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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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The PKK and MANPADs: A Game Changer

OE Watch Commentary: The outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighting Turkish security forces appears to have acquired man-portable, shoulder-launched missile systems (MANPADS)-- a development that may challenge Turkish air power and potentially intensify fighting in the region. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss this potentially game-changing development in Turkey's fight against the PKK, and claim that it will likely further escalate the cycle of violence.

On 14 May media affiliated with the PKK posted a video showing a fighter downing a Cobra attack helicopter with a MANPADS in the mountains of southeastern Turkey the day before. The helicopter had been dispatched to the region after militants conducted an attack that killed six Turkish soldiers in the area. The Turkish Armed Forces' (TAF) initial statement suggested that the crash had occurred due to a technical problem, but a subsequent statement noted the chopper may have been shot down by an air defense system weapon, most probably a missile.

The first passage notes that it is unclear how PKK militants in Turkey got their hands on shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles, but points out that they are widely available on the black market. It claims that the PKK's ability to acquire a rare, next-generation weapon means that an unknown country effectively armed PKK militants with military equipment capable of inflicting maximum damage to security forces. The author also notes that the Turkish military will likely be forced to answer this new challenge by using armed drones in counterterrorism operations.

The second passage, written by respected Turkish military expert Metin Gürcan, points out that Super Cobras are the most effective weapons systems in the mountainous southeast region. He also discusses where the PKK may have found the missile, claiming that the most likely answer is Syria, since it is known that SA-18s, which constituted the main MANPADS in the Syrian army's inventory, were looted and sold on the black market in 2012-2014. He also discusses how this incident will influence the course of this conflict, arguing that this attack will sharply limit the use of helicopters in antiterrorism operations. As such he claims that ground units would have to assume a heavier burden. This, he suggests, will mean both increased convoy and supply activity on the ground, which raises the IED risk in critical areas, and additional risks and greater fatigue for ground units in the field.

Last July a ceasefire lasting about two and a half years broke down, reigniting the conflict between the PKK and the TAF. Since then, the PKK has killed hundreds of Turkish soldiers and targeted civilians in attacks, including suicide bombings. The use of a surface-to-air missile is a new and disturbing development in the conflict. The attack is being called a "game changer," with the potential to lead to further escalation in the region, according to Turkish experts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "How Did PKK Get Its Hands on MANPADS?," *Daily Sabah*, 17 May 2016, http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/yahya_bostan/2016/05/17/how-did-pkk-get-its-hands-on-manpads

"How exactly PKK militants in Turkey got their hands on shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles, or SAMs, remains unclear. To be clear, a number of man-portable air-defense systems, or MANPADS, are widely available on the black market. Had the PKK purchased such weapons on the black market, that would have been one thing. But intelligence sources indicate that the terrorists have obtained a new generation of weapons, including the Russian-made IGLA-1, or SA-16, which remains unavailable on the black market.

The PKK's ability to purchase a rare, next-generation weapon has repercussions beyond Turkey's national security, because this means that an unknown country effectively armed PKK militants with military equipment capable of inflicting maximum damage to security forces.

...

At this point, it remains unclear how many surface-to-air missiles PKK militants have obtained. However, it is quite clear that the terrorists are capable of targeting Turkish helicopters. Airstrikes, after all, have been minimizing Turkish casualties while maximizing the damage inflicted on the PKK. In this sense, the PKK's new weapons might have a negative short-term effect on Turkey's air power. The obvious answer to this challenge will be to use armed drones in counter-terrorism operations."

Source: "Çatışmalarda yıkıcı bir denge haline doğru mu?" (Towards a destructive stalemate in the conflict?), *Al Monitor*, 16 May 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/originals/2016/05/turkey-kurdish-militants-clashes-catastrophic-stalemate.html

"Assault helicopters provide critical close air support to ground forces. These helicopters are the most effective supporters of ground units in their infiltration of and departure from operational zones. By interdicting the escape routes of PKK militants and using 20 mm guns and unguided 70 mm rockets for pinpoint strikes, Super Cobras are the most effective weapons systems in the mountainous southeast region....

...Where did the PKK find the SA-18? It is possible to reply "most likely in Syria" because it is known that the SA-18s, which constituted the main MANPADS in the Syrian army's inventory, were looted and sold on the black market in 2012-2014...

..How [will] this incident affect the course of the clashes[?]

In Turkey's anti-terror operations, helicopters play a critical role in close air support and logistics, thanks to their aerial evacuation/supply capabilities. Turkish security forces face an increasingly effective improvised explosive device (IED) threat and therefore rely on helicopters for critical missions. This attack will sharply limit the use of helicopters in anti-terror operations. Accordingly, ground units would have to assume a heavier burden. And that will mean both increased convoy and supply activity on the ground — which raises the IED risk in critical areas — and additional risks and greater fatigue for ground units in the field."

ISIS Targeting Turkey with Katyusha Rockets

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkish town of Kilis, located three miles from the Syrian border, has been under Katyusha rocket fire by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) from inside Syria since January 2016, with attacks becoming more targeted and intense as of late. The accompanying passages discuss this development, and note that this challenge is evolving from low-intensity conflict into a hybrid warfare threat for Turkey.

The first passage, written by a respected military expert, points out that Kilis has about 130,000 inhabitants and is the Turkish town closest to the northern Syria region controlled by ISIS. Kilis hosts more Syrian refugees than its own population, and since January, 17 people have been killed and 62 wounded by rockets fired from Katyusha multiple-rocket launchers from Syria. In addition, it points out that the attacks are becoming more professional and targeted, given that they started out landing in empty spaces but have recently been landing in areas close to the city centers. The author points to reports that ISIS is taking advantage of the fact that Turkey is unable to fly planes in Syrian airspace due to the Russian threat, and points out that the group mounts its launchers on pickup trucks, moves about freely, fires and immediately disappears before Turkish artillery can pinpoint it.

The second passage, written by the same author, claims that ISIS is conducting these attacks as a response to being squeezed in Syria and Iraq. He points out that ISIS is trying to expand the front and dimensions of the war and turn Turkey into a front in order to reduce the pressure it is feeling in Syria and Iraq.

The third passage argues that Ankara needs to respond quickly to a terrorist challenge that is evolving from low-intensity conflict into a hybrid warfare threat. It claims that Turkey's nonstate adversaries are improving their capabilities with mobile rocket systems, antitank guided missiles, and man-portable air defense systems (see previous article). The fourth passage notes that, despite attempts to increase border defenses, Turkey's efforts to counter this rocket fire have little chance of success unless the Turkish military launches a ground offensive or allied rebel forces push ISIS firing positions beyond 20 miles.

The Soviet-made Katyusha rockets used against Kilis are among the most important weapons of World War II. They have particularly been used against Israel, first during its war with Hezbollah in 2006 and then with Hamas in 2009. This is a weapon that is difficult to defend against with classic air defense systems, and Israel has developed new ways and laser-guided air defense systems to defend against it, including the Iron Dome system. Analysts note that ISIS is likely to have obtained its Katyusha arsenal by capturing systems from government forces in Syria and Iraq.**End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "Türkiye'nin Katyuşalarla sınavı" (Turkey's test with the Katyushas), Al Monitor, 26 April 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/originals/2016/04/turkey-syria-isis-katyusha-rockets-kilis.html

"Kilis, with 130,000 inhabitants, is the Turkish town closest to the northern Syria region controlled by the Islamic State. In Kilis, which hosts more Syrian refugees than its own population, 17 people have been killed and 62 wounded since January by rockets fired from Katyusha multiple-rocket launchers from Syria...

One important thing to note about the rocket attacks is that initially they landed in empty fields outside Kilis; but the most recent ones have landed in city centers... This shows that the rocket attacks against Kilis are becoming more professional. In addition, according to the intelligence reports reaching Ankara, ISIS is taking advantage of the fact that Turkey is unable to fly planes in Syrian airspace due to the Russian threat; and the group mounts its launchers on pickup trucks, moves about freely, fires and immediately disappears before Turkish artillery can pinpoint them."

Source: "Türkiye'nin IŞİD'le mücadelesi savaşa mı dönüşüyor?" (Is Turkey's fight against ISIS turning into a war?), *Al Monitor,* 5 May 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/originals/2016/05/turkey-polarization-impairs-anti-isis-combat.html

"ISIS, who is being squeezed in Syria and Iraq, is trying to expand the front and dimensions of the war and turn Turkey into a front, in order to reduce the pressure it is feeling in Syria and Iraq. It is thus trying to show that its successes are continuing and it is trying to send a message to its sympathizers that 'We are still strong!' by carrying the war both into Turkey and Europe. In addition, it appears that ISIS has directly targeted Turkey in response to its losses in northern Syria. All of these are concerning developments for Turkey."

Source: "Turkey's War of Attrition With the Islamic State: The Rocket Threat," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 17 May 2016, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkeys-war-of-attrition-with-the-islamic-state-the-rocket-threat

"... Ankara needs to respond quickly to a terrorist challenge that is evolving from low-intensity conflict to hybrid warfare threats. Turkey's nonstate adversaries are improving their capabilities with mobile rocket systems, antitank guided missiles, and man-portable air defense systems. Under these circumstances, strategically adapting to the new security environment and implementing needed changes in the Turkish Armed Forces are crucial."

Source: Aaron Stein, "ISIS and Turkey: The Rocket Threat to Kilis," Atlantic Council, 26 April 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/isis-and-turkey-the-rocket-threat-to-kilis

"Despite attempts to increase border defenses, Turkey's efforts to counter the rocket fire have little chance of success, unless the Turkish military launches a ground offensive or allied rebel forces push ISIS firing positions beyond 20 miles."

Turkey Opens Military Base in Qatar

OE Watch Commentary: : In late April Turkey officially opened a military base in Qatar-- its first foreign military base in the Middle East. This followed a defense agreement signed with the Qatari Emir in December 2014. The accompanying passages from the Turkish and global press discuss this development and why it is important for Turkey, Qatar and the region.

As the first passage notes, the new Turkish base is expected to host about 3000 forces, including ground troops, special operations teams and military trainers. It quotes a Gulf security analyst who claims that Qatar and Turkey are united in their distrust of Iran, with both countries supporting Iran's enemies in Syria and Yemen. He is quoted as saying that since the Iran nuclear deal the United States is no longer seen as a reliable military counter to Iran's considerable strength. "Gulf countries think if the U.S. doesn't see Iran as a threat, the U.S. will withdraw."

The second passage points out that the Turkish base in Qatar will consist of elements from each force of the Turkish Armed Forces. Its main task will be to train Qatari forces. The base is expected to improve military ties and facilitate joint military exercises. In addition, the base in Qatar is seen as a potential counterbalance to Iran's increasing influence in the region. It is also seen as part of the Sunni alliance among Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The final passage points out that Qatar also hosts the largest military base in the Middle East, with 10,000 American soldiers.

The military initiative with Turkey is important for Qatar, which is concerned with increased Iranian influence in the Gulf and the improvement of U.S.-Iran relations. Qatar lacks serious military power, and this initiative enables it to make up for its deterrence weakness in the Gulf by entering into a military alliance with Turkey and diversifying its defensive capacities. A strong military alliance with Turkey will enable Qatar to enhance its defense industry capacity, improve the training of its Army, reduce its military dependence on the United States, and perhaps even develop stronger cooperation with NATO via Turkey. As for Turkey, the base will allow it to have a greater say in the Gulf and provide access a lucrative market. It will also offer Turkey a way to strategically counter Iranian influence in the region and boost Turkey's role in global security and global energy security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "Turkey Opens First Mideast Military Base in Qatar," Voice of America, 10 May 2016, http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-opens-first-middle-east-military-base-in-qatar/3323653.html

"Gulf State Analytics founder Giorgo Cafiero says, 'Besides isolation, ... Qatar and Turkey are united in their distrust of Iran, with both countries supporting Iran's enemies in Syria and Yemen. And since the Iran nuclear deal, the United States is no longer seen as a reliable military counter to Iran's considerable strength... Gulf countries think if the U.S. doesn't see Iran as a threat, the U.S. will withdraw.'

The new Turkish base is expected to house more than 3,000 people, including ground troops, special operations teams and military trainers."

"Qatar and Turkey are united in their distrust of Iran, with both countries supporting Iran's enemies in Syria and Yemen. And since the Iran nuclear deal, the United States is no longer seen as a reliable military counter to Iran's considerable strength... Gulf countries think if the U.S. doesn't see Iran as a threat, the U.S. will withdraw.."

Source: "Katar'daki Türk üssü tamam" (The Turkish Base in Qatar is Ready), *Hurriyet.com.tr,* 29 April 2016, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/katardaki-turk-ussu-tamam-40096367

"Analysts evaluate Turkey's military base in Qatar as having the goal of counter-balancing Iran's increasing influence in the region. The Turkish base is assessed as the reflection of the Sunni alliance between Turkey-Qatar and Saudi Arabia in the defense field. The Turkish base in Qatar will consist of elements from each force of the Turkish Armed Forces. The Turkish forces' main task will be to train Qatar forces...

The base has the capacity to hold some 3000 soldiers. With the base, [it is expected that] the two countries will improve military ties, and conduct joint military exercises."

Source: "Katar'da Türk Askeri Üssü" (Turkish Military Base in Qatar), *Amerika'nin Sesi*, 29 April 2016, http://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/katarda-turk-askeri-ussu/3307339.html

"Qatar hosts the largest military base in the Middle East, with 10 thousand American soldiers."

Iran: Chinese Eye Port of Chabahar

OE Watch Commentary: Iran's Indian Ocean port of Chabahar has long been a backwater. There was some discussion among European NATO members during Operation Enduring Freedom to use Chabahar's proximity to Afghanistan to help supply that country, but a combination of U.S.-Iran tension and the lack of real infrastructure around Chabahar largely put those plans to pasture.

In recent months, however, China has been making a concerted push to invest in and develop Chabahar. In March, Chinese ambassador Pang Seng visited the port

Nick Unique [Nick Yi], amanaging director China Double View, representing a group of Chinese investment companies, a member of the Presiding Board of the Chabahar Free Trade Zone, stated that the economic delegation arrived in Chabahar on 26 April as part of a three-day visit. This came after a March visit by Chinese Ambassador Pang Sen to drum up business for Chinese firms engaged in port construction and development. Now, according to the article excerpted here from Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, Chabahar has hosted a Chinese delegation from a major Chinese government-backed firm which has visited not only Chabahar, but also the Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari Ports.

By investing heavily in Chabahar, Chinese authorities may seek to add the Iranian port to their "string of pearls," which already includes heavy investment in Gwadar (Pakistan), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the Marao Atoll in the Maldives. In addition, Chinese authorities appear to be investing heavily in Port Sudan on the Red Sea. While China has long been interested in protecting its Persian Gulf energy access, its increasing investment in the Indian Ocean might ultimately augment its challenge to the U.S. Navy in time of conflict.

From a domestic Iranian standpoint, while Iranian authorities will be unlikely to grant the Chinese any military base on Iranian soil, simply building up Chabahar port to military standards will bolster China's strategic position and enable Tehran to use Beijing to balance its growing relationship with Moscow. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"China…has a great desire to invest in ports and railways"

Chinese investors tour the port of Chabahar
Source: Irna.ir (http://img7.irna.ir/1395/13950131/82042097/82042097-70663792.jpg)

Source: "Bazdide Hiyat-e Sarmayeh-e Gozar-e Chini az zir Sakhteha-ye Bandar Chabahar" (Visit by a Delegation of Chinese Investors to the Infrastructure of the Port of Chabahar), *pmo.ir,* 20 April 2016. http://goo.gl/JunxEI

Visit by Chinese Investors to the Port of Chabahar

In a meeting with the directors of the Port and Maritime Organization of Chabahar, Nick Yi, Managing Director of the Double View companies from China, said Double View is an international engineering and construction companies that builds railroads, develop ports, build bridges, build airports, and work in electricity, highway construction, steel, petrochemicals, general construction, and industrial activity. Double View China has 500 affiliated companies and with 1,700 experts and engineers working in and investing in 157 countries.

Nick Yi said, "China is looking for bilateral economic cooperation, and in this trip, we have a great desire to invest in ports and railways, and because of these two issues, the port of Chabahar is very important to us."

Iran: Kurdish Insurgents on the Upsurge

OE Watch Commentary: Increasingly, it seems to be Kurdistan's moment. Iraqi Kurdistan has been de facto separate from the rest of Iraq for a quarter century. With the rise of the Islamic State, however, and the setbacks that group has dealt to the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga has been able to consolidate control over most of the territory still under dispute between the Iraqi government and the [Iraq] Kurdistan Regional Government, Meanwhile, Syrian Kurdistan has also achieved autonomy in the guise of Rojava. Meanwhile, the breakdown last year of the peace process in Turkey between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has made the Turkish government's grip on portions of southeastern Turkey tenuous at best.

Perhaps because Western journalists and diplomats are unable to travel regularly or freely to Kurdish regions of Iran, seldom is any attention paid to the ongoing Kurdish insurgency in Iranian Kurdistan and neighboring provinces. The Kurds have a long history of resistance to Iranian central government control. In 1946 Iranian Kurds (with Soviet backing) briefly declared the Mahabad Republic. While this did not last out the year, subsequent repression has not eliminated a succession of Kurdish insurgent groups, the most potent of which is now the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PeJAK), an affiliate of the PKK.

While the excerpted article does not mention PeJAK or name any other Kurdish group, instead simply referring to "anti-revolutionary agents," the fact that Kurdish insurgents continue to kill Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps soldiers in combat suggests that the Kurdish insurgency in Iran is now more deeply established than the Iranian government wishes to admit. The potency of Kurdish resistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran might also explain the increasing vociferousness of Iranian opposition to Iraqi Kurdish moves toward independence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"[The two] were killed yesterday in clashes with anti-revolutionary agents"

Funeral for two Revolutionary Guardsmen killed in Iranian Kurdistan.
Source: IRNA, http://img7.irna.ir/1395/13950216/82062697/82062697-70702087.jpg

Source: "Pikar Do Shahid Sepah Sardasht Tashiah Shod" (Two IRGC Sardasht Martyrs Buried), *Islamic Republic News Agency,* 5 May 2016 http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82062697/

Two IRGC Sardasht Martyrs Buried

According to a report by the Islamic Republic News Agency correspondent, Martyr Rahman Ibrahimi and Martyr Mohammad Abubakri were killed yesterday in clashes with anti-revolutionary agents around the village of Mevaneh in the central part of this district… City officials, Law Enforcement Forces, military officials, and notables from various segments of Sardasht society all attended the funeral of these martyrs. The Sardasht district is in the south of West Azerbaijan, alongside the border of Iraq.

Iran: IRGC Debuts New Explosives Plant

OE Watch Commentary: While the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the so-called Iran deal, aimed to halt Iranian work toward a nuclear weapon, it did not stop Iranian development of dual-use technology. Hence, Iranian officials justify the legality of their ballistic missile work by arguing that the missiles are not exclusively designed to carry nuclear warheads and, therefore, legal. While the opening of a new explosives factory has not drawn the same Western scrutiny, the inauguration of a plant that can produce Octagen (also called HMX) suggests dual-use military development will not be limited to missiles. In the article excerpted here from Iran's main defense news portal, Iran's minister of defense talks about how Octagen can enhance the lethality of Iranian warheads. It is also a component of some armor-piercing munitions. What the defense minister does not mention is that Octagen can be used in nuclear weapon detonators.

While there is no evidence that Iran has continued to work on nuclear detonators in the wake of the JCPOA, the fact that it has invested in a plant to mass produce Octagen will keep suspicion about its ultimate intentions alive, while simultaneously raising questions about whether Iran's military posture will be defensive and whether elements within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps might provide more lethal explosives to proxy terrorist groups for use in either smaller missiles or explosively-formed projectiles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"This is a starting point for greater steps to ensure national security"

Source: "Afzayesh-e Daghat va Ghadarat-e Samaneh-haye Taslihati dar Dastor-e Kar-e Vizarat-e Defa' Qarar Darad" (Increased Accuracy and Power of Weapons Systems are on the Agenda of the Ministry of Defense), *Defapress.ir*, 6 April 2016. http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/76486

Increased Accuracy and Power of Weapons Systems

...Hossein Deghan, minister of defense and armed forces logistics, at the opening of a factory for a new generation of explosives (Octagen) said, "By creating a powerful infrastructure and upgrading defense, we will reinforce the defense industry." He added, "The Ministry of Defense simultaneously endeavours to put on the agenda how to increase the accuracy of weapons systems and the augmentation of the effectiveness and power of different warheads with access to technical knowledge about the production of the exposive Octagen and its synthetic products...."

Deghan added, "With propaganda, the Americans tried to destabilize Iran by destabilizing the countries of the region, and they even created, trained, and introduced terrorist groups...." Deghan said, "This is a starting point for greater steps to ensure national security...."

The material for the Octagen explosives is a strategic product that is used in a variety of ballistic, cruise, and air defense missiles, armor-piercing and marine weapons to increase their effectiveness and efficiency.

Iran shows off a new factory to mass produce Octagen.
Source: Basij Press, http://basijpress.ir/images/news/73203/thumbs/73203.jpg

Water Scarcity and Conflict: Yemen, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia

OE Watch Commentary: Water scarcity is a growing concern for the populations and governments of the Middle East and North Africa. In the past few months fears of water scarcity have exacerbated conflict in Yemen, increased tensions between Egypt and its neighbors, and forced the Saudi government to take measures to lower the kingdom's unsustainably high water-consumption levels.

The near-total breakdown of governmental authority in Yemen is exacerbating an already dire situation. According to the first accompanying article, most conflicts in Yemen during 2011 and 2012 were over water, with 4000 people killed annually in these clashes. Water distribution has all but stopped in much of Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city. Yemen's water institutions are hardly functional, and power cuts and fuel shortages make piped water supplies unreliable. In areas with accessible groundwater, unlicensed wells are proliferating. Many are dug to grow qat (khat), a water-hungry herbal stimulant widely used in Yemen that is the war economy's most profitable crop.

In Egypt, Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam upstream the Nile continues to be viewed as a pressing national security threat. Ethiopia is currently suffering a severe drought, and Nile levels downstream are significantly lowered. Many in Egypt blamed the Renaissance Dam, but, as the second excerpt notes, Egypt's water minister acknowledges, "The truth is, there is a drought in the Nile Basin region and the amount of rainfall is below normal." Yet Egypt's fears of the Renaissance Dam are not unfounded, particularly given the ongoing drought. Ethiopia is slated to start filling the dam in September, and "a real water crisis" is a distinct possibility, according to an Egyptian expert cited in the third accompanying excerpt.

In the wealthy kingdom of Saudi Arabia the water crisis is, for now, merely a "water bill crisis," brought about by a major price hike and some bureaucratic fumbling. The price increase was made in December 2015, part of a package of austerity measures meant to help plug the budgetary gap opened up by low oil prices. There is hope that the price increase will curb water consumption in Saudi Arabia, which, according to the fourth excerpt, is third highest in the world (per capita), despite the country's glaring lack of freshwater resources. When customers complained about the price hike, they received no response. It may seem like a trifle now, but the politics of water in an age of scarcity will not be getting any easier for Saudi Arabia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: "Egypt's Water Minister Says Country Facing 'Critical Phase'," *al-Monitor*. 10 April 2016. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/egypt-water-minister-interview-nile-drought-ethiopia-sudan.html

Al-Monitor: The low water level on the Nile — which resulted in crises at drinking water stations and mass fish deaths — recently has led to controversy among the public about Ethiopia starting to store water at the Renaissance Dam. What is the truth of this matter?

Abdel Ati: The truth is, there is a drought in the Nile Basin region and the amount of rainfall is below normal. We are hoping for an improvement over the coming months.

Source: الزراعة: مصر ستواجه أزمة مياه حقيقية خلال فترة ملء خزان سد النهضة
"Agriculture Ministry: Egypt Will Face a Real Water Crisis During the Filling of the Renaissance Dam," *al-Shuruk*. 14 April 2016. http://www.shorouknews.com/

According to the officials, the filling of the dam will begin next September and last two years. Mohammed Suleiman, the director of the Agricultural Crops Institute and the Egyptian foreign ministry's representative to the conference, told al-Shuruk: "As far as I know, we will face a real water crisis with the filling of the Ethiopian dam combined with the decline in rainfall there."

Source: م العطش يطارد اليمن الغارق في الحرب
"Thirst Pursues War-Torn Yemen," *al-Araby al-Jadid*. 25 March 2016. https://goo.gl/kObOCd

Despite the Water Ministry's precautionary measures and the government's issuance of a law forbidding the digging of illegal groundwater wells, the number of illegal wells has increased and now numbers 13,500 in the Sana'a basin alone, according to official reports. The aim of these wells is to feed Qat plants, which consume 80-90% of the water... Yemen's water problems are extremely complicated, as Qat is the one product which has flourished during the war and become highly profitable... Electricity and fuel cuts have halted water distribution into homes, as Yemenis seek alternative sources including wells. Solar panels are the preferred method for powering private wells to obtain water for drinking and agriculture. According to a government report, water conflicts have killed many in recent years, peaking between 2011 and 2012, when 80% of conflicts in the country's interior were over water and killed an annual average of 4,000 Yemenis... According to local activists, the price of water delivered by tanker trucks has tripled; trucks need four or five days to bring water to the Taiz city center.

Source: "Higher Water Bills Create Angry Waves," *Arab News*. 22 March 2016. http://www.arabnews.com/news/899016

There has been a surge in complaints to the National Water Company (NWC) by Saudis about higher water bills resulting from the increased tariffs announced by the government late last year... Many also claimed that the NWC had failed to respond to their complaints... most citizens would not be affected by the hike in prices, which were among the cheapest in the world. The Kingdom ranks third after the US and Canada in terms of average daily water consumption, despite the scarcity of water and the difficulty in desalinating and delivering it to consumers, he said.

Turkistan Islamic Party Makes its Mark on the Syrian Rebellion

OE Watch Commentary: A key player in the breakdown of the cessation of hostilities in Syria earlier this year was the Syrian branch of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), which is made up of ethnic Uighurs, speakers of a Turkic language who originate from China's Muslim-majority Xinjiang Province. Uighur jihadists have been present on the Syrian battlefield since early in the conflict. As detailed in the first accompanying excerpted article, their inability to speak or understand Arabic made rebels suspicious, thus constraining the TIP's ability to embed in the Syrian rebellion. TIP fighters eventually formed an independent, al-Qaeda-linked unit to fight alongside its Syrian counterparts. According to the article, the Syrian TIP branch draws recruits from the 20,000-strong Uighur refugee community in Turkey.

The second accompanying excerpt, from the Syrian opposition news website ***Enab Baladi,*** highlights the TIP's role in the recent jihadist assault and takeover of Khan Touman, a loyalist-held town south of Aleppo city. The article claims that a 300-man TIP detachment led the assault on Khan Touman after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device from the Nusra Front (al-Qaeda's Syrian branch) softened loyalist defenses. In the ensuing battle the TIP kidnapped several Iranian fighters; the group has a policy against holding prisoners and thus handed them over to the Nusra Front, according to the article.

The TIP seems to have a long-term Syrian presence in mind. It rose to prominence after leading the successful assault on the strategic town of Jisr al-Shughur in the spring of 2015. Over the ensuing summer its fighters established havens in adjacent mountainous areas near the Turkish border. According to the third accompanying excerpt, they then brought their families and settled in villages of Lattakia Province's "Turkmen Mountain."

The TIP is one of a few jihadist groups to have remained relatively neutral in the Syrian spat between al-Qaeda and ISIS. As detailed in the fourth accompanying excerpt, in February 2016 the TIP coordinated with ISIS in an attempt to cut off the desert road linking loyalist forces in Hama and Aleppo. Growing influence of the TIP and other "neutral" jihadists within Syrian rebel ranks increases the likelihood of reconciliation between ISIS and al-Qaeda. A scenario of jihadist force amalgamation in Syria deserves serious consideration. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source:
الصينيون الأويغور... انغماسيّو أردوغان الجدد
"Chinese Uighurs: Erdogan's New Suicide Fighters," *al-Akhbar*. 19 May 2015.

With the Nusra Front's overt appearance, a small number of Turkistan fighters joined their ranks... A few of them (five Arabic-language speakers) joined Ahrar al-Sham, but the group's leadership refused the entry of more since they neither spoke nor understood Arabic ... "How could we be reassured by the presence of a group whose language we did not understand? How could we know they were not moles?"... According to a jihadist source, "the TIP's fighters have received extensive specialized training in storming and assaults since late last year"... The number of Uighur refugees in Turkey (around 20,000) makes it easy to recruit "mujahideen" to join the TIP. The TIP has transformed Turkey into one of its key bases of operations, with assistance and willful overlooking by Turkish intelligence. "The East Turkistan Educational and Solidarity Association" has played a key role in organizing and equipping fighters to send to Syria under the cover of providing "humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people."

Source:
التركستان.. الحصان الأسود في معارك خان طومان
"Turkistan: The Dark Horse in the Khan Touman Battle," *Enab Baladi*. 11 May 2016. http://www.enabbaladi.org/archives/78997

The source added that the TIP participated in the battle with around 300 fighters, most of them "suicide fighters" (inghimasiin) that participated in the storming. The [Iranian] prisoners are presumably in the hands of the Nusra Front, given the TIP's policy of not holding prisoners despite their superiority in combat and urban warfare, which had an influence in the battles for Jisr al-Shughur and the al-Ghab Plain last year.

Source:
الحزب الإسلامي التركستاني... فصيل جديد يقود عمليات رئيسية في شمال سوريا
"The Turkistan Islamic Party: A New Faction Leading Key Operations in North Syria," al-Sharq al-Awsat. 22 September 2015. http://goo.gl/Dk622j

International estimates from last year calculated 450 fighters, while 700 of them emerged in the operations in Jisr al-Shughur according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Their numbers are now in the thousands given their having settled with their families in the Turkmen Mountain in rural Lattakia, according to the SOHR's director, who adds that "we documented 300 of them being killed in al-Ghab Plain and rural Idlib and Lattakia since they emerged as a single fighting force working in north Syria and allied with the Nusra Front"... Abu Haniya indicated that following Pakistani pressure last July and restlessness within the group's ranks following the killing of Hakimullah Mehsud in November 2013, they found they no longer had a refuge in Pakistan and headed to Syria...

Source:
تفاصيل: ماذا يجري على طريق خناصر..؟
"In Detail: What is Happening on the Khanasir Road?" al-Hadath, 24 February 2016. http://www.alhadathnews.net/archives/172304

The Syrian Observatory noted: "[In addition to ISIS], Syrian forces and their allies are fighting against extremists from Jund al-Aqsa and the Turkistan Islamic Party"... There is conflicting information on the claim that hundreds of Syrian soldiers were killed in the battle launched by ISIS and TIP, after their fighters were able to infiltrate villages near the Khanasir Road at dawn and kill tens of soldiers.

Tunnels and Refugees: Can ISIS Breach Jordan's Borders?

OE Watch Commentary: According to the head of Jordan's Border Guard, the kingdom's borders are secured and impossible to breach. These comments, included in the first accompanying excerpt, come as Jordanian forces claim to have captured a carrier pigeon used by ISIS militants to communicate between Syria and Jordan. The pigeon is of symbolic rather than strategic importance, a reminder that ISIS is constantly seeking exploitable asymmetries to counteract its disadvantage in weapons and technology. Using birds (or pack animals) to overcome border surveillance and deliver messages is one thing, finding ways to slip militants past border defenses another. For this, ISIS relies on tunneling and embedding with refugee populations.

Tunneling has become a key component of ISIS fighting doctrine in Syria and Iraq. Yarmouk Martyr's Brigade, a resilient ISIS affiliate, controls the southwestern pocket of Daraa Province in Syria. Across the border lies Jordan's densely populated Irbid Province, and the terrain is favorable for tunneling. The second excerpt describes a network of Roman-era tunnels, "known only to amateurs and tomb seekers," linking the Jordanian border village of Kharja with Syria. Historical tunnel networks indicate favorable soil conditions and make the building of new tunnels easier, as Syrian rebels in Aleppo have shown.

Jordanian authorities are currently most concerned with ISIS exploiting refugee flows in the remote desert crossings of Rukban and Hadalat. Jordan has practically closed both of these crossings for fear that ISIS militants are embedding with the growing waves of refugees from areas under their control. In the first four months of 2016 the number of refugees stranded on the Syrian side of the berm dividing the two countries increased from 16,000 to 59,000, the majority of them living in a tent city across the dividing berm from the Rukban crossing. Jordanian authorities believe ISIS sympathizers and informants live among them.

Jordan's border may be safe from conventional ISIS attacks, but it remains vulnerable to asymmetric tactics, including tunneling and embedding with refugee populations. These tactics may not pose much of an immediate threat, but their cumulative effects can be fatal, as with the gradually heating water that eventually boils the anecdotal frog to death. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"… There are more than 59,000 Syrians stranded across Jordan's Rukban and Hadalat border crossings. They come from Raqqa, Deir Ezzour, Aleppo and Homs, areas under ISIS control … "

Source:
العميد المهايرة: حدود المملكة آمنة ولا يمكن اختراقها
"Brigadier General Mahayrah: The Kingdom's Borders are Safe and Cannot be Breached," *al-Dustur*. 5 May 2016. https://goo.gl/xIoJuH

The commander of the Border Guard, Brigadier General Saber Mahayrah, said that the kingdom's border cannot be breached and is fully secured… He noted that Border Guards conduct constant border surveillance with UAVs and from the ground, as well as nonstop electronic surveillance … The Border Guards are also considering refugees being used to bring in drugs and explosives, and the use of tunnels for smuggling and infiltration. He noted that 5 tunnels between Syria and Jordan had recently been closed and 12 smugglers using a 100-meter long Ottoman tunnel had been killed… al-Mahayrah noted that ISIS has a source within the Rukban refugee camp in northeast Jordan, but that it does not pose any danger to Jordanian national security… He also noted that in one part of Rukban, war profiteers exploited refugees while in another ISIS had intelligence sources, mostly residents of Palmyra and Raqqa.

Source:
أنفاق أثرية عابرة للحدود في خرجا لا يعرفها إلا الهواة والباحثون عن الدفائن
"Historic Cross-Border Tunnels in Kharja Known Only to Hobbyists and Tomb Explorers," Jordan Zad. 18 July 2011. http://www.jordanzad.com/print.php?id=49993

Deep underground, at depths reaching tens of meters, are the tunnels of Kharja village, in Bani Kanan District. There are estimated to be 50 of them crossing the border; the exits to some of them are unknown… According to the archaeology directorate, one of them may be around 60 kilometers long, linking Muzayrib in Syria with the archaeological site of Umm Qais in Jordan. Many of the tunnels are linked to one another, including the ones in Kharja. Local Arab residents dug them during Roman times.

Source:
العربية.نت" ترصد معاناة لاجئين سوريين على حدود الأردن"
"Al-Arabiya.net Monitors the Plight of Syrian Refugees on Jordan's Border," *al-Arabiya*. 5 May 2016. http://goo.gl/LOimHR

There are more than 59,000 Syrians stranded across Jordan's Rukban and Hadalat border crossings. They come from Raqqa, Deir Ezzour, Aleppo and Homs, areas under ISIS control. As a result, Jordanian authorities have taken preventive measures and stopped letting in refugees for fear they will target Jordan…Among the measures taken by Jordanian border guards to fend off terrorists and armed gangs has been the closing of historical tunnels linking the kingdom with Syria, particularly those located on the northwestern border.

New Insurgent Group Emerges in Niger Delta

OE Watch Commentary: : Insurgencies are still in fashion in Nigeria. While Boko Haram, based in the northeast of the country, gets the lion's share of attention when it comes to insurgencies, the southeastern Delta region is experiencing renewed tenuousness for its insurgent groups as well. As per the excerpted article below, a new group called the Red Egbesu Water Lions has emerged in the Niger Delta, vowing to team up with other groups in the Delta to force the government's hand to meet sundry demands related to oil production in the region.

When it comes to insurgencies in Nigeria, those in the Niger Delta predate Boko Haram by around a decade, and have since the early 1990s been protesting what they see as their marginalization at the hands of unfair partnerships between the national government and multinational oil corporations. Beginning in 1992, members of various smaller ethnic groups inhabiting the swampy Niger Delta began protesting the riches begotten by multinational oil companies - especially Shell, Elf, and Chevron - in their backyards, while the vast majority of citizens lived in poverty. Widespread social movements came to rise, notably led by Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, which ultimately touched off more contemporary movements. Throughout the 1990s, the once-peaceful protest movement became violent, and coalesced under the banner of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, which was, until the emergence of Boko Haram in approximately 2009, the Nigerian government's primary domestic national security interest. Such groups like the Red Egbesu Water Lions have been oil bunkering, kidnapping oil workers, and targeting state and non-state actors.

Though threats from the militants in the Niger Delta died down beginning in 2009 and 2010, as the government extend an amnesty program, the emergence of Red Egbesu Water Lions signals a return to the past. Observers are unsure whether the group is an entirely new outfit or simply the merger and reemergence, under a different name, of two once-defunct groups called the Egbesu Mightier Fraternity Of Izon (Ijaw) Land and The Water Lion. If true, the group has a precedent of notoriety, given that it threatened to expel northerners from the southeast region, when Boko Haram began attacking Christians (the predominant religion of the south) in its area of operation in the north. Moreover, the group has claimed to start working with other insurgent groups in the region, including the Niger Delta Avengers and Indigenous Peoples of Biafra. Indeed, the emergence of yet another group that has pledged to impede Nigerian oil production is a real threat, especially as Nigeria's economy tries to weather the blows from profoundly low global oil prices.
End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

"The Red Egbesu Water Lions, said to be an Ijaw group, threatened to shut down all oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta"

A new insurgent group called the Red Egbesu Water Lions has emerged in the Niger Delta, and threatens to halt Nigerian oil production.
Source:

Source: Addeh, Emmanuel. "Nigeria: New Niger Delta Militant Group Emerges, Issues 7-Day Ultimatum" *This Day* (Lagos). May 18. http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/18/new-niger-delta-militant-group-emerges-issues-7-day-ultimatum/

The Federal Government now has a new group of militants to contend with, following the emergence of the Red Egbesu Water Lions, which has vowed to team up with the Niger Delta Avengers in ensuring zero production of oil and gas in the region…

In a statement by its Creek Network Coordinator, "General" Torunanawei Latei, on Wednesday, the new militant group vowed to work with the Niger Delta Avengers and Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, IPOB, to ensure that all their demands were met in the next seven days.

Among others, the group demanded the immediate release of Nnamdi Kanu, the IPOB leader and the discharge of former National Security Adviser, NSA, Sambo Dasuki from prison custody....

The Red Egbesu Water Lions, said to be an Ijaw group, threatened to shut down all oil exploration activities in the Niger Delta at the expiration of the ultimatum if the president ignores the group's demands...

Reactions to U.S.-Senegalese Security Accord

OE Watch Commentary: On 2 May 2016 the United States and Senegal signed a bilateral defense accord that has commentators both within and outside Senegal buzzing. As per the three excerpted articles below, opinions range from optimistic to skeptical about the nature of the new agreement. In its broadest form the agreement is arguably the deepest show of cooperation ever between the United States and Senegal, and is primarily intended to address the growing spate of terrorist activities in West Africa. Among other stipulations, the new accord allows the US military access to Senegalese airports and bases - upon the invitation of Senegal - and further, includes language about the potential for a permanent US military presence in the country, though this does not entail the presence of a standalone US base.

News of the agreement has elicited various reactions from those in the country and outside of it. For one, some observers, like the author of the first article, are somewhat dispassionate about the move and see it as an intuitive partnership. Senegal is a democratic country that has generally been spared histories of violence and has, as of late, been able to stave off attacks from jihadist groups like those that have befallen its other neighbors, especially like the hotel attacks in Mali in November 2015; the attacks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in January 2015; and the more recent massacres on the beaches of Grand Bassam in Cote d'Ivoire in March 2016.

Other critiques of the new accord are more wide-ranging. The Senegalese author of the second article expresses a degree of worry about the development, particularly afraid that Senegal has given the US too much latitude and access in allowing it to access its bases and airports. Moreover, his article discusses at some length threats to Senegal's national sovereignty, and therefore image and self-perception, in light of what he views to be an overly-generous pact. The third author assesses the new accord through a geopolitical lens. He suggests that, since Senegal has always fallen into France's sphere of military influence in West Africa, Paris is likely less than excited about the possibility of such profound US cooperation with Senegal.
End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

"The protocol suffers from a lack of protocol, and creates issues surrounding our national dignity and sovereignty, which we simply can't overlook..."

Source: N'gampoula, Nestor. 2016. "Afrique: Lutte contre le terrorisme - Le pays donne son accord pour une présence permanente militaire américaine" [Africa: Fight Against Terrorism: The country gives its permission for a permanent American military presence.] *Les Dépêches de Brazzaville* (Brazzaville, Congo). 3 May. http://adiac-congo.com/content/lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-le-senegal-donne-son-accord-pour-une-presence-permanente

In this accord...the Senegalese government gave the possibility for American forces to access certain zones in Senegal, notably airports, including military ones, in the service of responding to security or health crises.

The representatives of the two countries, who refused to discuss military bases, nevertheless confirmed that the document that they signed does permit "the presence of permanent American military bases in Senegal, in order to respond to the common difficulties of security in the subregion."

Source: 2016. "Sénégal: Signature accord de défense" [Senegal: Signature of Defense Accord]. *Walfadjri* (Dakar, Senegal) 3 May. http://www.walfnet.com/index.php/actualites/dernieres-minutes/3560-signature-accord-de-defense-pour-babacar-justin-ndiaye-un-sous-secretaire-d-etat-americain-devait-au-moins-se-deplacer-a-dakar

The defense accord that Senegal has signed with the United States continues to elicit reactions, like those from Babacar Justin Ndiaye, who finds that the agreement suffers from a lack of protocol, which should put Senegal on guard.

"There is a disequilibrium at various levels...The protocol suffers from a lack of protocol, and creates issues surrounding our national dignity and sovereignty, which we simply can't overlook..."

In multiplying its partnerships [Senegal] risks losing its sovereignty. On 18 April, 2012, after his election, president Macky Sall traveled to Paris to renew Senegal's defense and military cooperation with France, though his predecessor, Abdoulaye Wade, had taken undertaken some revisions to that relations, resulting in changes not quite equal to a rupture. According to him, signing so many cooperative agreements with foreign countries is not negative in an absolute sense, but should be approached cautiously with the goal of safeguarding the sovereignty of the country.

Source: Chriet, Hamid. 2016. "Afrique de l'Ouest: Le nouvel axe Dakar-Washington en Afrique de l'Ouest" [West Africa: The New Dakar-Washington Axis]. *Libération* (Casablanca, Morocco). 16 May. http://www.libe.ma/Le-nouvel-axe-Dakar-Washington-en-Afrique-de-l-Ouest_a74789.html

At the same time that France is suffering from an economic crisis at home, the United States is consolidating its military presence in West Africa, especially in Senegal...with a new accord between Washington and Dakar...

...It seems to me that this new agreement improves the status of American personnel, especially because of the clause that mentioned "the conditions for access and use of the concerned installations, once America soldiers are invited by Senegal." This is also a shift in the relationship between the two counties.

To what degree will American troops have access to the airports and Senegalese military beset? Because we should not forget that Senegal still holds a strategic position for French interests. Paris will likely view these new developments with suspicion.

New Nigerian Insecurity: Nomads v. Farmers

OE Watch Commentary: A new source of insecurity - largely overlooked by all those outside of Nigeria - seems to be coming to a head. Increasingly, ethnic Peul (or Fulani) herders, historically based in the northern part of Nigeria, have been grazing their animals southward on the lands and farms of other, smaller ethnic groups, especially located in the states of Enugu, Anambra, Benue, Ondo, Taraba, and Nassarawa. Clashes have been turning bloody: on 25 April attacking Peul herders killed people in fights over rights to land for grazing.

Several factors have caused the Peul to move southwards, coming to clash with other sedentary farmers. First, the need to move away from the carnage being wrought by Boko Haram, which has killed more than 20,000 in the past 6 year years. Second, climatic change is also pushing these herders southward: as Saharan decertification overtakes previously fertile lands, grazers are moving south. Third, and concurrently, decreasing access to water is also compelling southward moves.

Importantly, the clashes are raising concerns of longer-term violence. As per the first article, some sedentary Igbos see the Buhari government as doing little to protect them in the face of insecurity. Buhari, himself a northern Peul, has been slow to condemn the attacks. Meanwhile, the independence-minded region - which famously fought and lost a devastating war for independence between 1967 and 1970 - has experienced renewed nationalist sentiment in recent years. Such attacks by outsiders stoke these fires for independence. As the second excerpt mentions, locals of the region have begun to question just who precisely these new assailants are. While some believe them to actually be Peul herdsmen, others believe, particularly given their provenance from the north of the country, that they are simply terrorists from Boko Haram or others from outside the county entirely, posing as Fulani herdsmen. Both authors, as well as others, believe that this northern-southern clash over land is likely to emerge as a new fault line for conflict in Nigeria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

Peul herdsmen have increasingly been clashing with sedentary farmers in southeastern Nigeria, potentially signaling a new fault line of conflict in the country.
Source: http://guardian.ng/features/terrorists-in-the-name-of-herdsmen/

"Let's face it, most herdsmen causing trouble in different parts of the country are not Nigerian."

Source: Findlay, Stepahnie. 2016."Nigeria: les violences peules se déplacent dans le sud-est" ("Nigeria: Peul violence comes to the southeast") TV5 (Paris). May 16. http://information.tv5monde.com/en-continu/nigeria-les-violences-peules-se-deplacent-dans-le-sud-est-107802?utm_source

The Peul herdsman launched their attack at daybreak in Nimbo, a peaceful village where farmers grow yams and papaya, not farm from Nsukka…In total, ten people were killed on the attack on the 25th of April. Many others were hurt.

Peul herders have been venturing [from their traditional grounds in the north] into southeastern Nigeria over the past few months. ..

President Muhammadu Buhari, a Peul from the north, was slow in condemning the attacks committed by herdsmen. Finally, in April, he ordered the the police and the army to "take necessary measures to stop the carnage."

Source: Findlay, Stepahnie. 2016."Nigeria: les violences peules se déplacent dans le sud-est" ("Nigeria: Peul violence comes to the southeast") TV5 (Paris). May 16. http://information.tv5monde.com/en-continu/nigeria-les-violences-peules-se-deplacent-dans-le-sud-est-107802?utm_source

In the last few weeks, the spate of attacks by herdsmen against farmers across the country, leading to the death of many and destruction of property has ignited citizens' conversation around the identity of the assailants. Are the aggressors Fulani herdsmen or terrorists masquerading as herdsmen? Or are the herdsmen adopting terrorist method to instill fears in the heart of peasant farmers as a survival strategy?....

According to the media reports, about 100 Fulani cattle herders armed with various weapons attacked [members of Ukpabi Nimbo, an agrarian community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State] and left many villagers dead and some wounded. Ujam wanted the criminals hunted down and punished severely. Most importantly, he wanted the law that would rein in the wandering herdsmen….

"Foreigners have invaded our countries in the guise of Fulani Herdsmen," he said….

"Let's face it, most herdsmen causing trouble in different parts of the country are not Nigerian," said Alhaji Babalola Akinwuje, the Secretary-general of Kara market in Lagos.

As AQIM Attacks Increase, Ghana Prepares for the Worst

OE Watch Commentary: Since November 2015 Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has carried out major attacks on hotels in the Malian, Burkinabe and Ivorian capitals. There appear to be at least three main objectives of AQIM in these attacks. First, by killing foreigners AQIM hopes to hurt the tourism and investment sector of these countries' economies and then recruit from among the unemployed (and incite animosity against the governments for not providing employment). Second, by undermining the economies of these countries AQIM hopes to strike behind-the-scene deals and blackmail governments to pay "protection money" for AQIM to not attack again. Third, by making international headlines with its high-profile attacks AQIM hopes to show prospective recruits that, in the context of Al-Qaeda's rivalry with ISIL, AQIM is strongest in West Africa.

After seeing the attacks in the region, Ghana is now taking action. According to the excerpted article in ***Ghanaweb*** from 19 April, the country has decided to establish a counterterrorism unit. This unit will be tasked with sharing intelligence with neighboring countries in the hope of detecting the next AQIM attack preemptively to avert what would become the first-ever major terrorist attack in Ghana.

Ghana has neither many citizens fighting with AQIM or ISIL, nor a particularly large Muslim population from which ISIL and AQIM can recruit. AQIM's recent activities, however, show that AQIM now specializes in high-profile attacks involving only three to four militants who can blend into the urban environment before their attacks. Thus, Ghana is right to believe that its demographics and relative economic and political stability cannot shield it from attacks. The creation of the counterterrorism unit is a pro-active example of foresight in a region that too often finds itself reacting to attacks post-facto. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

"One of the most important things is intelligence sharing and we are getting a lot of intelligence from our neighbors – Ivory Coast, Guinea and Burkina Faso."

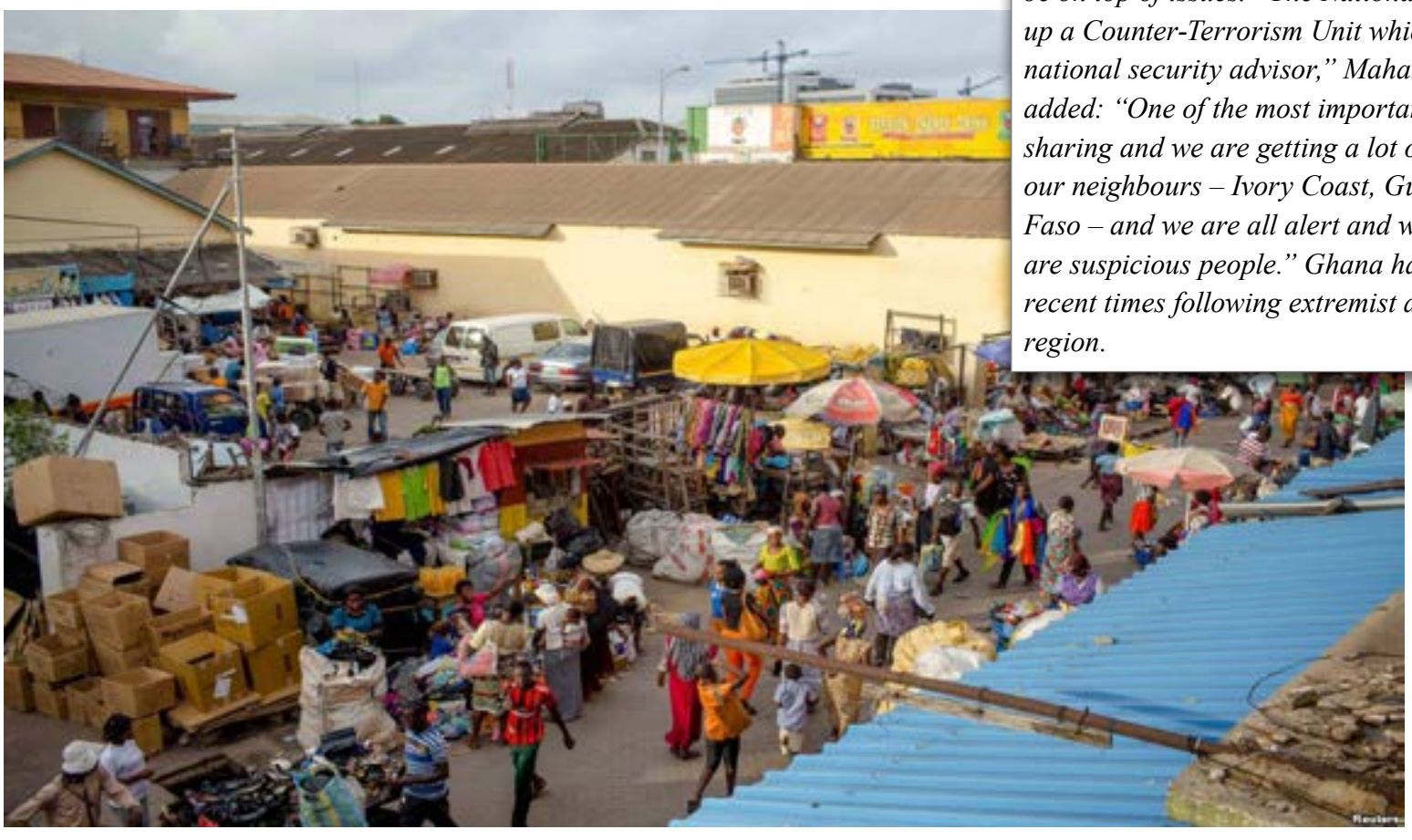
Source: Ghana Creates Counter-Terrorism Unit, *Ghanaweb*, 19 April 2016.

A growing terrorism threat level in Ghana has forced the country to create a counter-terrorism unit to protect against to high-profile attacks, such as hotels, ports or markets, as seen in the adjacent image. Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/ghana-on-high-alert-after-ivory-coast-terror-attack/3241634.html

Ghana Creates Counter-Terrorism Unit

President John Mahama has announced the creation of a Counter-Terrorism Unit to avert any possible external attack on Ghana. Speaking during a quarterly meeting with members of the Council of State in Accra, Mahama said Ghana has been in constant touch with its neighbors in the area of intelligence gathering to be on top of issues. "The National Security has set up a Counter-Terrorism Unit which is chaired by the national security advisor," Mahama told the council. He added: "One of the most important things is intelligence sharing and we are getting a lot of intelligence from our neighbours – Ivory Coast, Guinea and Burkina Faso – and we are all alert and watching to see if there are suspicious people." Ghana has been on red alert in recent times following extremist activities in the sub-region.

A growing terrorism threat level in Ghana has forced the country to create a counter-terrorism unit to protect against to high-profile attacks, such as hotels, ports or markets, as seen in the adjacent image.
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/ghana-on-high-alert-after-ivory-coast-terror-attack/3241634.html



Fulanis Caught Between Militants and the Malian Army

OE Watch Commentary: One of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) latest recruitment targets has been the Fulanis of southern and central Mali. Rather than employing the traditional AQIM narrative of re-conquering Spain in the name of Islam, AQIM has tailored a narrative of victimhood and persecution for the Malian Fulanis. Also, AQIM has used an AQIM "front group" called Ansar Dine (Supporters of Religion), which itself uses a front group called Macina Liberation Front (MLF), to recruit Malian Fulanis (Macina is the name of a historic Fulani emirate in Mali).

As the excerpted French-language article in ***Jeune Afrique*** from 24 April shows, Fulanis are increasingly caught between militant groups like the MLF on one side and the Malian security forces on the other side. The security forces have become increasingly suspicious of Fulanis, while the MLF targets the Fulanis for recruitment and relies on Fulanis to carry out attacks, thus creating a cycle of suspicion. According to the article, Fulani associations claim the country's Fulanis have been victims of abuses at the hands of the military even while they insist they view their identity as Malians first, before Fulanis.

Mali's ability to maintain support from its Fulani population is crucial. AQIM targets the Fulanis not only to destabilize Mali and expand its area of operations, but also because, as West Africa's most transnational ethnic group, the radicalization of Fulanis in Mali could have an impact elsewhere in the region. In recent months, for example, Nigeria has reported an increase in attacks by Fulani herdsmen on settled and predominantly Christian populations. If AQIM's Fulanis in Mali connect with Fulanis in Nigeria, AQIM could extend its influence throughout the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

As West Africa's most transnational and nomadic ethnic group, Fulanis, such as this group in Nigeria in the adjacent image, have become a target for AQIM recruitment. Source: http://www.voahausa.com/content/an-kama-wasu-a-adamawa-da-ake-zarginsu-da-kashe-fulani/2562219.html

"People sometimes consider all Fulani to be jihadists, but that is not true. We should avoid any confusion. We are proud to be Malian, and also proud to be Fulani."

Source: "Des Peuls Dénoncent des Exactions Contre Leur Communauté [Fulanis Denounce Abuses Against Their Community]," *Jeune Afrique*, 24 April 2016.

As West Africa's most transnational and nomadic ethnic group, Fulanis, such as this group in Nigeria in the adjacent image, have become a target for AQIM recruitment. Source: http://www.voahausa.com/content/an-kama-wasu-a-adamawa-da-ake-zarginsu-da-kashe-fulani/2562219.html

Fulanis Denounce Abuses Against Their Community

Does the Malian Army and militia groups kill unfairly and arrest Fulani civilians seen as Jihadists? This is what a Malian members of this community have denounced. "In recent weeks, more than 15 Fulani civilians have been killed for no reason," Oumar Aldjana, chairman of the Union of Pulaar-Speaking Fulanis.

The Malian Army contests the charges. "In regard to the killing of Fulani civilians, I have no evidence to give, and I do not have any answer, but I insist that our army respects human rights, therefore, I cannot confirm these killings," said a source on condition of anonymity.

The Union of Pulaar-Speaking Fulanis pledged to strive for the return into the Republic of Mali of some young Fulani who joined the Islamic group, the Macina Liberation Front [FLM]. The FLM is based in central Mali, and led by Amadou Koufa, a Malian radical preacher, who is also a Fulani, and an ally of Iyad Ag Ghali, who is the leader of Ansar Dine, the terrorist group that is active in the north. These two groups regularly claim attacks in northern and central Mali

La Linea Cartel in Possession of a Guided Missile Launcher [Redeye MANPADS]

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-April Mexican authorities seized weapons, drugs, and exotic animals in possession of La Linea cartel in Nuevos Casas Grandes, Chihuahua. Among the weapons was a guided missile launcher recovered from a stolen vehicle located outside an apartment complex. The accompanying photo shows a La Linea cartel member holding that weapon.

This seizure was a part of a larger operation called "Casas Grandes Seguro" (Casas Grandes Security), conducted by militarized police belonging to the State Attorney General's office. According to an article in ***La Opción de Chihuahua***, the purpose of the operation is to provide security for the people living in the areas of Casas Grandes, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Ascensión, Ignacio Zaragoza, Buenaventura, and Janos.

A sample of the inventory seized by authorities include a beige .50 caliber Barret rifle (M107A1), a black 30mm caliber automatic weapon; assault rifles (Romanian 7.62x39), and five handguns. Authorities also discovered nearly a dozen tactical vests, helmets, and military style uniforms, plus 25 wrappers each of cocaine and marijuana.

These operations are actively conducted throughout Mexico's provinces where there is an organized crime presence and this is the latest example of a successful seizure. However, not all operations are as effective in recovering powerful weaponry such as a guided missile launcher.

Authorities also made several arrests linked to La Linea cartel. ***La Opción*** detailed the arrests of three suspected gang members, who were carrying assault rifles, handguns, and 715 rounds of ammunition of different calibers, among other items. Patrolling officers were later guided by a fleeing suspect to an abandoned house, where they found tigers and a lion.

This operation also led authorities to luxury and sports cars that were reported as stolen in the U.S. These vehicles had been abandoned in pockets of Casas Grandes on different streets in the town of Ascensión.

With significant arrests and apprehension of a sizeable supply of weapons, drugs, and stolen vehicles, operation "Casas Grandes Seguro" managed to dismantle a smaller cell of La Linea operating in Nuevo Casas Grandes. This is indicative not only of Mexico's ongoing struggles with organized crime, but also the extent to which cartels are equipped with advanced weaponry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bunker and Keshavarz)**

Source: "Desmantelan cártel en NCG: incautan 19 vehículos de lujo, un lanzamisiles y 5 tigres" ("NCG cartel dismantled: seized 19 luxury vehicles, a missile launcher and five tigers"). *La Opción de Chihuahua*, 20 April 2016. http://laopcion.com.mx/noticia/133113#!/close

Under the operation "Casas Grandes Insurance" agents of the Attorney General assured powerful weapons such as rocket launchers and Barret, over a thousand 300 cartridges, lots of tactical equipment, vehicles reported as stolen including modern sports cars rifle, drugs and exotic animals, in addition to arresting six subjects, cells belonging to organized crime….

...The total underwritten in these operating was:

...1 50-caliber Barret rifle, beige color, model M107A1, with serial number AE000334…; 1 guided missile launchers, green…; 30 mm caliber automatic gun black color...; 25 clear plastic wrappers of cocaine…; 25 bundles of marijuana…; $ 475 Million….

[Authors' Note: The guided missile launcher has been identified as a Redeye MANPADS (Man Portable Air Defense System). The launcher is held backwards by the La Linea member in the accompanying photo.]

Lawfare Reaching Colombian Altitudes

OE Watch Commentary: The active involvement of lawyers and lawyering in Colombia has gone well beyond the cynical accusation of human rights violations, although that has certainly been a feature of FARC lawfare. The FARC has made the legalistic argument that the agreements it has been pushing hold special status under international humanitarian law, which elevates them to an equal, if not superior status as that of the Colombian constitution. Acceptance of that legal argument would mean, among other things, that no public ratification process of the agreements is necessary.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos agrees, seeing the clever legal stroke as a way to avoid what is increasingly obvious -- that the Colombian public would roundly reject the accords and, with them, Santos. Opposition to the accords is causing Santos to fare worse in opinion polling than Maduro fares in distraught neighbor Venezuela. The Colombian Constitution is beginning to look as though it is all but meaningless.

More than just putting a huge question mark next to the rule of law, Colombian opinion has been led to doubt not just the long-term sustainability of the agreements, but their short-term sustainability as well. Opposition opinion-makers are now successfully labeling Santos as either a dupe or a Trojan Horse activist of the Bolivarian movement, in other words, that President Santos is of a piece with the Cuban and Venezuelan regimes, as well as the FARC. A definite shift appears to have occurred among Colombian politicians, many more now sensing that being identified with Santos is poisonous to their chances in the next elections. In fact, Santos might not even survive as president until the next scheduled elections. (A first step in a presidential removal process in Venezuela was able to secure more than a million signatures almost overnight.) Ex-President Álvaro Uribe, from a height of far greater popularity than President Santos, is calling for civil resistance. What that means exactly is unclear, but given the region's experience with mass demonstrations and movements, we cannot overlook it as an empty threat.

The world recognizes (finally) that the Bolivarian leaders of Venezuela drove that place to failure. Next door in Colombia, meanwhile, what many in the world have wanted to see as a peace process may be about to tear the social order to pieces. The lesson to be feared is that a headlong capitulation in the name of peace might receive its bitter comeuppance early. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...in spite of the massive rejection... the Juan Manuel Santos administration has already initiated the lifting of the agreement with the FARC to constitutional status.

He [Ex-President Álvaro Uribe] insisted that in the face of this coup d'état ...we are left with no other route than ...civil resistance."

Source: Editors, Alberto D. Prieto, "Sin un plebiscito, Santos inicia trámites para dar rango constitucional al acuerdo con las FARC" (Without a plebicite, Santos begins bureaucratic steps to give constitutional rank to the agreement with the FARC), *OK Diario*, Madrid, 17 May 2016, http://okdiario.com/internacional/america-latina/sin-referendum-colombia-inicia-tramites-dar-rango-constitucional-acuerdo-farc-139622

"...in spite of the massive rejection in the streets and in the polls, extremely harsh criticism from the [independent] Colombian Attorney General and from political parties that until now were in favor of the process with the FARC, the Juan Manuel Santos administration has already initiated the lifting of the agreement with the FARC to constitutional status."

Source: Jesús Vallejo Mejía, "¡Oh confusión! ¡Oh caos!" (Oh confusión! Oh Chaos!), *Periodico Debate*, 17 May 2016, http://www.periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/11675-oh-confusion-oh-caos

"...this procedure supposes that the FARC are recognized as belligerents, which implies that they are obliged to accept and fulfill International Humanitarian Law, which they have always refused to recognize. In fact, they have violated it a thousand times."

Source: Editors, "Las Farc tienen su Constitución" (The FARC has their [your] Constitution), *El Colombiano*, 15 May 2016, http://www.elcolombiano.com/opinion/editoriales/las-farc-tienen-su-constitucion-CY4144985

"Two weeks ago the interpretation was, after hearing him on a radio interview, that President Juan Manuel Santos did not share and characterized as an 'audacious proposition' the ex-prosecutor-general Eduardo Montealegre's elevation of the agreements with the FARC as having the status of a 'special agreement' derivative of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). That interpretation turns out to have been mistaken: the President not only shares the fundamentals of the matter, he accepted - or ordered - that his delegates in Havana adopt the FARC theses.

Source: Editors, "Gobierno entrega Constitución a Farc: Uribe" *Periodico Debate,* 15 May 2016, http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/nacion/politica/item/11653-cd-431

"Ex-President Álvaro Uribe Vélez claimed to Noticias RCN that the Administration of Juan Manuel Santos had given the FARC everything, which in the last few years has passed from 6,00 members to 17,000, which has helped criminal bands multiply by 5, grow narco-trafficking from 43 thousand hectares to 159 thousand hectares once again, and to resuscitate the criminal capacity of the ELN. He insisted that in the face of this coup d'état for those of us thinking of the future of the country, in a stable peace, we are left with no other route than peaceful, public, argued and persistent civil resistance.

(Appreciation to Dr. Eduardo Mackenzie's Colombian News for source guidance)

Spanish Elections and Venezuelan Failure

OE Watch Commentary: Spain's 2015 general elections failed to produce a government, as no party secured an absolute majority or was able to form a governing coalition. That rare failure compelled new elections to be held this coming June 26.

The Partido Popular (PP) won the greatest number of seats in 2015, but in one of its worst showings historically. The traditional leftist party, the PSOE, also lost seats, however. Two newer parties, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*, gained enough political space that Spain appears to have experienced a shift from what was more-or-less a two-party electoral universe to a more clearly multiparty universe.

The rise and potential influence of *Podemos* (a hard-left progressive party led by Pablo Iglesias) provides a central electoral drama of interest. The party's birthright is linked to Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and is decidedly Bolivarian ideologically. If *Podemos* could ally with PSOE or at least with a variety of minor leftist parties (varying membership in *Izquierda Unida*, IU), it might, if not form a progressivist government, at least block the PP from forming a government. *Podemos*' electoral ascendance is in any case propitious for the Bolivarian enterprise in northern South America, especially in Venezuela. This is true whether Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro remains in power or some follow-on (but still Bolivarian) leadership displaces him. In either case, a Spanish government led by the PP would be detrimental to a Bolivarian regime, while a more *Podemos*-influenced Spanish government would benefit the Bolivarians, including militarily. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...Podemos would be noticeably set back in case it has to take part in the elections of 26 June alone."

Source: Editors, "Una coalición Podemos-IU dificultaría la formación de un Gobierno estable" *ABC España*, 30 April 2016, http://www.abc.es/espana/abci-elecciones-2016-coalicion-podemos-iu-dificultaria-formacion-gobierno-estable-201604302115_noticia.html

The eventual union between Podemos and Izquierda Unida would stop the erosion of Pablo Iglesias' growth [as a political figure], although it would not substantially change the outlook for the formation of an Administration. On the other hand, Podemos would be noticeably set back in case it has to take part in the elections of 26 June alone."

Source: Víctor Ruiz de Almirón López, "Sánchez dice «no, gracias» a la oferta de Podemos de presentar listas conjuntas en el Senado" *ABC España,* 10 May 2016, http://www.abc.es/espana/abci-podemos-ofrece-psoe-presentar-listas-conjuntas-senado-para-superar-pp-201605101253_noticia.html

"Podemos has delivered a letter to the PSOE in which it proposes to Pedro Sánchez [PSOE leader] the presentation of joint list of candidates for the Senate 'which would make the objective of undoing PP's veto power possible'. This alliance, according to what the party of Pablo Iglesias asserts in a press release, would have as its objective 'to be a progressivist majority in the Senate' and a hopeful element and a touchstone for the formation of a progressivist change government'."

Venezuela Now Upheaving

OE Watch Commentary: As of the time of this writing on 20 May it is no longer reasonable to warn of impending chaos in Venezuela. Venezuela's implosion is now the central political concern on the continent. Media from across the region are headlining an urgency perceived by regional governments and international organizations. Many who identify ideologically with, and even who are directly linked to the Bolivarian movement are straining to find ways to influence events in Venezuela. Many of these appear to want a way to dump Venezuelan President Maduro without Venezuela's changing its political institutional alliances.

Many of the prominent opinions, such as the example in the first excerpt here, advocate dialog and tolerance -- finding a way for the parties inside Venezuela to discuss a peaceful resolution of their differences in order to calm tensions. Many other voices are saying that these wisdom-intoned expressions are too late, and that the well-recognized root cause of Venezuela's disaster is radically authoritarian intransigence on the part of the Venezuela's socialist regime.

It appears that the Rubicon has been crossed. Moreover, many regional analysts note that Venezuela's implosion is but one expression of, if not an accelerant to a broader irregular war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Luis F. Jiménez, "Cómo Librarse de Maduro" (How to Free Ourselves [themselves or one's self] of Maduro) *Caretas, Lima*, 20 May, 2016, http://caretas.pe/

"The general situation in Venezuela takes on more alarming aspects with every passing day. It is necessary to adopt, urgently, means that will permit the Venezuelans to initiate a fruitful dialog in order to overcome the pressing problems that afflict the society."

Source: Editors, "¡Maduro Miserable! Encapuchados del Sebin secuestraron a jefe de seguridad de Ramos Allup" (Miserable Maduro! Hooded agents of Sebin [Bolivarian inteligence service] arrest the chief of security of Ramos Allup [opposition leader]), *DólarToday* and *El Nacional*, 19 May 2016, https://dolartoday.com/

"In the style of the worst dictators that the Continent has, by orders of Nicolás Maduro, a task unit of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) arrested Inspector Coromoto Rodríguez, chief of security for the president of the National Assembly, Henry Ramos Allup."

Number of Children Trying to Migrate to US Could Become Lasting Phenomenon

OE Watch Commentary: Illegal immigration along the US/Mexican border is nothing new, but since 2014 sharp migratory increases of unaccompanied children and families from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have raised concerns regarding a possible lasting phenomenon. Recent migratory patterns support concerns as the US Customs and Border Patrol has already apprehended 20,455 unaccompanied children and 24,616 families since the start of fiscal year (FY) 2016, per information pulled from the first ***Prensa Grafica*** excerpt below. This same source also highlights the fact that this quarterly total is alarming because it accounts for half of all unaccompanied children (39,970) and families (39,838) apprehended during FY 2015. The fear is that, if this trend continues, 2016 figures will be significantly higher than in FY 2014, when apprehensions of unaccompanied children (69,000) and families (68,000) along the US/Mexican border reached record highs.

Traditionally, male immigration along the southwest border has been more prominent than that of unaccompanied children and families. However, traditional factors such as violence and poverty, coupled with new factors that include widespread drought, are thought to be driving new migratory patterns in the Northern Triangle region, as discussed in excerpt 2. El Salvador news source ***Prensa Grafica***, citing the Migration Policy Institute in excerpt 3, also pointed out that unaccompanied child migration may be related to the fact that once apprehended in the US, children are allowed to stay with their families until an immigration hearing date is set, which in some cases takes more than four years.

Despite recent migratory increases, there is hope that the newly launched Alliance for Prosperity (discussed in excerpt 4) in the Northern Triangle will help to curb the flow of unaccompanied children and families by targeting poverty and gang violence at its source. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Cifra de niños migrantes a EUA podría crecer en 2016" (El Salvador: Number of Children Trying to Migrate to US Could Become Lasting Phenomenon). *La Prensa Grafica.* Accessed from http://www.laprensagrafica.com/2016/02/22/cifra-de-nios-migrantes-a-eua-podria-crecer-en-2016

"If the current rate of arrests continues and it behaves in patterns similar to those in recent years, the projected total for this year (2016) could be significantly higher than the record of 69,000 children and 68,000 families who arrived at the border in fiscal year 2014 (which) caused a crisis for the Obama administration because of the challenges (that entails) processing and giving shelter to newcomers."

"The complex factors causing migration from Central America have changed little since 2014. The violence perpetrated by gangs continues to devastate the Northern Triangle, which includes three of the five countries with the highest rates of homicide in the world. Poverty and lack of economic opportunities have been for long the key for migration to persist."

"The laws and policies of the United States provide a single treatment to undocumented children and their families... allowing many to be returned to their families and to stay in the country for long periods."

Source: "Alianza por la prosperidad" (Alliance for Prosperity). *El Heraldo*. Accessed from Accessed from http://www.elheraldo.hn/opinion/766841-368/alianza-para-la-prosperidad

"The Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle plan was jointly developed by the governments of the United States, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. It aims to prevent rising migration by attacking the root causes, such as poverty and gang violence. Furthermore, Northern Triangle countries are being asked to take steps to inform their citizens about the dangers of the journey to the U.S. border, combat human smuggling, improve border security, and facilitate the safe return and reintegration of deportees. Reintegration measures will include offering opportunities such as access to jobs and education or training. While implementation is just beginning, the plan signals a more systemic approach to addressing the underlying drivers of Central American migration flows."

MS-13 in Honduras Matures as it Seeks International Status

OE Watch Commentary: The phrase "we don't do the small stuff anymore" may sum up the overall mentality of the MS-13 in Honduras, despite the fact it was just a comment made between two leaders of the group during a tapped phone conversation. This is because police believe a definitive transition has occurred within the MS-13, as its leaders are no longer interested in dedicating themselves to extortion, kidnapping, and small-time drug dealing as their primary means of survival. Instead, as the ***El Tiempo*** excerpt indicates, the group is looking to diversify as it undergoes internal transitions aimed at converting the MS-13 into a wholesale drug organization capable of competing with transnational cartels operating in the region.

As part of this transition, the MS-13 is seeking ownership of the same transport and taxi companies they once used as their principal extortion victims. In fact, the MS-13 is said to own large fleets of taxis and multiple public transport busses, and it continues to look for expansion opportunities. The MS-13 in Honduras has also used past profits to purchase real estate and businesses in areas throughout the country, which are used in conjunction with transportation assets to run a profitable drug-distribution ring, as discussed in the ***La Prensa Libre*** excerpt.

The take-away point from the MS-13 transition is that it is still occurring and may take a decade or more to materialize. In the meantime, Central American authorities can expect for the group to continue its expansion efforts as it aims to gain international status as wholesale drug distributors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "MS 13 de Honduras Madura y busca negocios internacionales" (MS-13 in Honduras Matures as it Seeks International Business Opportunities). *Tiempo*. Accessed from http://www.tiempo.hn/ms13-de-honduras-madura-y-busca-negocios-internacionales/

"The MS13 has long focused on local drug peddling, which has distinguished it from its rivals for several years now. During that time period, the MS13 has created an efficient means of dispensing drugs in the communities where it operates. This involves establishing discreet meeting points, running security rings, and maintaining limited exposure should they be robbed or assaulted by a rival, or ambushed by the security forces. It is impossible to calculate how much revenue this activity brings in for the MS13, but it is significant. Lately, the gang has also become wholesale distributors in some parts of the country. In at least two places, the gang has taken more control of the wholesale drug market, authorities said. In Tela, for example, the gang has a monopoly on drug sales. This could entail significant revenues for the MS13, given the amount of tourism in Tela."

Source: "La MS: ¿De pequeños extorsionadores a narcotraficantes internacionales?" *Prensa Libre*. Accessed from http://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/justicia/la-maduracion-de-la-mara-salvatrucha-de-pequeos-extorsionadores-a-narcotraficantes-internacionales

"With money earned from past illicit activity, the MS-13 has purchased real estate, business chains, a water purification business, and transport companies. The transport companies are particularly valuable as they are not simply a means of public transportation. Instead, they are used by the group to transport drugs which are sold locally. They are also used to transport weapons and hitmen from point A to point B."

Nicaraguan Purchase of Military Equipment Raises Concerns about Regional Arms Race

OE Watch Commentary: Nicaragua recently closed deals with Russia that entail the purchase of 50 T-72B1 war tanks, 12 anti-air defense systems, a consignment of armored vehicles, 2 combat helicopters, 4 artillery patrol boats, 2 more boats equipped with rockets, and training planes. There is also talk regarding the potential purchase of MiG-29 fighter jets, although plans have not yet been finalized. These purchases by a developed country with a robust military budget might not even receive a second thought, but they are certainly putting neighboring countries such as Costa Rica and Honduras on high alert, as some officials feel that it may fuel an arms race in the region, as cited by ***La Prensa*** in excerpt 1.

Costa Rica, in particular, is on edge about the purchase, as the country does not have a military force and has had several border disputes with Nicaragua in recent years. As for Honduras, the country has a military force, but it is considerably inferior to Nicaragua's in terms of equipment, as reported by ***La Tribuna*** in excerpt 2. And just as Costa Rica, Honduras has had past border disputes with Nicaragua and fears that the latter's acquisition of military equipment could offset the balance of power. In response to these concerns, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua has cited that the new equipment will be used to fight against drug trafficking in the country. However, regional leaders are not convinced, as the new arsenal far exceeds what is needed to patrol the coast and to engage in interdiction tasks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Costa Rica preocupado por compra de armamento ruso en Nicaragua" (Costa Rica Expresses Concern Regarding Nicaragua's Purchase of Russian Military Equipment). *La Prensa*. Accessed from http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/04/27/nacionales/2025780-costa-rica-preocupado-por-compra-de-tanques-rusos-en-nicaragua

"Nicaragua's military purchases are concerning for the entire region, as they could provoke an arms race. As for Costa Rica, we have been warning about this type of activity since 2012."

Source: "Aviones y tanques rusos de Nicaragua rompen el balance militar en Centroamérica" (Aircraft and Russian Tank Purchases Break Military Balance of Power in Central America). *La Tribuna*. Accessed from http://www.latribuna.hn/2016/04/29/aviones-tanques-rusos-nicaragua-rompen-balance-militar-centroamerica/

"Nicaragua's new weapon systems are a threat to us because they are acquiring weapons of war that are effectively breaking the balance of military power in the region. For example, the Honduran Air Force and Army have combat equipment that hasn't been replaced since the 80s. Something should be done because Honduras still has border issues with Nicaragua in the Gulf of Fonseca and they (Nicaragua) could catch us with our pants down which is exactly what happened in 1969 with El Salvador. The only difference from then until now is that Nicaragua is better prepared" according to retired Honduran military commander Romeo Vásquez Velásquez.

Mexico to Participate in Peacekeeping in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: Mexico has been divesting itself from a legacy of isolationist military policy by embracing a role in U.N. peacekeeping operations. As reported in ***OE Watch*** for January 2016, Mexico deployed 12 staff personnel to U.N. operations in Haiti, Western Sahara, and Lebanon in 2015. These deployments included personnel from the Defense Department (SEDENA, which includes Mexico's Army and Air Force), and the Navy Department (SEMAR, which includes Mexico's Navy and its Marine Ground Forces). Although a small contribution in terms of manpower, the deployments were a big step for the Mexican military.

Now, Mexico is furthering its commitment by offering personnel to support anticipated U.N. peacekeeping operations in Colombia (first excerpted article). Press coverage has not provided specifics about how significant the Mexican role on the ground will be, especially because the mission will be unarmed, with a solely observational role (second excerpted article).

In many ways it does not matter. Because of legacy institutional restrictions on deploying military personnel abroad, Mexico is still new to the peacekeeping game, having only adopted the role in 2014 (third excerpted article). Mexico will demonstrate continued resolve to become a global security partner just by showing up. Deploying to Colombia will also be important for Mexico's regional status, because an increased security footprint in the Western Hemisphere will augment Mexican political, cultural, and economic influence in Latin America. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgents
Source: Unattributed author(s), "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgents," Institute for National Strategic Studies Strategic Assessment 1998: Engaging Power for Peace, 1998, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/sa98/sa98ch7.htm; via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Revolutionary_Armed_Forces_of_Colombia_(FARC)_insurgents.GIF. Photo in public domain.

Source: Silvia Garduño, "Irá México a misión de paz en Colombia" [Mexico Will Go on Peace Mission in Colombia], *Reforma*, 10 May 2016, http://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?Id=840276&Fuente=MD.

Mexico will send military observers to Colombia as part of the United Nations peace mission in this South American country … The parties are the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) … The treaty was expected to be signed by both partners on 23 March, but this did not happen … The U.N. peace missions have the objective of creating the conditions for a lasting peace in a country torn by conflict, involving military, police, and civilian personnel from diverse countries. …

Source: Unattributed author(s), "New Mission in Colombia 'Unprecedented' in History of UN Ceasefire Observation – Ban," *UN News Centre*, 13 March 2016, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53479#.Vz33Rj9f1Vk.

The United Nations political mission that is being deployed in Colombia will be an "unprecedented experience" in the country, as well as in the history of UN ceasefire observations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said … He stressed that the international observers working under the UN flag would not carry weapons or engage in armed action of any kind, nor would their role be to carry out cooperation projects, as is the case with UN agencies, funds and programmes in the country … Mr. Ban extended the support of the Organization, along with the Member States, particularly those in South America, to ensure the success of the peace process.

Source: Unattributed author(s), "México enviará observadores a la misión de la ONU que se creará en Colombia" [Mexico Will Send Observers to U.N. Mission Created in Colombia], *El Spectador*, 10 May 2016, http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/mexico-enviara-observadores-mision-de-onu-se-creara-col-articulo-631503.

Mexico announced that it will send military observers to the U.N. mission that will help monitor the ceasefire in Colombia once the peace accord between the government and the FARC has been signed … The U.N. has promised to form a political mission that will assist the [Colombian government] and FARC representatives once both parties have signed the peace accord … in 2014 Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto decided to resume his country's participation in peacekeeping operations worldwide.

FARC guerrillas marching during the Caguan peace process
Source: DEA Public Affairs Office, "FARC guerrillas marching during the Caguan peace process," Wikimedia Commons, 22 March 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FARC_guerrillas_marching_during_the_Caguan_peace_talks_(1998-2002).jpg. Image in public domain.

Indian Military Reviewing First Space Law

OE Watch Commentary: India successfully launched the seventh and final satellite of its regional navigational system (IRNSS) on 28 April 2016. India is also now branding the IRNSS as NAVIC, which stands for "NAVigation with Indian Constellation" and forms an acronym with the Hindi word "sailor" or "mariner". For India, the achievement is not just having a navigation satellite system, but having one with a unique satellite constellation (i.e., seven satellites in geostationary and geosynchronous orbits) and one that is managed by a civilian agency – the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) – rather than the military (first excerpted article).

Indians view domestic production of the system with national pride, but consider its importance more than symbolic or affective. India has prioritized independence from foreign production, particularly in military matters, as a strategic necessity and a lesson learned from military failures (second excerpted article). There is still work to be done: India must still make some hardware available (third excerpted article), as well as build and ready two backup satellites (fourth excerpted article), but there are now enough satellites on station to provide service.

There is one noteworthy shift in coverage of IRNSS/NAVIC: as the system has deployed over the past few years, official press releases and Indian hard news articles have emphasized the potential civilian applications of the system. Now that the system is all-but-operational, Indian writers are being straightforward about the military being the primary customer of IRNSS/NAVIC, at least in editorials (fifth excerpted article). **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Source: Vivek Pandit, "Make in India vs Made in India," *The Economic Times*, 28 March 2016, www.pressreader.com/india/economic-times/20160328/282097750837236.

... The current discourse is centering on pushing indigenisation efforts through an enabling policy framework facilitating ease of doing business under the "Make in India" campaign. This need for self-reliance is much required given our geopolitical realities on north-west, north and north eastern frontiers along with new challenges of securing our economic and strategic interests in the international waters of western Pacific Ocean ... The over-dependence on foreign technology and equipment is unviable both strategically and financially, as was experienced during post Pokhran Nuclear Test and the Kargil conflict where we were denied critical spares and maintenance support to counter the enemy with the existing arsenal. This experience was the tipping point for reform of our defence policy ...

"Though the full system comprises nine satellites — seven in orbit and two on the ground as stand-by, the navigation services could be made operational with four satellites ...

Once the regional navigation system is in place, India needs not depend upon other platforms.

... the implications of signal failure, whether deliberate or accidental, will be enormous."

Source: Unattributed author(s), "India's Very Own GPS Is Ready with Seventh Navigation Satellite Launch," *The Hindu*, 28 April 2016, http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/irnss-launch-indias-own-regional-navigation-satellite-system-takes-shape/article8531388.ece.

ISRO's PSLV-C33, carrying India's seventh navigation satellite IRNSS-1G, blasted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre ... The satellite was successfully placed in sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit ... A regional navigation satellite system with just seven spacecraft and in civil domain is unique to India. The three global versions of other countries offer worldwide commercial coverage and are operated by their militaries.

IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System) will be to the subcontinent what the GPS is to its users worldwide, but with far greater precision and in Indian control ... Two spare satellites are kept ready to be flown in an emergency. A full-fledged ground control centre in Bengaluru and tracking stations across the country have been put in place ...

Source: Unattributed author(s), "ISRO: 51.30 Hour PSLV-XL Countdown Starts for Launch of India's IRNSS-1G Navigation Satellite," *The Financial Express*, redacted from the Indo-Asian News Service, 26 April 2016, http://www.financialexpress.com/article/lifestyle/science/isro-51-30-hour-pslv-xl-countdown-starts-for-launch-of-indias-irnss-1g-navigation-satellite/242995/.

... The satellite IRNSS-1G (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System-1G) is part of a constellation of seven satellites to provide accurate position information service to users across the country and the region, extending up to an area of 1,500 km ... Though the full system comprises nine satellites — seven in orbit and two on the ground as stand-by, the navigation services could be made operational with four satellites ... Once the regional navigation system is in place, India needs not depend upon other platforms... The IRNSS will provide two types of services — standard positioning service and restricted service. The former is provided to all users and the latter is an encrypted service for authorised users. Meanwhile ISRO is in the process of developing the front-end radio frequency chips for the satellite navigation system ...

(continued)

Continued: Indian Military Reviewing First Space Law

IRNSS approximate coverage.
Source: Wikimedia Commons contributor Brilliantwiki2, "The approximate extended service coverage of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System," Wikimedia Commons, 02 August 2015, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IRNSS_Coverage_Polygon.png.

Source: Unattributed author(s), "Self-Reliance Is the Key,: *The Hindu*, 02 May 2016, http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/selfreliance-is-the-key/article8545136.ece.

... The system will be operational in three to six months, once the satellites are stabilised as a constellation and initial tests are completed. Currently, the IRNSS does not have backup satellites in orbit that can be put to use in case of a glitch in any of the satellites. Two spare satellites are available for launch in case of an emergency ... ISRO opted for seven satellites — three in geostationary and four (as two pairs) in geosynchronous orbits — to provide the best navigation services. ... With satellite positioning becoming the standard way of navigating and many civilian utilities reliant on it, the implications of signal failure, whether deliberate or accidental, will be enormous. More importantly, the availability of reliable, encrypted, accurate positioning and navigation information from IRNSS will mean that Indian military operations will not have to rely on GPS data. ...

Source: Unattributed author(s), "Latest Position," *The Indian Express*, 02 May 2016, http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/irnss-1-g-satellite-latest-position-2779692/.

...For the moment, the chief beneficiary of Navic is the military, which now has access to an encrypted and completely secure service. The forces will no longer have to depend on the US service, a weakness that was exposed during the Kargil conflict of 1999, when accurate GPS data on the region was not forthcoming in real time. The geopolitical imperative to develop an indigenous system was immediately obvious and today, it is almost ready to roll. The forces use GPS for the guidance of smart artillery shells and bombs, besides ballistic and cruise missiles...Apart from an encrypted service for the military, Navic will offer public access to an unsecured service for civilian ... This could trigger a boom in GPS applications tuned to Navic. Manufacturing capacity would be a decisive factor, since a critical mass of GPS receivers would be required. In turn, this could provide an occasion for hardware manufacturers to turn protectionist and urge government to force manufacturers of GPS products to patronise the Indian service ...

Space Age Clothing for Indian Soldiers at High Altitudes

OE Watch Commentary: The Indian Army regularly operates in some of the most extreme terrain on Earth. One of these areas is Siachen, situated near the borders of Pakistan and China in contested Kashmir. Siachen ranges from 12,000 to nearly 19,000 feet ASL and is the location of the world's second largest non-polar glacier.

The ongoing dispute over Kashmir's status requires a permanent military presence, but the operational environment has proved to be more deadly than the enemy. To confront this challenge, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is designing clothing by using its own formula of aerogel, originally developed to provide insulation for spacecraft. It is not just a matter of warmth: the advantage of aerogel is not just insulation but weight (first and second excerpted articles). The Indian government is not alone – commercial companies are also researching application of aerogel or insulated clothing, specifically targeting hikers in extreme environments. If India is able to field aerogel clothing, the power balance in Kashmir could be shifted, since improving the range and speed of mountain troops would provide relative advantage over India's rivals. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

A flower is on a piece of aerogel which is suspended over a Bunsen burner. Aerogel has excellent insulating properties, and the flower is protected from the flame.
Source: NASA JPL, "Aerogel flower," Wikimedia Commons, retouched by Wikimedia Commons user JovanCormac, 23 October 2007, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aerogelflower.jpg. Image is in public domain.

Source: Ateeq Shaikh, "ISRO's Path-Breaking Gel To Be Used on Earth Now," *DNA*, 22 April 2016, http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-isro-s-path-breaking-gel-to-be-used-on-earth-now-2204847.

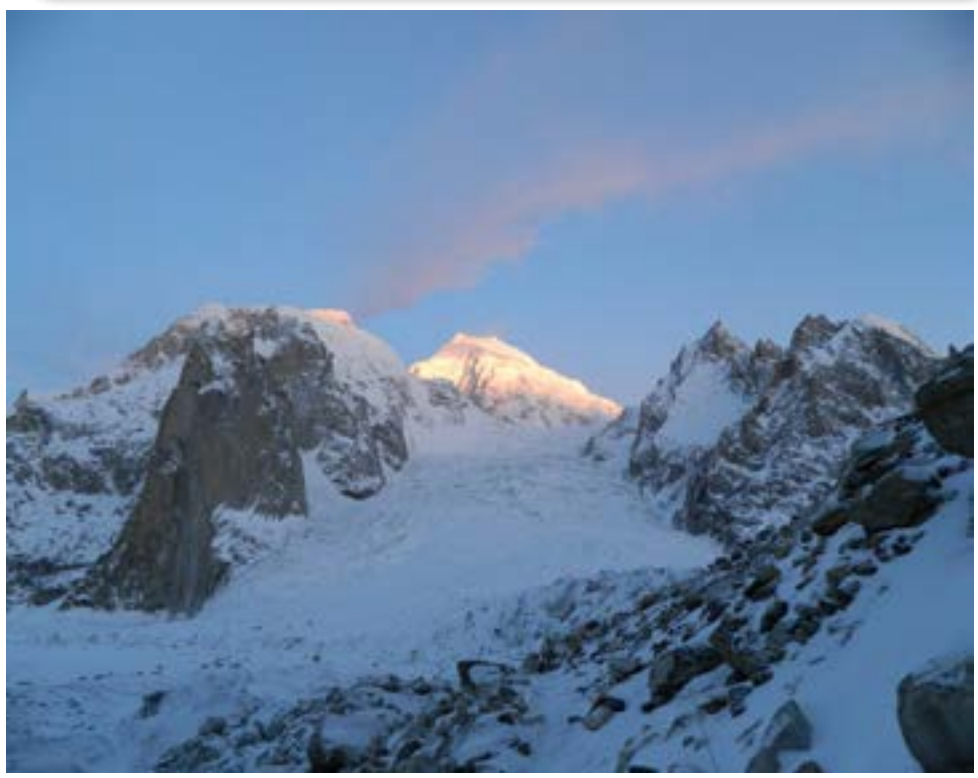
Scientists at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) have developed a specialised blue gel that primarily helps in insulation and heat exchange from outside extreme temperature … "We needed a material to insulate our primary-stage rocket engines … We intend to create a jacket using this gel," [the director of VSSC] said. The invention could be path breaking for soldiers serving at high altitudes in Siachen. "Using this material, the jackets' weight can be brought down to around 200 to 300 grams and shoes to around 800 grams," … Since 1984 till November last year, a total of 869 Indian soldiers … have died in Siachen due to climatic conditions. At the moment, the formula is classified and highly guarded …

Source: Pallava Bagla, "ISRO Gel Can Save Soldiers in Siachen," *The Tribune*, 03 April 2016, http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/isro-gel-can-save-soldiers-in-siachen/217457.html.

The bigger killer on the heights of Siachen Glacier is not enemy bullets from the Pakistan Army, but the extreme weather … Recently, India's main lab, that specialises in making rockets for the country, mastered the art of making the 'world's lightest artificial material' called 'silica aerogel' … it is incredibly light, a great thermal insulator …

In the past three years, at least 41 soldiers have lost their lives at the Siachen Glacier, according to the Ministry of Defence. Since 1984, when India occupied the icy heights, about 1,000 soldiers have died on the glacier. As per the official records, only 220 of these have been felled by enemy bullets. At those heights of 6,000-7,000 m, extreme weather is a bigger killer.

If only our soldiers get access to some of the latest developments from Indian labs, many lives can be saved … Despite upgrades, Indian soldiers still wear very heavy clothes …



Siachen Glacier in Pakistan territory
Source: Wikimedia Commons user Danokhan, "Sunset at Siachen Glacier, Pakistan," Wikimedia Commons, 12 September 2013, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sunset_at_Siachen_Glacier,_Pakistan.JPG. Permission to share under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

Fighting Piracy in the Sulu Sea Through a Subregional Agreement

OE Watch Commentary: Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines are taking a multipronged approach in addressing maritime robberies and abductions along their shared border areas, framing the issue as not only just a security threat, but also a menace that has negative economic and social impact. According to excerpts from the accompanying article in ***The Jakarta Post***, the three countries plan to conduct joint coordinated patrols by military forces from each country, through a subregional economic platform, to implement the necessary security protocols that would increase economic activities in the area.

The abduction of civilians by armed groups undermines confidence in trade and commerce in the region, according to Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi. This partnership comes after cross-border criminals linked to the Abu Sayyaf abducted 14 Indonesians and 4 Malaysian sailors plying international maritime waters along the Philippine side of the border in 3 separate incidents between 26 March and 8 April.

As described in the excerpts, Marsudi cited the strategic importance of the tri-border area as one of Southeast Asia's busiest alternative thoroughfares. Annually, over 18 million people travel through the Sulu-Sulawesi Waterway, carrying more than 55 million metric tons of goods. In their regulatory agreement the three countries will use existing provisions of the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area framework, a subregional economic mechanism, to increase economic activities in the area by implementing the necessary security protocols.

A local Indonesian analyst disagrees with the trinational agreement. International relations expert Adriana Elisabeth of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences criticized the use of the subregional platform to expand what should be region-wide cooperation on security, saying that the threat of abductions by armed groups in the region will remain a problem for the next 10 to 20 years. She said that developing security protocols through the framework was a distortion of its original function, i.e., to facilitate trade, investment and tourism, and called for an ASEAN-wide solution that would preempt any further development of nontraditional security threats, such as abductions and armed robbery at sea.
End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)

For more information, see: "Terrorism Expert: Sulu Sea is Becoming a Terror Haven," OE Watch, May 2016

Source: "It Takes 3 to Curb Abductions," *The Jakarta Post,* 7 May 2016. http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/05/07/it-takes-3-curb-abductions.html

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines are taking a multi-pronged approach in addressing maritime robberies and abductions along their shared border areas, framing the issue as more than just a security threat, but also a menace that brings negative economic and social impacts.

The three countries have opted to build on existing provisions from the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area …

The abduction of civilians by armed groups could undermine confidence in trade and commerce in the region if it was not addressed appropriately, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi told the press in Yogyakarta on Thursday.

… agreement to conduct joint coordinated patrols, which will be carried out by military forces from each of the countries.

The neighbors also agreed to devise an emergency protocol under which any of the countries could render immediate assistance for the safety of people and ships in distress within the maritime areas of common concern.

The minister cited the strategic importance of the tri-border area as one of Southeast Asia's busiest alternative thoroughfares. Annually, over 18 million people travel through the Sulu-Sulawesi waterway, carrying more than 55 million metric tons of goods.

… platform provided an existing avenue of cooperation among the three countries to increase economic activities in the area by implementing the necessary security protocols.

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Adriana said that developing security protocols through the subregional mechanism was a distortion of its original function — to facilitate trade, investment and tourism.

She called for an ASEAN-wide solution that would preempt any further development of non-traditional security threats such as abductions and armed robbery at sea.

Philippine Navy BRP Rajah Humabon.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_Navy#/media/File:BRP_Rajah_Humabon_%28PF_11%29.jpg

Source: "Joining Forces to Tackle Terror at Sea," *The Star Online*, 6 May 2016. http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2016/05/06/joining-forces-to-tackle-terror-at-sea/

Cross-border criminals linked to the Abu Sayyaf abducted 14 Indonesians and four Malaysian sailors plying international maritime waters along the Philippine side of the border in three separate incidents between March 26 and April 8.

Terrorism Expert: Jemaah Islamiya Poses a Greater Threat than ISIS to Southeast Asia

OE Watch Commentary: The ISIS threat to Southeast Asia is not as great as that of a rejuvenated Jemaah Islamiya, which has a more extensive network in the region, according to excerpts from a commentary by Joseph CY Liow, Dean of the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, in Singapore. He contends that, in addition to its larger network, Jemaah Islamiyah is better funded than the pro-ISIS groups in the region. Founded in 1993, Jemaah Islamiya is a transnational organization dedicated to the establishment of a regional Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia, with cells in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines.

As described in accompanying excerpts, there is no such thing as an "ISIS Southeast Asia," nor has ISIS central formally declared an interest in any Southeast Asian country. For the most part, ISIS supporters in Southeast Asia include radical groups and individuals who have, on their own, taken oaths of allegiance to ISIS. The commentary also notes that there are multiple militant groups operating throughout Southeast Asia, with many at odds with one another, and not all seek affiliation to, or are enamored of ISIS.

Another key point from the accompanying commentary is that the number of Southeast Asians fighting in Iraq and Syria remains comparatively small. At most, there are 700 people from Southeast Asia, mostly from Indonesia, and a large proportion – Liow estimates around 40 percent – comprise women and children. As such, there are relatively few hardened Southeast Asian militants who would return from Iraq and Syria.

Liow remarks that terrorism will continue in Southeast Asia, and the question of terrorist attacks is, unfortunately, no longer a matter of "if," but "when." He argues that, even if the influence of ISIS diminishes over time, and it will, terrorism is part of the lay of the land and will not be eradicated anytime soon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: Liow, Joseph CY. "The ISIS Threat to Southeast Asia: An Assessment," S. Rajaratnam School Of International Studies, 29 April 2016. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co16099-the-isis-threat-to-southeast-asia-an-assessment/#.VzCoo2ZOFSE

The ISIS terrorist threat to Southeast Asia is not as great as that from a rejuvenated Jemaah Islamiya which has a more extensive network in the region.

... when we speak of ISIS in Southeast Asia, we have to be mindful of the fact that at present, there is no such thing as an "ISIS Southeast Asia," nor has ISIS central formally declared an interest in any Southeast Asian country. For the most part, we are dealing with radical groups and individuals who have on their own taken oaths of allegiance to ISIS.

... the number of Southeast Asians fighting in Iraq and Syria remains comparatively small. We are talking of, at most, 700, mostly from Indonesia. By way of comparison, thousands are coming from Europe. In addition to this, a large proportion of Southeast Asians there – I would say around 40 percent – comprise women and children.

There are multiple militant groups operating in Southeast Asia. Many are at odds with each other; not all seek affiliation to, or are enamored of, ISIS. In fact, I would argue that the greater, long-term threat comes from a rejuvenated Jemaah Islamiyah, which has a larger network and is better funded than the pro-ISIS groups in the region.

... for Southeast Asia today, the question of terrorist attacks is, unfortunately, no longer a matter of "if", but "when." Even if the influence of ISIS diminishes over time, and it will, terrorism is part of the lay of the land and will not be eradicated anytime soon.

The Australian embassy in Jakarta after the 2004 bombing claimed by Jemaah Islamiyah. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Australian_Embassy_bombing_in_Jakarta#/media/File:Aus_Emb_bomb2.png.

President-Elect Duterte's Approach to Peace in Mindanao

OE Watch Commentary: Rodrigo Duterte, who spent almost his entire political life in Davao City on Mindanao Island, where he served as mayor for more than two decades, is being dubbed as the first Philippine president-elect from Mindanao, a restive area known for its long-standing Muslim insurgencies and home of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf. According to excerpts from the accompanying articles, two Philippine analysts offer different perspectives on Duterte's approach to peace in Mindanao: pragmatic solutions and heavy-handed authority.

According to excerpts from ***Minda News***, an analyst from Mindanao points out that the Mindanawons, and non-Mindanawons who voted for Duterte did so because he understands Mindanao's problems, as well as those of the Philippines, and can offer pragmatic solutions. The analyst explains that Duterte knows peace and development in Mindanao go hand in hand, which is why his agenda is reconciliatory and unifying, with diplomatic discussion and compromise among the major stakeholders rather than military action. Previous administrations have attempted to do the same, but with little success, since their formulas were limited and less inclusive, talking to just one or two stakeholder groups and excluding the others, while playing an on-and-off military game in between.

Another analyst from Makati City, near Manila, offers a different perspective and expects Duterte to use heavy-handed authority in Mindanao. In excerpts from his opinion piece in ***Inquirer.net,*** the analyst said the electorate chose Duterte for one reason alone: to eliminate crime committed with impunity. He noted a discussion with Sonny Dominguez, a businessman who leads Duterte's campaign, about what to expect from the president-elect. According to the excerpts, when Duterte was mayor of Davao City and New People's Army (NPA) recruits were shooting policemen, he organized a paramilitary group, made up of gangsters, who hunted down the NPA tit for tat. He says that Duterte will deal more ruthlessly with the Abu Sayyaf and dissident Muslims until they all leave for Syria.
End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)

Source: "Duterte's Challenges: Terror, Crime and the Abu Sayyaf," *Rappler*, 13 May 2016. http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/132875-duterte-challenges-terror-crime-abu-sayyaf

... Duterte spent almost his entire political life in Davao City of the Mindanao Island where he served as city mayor for more than two decades.

Duterte is, however, being dubbed as the first Philippine president-elect from Mindanao, a restive area known for its long-standing Muslim insurgencies and home of the terrorist group, the Abu Sayyaf.

Source: "Commentary: Mindanawons Weigh in on Duterte Presidency," *MindaNews*, 14 May 2016. http://www.mindanews.com/mindaviews/2016/05/14/commentary-mindanawons-weigh-in-on-duterte-presidency/

... Mindanawons (and non-Mindanawons) who voted for President-elect Duterte did so not only because he's a Mindanawon but more importantly because he understands Mindanao's (and also the Philippines') problems and can offer pragmatic solutions.

For Mindanao, it's peace and development. They go hand in hand. Duterte knows that. That's why his agenda is reconciliatory and unifying. Open/Diplomatic discussions and compromise among the major stakeholders (CCP/NDF, MILF, MNLF, lumads, etc.) rather than war or military action. Previous administrations have attempted to do the same but with little success because their formulas were limited and less inclusive, talking to just one or two stakeholder groups and excluding the others, while playing an on-and-off military game in between.

The image shows downtown highway in Davao City.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davao_City#/media/File:Victoria_Plaza_Davao.JPG

Source:"One Reason: to Eliminate Crime Committed with Impunity," *Inquirer.net,* 14 May 2016. http://opinion.inquirer.net/94734/one-reason-to-eliminate-crime-committed-with-impunity

"Let me tell you how Duterte dealt with the NPA. There was a time when the communists were recruiting dissidents in Davao City; as part of their 'graduation,' they were given a gun and told to shoot policemen. There was a time, every week four policemen directing traffic were killed in the city. Mayor Duterte organized the paramilitary Alsa Masa made up of 'Ilaga' gangsters who hunted down the NPA tit for tat. ... He will deal more ruthlessly with the Abu Sayyaf and dissident Muslims, till they all leave for Syria. ...."

The electorate chose Rodrigo Duterte for one reason alone, to eliminate crime committed with impunity.

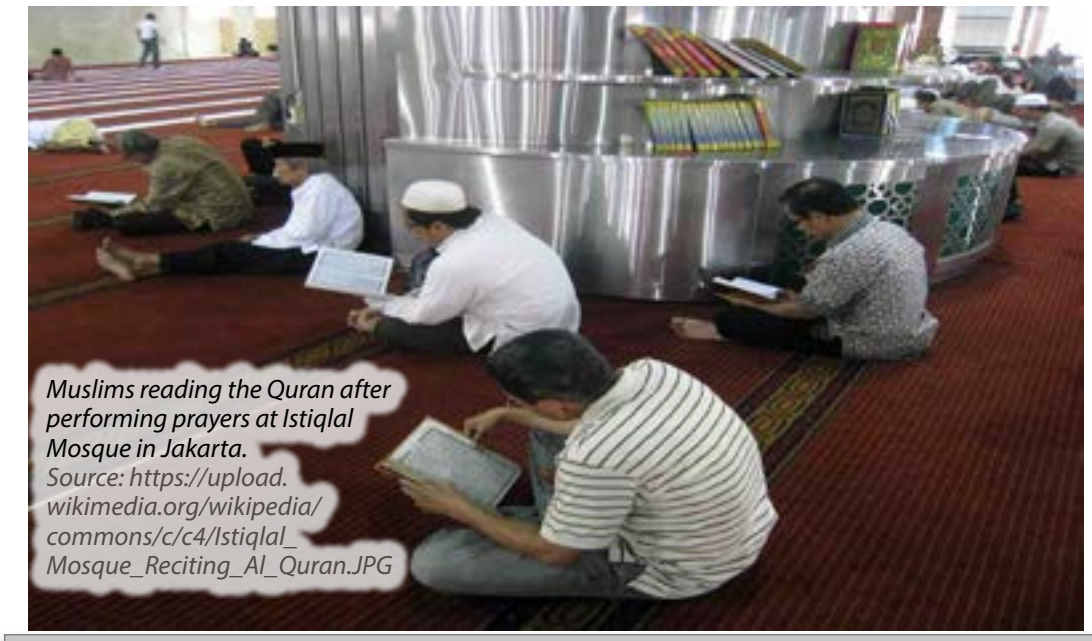
Can Indonesia Spread its Version of Moderate Islam Internationally?

OE Watch Commentary: Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, recently sponsored an international conference on 9 May as part of its strategy to promote its brand of moderate Islamic thought, Islam Nusantara (Islam from Indonesia), worldwide. The conference received widespread attention and was attended by delegates from over 40 countries, including Islamic scholars from the Middle East, Europe and the United States, in addition to receiving support from the Indonesian government. However, according to excerpts in the accompanying commentary, the concept remains deeply contested, even within NU itself.

As the excerpt points out, the conference served as a venue for NU to promote Islam Nusantara among participants. According to NU, Islam Nusantara is an application of Islamic teachings in the Indonesian socio-cultural context that combines classical Islamic theology and jurisprudence with Sufism and localized practices and rituals originated from Java, where the majority of NU's claimed 60 million followers live.

By sponsoring this international conference, NU aimed to promote Islam Nusantara to other countries, according to excerpts. While it does not explicitly call for the exportation of Islam Nusantara beyond Indonesia, the declaration considers it as "an idea that needs to be learned and practiced by other Muslims throughout the world." In fact, a number of Islamic scholars who attended the conference declared their intention to establish NU affiliates within their own countries to promote moderate Islamic principles similar to Islam Nusantara. Abdul Nasheer Jabri, a Lebanese Islamic scholar, stated, "Moderate Islamic paradigms like those promoted by the NU need to be supported."

As described in the excerpts, NU's goals also face serious obstacles. The concept is running into fierce opposition from other Islamic organizations in Indonesia that argue Islam Nusantara is an innovation that should be prohibited from Islam. Within NU, Buya Yahya, a conservative scholar with a popular following, has argued that Islam Nusantara is "a form of 'liberal Islam' that seeks to replace the fundamental Islamic teachings." **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**



Muslims reading the Quran after performing prayers at Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c4/Istiqlal_Mosque_Reciting_Al_Quran.JPG

Source: "Islam Nusantara: NU's Bid to Promote "Moderate Indonesian Islam," S. Rajaratnam School Of International Studies, 17 May 2016. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co16114-islam-nusantara-nus-bid-to-promote-moderate-indonesian-islam/#.Vz8M0CGGpdc

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, has sponsored an international conference as part of its strategy to promote "Islam Nusantara" worldwide. However, the concept remains deeply contested, even within the NU itself.

... an international conference in Jakarta attended by delegates from over 40 countries, including Islamic scholars (ulama) from the Middle East, Europe and the United States. A number of prominent ulama and intellectuals spoke during the conference on 9-10 May 2016, ...

The conference also received support from Indonesian President Joko Widodo (Jokowi). This can be seen from the fact that the meeting was opened by Vice President Jusuf Kalla, with speeches delivered by a number of high level officials from his administration, ...

The conference serves as a venue for NU to promote Islam Nusantara – its brand of moderate Islamic thought – to the conference participants. NU defines Islam Nusantara as the application of Islamic teachings in the Indonesian socio-cultural context. It combines classical Islamic theology (aqidah) and jurisprudence (fiqh) with Sufism and localised practices and rituals originated from Java – where the majority of NU's claimed 60 million followers live.

By sponsoring this international conference, NU seeks to promote Islam Nusantara to other countries. ... While it does not explicitly call for the 'exportation' of Islam Nusantara beyond Indonesia, the declaration considers it as "an idea that needs to be learned and practised by other Muslims throughout the world". ...

A number of Islamic scholars who attended the conference have declared their intention to establish NU affiliates (jamiyah) within their own countries, to promote moderate Islamic principles similar to Islam Nusantara. Abdul Nasheer Jabri, a Lebanese Islamic scholar, states that "Moderate Islamic paradigms like those promoted by the NU need to be supported ...

... such efforts face a number of serious obstacles.... The concept is running into fierce opposition from other Islamic organisations which argue that Islam Nusantara is an innovation (bid'ah) that should be prohibited from Islam.

Buya Yahya, a conservative scholar with a popular following within the NU, has argued that Islam Nusantara is "a form of 'liberal Islam' that seeks to replace the fundamental Islamic teachings ...

Indonesian Official: Southeast Asia is Becoming the New Somalia for Piracy

OE Watch Commentary: Southeast Asia is rising as the new epicenter for ocean piracy; the region is now responsible for about 60 percent of worldwide attacks, according to excerpts from a recent report in ***Inquirer.net*** that tracked piracy in 2015. This report comes as Indonesian officials fear the piracy surge is turning regional waters into a new Somalia.

According to the excerpts, Vietnam's waters are the most dangerous in Southeast Asia, accounting for 147 (55 percent) of attacks last year, up from 37 percent in the previous year. The southern port of Vung Tau in Vietnam was the site of more than half of the hijackings that took place in 2015. Piracy along Indonesia's sea border with the Philippines is another concern, as well as in the Straits of Malacca, and in the past few months, there have been a number of incidents involving vessels passing through both areas.

As described in the excerpts, piracy along Indonesia's sea border with the Philippines has caused concern among Indonesian authorities. "We don't want to see this become a new Somalia," said Indonesian Chief Security Minister Luhut Pandjaitan, referring to the southern Philippine waters of the Sulu Sea.

As noted in the report, pirates in the region tend to hijack ships to rob oil from slow-moving tankers, while usually leaving workers unharmed. They then sell the oil on the black market. Pirates are also using hi-tech software to hack information on cargoes and movements of vulnerable ships. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

For more information, see: "Fighting Piracy in the Sulu Sea Through a Sub-regional Agreement," OE Watch, June 2016

Source: "Piracy in SE Asian Waters Rises; Attacks off Somalia Fall Sharply," *Inquirer.net*, 13 May 2016. http://globalnation.inquirer.net/139416/piracy-in-se-asian-waters-rises-as-attacks-off-somalia-fall-sharply

Southeast Asia is rising as the new epicenter for ocean piracy, according to a new report.

Attacks on shipping by pirates in Southeast Asia are on the rise and the region is now responsible for about 60 percent of worldwide attacks, …

Vietnam's waters are the most dangerous in Southeast Asia, according to The Allianz report, accounting for 147 or 55 percent of attacks last year, up from 37 percent in the previous year.

The southern port of Vung Tau in Vietnam was the site of more than half of the hijackings that took place in 2015.

Piracy along Indonesia's sea border with the Philippines is another concern, with Indonesian authorities said to be worried that pirate attacks could reach recorded Somalian levels.

… Asian pirates tend to hijack ships to rob oil from slow-moving tankers, while usually leaving workers unharmed. The stolen oil is sold on the black market.

… pirates are using hi-tech software to hack information on cargoes and movements of vulnerable ships.

Source: " 'Piracy surge turning regional waters into new Somalia'," Borneo Post, 22 April 2016. http://www.theborneopost.com/2016/04/22/piracy-surge-turning-regional-waters-into-new-somalia

"We don't want to see this become a new Somalia," Indonesian chief security minister Luhut Pandjaitan told reporters, referring to the southern Philippine waters of the Sulu Sea, …

Source: "'Piracy in ASEAN Seas Rising'," *The Standard*, 16 May 2016. http://thestandard.com.ph/news/-main-stories/top-stories/205695/-piracy-in-asean-seas-rising-.html

In the past months, there have been incidents of piracy involving vessels passing through the Malacca Strait and waters bordering the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia,…

The image shows suspected pirates on a ship off western Malaysia in January 2006.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piracy_in_the_Strait_of_Malacca#/media/File:Suspected_pirate_ship_boarded_by_USS_Winston_S._Churchill.jpg

Southern Thailand Peace Talk Hit Another Bump in the Road

OE Watch Commentary: Following an unofficial meeting between Thai military representatives and the Mara Patani insurgent group in late April, the Thai government has decided to put peace talks on hold for now. According to excerpts from the ***Bangkok Post***, Prime Minster Prayut Chan-o-cha expressed frustration over the stagnant southern peace talks, saying his government was left to tackle problems initiated by the last administration. He added that peace talks could make headway if the insurgent party thinks along the same lines as Thai authorities about ways to tackle the violence. Nevertheless, General Aksara Kerdphol, who is leading the Thai peace team, insisted negotiations will continue and the process is still in line with the prime minister's policy. The fruitless talks come as no surprise to security analysts, but are a discouraging sign for an end to the twelve-year insurgency, which has seen more than 6500 people killed.

As described in the accompanying excerpted article, the Thai government and the Malaysia-based Mara Patani agree on both the purpose of the talks and the reasons why they have hit a bump in the road. The primary obstacle: the group on the separatist side wants official recognition and the Thai government does not agree. Chan-o-cha said the group's demand could encourage the emergence of other such groups.

Another obstacle is unproven claims that the group actually represents any Thais in the southern region. Kerdphol has asked Mara Patani to prove it has the influence it claims by halting or slowing the constant violence.

A local analyst notes two practices that would benefit peace talks. First, if Malaysia were more involved, any attempt to restart the talks would benefit from its past experience in helping negotiate between the government and rebel groups in the Philippines. Second, greater public discourse in the peace talks would allow the government and pro-separatist sides to speak their minds and come to trust each other. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

For more information, see: "Are Southern Insurgents Ready to Settle with the Thai Government?," OE Watch, January 2016

Source: "Prayut Fed up with Southern Peace Talks," *Bangkok Post*, 30 April 2016. http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/953589/prayut-fed-up-with-southern-peace-talks

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has expressed frustration over the stagnant southern peace talks, saying his government was left to tackle problems initiated by the last administration.

He was speaking after an unofficial meeting between Thai military representatives and the Majlis Syura Patanai (Mara Patani) group in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Wednesday failed to make any progress.

Gen Prayut said on Friday the peace talks could make headway if the other party thinks along the same lines as Thai authorities about ways to tackle the violence.

He also disagreed with the group's demand that the Thai government has to officially use and certify the name of the group, saying the move could encourage the emergence of other such groups.

... Gen Aksara Kerdphol, who is leading the Thai peace talks team, insisted the talks will continue and the process is still in line with the prime minister's policy.

The fruitless talks come as no surprise to security analysts, but are a discouraging sign for an end to the twelve year insurgency which has seen more than 6,500 people killed.

Source: "South Peace Suffers Blow," *Bangkok Post*, 2 May 2016. http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/955817/south-peace-suffers-blow

The government and the Malaysia-based Mara Patani agree, more or less, on the stakes and why, for a second time, the talks have hit a bump in the road. ... Mara Patani has failed to show it actually represents any Thais of the southern region. Gen Aksara and his negotiators have asked Mara Patani to prove it has the influence it claims, by halting or slowing the constant violence.

One of the initial stipulations by Thailand has arguably worked against progress. That is that the Malaysian government plays no role in the talks themselves. As facilitator, Malaysia has agreed to host, finance and act as recording secretary at the Thai-separatist meetings. It is possible any attempt to restart the talks would benefit from Malaysia's experience in helping to negotiate between the government and rebel groups in the Philippines.

The talks always have been confidential, out of public view and without any report to the public by either side or by Malaysian hosts.... In theory, the government and pro-separatist sides can speak their minds and come to trust each other.

By putting the talks on hold, the government also has muffled a channel to the violence in the South.

The PLA Bans Commercial Activity as Part of its Ongoing Military Reform

"The duty of the army is getting ready for wars. How can they battle if they are shooting on the training ground, and at the same time calculating how much money they can make from a contract they just signed?"

OE Watch Commentary: Corruption in the Chinese military has been an ongoing issue for several decades. As a result, the country's military structure has been evolving over the past two or three decades as the government strives to get control over the situation. Most recently, in March, China's Central Military Commission (CMC) announced that it planned to gradually terminate all commercial business conducted by the military. The following excerpts are from an article discussing China's plans to end military-run businesses.

China's military-run businesses are currently in the areas of telecommunications, personnel training, logistics, technology, and healthcare. The most popular commercial dealings, however, are in real-estate. The article explains that land resources and real estate had become a "hotbed for military corruption," and some of the corruption had been traced to the PLA's General Logistics Department (GLD). (As an interesting side note, the GLD was one of four general departments that fell under the CMC. At the end of 2015, however, China replaced the four general departments – GLD, General Political Department, General Staff Department, and General Armaments Department – with 15 new units.)

According to the article, the move is part of an ongoing effort to reform the military. China has had problems with corruption in its military since at least the mid-1980s, when it first commercialized the industry and cut State allocations, while authorizing and encouraging the PLA to go into business as part of an effort to boost the economy. At that time the PLA began setting up thousands of factories, companies, mines, and large conglomerates to offset budget cuts. However, the PLA's defense industry began to take a back seat to civilian production, and while some profits were reinvested into the military, some ended up in the pockets of corrupt military officials.

The plan to ban the PLA's commercial activities is expected to take three years to implement. However, with a history of problems and issues plaguing the military, the path should not yet be considered set in stone. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: "PLA Bans Commercial Activities as Anti Graft Drive Gains Momentum," *Global Times Online*, 5 May 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/981596.shtml>.

PLA Bans Commercial Activities as Anti Graft Drive Gains Momentum

For those who are commercially involved with the Chinese military, worries like this have been on the rise after the Central Military Commission (CMC) said it in a document in March that plans to gradually terminate all paid services in the military. The move, part of China's ongoing military reform, is expected to take three years to complete.

According to the document, military units will no longer be allowed to launch new commercial programs or sign new contracts regarding paid services, and expired contracts may not be extended, the Xinhua News Agency reported. This is seen by many as an effort to modernize China's armed forces and fight against military corruption.

"This is an important decision made by the CPC Central Committee, the CMC and President Xi Jinping, and it will help to purify the troops' morale, keep the true quality and nature of the military and also focus more on core military capacity building," said Yang Yujun, spokesperson of China's Ministry of Defense, in a press conference in March.

An officer from the Beijing Military Region, who declined to be named, told the Phoenix Weekly that this is expected to be the toughest ban on the military's commercial dealings to date. "The duty of the army is getting ready for wars. How can they battle if they are shooting on the training ground, and at the same time calculating how much money they can make from a contract they just signed?" he said.

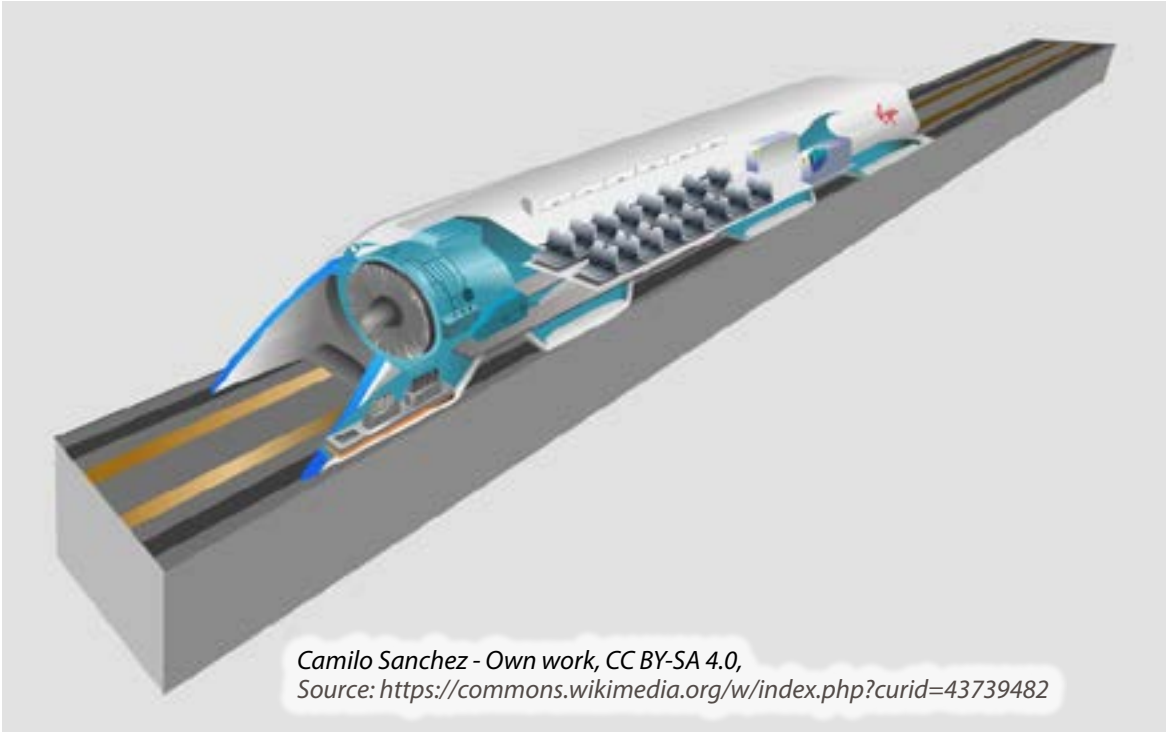
China Looks at Hyperloop Technology for Possible Military Applications

OE Watch Commentary: Three years ago American inventor and billionaire Elon Musk conceptualized a technology he called "hyperloop." While Musk's original aim was to come up with what he called the fifth mode of transport (the other four modes are plane, train, automobile, boat), the following excerpts come from an article that discusses China's desire to use the experimental technology to develop military applications.

The hyperloop is meant to project passengers, who are seated in pods, through vacuum tubes at high speeds up to 1000 kilometers per hour. However, according to the article, some of the work being done is being funded by the military because "the technology might have defense applications." Some of these applications are outlined in the excerpts of the article.

Professor Zhao Chunfa, a member of a team of scientists from China's State Key Laboratory of Traction Power at Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu, said he was not impressed with trials conducted recently in the United States. He also sees this as a race with the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"Numerous research teams are developing the technology in China and some of the projects have not been disclosed to the public due to their military sensitivity..."



Camilo Sanchez - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43739482

Source: Stephen Chen, "Beyond Hyperloop: Chinese Scientists Board 'Vacuum Train' For Possible Military Projects," *South China Morning Post,* 18 May 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1946676/beyond-hyperloop-chinese-scientists-board-vacuum-train)>.

Beyond Hyperloop: Chinese Scientists Board 'Vacuum Train' For Possible Military Projects

One centre researching the technology in China is State Key Laboratory of Traction Power at Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu in Sichuan province.

Numerous research teams are developing the technology in China and some of the projects have not been disclosed to the public due to their military sensitivity, according to [Professor Zhao Chunfa, who is a member of a research team at the State Key Laboratory]...

The PLA is interested in ¬vacuum train technology for ¬several reasons, according to Zhao. Launching a missile from a vacuum tube, for instance, could reduce its fuel consumption by 60 per cent to 70 per cent, he said. That meant a missile could fly much further or carry more ¬warheads.

Zhao said vacuum train technology could also be used to launch fighter jets on aircraft carriers.

Some research teams were also conducting experiments to send small military satellites into orbit from a vacuum tube, he said.

Another area under intensive research is to combine the ¬vacuum tube with a railgun. A railgun uses electromagnetic forces to destroy a target with high energy particles and vacuum train technology may make it easier to accelerate projectiles to extremely high speeds, according to a Chinese researcher in the field.

Chinese Military Works on Implementation of Stratagem Training

OE Watch Commentary: Leaders of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) 54th Group Army Division recently extended their stratagem training to the grassroots cadre level. The goal is to improve the overall qualification of the command contingent.

The use of stratagem training is a key way in which the PLA develops creative tactical and strategic thought among leaders. Apparently the training was needed, since mistakes were made in judging situations and responding to emergency developments randomly set up by the graders. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

The Islamic State-claimed terror attack in January 2016 in Jakarta, as seen in the adjacent image, involved a group of cells with some Uighurs from China.
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/indonesian-terrorism-law-reform-still-faces-opposition/3155695.html

"It was learned: since early this year, the division has organized over 10 similar exercises; more and more grassroots commanders have proposed unique ideas for combat determination and tactical application; and the overall stratagem capabilities of forefront commanders have improved."

Source: Wang Lifei and special correspondent Ma Yongsheng, "Stratagem Training Extends to Grassroots Cadres," *Jiefangjun Bao Online,* 6 May 2016, p. 2.

Early last year, in a live force confrontation exercise organized by the division, some battalions and companies in executing independent "operational" tasks fell into a passive position because their commanders made mistakes in judging battlefield situations. Some detachment commanders were incapable of responding to the emergency situations that were randomly set up by the direction department. The insufficient command capabilities of grass root cadres drew a high level of attention from the division leadership.

"The ultimate problem lies in the incapability of stratagem [application] and inflexible application of tactics." At the exercise wrap-up meeting, the division leaders conducted an in-depth analysis to identify problems. They focused on the stratagem training, relied on the integrated command platform and simulated confrontation exercise systems; and employed skill training, online confrontation, reply and summary, and other methods, in order to strengthen the command capabilities of the grassroots cadres. They also invited experts from institutes and colleges to provide on-site guidance; organized command headquarters personnel to instruct by demonstration; and led the grassroots commanders to practice tactical and training methods, so as to improve the stratagem capabilities.

China Exerts Counterterrorism Pressure in Southeast Asia

OE Watch Commentary: Since terrorist attacks attributed to the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and other independent Xinijang-based cells became a regularity in China around 2011, the country has pressured Southeast Asian countries to clamp down on alleged Uighur militants hiding in their territories. This has involved China offering financial incentives to countries such as Cambodia and Thailand to deport Uighur migrants who do not have proper visas, even though their role as militants is often difficult to determine and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) opposes their repatriation to China because of concerns over torture. Other countries, such as Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, have generally cooperated with China on Uighur migrant issues as a matter of foreign policy.

According to an article in ***Bangkok Post*** on 28 April, now China is engaging in diplomacy with Indonesia over Uighurs detained in that country. China perceives as a security threat the possibility of havens in Southeast Asia, where Uighur militants can travel freely using fake Turkish passports and can avoid deportation to China on grounds of the UNHRC's non-refoulement principle. Specifically, the article says China wants Indonesia to repatriate one of the Uighurs who was part of the cell that carried out botched suicide attacks on behalf of ISIL in Jakarta in January 2016 and had been in Thailand and Malaysia before entering Indonesia.

China has a number of tools that it can use to pressure Indonesia to submit to its request, although Indonesia has thus far not obliged. China could, for example, take a more assertive stance toward Indonesia in their bordering territorial waters in the South China Sea. China could also provide corrupt Indonesian officials or businessman haven in China in retaliation for Indonesia not repatriating the Uighur militants. As a result of these pressures and Indonesia's desire to avoid an escalation in military or political tensions with China, it would not be surprising if in the near future China and Indonesia come to a extradition agreement. In such a case, Indonesia would repatriate Uighur militants, including the one connected to the recent Jakarta attacks, to China, despite international pressure against such actions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

"China has also exerted pressure on other Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia and Thailand to get them to deport Uighurs, even those who had been issued 'Persons of Concern' letters by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees."

The Islamic State-claimed terror attack in January 2016 in Jakarta, as seen in the adjacent image, involved a group of cells with some Uighurs from China.
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/indonesian-terrorism-law-reform-still-faces-opposition/3155695.html

Source: "China Asks Indonesia to Deport Detained Uighur Terror Suspect," *Bangkok Post*, 28 April 2016

China asks Indonesia to deport detained Uighur terror suspect

China has asked Indonesia to deport a suspected Uighur terrorist detained since December and alleged to have links with Islamic State, authorities said. The man, who is identified as Alli, was arrested by counterterrorism police in December for allegedly planning to launch terrorist attacks during Christmas and New Year celebrations. They said he had spent two months in Indonesia prior to his arrest before which time he was in Thailand and Malaysia.

When he was on trial, the only identifying documents found on him was Turkish, not Chinese, which prevented him from being deported to China as a Chinese citizen. China has also exerted pressure on other Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia and Thailand to get them to deport Uighurs, even those who had been issued "Persons of Concern" letters by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees sparking international concern about the whereabouts and wellbeing of those who were deported. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has said these cases violate the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of a refugee to a country where he or she is likely to face persecution or torture under the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment that came into effect in 1987.

Canadian Visas Keep Bulgaria and Romania from Approving Economic Deal

OE Watch Commentary: Bulgaria and Romania are two members of the European Union whose citizens are still required to present tourist visas when visiting Canada. Canada stated that it would abolish all tourist visas for European Union countries, but failed to meet its deadline on April 12.

Instead, Canada promised to lift the visa requirements by the implementation of two economic partnerships, the Canada-European Union Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Canada and European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). As the accompanying excerpted article notes, CETA would remove 99 percent of customs duties and ease trade.

The trade deal may require all European Union member states to ratify, in which case Bulgaria and Romania threaten to veto if Canada does not remove the visa requirements. However, the deal may ignore individual member state attitudes, which removes Romania and Bulgaria's legal power to block the deal. Even if all aspects of these economic agreements are decided upon, visa requirements may hinder its implementation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

"Bulgaria and Romania have warned the EU that they could refuse to back upcoming EU-Canada trade and investment agreement this autumn if they are not guaranteed free visa travel for their citizens."

Source: Cheresheva, Mariya and Marian Chiriac. "Bulgaria, Romania Tie EU-Canada Deal to Visas." Balkan Insight. 16 May 2016. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-romania-tie-eu-canada-deal-to-visa-free-travel-05-16-2016>

"Bulgaria and Romania have warned the EU that they could refuse to back upcoming EU-Canada trade and investment agreement this autumn if they are not guaranteed free visa travel for their citizens.

... "It would be very difficult for the Governments of Bulgaria and Romania…to find arguments to promote the adoption of the Strategic Partnership between Canada and the EU and its Member States, SPA, while Canada is still imposing discriminatory treatment on our citizens, based on unclear and changing criteria," the two countries warned.

They also remain skeptical about supporting the long-awaited Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA, which is expected to boost Europe's GDP by removing 99 per cent of customs duties and other barriers from businesses.

They say that due to the remaining visa requirements, Bulgarian and Romanian businesses will not be able to fully benefit from the agreement."

Kazakhstan and the Economic Importance of the Defense Sector

OE Watch Commentary: Kazakhstan's defense expenditures make up around one percent of the country's GDP, and this percentage did not increase even during the period of economic growth from 2009-2014, when the GDP doubled. The accompanying excerpted articles show how this could be changing, despite an economic downturn that started in 2015 and is projected to last at least a few years. In one of the ***Kazinform*** articles President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that defense expenditures will remain a priority, and he noted this alongside the Ministry of Defense's efforts to update weapons and equipment. Some of these updates will come from Kazakhstan's own defense industry, which continues to take shape, as shown by the other two articles.

The article from ***Obektiv*** reported how the Zenit shipyard launched another ship for the Kazakh Border Guards' detachment on the Caspian Sea. Zenit utilizes foreign engines and other imported components, but it has been constructing ships on its own for a number of years. The other article from ***Kazinform*** reported how the company "Tynys" will present the armored vests and tanker's helmets at the June 2016 Kazakhstan Defense Expo in Astana. The vests and helmets are examples of the kinds of equipment being produced by the various subsidiaries of "Kazakhstan Engineering," and while it has been noted that many of the subsidiaries lack engineering and production capabilities, their growth over the past several years has resulted in the defense industry becoming an important part of the country's economy. It remains to be seen what the percentage of Kazakhstan's GDP defense spending will be over the next few years, but if these articles are any indication, it may no longer stay at one percent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Companies in Kazakhstan's defense industry have been producing small pieces of equipment like the шлемофон (tanker's helmet) for the Armed Forces, some of which will be on display during the June 2016 Kazakhstan Defense Expo in Astana."
Source: https://reibert.info/threads/shlemofon-letnij.326723/

Source: "В Уральске спущен на воду военный корабль" (A warship has been launched in Ural), *Obektiv Kazakhstan*, 30 April 2016. http://obk.kz/2016/04/30/v-uralske-spushhen-na-vodu-voennyj-korabl/

The warship "Sarbaz," constructed at the "Zenit" shipyard, was launched in Ural according to the press service of the Ministry of Defense. "Sarbaz" is the 24th ship ordered and built for the Border Guard Service of the National Security Committee and is the fifth ship of its class…

"Priority is being placed on defense expenditures despite difficulties…"

Source: "Н.Назарбаев: Создание национальной армии - одна из важных страниц истории суверенного Казахстана" (N. Nazarbayev: the formation of the national army – one of the most important pages in the history of sovereign Kazakhstan), *Kazinform*, 6 May 2016. http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2900962

N. Nazarbayev: the formation of the national army – one of the most important pages in the history of sovereign Kazakhstan

The head of state Nursultan Nazarbayev visited a concert being put on for the Day of Protectors of the Fatherland…the head of state drew attention to what was being done in our country to ensure defense capabilities. "Priority is being placed on defense expenditures despite difficulties…At least 70 percent of all types of weapons and equipment, and in some cases 100 percent, will be updated in the next few years…" – said the president. Additionally, a number of tasks of the transfer of technology to the domestic defense industry will be resolved as part of the modernization of the military…

Source: "Отечественные бронежилеты и шлемофоны представят на 'KADEX-2016'" (Domestic body armor and tanker's headsets will be presented at "KADEX-2016"), *Kazinform*, 28 April 2016. http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2897977

The company "Tynys" will present special military equipment of its production, specifically body armor and tanker's headsets at the International Exhibition of Arms and Military Equipment "KADEX-2016"…All types of body armor for use with Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense and security services have been in production since 2012…The manufacturing of tanker's headset started this year. Summer and winter variants of this equipment is intended for communication between crews of armored vehicles…Note that the joint stock company "Tynys" is large manufacturing enterprise in the Akmola Oblast and is a part of "Kazakhstan Engineering"…The main activity of the plant is the production of components of aircraft…

Small Unit Tactics in Kyrgyzstan

OE Watch Commentary: There has been an emphasis on tactical training in small units in the Armed Forces of Kyrgyzstan over the past few years (see: November 2014 OE Watch, "The Function of Kyrgyzstan's Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Takes Shape"). The accompanying excerpted article shows that this kind of training continues to take place through a recent competition for helicopter pilots. There are some things to consider in addition to what was reported.

The training took place in mountainous terrain at the "Edelweiss" facility (located in the Issyk Kul Province, northern Kyrgyzstan) and in a situation where the helicopter would be providing close air support, though there was nothing mentioned about coordinating with ground units as part of the conditions of the competition. This facility will be the location of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's joint military exercise "Peace Mission 2016," set to take place in September 2016.

The emphasis on training in small units has been a focus in recent years, based on the experiences of two generals (now retired) who had combat experience in the Soviet-Afghan War and against the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in 1999. It has been noted that they based training scenarios on these experiences. Lastly, Kyrgyzstan's Air Force reportedly has two Mi-24 attack helicopters in its inventory, but pilots in the competition utilized the Mi-8MTV transport helicopter outfitted with hard points for rockets and practice bombs. The Kyrgyz Air Force has an estimated eight Mi-8 helicopters, but it is unknown how many are of the MTV variant.

If this training is any indication, small unit tactics continue to play an important role in Kyrgyzstan's Armed Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

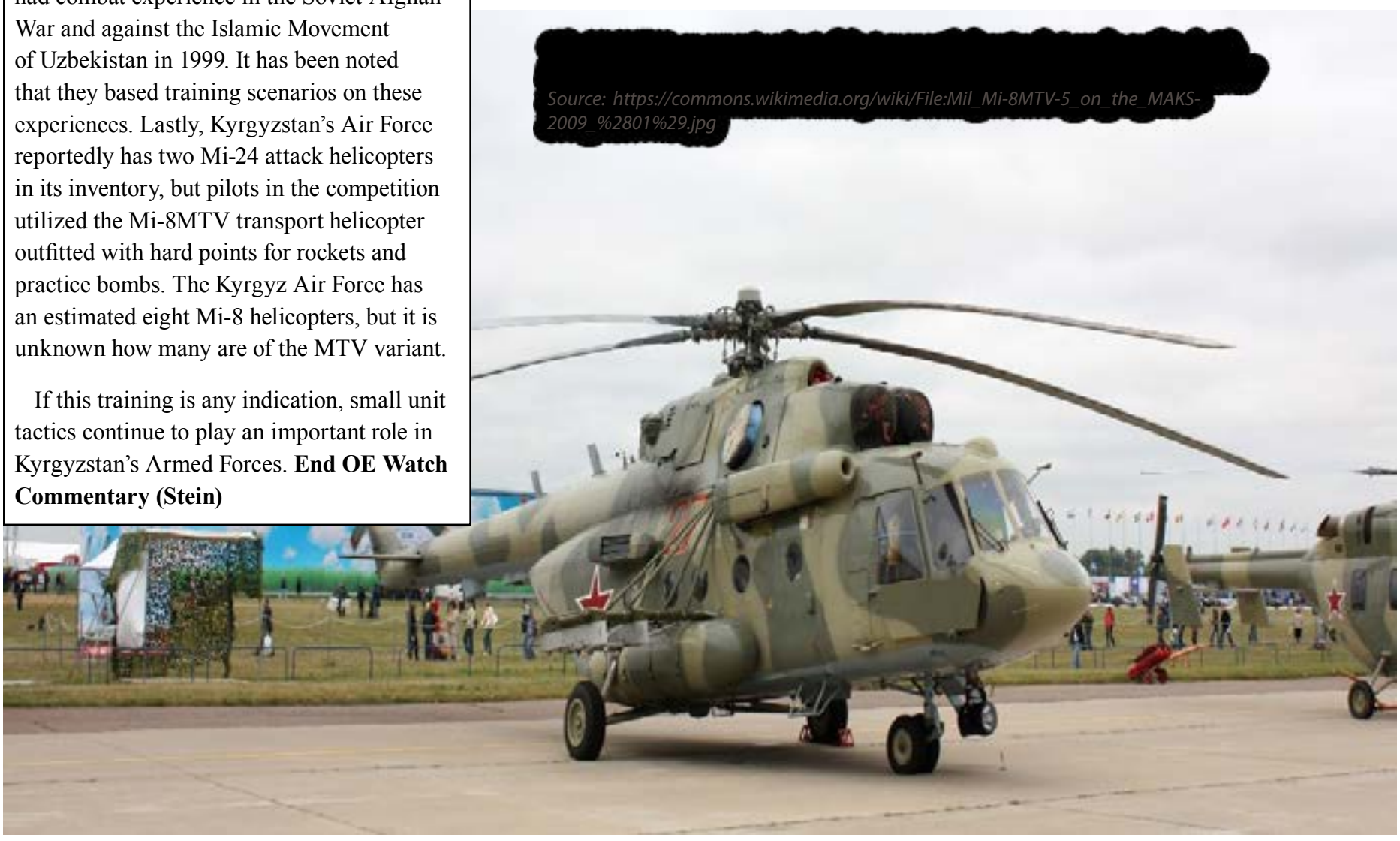
"On April 21 competitors demonstrated their ability to fly and use weapons against ground targets"

Source: Kurenev, Gleb. "Мне бы в небо. Как проходят военные соревнования 'Аскер шумкарлары-2016'" (I'd like to be in the sky. How the military competition "The Soldiers' birds of prey-2016" has been taking place), *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 22 April 2016. http://www.vb.kg/doc/338699_mne_by_v_nebo._kak_prohodiat_voennye_sorevnovaniia_asker_shymkarlary_2016.html

I'd like to be in the sky. How the military competition "The Soldiers' birds of prey-2016" has been taking place

On April 21 at the "Edelweiss" training the unit 20636 of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Kyrgyzstan passed the next stage of the competition "Soldiers' birds of prey 2016"...young pilots competed to be the best crew of the Mi-8MTV...The competition is being held from 18-29 April with the goal of increasing combat flight skills of personnel of the air defense forces. On April 21 competitors demonstrated their ability to fly and use weapons against ground targets...the soldiers fired unguided S-5 rockets and dropped 50kg practice bombs...

The altitude of the flights on the competition day was around 400 meters. The goal of the helicopter crew – fly to the firing position, fire shots on target and return, then drop bombs on a target...all of this was done at speeds around 130 km/hour...Observers, who watched from (nearby) mountains, did not report results. But they noted that the training of the young pilots was better than average and their shooting received a good rating.



Fleshing Out the Details of Reintroducing Divisions

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from ***Izvestiya*** lays out some interesting details about the reintroduction of the division into the Russian Ground Forces. Although Russia transitioned to a brigade structure in 2009/2010, a few divisions remained in the Ground Forces, but they were definitely the exception and not the rule. Now the Russian Federation is reintroducing the division into its organizational structure in a few key locations, notably on Russia's western border with Ukraine and NATO (reportedly, these divisions will deter any NATO invasion).

There have been few details about these divisions and how they will be structured. According to the accompanying article, each division will resemble divisions from the Soviet era, and have three motorized rifle regiments and one tank regiment (for a motorized rifle division) or three tank regiments and one motorized rifle regiment (for a tank division) plus supporting units. There has been speculation that these divisions will have fewer than the four maneuver regiments that were customary in Soviet times.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this article is the mention of how Russian tacticians envisage the functioning of brigades and divisions in the same combined arms formations (a combined arms army or tank army). Prior to 2009/2010 the Russian Ground Forces had never used maneuver brigades as permanent formations. When they were used, it was typically in an ad-hoc manner, being formed for a specific purpose or set period of time. Since these units are now functioning together, there now is some thinking about how they would interact in large-scale combined arms warfare. According to the article, the brigades will use their mobility to function as a combined arms reserve to either repel penetrations of the defense (while in the defense) or exploit offensive successes (while in the offense). Unlike the U.S. system, divisions and brigades will be subordinated directly to a combined arms army or tank army; maneuver brigades will never be subordinated to a division.

One reason that Russia turned away from the regimental/divisional structure was the difficulties with deploying these units. Russia determined it needed a brigade structure to more easily project combat power, as it is much easier to move a brigade than a division. Since these new divisions will be formed just on the western border (near the perceived threat), there is likely little concern about these units' effect on strategic mobility.

In sum, current Russian thinking sees value in maintaining both the brigade and divisional structures. The brigades provide needed strategic mobility to rapidly protect the vast borders of the Russian Federation, while the relatively static division provides an abundance of combat power in high risk areas. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Aleksey Ramm, "Russia Is Reviving Divisions," *Izvestiya* Online, 10 May 2016, <http://izvestia.ru/news/612939#ixzz48GcOt8FZ>, accessed 20 May 2016.

Russia Is Reviving Divisions

Prior to 2014, the Russian Armed Forces were able to withstand NATO on the Western Strategic Axis using only several tank and motorized rifle brigades of 4,000 men each and one air assault division. But a super-powerful armored fist, which is equipped with the latest word in equipment, has been created here literally during the last two years… Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu stated that a series of steps are being taken with the goal of countering the buildup of North Atlantic Alliance forces in direct proximity to the Russian borders…In particular, we are talking about the formation of three new divisions: two in the Western and one in the Southern military districts.

The Defense Ministry Head did not report additional details about the new formations, however, we already know that we are talking about the 150th Motorized Rifle Division, which will be deployed in Novocherkassk, Rostov Oblast, and 10th Tank, for which the infrastructure is being created in Voronezh Oblast's Boguchar and Belgorod Oblast's Valuyki at the present time…There is no precise information about the third formation at the present time, but presumably the third division will be a motorized rifle division and will be deployed in Yelnya, Smolensk Oblast.

Each division – is four motorized rifle or tank [3 motorized rifle and 1 tank or 3 tank and one motorized rifle], air defense missile, artillery regiments, and also several separate battalions, including combat engineer, reconnaissance, and even electronic warfare battalions. More than 10,000 soldiers and officers and hundreds of tanks, armored infantry vehicles, armored transport vehicles, and self-propelled howitzers and other weapon systems.

But right now the military-political leadership is once again forming divisions on the strategic axis where NATO threatens Russia. Why?... A division is a sledgehammer, with which one can breach a defense, which is composed of numerous and well-armed NATO formations but can also conduct a defense with that same success. On the contrary, Russian motorized rifle and tank brigades will hardly be able to deter "heavy" divisions in a showdown engagement because their trump card – is mobility. On the other hand, in the event of the breach already of our defensive positions, brigades can also help in defense as a mobile reserve, which is capable of entering an engagement and plugging a breach, having defeated the enemy. In this formation, divisions and brigades organically supplement each other and that is precisely why Russian Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Oleg Salyukov also said that, although the decision has been made to form divisions, no one intends to reject brigades…

In the process, the trend toward the formation of divisions is obvious right now: besides the three new formations, there are already the 2nd Guards Motorized Rifle Taman and the 4th Guards Tank Kantemirovka divisions in the Russian Army. It is noteworthy that it is precisely the tank crewmen from Moscow's Alabino and Naro-Fominsk and also

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Continued: Fleshing Out the Details of Reintroducing Divisions

Nizhniy Novgorod's Boguchar that will be the first to master the latest T-14 Armata tanks, Kurganets armored infantry vehicles and Koalitsiya self-propelled artillery mounts, and deliveries of the latter will probably begin by the end of this year.

1st Guards Tank Army, of which the Taman and Kantemirovka divisions have already become a part, was formed not far from Moscow in the Village of Babovka at the end of last year. The new combined formation parries the threat from the Baltic countries and the borders of Belarus. The newly-formed divisions in Nizhniy Novgorod and Smolensk oblasts will most likely be part of 20th Combined-Arms Army and cover the Kursk, Nizhniy Novgorod and Voronezh axes. At the same time, the 150th Division from Novocherkassk not only serves as the reserve of the Moscow Guards tank crewmen, to the assistance of which the new formation will be able to arrive over the course of a day, but also assists the 20th Army to close the Russo-Ukrainian border...

"Russian motorized rifle and tank brigades will hardly be able to deter "heavy" divisions in a showdown engagement because their trump card – is mobility. On the other hand, in the event of the breach already of our defensive positions, brigades can also help in defense as a mobile reserve, which is capable of entering an engagement and plugging a breach, having defeated the enemy. In this formation, divisions and brigades organically supplement each other and that is precisely why Russian Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Oleg Salyukov also said that, although the decision has been made to form divisions, no one intends to reject brigades..."

Innovation, Cost, and Compromise Regarding the "God of War"

OE Watch Commentary: In the U.S. military, the infantry is often referred to as the "Queen of Battle," but in the artillery-centric Russian Army the artillery is often referred to as the "God of War." In keeping with this theme, the Russian Federation has put a great emphasis on the design and production of artillery pieces to more effectively project combat power. In terms of tube artillery developments, it is pursuing two lines of effort.

The first is the creation of a new howitzer, the Koalitsiya-SV 152mm self-propelled howitzer. As the accompanying excerpted articles discuss, the Koalitsiya-SV is a new howitzer design, with an unmanned turret, capable of firing 16 shells per minute, allowing each Koalitsiya-SV to achieve the same effects as an artillery battery (with six howitzers) using older guns. Although the Koalitsiya-SV is currently mounted on a T-90-based chassis, there are also plans to field it on the Armata chassis. As with other technological innovations, the Koalitsiya-SV will be modified and used by other branches of service, namely the Navy's Coastal Defense Troops, which are considering a wheeled variant that the Ground Forces is testing for use by "Mountain" designated units. This capability to be mounted on a variety of tracked and wheeled vehicles suggests the Koalitsiya-SV is following the same design pattern as other Russian military combat vehicles, likely an innovation furthered for the benefit of the Russian Defense Ministry, but also a selling point on the lucrative international arms export market.

A second pattern that Russian artillery innovations are following in regard to Russian combat vehicle development is the fielding of a small number of new systems, while conducting a major refurbishment of existing systems. Unlike in the U.S. system, Russia does not find a need to retire functioning equipment, but rather prefers to refurbish this equipment at a fraction of the price of purchasing new systems. Although the capabilities of the refurbished systems are less impressive than those of newly purchased systems, these refurbished assets are a great bargain, and deliver more "bang-for-the-buck." This institutional practice allows Russia to upgrade existing capabilities for a majority of the force, while purchasing a few expensive new technologies. Since Russia pursues a more "evolutionary" than "revolutionary" approach to arms procurement and utilizes only a few manufactures of equipment, there is substantial overlap in terms of parts and components that are used in new and refurbished vehicles, meaning that the use of a combination of refurbished and brand new equipment probably does not cause the logistical headaches which would be expected from such a practice.

In terms of tube artillery, Russia is preparing to field the Koalitsiya-SV, but is also modernizing the Koalitsiya-SV's predecessor, the MSTA-S 152 mm self-propelled howitzer, which reportedly boasts a firing rate of 10 rounds per minute, and is designated the MSTA-SM after refurbishment. Russian commentators have mentioned the possibility that these systems are capable of functioning in a "simultaneous fire assault" mode, a practice where the howitzer fires at different *(continued)*

"A single Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled gun is worth an entire artillery battery."

— Missile and Artillery Troops Deputy Commander, Major General Alexander Dragovalovsky

Source: "Advanced Self-Propelled Russian Rifle Gets Satellite-Navigated Shells," *Sputnik* Online, 24 April 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20160424/1038522310/russiagunmissilesatellite.html>, accessed 20 May 2016.

Russia's advanced self-propelled howitzer, the Koalitsiya- SV, is capable of firing high-precision shells, which are navigated using a GLONASS module, according to the Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

Russia's state-of-the-art Koalitsiya-SV 2S35 self-propelled howitzer will be equipped with high-precision projectiles that will be navigated via the GLONASS satellite system, the Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta quoted Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Mikhail Osyko as saying.

According to him, the projectile was developed as part of another to equip the Koalitsiya-SV with a new munitions array which will significantly increase the howitzer's effective range and accuracy.

"When will all the necessary tests come to a close, this projectile will rightly be considered a high-precision weapons," Osyko pointed out. As for the GLONASS navigation module, it will be installed inside the upper part of the Koalitsiya-SV's 152-mm artillery shell, according to Rossiyskaya Gazeta. The 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV #howitzer is fitted with unmanned turret 2A88 152mm cannon.

The device includes a combined fuse, GLONASS receiver and aerodynamic control surfaces, which are arranged in the air and adjust the trajectory of the projectile.

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Continued: Innovation, Cost, and Compromise Regarding the "God of War"

trajectories on the same target, causing the rounds to fall on the target at the same time.

The Russian Federation's efforts to modernize tube artillery are in sync with efforts to develop a "reconnaissance-fire delivery system," a system for the rapid integration of targeting, fire control, and fires. While it is modernizing its tube artillery, it is also developing multiple launch rocket systems, targeting (primarily through the use of UAVs), and automated command and control and fire control systems. The end state of these endeavors is to more rapidly acquire targets and appropriately task decisive fires.

Another interesting aspect of the articles is a mention of the cost of the Russian 152mm GPS/GLONASS-enabled artillery shell in relation to the U.S./NATO 155mm M982 Excalibur artillery shell. Reportedly, the Russian shell costs about $1,000, while the U.S./NATO shell costs about $80,000 to manufacture. Issues of cost and affordability have always been top concerns in the Soviet, and later Russian arms production cycles. In the Russian system the cost of a given technology is one of the first criteria checked for feasibility, not the last. For Russia, it would be far better to use a less capable technology that can be used as desired, than a more capable technology seldom used due to issues of cost.
End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Source: "Fast and Accurate: Best-Kept Secrets of Russia's 'Sniper' Howitzer Revealed," *Sputnik* Online, 20 December 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20151220/1032044882/russiahowitzerdetailsvideo.html>, accessed 20 May 2016.

A gun with firing range far exceeding all existing analogues, unique fire-control electronics and a modern superfast loading system – these are just a few features that make Russia's Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled howitzer one of the most powerful and accurate around.

Even though information about the Koalitsiya's exact rate of fire remains under wraps, Russian experts say that it is higher than that of any of its foreign analogues.

This includes Germany's PsH 2000, which fires 10 rounds a minute, China's PLZ-05 with its eight rounds per minute capability and, of course, Britain's Brave Hart, which can fire maximum six times per minute, Zvezda TV reported on Sunday.

The Koalitsiya owes its record rate of fire largely to a unique barrel-cooling system developed by the Burevestnic research institute in Moscow.

Even though the Koalitsiya-SV resembles the older 2S19 Msta-S, it is a totally different system. It has an unmanned turret and is armed with a 152-mm gun. It also has a fully automated ammunition loading and handling system utilizing a modular charge mechanism.

This artillery system can fires a wide range of munitions, including standard and rocket-assisted HE-FRAG projectiles, cluster projectiles with anti-tank submunitions and jammer-carrying shells. The range of fire with a standard projectile is around 30 km and around 40 km with rocket-assisted projectile…

The Koalitsiya-SV's tracked chassis uses components of the T-90 main battle tank and is powered by a turbocharged diesel engine developing around 1,000 hp. A single Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled gun is worth an entire artillery battery, deputy commander of Russia's Missile Troops and Artillery, Maj.-Gen. Alexander Dragovalovsky told reporters in November.

Overall, the Koalitsiya-SV presents a quantum leap forward for Russia's defense industry and it won't be long before this long range howitzer with a truly sniper capability enters service in the Russian armed forces.

Source: "Packing a Punch: A Self-Propelled Gun That's Worth a Whole Battery," *Sputnik* Online, 22 November 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/military/20151122/1030528826/russiakoalitsiyaartillery.html>, accessed 20 May 2016.

A single Russian state-of-the-art Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled gun is worth an entire artillery battery, deputy commander of Russia's Missile Troops and Artillery, Major-General Alexander Dragovalovsky told the press.

"It's a new weapon, cutting edge. Its capabilities effectively allow it to replace a whole battery," Dragovalovsky said.

He pointed out that Koalitsiya has a very high degree of automation, with the turret being completely unmanned and the vehicle's crew residing within the hull. The new 2S35 Koalitsiya-SV self-propelled gun was first presented to the public during the Victory Day Parade in Moscow on May 9, 2015.

The 152mm self-propelled gun, with its maximum firepower, is designed to eliminate enemy armored units, infantry and fortifications. It's outfitted with an autonomous power unit, crew amenities, a satellite communication network and secure data link systems.

Due to its pneumatic loader and microwave shell priming system, the Koalitsiya-SV is capable of firing up to 16 shells per minute. Its ammunition capacity is 50-70 shells, including precision-guided munitions linked to the GLONASS system, Russia's equivalent of the US-based GPS satellite network.

Russia Successfully Tests Hypersonic Glide Vehicle for ICBMs

OE Watch Commentary: In late April the Russian Federation conducted the first fully successful test of the Yu-71 Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV), as the accompanying excerpted article from ***Moskovskiy Komsomolets*** reports. An HGV is not a hypersonic missile, rather it is a component of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that is designed to separate from the warhead and guide itself (unpowered) towards a given target with a conventional or nuclear payload at an extremely high rate of speed (Mach 10+). The HGV is reportedly protected by an electronic warfare suite and has a variety of sensors to find its target.

The article also points out that as early as 2004, around the time of the U.S's withdrawal from the antiballistic missile defense treat, Russia was already considering the HGV as means for circumventing missile defense systems. This is because of the HGV's incredible rate of speed and capability to zig-zag to its intended destination, making targeting an HGV by current air defense or missile defense technologies unlikely at best. The accompanying excerpted article from ***Izvestiya*** discusses, among other things, the additional physical protection measures that will protect the missiles from conventional precision-guided munitions at their launch silos, and the geographical location that will protect the missiles (in their launch silos) from the US missile defense system in Europe or BGM-109 Tomahawk cruise missiles.

These statements are due to a Russian belief that the U.S. has developed a "Prompt Global Strike" (PGS) program as a way of neutralizing Russian military capabilities by eliminating both offensive and defensive Russian strategic deterrent forces without using nuclear weapons. In a conventional large-scale nuclear attack, the adversary's military units, leadership, C2, military industry complex, power supply, and transportation facilities were all targeted for destruction. In a PGS attack, only military targets capable of inflicting damage on US territory and its military are targeted (launch vehicles) with conventional munitions. In the Russian view, this objective is an order of magnitude easier to accomplish and could be done with fewer than 1000 cruise missiles. By some Russian estimates, up to 80% of Russia's nuclear arsenal could be destroyed without the use of any U.S. nuclear weapons. The concern about the location of the silos relative to the U.S. missile defense system is due to a Russian belief that the U.S. missile defense system in Europe can quickly and easily be used as an offensive weapon and possibly to target Russian missiles in their silos. (The Russians have been quick to point out shared components between the antiballistic missile defense and Tomahawk cruise missile launch systems.)

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"The current task of the military industrial complex not only is to make up for lost time and develop fifth-generation weapons, but also to step into the future -- to work on the sixth and seventh generations of weapons already now. And I will note that such very successful developments already exist. These are entirely new and at times unpredictable weapons."

- Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Rogozin

Source: Olga Bozhyeva, "Russia Successfully Tested New Missile Superweapon," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* Online, 20 April 2016, <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/04/20/istochniki-rossiya-uspeshno-ispytala-novoe-raketnoe-superoruzhie.html>, accessed 20 May 2016.

According to our sources' information, at the beginning of this week Russia held successful tests of a new hypersonic warhead for the advanced Sarmat Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), which soon should come to replace the most powerful Russian Voyevoda RS-20 ICBM (SS-18 Satan according to the NATO classification). Nothing has been announced officially about these tests, but Moskovskiy Komsomolets sources assert that there should be a report in the near future about this fantastic success, as it is categorized by the developers. Our sources report that the test launch was made from the Dombarovskiy launch area in the Orenburg Oblast...It was launched into near-Earth orbit by the UR-100N ICBM (SS-19 Stiletto)...The Yu-71 will be able to carry both a nuclear as well as a conventional warhead.

...I would like to give the reminder that in one of his speeches back in 2004 former Russian Federation Chief of General Staff Yuriy Baluyevskiy talked about tests of a maneuvering warhead for an ICBM which was to fundamentally increase RVSN capabilities and become a worthy response to deployment of any missile defense system…analysts assert that the trajectory of the new Russian hypersonic device is random. It flies at a speed of over 11,000 km/hr (as a comparison, the maximum speed of a MiG-31 aircraft is 3,000 km/hr). And this device is called aeroballistic, which means it flies along an unpredictable trajectory, changing its direction using control surfaces. That is, it can maneuver randomly, which makes its intercept practically impossible by both air defense and missile defense elements…the Yu-71 vehicles can be used not only as warheads for the new Sarmat ICBM, but also can be adapted for arming our advanced long-range strategic bombers, although this idea is in the future for now. The success of the current tests is fundamentally important basically for the Russian RVSN at the given moment.

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Continued: Russia Successfully Tests Hypersonic Glide Vehicle for ICBMs

The last excerpted article, from ***Zvezda***, discusses not only the military capabilities of the HGV, but also its political capabilities as a tool for treaty negotiations tools. The Russian Federation has been extremely critical of the Aegis ashore program, so the HGV may also be intended as a bargaining chip in Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) negotiations and as possible leverage to reimplement the Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense Treaty. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Dmitriy Litovkin, "Russia Tested Hypersonic Warheads for the Sarmat," *Izvestiya* Online, 5 May 16, <http://izvestia.ru/news/612357#ixzz47mOfkoWg>, accessed 20 May 2016.

Russia conducted successful tests of hypersonic warheads for arming advanced strategic missile complexes…the Sarmat is a direct successor to Voyevoda, but with one important distinction: the new machine will be two times lighter. With comparable combat qualities, Sarmat will surpass its predecessor in energy efficiency, which will permit engaging targets at any point in the world… The main requirement for the new missile is a flexible response to development of the US national missile defense up to 2030," he explained.

According to Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov, "improved energy characteristics will permit equipping Sarmat with additional means of penetrating the US missile defense. The new missile will be capable of withstanding a space-based echelon of attack weapons, and it will be possible to launch it from practically any area and in all directions." The missile's new warhead -- a hypersonic maneuvering warhead -- specifically will be responsible for penetrating the US missile defenses. The West calls it the Yu-71, and in Russia, according to certain information, it goes by the designation "Article 4202."

The Yu-71's principle of operation resembles the description of actions by maneuvering nuclear warheads of the Topol-M, Yars, and new RS-26 Rubezh ballistic missiles. The Defense Ministry demonstrated them back in 2004 as part of Exercise Bezopasnost-2004. At that time Chief of General Staff Yuriy Baluyevskiy announced that an attack vehicle with hypersonic flight speed and capable of "swerving" and unpredictably changing the direction of flight at speeds close to Mach 10 (11,500 km/hr) had been tested in a training mode. Not one missile defense system is capable of calculating such a trajectory and guiding an interceptor missile to the attacking warhead.

According to Yesin, Sarmat will be accommodated in silo launchers being freed of "old" heavy RS-20 and RS-18 missiles. According to the specialist, silos of ballistic missiles being removed from operation will undergo in-depth modernization, which proposes their technological conversion as well as a new qualitative level of fortified protection with creation of elements of passive and active missile point defense. This will permit increasing by many times the protection of silo launchers against enemy effect both by conventional precision-guided munitions as well as nuclear weapons.

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

This top secret aerial vehicle, on which limited information began appearing in the press under the name Yu-71, is part of Project 4202, which involves a domestic missile program. Based on more or less reliable information, it is capable of developing a speed of over 11,000 km/hr, has supermaneuverability, uses a gliding type of flight (hence the name glider), and is capable of entering near space while maneuvering. Tests still continue, but their results permit speaking of the undeniable success of Russian technical thinking. It is thought that through this new kind of armament Russia will gain a powerful nuclear trump card by 2025 in talks with the United States.

"The arms race at the end of the last century allowed our country to move substantially ahead of NATO countries from a military-technical aspect and to create fourth-generation weapons, said Vice Premier Dmitriy Rogozin. "We will be objective and say that the fifth generation got stuck back at the design bureau level for a number of understandable reasons involving the Soviet Union's disintegration. The current task of the military industrial complex not only is to make up for lost time and develop fifth-generation weapons, but also to step into the future -- to work on the sixth and seventh generations of weapons already now. And I will note that such very successful developments already exist. These are entirely new and at times unpredictable weapons."

Yu-71 technical capabilities include more than just the delivery of instantaneous, deadly attacks. The hypersonic vehicle, equipped with an electronic warfare system, capable of traversing US territory and disabling all electronic detection stations in its path in a matter of minutes…the Yu-71 is capable of flying to Washington in 45-50 minutes, to New York in 40 minutes, and to London in 20 minutes. It is impossible to detect let alone shoot down these vehicles. This is a serious reason for frustration!

It is also no secret that Russia also is developing hypersonic cruise missiles which will reach targets at low altitudes. It is practically impossible to destroy them even with advanced missile defense systems, because these essentially are aerodynamic targets. Moreover, modern missile defense complexes have limits to target kill speed: intercept is possible only within limits of 700-800 m/sec. Plus the interceptor missile must have capabilities of maneuvering with g loads, and such interceptor missiles do not exist in NATO for now.

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Continued: Russia Successfully Tests Hypersonic Glide Vehicle for ICBMs

The Yu-71 test site also was not chosen by chance. The missile unit in the vicinity of Dombarovskiy Settlement, Orenburg Oblast, is a position area of Voyevoda strategic missile complexes, from the territory of which commercial launches are made as well as test launches of ballistic missiles in the interests of Missile Troops development. A feature of the range is that the missile and warhead fly a "closed path" that cannot be observed by US telemetry monitoring equipment, as is the case at Baykonur or Plesetsk. Secrecy of the launch and of its results is thereby fully assured… Dombarovskiy also will be the first place where a minimum of 24 Sarmat missiles with the Yu-71 will be stationed. It is impossible for the US missile defense system in Europe or BGM-109 Tomahawk cruise missiles from ships and submarines to reach them here…

Russia's Near-Term Asymmetric Response to the BMD- the Iskander

OE Watch Commentary: Few actions have miffed the Russian Federation more than the establishment of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System (ABM). It perceives this program, along with the Prompt Global Strike program, as an effort to undermine Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities, the cornerstone of Russia's national security strategy. The accompanying excerpted article from ***RIA Novosti*** lays out these beliefs, as well as some of the more interesting, long-term means of circumventing the ABM. In the near term Russia will likely posture its often mentioned Iskander missile systems, as discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from ***Interfax***. In regards to the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System, Russia has stated on several occasions that one purpose of the Iskander missile system is to destroy U.S. strategic missile defense assets at their launch sites in Eastern Europe.

In terms of capabilities, the Iskander missile system has little in common with its predecessors. The system is capable not only of transporting and launching two missiles, but also of firing two different types of missiles. The Iskander, which is classified as a tactical-operational missile system by the Russian Federation, can fire two short-range ballistic missiles (SS-26 Stone) or two ground-launched cruise missiles (referred to as the R-500 or Iskander-K in Russian), and possibly could fire a combination of these missiles. These missiles can carry a variety of payloads weighing 480-700 kg, including cluster warheads (antipersonnel/antimaterial), fragmentation submunitions, area denial submunitions, thermobaric, high explosive earth penetrators for bunker busting, electromagnetic pulses, decoys, and nuclear warheads. The Iskander's missiles are reportedly compliant with the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, but there are allegations that they could be easily modified to violate the 500-km lower limit of the treaty.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Iskander and its predecessors is its accuracy. While the circular error probability (CEP) of the Iskander's predecessors was often estimated in hundreds of meters, the Iskander reportedly has a CEP of 10-30 meters. The warheads have an inertial unit with a terminal guidance electro-optical seeker and topographic data for finding targets. Some versions reportedly have guidance systems capable of GPS/GLONASS satellite navigation and active radar and/or infrared imaging seekers. The Russian Federation has also been touting the capability of the Iskander's missiles to evade air and missile defense systems by being able to vary their flight paths and deploy various countermeasures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: "Experts: The Russian Federation Will Respond to the European Missile Defense With Missiles, Which Will Make It Irrelevant," *RIA Novosti* Online, 13 May 2016, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160513/1432489076.html#ixzz48YsKAQgN>, accessed 20 May 2016.

The deployment of elements of the Missile Defense in Eastern Europe is only Washington's first step on the path to undermining world stability and the RF's status as a nuclear power; Russia must respond to it through the development of new types of strategic weapons, which will make the further deployment of the U.S. Missile Defense inadvisable, the experts, whom RIA Novosti polled on Friday, think.

That is how they commented on the launch of the first U.S. Missile Defense facility in Eastern Europe, which is located at the former Deveselu Air Base in the South of Romania, where the ceremony confirming the operational readiness of the American Aegis Ashore complex took place. The ceremony for the initiation of the construction of a similar Missile Defense complex in Redzikowo, Poland will take place on Friday. Both bases are being created within the second and third phases of the U.S. and NATO European Missile Defense Deployment Plan…

The deployment of elements of the American Missile Defense in Romania and Poland is an "extremely alarming" step, which is directed at undermining world stability, Igor Korotchenko, a member of the Public Council under the RF Ministry Defense and the editor-in-chief of National Defense Magazine, opines.

Konstantin Sivkov, the president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, thinks that Russia must react to the launch of the U.S. Missile Defense elements in Eastern Europe with the development of a new generation of super-powerful nuclear munitions and their delivery systems, which will make the deployment of the Global Missile Defense System senseless and will compel Washington to sit at the negotiating table. "The response must be asymmetrical. The development of weapons for the guaranteed destruction of the United States must become the response to the development of the American missile defense. Under the current state of affairs, we can achieve this only through the development of weapons, which are capable of causing geophysical changes on the territory of the United States. We are talking about the development of very large caliber nuclear munitions, which are capable, for example, of causing the eruption of the Yellowstone Volcano or powerful tsunamis during detonation at great depths," Sivkov said.

He added that the development of super-heavy ballistic missiles with a throw weight of 15-20 tonnes and also the development of platforms with a range of up to 40,000 kilometers, which will permit them to reach U.S. territory during a launch from any point, is one more key issue, which the Russian Defense Industrial Complex faces as a result of the development of the American Missile Defense.

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Continued: Russia's Near-Term Asymmetric Response to the BMD- the Iskander

"It is precisely those missiles, which were developed at the end of the 1960s, that compelled the United States at that time to abandon the missile defense project and to sit at the negotiating table. This is the only realistic method, the Americans understand only force, and if there is no force, you will not convince them of any negotiations whatsoever," the expert pointed out.

In his words, the demonstration of the capabilities of the Status-6 System – the unmanned nuclear submarine project, which is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead - is one more argument, which is capable of compelling the United States to abandon the deployment of the Missile Defense System.

Sivkov also stressed that, from the point of view of missile defense, the facilities in Romania and Poland only pose a threat to Russian Iskander operational-tactical missile complexes, however, the MK-41 launchers that are being deployed there could also be used for the launch of Tomahawk cruise missiles with a flight range of up to 2,500 kilometers.

Source: "Russia Testing New Systems to Beat Missile Shield," *Interfax*, 13 May 2016.

Russia is testing new military equipment in response to the US deployment of missile defence systems in Poland and Romania, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has said, privately owned news agency Interfax reported on 13 May.

"Of course, there will be an inexpensive, symmetrical military response, and, as the president has said, we won't be drawn into an arms race. But we have forces and means, including those which are in the test stage, which will act not in the same old way, but on the enemy's vulnerabilities," he said when asked about Russia's response to the latest US deployments.

Earlier that day, President Vladimir Putin repeated previous statements that Russia would respond to the latest US deployments of missile defense systems in Eastern Europe.

Russia has previously said it will deploy Iskander short-range ballistic missile systems to Kaliningrad, and take other measures, in response to deployment of missile defenses by NATO in Europe.

Airborne Commander, Colonel General Valdimir Shamanov
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Shamanov#/media/File:Vladimir_Shamanov._Cabinet_photo.jpg

Russian Electronic Warfare Equipment and Personnel Developments

OE Watch Commentary: In the past, Russian military thinkers have thought of combat in spatial terms: depth, width and height. In recent years, military theorists such as renowned military scholar and tactician Major General (Retired) Ivan Vorobyev, Doctor of Military Sciences and Hero of the Soviet Union, have proposed that a fourth element – information - is now equally important. In general, Russian efforts to dominate the information domain may be split into two subsets: information operations (propaganda, psychological operations, military information support operations, etc.) and electronic warfare (EW), with includes cyber. (In the Russian system, offensive/ defensive cyber is a subset of the EW discipline.) In the Russian view, information operations are closely connected with EW. They are both intended to conceal friendly actions, mislead the enemy, and eventually lead to the imposition of one's will on the enemy.

The Russian military has been especially keen on the study and practice of the EW aspects of the information sphere. Most Russian theorists believe that EW can be waged at all levels (tactical, operational, strategic), but is primarily designed to disrupt enemy or protect friendly command and control systems, impacting all aspects of combat operations. EW is generally defined (in a military context) as the delivery of individual and multiple fire and electronic strikes coordinated by target, mission, time, and place, with the purpose of disorganizing enemy command and control and fire control systems, disrupting the functioning of his reconnaissance, EW and air defense systems, and disrupting the most important elements of the his reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire delivery complexes.

The accompanying excerpted article from ***Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*** discusses the direction of Russian EW developments by examining the desired characteristics for current and future EW systems. It also discusses the seldom mentioned, but equally important human component of EW operations. The Russian Federation appears to be making a large investment in the human capital that operates this equipment at the officer and contract NCO levels, usually measuring terms of training not in months, but years. Complex equipment, requires highly skilled labor. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Major General Yuriy Lastochkin, "Not a Day Goes By Without Interference: Electronic Warfare Is Conducted Strictly According to Science," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 27 April 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/30428>, accessed 17 May 2016

Electronic Warfare (EW) is the most complex intellectual and technical component in the rivalry of states laying claim to leadership. The swift development of arms and military equipment, their saturation with the newest hardware, and creation of global information exchange networks predetermine the impossibility of even the slightest lag behind a potential enemy. These conditions set the highest rate of development of the EW Troops. Their technology base is being upgraded in accordance with State Armaments Program-2020. Breakthrough technologies and innovative solutions that elevate multifunctionality, mobility, and maintainability to a new level are being introduced successfully. In its zone of responsibility the current armament and equipment system of the EW Troops are capable of parrying all possible threats to national security...

DEMANDS ARE GROWING

There currently are on the order of 20 EW items in the State Defense Order. It is expected that development will be completed and procurements will begin for at least another 10 items in the near future. This essentially consists of all EW equipment groups: communications, radar, and radionavigation jamming; protection against precision-guided munitions; and command and control and support equipment.

The main demands on modern EW equipment are as follows:

- expanded functional capabilities and increased versatility of individual equipment, transition to multifunctional complexes capable of performing a wide range of missions in warfare against enemy command and control systems;

- Increased effectiveness of warfare with a significant decrease in weight-size characteristics of hardware

- High survivability and mobility by accommodating hardware on platforms ensuring use under conditions of intensive fire and electronic countermeasures

- Transfer of engagement efforts to "enemy territory," wide use of unmanned and scatterable deliverable assets

- Creation of a complex electronic environment for enemy technical reconnaissance assets in combat operations areas

- Development of multispectral jammers for protecting technical equipment from enemy precision guided munitions, electro-optical, and combination guidance systems;

- Integration of electronic countermeasures complexes with aircraft onboard equipment systems, above all radars with the function of creating high-potential interference

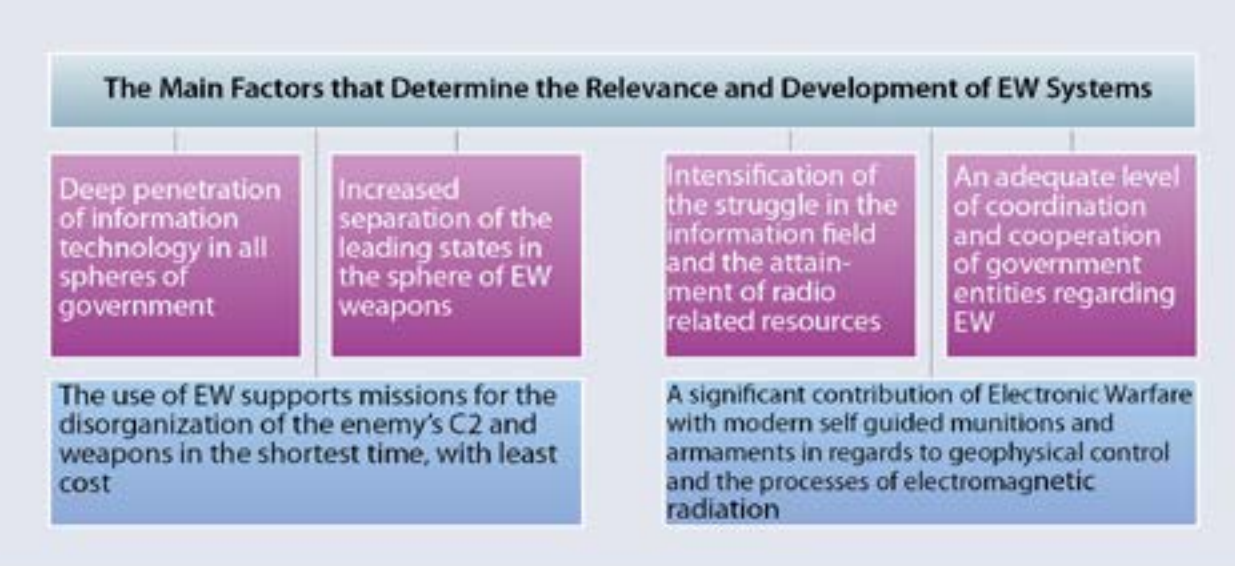
- unification of EW complexes in spatially distributed protection systems based on a common algorithm of functioning

(continued)

Continued: Russian Electronic Warfare Equipment and Personnel Developments

QUALIFICATION AND COMPETITION

Around 300 basic models of equipment and more than a thousand pieces of small hardware have been delivered to the Troops under the State Defense Order. This permitted reequipping 45 percent of military units and subunits with the modern Murmansk-BN, Krasukha, Borisoglebsk-2, and other complexes…The overall proportion of modern models was 46 percent by the beginning of 2016, and they concede nothing to the best Western models in terms of specifications and performance. Moreover, the main trends in development of domestic EW equipment and foreign analogues coincide, which predetermines the closeness of their characteristics.

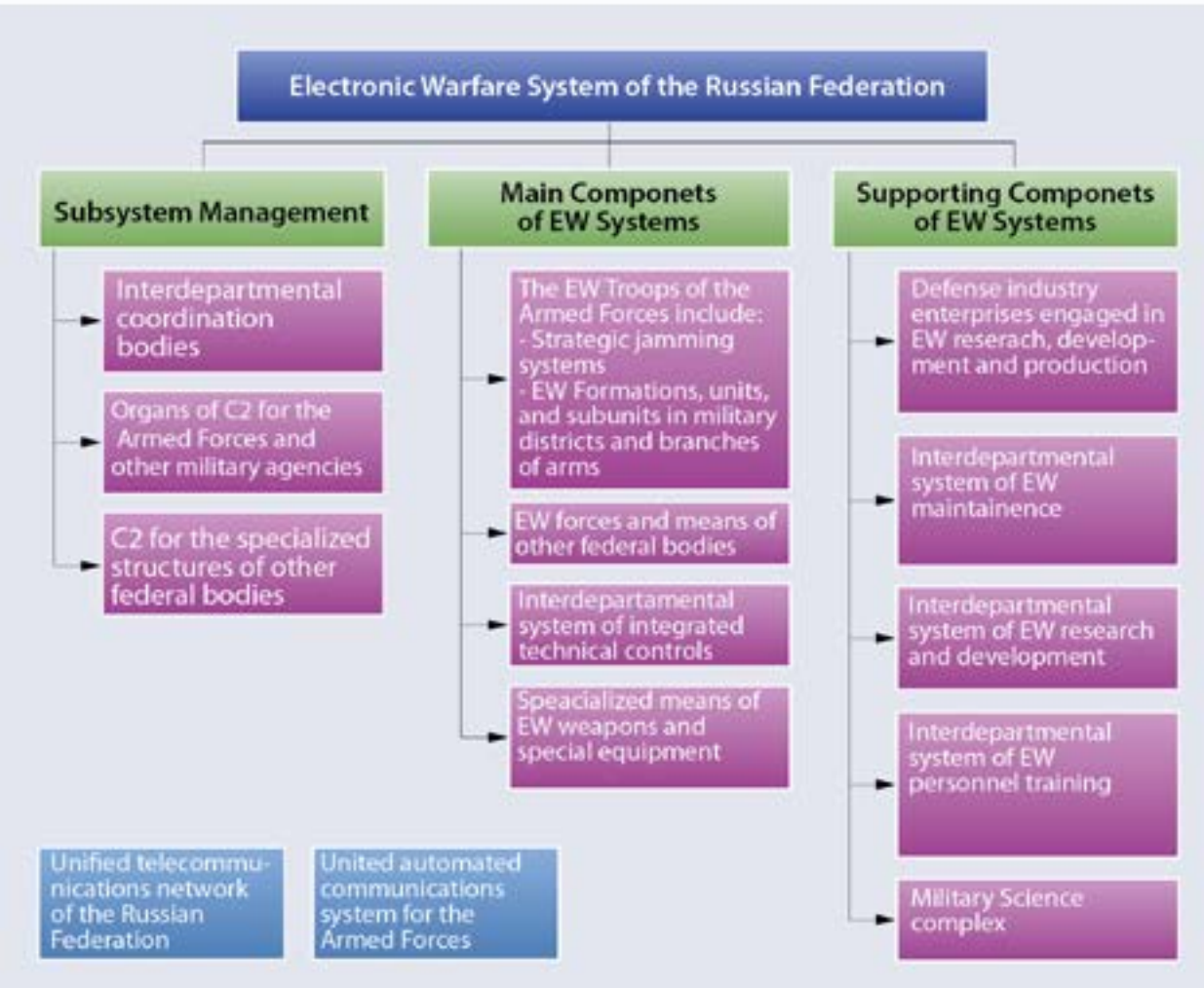


The following can be included among the main advantages of domestic equipment:

- Long range of its effect, achieved by using transmitters and antenna systems surpassing foreign ones in power and efficiency

- Wide nomenclature of affected targets

- Possibility of implementing a flexible structure of control both of EW complexes as well as of individual models of equipment functioning autonomously or as part of integrated pairs



FROM HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION TO THE FIELD

The new EW equipment also required changes in training modern specialists. A training system has been organized, which includes programs for the following:

- Senior operational-strategic training for central military command and control entities -- in the General Staff Academy (2 years)

- Complete military-special training for EW formations, military units, and subunits of all branches and combat arms -- in two Russian Federation Defense Ministry higher educational institutions (5 years)

- Master's level (senior military operational-tactical) training for combined formations, operational-strategic commands, and staffs of branches and combat arms -- in six Russian Federation Defense Ministry higher educational institutions (2 years)

In addition, when appointed to higher positions, EW officer-specialists are trained in Defense Ministry's higher educational institutions under supplementary professional education programs. Contract NCOs in the Ground Troops and Coastal Defense Troops study at the Interbranch Center for Training and Combat Employment of EW Troops. The term of training is four and one-half months. Refresher training of contract servicemen also has been adjusted there under supplementary professional education and advanced training programs…

Tank Combat Support Vehicle "Terminator-3" on an Armata Chassis?

OE Watch Commentary: While the U.S. and other Western Armies have focused on special operation forces development, the Russian Federation has focused on the development of its conventional forces. Russia considers tanks to be essential to current and future warfighting not only in conventional environments, but also in urban and counterinsurgency fights. However, in order for tanks to dominate the future battlefield, they must survive.

The proliferation of antitank missiles and rocket-propelled grenades has caused Russia not to shy away from tanks, but rather to look for other ways to increase their survivability on the modern battlefield. One idea is the development of a completely new type of vehicle to support tank operations, namely a tank combat support vehicle (BMPT) [боевая машина поддержки танков (БМПТ)] or, as it is sometimes referred, a combat fire support vehicle (BMOP). [боевая машина огневой поддержки (БМОП)].

Russia's first BMPT was nicknamed the "Terminator," due to the antipersonnel capabilities of the system, and was built upon a T-72 or a T-90S tank chassis. The BMPT has the armored protection, maneuverability, and ruggedness to maneuver directly with the tank platoon, has laminated and reactive armor, weighs 47 tons and carries a five-man crew with a low-profile turret, housing a 30mm automatic cannon with a coaxial AG-17D grenade launcher, an AT-14 Koronet antitank guided missile, and a 7.62mm machine gun. Hopes for fielding the BMPT were dashed in 2010, when the Russian MoD announced that its funding had been cancelled. Despite this setback, the manufacturer, Uralvagonzavod, did not give up on it, and began to look for customers in the export market. In 2012 Kazakhstan, a country with a post-Soviet Army that somewhat resembles the Russian military in force structure and tactics, signed an agreement to purchase nine BMPTs on T-72 chassis, with deliveries starting in 2013. Apparently, the BMPT was perceived as a great success, and in April 2014 Kazakhstan signed another contract with Uralvagonzavod to produce the BMPT in Kazakhstan under a licensing agreement. In 2013, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who oversees the Russian defense industries, suggested that the Terminator-2 could be built upon Russia's newest heavy chassis platform, the Armata. This statement could be seen as evidence that the BMPT program had not been cancelled by the Russian MoD, but instead put on indefinite hold until a new universal chassis was put into production. The accompanying excerpted article from ***Rossiyskaya Gazeta*** has again mentioned the possibility of fielding a BMPT on an Armata chassis, naming the new system the "Terminator-3." **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Nikolai Gryshchenko, "On the Basis of the 'Armata' the Terminator-3 Will be Created," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 18 April 2016, <http://rg.ru/2016/04/18/armata-boevuia-mashina-terminator-3.html>, accessed 20 May 2016.

On the basis of the 'Armata' the Terminator-3 will be created

On the basis of the T-14 "Armata" a new tank support combat vehicle, "Terminator 3," will be created, as announced by Oleg Siyenko, Director General of the "Uralvagonzavod" corporation. ..the "Terminator 1" and "Terminator 2" are built upon T-72 chassis and are sold for export only, the Russian Ministry of Defense does not buy them.

"We will build [the tank combat support vehicle] on the Armata chassis..." We have a machine concept of development based on the Armata platform. "It consists of 28 systems integrated to function on a single platform.. Unifying elements will increase the rate of repair and replacement of components and assemblies.

The Director General of "Uralvagonzavod" also announced an intention to establish a new system with a 57 mm cannon, with a range of 16 kilometers. "Against such a machine militants do can do nothing. Yes, they are expensive, but effective, and therefore believe there are prospects for development...

Recall that the tank combat support vehicle "Terminator" was created due to lessons from the military actions in Afghanistan [during the Soviet-Afghan War]. It became apparent that armored vehicles require protection from grenades and anti-tank guided missiles.

Georgian Perspectives on Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict and Russia's Position

OE Watch Commentary: When fighting broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabakh in early April 2016, the Western press covered Armenian, Azeri, and Russian sides of the story about the fighting. Yet few have focused on views in the South Caucasus about the region's views on Russia's actions in the region. Few also have focused on Georgian perspectives on the entire situation. The accompanying excerpt from ***Haqqin.az*** from 19 April 2016 provides such perspectives. ***Haqqin.az*** is an information analysis and monitoring portal of the nonprofit "For Human Rights" association—a nongovernmental human rights organization created in 2011.

The accompanying except is an exclusive interview with Roman Gotsiridze, Chairman of the Economic Development Center and former economic advisor to Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili, as well as former President of the National Bank.

"In general, all fears of Georgians are associated with Russia, as the country is absolutely unpredictable," said Gotsiridze, "And that Moscow, at least outwardly, took Azerbaijan's position in the recent conflict (and this is true, according to official statements of Russian officials), extremely surprised us." In his view, however, Moscow's official position is based strictly on *realpolitik* principles. He believes Russia has begun a game where it is trying to pull Azerbaijan into its sphere of influence. In his view, Armenia, for all intents and purposes, has already become what he calls "a Russian province." Therefore, he believes, Russia is seeking its next target province. He believes that the Kremlin will not think twice about "sacrificing" Armenia to this aim.

Gotsiridze highlights that Georgia's and Azerbaijan's economies are interconnected, and therefore tensions in Azerbaijan affect Georgia. "So, there we had plenty of reasons for concern," he said. He concludes that only time will tell how Russia's influence on Azerbaijan will manifest itself. However, he is certain that "Russian influence on Azerbaijan for Moscow is a higher priority than disappointing Yerevan." **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Bakhram Batyev, "Экс-советник президента Грузии: 'Ради Азербайджана Россия спокойно пожертвует Арменией'" (Former Advisor To Georgia's President: "For Azerbaijan, Russia Will Easily Sacrifice Armenia"), *Haqqin.az*, 19 April 2016. http://haqqin.az/comics/68425

- How has the Georgian society perceived in the beginning of April the start of military actions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and what do the country's political experts think about it?

- Of course, [they perceived it] with great concern. In the Georgian society quite understandable concerns were observed about the completely unpredictable actions of Russia in the conflict. In general, all fears of Georgians are associated with Russia, as the country is absolutely unpredictable. And that Moscow, at least outwardly, took Azerbaijan's position in the recent conflict (and this is true, according to official statements of Russian officials), extremely surprised us. But I would like to warn our Azerbaijani neighbors – it is not worth it to be deluded with Russia's position, because it [Russia] did not support Azerbaijan and operated strictly in accordance with its strategic goals and objectives in the region.

Tensions in the region cannot but affect the economic situation in Georgia, and we are well aware of this. Any economic problems in Azerbaijan are automatically reflected on the Georgian economy, since our economies are closely interconnected. So, there we had plenty of reasons for concern....

- Do you mean to say that Russia now is starting a game, in which first prize—is Azerbaijan?

- I think yes. Armenia is already a Russian province. And now it is necessary [for Russia] to get Azerbaijan. I am sure that Russia will easily sacrifice Armenia for Azerbaijan. And without any risk to itself, because in Armenia the already is strong Russian influence, which Armenian authorities cannot escape. How the extension of Russian influence to Azerbaijan will take place, economically or politically, time will tell. I can only say that intensifying Russian influence on Azerbaijan for Moscow is a higher priority than disappointing Yerevan ...

(continued)

Armenian Officials Reassure the Public about Military Effectiveness

OE Watch Commentary: Following clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabakh in early April 2016, the Armenian public expressed concern about both the quality and quantity of the country's weapons. Moreover, protests broke out in Armenia over Russia's arms sales to Azerbaijan. In response, Armenian officials rushed to reassure the public that Armenia can defend itself. The accompanying excerpts provide examples of such statements and context for them.

The first excerpt is from Russian-language ***Novosti Armeniya***. The publication quotes Chief of Armenian Police Vladimir Gasparian: "We have advantages and disadvantages, but this does not prevent us either from fighting or defending ourselves or moving forward. The important thing is that we have a fighting spirit." He added that there are "internal squabbles," but they are improper to discuss on such a level. "[N]ot everything can be spoken about out loud or on a level of a selfie."

The second excerpt is from ***Armenia Today,*** which provides comments from Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan, who assured readers that Armenia does not have, and never had problems with regard to weapons. When asked about acquisitions of modern weapons from Russia he vaguely assured that everything is fine.

The third excerpt, also from ***Armenia Today,*** quotes Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovhannisyan. He calms the public's concern about lack of modern equipment (existing equipment dates to the 1980s and came from Moscow). In his view, Russia produced its most powerful weapons, such as Smerch and Solntsepyok, precisely in the 1980s, and Russia's armorers produced little of value after that, such as T-90 tanks, which, in his view, are ineffective. In addition, in his view, a large majority of weapons worldwide, not simply in Russia, were also produced in this decade and even before it. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s changed the situation, he concludes.

To put these comments into context, Armenia's military indeed relies, to some extent, on old Soviet-era equipment such as tanks, missile systems, and personnel carriers. The relatively small Armenian Air Force, used to protect its airspace and offer close air support for ground elements, consists of a couple dozen or so Soviet-era fighter jets and helicopters that have suffered from poor maintenance in the past.

Source: "'У армянской армии нет и не было проблем с вооружением' – начальник Полиции" (The Armenian army does not have and never had problems with weapons - Police Chief), *Novosti Armeniya*, 29 April 2016. http://newsarmenia.am/news/armenia/u-armyanskoy-armii-net-i-ne-bylo-problem-s-vooruzheniem-nachalnik-politsii-/

The Armenian army does not have and never had any problems with weapons, Vladimir Gasparyan, chief of Armenian police told journalists on Sunday, after visiting the memorial complex Tsitsernakaberd ....

"We have advantages and disadvantages, but this does not prevent us either from fighting nor defending ourselves nor moving forward. The important thing is that we have a fighting spirit." Gasparian said.

According to him [Gasparian], the problem lies in internal squabbles, which is not proper for the Armenian people, especially when fateful questions are decided.

"Armenia's army and police are one single entity. Our police officers are on duty at the border, but not everything can be spoken about out loud or on a level of a selfie," Gasparian said. ..

Baku's most recent purchases of modern armament from Russia put Azerbaijan at an advantage over Armenia, at least on paper. Still, Russia's massive and multifaceted military presence in Gyumri and Erebuni, under the auspices of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, effectively bolster Armenia's air defenses and strike capabilities. In addition, Moscow reportedly provided Armenia a $200 million loan in February 2016 for purchasing Russian weapons in the next two years at a low 3 percent interest rate. Furthermore, old equipment that is well maintained and upgraded can be very effective, though it is unclear how well Armenia has done this outside the Air Force.

Nonetheless, the accompanying excerpts do not inspire confidence about the state of Armenia's Armed Forces. Rather than addressing internal difficulties, such as "internal squabbles," Gasparian simply says they are an improper topic of conversation. In this context fighting spirit alone does not convince. Abrahamyan merely says that everything is fine. Hovhannisyan meanwhile downplays Moscow's recent strides in improving modern weaponry, even the value of T-90 tanks built in the 1990s, which Iran, for one, covets, and which would be suitable for Armenia's needs. It remains unclear how Armenian-Azeri tensions will play out in the coming months. Russia, for its part, however, will continue pursuing its own interests in the region above all else. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

(continued)

Continued: Armenian Officials Reassure the Public about Military Effectiveness

Source: "'Абрамян: Армения не испытывает финансовых проблем в вопросе вооружения армии" (Abrahamyan: Armenia is experiencing financial problems in the issue of military weapons), Armenia Today, 29 April 2016. *http://www.armtoday.info/default.asp?Lang=_Ru&NewsID=145751*

Armenia is not experiencing financial problems in the issue of military weapons. Prime Minister of Armenia Hovik Abrahamyan made this announcement today at the memorial complex Tsitsernakaberd ...

Commenting on the question of at what stage are the acquisitions of modern weapons from Russia, he noted that everything is going as it should and there are no problems.

Source: David Stepanyan, "Арцрун Ованнисян: Разговоры о вооружении армянской армии 'оружием 80-х' отдают дилетантизмом" (Artsrun Hovhannisyan: Discussions about arming the Armenian army 'with arms from the 80s' waft of dilettantism), *Armenia Today*, 25 April 2016. http://www.arminfo.info/index.cfm?objectid=090ED500-0AEE-11E6-B1570EB7C0D21663

Talks about arming the Armenian military "with 80s weapons" waft of dilettantism. Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovhannisyan expressed such an opinion...

"I want to emphasize that after the 80s… nothing particularly special and good was made by the Russian armorers. All these Smerches, Solntsepyoks, and other powerful Russian arms were created precisely in the 80s…and all the discourse about the T-90 tanks and other weapons upgraded with impressive-sounding titles are just talk," he said ...

"Meanwhile, 70-80% of world's arms were produced precisely in the 80s and even the 70s of the last century. The main reason is simple, the end of the Cold War could not but make revisions in the plans of the manufacturers and most importantly the buyers of new weaponry types, although there are other reasons as well for this," he concluded.

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

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

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

Armenian Views on Russia's Peacemaking Efforts in Karabakh

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 April 2016 ***Haqqin.az*** published an exclusive interview with Director of the Yerevan-based Caucasus Institute Alexander Iskandaryan, a prominent political scientist in Armenia. In the interview he provides his views on the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The accompanying excerpts focus on Russia's role in the conflict, especially its peacemaking efforts and the possibility of deployment of Russian peacekeepers.

With regard to possible Russian peace plans, the regional media had floated a proposed settlement: a lifting of the Turkish/Azerbaijani blockade on Armenia's borders, which would take Armenia out of economic isolation, in exchange for five regions around Karabakh going to Azerbaijan. Iskandaryan dismisses such ideas as conjecture.

Moreover, he stresses that at this point talk of conflict settlement is unrealistic. "Today we can speak only about an attempt at resuscitation of the negotiation process, about a political 'emergency'." He says that in the end, the opening of the borders that could be closed again in a week is a high price to pay for unblocking "the entire security system of Karabakh."

Both Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders publically said they do not want Russian peacekeepers in the region. Talk of Russian peacekeepers emerged in recent weeks following Russia's announcement of a new National Guard that answers directly to Russian President Vladimir Putin, which would have a mandate, among other things, to participate in peacekeeping missions abroad.

Asked about whether or not peacekeepers in general are necessary in the region right now or in the near future, Iskandaryan says that the question is wrong—peacekeepers are simply not possible right now. Though neither the question nor Iskandaryan's answer refer here specifically to Russian peacekeepers, he brings the issue back to Russia when he says that Moscow has no real intentions of deploying peacekeepers either. He concludes that "at minimum in the short-to- medium-term" the deployment of peacekeepers would be impossible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Bahram Batyev, "Александр Искандарян: 'Пять районов взамен на столь малый пряник, как открытие границ?'" (Alexander Iskandaryan: 'Five districts in return for such a small prize as the opening of the borders? '), *Haqqin.az*, 26 April 2016. http://haqqin.az/news/69048

...Russia these days exerts hyper-efforts to resolve this conflict. There is an opinion that Lavrov brought to Yerevan a settlement plan, which entails a return to Azerbaijan of five regions around Karabakh. In return, the blockade of Armenia's Azerbaijani and Turkish borders will be lifted, which will help normalize somewhat the difficult economic situation in the country. How realistic is this plan?

- I do not think that now, in principle, can we talk about settlement of the conflict. Today we can speak only about an attempt at resuscitation of the negotiation process, about a political "emergency." Everything else - media bubbles, including exotic conjectures that it is possible to five areas, that is, unblock the entire security system of Karabakh in exchange for such a small prize as the opening of borders, which can be closed again in a week.

- Sargsyan has openly declared that he does not wish to see Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone. Azerbaijan, as we know, also does not agree to the deployment of Russian troops on its territory. What do you think, are peacekeepers necessary in general, right now, (or in the future) in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict zone?

- The issue is not "necessary" but "possible." Deployment of peacekeepers in the region right now is impossible. As you correctly pointed out, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan welcome such a prospect. And I doubt that Moscow seriously has such intentions. In the future, of course, theoretically change is possible - in politics nothing can be excluded, but at minimum in the short to medium term, it is hardly possible...

A Cyber Component to the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

OE Watch Commentary: Not long after fighting broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh in early April, various groups shut down Armenian and Azeri government websites, as the accompanying excerpted articles report. This is not the first time this has happened over disputes between Armenia and Turkey or Azerbaijan, but the groups claimed they were doing this in retaliation for the most recent outbreak of violence. The websites mentioned in the articles were not offline for very long, and it does not appear that the shutdown caused any significant problems. The article from ***News.am*** reports how the Armenian Monte Melkonian Cyber Army released information on 25,000 Azerbaijani soldiers, and there are a couple of things to note about this in relation to the other incidents: the group has taken credit for a number of actions against Turkey and Azerbaijan over the past few years, including taking down government websites through distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks (often several websites at a time) as well as other breaches of databases.

The list of 25,000 soldiers from Azerbaijan contains the names, telephone numbers, and other personally identifiable information, and while the original link to the spreadsheet file was taken down, it appears to have been reposted in some different locations. It is unknown if the information came from a Ministry of Defense database or if it had been compiled through other means or sources, but this is one of the more high-profile actions against Azerbaijan or Turkey that the group has carried out. This is also notable, considering how much the government of Azerbaijan has been investing in its Armed Forces over the past several years. There have been no reports that the soldiers' information has been used to target them in any way, though it will be something to watch for over the next several years.

Ultimately, actions like those seen in the articles show how there is another component to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh that continues to take shape, namely, information. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Members of the Monte Melkonian Cyber Army group hacked the data and published information on 25 thousand Azerbaijani soldiers."

Source: "Armenian Hackers Broke into Data of 25,000 Azerbaijani Soldiers," News.am, 5 April 2016. http://news.am/eng/news/320605.html

Armenian hackers broke into data of 25,000 Azerbaijani soldiers

Members of the Monte Melkonian Cyber Army group hacked the data and published information on 25 thousand Azerbaijani soldiers…

Source: "Turkish Hacker Group's Attacks Shut down Armenian Government Websites," *Daily Sabah*, 6 April 2016. http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2016/04/06/turkish-hacker-groups-attacks-shut-down-armenian-government-websites

Amid renewed fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the weekend, a Turkish hacker group launched attacks on Armenian government websites on Tuesday, causing long shutdowns. The attacks by the hacker team named "Aslan Neferler Tim" (which can roughly be translated as Lion Privates Team) caused blackouts on government websites including defense, energy, agriculture ministries' sites, in addition to various other government agencies…

Source: "Armenian Hackers Broke into Data of 25,000 Azerbaijani Soldiers," News.am, 5 April 2016. http://news.am/eng/news/320605.html

…on Twitter the cyber terrorists spread information about taking down all websites with the gov.az domain name...the Azerbaijan Ministry of Defense and other department sites were unavailable, but later restored.

"The recent outbreak of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh drew increased attention to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory and was estimated to have caused the most casualties since 1994."
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagorno-Karabakh_Occupation_Map.jpg

Will the White Swan Modernize?

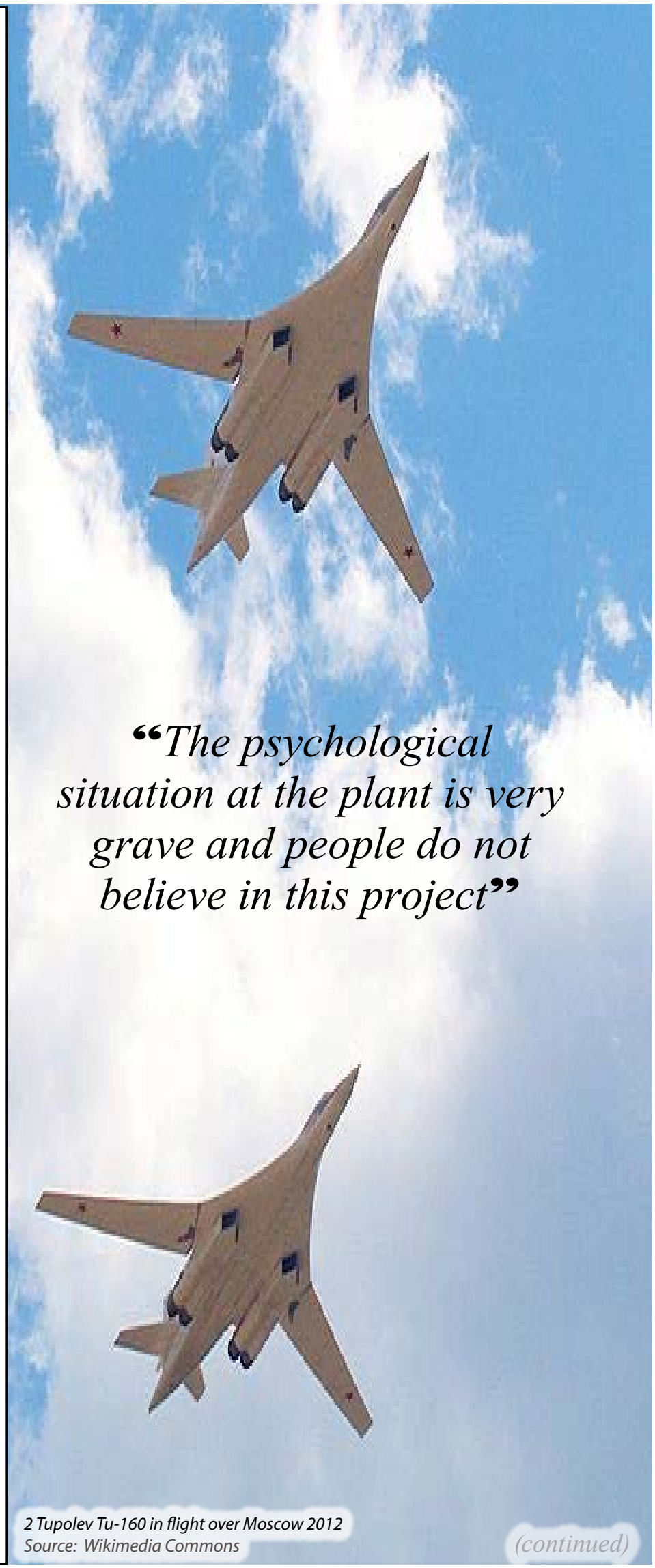
OE Watch Commentary: One of the highlights from last month's Victory Day parade was a simulated refueling operation of a Tu-160 (Blackjack) as it flew over Red Square. Known as the "white swan" for its sleek design, the Tu-160 remains Russia's most modern long-range bomber. As the accompanying excerpt (from a local newspaper in Kazan) points out, last year, during a visit to Kazan, where the Tu-160 is manufactured, Defense Minister Shoygu announced that the Kremlin was planning on "the resumption of production of the Tu-160, for which 'tens of billions' were subsequently promised" to modernize the aircraft into the Tu-160M2 with new engines, avionics and weapon systems. However, as the article goes on to elaborate, this procurement plan has run into some difficulties.

As the author points out, there has been a disconnect between Shoygu's statement and the actual procurement of budget funds. To date, "there has been no [presidential] edict" authorizing these expenditures, thus delaying the modernization effort. The reasons behind this delay are unknown, but, besides the current budget crunch, the excerpt suggests that the intense competition among Russian aircraft manufacturers may be a factor. It points out that "there are opponents" to the revival of the Tu-160, advocating instead "experimental design work from scratch," likely referring to its planned successor, the Advanced Aviation Complex for Long-Range Aviation (PAK DA).

The article explains why funding for modernizing the Tu-160 ought to be a high priority. The aircraft not only contributes to the country's strategic nuclear forces, which remain the first priority, but is also considered an integral component of "the Aerospace Forces [which] are the second priority under the State Armament Program." Moreover, the Tu-160 was recently employed in Syria, where it demonstrated its ability to play a prominent role, not only in large-scale wars, but also in localized wars.

Having laid out a strong argument for the Tu-160 modernization, the article points out the many obstacles which will hamper the completion of this project. There has been a general lack of capital investment both within the design bureaus for the aircraft and the actual manufacturing facilities. Compounding this weakened industrial infrastructure has been the lack of coordination among the many manufacturers involved in this project. Of particular concern are problems associated with new engines for this aircraft, where, according to the article, the "situation is serious."

The article concludes on a pessimistic note, pointing out that the "psychological situation at the [main manufacturing] plant is very grave and people do not believe in this project." It recounts previous government promises to renew production of other aircraft (e.g., the Tu-334 short-haul aircraft, Tu-214, An-70) remain unfulfilled. Even though defense officials claimed that "the revival of the Tu-160 [is] the highest priority project and absolute priority of the Russian Army," this article suggests that Kremlin promises are not always fulfilled. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



2 Tupolev Tu-160 in flight over Moscow 2012
Source: Wikimedia Commons

(continued)

Continued: Will the White Swan Modernize?

Source: Timur Latypov, "Психологическая обстановка на КАЗе тяжелая, люди не верят в возрождение Ту-160," [Psychological Situation at KAZ Grave; People do not Believe in Tu-160 Revival] *Kazan' Business-Gazeta.ru*, 2 May 2016.

...Today marks exactly one year since the day Russian Federation Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu, while on a visit to Respublika Tatarstan, first announced the start of a project for the resumption of production of the Tu-160, for which "tens of billions" were subsequently promised. ...The document that would serve as the foundation of the Tu-160 production resumption program is a corresponding Russian presidential edict, without which the decision on launching the project looks not so concrete. To date there has been no edict...

Strictly speaking, why is the matter of a presidential edict felt so keenly? Some are of the opinion that the program for the revival of the Tu-160 has enemies. "There are forces that do not want them to revive the Tu-160," a BIZNES Online source in the aviation industry is convinced. "It is no secret that there are opponents," notes Murakhovskiy, "because it is always more profitable to do the scientific research and experimental design work from scratch, and not to modernize existing equipment, albeit extensively. Naturally there is no getting away from a fight over resources."

..."Today, the strategic nuclear forces are our first priority, and they will get funding no matter what," Murakhovskiy insists. "The Aerospace Forces are the second priority under the State Armament Program. The Tu-160 falls under both categories. Therefore, it is a sufficiently high-priority project, especially when you consider that the Tu-160 has proven itself to be a significant quantity in the employment of conventional and precision weapons."...Here the expert is referring to the Tu-160's recent Syrian experience. Evidently this experience is especially significant also because, prior to this, Russian strategic bombers had never been used in actual combat....

...But at the same time, some experts believe that even today it is "not very clear how the Tu-160M2 program will 'interact' with the PAK DA program, and to which one the greatest priority will be assigned."...You will recall that the PAK DA's maiden flight is slated for 2020....

...Design bureaus such as Sukhoi and MiG have gone much farther than Tupolev, which has almost no young people with brains left and whose equipment is a bit weak. ...there is no certainty that Tupolev Design Bureau has all of the competencies necessary to create and launch production of such an aircraft," Frolov believes. in our time the bureaus have shriveled up. And now there is no way to resolve this problem except as an integrated organization. I do not know of a single design bureau that could take up such an enormous task."...

...But the most important thing, the engines, are NK-32s. "You have to understand that without a new engine it will not be a new aircraft," says Gusarov "According to comments made, the situation with the engines is serious," says the source. "They have five motors on which they will put the finishing touches. But beyond that? The Samara plant is not in very good shape." ...

...We have no doubt that such is the case; however, according to the BIZNES Online correspondent's observations, the labor collective at KAZ for some reason is not optimistic. "A year has gone by, but other than public affairs work there has been no actual business to be seen at KAZ," says one of our sources. "...Meanwhile, the plant is old and requires immediate investments in order to update it at least somewhat. Some fear that the sequestration will have a great impact on KAPO's overhaul as well; Tupolev invested one set of figures, but now the company is trying to cut them."...

...After speaking with the plant's employees one might conclude that at the enterprise they do not believe realization of the Tu-160M2 program will happen. "The psychological situation at the plant is very grave and people do not believe in this project," a source in the aviation industry confirms our suspicions. ... "The plant has been dying for the last 20 years," Murakhovskiy tries to explain people's mood. "People fled. But then there were those who came, who could find a use for themselves, i.e. mobile, creative people. I do not want to offend anyone and I am not talking about everyone, but I am certain that those who remained are the very best...

Jamming for Business

OE Watch Commentary: Much has been written over the past couple years regarding the extensive development of electronic warfare (EW) capabilities within the Russian military. Over the past two decades the Kremlin and defense leadership have been keen observers of Western high-tech military operations and have responded by developing a host of EW platforms designed to interfere or disrupt digital signals. Once these systems are deployed on the battlefield, operating within this environment will be a challenge for any potential adversary. As the accompanying brief excerpt points out, some of these EW capabilities may soon be available for Russian businessmen.

The article describes a portable "jammer device [which is] concealed in a briefcase to protect senior officials from bugging and terrorist attacks." It goes on to point out that the device "is capable of blocking communications and command signals in all frequency ranges including GSM [Global System for Mobile Communications] networks." The jammer can also be used to prevent leaks of confidential information, claiming that it "produces a protective cover over a building, blocking bugging devices."

Russian defense industries continue to develop a wide array of EW systems. Offering their products to the civilian market may indicate that these industries are searching for alternative sources of income. It might also suggest that Russian business remains a highly competitive environment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "В России разработали чемоданчик для защиты первых лиц" [Russia develops suitcase 'jammer' for VIP protection], *RBK*, 6 May 2016. http://www.rbc.ru/

Russia's United Instrument-Building Corporation (OPK) has developed a special "jammer" device concealed in a briefcase to protect senior officials from bugging and terrorist attacks, Russian business news website RBK reported on 6 May, citing the company's website (bit.ly/1Zm7cDj).

According to a statement on the website, the device is "a transmitter integrated into a small attaché case, easily carried and unobtrusive to passers-by."...

...The transmitter unit installed in the case is capable of blocking communications and command signals in all frequency ranges including GSM networks, the statement said.

The transmitter can also be used to prevent leaks of confidential information. During confidential negotiations, the system produces a protective cover over a building, blocking bugging devices, it said.

The equipment is also capable of preventing the operation of radio command explosive devices out to a range of several tens of meters. The case can be used to jam radio signals for triggering explosive devices during clearance operations by sappers, and also to protect the movements of VIPs and prevent terror attacks, the statement said....

Jammer prototype
Source: orktu.ru

A Semi-Frozen Conflict in SE Ukraine?

OE Watch Commentary: The military-political situation in SE Ukraine remains viciously unsettled. While major combat operations have largely ceased, low-level violence continues between pro-Russian separatist and Ukrainian forces. Each side blames the other for the ongoing violence. Movement toward determining the political status of the separatist regions has been stymied by continued fighting and unwillingness among the warring sides to abide by the key provisions of the Minsk II agreement, particularly regarding the conduct of new elections within the separatist region and defining control over the borders. For all practical purposes, the separatist regions have become quasi-independent statelets controlled, defended and financed by Russia.

As the first brief excerpt points out, the separatist military forces have been reorganized on the model of the Russian army. This Ukrainian source goes on to claim that "these military structures are equipped with weapons and military hardware of the Russian Armed Forces, receive full logistical support from the Russian Defense Ministry, report on all aspects to Russian military commanders, while virtually all senior command positions are filled by military experts from among generals and officers of the Russian Armed Forces." Theoretically, acknowledged Kremlin command and control over these separatist forces could improve the prospects for conflict resolution.

The second excerpt, also from a Ukrainian source, points out that the current government in Kiev has decided to cancel plans for additional "mobilization" suggesting "that [President] Poroshenko absolutely does not believe in the possibility of a large-scale offensive in Donbass." This belief is predicated upon the assertion that the Kremlin will refrain from further offensive operations due to its desire to have Western sanctions lifted and the improved defensive capabilities of Ukrainian forces.

The final political status of the separatist regions in the Donbass region of Ukraine will likely not be resolved anytime soon. The Russian leadership continues to maintain the fiction that it is not militarily involved in this war. The indeterminate status of these regions could serve as a pretext for further violence. At this point, the best option might be another frozen conflict along Russia's borders. As it did in Georgia in 2008, the Kremlin has effectively destabilized (some would say "dismembered") neighboring Ukraine to prevent the central government from pursuing a pro-Western orientation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "Ukrainian Defense Ministry Says Rebels Organize Military Units on Russian Model," *Interfax-Ukraine*,17 May 2016.

Illegal armed groups in Donbass territories not controlled by Ukrainian authorities have been reorganized on the model of the Russian army, the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported on 17 May, quoting the chief of Ukraine's Main Command Centre, Maj-Gen Bohdan Bondar.

"Illegal armed groups in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, with the full support of the Russian Federation and the involvement of units and members of Russia's regular army, have completed their reorganization on the model of Russian army units," he said at a briefing in Kyiv....

..."These military structures are equipped with weapons and military hardware of the Russian Armed Forces, receive full logistical support from the Russian Defense Ministry, report on all aspects to Russian military commanders, while virtually all senior command positions are filled by military experts from among generals and officers of the Russian Armed Forces," he said.

Military situation in SE Ukraine as of 18 May 2016
Source: mil.gov.ua

Source: "Ukrainian President Not Expecting Full-Scale rebel Offensive in Donbass," *Glavkom*, 5 May 2016. http://glavcom.ua/

[Vuyets] Some experts interpreted the cancellation of the seventh wave of mobilization as showing [Ukrainian President Petro] Poroshenko's confidence that the war is over and the Minsk [cease-fire agreements] will be fulfilled, or, on the contrary, that there are sufficient forces to carry out a forced march to the Russian border. How do you interpret this move?

[Tymchuk] Refusal to mobilize only shows that the Ukrainian government is firmly committed to peaceful dialogue. It is not preparing for the military scenario and does not expect such an option from the Russian-terrorist side. At the moment, we observe a certain parity of forces in the antiterrorist operation zone [ATO] zone. Forces and equipment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are sufficient to counter the Russian-terrorist troops who are now in Donbass. But if Russia actively redeploys its battalion and company tactical groups, which have long been concentrated on the Ukrainian border in Rostov Region, the balance can change in just a few weeks.

The cancellation of mobilization may mean that Poroshenko absolutely does not believe in the possibility of a large-scale offensive in Donbass. I believe that this confidence is based on Western pressure on Russia and Putin's attempts to have the sanctions lifted. Besides, the increase in the number of contract servicemen played a role. The number of people who want to sign a contact with the Defense Ministry has increased significantly.

The Spreading Propaganda Virus

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past few years the Kremlin-supported Russian media have portrayed the United States in an extremely negative light. In the Kremlin's narrative, the US will resort to the most barbarous methods to protect its leadership status. For instance, the Kremlin insists that Washington has unleashed the bacillus of "color revolutions" to remove those regimes which prevent further expansion of American influence. Over the past two and a half years the Russian media have portrayed the conflict in Ukraine as an attempt by Washington to gain a foothold from which to attack Russia. Not surprisingly, a majority of the Russian population now regards the US as the greatest threat to their country. As the first excerpt points out, according to a recent poll conducted by the Levada Center, upwards of 80% of the Russian population have a negative view toward the United States.

The second excerpt is a typical example of the strident journalism the average Russian consumes and reveals why attitudes toward the US remain so negative. The author claims that the US is intent upon using bio-weapons to weaken and destroy Russia. His "evidence" consists of allegations that the laboratory facilities constructed under the auspices of the Biological Threat Reduction Program in Ukraine and Georgia are in reality secret military biological facilities which have "already been dubbed the "BioABM" system" in Russia. (For an earlier report on the facility in Georgia, see "Bio-Weapon Accusations," OEW October 2013.)

The author begins by asserting that the US has been relentless in "scientific experimentation… in the creation of biological weapons on an industrial scale." He goes on to assert that the US is responsible for every major contagion over the past 25 years, whether it was the H1N1 virus or the recent influenza epidemic last winter in Russia. To back up his argument, he quotes senior Russian officials, who echo and aggravate these claims. The author cites Russia's top health official, Gennadiy Onishchenko, who alleged that the presence of the Zika virus in Abhazia in 2012 could be linked to the presence of the American laboratory in Georgia.

The author describes in detail the diabolical plans of the US to produce various types of infectious diseases designed specifically to harm the peoples living along the borders of the Russian Federation. But all is not lost; the country's leadership is taking active countermeasures. The author concludes by quoting the pro-Kremlin defense "expert," Igor Kototchenko, who claims that the Russian authorities have already developed an effective remedy for counteracting lethal American viruses. This antidote "is designed to prevent and neutralize threats beginning with the delivery of infectious biomaterials into Russia and ending with the spreading of lethally hazardous substances on the territory of our country by terrorists or intelligence services of NATO countries."

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Source: "Почему мы не любим Америку" [Why we do not like America], Levada Center, 25 April 2016. http://www.levada.ru/2016/04/25/pochemu-my-ne-lyubim-ameriku/

"Poll results at the "Levada-Center" point out that the peak of anti-Western sentiment, which was noted at the beginning of 2015, is still holding firm. Record values were recorded whereby 81% of Russians have a negative view toward the United States..."

Source: Aleksandr Netyesov, "Американский био-ПРО и Украино-грузинский вирус" [The American bioABM' and the Ukrainian-Georgian Virus], *Voyennyy Vestnik Yuga Rossii* , 29 April 2016. http://www.redstar.ru/images/files/regions2016/2904/290416-v-v-u-r.pdf

Not too long ago USA President Barack Obama, the Nobel [laureate] "dove of peace" with the head of a hawk, placed Russia in third place, after ISIL and Ebola fever, in an enumeration of world threats that have presented challenges to world civilization.

But it is precisely the actions of the overseas "citadel of democracy" in the international arena which have become the main threat to peace over the last half century. These include actions relating to unrelenting scientific experimentation in the USA in the creation of biological weapons on an industrial scale....

...It seems that in order to derive the virus the American virologist had to modify the H1N1/09 strain, which killed an enormous number of people throughout the world during the epidemic of 2009-2010.

Alas, the geography of the network of biological laboratory centers, or more precisely military biologic facilities, is not limited only to the territory of the United States. It is steadily approaching the borders of the Russian Federation.... And recently the issue of US military biological facilities functioning in post-Soviet territories has become acute. This has occurred because those in power in several previous Soviet republics have become tempted by the free cheese in the American mouse trap....

...In the first place the United States, specifically the Pentagon, wants to put the state of sanitation and epidemiological conditions in one specific region of the former USSR under its own control, as well as the scientific and practical contents of work being conducted with pathogenic microorganisms. In the second place they intend to concentrate in their own hands the collection and identification of corresponding biomaterials along the borders of the Russian Federation with their subsequent selection and forwarding of samples to the USA. In the third place there is the implementation of a universal study of the susceptibility of the population in post-Soviet territories to various types of infectious diseases and the means for their treatment. In the fourth place they want to conduct unimpeded large-scale testing of innovative medicines, taking into consideration ethnic and racial peculiarities of the local populations.

A listing of the primary partners of the USA in the military-biological arena includes the countries which after "colored revolutions" established political regimes under foreign control of the American State Department. These are primarily Georgia and Ukraine....

...Everyone is now aware of the Zika fever epidemic, a virus which was discovered in 1947. But for 60 years its existence was revealed by a total of only 15 cases of Zika illness in Africa and Southeast Asia. But since 2007 in an inexplicable manner it established itself in Latin America. And on 15 February of this year assistant to the Prime Minister

(continued)

Continued: The Spreading Propaganda Virus

The intensity, breadth and scope of anti-American propaganda within the Russian media over the past several years have been without precedent. While older Russians, who lived during the Soviet period, may have developed effective mental filters, the younger generation may not have the ability to distinguish fact from fiction. This constant falsification of American policies and objectives could prove to be a most dangerous virus, both to the Russian people and elsewhere. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

of Russia Gennadiy Onishchenko (ex-head of Rospotrebnadzor [Federal Service for Oversight of Consumer Rights and Human Well-Being] and formerly the main public health doctor in Russia) touched on the subject of the Zika fever epidemic in an interview with BBC. He stated that as early as 2012 Russian epidemiologists on the Akhazian coast of the Black Sea recorded for the first time the appearance of the subspecies of mosquito which is the host of the Zika virus.

In his opinion, "somewhere about 100 kilometers from the site where this mosquito lives today along our borders is a military microbiology laboratory of the US Army. And I think that it is doubtful that the American military microbiologists have been transformed into humanitarians who are only thinking about how to protect Georgian children from the blood disease. This is not why the Pentagon built this military biological base."

Onishchenko described his own position regarding the fact of "the presence of the American laboratory and the presence of the mosquito" as "deliberate interference in the natural progression of the epidemiological process."

This is not the only example of the USA concentrating a large-scale network of secret military biological facilities (already dubbed the "BioABM" system) around our country. Notwithstanding the statements of officials of the American State department concerning the exclusively peace-loving nature of these institutions and their civilian orientation, the facts indicate the opposite case. Not the least of which is that financing of the biological facilities is being done from budgeted funds of the Pentagon….

...Incidentally, the influenza epidemic in Russia this winter was to a large extent of Ukrainian origin (or was it American?). If this does represent such intervention, then it is even more important for us to think in advance about timely inoculations.

According to a domestic expert, the chief editor of the magazine "Natsionalnaya oborona [National Defense]" Igor Korotchenko, the defense establishment of Russia has at its disposal an effective remedy for counteracting lethal American viruses, which is now undergoing testing at military institutes that have formerly been engaged in biological infection issues. It is named "Berkut-1" and it is designed to prevent and neutralize threats beginning with the delivery of infectious biomaterials into Russia and ending with the spreading of lethally hazardous substances on the territory of our country by terrorists or intelligence services of NATO countries.

Airborne Arctic Searchlight for Helicopter Gunships and Transports

"Vadim Smirnov, Deputy CEO of the Kronshtadt Group, announced plans to equip Russian Mi-8AMTSh transport and attack helicopters with TSL-1600 search and rescue searchlights."

OE Watch Commentary: The Arctic-improved TSL-1600 searchlight is first being fitted to the Mi-8AMTSh helicopters serving in the Arctic. The Mi-8AMTSh is a dedicated armored assault version of the Mi-8AMT helicopter. Its function is to carry cargo and troops and support them with its firepower. It can also perform evacuation and combat search and rescue. It can do ground attack against defensive positions and engage infantry, armored vehicles and tanks. It has a secondary air-to-air capability against low-flying aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs.

Arctic conditions require that ordinary equipment be improved to function effectively and reliably. Searchlights can be crucial when time matters and the Russians are making sure that they are prepared. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: "TSL-1600 Airborne Emergency-Rescue Searchlight for Mi 8AMTSh-VA Helicopters," *RIA Novosti,* http://ria.ru, 10 May 2016.

The TSL-1600 is the sole searchlight in Russia which was originally developed especially for the aviation market. The TSL-1600 is installed on helicopters as an airborne controllable high-intensity light source. It has high illuminance characteristics, which enables it to effectively conduct search-and-rescue and emergency-rescue operations and to perform patrol, investigative, and security functions. The searchlight may also be used in night photography and videotaping.

Kronshtadt specialists have completed the adaptation of the TSL-1600 to Arctic conditions. "We ran tests for tolerance for vibration and at reduced and elevated temperatures from -60° to +50° Centigrade [-76° to +122° Fahrenheit]. The first searchlight adapted for the conditions of the Arctic has already been installed on a Mi-8AMTSh-VA helicopter," Smirnov stated.

A Not-too-Subtle Warning about NATO Membership

OE Watch Commentary: The "Kalibr" is a Russian cruise missile that has anti-shipping, anti-submarine and ground target variants, with reported ranges between 50 and 2500 kilometers. Kalibr made a spectacular debut last year when fired from the Caspian Sea against Syrian ground targets.

Polls in Sweden indicate that, for the first time, Swedes prefer NATO membership over its long-term state neutrality. The Kalibr launch from Arctic waters that occurred just after Russia's warning Sweden against joining NATO is probably not coincidental. The fact that is was fired against a land target is probably also not coincidental.

The Kalibr was fired from the K-560 "Severodvinsk," Russia's first Yasen-class nuclear attack submarine, which reportedly carries 48 Oniks and Kalibr cruise missiles plus torpedoes and sea mines. The "Severodvinsk" was commissioned in 2013. The premier submarine's assignment to the Northern Fleet reflects the importance of the Northern Fleet and the Arctic region to Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

"The Northern Fleet's newest multi-purpose submarine "Severodvinsk" fired Russia's most advanced naval cruise missile from the Barents Sea Saturday morning, 30 April."

Source: Thomas Nilsen, "Russian Sub Launched Kalibr Missile Day after Warning against Swedish NATO Membership," http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/thomas-nilsen, 30 April 2016.

The Northern Fleet's newest multi-purpose submarine "Severodvinsk" fired Russia's most advanced naval cruise missile from the Barents Sea Saturday morning, 30 April.

The Kremlin's propaganda agency Sputnik describes the Kalibr missile as a weapon that "has caused jitters in the West with its ability to sneak up to its target when fired" ...and "Hugging the ground with pinpoint accuracy and almost invulnerable due to its supersonic speed, the missile is a deadly weapon to be reckoned with."

Russia's Ministry of Defense stated that the launch that took place while the "Severodvinsk" was submerged off the coast of the Kola Peninsula.

"Severodvinsk" lists Zapadnaya Litsa as its homeport, which is some 55 kilometers from Russia's border with Norway.

The Defense Ministry stated that the Kalibr missile hit its target with high accuracy on the Chizh testing ground on Cape Kanin north in Arkhangelsk region.

The naval version of the Kalibr cruise missile is supersonic, specifically designed to evade active air defenses and electronic countermeasures. Fired from the Caspian Sea last year, the missile travelled 1,500 kilometers and hit a target in Syria.

The missile launch from the Barents Sea came less than 24 hours after Deputy Head of the Russian Federation Council's Committee for Defense and Security, Evgeny Serebrennikov, threatened Sweden that Russia will deploy more missiles in its northern regions if Sweden enters NATO.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also came out with a direct warning against Swedish NATO membership. He warned that Russia would implement new military measures in its northern territories.

"If Sweden decides to join NATO, we don't think the Swedes will attack us. However, Sweden's military infrastructure would then obey the commands of NATO and, of course, we will be forced to take necessary military-technical measures in our northern territories,"

The submarine launched cruise missile (SLCM) version of Kalibr has a range of up to 2,000 kilometers.

Russian and CSTO Airborne Drops on North Pole Ice Floe

OE Watch Commentary: It is not the optimal training season in the frozen North, but Russia and its allies are conducting airborne training in the Arctic. In late March Chechen Special Forces jumped on a North Pole ice floe and conducted training. Video footage shows them moving by sled behind snow mobiles with weapons drawn and displaying the Russian flag (Chechnya is part of Russia).

On 8 April Russian paratroopers from the 76th Guards Airborne Division, stationed at Pskov, landed on an ice floe near the North Pole and conducted training. RT video shows troops jumping, moving by dog sled and swim-trunk-clad inductees participating in "Polar Bear Club" initiations in a purpose-built water pit. The paratrooper flights took off from Olenya Airbase on the Murmansk Peninsula.

On 21 April 76th Guards Airborne paratroopers dropped with a CSTO Rapid Reaction Force from Belarus. This is the third year in a row that the airborne forces have conducted jumps in the Arctic, and this is probably the furthest north that they have jumped.

Russia is building a cadre of seasoned Arctic paratroopers who can quickly augment the three brigades that are permanently stationed in the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

"Some 100 paratroopers from the Airborne Troops based in Pskov and a unit from the CSTO Collective Rapid Response Force from Belarus jumped onto the ice on Thursday, 21 April."

Source: Trude Pettersen, http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/trude-pettersen, 26 April 2016

Russian Paratroopers Trained on North Pole

About the same time as Chechen special forces were welcomed in Grozny after a historic exercise on the North Pole, Russian airborne forces started their Arctic drills for the third consecutive year. The airdrop was done from Il-76 airplanes at a height of 1,500 meters. The troops used "Arbalet-2" parachutes, which are designed for extreme conditions. The troops conducted drills on search and rescue and survival in Arctic conditions. The soldiers should be evacuated from the North Pole on April 25. The Russian Airborne Troops cooperated closely with the Russian Geographical Society, which runs the Barneo temporary ice station. Polar experts from Barneo held lessons for the soldiers in Arctic survival.

Source: Justin Wade, TS, The Sentinel Analytical Group, http://thesentinel.ca/russian-paratroopers-to-jump-on-arctic-ice-floe/, 8 April 2016.
Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, http://www.mil.ru, 22 April 2016.

Russian Airborne Troops Deploy Mobile Communications Node on North Pole Ice Floe

Russian airborne troops who landed on ice in the Arctic Ocean have deployed a mobile communications node for coordination of activities both in secure mode and for videoconferencing. Configuring the special equipment that was available to every serviceman took place in automatic mode.

In addition to the mobile communications node, during the first two hours on the ice the airborne troops mounted perimeter security to provide prompt warning of unauthorized penetration in the area of the base camp. All work took place in extreme weather conditions. Satellite communication was activated to ensure communication with the command of the VDV Airborne Troops.

New Armored Vehicles and Heavy Artillery for the Russian Airborne Troops

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's military is developing new armored vehicles and a new artillery system for its elite Airborne Troops as part of efforts to fulfill rearmament requirements outlined in the 2025 State Armament Programme. Airborne Troop Commander Colonel- General Vladimir Shamanov announced the planned upgrades at the beginning of the month. According to him, a new "Typhoon" mine-resistant armored personnel (MRAP) vehicle and "Zauralets" artillery system are currently under development.

Shamanov announced the plans for the new "Typhoon" armored assault vehicle in early May. The 4x4 wheeled vehicle, built by Russian defense industrial manufacturer KAMAZ, is an upgraded version of the Typhoon-K 6x6 armored personnel carrier. As of early May, when Shamanov announced the plans, the vehicle was already in the design and construction stage of the first prototype. Later this same month Shamanov revealed to reporters that KAMAZ had already begun assembly of the vehicle and that testing is slated to take place in late 2016.

Additionally, in late April Shamanov announced development plans for the Airborne Troops new artillery system, "Zauralets." According to the accompanying excerpted article, the system is based on the designs of the BDM-4M Russian infantry fighting vehicle and the BTR-MD "Rakuskha" armored vehicle, which only came into service for the Airborne Troops last year. Shamanov stated that the Zauralets system would have a 120mm gun and increased shooting range, among other characteristics. The military plans to unveil the new artillery to the public in the near future.

These heavy upgrades are consistent with Russia's new commitment to rearmament programs. Reequipping the Airborne Troops with new military hardware is a Ministry of Defense priority due to their role as a mobile rapid task force. The fast-paced development of these new technologies further reinforces Russia's prioritization of military rearmament as a response to its current security threat perception. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kangas)**

Source: "В России создается первый макетный образец новой колесной машины для ВДВ" [First model of the new wheeled vehicle for the Russian Airborne Troops created in Russia], *RIA Novosti,* 2 May, 2016.

The first model of the new wheeled armored vehicle for the Russian Airborne Troops, the "Typhoon," is already under development, VDV commander Colonel-General Vladimir Shamanov reported to journalists on Monday.

"As part of the development work for the "Typhoon," they're developing a four-wheeled armored vehicle for reconnaissance and special units of the VDV and Special Operations Forces. Now they are already in the design and construction phase of making the first model sample. This is the first step in building the wheeled vehicle technology." - the general explained.

Source: "ВДВ начнут испытания бронеавтомобиля "Тайфун" в конце 2016 года" [Russian Airborne Troops to begin testing the "Typhoon" armored vehicle by the end of 2016], *RIA Novosti*, 16 May, 2016.

Military testing for the new Russian armored personnel vehicle "Typhoon" for the Russian Airborne Troops will begin at the end of 2016, VDV commander Colonel-General told journalists on Monday.

"At KAMAZ, they've already begun assembling the wheeled segment of this military technology- the 4x4 wheeled vehicle with a 5th degree of protection, the 'Typhoon.' We are planning on getting prototypes before the end of the year to begin military testing." said Shamanov.

Source: "ВДВ в ближайшее время представят публике новую артсистему 'Зауралец'" [VDV in the near future to unveil to the public the new Zauralets artillery system], *Ria Novosti,* 30 April, 2016.

The Russian Airborne Troops will reveal to the public the new "Zauralets" 120mm artillery system in the near future, VDV commander Colonel General Vladimir Shamanov reported on Saturday to journalists.

"The artillery system is currently in the development phase. It is a 120mm gun with increased shooting range and other characteristics," said Shamanov.

He clarified that "Zauralets" was created based on the BMD-4M and the armored BTR-MD 'Rakushka' vehicle, which came into the VDV's service last year.

Russia Building Barguzin Rail-Based Missile Components

"Let me add that the Barguzin will be replacing the Molodets BZhRK that were retired in 2005 in compliance with START II. The missile trains constituted a weapon that was unique to the Soviet Union, no other country in the world was capable of building these systems. Their primary attributes were undetectability and mobility. The missile trains hid themselves from satellites among other trains and in sheds and tunnels, and thanks to the ramified rail network they were able to move swiftly out to any location in the country."

OE Watch Commentary: One way that Russia intends to restore its missile shield is through the announced resurrection of its rail-mobile ICBM system, allegedly in response to the US global strike platform. In the Soviet era the RT-23 Molodets (NATO classification as the SS-24 Scalpel) was the rail-mobile combat missile complex (BZhRK). Russia's Barguzin rail-based missile complex is slated to enter service in 2020. Noted for its ability to hide and evade detection, the system will carry six nuclear ICBMs developed from the Yars ICBM. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Nikolay Grishchenko, "Russia Has Begun Building 'Nuclear' Train," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online,* 12 May 2016.

Information concerning the new Russian missile train is classified. Previously, however, it has been reported in open sources that the Barguzin BZhRK will be capable of carrying six nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles developed on the basis of the Yars ICBM. This is the land-based version of the sea-based Bulava. Each launch complex will equate to a regiment, and a Barguzin division [дивизион] will comprise five regiments. The missile troops anticipate the new systems remaining in service at least through 2040.

Military experts are of the opinion that, in conceptual terms, Russia's new BZhRK is comparable to a strategic nuclear submarine. All the train's cars must be airtight and very robust, so as to be invulnerable to damage even in the event a nuclear warhead is detonated several hundred meters from the train. The train has an endurance capability of one month. The Barguzin will be able to cover a distance of up to 1,000 km in 24 hours.

It will be virtually impossible for technical means of reconnaissance to determine the missile train's location during its performance of alert duty. The Yars missiles can be brought to deployed mode within minutes. They have a range of 10,000 km and are accurate to within 100 meters of the target. The maneuvering reentry vehicles are capable of breaching any existing missile defense system.

Russia Upset over U.S. Missile Defense Elements in Eastern Europe

OE Watch Commentary: The recent ceremonies establishing US anti-missile defense systems in Romania and Poland have generated a quick and angry response from Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and others. He believes the system is part of the US's Prompt Global Strike system, and the point of the missile shield is "to deploy interceptor systems as close to us [Russia] as possible…" Rogozin's response was in line with other Russian analysts, who noted that in return Russia may deploy Iskandar missile systems closer to Eastern Europe or send submarines to US coasts as a deterrent measure. In Russia's view, such deployments will ensure the strategic balance of forces for Russia and serve as a detriment to another nation starting large-scale conflicts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Unattributed report, *Interfax (in English),* 13 May 2016

13 May (1): Russia will develop its resources and allocate the funding "to make it possible to neutralize any threat with the least resources," he [Rogozin] said. "As regards the industry, we reported to the president during these days about the most recent work, and tests and changes to the regulations for such tests, which allow us to speed up the creation of a weapon whose technical characteristics are even superior to [those of] the weapon of our probable adversaries," the deputy prime minister said.

Russian specialists "have no way of making sure that the silo where the counter-missile weapon will be placed, does not also contain a high-precision offensive weapon," the deputy prime minister said. "This smacks of a gross breach of the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force] Treaty," Rogozin added.

13 May (2): "Russia could send its submarines to U.S. coasts as a deterrence measure in response to the development of the U.S. missile defense shield in Europe," the chairman of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee and former Russian Black Sea Fleet commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov, told Interfax on Friday. "There is a need to look for technical tricks and possibilities to break through and bypass this missile defense shield, or, an even better option, keep deterrence forces on board submarines off U.S. coasts," he said.