment and maintaining existing equipment...



Source: “T-72B -TankBiathlon2013-28” by Vitaly V. Kuzmin - <http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/510>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-72B_-_TankBiathlon2013-28.jpg#/media/File:T-72B_-_TankBiathlon2013-28.jpg

Russian Soft Power, Strategic Messaging, and the European Migrant Crisis

4 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In February 2013 *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* published an article titled, “The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations.” This article, by Chief of the Russian General Staff, General Valeri Gerasimov, published about a year before the invasion of Crimea, outlined his vision of recent and future of warfare. He makes it very clear that recent conflicts have been brought about by nonmilitary means through the introduction or bolstering of separatist movements, subversive ideas, and other activities that interfere with legitimate governance. After the seeds of instability are planted, they can be watered by the arming of separatists/insurgents/terrorists/etc., and through the introduction of special operations forces and/or private military companies. As the security situation devolves and the government is provoked (in the Russian view) into pacifying these elements, the US/West then acquires a pretext for imposing no-fly zones, embargoes, and sanctions. In the end, the government collapses, and the US/West is free to introduce overt forces (peacekeepers), enact regime change, and divvy resources and territory as desired. In Gerasimov’s view, this is the Western way of war.

The accompanying article discusses Russia’s ability to develop nonmilitary means, a topic that is often overshadowed by its flashier military developments. (In Gerasimov’s view, the nonmilitary aspects outweigh the military aspects of warfare by a factor of 4:1.) Although many in the West have accused Russia of developing these new means of warfare to execute so-called “hybrid warfare,” in Russian military and security circles the development of these means is simply seen as a reactive measure to counter similar Western capabilities that Russia believes have attacked her allies in the form of Color Revolutions, the Arab Spring, and the Maidan movement. Russia has long been quite vocal that these uprisings and the US/West’s interference in other countries internal affairs (embargoes, no-fly zones, sanctions, etc.) are the cause of much of the world’s instability. Unsurprisingly, Russia is using its “soft power” assets to relate this message, as Russia believes it pertains, to the current Syrian refugee crisis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The reason for the migration of the crisis in Europe was imposing one’s own standards with no regard for the historic, religious, national, or cultural complexities of these regions. “This is, above all, the policy of our American partners”

— President Vladimir Putin

Source: Andrey Kamakin, “Kremlin’s Western Friends: Who Are They and How Much Do They Cost Russia?” *MK Online*, 21 August 2015, <<http://www.mk.ru/politics/2015/08/20/zapadnye-druzya-kremlya-kto-oni-i-kak-dorogo-obkhodyatsya-rossii.html>>, accessed 16 September 2015.

Kremlin’s Western Friends: Who Are They and How Much Do They Cost Russia?

...The concept of “soft power”, invented by a US political scientist...found its way into the Russian diplomatic vocabulary relatively recently. And it appeared in documents even later. The term was officially registered in the corridors of power in 2013, with the appearance of the new Russian Federation Foreign Policy Concept. Here it stands for “a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy”. However, those who think that our country is a novice at this are seriously mistaken. There were times when our Fatherland was ahead of the rest of the world not just in ballet and missile technology, but also in what today is called “soft power”, but back then was known as “the international Communist movement”...

Visible “Soft Power”

In 2008 a special government agency was set up, which is responsible for exercising and developing our “soft power” -- the Federal Agency for the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and for International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo). The agency’s purpose is clear from its name: It “implements projects intended to strengthen international ties, build close cooperation in the humanitarian sector, and create a positive image of Russia abroad”. These admirable plans are implemented via a network of foreign affiliates.

Figures from the end of last year show that Rossotrudnichestvo had 90 representative bodies in 78 countries: Sixty-one Russian Centers of Science and Culture (RTsNK), 7 branches, and 22 representations as part of an embassy...

As well as Rossotrudnichestvo, Russian “soft power” is made up of a whole host of officially nongovernmental, but actually quasi-state public organizations: The Russian Association for International Cooperation, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Fund for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, the A.M. Gorchakov Fund for Public Diplomacy, the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation (Paris), and other similar structures. Some of them, like the Russkiy Mir foundation and the Foundation for Supporting Compatriots get funding direct from the budget...

Russkiy Mir’s main mission, according to its documentation, is to popularize the Russian language. There are, however, also other, more applied goals, including, for example, “generating public opinion favorable to Russia” through “the distribution of objective information”. In addition, one of the foundation’s activities is awarding grants to foreign noncommercial organizations...

(continued)

Continued: Russian Soft Power, Strategic Messaging, and the European Migrant Crisis

Dear Friends

“The Kremlin has managed to create a far-reaching umbrella system of influence in the West,” ... Under this “Russia’s friends” are drawn to Moscow not so much by shared ideology, as by “overt commercial interest”...

Another way in which Russia is expanding its influence in the West,... is through Schroederization [Hiring former politicians into Russian controlled companies in an attempt to influence foreign policy] -- a phenomenon that gets its name from former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who headed the shareholders’ committee of Nord Stream AG, the Swiss “daughter” company of Russia’s Gazprom...

“I cannot give you any definite amounts, but I know that Russia is paying for the services of a whole range of pundits abroad,” Aleksandr Sytin, head of the Center for Northern and Eastern European Political Studies, told Moskovskiy Komsomolets... At the same time, the lion’s share, and possibly the very largest share of the expense of funding “friends abroad” is taken on by Russian business. Sometimes this is done voluntarily, but more often than not entrepreneurs are persistently asked to “help”, the expert claims. Sytin says that he himself witnessed a situation in which one well-known entrepreneur received a phone call from the “relevant office” and was told the amount he needed to transfer and where to send it. As a rule there are no refusals, because “everyone understands what will happen if they refuse to make to payment”...



President Putin and Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill
Source: <http://dt.ecumenicalnews.com/en/full/4991/vladimir-putin-patriarch-kirill.jpg>

Source: “Putin: Migrant Crisis in Europe is Due to the Erroneous Policies of the West,” *Tass Online*, 4 September 2014, <<http://tass.ru/politika/2234730>>, accessed 16 September 2015.

Putin: Migrant Crisis in Europe is Due to the Erroneous Policies of the West

“You know, we have spoken about this many times, I consider this a completely anticipated crisis,” Putin said. “If you think back, skim through archived documents to see that we in Russia, your faithful servants, have been saying for many years that there will be problems on a massive scale if our so-called western partners continue this misguided, as I have often called it, foreign policy towards regions in the Muslim world, in the Middle East and North Africa which they continue to this day.”

...The reason for the migration of the crisis in Europe was imposing one’s own standards with no regard for the historic, religious, national, or cultural complexities of these regions. “This is, above all, the policy of our American partners,” Putin said, adding that Europe was now suffering from “blindly following U.S. orders”

“... Asean-China relations have always been more than just the South China Sea,” Benjamin Ho, a maritime security researcher, said.

Asean-China relations are largely very stable at the moment.

Such ties were further strengthened with the Asean support for the recent Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank initiative by the world’s second largest economy.

MoD Adds First Disaster Relief Regiment to the Ranks

21 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The 100th Separate Logistical Support Regiment was created one year ago, and is a notable for several reasons. As the accompanying article explains, the regiment is intended for disaster relief duties both within and outside of Russia's borders. This development is interesting because Russia already possesses a "Ministry of Emergency Situations" (MChS), which somewhat resembles a militarized version of the US's Federal Emergency Management Agency with organic assets (troops, helicopters, water purifiers, etc.), that performs this function. Undoubtedly, the Russian MoD's "drift" into the MChS's activities is due, in some part, to the current Russian Defense Minister, General Sergey Shoygu, who previously headed the MChS and was quite well regarded as an effective leader during his eleven years as head of the ministry. Aside from the obvious good press that comes from performing disaster relief missions, the formation of this unit may be intended to support Russian force projection efforts, as the Russian logistics tail is now being stretched due to deployments in Ukraine and Syria.

In addition to disaster relief and combat support duties, Russian logistic assets are also being heavily employed in Crimea. Elements of at least two logistic support brigades are engaged in pipe-laying operations, as the existing pipelines from Ukraine have been closed. In all, Russian military engineers have laid 48 pipelines totaling 412 km, and have dug several wells to supply Crimea with much needed water. Whatever the reasons that the 100th Separate Logistical Support Regiment was created, there is clearly seen a need for more such units, as the article suggests other military districts and fleets could acquire them.

Another interesting note in the accompanying article is the mention that half of the unit is staffed with contract NCOs, which is somewhat peculiar in the Russian system. The current one-year draft period is believed to be too short to instill effective fighting skills for an infantryman, so conscripts are often routed to combat support positions (drivers, cooks, laborers, etc.), while contract NCOs fulfill the "trigger puller" positions. This system is creating considerable difficulty for combat service support units that require skilled labor (such as mechanics), as they are forced to work with high percentages of conscripts who are unable to master complex skill sets in such a short time. The net result of this situation is that maneuver commanders are unhappy with the level of support they have been receiving from certain combat support elements (mainly maintenance). Apparently this concern is now being heeded, as at least this particular unit will enjoy a greater percentage of contract NCOs than most other logistic units. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



100th Separate Logistical Support Regiment

Source: https://vk.com/page-60767131_49082397

Source: Anna Potekhina, "Special Purpose Regiment," *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 21 August 2015, <<http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/25393-polk-osobogo-naznacheniya>>, accessed 16 September 2015.

Special Purpose Regiment

The regiment's organization provides for such unusual units as an engineering repair and reconstruction company, intended to maintain/deploy life-support systems [electricity, plumbing, refrigeration, sewage, etc.], and a heavy equipment company equipped with graders and other heavy equipment. Other units in the regiment consist of a water-crossing equipment platoon; motor transportation companies with various types of vehicle for transporting supplies, including fuel and heavy full-tracked equipment; bath and laundry units; and field bakery units. The armament of the regiment includes some unique equipment, not found elsewhere in the army, as well as regular small arms...There is also a mortuary affairs unit, but since Russia is not currently involved in any local conflicts or military action, the equipment for that unit is kept in storage. Half of the unit consists of contract NCOs, in the future professionals will make up the majority...

"The regiment is very mobile and can be promptly dispatched to a remote location in Russia to deliver disaster aid," said Lt.Col Svyatoslav Sedov, the regiment's chief of staff. "In accordance with our military designation we have eight hours to deploy to any region of the country. And in twenty four hours we must start accomplishing of any mission we are given. Fortunately, this year the regiment was alerted only for training alarms and drills."

It should be noted that many officers of the regiment have combat experience. For example, Chief of Staff Lt Col Sedov participated in the second Chechen campaign and in the operation to force Georgia to make peace in South Ossetia in 2008. He has devoted twenty one years to intelligence work. There is no doubt that his combat experience will prove useful in emergencies as well...

In one year of existence the regiment has participated in events providing logistical support to troop groupings during a variety of exercises held in military districts and on fleets, and during the Vostok-2014 strategic command and staff exercise. The regiment participated in transportation of large loads and equipment during the preparation for and at the actual anniversary parade on Red Square. It participated in the construction of the "Patriot" park outside in Moscow.

...Today the regiment is providing the future drill participants promptly with material and technical supplies, water, and fuel and lubricants. A bath and laundry complex, and bakery have been deployed in the field camp. On 1 September it will be redeployed to the Donguz range to take part in the Tsentri-2015 exercises. During the event, in addition to its regular everyday tasks, the 100th Regiment will for the first time also be accomplishing some unusual missions."

The 100th regiment is always in the front line, even though it is a rear services regiment. The regiment is considered an effective instrument in the hands of the deputy defense minister [General Dmitriy Bulgakov], and it is possible that in the future such regiments will be created in other military districts and the fleets.

NGO Warfare

16 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has recently enacted strong legislation requiring nongovernmental organizations (NGO) that receive funding from outside the Russian Federation to register as “foreign agents” and to identify themselves as such on their websites and promotional materials. Russia has been extremely suspicious of NGOs due to a strong belief that they have been the causal factors of the Color Revolutions, Arab Spring, and the Maidan movement. It believes that keeping NGOs under wraps inhibits the mass protests and instability that lead to regime change. Aside from combating NGOs through legislative means, Russia is also supporting the formation of pro-government NGOs (such as the biker gang, the Night Wolves) to “combat” hostile NGOs if their members should take to the street, as they did during the Maidan uprising in Ukraine.

On the offensive side of the coin Russia, as the accompanying article discusses, is funding pro-Russian NGOs in other countries. Russia’s observations of the NGOs that conducted the Color Revolutions, Arab Spring, and the Maidan movement was that they were not necessarily directly or indirectly controlled by foreign governments, or other entities funded by foreign governments. These NGOs were funded simply because they had objectives to influence the governments in a given way, or to just cause general instability. This “NGO warfare” idea is becoming increasingly common in post-Soviet, authoritarian countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



AntiMaidan Logo

Source: <http://vk.com/antimaydan>

“It’s a public secret in the Baltic states that Russia bankrolls NGOs that defend Kremlin’s politics in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania”

Source: S. Tambur “Over 40 Russian-Funded NGOs Operate in Baltic states,” *Estonian Public Broadcasting Online*, <<http://news.err.ee/v/International/7a39ae2b-77eb-4289-ac5b-3e16408afde5/over-40-russian-funded-ngos-operate-in-baltic-states>>, accessed 16 September 2015.

Over 40 Russian-funded NGOs operate in Baltic states

A group of journalists from all three Baltic states established that Russia funds directly over 40 non-governmental organizations (NGO) in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The journalists who conducted the survey spent over a year researching how Russia uses its soft power in the Baltics...

“It’s a public secret in the Baltic states that Russia bankrolls NGOs that defend Kremlin’s politics in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The only question was how generous is this financial aid,” a journalist said, adding that the total financial assistance over three years came to 1.5 million euros...

There are nine Moscow-funded organizations in Estonia who received 710,000 euros in financial support over three years. The largest recipient is the Legal Information Center for Human Rights, which is considered to be a “Russian agent organization in disguise” by the Estonian security services – a claim the NGO denies. The center, headed by Aleksei Semjonov, has also received funding from the Tallinn City Government, which is headed by Edgar Savisaar, long considered to be too ambivalent towards Putin’s regime...

Other Estonian NGOs mentioned are Nazi-free Estonia, Paldiski Radio Union, Integration Media Group and Altmedia...

Source: “Aliyev: ‘Maidan’ was being prepared in Azerbaijan, money for which was brought by ‘fifth column’ NGOs,” *Interfax*, 8 September 2015.

Azerbaijan managed to avert what is happening today in the Middle East region and Ukraine, President Ilham Aliyev said.

“Dirty scenarios which are taking place in the Middle East today were also prepared for Azerbaijan. In 2011 and then in 2012 some foreign circles were speaking about the emergence of the ‘Arab Spring’ in Azerbaijan and said that this is inevitable,” Aliyev said at a meeting devoted to economic issues and the drafting of the state budget for 2016. He chaired the meeting on Tuesday. To complicate the situation and violate the stability in Azerbaijan foreign circles resorted to different methods, he said.

“Our law enforcement agencies have uncovered all these cases. They wanted to create ‘a Maidan movement’ in Azerbaijan. They wanted to attract young people to these dirty deeds and made them unhappy. Much money was spent to mount tension in Azerbaijan. Tens of millions of dollars were found which they tried to bring into Azerbaijan in illegal ways through the local ‘fifth column’ named ‘non-governmental organizations’, stir up tension of the situation and bring to power people who serve some foreign circles,” the head of state said.

He said that from the beginning of 2013 these processes have become even more serious. Some attempts were observed to incite tension, violate stability and destroy Azerbaijan, he said... “They want to see puppet figures everywhere who do not want worthy politicians who rely on their people and are supported by them,” he said...

“But the point is that popular will determines everything in Azerbaijan, but not the abetment of foreign circles...” Let’s see what is happening in Ukraine, the Middle East, Syria, Iraq and Libya. It can be said that the territorial integrity of these countries is disrupted. These countries are in an uncontrollable situation... We protected our country from these troubles. We have cut dirty hands targeted against us. And after this we will protect our country and will ensure sovereign development of our people,” the head of state said...

A Russian (Pragmatic) View of Army Ethics

3 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Stomping out military corruption has been a top priority of both the Russian civilian and military leadership for quite some time. Due to the Russian Federation's Tsarist/Soviet past, Russia and, by inheritance, the Russian military have developed a nuanced view towards corruption, which makes its eradication difficult. Crimes of theft against individuals are viewed the same as in the West, but crimes of theft against the state are seen as much more tolerable; however, the latter are still embarrassing.

The most recent high-profile military corruption fiasco involved the recent conviction and sentencing of Colonel General Vladimir Chirkin, the former Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief. Although there have been other high-profile gaffes, such as Airborne Troops Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Shamanov dispatching an airborne unit to interfere in the prosecutorial investigation of a family member, this case has garnered substantial interest, as it is unusual for such a high-ranking and prominent official to be tried, convicted, and sentenced.

One of the most interesting aspects of the case is the involvement of General Valeri Gerasimov, Chief of the Russian General Staff, as the accompanying articles describes. He is an adamant supporter of Chirkin and asked that Chirkin either be found "not guilty" or, if found guilty, given no prison time. In the Russian system personal connections and loyalties often trump institutional governance, and this appears to be such a case.

It is important to note that these views towards "relaxed morals" are not reserved solely for senior leaders, as the Russian military justice system is now being amended to allow lesser punishments for some crimes that once required dismissal from service. There appears to be concern that the previous regulation was weeding out too many good officers who had a few minor peccadilloes. In the Russian view, it is far better to have an army with the best and brightest, albeit ethically challenged, than an army of the ethical, but less capable. Undoubtedly, as Russia continues experimenting with undeclared wars and "indirect and asymmetric methods," there is a need for officers who can operate in the grey area that results when something that needs to be done conflicts with the letter of the law. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Sergey Shishkin, "Generals' Advocacy," *Kommersant* Online, 03 September 2015, <<http://kommersant.ru/doc/2802382>>, accessed 16 September 2015.

Generals' Advocacy

Kommersant has learned that former Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Chirkin, who was recently sentenced to five years' imprisonment, received a light sentence for major bribe-taking partly thanks to the support of General Staff Chief Valeriy Gerasimov, his old friend and colleague. Shortly before the sentence, he sent the military court a letter requesting that Colonel General Chirkin not be committed to a prison colony, since the military department was planning to use "his knowledge and experience."

According to Kommersant sources, the general's appeal to the court, which

appeared at the trial's closing stage, came as a complete surprise to all its participants. When the time came to switch from the judicial investigation to the parties' pleadings, Vadim Korchagin, the presiding judge at the session, informed those present that the Moscow Military Garrison Court office had received through the mail a letter from the first deputy defense minister, Russian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Valeriy Gerasimov, and read out its contents.

In his statement, which was written on Defense Ministry stationery and addressed to Court Chairman Viktor Salatov, General Gerasimov gave the defendant a glowing character reference without any exaggeration. The letter states that, during his many years of service in the Armed Forces, the demanding and strong-willed General Chirkin made a huge contribution to maintaining the troops' operational readiness... May we remind readers, the investigation established that the former commander had assisted a retired officer in improving his living conditions

in return for a bribe in the sum of 450,000 rubles...

"In the event that the court rejects the plea of innocence, I request that it consider the question of applying a penalty that does not involve imprisonment," the petitioner summed up, justifying his request by saying that the military department "intends to make further use of V.V. Chirkin with his commander's knowledge and experience."

As a result, Mr. Korchagin upheld the army general's petition, but only partially. Delivering his judgement, the judge deemed General Chirkin guilty of having received a major bribe, for which a custodial sentence from seven to 12 years is stipulated. However, having enumerated the circumstances mitigating the defendant's guilt – his combat accomplishments, absence of any previous criminal proceedings, the time elapsed since the violation was committed, and "the first deputy defense minister's request for commutation of the penalty" -- Vadim Korchagin awarded a custodial term below the lower limit: five years in a minimum-security colony...

It has remained unclear, meanwhile, precisely how the court has interpreted Valeriy Gerasimov's statement. On the one hand, the army general may have expressed in his letter the private opinion of the defendant's old friend and colleague... On the other hand, the petition was composed on official Defense Ministry stationery, and its concluding section notes that it was actually the ministry leadership that was planning to use the defendant's knowledge and experience...

(continued)

Former Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Chirkin
Source: http://pics.top.rbc.ru/top_pics/uniora/46/1387408479_0546.1000x800.jpeg

Continued: A Russian (Pragmatic) View of Army Ethics

Source: Velimir Razuvayev, "Punishment Will Be Lessened for Corrupt Army Officers," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 10 August 2015, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2015-08-10/1_corruption.html, accessed 16 September 2015.

Punishment Will Be Lessened for Corrupt Army Officers

A bill providing for a lessening of punishment for corrupt officers in the army has been submitted to the State Duma. The amendments are sponsored by the government, which has already approved the wording of the document. It is proposed that an alternative to discharge be created. The government proposed amendments to the federal laws "Status of the Serviceman" and "Duty Commitment and Military Service".

...According to the logic of the document, transfer of the grounds will afford a commanding officer "the possibility of choice between discharge from the service of a serviceman who has committed an offense on account of a loss of trust or, given mitigating circumstances, confinement to disciplinary actions."

Earlier a conflict of interests or undeclared assets de facto closed the books on a military career. Now discharge has been "diluted" by disciplinary award. "What if someone is needed," Aleksey Makarkin, deputy general director of the Center for Political Technology, asks here. "Alternative options are always better for the authorities: different scenarios. This affords an opportunity for maneuver."

The expert drew a parallel with the revolution of the start of the last century, "when many commanding officers quite freely approached the question of the regimental treasury -- they borrowed money from it and so forth. There were problems with financial discipline, and there were claims against many." But had all offenders been discharged, executed, and so forth, "a shortage of command personnel would have arisen. And for this reason they approached it from the positions where if someone was useful and talented, he compensated the shortfall -- and they retained him. His career could have been slowed owing to a negative fitness report, but it did not fall apart completely. "The political analyst believes that a similar situation is being observed at this time..."

Modularity Facilitates Russian Armored Vehicle Innovations

9 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In Western armies the term "motorized" refers to wheeled vehicles and units, while "mechanized" refers to tracked vehicles and units. In the Russian Army "motorized rifle" refers to any infantry unit mounted on tracked or wheeled vehicles. Despite being engaged in what the West refers to as "hybrid war," Russia has been pursuing a vast modernization of its tank and motorized rifle forces (instead of special operations forces).

This modernization has involved the creation of the "Armata" tracked heavy chassis, the "Kurganets-25" tracked utility chassis, and the "Bumerang" wheeled chassis (shown in the accompanying graphics). Interestingly, these three chassis types, made by three different manufactures, are all designed to accept the same turret, the "universal combat module" known at the "Epoch" or "Bumerang-BM," made by a fourth company. This module consists of a 30mm automatic cannon, four "Kornet" antitank missiles, and a 7.62mm PKT machine gun.

This level interoperability is unheard of in Western defense industries, where proprietary technology and financial considerations would make the pursuit of such an effort difficult. The imposition of such a standard must have been implemented several years ago; some reports have implied that the BTR-82A (armored personnel carrier) and BMD-4 (infantry fighting vehicle for the Airborne) have already entered service and may also be capable of mounting the universal combat module. Russia has put great stock in the concepts of interoperability and modularity. As the accompanying article states, the "Armata" chassis (and likely the other two as well) will *(continued)*

Source: "BTR 'Kurganets-25': The Little Brother of the New Infantry Fighting Vehicle," *Interpolit Online*, 9 September 2015, <http://interpolit.ru/blog/btr_kurganec_25_mladshij_brat_novoj_boevoj_mashiny_pekhoty/2015-09-12-5605>, accessed 18 September 2015.

BTR 'Kurganets-25': The Little Brother of the New Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Beginning next year, the troops can enter the first infantry fighting vehicles and armored transporters built on the "Kurganets-25" utility tracked chassis. For the first time this vehicle appeared in public for rehearsals and the May 9 Victory Day parade. The vehicles made no less a sensation than their "big brother" - the T-14 Tank, the main representative of heavy tracked platform "Armata" chassis...

Military experts first discussed five years ago the creation of the "Kurganets-25" for the first time the Russian defense budget has grown substantially, allowing the army to plan for equipment modernization and discuss large orders of new equipment.

According to official information, the "Kurganets-25" chassis is planned to be used for infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carriers, antitank guns, repair and recovery, command and staff vehicles, reconnaissance, ambulances, logistic vehicles, and radar vehicles. But the primary uses will be for infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carriers, and engineer vehicles.

...The BMP version of the "Kurganets-25" is much more powerful than other armored personnel carriers due to the unmanned universal combat module "Epoch" (sometimes referred to as "Boomerang-BM") developed by the Tula Design Bureau. The module has a 30mm automatic cannon with 500 rounds ammunition, four "Kornet" antitank guided missiles, and a 7.62mm PKT machine gun. The same module can be installed on the "Boomerang" BTR, but with module installed, some experts suggest the vehicle is no longer an armored personnel carrier, but now a wheeled infantry fighting vehicle...

Continued: Modularity Facilitates Russian Armored Vehicle Innovations

serve Russia throughout the 21st century. Russia appears to believe that, although the chassis may be suitable throughout the 21st century, the weapons systems which it carries will not. After these three chassis are fielded, Russia will likely pursue capability improvements through upgrading the turrets for the foreseeable future, rather than by the purchase of completely new vehicles. Other more novel innovations involve giving the Kurganets-25 vehicles a Sony PlayStation-like controller (for steering) to ease driver training.

Aside from the obvious cost savings due to the economies of scale and the ability to relatively quickly repurpose equipment as needed, this development will also likely spur innovation. Weapons manufacturers will now only have to design for one turret specification, which could lead to significant cost savings. This could be especially significant if these chassis enter the export market, as they likely will. Customers will be able to “plug-n-play” a variety of capabilities, based upon turret design, with their particular desired chassis type. The accompanying articles discuss many different aspects of the universal combat module, interoperability, and modularity in regards to Russia’s new chassis.

Other interesting implications of these chassis are that manned vehicle turrets may be a thing of the past. The terms “infantry fighting vehicle” (IFV or BMP) and “armored personnel carrier” (APC or BTR) may become unimportant when describing these vehicles, as the only difference is the turret type. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Yuriy Belousov, “Only an Armata is More Awesome than an Armata,” 3 July 2015, *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, in Russian 03 July 2015, <<http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/24718-kruche-armaty-tolko-armata>>, accessed 20 September 2015.

Only an Armata is More Awesome than an Armata

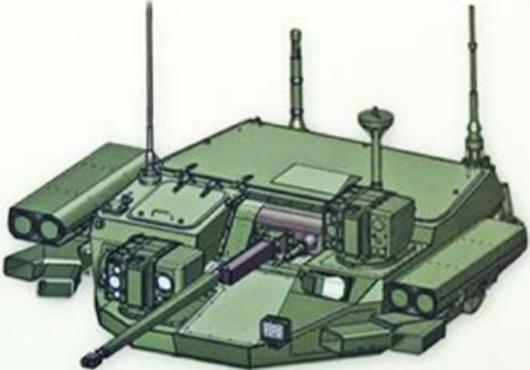
“The tank’s silhouette in combination with the use of a special coating significantly reduces the machine’s visibility in thermal and radar surveillance wavebands. The Armata’s armor, according to our estimates, is able to withstand a hit from any existing antitank weapons. The T-14 has a remote controlled combat module with a 125mm smooth-bore gun and automatic reloading system.”

“Are the reports true that say that in the future the T-14 could acquire a large-caliber gun? What is the upgrade potential of the tank?”

“The Armata platform is so unique that it is possible to install on it any weapons system developed in the present day, from a module with a powerful artillery system to a missile system or, for example, a module with weapons based on other physical principles. It all depends on the specifics of the tasks to be carried out.

“The machine complies with the requirements set by the Defense Ministry to create a unified framework with different weapons systems. Today we can adapt the basic platform for any range of tasks.

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



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

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



Bumerang



Kurganets-25



T-15 Barbaris (on Armata chassis)

Universal Combat Module «Epoch» Source: <http://nevskii-bastion.ru/epoha/>

“I note that most discussion is about the T-14. Meanwhile, another machine on an Armata platform that participated in the Victory Parade was a heavy BMP [infantry fighting vehicle]. Did you notice that the heavy BMP has a unified propulsion unit placed at the front, whereas the the T-14 has it at the rear. This proves in the best way the adaptability of the platform that has been made.

“Today the BMP is on an Armata tracked platform, the most highly protected infantry fighting vehicle in the world. It is equipped with a remote-controlled universal combat module. A distinctive feature of the new BMPs is the anti-mine design of the hull with a level of protection comparable to that of a tank. The universal combat module protects the crew of the fighting vehicle and assault troops even from powerful roadside bombs. It also has active protection systems.”

“And what kind of upgrade potential does it have?”

“I will give an example. We recently did an analysis of the life cycle of our platforms. They started with the postwar T-55 and T-62 tanks, and before them, as you know, there were the T-44 and T-54... These models came almost one after another and were developed in a short time. They were essentially upgrade variants. The T-55 was produced for 22 years in the Soviet Union. And already released batches were in practical operation and upgrades for a further 30 years. Ultimately, the T-55 served the Fatherland for 54 years!

“Today we are laying down the Armata, a unified platform for diverse weapons systems. I am confident it will serve Russia throughout the 21st century.”

MVD-VV Spetsnaz: The Elite of Russia's Ministry of Interior Troops

16 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: For historical reasons the Russian Federation has militarized intelligence and security services spread throughout its various ministries, services, and agencies. Often military forces that serve in ministries other than the Ministry of Defense (MoD) are labeled in the West as “paramilitary,” which implies these troops are somewhat less than military. This assumption would be incorrect, as the conscripts, contract NCOs, and officers who serve in these formations are, for the most part, indistinguishable from MoD forces: the officer academies of Russian military forces are so similar that officers can attend one ministry’s academy, but be commissioned as an officer into a different ministry. These non-MoD forces live in barracks and possess BTRs, BMPs, mortars, artillery, and other weapons appropriate for light or motorized rifle units.

The Russian Ministry of Interior has one such non-MoD, military force - the Ministry of Interior Troops (MVD-VV). Unlike the US where there are federal, state, county, municipal, etc. authorities responsible for domestic policing duties, in Russia there is only the Ministry of Interior. It has several branches, one of which is the MVD-VV, which consists primarily of motorized rifle units. These troops are not policeman, but are instead intended for maintaining domestic order to combat insurgent/separatist activity, quelling mass unrest, and performing limited counterterrorism activities (the primary responsibility for counterterrorism lies with the Federal Security Service (FSB)). In the event of a “Maidan”-type uprising in Russia, MVD-VV Troops, not MoD troops, would be the first called to pacify the situation.

The accompanying article, an interview with Colonel (ret.) Sergei Lysyuk, a founder of the MVD-VV spetsnaz, discusses the establishment of the MVD-VV spetsnaz, the elite of Russia's Ministry of Interior Troops who wear the maroon beret. Of particular interest in the article is Colonel Lysyuk's explanation of the differences between MVD-VV spetsnaz from the spetsnaz in other ministries, the way these troops are selected, and the inspiration for their selection process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Timur Akhmetov, Sergei Lysyuk, Roman Ilyushchenko, “Antiterror – Fieldcraft: Spetsnaz without Action Rusts like Iron”, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 2 September 2015, <<http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/26817>>, accessed 15 September 2015.

Antiterror-Fieldcraft: Spetsnaz without Action Rusts like Iron

Colonel Sergei Lysyuk, Hero of Russia, was a founder of the MVD-VV Spetsnaz. It was he who formed a training company, which was later transformed into the “Vityaz” detachment. On the eve of Armed Forces “Spetsnaz Day,” which is celebrated on August 29, Sergey Lysyuk spoke to VPK.

Who can become a “Vityaz” warrior and how the selection of soldiers and officers is done?

[In reference to enlisted soldiers] First, they must have a high level of desire and high motivation. Second, be in excellent physical condition. Third, a clean past without a criminal record. Officers may come to us after graduation from a military academy or from another assignment, but only after special selection, which includes physical and mental testing.

What is the role of the Interior troops in modern military operations?

The role is enormous...All actions are planned together by Joint Staff. The role MVD-VV Spetsnaz is to eliminate enemy gangs, as well as perform special operations to arrest or liquidate criminals in rural or urban environments.

What is the difference between “Vityaz”, and say, “Alpha”, since both perform anti-terror tasks?

“Alpha” [The Federal Security Service’s elite antiterrorism unit] was created specifically for antiterrorist missions. However, the MVD-VV Spetsnaz have a wide range of tasks: not only anti-terror, but also the destruction of illegal armed groups, and actions against criminal elements.

Do you consider yourself a counterinsurgency or anti-terrorist unit?

We combine both methods of fighting. It depends on the mission. “Vityaz” took part in the anti-terrorist operation in the Dubrovka and fought against illegal military formations in Chechnya.

How was born the idea of passing the exam to acquire the maroon beret? And how does it work?

The idea came to me after reading the book “Alpha Team”, dedicated to the US Army Special Forces. I shared my thoughts with my friends and in 1988, and we started a selection program for soldiers, for the right to get their own distinctive mark – a maroon beret. Before that, we did it informally as part of control and verification exercises. To avoid incidents, the soldier is pretested before being allowed to take the actual exam. During pretesting, there are many drop outs. After that, everything takes place in stages. First - Cross-training, the soldier runs 12 kilometers with body armor, helmet and weapon. Second – Controlled shooting, after exertion Third - high-altitude training. Fourth - acrobatic test. Finally, the last – hand-to-hand combat. Upon successful completion of all five stages, the participants are assessed.

At first “Vityaz” was detachment, and then became a regiment. Has this enlargement had a positive impact on the preparation and conduct of operations?

- In my opinion, it was not the right decision. A few soldiers in a small unit ensures a more efficient soldier. Taking a mass approach to spetsnaz enlargement is harmful.

Russia's Military Build-up in Syria: Another Afghanistan?

7 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In response to multiple reports in the Russian and Western press about Russia's increased military build-up in Syria, Russian commentators and analysts, especially those associated with the liberal opposition, expressed strong disapproval of the Kremlin's policies. The accompanying excerpt from the blog of Russian journalist Evgeniy Kiselev in the liberal-oriented *Echo Moskvy (Moscow's Echo)* is an example of this criticism.

Kiselev is a prominent TV journalist, traditionally critical of the Kremlin's corruption, including during Boris Yeltsin's presidency. He worked as an interpreter in Iran and Afghanistan during the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and at *Radio Moscow's* Persian service in the early years of his career. Since 2008 he has been living and working in Ukraine.

Kiselev explains how disastrous he feels Russia's "adventurism" in Syria will become, saying that in the scope of Russian history this is a common pattern: an authoritarian regime getting involved in a war to divert attention from domestic problems, with "catastrophic" foreign policy consequences. He feels that Russia's involvement in Syria is likely to replicate the Soviet Union's mistake of getting involved in Afghanistan—a war which in many ways contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union. "[T]hat a military intervention in Syria – is an adventure, and at that a mortally dangerous one for Russia - for Russia! - I personally have no doubt," he wrote. Other Russian analysts and commentators, even some among Kremlin supporters, have widely expressed precisely this concern. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Evgeniy Kiselev, "Увяднем, братцы, в Сирии?" (Shall We Get Bogged Down, Brothers, in Syria?), *Echo Moskvy* (Moscow's Echo), 7 September 2015. <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/kiselev/1617546-echo/>

I do not know there were any specialists-Orientalists, who were able to explain to Putin the risks he is taking in speaking for the protection of unpopular ruler of Syria, who has lost control over most of its territory, who belongs, moreover, to the hated Shiite minorities (Alawite) in the country where the majority are Sunni Muslims, which enjoys the support of a Shiite movement "Hezbollah" in neighboring Lebanon and the Shiite Iran, whom almost all Arab countries - almost all Sunni [countries] - perceive today as the main enemy, including on religious grounds.

In the Soviet times, Middle East experts advising the Kremlin did not stand out in foresight [abilities]. For example, they traditionally exaggerated the power of the Arabs in confrontation with Israel and presented the willingness of Egypt and other Arab countries to accept Moscow's generous economic and military aid in exchange for intention to always follow in the wake of the Soviet foreign policy. But when Israel repeatedly blew the Arabs in smithereens, when it became clear that Arab leaders prefer not to deal with the Soviet Union and the United States, where not Gromyko but Kissinger turned out to be a major player in the Middle East diplomacy, when, replacing the doctrinaire and populist Nasser, the pragmatic Anwar Sadat came to power in Egypt, had shown the Soviet military advisers the door and went to the peace talks and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, the Kremlin had begun a fruitless multi-year hysteria.

The Kremlin's Middle East policy had not been significantly more far sighted in the following years, [a policy] which we can be briefly describe - forgive me for a soldier's bluntness - like this: what if we try to urinate against the wind?! The Kremlin twice tried to help Saddam Hussein - for the first time before the "Desert Storm", when the late Yevgeny Primakov ran to Baghdad, where he tried to convince Hussein to get out of Kuwait, the second time - on the eve of the 2003 war...

An authoritarian regime, faced with internal problems, seeks to compensate them for the foreign policy direction... But in Russia's history, these small and large, victorious in their inception wars with surprising constancy turn into completely non-victorious, and if we call a spade a spade - into foreign policy catastrophes. Beginning with the Russian-Japanese war of the last century or even the century before last, the Crimean War. 36 years ago we got bogged down in Afghanistan. Last year, bogged down in the Donbass - now we'll get bogged down in Syria?

But, as it was once said, "it is impossible to understand the non-professional's logic" - and just as difficult to understand the logic of an adventurer. And that a military intervention in Syria – is an adventure, and at that a mortally dangerous one for Russia - for Russia! - I personally have no doubt ...



Aleppo Citadel, Aleppo, Syria

Source: "Syria Aleppo" by Anas Al Rifai - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Syria_Aleppo.jpg#/media/File:Syria_Aleppo.jpg

Russia's Continued Economic Decline

18 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's economy shows few to no signs of improvement, according to the accompanying excerpt from Russia's *Argumenty i Fakty (Arguments and Facts)*, a major Russian newspaper. While Western organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and Moody's financial index predict that the Russian economy will slowly begin to grow or at least stop declining in 2016, Russian analysts see a much darker picture. They provide a very long list of reasons for their pessimistic predictions, including low oil prices, double-digit inflation, a major drop in disposable income, decreased consumer activity, Western sanctions, capital flight, and others. According to one analyst quoted in the article, import substitution and contracts with Asian and Latin American partners will be the only drivers of any economic growth in Russia.

These dire predictions are not surprising. The Russian economy has been declining steadily in recent years. As the government ignored important investments in education and infrastructure, it embarked on major military expenditures, which are, according to some prominent Russian economists, unsustainable. Russia's foreign reserves, which were high enough in 2008 to allow Russia to weather the global financial crisis relatively well, are dwindling. In addition, according to some observers, the government continues to overspend on social benefits. Russia's population also continues to decline, with low births, high mortality and high emigration, especially of the educated population, making Russia's economic future look bleak. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Elena Tregubova, "Свободное падение. Что спасёт экономику России от обвала?" ("Free Fall: What will Save Russia from a Crash?"), *Argumenty i Fakty (Arguments and Facts)*, 18 August 2015. http://www.aif.ru/money/economy/svobodnoe_padenie_chno_spaset_ekonomiku_rossii_ot_obvala_

The Russian economy will only be partially restored in 2015-2016. According to international rating agency Moody's, this year Russia's GDP will go down by 3%, and next year, experts expect zero economic growth. Moody's Russian GDP forecast is not the most pessimistic.

Freefall

According to the latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast, at the end of this year, Russia's economy will shrink by 3.4%. Yet the IMF expects that growth will resume in 2016 at about 0.2% ...

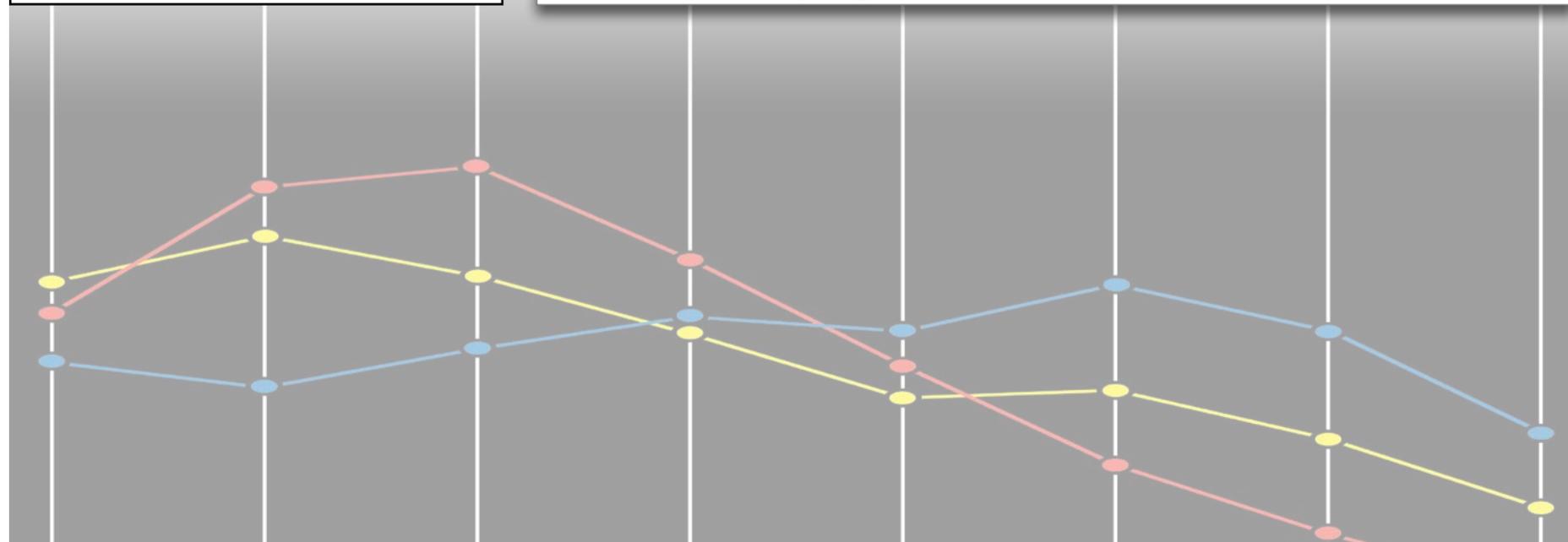
We are only dreaming growth

A number of factors will contribute to Russia's economic slowdown, says analyst at QB Finance Madina Abaeva. These are weakening of the national currency... rising inflation caused by the weakening of the ruble, and complete fall of oil prices. "In 2015-2016, we expect an average price of Brent crude oil of 53 dollars a barrel. Aggravating the economic situation will also fall in the purchasing power of the population," says Abaeva.

"I wouldn't talk about restoration of the Russian economy at all. Based on my assessment of current economic realities and causes of the fall in GDP, a recession of more than 6% this year awaits the Russian economy, and statistics for the following year is no less depressing. There are reason [for this]: two-digit inflation, a catastrophic fall in the level of disposable income, a decrease in consumer activity, the crisis of industry and services, high inflation-devaluation expectations, undermined credibility of the organized system of bank savings, collapse of energy prices, sanctions standoff with the West, outflow of capital, drop in investment as well as still-closed off access for Russian companies to international markets for borrowing capital "- lists [head of AMarkets's analytical department] Artem Deev.

According to analyst Anna Kokoreva at a company called Alpari, in conditions of low hydrocarbon prices, the only driver of growth will be import substitution, as well as contracts with Asian and Latin American partners. "The high exchange rate must sooner or later push the industry to move towards domestic raw materials, and consumers - towards Russian goods and services. Implementation of existing contracts with partners and signing new ones will also support the Russian economy. Development and support in the framework of organizations such as BRICS, SCO, EEU, will provide additional support under sanctions from the West, " sums up Kokoreva.

level of the Air Force's weapons and equipment, using training to practically increase the room for freedom of action and improve the capabilities for completing diverse tasks has become a serious issue facing the PLA Air Force.



Armenia Debates Constitutional Amendments

7 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Two years after Armenia's president Serzh Sargsyan announced the decision that Armenia would join the Russian-led Customs Union and signed a decree to carry out constitutional reforms, Armenia is discussing the constitutional changes which entail changes from a presidential to parliamentary system. The accompanying excerpt from the *Strategic Culture Foundation Online Journal* presents a clear anti-Western perspective on the issue. In this view, the West is attempting to get Armenia to cede its sovereignty: Europe, according to the author, is trying to organize another “colored revolution” (reference to peaceful democratic colored revolutions throughout the post-Soviet space in the 2000s, which, in the Kremlin's stated view, were orchestrated by the West), but by using “cheaper” methods—the law rather than organizing protest.

By many analysts' accounts, Sargsyan had little choice but to agree to join the Russian-led Customs Union because Russia's influence in the country was too vast for Armenia to refuse. At the time, Russia was looking to prevent Armenia, a member of the European Eastern Partnership from joining the West—Armenia was slated to initial an Association Agreement with the European Union including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA). When Sargsyan announced the decision to join the Customs Union, he also announced decision not to initial the negotiated Association Agreement. Legally, a country cannot both be a member of the Customs Union and look to sign an Association Agreement with the EU because a Customs Union has a common external trade policy that deprives each individual member-state of sovereign control of this policy within its border. Still Armenia and the EU continued political and trade talks to the extent that they are compatible with the Customs Union's regulations.

A possibility of association with Europe foresaw economic and political development for Armenia, while membership in the Customs Union— further economic problems to the already poor nation, and deeper entrenchment of Russia's influence there. Ironically, the Venice Commission, an advisory body of the Council of Europe to which the author refers, had been critical of some of the measures he disapproves of, namely, provisions that may give Sarksyian's party complete control of the National Assembly parliament. A the same time, on 14 September 2015, a week after publication of the excerpted article, the Venice Commission issued a report which, broadly speaking, accepted the latest draft of the constitution, noting that this latest draft incorporated changes the Venice Commission had recommended, and the text is now “in line with international standards.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Eduard Mamikonyan, “Армения отказывается от национального суверенитета - мнение, (“Armenia Relinquishes National Sovereignty-Opinion), *Strategic Culture Foundation Online Journal*, 7 September 2015. <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2015/09/07/armenia-otkazyvaetsja-ot-nacionalnogo-suvereniteta-mnenie-35216.html>

On September 3, 2013, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan announced the republic's decision join the Eurasian Customs Union EACU. And the next day - Sept. 4, 2013, President Serzh Sargsyan signed a decree on carrying out constitutional reform, within its framework had established a special working group , which, together with the so-called Venice Commission drafted the new Constitution of Armenia.

If the proposed draft of the new Constitution is adopted, Armenia in the harshest forms will be linked to Western political and ideological institutions and further integration of the republic in the structure of the EACU would be very problematic due to incompatibility of the proposed economic and political system of Armenia and other countries of the EACU. And in the text of the new Constitution (article203) it is indicated that the country's accession to any international supranational institutions is possible only through a referendum. A referendum in a country that is extremely poor is problematic. And I think everyone understands – Armenia's accession to international supranational organizations is realistic y only within the EACU framework. No one else is waiting for us. I have no doubt that Europe wants to take revenge for its failure in the Eastern Partnership project and possibly to try out on Armenia a new version of “colored revolution” through legal manipulation - without meetings and other expensive demonstrations.

The issue is, the text of the draft new Constitution of Armenia is a volatile mix of extreme liberalism, renunciation of sovereignty, Western interpretation of human rights and freedoms and is very peculiar kind and quasi-parliamentarism and is undoubtedly aimed at changing the country's civilizational paradigm...

...The draft provides an amazing system of government - a nominal president and a parliament that holds all power. The system of parliament formation of is designed so that one party has a guaranteed majority that would allow the ruling party to carry out its desired policy...

Currently, the new draft constitution is submitted for discussion in Armenia's National Assembly, and if the text is approved, it will be put to a referendum. Currently the draft is under discussion in the country. Many leaders of the parliamentary parties have already expressed their admiration for the proposed text, while shying away from its analysis.

Ukraine's New Defense Doctrine

3 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: While fighting over the past month has tapered off between pro-Russian separatists and pro-government forces in SE Ukraine, basic questions regarding the political status of the separatist regions in Donetsk and Luhansk remain unresolved. The two sides disagree over the timing and scope of future elections to help determine this status. It remains doubtful whether these and other essential questions (e.g., border control) will be resolved prior to the expiration of the current ceasefire agreement (31 December 2015). As winter approaches there are indications that portions of Donetsk and Luhansk will be added to the list of unsettled “frozen conflicts.”

This ongoing conflict provides the backdrop to the release last month of Ukraine's new military doctrine. As the first excerpt (from a Ukrainian source) points out, the new doctrine, “defines Russia as Ukraine's military adversary,” and that, given “the mentality of the Russian political elite,” there is a “high probability of using large-scale military force against Ukraine.” The doctrine renounces the former nonaligned policy and calls instead for the “re-establishment of the strategic course towards Euro-Atlantic integration.” This updated guidance not only provides the framework to reposition Ukrainian forces to counter the Russian threat, but also recognizes the need to take into account the “increased role of the informational-psychological operations.”

The second excerpt, from a moderate Russian source (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*), provides additional background to this new defense doctrine. Since the conflict in the Donbass region began 18 months ago, Ukrainian views toward possible NATO membership have changed dramatically. According to the article, “since Crimea, opinion has changed radically. The majority of Ukrainians now see in NATO the only real opportunity for guaranteeing their country's security and territorial integrity.” As of July 2015, “64 percent would vote to join NATO at a referendum, with 28 percent against.”

Both articles point out that the previous versions of the Ukrainian defense doctrine reflected the loyalties of those holding power in Kiev. For instance, under the pro-Western Yushchenko administration (2005-10) NATO accession was a goal, while this was reversed under the pro-Russian Yanukovich presidency (2010-14). More significantly, none of the previous iterations had specifically labeled the country's primary adversary. While clearly stating that Russia has become Ukraine's chief threat may help with strategic planning (and domestic politics), it will likely complicate future political dialogue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Ivan Kapsamun, “Russia Is the Adversary. Officially,” *Den*, 3 September 2015.

...“All current threats and military challenges are, unfortunately, related to Russia. And all of them are long-term. In the mentality of the Russian political elite, the reluctance to accept Ukraine's independence is rooted so deeply - consciously or unconsciously - and it will not go anywhere in historical prospective,” President Petro Poroshenko said, opening the discussion of the new edition of Ukraine's military doctrine at the NSDC meeting....

The novelty of the military doctrine, according to the president, is in rejecting the non-aligned policy, changing the emphasis in military conflicts to complex usage of military and non-military - economic, political, information and psychological - tools. “This fundamentally changes the nature of a military struggle. This is, essentially, what we call a hybrid war,” Poroshenko said....

How do the experts assess this document? We spoke with the director of the Army Conversion and Disarmament Research Centre, Valentyn Badrak.

[Den] If we look back, what military doctrines did we have before?

[Badrak] Today's edition of the military doctrine is the sixth one. The first doctrine emerged in 1993. It was quite peaceful, it stated the fact of the Soviet Union's collapse and Ukraine's non-alignment status was announced....

...The fourth edition of the doctrine appeared in April 2005 during the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko. He ordered that the goal to join NATO be inserted back. ...

...Viktor Yanukovich's coming to power changed the situation. In 2011, the fifth doctrine was passed which experts called “scandalous”. This draft was “toothless”. ... And the most negative point was, of course, confirming Ukraine's non-aligned status.

[Den] How can you characterize the new doctrine?

[Badrak] This doctrine can be taken as a basis for creating the new type of defense forces. Compared to the previous ones, it is the most serious and active one. The document foresees a powerful army and other armed formations as the tool of deterrence. We see that Russia is defined as the main military adversary, there is a task to relocate military units and create new infrastructure in the east and south. It is very important that the threats and challenges are defined as long-term. And, undoubtedly, the most important thing is to meet the membership criteria and become fully compatible with NATO....

...Ukraine's new military doctrine:

- Defines Russia as Ukraine's military adversary and conditions of liberation of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;
- Is based on high probability of using large-scale military force against Ukraine as the main threat to the national security of Ukraine in the military sphere;
- Confirms refusal from non-alignment policy and re-establishment of the strategic course towards Euro-Atlantic integration;
- Defines the signs of a military conflict inside Ukraine as well as one inspired by foreign states;
- Takes into account increased role of the informational-psychological operations;...

Source: Tatyana Ivzhenko, “Порошенко переводит армию на стандарты НАТО; Главной угрозой своей безопасности Украина считает “российскую агрессию” [Poroshenko Switches Army to NATO Standards; Ukraine Sees ‘Russian Aggression’ as Main Threat to Its Security] *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 27 August 2015. http://www.ng.ru/cis/2015-08-27/6_ukraina.html

...As a whole the moods of ordinary citizens coincide with the authorities' strategic plans. Sociologists observe striking changes which have occurred in Ukrainians' feelings toward NATO in the past 18 months. Whereas before the Crimean events the majority opposed rapprochement with the alliance -- because of (continued)

Continued: Ukraine's New Defense Doctrine

fears that the Ukrainian military would be drawn into international conflicts -- since Crimea, opinion has changed radically. The majority of Ukrainians now see in NATO the only real opportunity for guaranteeing their country's security and territorial integrity.

Mariia Zolkina, a political analyst at the I. Kucheriv "Democratic Initiatives" foundation, observed: "From 2005 through 2012 the number of people who would vote for NATO membership at a hypothetical referendum has fluctuated between 15 and 32 percent. But since Crimea and the situation in the Donbas and everything connected to it, it has emerged that non-bloc status is a soap bubble. Ukraine has found itself in a security vacuum. And that has been the catalyst for the growth of support for the idea of NATO membership. The first upswing was recorded in June 2014: from 15 percent (as of May 2012) to 45 percent. The number of opponents of NATO declined from 62 to 36 percent in the same period. In July 2015 the gulf became even more marked: Already 64 percent would vote to join NATO at a referendum, with 28 percent against."...

Blow to Russian Military Morale

27 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Shortly after Vladimir Putin returned as president in May 2012, he dismissed his Defense Minister, Anatoliy Serdyukov. Serdyukov was subsequently charged with fraud and embezzlement, particularly in selling off excess military property at reduced prices. Many observers interpreted this dismissal as a sign that the Kremlin was concerned with cleaning up corruption—particularly within the military. By removing a high official like Serdyukov, Putin appeared serious in enforcing the notion that no one was exempt from following the law. Appearances, however, can be deceiving.

As reported a year ago (see "Dangerous Corruption Fight," *OEW* August 2014), the Kremlin amnestied Serdyukov from criminal prosecution, and he has since gone on to pursue a successful business career. Although he was exonerated, there were hopes among many Russians that Evgeniya Vasilyeva, his key subordinate (and alleged paramour), would be held accountable for the financial machinations the within ministry's property relations department (Oboronservis).

Vasilyeva's legal proceedings and trial dragged on for over a year, and finally, in May 2015, she was sentenced to a 5-year prison term and required to pay a 77 million ruble fine. Since she had already spent 2.5 years under house arrest, her actual prison time would also amount to 2.5 years. Although justice had been delayed, by sentencing such a well connected official, it appeared that fighting high-level corruption remained a priority. Again, later events proved otherwise.

After spending a brief time in detention, Vasilyeva was granted parole and released from prison. This was a highly unpopular decision, and, as the poll results in first excerpt point out, over 70 per cent of respondents said they were against Vasilyeva's release. Not surprisingly, the major Russian media largely ignored this story. The second excerpt describes a request to the Kremlin from Ella Pamfilova, Russia's chief human rights ombudsman, to "carefully analyze the actions of all officials and [legal] authorities who have taken decisions in the Oboronservis case, as a result of which high-level offenders managed to evade responsibility." She goes on to say that paroling Vasilyeva after such a short sentence "strikes at the authority of the judicial and law-enforcement system and undermines the trust of the country's citizens in justice."

Pamfilova concludes that creating a dual system of justice—one for the elites and one for the rest—weakens the fighting spirit of officers in Russian Army and has "inflicted huge moral damage on the Russian Armed Forces." As Russia's economic and political situation continues to grow more problematic, the ripple effects from the perceived injustice stemming from the Serdyukov and Vasilyeva cases may yet have a dangerous impact. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Россияне об УДО Евгении Васильевой," [How Russians View the Parole of Evgeniya Vasilyeva], *Levada Center*, 27 August 2015. <http://www.levada.ru/27-08-2015/rossiyane-ob-udo-evgenii-vasilevoi>

...Over 70 per cent of respondents said they were against Vasilyeva's release on parole, while 8 per cent favored the idea....

...On 25 August, the Sudogodskiy district court in Russia's Vladimir Region released former Defense Ministry official Yevgeniya Vasilyeva on parole after three months in prison. In May 2015 Vasilyeva, the former head of the ministry's property relations department, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment after being convicted of embezzling over R800m (over 11m dollars at the current exchange rate) under the so-called "Oboronservis case".

The poll was conducted on 21-24 August, involving 800 people aged over 18 in 134 towns in 46 regions of Russia.

Source: "Russian Ombudsman Slams ex-Defense Ministry Official's Parole," *Interfax*, 25 August 2015.

Russian human rights ombudsman Ella Pamfilova has strongly condemned a court decision to release on parole Yevgeniya Vasilyeva, a key figure in the Oboronservis case, suggesting the move amounted to "elite" justice, privately-owned Russian news agency Interfax reported on 25 August....

...In a statement on her official website that evening, Pamfilova said she intended to request that President Vladimir Putin instruct the Russian Security Council to "carefully analyze the actions of all officials and [legal] authorities who have taken decisions in the Oboronservis case, as a result of which high-level offenders managed to evade responsibility."...

"Dividing investigations and court proceedings into two levels - 'elite' and 'for the rest of the people' - strikes at the authority of the judicial and law-enforcement system and undermines the trust of the country's citizens in justice," she said.

She went on: "This appeared most graphically and tellingly in the so-called Oboronservis case, in which the broad public still has more questions than answers. It does not raise the fighting spirit of officers in Russian army either that Mr. [former Defense Minister Anatoliy] Serdyukov, living in the shadows of a woman, evaded responsibility for the unsavory facts that came to light in the process of the investigation and inflicted huge moral damage on the Russian Armed Forces."...

Russian-Chinese Military Partnership?

2 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Events over the past few months indicate that Russia and China are continuing to strengthen their bilateral military relationship. For instance, the two countries conducted joint naval exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and Sea of Japan in May and August. In August the Chinese military participated in the Army competition hosted by Russia. On a more symbolic level, in May Chinese soldiers took part in the Kremlin's commemoration in Red Square to mark the 70th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War (World War II). And this past month Russian soldiers participated in Beijing's military parade to mark the end of the Chinese victory over the Japanese. The accompanying excerpt from an article describing Russian Defense Minister Shoygu's recent visit to Beijing reflects this growing cooperation.

Shoygu points out that the increased number of joint exercises are contributing "to boosting both countries' Armed Forces' combat skills and authority" which will help "in defending common security within the zone of our responsibility." He also referred to greater cooperation between the two countries in the field of weapons procurement and went on to invite representatives from the Chinese defense industry to participate in the "Army-2016" military-technical forum, which will take place next year at the "Patriot" Park congress and exhibition center (Moscow Oblast).

Perhaps the most interesting portion of Shoygu's comments during his visit to Beijing dealt with the changing historical perspective regarding the events surrounding World War II. According to Shoygu, the Russian-Chinese participation in mutual parades to mark the end of World War II "confirms once again the deep level of cooperation and of our historical ties in the fight against world evil, the fight against fascism." By marching in each other's parades, Shoygu suggested that the Soviet Union and China were partners in "the bloodiest and most protracted war" and presumably are partners today in the fight against fascism.

Shoygu went on to explain that "Russo-Chinese solidarity has great significance in counteracting attempts to falsify history and to hero-worship fascists and their allies." These comments were code-speak for US and NATO support of Ukraine against Russian aggression. The Russian Defense Minister, however, conveniently failed to mention the fact that the USSR had been a quasi-ally of Nazi Germany from August 1939 until June 1941, and, perhaps more significantly, Moscow did not declare war against Japan (China's foe) until the last month of the war. Such a select interpretation of history may not serve as a firm basis for a genuine Russian-Chinese military partnership in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Шойгу отметил большие перспективы российско-китайского военного сотрудничества," [Shoygu Has Noted Great Prospects for Russo-Chinese Military Cooperation] TASS, 2 September 2015.

"Russo-Chinese military cooperation" has a great future, Russian Federation [RF] Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoygu stated in Beijing on Wednesday [2 September].

"Our cooperation continues to develop fairly rapidly. This year we have already conducted a large number of events, and the realization of new plans is in prospect," Shoygu said during talks with PRC Central Military Committee Deputy Chairman Colonel General Fan Changlun.

Shoygu thanked the Chinese side for the invitation to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Victory in "the bloodiest and most protracted war." "In China it continued for longer than anywhere else – 13 years. Within that period more than 30 million people perished," Shoygu said.

He noted the profound historical ties between the peoples of Russia and China. "The fact that you believed it necessary and possible to join with us 9 May in Moscow to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War and to take part in the military parade confirms once again the deep level of cooperation and of our historical ties in the fight against world evil, the fight against fascism," Shoygu said.

For that reason, he noted, the RF Defense Ministry welcomed the invitation to take part in the celebrations in Beijing marking the 70th anniversary of Victory. "And, of course, our servicemen will take part in the parade – just as we agreed in Moscow in May," Shoygu said.

Russo-Chinese military cooperation is the basis of the two countries' strategic interaction, which is exerting a stabilizing influence on the international situation, the RF defense minister believes. Shoygu noted that "the underpinning of Russo-Chinese strategic interaction is military cooperation."

"Its most significant aspect is joint exercises," Shoygu said. "They contribute to boosting both countries' Armed Forces' combat skills and authority, and they demonstrate the defense departments' readiness for effective counteraction against present-day challenges and threats."

In Shoygu's estimation, the Russo-Chinese naval exercises that took place in the Mediterranean Sea and Sea of Japan water areas in May and August were of great practical benefit. "During the exercises, joint counterterrorism- and antipiracy-directed operations were rehearsed, as well as possible interaction and the conduct of peacekeeping operations," Shoygu said.

He noted that the parties "are focused on developing relations between Russia's and China's Armed Forces and on cooperation in defending common security within the zone of our responsibility."

Russia's defense minister has invited Chinese defense sector representatives to participate in the "Army-2016" military-technical forum, which will take place next year at the "Patriot" Park congress and exhibition center (Moscow Oblast)...Shoygu also invited Chinese servicemen to participate in the Army Games 2016, having appraised their performance in Russia this year highly.

The RF defense minister noted the high standard of professionalism of the Chinese People's Liberation Army servicemen, as well as the capabilities of the combat equipment with which the Chinese soldiers had arrived at the competition.

Shoygu gave a reminder that this was already his second meeting with Fan Changlun this year. "We rate highly the intense dynamism of Russian-Chinese contacts in the defense sphere," the minister said. He expressed certainty that today's meeting "will promote further development of the traditionally friendly and trusting ties between the Russian and Chinese defense ministries."...

...It was friendship and mutual assistance in battle during the Second World War [WWII] years that laid down a firm foundation for today's Russo-Chinese relations in the military sphere," he continued. "Russo-Chinese solidarity has great significance in counteracting attempts to falsify history and to hero-worship fascists and their allies," he noted....

Russian-Serbian Anti-Color Training

31 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: During the Cold War the leadership in Yugoslavia proved quite adept at balancing its loyalties and policies between Moscow and the West. While officially committed to the socialist cause, it also relied heavily upon Western loans and investments. The country adopted an independent, nonaligned approach toward international affairs, working to maximize concessions from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Some of this balancing tradition appears to live on within the Serbian successor state today.

Since Russia's aggression toward Ukraine began 18 months ago, both the EU and NATO have taken measures to express their disapproval of Kremlin actions. The EU and other Western nations have imposed economic sanctions against Russia, while NATO has moved to strengthen its defenses. Although it aspires to EU membership, Serbia is not yet a member, and has exploited its non-membership to increase trade with Russia. Similarly, having renounced any intention of joining the NATO alliance, Serbia is continuing to strengthen its military relationship with Russia.

The brief excerpt from a Russian source describes the plans for a military exercise which took place in early September, involving soldiers from Russia, Belarus, and Serbia. Given the current political climate in Moscow, the scenario for the exercise was somewhat predictable. According to Commander of Russia's Airborne Forces Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov, the exercise was built around defending against "antigovernment elements and regular military units trying to destabilize the situation in a notional country through acts of provocations and terrorist attacks." Shamanov went on to explain that the paratroopers will conduct "a special operation to prevent unrest and the escalation of the situation along the lines of Maydan."

A key element of the current Russian narrative posits that the West (and the US in particular) exploits "color revolutions" under the guise of democracy promotion to strengthen its geopolitical position. The Kremlin points to political unrest over the past decade in a number of countries (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Egypt, etc.) as "proof" of Washington's meddling. This exercise reflects the determination of the Russian Ministry of Defense to develop plans to counter this "threat."

Serbian military participation in this type of training is somewhat curious. In 2000, when public protests led to the ouster of President Slobodan Milosevic, many Serbians hailed his removal as a democratic victory. That the Serbian military now feels compelled to train for such a contingency might indicate a non-democratic direction. It might just as well be interpreted as adept political maneuvering. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Военные РФ, Белоруссии и Сербии на учениях пресекут беспорядки," [Russia, Belarus, Serbia to hold joint military anti-disturbance training] *RIA Novosti*, 31 August 2015. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150831/1218908485.html

Paratroopers from Russia, Belarus and Serbia will in the course of a joint exercise practise action to prevent unrest like that in Ukraine's Maydan, the commander of the Russian Airborne Troops, Colonel-General Vladimir Shamanov, told journalists on Monday [31 August].

The exercise which is to take this form for the first time ever will take place on 2-5 September in the south of Russia, near the city of Novorossiysk. Both non-lethal and combat weapons will be used.

According to the exercise scenario, "antigovernment elements" and regular military units try to destabilize the situation in a notional country through acts of provocations and terrorist attacks.

On this basis, the command of the joint group decides to launch joint antiterrorism operations to destroy the illegal armed groups and to restore law and order, the commander said.

According to him, (unspecified) non-lethal weapons will be widely used in the first phase of the exercise during a "special operation to prevent unrest and the escalation of the situation" along the lines of Maydan.

"The aim of the exercise is the preparation and application of a joint group of forces in a special operation to detect and destroy a training center used by unlawful combatants," Shamanov said.



Russian and Serbian paratroops boarding for training jump. September 2015
Source: <http://sputniknews.com/military/20150903/1026549545/slavic-brotherhood-russia-serbia-belarus.html>

Summer Arctic Water Crossing Demonstration

12 August 2015

“The officers of the Northern Fleet’s Motorized Rifle Brigade have taken part in a demonstration exercise involving preparing and driving combat vehicle across water obstacles. The exercise also involved firing from T-72B3 tanks and Akatsiya self-propelled 152-mm howitzers, a motorized rifle platoon capturing and holding a bridgehead after crossing a water obstacle, and other elements of combat training.”

OE Watch Commentary: Four days before the kick-off of a major joint Arctic exercise, ground force officers attended a water-crossing demonstration near Murmansk in order to prepare for the upcoming landing at the Arctic river port of Dudinka. Permafrost is fairly squishy in August, and mortars and howitzers tend to bury themselves during the course of firing. The Russian gunners moved their self-propelled howitzers onto pontoons to conduct battery fire. This is a common Russian gunners practice dating back to the Battle of Stalingrad, where the Soviet Volga Naval Flotilla used artillery barges to provide fire support for the embattled city defenders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <http://www.mil.ru>, 12 August 2015

Northern Fleet Coastal Troops Demonstrate River Crossing Capabilities

The exercise was held at the Naval Infantry Brigade’s water training range outside the village of Sputnik. The officers were first shown the performance characteristics of the formation’s combat vehicles, in particular, the Vityaz articulated tracked all-terrain vehicle, capable of moving over any terrain and obstacle in the Far North, and the tried-and-tested MT-LBv multipurpose tractor.

The officers were then taken to training sites to observe the actions of servicemen learning various skills (medical, engineering, NBC defense), before actually driving vehicles across water obstacles.

During the practical part of the exercise, the officers observed various methods of crossing water obstacles -- from setting up an ordinary ford to installing pontoons and bridges and driving vehicles across water.

The demonstration exercise involved more than 40 combat vehicles, including T-72B3 tanks and self-propelled howitzers, which performed artillery firing from a pontoon. All the amphibious vehicles used in the exercise had been treated with special materials, sealed, and examined for leaks.

During the sessions, special attention was paid to safety requirements. A medical team and a team of divers, as well as personnel from engineering departments stood by ready to provide support, although no need arose for their involvement in the educational process.

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

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

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

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf

Major Arctic Exercise

17 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The Northern Sea Fleet exercise kicked off on 16 August, when seven vessels left on a voyage that involves stops at the river port of Dudinka and Kotelny Island (part of the New Siberian Islands archipelago). The amphibious flotilla left the Kara Sea and moved 370 nautical miles down the north-flowing Yenisei River to the river-port of Dudinka. There it landed troops and equipment and began the movement toward Norilsk.

The soldiers conducted an unopposed landing at Dudinka and moved inland, where they encountered enemy commandos and conducted a live-fire exercise. This phase of the exercise was successful in testing hardware, troops, joint planning and Arctic amphibious and riverine landings. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gru)**

“This is the fourth Arctic campaign since 2012. A significant portion of the Northern Fleet ships’ route passes along the Northern Sea Route, which is currently ice-free, but being monitored by the fleet’s hydrometeorological center. In the event that the ice situation worsens, Atomflot icebreakers will come to assist the unit. The flagship on this voyage is the large antisubmarine warfare ship Severomorsk.”

Source: Krasnaya Zvezda Online, <http://www.redstar.ru>, 19 August 2015

Russian Northern Fleet Force Heads to Novaya Zemlya for Landing Exercise

A specific feature of the current Arctic Ocean voyage is the participation of troops and equipment from a newly formed Arctic motorized rifle brigade. Its subunits are on board the large amphibious warfare ships Georgiy Pobedonosets and Kondopoga. This is the first time that the motorized rifle subunits have participated in a long voyage. They have to carry out an amphibious landing and unload their equipment on Kotelny Island and several other Arctic territories. The Arctic brigade servicemen will participate in live fire drills.

Another mission on the voyage is to work on skills involved in providing assistance to ships in distress at high latitudes. Two Ka-27 helicopters are based on the Severomorsk, to be used for rescue operations, aerial reconnaissance, and a wide range of combat training missions.

Admiral Vladimir Korolev, commander of the Northern Fleet, stated in his recent interview to Krasnaya Zvezda that practice on tasks involved in making an amphibious landing on unprepared Arctic island coasts has been going on for several years. This year a landing will take place on the New Siberian Islands, of which Kotelny Island is one.

“A naval group from Russia’s Northern Fleet on Sunday left its home base of Severomorsk for an expedition along the Northern Sea Route. For the first time, soldiers from the Arctic Brigade in Alakurtti are taking part in the operation.”

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

Arctic Brigade joins Northern Fleet on exercise along Northern Sea Route

The frigate “Severomorsk” [North Sea] led the amphibious naval group, which includes the large landing vessels “Georgiy Pobedonosets” and “Kondopoga”, the tanker “Sergey Osipov” and three support vessels. The vessels will sail along the northern Sea Route, and make calls at several Arctic ports. Commander of the Northern Fleet Admiral Vladimir Korolyov stated earlier this year that the task force would sail to the New Siberian Islands, where Russia in 2013 started the process of reopening an old Soviet air base that had been abandoned since the early 1990s.

For the first time, personnel from the so-called Arctic Brigade – the 80th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade in Alakurtti, will take part in the exercise. The Arctic Brigade was established on a partly abandoned base some 50 kilometers from Finland, with the first troops arriving in January 2015. They have since then been going through comprehensive training on combat and survival in Arctic conditions.

“Never before have the Russian Armed Forces engaged in such a major drill in the Taimyr region. Several Northern Fleet vessels are involved in the first part of what is a several-stage rehearsal.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, Barents Sea Observer, <http://www.barentsobserver.com>, 20 August 2015

Biggest military drill in Taimyr ever: The Russian Northern Fleet launches major war games on the banks of the Yenisei River

“It is the first time we have such a large military drill on the territory of the Taimyr”, regional leader Ildar Dzhuhaev said in a recent meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Defense. The first stage of the exercise unfolds in Dudinka, the strategically important port operated the Norilsk Nickel mining company. The Northern Fleet vessels “Georgiy Pobedonosets” and “Kondopoga”, as several more ships, are involved.

The rehearsal also includes combat training in the area of the Norilsk airport, the village of Alykhel and the plant territory of the Norilsk Nickel smelters. Forces including paratroopers, naval infantry, personnel from the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Emergency Situations [EMERCOM] are involved.

(continued)

Continued: Major Arctic Exercise

“An inter-service force grouping of the Northern Fleet consisting of subunits of an Arctic Brigade reinforced by two companies of Airborne Troops (VDV) have begun the final stage of an inter-service tactical exercise in defense of an important industrial facility in the Arctic -- live-fire activity.”

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <http://www.mil.ru>, 27 August 2015

Northern Fleet Ground Force Live-Fire Exercise on Taymyr Peninsula

The live-fire exercise was conducted at a specially prepared small-arms firing range with challenging target positions. It is located not far from Lake Bolgokhtokh [located halfway between Dudinka and Norilsk]. On the main axis of the firing range, soldiers of the Northern Fleets Arctic Brigade conducted automatic weapon and machinegun fire while, on the flanks, paratroopers fired, simulating their assault in the enemy rear.

According to the general scenario, soldiers of the Arctic Brigade in the area of Lake Bolgokhtokh detected an enemy commando reconnaissance group of some 30 men. They found them using an Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicle.

Upon command, a motorized rifle company mounted on TTM-4902PS-10 all-terrain vehicles moved to the area where the group had been detected. To seal off the commandos, the paratroopers of the VDV subunits mounted Mi-8 helicopters and performed an assault landing in the rear of the commando-recon group. At this same time, the motorized riflemen of the Arctic Brigade turned the flank of the enemy, completed the encirclement, and trained withering fire on him.

For the safety of the live-fire activity the area of the exercise was closed to visits by citizens and secured by officers of the military police and the Interior Ministry.

“Admiral Vladimir Korolev, Commander of the Northern Fleet stated ‘The Northern Fleet forces’ interbranch exercises were important for an objective assessment of the potential of new hardware to be used in real Arctic conditions in unfamiliar terrain’.”

Source: RIA Novosti, <http://ria.ru/>, 27 August 2015

Commander: Northern Fleet Ready for Protection of Economic Facilities in Arctic

Admiral Korolev stated “Personnel of the Arctic motorized rifle brigade and mobile subunits of the Airborne Troops participating in the joint exercise proved their readiness to protect economic facilities in the Russian Federation’s Arctic zone”.

He added that during the exercises a wealth of experience was gained in the organization of joint collaboration which will be used in training subunits intended for actions in the Arctic. According to the commander, the exercises that have been held were also important for an objective assessment of the potential of new hardware to be used in real Arctic conditions in unfamiliar terrain.

Within the framework of the joint exercises, the joint practical actions of Arctic motorized riflemen and airborne troops in the defense of an important industrial installation were rehearsed for the first time in the region. Some of the main episodes of the exercise were the landing of Arctic motorized rifle brigade subunits in the port of Dudinka from large amphibious warfare ships of the Northern Fleet, the transport of Airborne Troop subunits by Il-76 military transports, and the practical training for defending an important industrial installation with live fire.



Parade of ships of the Northern Fleet

Source: “Parad korabley” by Alexey Pavlov - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Parad_korabley.JPG#/media/File:Parad_korabley.JPG

Is the Northern Sea Route an Expensive Pipe Dream?

OE Watch Commentary:

The Russian government has been pushing Arctic expansion and development so hard, that a contrarian argument from within Russia is worth examination. Vladimir Inozemtsev, the Director of the Center for Post-industrial Studies, has published such an article in the Saint Petersburg-based ProAtom.ru, a Russian website specializing in nuclear energy and security issues.

This lengthy piece makes a convincing argument except for two things. First, there are important military considerations in the construction of the North East Passage, as there were for the construction of the Panama Canal, Suez Canal and high speed Chinese railway. Second, the author's numbers are impressive, yet he misquoted the price of the Suez Canal expansion (\$8.2 billion). This makes one leery of the rest of his numbers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“To invest in developing the Northern Sea Route is like living in a parallel world of economic reality; after all, commercial transport is not only becoming less expensive every year, it also requires close relations with European carriers.”

Source: Vladislav Inozemtsev *ProAtom.ru*, <http://www.proatom.ru/>

Absurd Investments: Why the Northern Sea Route May Not Make Sense

Golden Fleece

On 6 August there was a gala ceremony marking the opening of an additional channel on the Suez Canal, presently the largest man-made transport artery in the world. The ceremony was - attended by representatives of 90 governments and was held in Izmailia. The project constructed a 35-kilometer waterway. This estimated five year project was completed in only one year without exceeding its \$4.2 billion cost estimate. The construction was primarily financed from funds from a “peoples loan” offered by the government on the domestic market; the lowest certificate has a nominal value of ten Egyptian pounds [\$1.28].

The canal's new channel is 317 meters wide and 24 meters deep and on a per kilometer basis cost three times as much as a four-lane automotive road from the Moscow Ring Road to Skolkovo, which was built in 2010 and has already become unserviceable.

But efficiency is more important than the project's cost. According to Egyptian authorities' estimates, waiting time to enter the canal has been reduced by a factor of three, transit time by 40%, the number of ships passing through the canal in a day has nearly doubled, and Egyptian treasury revenues will increase from the current \$5.3 billion to \$13.2 billion by 2023. The last figure seems too optimistic, but one can have no doubt that the expenses will be recovered in three-four years at most.

One can congratulate the Egyptians for the fact that after a few years of instability in the country's political life, a new page in its history is being written with such an impressive achievement. But I would like to talk about us, not them.

The Icebreakers have not been launched

Four years ago, at the Second Arctic Forum in Archangel, President Putin, announced that Russia sees the Northern Sea Route's future as an international transport artery, capable of competing with traditional marine shipping lines both in cost of services and in safety and quality. Shortly before this, Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, announced that five million tons of freight will be transported via the Northern Sea Route in 2012, and up to 64 million tons in 2020.

At the same time, “Developing Russia's Transport System for 2010-2015”, proposed the construction of one 60 megawatt nuclear icebreaker and three 25 megawatt icebreakers. Total expenses for developing arctic shipping lanes should come to 1 trillion rubles (\$34 billion) by 2018.

For the hypothetical transport of 60 million tons of freight the Russian government intended to allot eight times more funds than the Egyptian government needed to increase transit by a minimum of 400 million tons per year.

Moreover, not a single one of the icebreaking vessels proposed by the program has been launched, and 2014 freight transit totals came to only 274 thousand tons, a decrease in comparison with the 2013 figures by a factor of 4.3 times (given total traffic of 3.7 million tons, which includes domestic Russian freight).

Cost is more important than deadlines

Opening a new channel in the Suez Canal is an important wake-up call for the Russian 'strategists'. To dream today of the Northern Sea Route's transit potential means to put one's trust in a concept that is totally inadequate for several reasons.

First of all, under no circumstances will the Northern Sea Route become a market-maker on the global freight market. To become such, it would need to control at least 2-4% of the transit between the primary markets connected by this lane, i.e. Europe and Southeast Asia. These markets already handle two billion tons per year now, and it is not likely to stagnate in the decades immediately ahead. To elevate Northern Sea Route capacity even to 50-70 million tons per year means increasing it by a factor of 200 times compared to last year's figures. Such a task seems unrealistic in the current situation.

Second, in order to build up Euro-Asian ocean transport, Russia would need close and trusted relations with both Asia and Europe, insofar as the companies of these regions dominate the transport market in these areas now. For the time being, we see only growth in international tensions and Russia's marginalization.

Third, the northern route will not be able to compete with the southern route because 14 of the 20 largest ports of the world,

(continued)

Continued: Is the Northern Sea Route an Expensive Pipe Dream?

31 July 2015

each of which turns over from 200 to 700 million tons of freight per year, are located along the southern route. And more than half of the traffic is provided by freight carriers that do not sail the entire route, but rather on separate segments within it. Of the 71 ports formally operating along the northern route, 66 turn over less than 100 tons of freight per year, or they are simply not functioning. Moreover, the majority of global shipping companies have their own mooring berths and repair capabilities in more than 20 ports of the southern route. Russian will probably not allow foreigners are not likely to build these in Russia.

Fourth, the Chinese Peoples' Republic has been actively developing the Indian Ocean. China, which provides half of the European-Asian trade, practically controls the ports of Chittagong, Colombo, Gwadar, Djibouti, and Dammam. But, which is even more important, China has the option to reduce the distance to Europe. This is by high-speed roads and railroads from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou to Myanmar to deep-water ports being built in Dawei and Kalargote. Such a corridor will allow them to shorten the route by 3-3.5 thousand nautical miles and will pay for itself in 10-12 years.

Fifth, account transport costs are much more important in the global economy than delivery times. Large shipping companies are inclined to reduce the speed of their vessels by 30-40%, since slower running speeds allows them to cut fuel expenditures by up to 50%. The northern route cannot compete pricewise with transport from East Asian ports to Northern European ports or with Northwest US ports to Europe] or even with transport via the Suez and Panama canals unless Russia charges nothing for transit or icebreaking fees. This makes opening the Northern Route senseless.

Parallel economic reality

Marine transport is the least expensive form of transport, it is constantly becoming less expensive; and its cost reacts sharply to any fluctuations in the economic state of affairs. The prime transport cost indicator, the Baltic Dry Index, which had reached 11,000 on the eve of the 2008 crisis, closed on Friday at 1,055. It makes no sense to count on noticeable growth in the freight costs in the immediate future.

Investing in exotic marine transit routes like the Northern Sea Route, as well as in large overland projects such as the Baikal-Amur Railroad and the Trans-Siberian Railway in such conditions means living in a parallel reality; not only a political, but also an economic and financial one.

Of course, the construction of a new channel in the Suez Canal, as well as the Panama Canal modernization are a wake-up call to the Russian leadership. But there is something else consider. In Egypt, current revenues from operating the canal are equal to only one third of receipts from the tourism industry and amount to only one fifth of the money that industrial export brings the country. If one suggests that Russia will someday receive comparable income from transit fees on the northern route, the Trans-Siberian Railroad or the Central Asian corridor, the total will not exceed 1.5% of the value of our exports and will constitute 0.4-0.5% of the country's GDP.

The time when transit trade was able to 'feed' a country, vanished together with the ancient Uzbek Khorezm and Venice of the Middle Ages. We all, from America to Africa, from Asia to Europe, live in an industrial (or post-industrial) world, in which wealth is created by hands or by heads, but in no way by the size of one's territories.

Increasing Arctic Surveillance

9 September 2015

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian military has deployed the ORLAN-10 UAV to the Arctic for surveillance and early warning for ports, airfields and bases. It has a flight time of 16 hours and a range of 140 kilometers from the ground control station. This is excellent for ports, airfields and bases, but the Russians cannot cover the vast Arctic stretches with it. It appears that they are developing a system similar to the Northrop-Grumman RQ-4 Global Hawk for extended surveillance and early warning.

The Russians already have some large UAVs, including the five-ton ALTIUS, which is designed for reconnaissance, missile attack and electronic attack. The ALTIUS is produced at the well respected Sokol plant. Why are the Russian Armed Forces going to another design bureau for an Arctic-specific long-range surveillance aircraft? The answer may not be all military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Russian companies RTI Aerospace Systems and Tayber Science and Production Enterprise and will work jointly to create a heavy-class unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) weighing 1.5 tons to monitor the Arctic shelf. The drone will have an extended range and flight duration (4,000 kilometers and 35 hours respectively).”

Source: RIA Novosti, <http://www.ria.ru>, 9 September 2015

Russia Will Create Drone to Monitor Arctic Shelf

The first flight of the new system is scheduled for late 2017. The development will be equipped with an SAU-9.1 automatic control system, including a guidance system, on-board computer, and latest-generation actuators.

Tayber is a developer of software, automatic control system hardware, UAVs, and sea-based craft. The company also develops electronics and software, implementing the full cycle of projects - from idea generation, to development, reengineering, and maintenance of the finished product

RTI Systems was established in 2000. It specializes in telecommunications, aerospace and ground control systems, and power engineering

Polar Bears without Borders

8 September 2015

“Russian scientists are disappointed that a planned Norwegian-Russian polar bear inventory was cancelled because of lack of good will from Russian authorities.”

OE Watch Commentary: The polar bear hunts seal, its primary food, from the edge of an ice floe. *Ursus Maritimus* is classified as a vulnerable species, and with fewer ice floes afloat in the Arctic Ocean in recent years, the survival of the huge mammal is becoming a concern. Therefore, the conduct of a census appears to be a good thing. However, Russia seems to be putting obstacles in the way of the census. The Norwegians planned to have Russian scientists fly to Svalbard and sail from Svalbard to Franz Josef Land and back—the primary area of this part of the census.

The straight-line distance between the Norwegian port of Svalbard and Franz Josef Land is 856 kilometers. However, the Russians want the Norwegians to first sail from Svalbard to an established port of entry (Murmansk would be closest). The straight-line distance between Svalbard and Murmansk is 1053 kilometers and the straight-line distance between Murmansk and Franz Josef Land is 1488 kilometers, for a total distance of 2541 kilometers (1685 extra kilometers and ten sailing days not spent in census taking). Then, the joint team would conduct the census in the Svalbard to Franz Josef Land area—and presumably have to return to Murmansk to exit Russian waters!

Why are the Russians not cooperating and exacerbating already strained relations with Norway when they grant this right to tourist ships? Is there some reason they do not want a good census of the polar bears in this region or is it routine bureaucratic inertia? Finally the Russians cancelled the expedition. The Russians are within their legal rights, but should the United Nations cede additional vast areas of the Arctic to Russia, such hassles may increase in frequency and distances. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Trude Pettersen, *Barents Sea Observer*, <http://www.barentsobserver.com>, 8 September 2015

Tourists – da! Scientists – nyet!

A long-planned joint mission to count the number of polar bears between Svalbard and Franz Josef Land had to be cancelled because the Norwegian researchers were not allowed to enter Franz Josef Land.

Mariya Gavrilov, Deputy Director of the “Russian Arctic” National Park stated to TASS that the official reason for the refusal is that construction of the port on Franz Josef Land where the Norwegian vessel was supposed to enter, is not finished. The scientists had applied for permission to sail straight from Svalbard to the Russian archipelago of Franz Josef Land, without passing through a border check-point, but this was refused by Russian authorities.

“Of course we could have sailed through the border-crossing point, but this would have taken ten days, or one-third of the expedition”. She points out that although the port is not completely finished, the authorities have given permission to three vessels carrying tourists to sail directly from Svalbard to Franz Josef Land this year.

Gavrilov believes the cancellation of the joint expedition will make it difficult for the scientists to get a good a full picture of the polar bear population in the area. The last major census of polar bears was conducted in 2004, and the situation can have changed since then. “For polar bears, there are no borders. Unfortunately, for scientists, they are very clearly defined,” she said to TASS.

According to the expedition’s blog, Norwegian scientists have been counting polar bears in the eastern and northern parts of the Svalbard archipelago during August. First they used the Norwegian Polar Institute’s research vessel “RV Lance” and later from the Coast Guard vessel “KV Svalbard”.

The joint expedition was based on a Norwegian-Russian memorandum of understanding and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had supported the project with 10 million kroner [\$1,223,000].

Source: Atle Staalesen, *Barents Sea Observer*, <http://www.barentsobserver.com>, 11 September 2015

Russian oilman meets polar bear

Rosneft company representative Pavel Rassadkin confirms that a total 53 million rubles (€69.000) are being spent on polar bear studies during the period 2014-2015 and another 74 million rubles (€97.000) in the years 2016-2020.

Parts of the research will focus on satellite monitoring of tagged animals, as well as tests of fur, blood and fat layers Rassadkin stated. The testing came at the same time as Russian authorities canceled the country’s participation in a major joint polar bear inventory with neighboring Norway.

As previously reported, a long-planned joint mission to count the number of polar bears between Svalbard and Franz Josef Land had to be cancelled because the Norwegian researchers were not allowed to enter Franz Josef Land.

Over the last year, Rosneft has invested major sums in Arctic research expeditions, the latest of them being the Kara Winter-2015 expedition.

Does Russia's Correlation of Forces Assessment of the Arctic Indicate They Will Dominate There?

3 August 2015

OE Watch Commentary: In September 2015 an article appeared in the Russian paper *Svobodnaya Pressa* that discussed the situation in the Arctic and the various forces present in the area. An interesting question was offered: What is the alignment of forces and the likelihood in the future of armed conflicts in "the battle for the Arctic?"

The area is worthy of a close look by many countries, since it is estimated that around 30 percent of the undiscovered world reserves of natural gas and 15 percent of undiscovered oil reserves lie there. The article listed the weak composition of Western forces surrounding the area, as opposed to the Russian presence, which includes four nuclear-powered icebreakers, with another in reserve. Twelve diesel-powered icebreakers are also on hand.

The article noted that a main challenge today is retaining the northern seas as internal Russian waters, which excludes the presence of potential adversaries there. Internationalizing the Northern Sea Route would impact revenues from the use of the route by other states and would heighten Russia's vulnerability from the northern direction. Russian reporting below implies a very weak Western military presence, which appears to have been seen from the Kremlin as an ideal opportunity for Russia to act in the Arctic. Such an argument lowers the Russian thought that the US was behind the replacement of Ukraine's President. As the article notes, the US was too tired to even try such a gambit. Of course this analysis is not by a military officer but by a civilian, but the reasoning is sound. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

“It will be recalled that on 3 August 2015 Russia submitted a modified application to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Its purpose was to demonstrate that the Lomonosov and Mendeleev Ridges constitute the geographic extension of the Siberian continental platform, in which connection tracts in the central Arctic Ocean and the Barents and Bering Seas come under Russian jurisdiction.”

Source: Anton Mardasov, "Russia-USA: From 'Cold War' to 'Ice War.' Might the Arctic Become a Theater of Military Operations?" *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 10 September 2015.

Aleksandr Khramchikhin, deputy director of the Institute of Political and Military Analysis, remarks: "By virtue of the general weakness of their military potential, which has declined following the ending of the Cold War, the armed forces of Canada, Norway, and Denmark do not have the capability to exert any sort of serious military influence on Russia and its waters.

"The Norwegian Navy comprises six diesel-electric submarines, the same number of missile boats and minesweepers, and five frigates. Denmark's Navy consists of seven frigates and two support ships (a frigate/ amphibious warfare ship hybrid). The Canadian Navy -- four submarines, three destroyers, and 12 frigates and 12 minesweepers."

"Norway, Denmark, and Canada do not possess units of airborne troops and naval infantry, and they have virtually no means of troop redeployment. Their navies possess neither embarked aircraft nor cruise missiles."

"And now for the Americans. The United States does not have significant contingents of armed forces in the European Arctic (aside from a ballistic missile early warning system radar in Greenland). Two US ground troops brigades are stationed in Alaska (the 1st Stryker and 4th Airborne Brigades), along with two air wings of the US Air Force and the 176th Wing of the Alaska Air National Guard equipped with C-130 transports. Naturally enough, with their developed airfield network the Americans are able to reinforce their ground troops grouping expeditiously, although it is pretty difficult to imagine a battle in the Arctic involving armored equipment. Russia is doing this consistently, methodically, slowly and without rushing -- it steps on international rules, creates all kinds of international organizations, starts wars, and occupies territories.

Furthermore, the United States -- to say nothing of the countries of Europe -- is psychologically unprepared for even a limited military conflict with Russia. Therefore I don't see any possibility of a real military confrontation in the Arctic. No one there is coming into contact with anyone else. As for the internationalization of the Northern Sea Route, the main advocates of this are the United States and China. They essentially have an informal alliance in this context. But it is unclear how in practice this can be achieved. At the moment I cannot imagine the passage of any vessel, let alone a warship, along the Northern Sea Route without prior arrangement without Russia's consent.

Former Putin Aide Describes the Russian President's Goals and Methods

OE Watch Commentary: Andrey Illariyonov, a former advisor to Russian President Vladimir Putin, believes that the latter is preoccupied with creating and strengthening international organizations. For that reason Putin has invested heavily in the “clubs” known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), and the Eurasian Union (Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Belarus). Illariyonov notes that at Sochi, when Putin gave a speech to the Valdai Group (a meeting of international experts focused on Russia and its global role), he implied that the goal of the Russian war against the West was to revise general Western principles. What the West lacks at the moment is a strategy from any of the states to counter Putin's strategy. The West, Illariyonov notes, needs something like Wilson's 14 points, Churchill's Fulton Speech, or the Truman Doctrine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

“We need to understand that we are fighting a war. This is not just a simple crisis. This is not a crisis of Ukraine, Georgia, Estonia, or Lithuania. It is simply a war. It is long and it did not start yesterday. It did not start two year ago, it did not start in Crimea and it did not start in 2008 in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. It started much earlier,”

— Andrey Illariyonov

Source: Egle Samoskaite, “Andrey Illariayonov, Putin's Former Adviser: This Is No Longer a Crisis, This Is War,” *Vilnius Delfi*, 15 September 2015.

The Russian regime of Vladimir Putin declared a long term war against the western world, and the goal of this war is to destroy the global order formed after the Second World War. It is doing this consistently, methodically, slowly and without rushing -- it steps on international rules, creates all kinds of international organizations, starts wars, and occupies territories.

Illariyonov, who earned world fame via the duties as advisor inside Putin's administration, says that the west does not fully understand what kind of a war they were pulled into. He presents a seven point program, which according to him reveals the essence of the affair: Putin has declared a long term war against the west and the west has only three choices: To surrender and to agree with the demands of Putin, to look for a compromise, or to fight against it actively.

According to the analyst, the west in essence has three choices -- to yield to Putin and to agree with his proposals to reform the international system, to look for a compromise, or to resist and perhaps win. “To surrender means to accept the proposal issued by Putin during the speech in Sochi. This means admitting to oneself and the world that there is going to be a new order in the world. The new order means that there will not be international rules -- there are going to be the rules set by the powerful. Above all this will be felt by the weaker and not so powerful states, especially those that have borders with the current Russia,” he said.

According to him, the old Europe can expect information aggression, economic actions, development of corruption, but not a military aggression.



President Putin with former Economic Advisor Andrey Illariyonov

Source: “Vladimir Putin 20 October 2000-2” by Kremlin.ru. Licensed under CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_20_October_2000-2.jpg#/media/File:Vladimir_Putin_20_October_2000-2.jpg

XPCC: The Militarization of Agriculture and Construction

Introduction

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a quasi-military organization functioning in China's most restive region, has been growing in numbers, responsibility, and power over the past six decades. 6 October 2014 marked the 60th anniversary of this mostly unknown organization. While the XPCC is a critical force that plays an important role in China, little has been written about it.

The XPCC, also known as Bingtuan and the China Xinjiang Group, handles its own administrative and judicial affairs within the areas falling under its administration. It can be classified as a state within a state: it has its own schools, universities, hospitals, courts, newspapers, television stations, websites, police, and a citizen's militia, whose mission is to "support the stability of Xinjiang."¹ It is not subordinate to the regional government but reports directly to Beijing.

According to Hsaio-Hung Pai, an investigative journalist and author of *Scattered Sand*, it is impossible to avoid hearing about the XPCC when visiting Xinjiang. "Over the years, it has become a community of its own." The XPCC is segregated from the region's population. "It plays the role of a colonial institution," she explains.²

The apparent goals of the XPCC are to promote economic development, ensure social stability and ethnic harmony, expand its militia, consolidate border defense, and possibly extend its influence. This report will offer a brief overview of each goal and what China has been doing to try to achieve them.

Achieving Goals: Promote Economic Development

Even though the inner workings of the XPCC are not clear, much has been reported on its contributions to building up the economy. It has transformed cities, agriculture, and industry in Xinjiang. By 2004 the XPCC was described as one of the biggest institutions in China, consisting of 19 industrial conglomerates, with 11 companies listed on the stock market exchange, and accounting for one seventh of Xinjiang's output of goods.³ It had 174 regimental agricultural and stockbreeding farms; 4,391 industrial, construction, transport, and commercial enterprises; and social undertakings that cover scientific research, education, culture, health, sports, finance, insurance, and judiciary organs.⁴

In 2010 then President Hu Jintao unveiled a massive support package to try to help Xinjiang achieve leapfrog-like development. The goal was to bring Xinjiang's per-capita gross domestic product to a level equal to that of the rest of the country by 2015. In 2011 Che Jun, Deputy Secretary of the Xinjiang CPC Committee and political commissar of the XPCC, said that a long-term cooperation mechanism between the XPCC and state-run companies would be established to push forward the new-type industrialization of the Corps.⁵ China has reportedly been working toward these goals.

Achieving Goals: Ensure Social Stability and Ethnic Harmony

Ensuring social stability and ethnic harmony has proven to be difficult. Xinjiang is home to China's largest ethnic group, the Muslim, Turkic-speaking Uyghurs, who have lived in the country's shadow for centuries. Over the past decades, in what has been dubbed the Hanization of Xinjiang, China has been pushing Han Chinese to migrate west from the populous east coast through various incentives, such as free or cheap housing, key posts, or promises of prosperity. The growing Han population has caused the ratio of Uyghur to Han to change in the area. According to the World Uyghur Congress, when the PRC was

first formed the population of Xinjiang was about four percent Han Chinese. By 2009 that number had risen to more than 40 percent.⁶

Meanwhile, pro-autonomy sources claim that the Chinese government shows favoritism to Han Chinese. While a higher percentage of Uyghurs have advanced education than they did in the past, getting a good job in Xinjiang is not easy for them. They need to have connections or "guanxi." The technical jobs tend to go more often to Han Chinese.

Such disparities have caused discontentment and unrest in the region, as well as reported terrorist attacks elsewhere. Between 1990 and 2003 terrorists reportedly killed 160 civil servants and religious figures in Xinjiang, while security forces killed 110 terrorists and dismantled 560 terrorist organizations.⁷ In 2009 at least 197 people died in anti-Chinese rioting in Urumqi. In 2011 three attacks in the cities of Hotan and Kashgar, Xinjiang, left three dozen people dead. In October 2013 three Uyghur radicals crashed a motor vehicle into Tiananmen Square, in Beijing, setting the automobile on fire and killing its three occupants, along with two bystanders. Two months later two policemen and fourteen civilians were killed in deadly clashes near Kashgar.

In 1999 Commander Zhang Wenyuei, an officer with the Corps, stated that the XPCC would crack down hard on ethnic separatists, as well as illegal religious activities and other criminal activities, and step up its efforts to maintain social stability in Xinjiang. Zhang described the role of ensuring "the stability of Xinjiang and the internal stability of the Corps," as being the XPCC's most important new duty.⁸ These sentiments have been echoed more recently.

Achieving Goals: Expand the Militia

In line with ensuring social stability, the XPCC has also shown signs of expanding its militia role in the region. The 1984 Handbook for the Chinese People's Liberation Army, released by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) through the Freedom of Information Act, described the Corps as one of China's principal paramilitary forces.⁹ While the capabilities of the militia are somewhat sketchy, some reports offer clues as to the direction the Corps has been heading.

In 2002, after discovering discrepancies in its personnel record-keeping system during a random inspection of Construction Group No. 3 in Korla, which is located in central Xinjiang, the XPCC began implementing measures to boost accountability and work done by its militia. The organization adopted three measures. First, it placed fewer restrictions on recruiting militias. Previously rules existed that, for example, would limit the number of militia per household. Second, militia organizations were formed in offices, newly established service companies, and scientific research units that did not previously have militia units. Finally, steps were taken to strengthen management of the militia where militia members worked. Thus, the force was expanding.

Since 2002 the XPCC seems to have been undergoing further transformation, with its militia training ranging from computer network operations to cold weather operations to live artillery drills. For example, in a red versus blue scenario, the People's Armed Police Corps of the XPCC's Eighth Agricultural Division conducted training that consisted of the red team accessing and stealing information and control of the blue team's computer systems on the Internet.¹⁰ The Eighth Agricultural Division had focused its training on raising its capabilities to meet the needs of information warfare under a high-tech environment. It established a high-tech militia branch at the Institute of Information Engineering at Shihezi University, in Xinjiang, at the beginning of 2001 and built training bases, regional networks, and a

(continued)

Continued: XPCC: The Militarization of Agriculture and Construction

central website. Combining the technical expertise of local colleges and scientific research units with the characteristics of the armed police work, the organization reportedly “formed grass-roots and central information networks and developed the ‘Falcon’ network assault software,”¹¹ which is designed to search for the blue side’s Internet provider system.

In February 2011, during a mobilization conference for the Corps’ winter militia

training and campaign to “promote the spirit of the Corps,” Che Jun announced that going forward the Corps will launch annual winter training for its staff. The plan was in line with the 5th and 6th plenums of the 6th XPCC CPC Committee.¹²

One year later a CCTV report discussed the XPCC’s Xinjiang Ji-anshe Group being involved in an exercise in which more than 10,000 militia conducted “their great winter training.” The training is said to have included ten days of intensive exercises for some of the troops.¹³

In May 2011 Jiefangjun Bao released a one-page report describing a four-level joint training session that was organized under the leadership of the Department of Military Affairs of the XPCC for organ cadres of the Corps, divisions, and XPCC farms and company workers and staff members at various militia training bases in six major reclamation areas north and south of the Tianshan Range. The types of training reportedly included live-fire practice, emergency and contingency response, border defense, and coordination and formation into groups. More than 200,000 participants are said to have attended the training.¹⁴

According to the 2014 white paper on the XPCC, the Corps is currently focusing its efforts on forging a top military force in Xinjiang and “building a system of regular rotation training and standby duty, which combines production, training, duty performance, and emergency response.”¹⁵ It has also formed emergency militia battalions, whose companies and platoons can be mobilized at any time in response to activities viewed as endangering stability in Xinjiang.¹⁶

In October 2014, during a conference marking the 60th anniversary of the Corps, Chinese officials underscored the importance of the XPCC in combating violence and terrorism. According to Vice-Premier Liu Yandong, the XPCC “has performed an irreplaceable role in safeguarding Xinjiang’s stability,” but that fighting separatism and terrorism in Xinjiang will be a “long and complicated battle.”¹⁷

As of 2014, the XPCC consists of 176 regiments and has a total force of 2.7 million (11.9 percent of Xinjiang’s total population).¹⁸ While these forces have long been responsible for the growth and development of Xinjiang, their role as a militia will likely continue to expand because there is much at stake.

Achieving Goals: Consolidating Border Defense

It is necessary for China to consolidate its border defense. While Xinjiang is home to most of China’s poorest population, there is a lot of interest in it. It is rich in natural resources and is bordered by Russia, India, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It is the latter of these countries that offer the most concern.

Additionally, Xinjiang possesses large deposits of petroleum, natural gas, coal and 122 different minerals, giving it great economic value to China. It is estimated to have more than 25 percent of the country’s petroleum and natural gas reserves and 38 percent of coal reserves.¹⁹ Because of its vast windy expanses and steady sunshine, Xinjiang is also growing in importance for green energy. As of September 2014, there are 9 major wind areas, making up about 37 percent of China’s total wind power.

China has the fastest growing economy in the world. In order to

maintain its current pace of growth China must be able to tap into these and other critical resources. Protecting these resources is therefore important to the country’s national security.

Achieving Goals: Extending Influence

The XPCC is taking steps to extend its role and influence beyond Xinjiang. This is born out of necessity to support China’s huge population and economic growth. With China’s total food demand growing in pace with urbanization, the government has been trying to coax its domestic companies into farming overseas. In 2009 China had access to just over two million hectares of farmland abroad. Then, in September 2013, the country struck a deal with Ukraine in which China would initially be provided with at least 100,000 hectares – an area almost the size of Hong Kong – of high-quality farmland in Eastern Ukraine. Eventually, the project would grow to three million hectares. The produce would then be sold to two Chinese state-owned grain conglomerates at preferential prices. The agreement was signed in June 2013 between the XPCC and KSG Agro, Ukraine’s leading agricultural company. Not only would such a project help China to meet its growing food needs, but it would also help expand the influence of the XPCC and provide jobs abroad for Chinese laborers.²⁰

Some Ukrainian sources had voiced skepticism over the deal. For example, according to Ukraine-based Focus, while China has been interested in Ukraine agriculture for a long time, the possibility of the country gathering three million hectares of land under one legal entity was doubtful. Additionally, as the article points out, China has a bad track record with managing its agricultural industry, resulting in environmental damage.²¹ In light of the current Ukrainian crisis, it is unclear whether or not the XPCC has ultimately successfully carried out the deal.

Finally, there is also the possibility that China could seek to use the XPCC as a role model for other similar production and construction corps. With China’s territorial issues in the South China Sea (SCS) and with urbanization creating growing concern over the country’s need for natural resources, Dai Xu, a research fellow at Beijing University and a retired PLA AF colonel, suggested creating a “production and construction corps” for the SCS similar to that of the XPCC. Dai suggested that such an organization could set up an airfield, resupply base, and living quarters on disputed land features to maintain China’s sovereignty over them.²² As the XPCC continues to gain strength and build up its capabilities, it would serve as an ideal role model for other “production and construction corps” operating under similar situations.

Conclusions

Over the past 60 years the XPCC has gone through a number of transformations. It has reshaped the landscape of a province that might have otherwise been left behind as other regions, such as China’s east coast, began to thrive. It has offered employment opportunities in a challenging job market and served as a tool to help “widen” the opening up of China to the outside world.²³

The following statement, made in 1991, probably best summarizes the role of the XPCC, and still holds true today. “Playing the role of a production team, work team, and fighting team, it is an important force for economic construction, unity among various nationalities, and social stability in Xinjiang and for strengthening border defense and protection of the motherland’s unity. So, it holds a very important strategic position.”²⁴ The importance of the XPCC as a military style force is growing and is undisputable. The question, then is, how much more will the Corps or its concept continue to grow?

Endnotes

1. Mark O'Neill, "Autonomous Legion: Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps," South China Morning Post, 24 July 2009.
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Keeping NBC Relevant

Flame Weapons in the Russian Armed Forces

By Charles Bartles

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

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