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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ON THE COVER: Philipine Naval SWAG participating in battlefield exercise.
Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_Navy#/media/File:Philippine_Navy_Special_Warfare_Group(SWAG).jpg

OEWATCH

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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NATO and the Fight against ISIS

OE Watch Commentary: At the NATO summit in Warsaw on 8-9 July, leaders focused on the challenges facing the alliance today. While the main focus was on the Russian threat, an important outcome was that NATO decided to make its AWACS (airborne warning and control system) aircraft available to support the anti-ISIS coalition by flying over Turkish and international airspace. While NATO had sent AWACS to Turkey before, this marks the first time that NATO is officially and directly getting involved in anti-ISIS efforts. This is a welcome development for Turkey.

The first accompanying passage, from the Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security, notes NATO's decision to increase dialogue and cooperation with partners in the Middle East and North Africa. It points out that NATO will enhance training and capacity-building for Iraq, and that NATO AWACS aircraft will be made available to support the anti-ISIS coalition. The second passage, from a Turkish news article, points to the comments of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who said that the AWACS would fly in Turkish and international airspace, conduct intelligence tasks regarding ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq, and then pass their data to the international coalition carrying out operations.

NATO faces an unprecedented range of complex and urgent challenges. The third passage, by respected foreign policy columnist Sami Kohen, discusses the outcomes of the Warsaw Summit and points out NATO's three main priorities: first - the Russian threat and Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine, which have created concern among NATO members; second - "threats from outside the region," i.e., the fact that NATO has expanded its mission all the way to Afghanistan and is now facing a threat from groups like ISIS in the Middle East, who are targeting some of the alliance members with terrorist attacks; third - problems from within the region, which consist of refugee waves from Asia and Africa, along with social and economic problems in Europe, and Britain's decision to exit the European Union. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: "NATO IŞİD'e karşı AWACS'ları devreye sokuyor" (NATO is mobilizing AWACS against ISIS), *Birgun.net*, 10 July 2016, http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/nato-isid-e-karsi-awacs-lari-devreye-sokuyor-119359.html

"NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg declared that AWACS early warning and control aircraft sent for fighting ISIS would fly in Turkish and international airspace.... In a press briefing in Warsaw, where the NATO summit was taking place, Stoltenberg also said that he had reassured Turkey regarding its security concerns. ...

The AWACS will fly on Turkish and international airspace, conduct intelligence tasks regarding ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq and pass their data to the international coalition carrying out the operations.

In addition, the training of local security forces of the region's countries will not be limited to Jordan, it will also take place in Iraq. Cooperation will be strengthened to develop the military security structures in Libya and Tunisia as well."

Source: "The Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security," *NATO.int*, 9 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133168.htm?selectedLocale=en

"NATO will therefore step up political dialogue and practical cooperation with our partners in the Middle East and North Africa. NATO will enhance training and capacity building for Iraq, and NATO AWACS aircraft will be made available to support the Counter-ISIL Coalition. NATO is contributing effectively to addressing the refugee and migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea, and stands ready to consider possible additional support to international efforts in the Mediterranean, in complementarity and cooperation with the European Union. And we will sustain our support to Afghanistan, a partner to which we are committed for the long term."

Source: "NATO IŞİD'e karşı AWACS'ları devreye sokuyor" (NATO is mobilizing AWACS against ISIS), *Birgun.net*, 10 July 2016, http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/nato-isid-e-karsi-awacs-lari-devreye-sokuyor-119359.html

"The international environment in which the NATO summit in Warsaw is taking place, demonstrates the problems and challenges that the alliance faces. We can summarize these as follows:

1) "The Russian threat": The occupation of Eastern Ukraine; and the subsequent annexation of Ukraine and Crimea; followed by Moscow's pressures and demonstrations of its military might towards North and Eastern European countries, has created a lot of concern in NATO.

2)"Threats from outside the region": NATO, who has expanded its mission all the way to Afghanistan, is now facing terror attacks which target its own members, and which are originating from the Middle East (like ISIS).

3) "Problems from within the region": Many NATO members are concerned with the refugee waves coming from Asia and Africa. Europe is faced with serious economic and social chaos. Britain's exit from the EU is creating the danger that this may have a domino effect among other countries within NATO."

"NATO will enhance training and capacity building for Iraq, and NATO AWACS aircraft will be made available to support the Counter-ISIL Coalition."

A New Roadmap for Turkish Foreign Policy?

"After Turkey's moves to reconcile with Russia and Israel, there are now signs of similar intentions with Egypt and even Syria."

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the rapid shifts that have been taking place in Turkish foreign policy within the last month. These debates center around developments starting in late June: an agreement with Israel to overcome the six-year freeze in diplomatic relations, and the easing of tensions with Russia. Many are debating that these are only the first two steps in a larger roadmap, which appears to also include efforts to normalize relations with Egypt, Syria and Iran.

The first passage, by respected foreign policy commentator Sami Kohen, claims that there are signs of a change in Turkish foreign policy, noting the agreements with Israel and Russia and claiming that Egypt and Iran are next. He says that these steps are being taken as a form of "damage control' and are an effort to return to normal relations.

The second, third, and fourth passages, all by respected foreign policy experts, also note that Egypt and Syria may be next, after the normalization of relations with Israel and Russia. However, Soli Özel claims that it will take time for Turkey to regain the prestige it has lost in the last few years.

These shifts come after many ministerial changes within the government, including the foreign minister. The new foreign minister, Binali Yildirim, announced in his first speech that he would seek "more friends, less enemies" in Turkish foreign policy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source:http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/middle_east_pol_2003.jpg

Source: Sami Kohen, "Dış politikada değişen ne?" (What changed in foreign policy?), *Milliyet.com*, 9 July 2016, http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dis-politikada-degisen-ne--dunya-ydetay-2275002/

"Some of Ankara's recent openings are seen as a sign of a change in Turkish foreign policy. These openings started with the agreements to normalize relations with Israel and Russia. Right after this, there came a sign of an opening with Egypt. Now it appears that Iran is next.

These latest openings and those that are being planned are more of a 'return to normal' in the form of 'damage control'."

Source: Murat Yetkin, "Dün İsrail, bugün Rusya, ya yarın?" (Israel yesterday, Russia today, what about tomorrow?), *Hurriyet.com*, 27 June 2016, http://sosyal.hurriyet.com.tr/yazar/murat-yetkin_575/dun-israil-bugun-rusya-ya-yarin_40122981

"If the Russia crisis can be overcome in the next few days, it should not come as a surprise that Egypt, and finally Syria are next in line."

Source: Soli Özel, "Yeni rota ve öncelikler" (The new roadmap and priorities), *Haberturk.com*, 6 July 2016, http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1263225-yeni-rota-ve-oncelikler

"A revision is being made in foreign policy. Relations with Israel first, then Russia, and apparently Egypt, will shift....

It will require time for Turkey to regain the prestige and dependability that it has lost within the last few years."

Source: Cengiz Çandar, "Is Turkey's Radical Foreign Policy Shift Sustainable?," *Al Monitor.com*, 11 July 2016, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-israel-russia-egypt-foreign-policy-shift-sustainable.html

"After Turkey's moves to reconcile with Russia and Israel, there are now signs of similar intentions with Egypt and even Syria."

Turkish Commentary on the Failed Coup

OE Watch Commentary: On 15 July factions within the Turkish military attempted to overthrow the government of President Erdoğan. The attempt was not supported by the Armed Forces, law enforcement or any other institutions in Turkey, and was crushed within hours. On 21 July Erdoğan declared a three-month nationwide state of emergency. While Turkey has seen coups in the past, this was the first time a coup attempt was so violent, with the plotters bombing the parliament building and the Presidential compound and firing on civilians.

The event and its aftermath, which are being covered broadly, are still unfolding. In the current Turkish media there is almost unanimous agreement that the main reason for the coup's failure is that it did not have public backing, even from those who do not necessarily approve of Erdoğan's policies.

The author of the first passage also points out that Erdoğan's call on the nation to take to the streets to oppose the coup attempt did find public backing, and this is why the coup failed. The second passage, by expert Soli Özel, also notes that even those who were not happy with the government's direction did not support the coup. He claims that this shows that the coup plotters were out of touch with social realities. He points out that the coup plotters attempted something very risky without the support of the above-mentioned institutions.

The third passage is part of the joint statement by the four opposition parties. It points out that even though the parties have different views, they are united in their condemnation of the coup attempt. They claim that the attempt was an attack on the nation's will, the country's democracy and its parliament. The final passage, by military analyst Metin Gürcan, points out that the lack of support from opposition parties and the emphasis on the coup's anti-democratic nature made the coup illegitimate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

Source: Metin Gürcan, "Bir darbe girişiminin anatomisi" (The anatomy of a coup attempt), *T24.com*, 17 July 2016, http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/metin-gurcan/bir-darbe-girisiminin-anatomisi,15059

"The fact that the opposition parties did not support the coup and the emphasis on democracy, pushed the [coup] attempt to an illegitimate basis."

Source: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-military-coup-attempt-more-questions-than-answers.html

Source: Rusen Çakir, "8 soruda 15 Temmuz darbe girisimi" (The 15 July coup attempt in 8 questions), *Medyascopetv.com*, 16 July 2016, http://medyascope.tv/2016/07/16/sekiz-soruda-15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi/

"...[I]n my view, the main reason why the coup failed is that it had no public backing. So much so that, even those who don't like Erdoğan at all ... did not sympathize with this attempt. On the other hand, President Erdoğan's call on the nation to take to the streets, and the fact that his call found significant public backing, made the coup [plotters'] task ...impossible."

Source: Soli Özel, "Darbe girişimi ve sonuçları" (The coup attempt and its outcomes), *Haberturk.com,* 17 July 2016, http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1267759-darbe-girisimi-ve-sonuclari

"The fact that, even those who were not happy with the government's direction, and those who were disturbed by rising authoritarianism, did not support the coup, shows that the coup [plotters] were out of touch with the basics of what they were doing.

The coup [plotters] made a risky attempt, with many negative consequences and bloody outcomes in the long run, without even the support of the institutions. They risked wreaking havoc on the country and caused many people to die...."

Source: "Dört partiden ortak bildiri: Farklı görüşlerimiz olsa da... "(Joint statement from four parties: Even though we have different views...), *Birgun.net*, 16 July 2016, http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/dort-partiden-ortak-bildiri-farkli-goruslerimiz-olsa-da-120239.html

"Even though, as four [opposition] parties, we have different views, we all stand with and protect the national will and will always do so. Our nation should rest assured. ... We strongly condemn that attack made on our democracy, our nation and the Turkish Grand National Assembly."

Iran: No Factional Differences on Syria

"Zarif: There is consensus between me and Qasem Soleimani."

OE Watch Commentary: A common reading of Iranian politics emphasizes factionalism: There are hardliners (or principalists, as a direct translation from the Persian would go) and reformers. Many diplomats identify both President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as moderates if not reformers. There is consensus, meanwhile, that Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Qods Force, the elite unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, is a hardliner.

As Zarif began his third European tour since the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, ***Farda News***—a generally reliable news outlet close to Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the politically conservative mayor of Tehran—highlighted the centrality of the Islamic State crisis on the agenda of both Zarif and his various European interlocutors. That itself should not surprise, but it confirms that the diplomatic engagement that began with the nuclear file has expanded to other topics as well.

What is noteworthy, however, is that Zarif bent over backwards to suggest that no difference of opinion exists between Soleimani and him. This is significant because Soleimani has actively recruited not only Iranians, but also Shi'ites from Iraq, Lebanon, and Afghanistan to fight in Syria. This Iranian augmentation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has preserved the Syrian regime and helped turn the tables on more moderate elements in the Syrian opposition. The Iranian deployments into Syria also undercut the efficacy of Western diplomacy. Zarif's comments suggest that what some see as factional divides are more differences of style in the implementation of identical ideological prerogatives. Hence, rather than Iranian moderates seeking a different Iran or place for Iran in the broader international community, they might instead simply be engaging in an elaborate case of good cop-bad cop. Zarif's acknowledgement that the solution to the problems in Syria are political might therefore imply that Iran has a comprehensive strategy in which Soleimani and Zarif work hand-in-glove to alter the situation on the ground in Syria in order to augment Iran's (and the Assad regime's) strategic position and allow Zarif to pocket additional concessions toward a common goal. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Didarha va Rayizni Zarif dar Paris va Laheh" (Meetings and Negotiations of Zarif in Paris and the Hague), *Farda News,* 24 June 2016. http://goo.gl/MZyZNx

Meetings and Negotiations of Zarif

Mohammad Javad Zarif, foreign minister of our country, on the first day of his third tour to Europe since the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), visited France, used the space created in the post-JCPOA to develop cooperation and relations with French authorities during meetings and consultations. The first program of Zarif was an Iftar dinner at the residence of the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Paris where he met with a group of representatives from Islamic countries and Muslim organizations in France. The foreign minister emphasized that we must think globally, and said, "We must think about how we will deal with injustice, and we will strive to find new followers of Islam." In his speech, Zarif emphasized that the most important injustice was the injustice against the Palestinians… On Wednesday, the foreign minister of our country had additional programs with Gérard Larcher, president of the French Senate and had a conversation with him. In this meeting in Larcher's office, the two sides spoke about cooperation in the region, especially with regard to the crisis in Syria and Iraq… In answer to a question with regard to Syria at an event at the Clingendael Institute in the Netherlands, Zarif stressed that there is a common interpretation and complete consensus in Iran between me and all officials, including [IRGC Quds Force Commander] Qassem Soleimani." He added, "We all believe that the solution to the problems is Syria is political."

Qassem Soleimani speaks to pro-Iran militiamen in Aleppo, Syria; November 2015.
Source: FarsNews.com

Iran: Developing Carbon Fibers for More Advanced Centrifuges, UAVs

"This is one of the most important components in producing...nuclear components..."

OE Watch Commentary: The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action allowed Iran to continue to upgrade its nuclear program, so long as it abides by restrictions on enrichment and allows inspections at civilian nuclear sites. While many diplomats hoped that the nuclear deal would reduce tension, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has endorsed building a new generation of centrifuges utilizing advanced carbon fibers. ***The Young Journalist Club*** website—an outlet affiliated with the state-controlled Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting—quoted an engineer suggesting that the carbon fibers were meant to augment and enhance the strength of centrifuges. While centrifuges made from maraging steel can spin at 450 meters per second, carbon fiber centrifuges can reach speeds of up to 1,000 meters per second. The desire to develop new centrifuge components locally also reflects continued emphasis on developing indigenous nuclear and military industries to reduce dependence on outside suppliers, should sanctions again be imposed.

The article and interviews also reinforce Iran's growing emphasis on UAVs. Lighter UAVs presumably would have greater fuel efficiency and range. While the lifting of sanctions theoretically enables Iran to rebuild its Air Force, Iranian leaders may conclude that investment in UAVs makes greater financial and tactical sense, given that Iran can produce hundreds of UAVs for the price of a single advanced jet-fighter. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: "Alyaf Karban: Az badneh-e pehpad ta Ghata'at-e Santrifuzh/Moqavamat baraye yek madeh moqavam" (Carbon Fibers: From UAV Body to Centrifuge Parts/Resistance for a High-Resistant Material), 15 June 2016. http://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/5652060/الیاف-کربن-از-بدنه-پهپاد-تا-قطعات-سانتریفیوژ-مقاومت-برای-یک-ماده-مقاومفیلم.

Carbon Fibers to Enable Military, Nuclear Upgrades

Khamenei: "Don't accept the other side's expectations in regards to 'carbon fibers utilized for making centrifuges' and 'measuring 300 kg nuclear materials' at any costs." An expert stated that "composites made up by carbon fibers are used in airplane and UAV bodies." The expert continued: "In making centrifuges, there is always an attempt to make the structures lighter and more resistant and different generations of centrifuges are categorized based on their rate of enrichment and resistance. Centrifuge as a device under the influence of forces and high temperatures need the incorporation of materials with optimized structures for making situations better. Carbons fibers can have very high resistance against twists, frictions, and bending caused by centrifugal forces. This is one of the most important components in producing critical equipment especially nuclear ones. These materials, depending on number of their tissues have different levels of resistance but generally because of the limited number of the countries which have this technology, have very high prices. Because of their different usages, they among materials banned to sell to our country."

Iran develops carbon fibers for military applications
Source: http://www.psyop.ir/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/iran-psoyp.jpg

Iran: Khamenei Threatens Bahrain

OE Watch Commentary: Iran's claims to Bahrain are long-standing: Bahrain was, until the sixteenth century, an Iranian province. When the British prepared to withdraw from the Persian Gulf, the shah of Iran re-asserted Iranian claims. However, a 1970 United Nations-organized referendum concluded that Bahrainis—both Sunni and Shi'i—overwhelmingly sought independence. In 1981, as Bahrain prepared to celebrate its tenth anniversary of independence, the Iranian-backed Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain sought to overthrow the Bahraini monarchy. Iranian claims lay dormant for another quarter century, but in 2007 Iran's ***Kayhan*** newspaper, whose editor, Hossein Shariatmadari, is appointed to the post by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, editorialized that Bahrain was a wayward province that should revert to Iranian control. In recent years Bahraini security officials have intercepted weaponry and explosives which they say Iran sought to smuggle onto the island.

In recent weeks tensions between Iran and Bahrain have again flared. After Bahraini authorities suspended the main Shi'ite opposition *Wifaq* party and stripped its spiritual leader, Sheikh Isa Qassim, of his Bahraini citizenship, a host of Iranian officials—from parliamentarians to the foreign minister, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers and even the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—have threatened Bahrain and its stability more bluntly than they ever have in the past.

The ratcheting up of Iranian threats toward Bahrain threatens not only a new front for overt sectarian violence—such as that which is ongoing in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen—but also a challenge to U.S. forces. After all, Bahrain hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet from a facility in Manama. Indeed, Khamenei pointedly lumped the Bahraini government, the United States, and the Islamic State together in a conspiratorial "Arrogant Front" which seeks to deny justice throughout the region, but which Iran will always fight.

Iran's rallying around the case of Qassim, a Bahraini-born but Qom-trained ayatollah, will likely do little to win his release, but rather will convince Bahraini authorities that their suspicions are warranted. After all, Iranian advocacy was muted for Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, Saudi Arabia's leading Shi'i cleric, until after his execution for the simple reason that Nimr opposed the Iranian concept of clerical rule. Bahraini authorities will interpret the Iranian embrace of Qassim while under house-arrest as proof that Qassim is an Iranian asset. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

"Arrogant enemies must be dealt with based on a revolutionary spirit."

Source: "Mohakomiyat-e shadid ta'arez be 'alem mujahid Sheikh Isa Qassim" (Strong condemnation of the attacks on Sheikh Isa Qassim), *Leader.ir.* 25 June 2016, http://goo.gl/qg3Rdb

Strong Condemnation of the Attacks on Sheikh Isa Qassim

Ayatollah Khamenei said arrogant enemies must be dealt with based on a revolutionary spirit adding: "Faith in God, belief in jihad and the strong motivation of faithful and revolutionary youth are the sources of Islamic establishment's power in an asymmetrical war with the Arrogant Front and although they see the effects of this source of power, they are unable to analyze its reality and therefore they resort to violent and cruel methods."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said the formation of Takfiri terrorist groups like the Islamic State was one of these violent methods for countering the Islamic establishment, adding: "The main objective behind the creation of Takfiri terrorist groups and their actions in Iraq and Syria was to invade Iran, but the power of the Islamic Republic establishment pinned them down in Iraq and Syria."

Noting that Takfiri terrorist groups make no difference between Shias and Sunnis and that they target every Muslim who defends the Islamic Revolution and is the enemy of the US, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to ongoing events in Bahrain and said "In Bahrain, the issue is not a Shia-Sunni strife either. Rather the main issue involves the tyrannical rule of a selfish arrogant minority over a vast majority."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution said the Bahraini rulers' aggression of diligent scholar Sheikh Isa Qassim was an indication of their idiocy, noting: "Sheikh Qassim is a person who, as long as he could speak to people in Bahrain, used to prevent them from radical and armed movements, but the rulers of Bahrain do not understand that act of aggression against this diligent scholar means removing the barrier in front of epic and spirited youth in Bahrain for any action against the regime."

Noting that arrogant powers and their stooges are unable to know people and the level of faith in the society and they make miscalculations, Ayatollah Khamenei said: "The right way is to move on the path of Islam and place trust in Almighty God, and only a faithful and diligent nation with firm determination could overcome obstacles and move ahead."

Protestors rally with photos of Bahraini Ayatollah Isa Qassim
Source: PressTV, http://217.218.67.233/photo/20160622/900dd07e-66c0-47eb-90c3-96fac62f3d24.jpg

Yemeni Forces Aim to Vanquish Saudis Along the Border

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 July 2016 a MIM-104 Patriot mobile air defense battery in the Saudi Arabian province of Asir intercepted a "Qaher-1" ("Vanquisher-1") missile fired from across the border in Yemen. The Qaher-1 is a Soviet-era S-75 (SA-2 Guideline) SAM modified for ground targeting. It has been used with growing frequency by anti-Saudi forces in Yemen since late 2015. Along with the Yemeni Army's ballistic missiles (Scud-B variants and OTR-21 Tochka/SS-21 Scarabs), the S-75 systems remained under the control of units loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh after he relinquished the presidency in 2011. Saleh is currently allied with Yemen's Huthi Movement and its allies ("Popular Committees") against Saudi Arabia and its allies.

Ballistic missile storage sites and air defense systems were the primary targets of Saudi Arabia's initial bombing campaign in Yemen in March 2015. Three weeks into the campaign, the Saudi coalition's spokesman claimed to have destroyed "most" of Yemen's missile capabilities. Although storage depots and known sites were indeed destroyed, Yemeni forces dispersed and concealed missiles and TEL (transporter erector launcher) vehicles in the craggy mountains of northern Yemen. The first Scud-B was launched in June 2015, the first Tochka in August, and the first Qaher-1 in December.

The number of launches is significant and has kept Saudi air defense forces occupied. The first accompanying excerpted article, which was published last March on the official website of Yemen's Huthi Movement (aka Ansar Allah), claims 18 Qaher-1s were launched between mid-December 2015 and early March 2016 (13 toward Saudi Arabia and 5 at Saudi targets within Yemen). A Saudi Arabian twitter source (@saikhamk) claimed that as of early July Patriot systems brought in October 2015 to protect Saudi and allied forces in Yemen had made over a dozen intercepts of missiles targeting Saudi and allied assets in Yemen. Saudi Arabia recently ordered an upgrade of its MIM-104 Patriot systems, along with 600 latest-generation PAC-3 missiles, in a deal worth over $5 billion. Discussing the Saudi-Yemeni conflict at a recent event, an official at Raytheon (maker of the Patriot) claimed a "100 percent success rate" and "well over a couple of dozen intercepts."

Saudi Arabia's ability to effectively neutralize the tactical missile threat from Yemen does not alone guarantee success in the hybrid battlefield developing along the shared border. For the Huthi/Saleh coalition, keeping Saudi air defenses busy is reason enough to claim a tactical victory, particularly when using the "locally produced" Qaher-1. Saudi rulers are at a geographical disadvantage, as cross-border linkages in provinces straddling Yemen (Assir, Najran and Jizan) are historically stronger than linkages to Riyadh (over 500 miles to the northeast). Parts of the border divide tribal lands and smuggling is rife. Najran's majority population is Ismaili Shi'a (the Huthis are also from a minority Shi'a branch), considered a heretical sect by the ruling Wahhabis of central Saudi Arabia. The Huthis and their allies have leveraged the mountainous border terrain to carry out ambushes and other guerrilla attacks against Saudi border posts. Saudi towns near the border are virtually empty due to regular rocket artillery fire. The prolonged war is draining Saudi coffers at a rare time of austerity in the wealthy kingdom. Border tensions, in short, will fester for years to come. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...The Qaher-1 missile was produced to subdue the aggressor in his own home and punish his mercenaries..."

Source: قاهر 1اسطورة الصمود اليمني في وجة العدوان الأمريكي السعودي "Qaher-1: The Legend of Yemeni Steadfastness in the Face of the Israeli-American Aggression," *ansarollah.com*. 8 March 2016. http://www.ansarollah.com/archives/33983

The United States and Israel, and their Arab tools and proxies were able to destroy part of the Yemeni Army's SAM-2 [sic] capabilities and attempted to neutralize its Scud capabilities. The army and the Popular Committees were thank God able to produce ballistic missiles to vanquish the aggressor and the invader. The Qaher-1 missile was produced to subdue the aggressor in his own home and punish his mercenaries...with the modification it can travel 250-300 kilometers... it came into service on 13 December, when it was used to target the Khalid Bin Abdel Aziz Airbase in Khamis Mushait... As Yemen was once the graveyard of invaders so it will remain... Following is a brief description of [14] Qaher-1 launches to defeat the Saudi-American aggression...

Source: @saikhamk. Twitter Post. 5 July 2016. https://twitter.com/saikhamk/status/750448237354618880/photo/1

The #Coalition AD units inside #Yemen have successfully intercepted +12 missiles since they were installed in Oct-15

Source: "Raytheon Touts Patriot Anti-Missile Performance in Yemen War," *Defense News*. 12 July 2016. http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/show-daily/farnborough/2016/07/12/raytheon-touts-patriot-anti-missile-performance-yemen-war/86998912/

Raytheon has claimed a Patriot anti-missile system used by Saudi Arabia has had a "100 percent success rate" in intercepting missile attacks by Yemeni rebels. Speaking at the Farnborough Air Show on Tuesday, Ralph Acaba, Raytheon's vice president for Integrated Air and Missile Defense, said the Raytheon system employed by a Saudi-led coalition had successfully handled "well over a couple of dozen intercepts" of missiles over the last year. "Every target engaged was destroyed," he said.

Soft Power: Russian Language Fever Strikes Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Russian language instruction has become a rare growth sector in the devastated economy of government-controlled Syria. The spread of "Russian-learning fever" in loyalist bastions has created plentiful employment opportunities for Russian speakers, particularly as teachers and private tutors. As the first accompanying excerpt notes, the Department of Russian Literature at Damascus University, established only three years ago, now draws top students thanks to its stellar job-placement record. Russian became a secondary language option in the Syrian school system in the 2015 academic year. The "expectation that Russian-Syrian military coordination will extend to other domains" is, according to the excerpted article, a key driver of Syrian interest in the language. Instruments of Russian soft power, such as the "Russian Olympiad," described in the second excerpted article, should become more common.

Syria's "Russian fever" is directly linked to Russian military intervention. The third excerpted article describes how mingling between Russian military personnel and local residents in areas near the Russian military base in Hmeimim (Khmeimim) has incentivized merchants and shopkeepers to learn Russian. Rebels eavesdropping on radio chatter between Russian pilots and their commanders have also scrambled to learn the language, as the fourth excerpted article notes.

Trilingualism is hardly exceptional in Arabic-speaking countries, where much of the educated class at minimum speaks a local dialect, a "standard" written Arabic and English or French. Acquiring additional languages is relatively easy for native Arabic speakers but the converse is hardly true, especially for English-only speakers: Arabic is a Category V language, considered "exceptionally difficult for native English speakers" to learn, according to the U.S. State Department.

Language underpins the social element of any given operational environment. In the Syrian battlefield, as in government-held Syrian society, the importance of the Russian language is growing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Source: حُمّى تعلّم الروسية في الساحل السوري "Russian-Learning Fever on the Syrian Coast," *al-Akhbar*. 15 December 2015. http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/248212

Despite its only being three years old, there is growing attention on the Russian literature department at the University of Damascus, given its graduates' good fortune in finding employment… Several private institutes have also begun teaching Russian… government institutions are starting to include free Russian language training for their employees… Russian is important for all seeking to benefit from this "wave" that is breathing life into the new market, given Syria's economic hardship which limits regular spending habits to that which is necessary. To this is added the expectation that Russian-Syrian military coordination will extend to other domains and that priority in the workplace will be given to Russian speakers.

"… the expectation that Russian-Syrian military coordination will extend to other domains…"

Source: زاخاروفا تستقبل الطلاب السوريين الفائزين بأولمبياد اللغة الروسية "Zakharova Welcomes Syrian Winners of the Russian Language Olympiad," *al-Baath*. 23 June 2016. http://albaath.news.sy/?p=84371

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova welcomed Syrian students who won the "Russian Language, History and Culture Olympiad" held at the end of the last academic year in Syrian schools… Synergy University (Moscow University for Industry and Finance) will continue its work with Syrian children and aims to hold broad competitions that will include Syrian schools.

Source: "In Syria Regime Bastion, Russian 'Guests' Feast for Free," *al-Arabiya English*. 5 January 2016. http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2016/01/05/In-Syria-regime-bastion-Russian-guests-feast-for-free-.html

Russian soldiers go into the city for food, drink and entertainment, creating a new customer base with different demands for Latakia's businesses. To make what he calls his "new friends" feel comfortable, Ihab has begun learning a few Russian words from his father… Mohammad is also learning some Russian words and is pleased to see Russian soldiers learning Arabic words such as "salam", which means "peace" and is used for both hello and goodbye… Haidar has hired a Russian language professor to teach his staff how to communicate with their new guests…

Source: "Russian Language in Rebel Monitoring Stations," *Orient Net*. 25 September 2015. http://www.orient-news.net/ar/news_show/90855

… rebel monitoring stations in rural Hama and Idlib have begun teaching Russian to their personnel, in order to crack communications between Russian pilots and the military bases… the stations rely on Russian speakers from among the residents of liberated areas as translators.

Syria: Rebel Tussle Over Captured Pilot Highlights Vulnerabilities

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 July 2016 a Syrian Air Force Su-22M-3 crashed near the town of Jayrud, at the desert's edge, around 30 miles northeast of Damascus. The Syrian military claimed it was on a training mission and crashed for technical reasons. A Sunni rebel group called Jaysh al-Islam (JaI) claimed it shot down the aircraft (along with two others days earlier). Lieutenant Colonel Nawras Hassan, the aircraft's pilot, ejected safely and landed near Jayrud.

Hassan may have considered Jayrud neutral territory, given the community's ongoing truce with the Syrian government. He was, however, captured at a "joint checkpoint" run by the jihadists of Ahrar al-Sham and the Nusra Front (NF), neither of which was a party to the truce. A proof of life video was recorded at the checkpoint and uploaded to YouTube using the JaI's media logo, apparently without consent from those who had made the video. NF accused JaI of trying to steal their prisoner. JaI retorted that the pilot belonged to them since they had downed his plane. NF asked for proof. In an ensuing tussle over his custody, the pilot was shot and killed. JaI and NF traded barbs online, as the first two accompanying excerpts show.

Syrian rebels can be a fractious bunch. Time after time, the influx of new resources into rebel hands (in this case a POW, but more often weapons) has led otherwise allied factions to fight for control over the resource, often squandering it in the process. Efforts to counterbalance among rebels tend to backfire, as stronger groups usually take control of the new resources.

The Syrian Air Force responded to the killing of Hassan by pounding Jayrud with airstrikes, halting only after the pilot's remains were handed over the next day. Jayrud's angry residents took to the streets, directing their ire at the rebels rather than the government. Within hours, JaI, Ahrar al-Sham and NF agreed to vacate their positions in and near the town. According to the third excerpt, some rebel activists claimed that Hassan was simply "a morsel thrown to cause strife between rebel factions and turn the local population against them."

ISIS is usually drawn to sites of rebel infighting. Rebel divisions facilitated ISIS expansion in the eastern half of Aleppo Province and Raqqa and Deir Ezzour in 2013. Its success was partly due to a policy of non-engagement in rebel disputes. In its dealings with Syrian rebels, it accepted no conflict resolution mechanism beyond the use of force or submission to its rule. In either case, ISIS usually came out ahead. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...a morsel thrown to cause strife between rebel factions and turn the local population against them..."

Source: Tweets from @AdamSleem2, 1 July 2016. https://twitter.com/adamsleem2 (translation via: https://www.reddit.com/r/syriancivilwar/comments/4qwng4/another_nusra_account_concerning_the_executed/)

When the warplane fell the first ones to reach the pilot were Jabhat Nusra and then the rest of the factions. A quick interview was conducted with the pilot. The leadership of Nusra and Ahraar and Jaysh Al-Islam agreed that the pilot would stay under the joint operations room and that no faction would claim the downing alone. And the leadership of Jaysh Al-Islam in E-Qalamoun acknowledged that they did not down the airplane. So we were surprised by the statement published by Jaysh Al-Islam in Ghoutah in which they claimed the downing.

Source: Jaysh al-Islam Press Release, Office of Spokesperson. 1 July 2016. https://twitter.com/Islamarmy_eng3

We were surprised to know that Jabhat Alnusra member killed the pilot of the downed plane by Jaish Alislam. Even though they have given us assurances they'll hand him over to us... We ask both Jabhat Alnusra and Ahrar Alsham to release a justification as to what happened and to hand over the pilots body's [sic]

Source: تسليم جثة الطيار أو حرق جيرود... مجزرة أودت بحياة أكثر من 100 مدني
"Turn Over the Pilot's Remains or Burn Down Jayrud… Massacre Kills Over 100 Civilians," *All4Syria*. 3 July 2016. http://all4syria.info Archive/325892

... the people's decision to end the presence of armed gunmen in Jayrud and to vacate all of their bases in the area... Jaysh al-Islam complied quickly and their positions were vacated by 9 pm. The Nusra Front also agreed to leave the town immediately... Analysts believe the regime achieved the goals of its campaign. Activists suspect that the pilot Nawras was simply a morsel thrown to cause strife between rebel factions and turn the local population against them.

Nigeria and the Saudi-Anti-ISIS Coalition

OE Watch Commentary: In March 2015 Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS, thus becoming the latter's official West African province, or wilayat. Just months after, in December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the formation of an all-Islamic, antiterrorist coalition, the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT). Composed of 34 Islamic countries from around the world, including itself, and other major countries like Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan, IMAFT's mandate is to protect Islamic countries from the threat of violence from extremist Islamic groups. Doing so leverages these countries' roles as home to majority or near-majority Muslim populations, emphasizing that it is not exclusively Western countries that are fighting ISIS and, thus, delegitimizing many of ISIS's claims that frame its battle as a monolithic war of cultures between Muslim and non-Muslim societies. Importantly, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari included Nigeria in the IMAFT coalition, and since that time - as per the excerpted article below - has had to justify that decision against domestic detractors.

Buhari has faced a difficult balancing act in regards to Nigeria's (nominal) participation in the IMAFT coalition since it was announced, and Nigeria joined, in December 2015. Above all, critics in Nigeria, especially from the southern Christian states in the country, have been unsupportive of the decision: in short, they argue that joining a Muslim coalition - even against Islamic terrorism - paints Nigeria as a *mostly* Islamic state, instead of a more religiously diverse one. Indeed, many Christian critics have always believed - despite assurances to the contrary - that Buhari's government is secretly motivated by an Islamic impulse. Thus, the move to joint the Saudi coalition has been particularly susceptible to, critique given that Buhari is himself a Muslim from the north, and thus has the appearance of corroborating these fears.

Yet, as per the article below, Buhari has taken the approach that simply joining IMAFT does not signal that Nigeria is a *majority Muslim* county, but, rather, simply that it is fighting *Muslim terrorists.* While this logic is not flawless – using this rationale, any country fighting Islamic terrorists could join the IMAFT - his response shows yet another difficulty that Nigeria deals with in assuring its national security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

"[The Saudi-led anti-ISIS coalition] is all about eliminating the menace called Boko Haram. Having said that, Nigeria remains a multi-religious nation where there is freedom of worship as prescribed by our constitution, he added."

Source: Udonsi, Wale. 2016. "Why I Put Nigeria in Saudi-led Coalition Against ISIS - Buhari." *Daily Post (Lagos, Nigeria*). 17 July. http://dailypost.ng/2016/07/17/why-i-put-nigeria-in-saudi-led-coalition-against-isis-buhari/

President Muhammadu Buhari has explained why Nigeria joined the Saudi-led Coalition Against ISIS. Buhari also dismissed insinuations that it had religious motive.

"We were looking for solutions to our myriad of problems in the area of security posed by Boko Haram which has pledged alliance to ISIS and the Saudi-led coalition against ISIS was set up to confront and eradicate ISIS."

"Boko Haram had pledged alliance to this terror group and I don't see the reason why we should isolate Nigeria in any effort to eradicate global terrorism.

"It is all about eliminating the menace called Boko Haram. Having said that, Nigeria remains a multi-religious nation where there is freedom of worship as prescribed by our constitution," he added.

In December 2015, Saudi Arabia launched an anti-terror coalition called the IMAFT. Nigeria's decision to join has been rejected by some within the country, which warn that such a move unduly prioritizes Nigeria's Islamic identity over others.
Source: http://www.conflict-news.com/articles/saudi-arabia-announce-anti-terror-coalition

What to Do with Vigilantes Post-Boko Haram Insurgency?

"The Civilian JTF know how to handle arms and ammunition. They are trained in the art of warfare. If after the insurgency you abandon them, then you are planting a time bomb awaiting explosion."

OE Watch Commentary: Some have rightly called the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) that operates in northeastern Nigeria a vigilante organization. The group, composed primarily of men, but also some women, especially from Borno State, emerged in 2013, after citizens of Boko Haram-afflicted areas decided to take their security into their own hands. Often wielding only rudimentary weapons - the local name for the groups is "van gora" or "men with sticks" - the group has worked in both official and unofficial capacities alongside the Borno State government, as well as Nigerian military, to help detect Boko Haram members in the community, provide some forms of security (like roadblocks), and provide ad hoc assistance in raids. Although the Boko Haram insurgency is still very much present, governors of northern states in which the CJTF operates have begun to worry about the dangers posed by members of CJTF once the insurgency is over.

As per the excerpted article below, leaders of northern states worry that once the Boko Haram insurgency is over, the well trained - and by then, unemployed - youth members of the CJTF might well begin to form their own genre of insurgency. Indeed, at 30,000-strong, spread across three Nigerian states, the CJTF is no small demographic. Moreover, the fact that certain, though not all, members of the group have been trained in and given access to larger, more sophisticated weapons, their capacity to turn on the populations that they are currently protecting is not unimaginable.

Theoretically, these states have some plans in the works to forestall threats posed to communities from the CJTF once the Boko Haram insurgency is over. For its part, the Borno State government has adopted the aptly named "Youth Vigilante Empowerment Agency Law 2015," which includes plans to hire the 20,000 members of the CJTF once the insurgency is over. How the Borno government will do this, with its very meager operating budget, has yet to be seen. The Nigerian military has also theoretically instituted a program to bring former CJTF members into its ranks, but again, just how prepared these CJTF soldiers actually might be to join a professional army is questionable. Other plans are in the works to employ some former CJTF members as fire fighters, vehicle inspectors, and even bureaucrats. Indeed, whatever the profession, finding a suitable line of work for so many once-employed combatants once the Boko Haram insurgency is over will be a deeply important task. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

Source: Emuleomo, Adebayo. 2016. "MEND to Niger Delta Avengers: 'Our Struggle Is Beyond Attacks on Oil Installations'" *YNaija (Lagos, Nigeria)*. 16 June. http://ynaija.com/mend-formed-team-negotiate-fg-niger-delta/

[S]takeholders have called on the federal government to offer employment to the gallant Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) operatives who have made significant contributions towards winning the war against the [Boko Haram] insurgency. They stated that doing so would ensure that that the country does not suffer a return to insecurity after the current war against insurgency is won….

A number of the Civilian JTF operatives have received military training and the know-how to handle sophisticated weapons, with many of them believed to be possession of dangerous weapons, sparking the fear that if left without sustainable income, these elements may take out their frustrations on the society considering the fact that a number of the members of the group are not well educated.

…"The Civilian JTF know how to handle arms and ammunition. They are trained in the art of warfare. If after the insurgency you abandon them, then you are planting a time bomb awaiting explosion. They have sacrificed their lives."

Members of the ad-hoc Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have been fighting Boko Haram in their home turf of northeastern Nigeria for years. Leaders in these states are now worried that the one-time, informal counter-terror operatives might potentially turn against citizens if left unemployed once the Boko Haram insurgency is over.
Source: http://www.irinnews.org/news/2014/08/11

Updates on the African Union

OE Watch Commentary: In July it seemed as though one could barely go a week without hearing news from the African Union (AU), an organization that is often more noted for its inertia than its dynamism. Indeed, the sundry developments to come out of the AU all have some implications − direct or indirect − on the African security landscape, and deserve some attention.

As the first excerpted article details, the AU has recently declared that it intends to begin the institution of a new pan-African passport, which would allow citizens to travel freely between countries. Indeed, while the idea of a border-free African travel region has been an idea since the era of independence, typical fears about the free movement of people, goods, arms, and contraband have always stopped the project short. While the West African region of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) does have an open-border passport, to be able to institute this policy across the continent, especially as terrorism spreads across west Africa, the Horn, and northern Africa, continues to be a problem. Thus, it is likely that the recent trumpeting of new moves forward will not come to fruition.

The second excerpted article deals with how the AU Commission has recently failed to elect a new chairperson. With current Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, a respected South African foreign and health minister, stepping down, many commentators, like that of the second article, worry that the caliber of potential replacements is substandard, and also question the lack of nominations from some of Africa's preeminent countries such as Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria, and Algeria. Indeed, the Chairperson of the AU Commission is important, as concerns peace and security, as he or she oversees the African Peace and Security Council, which makes the most pressing decisions around the African continental security landscape.

Finally, the third excerpted article details the fact that Morocco - the only African country not to be a member of the AU - has reapplied for admission. Morocco originally left the AU in 1984, when the AU's predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, deemed the area currently known as Western Sahara independent, thus rendering Morocco's sovereign claims to it as illegal. With the insecurity that is increasingly pervasive in northern Africa, having Morocco officially back in the AU's fold cannot hurt, though nor will it likely have any truly wide-ranging impacts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

Source: No author. 2016. "Morocco Now Asks to Rejoin the African Union" *Daily Nation (Nairobi, Kenya)*. 18 July. http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Morocco-asks-to-rejoin-the-African-Union/-/1066/3300106/-/pn6sgcz/-/index.html

Morocco has formally announced its wish to rejoin the African Union, 32 years after leaving the organisation. In a message to the AU summit in Rwanda, the Moroccan King Mohammed VI said the time had come for his country to retake its place within its institutional family.

Morocco left the AU in 1984, after the organisation recognised the independence of Western Sahara.

Moroccans describe Western Sahara as their country's "southern province". For more than three decades, Morocco has refused to be part of the organisation. The AU has said that it will continue pushing for the rights of the people of Western Sahara to hold a self-determination referendum. Morocco is the only African country that is not an AU member.

Source: Nnabugwu, Favour. 2016. "AU to Launch E-Passport for 54 Countries." *Vanguard (Lagos, Nigeria)*. 7 July. http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/07/au-launch-e-passport-54-member-countries/

The African Union, AU, is set to unveil a common electronic passport that will grant holders visa-free access to all 54 member-countries of the group.

In a statement yesterday, AU said the passport was a step towards the fulfilment of the continent's aspirations as enshrined in Agenda 2063 action plan: to promote greater continental integration and forge a united Africa. According to the AU, the passports will be distributed to all African citizens by 2018.

Source: Maru, Mehari. 2016. "AU Commission Elections: From Bad to Worse?" *Pambazuka News (Nairobi, Kenya)*. 30 June. http://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/au-commission-elections-bad-worse.

....Could these recent extensive media coverages and Pan African conversations of concern rekindle the hope that AUC elections will progressively meet the demands of Africans for competitive and meritocratic elections? As revealed in the candidatures' list, this is inconceivable....

The four top tier budget contributor Member States (Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa) with 48 percent of the total budget) have only five (16 percent) of the 32 candidates for commissioner posts. None of the top tier nominated a candidate for the post of the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson. Of the four top tier budget contributors, Algeria is seeking re-election of the incumbent Amb Smail Chergui, while Egypt has four candidates, thereof, making Egypt with the highest number of candidates...Could this be an indication of change of African policy of Egypt? What primed South African government decision not to fill any candidate for the AUC after the bitter fight for the post of chairperson four years ago?... In contrast, is Egyptian diplomatic focus now shifted southward, and now bestowing Africa highest importance? Why? Nigeria nominated a new candidate for Peace and Security while failing to seek re-election of the incumbent commissioner of Political Affairs.

Fulani Vigilante Group Rising in Mali

"Groups who claim to represent an ethnicity or who are in a position of belligerence, we invite them to join in the peace process."

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted French-language article from ***Maliactu.net*** on 23 June, the Malian Army faces a new internal security challenge: Fulani vigilante groups in Central Mali. The vigilante group is known by the acronym ANSIPRJ, or National Alliance for the Preservation of the Fulani Identity and Restoration of Justice, and does not identify itself with jihadist-style rhetoric like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) ally, Macina Liberation Front (MLF), which also is led by and comprised of Fulanis in Mali. Rather, ANSIPRJ only claims to be fighting the army to defend against army abuses.

The article shows that the army responded to the formation of ANSIPRJ with patience and is trying to use Malian institutions to respond to ANSIPRJ's concerns. The Malian Army recognizes that the threat from ANSIPRJ is different than the threat from AQIM and its allies. Thus, a colonel cited in the article seeks to bring ANSPIRJ into the ongoing peace processes in the country and have its grievances heard in a court. He emphasizes that the Malian Army represents all communities and ethnicities in the country.

Nonetheless, the rise of vigilante groups is a trend in not only Mali but also other countries in West Africa. In Nigeria, for example, vigilantes known as the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) have combated Boko Haram often with only clubs and colonial-era rifles in areas where the army has little presence. Like Mali, the Civilian JTF is a response to state weakness, although, at least initially, the Civilian JTF cooperated with the army in Nigeria. In contrast, ANSPIRJ is opposed to the army. The Malian Army has taken the right steps to deal with ANSPRIJ, considering that the alternative for ANSPIRJ may be to associate with more violent groups aligned with AQIM, such as the MLF.

However, the army is limited in providing the institutional resources, such as courts, peace committees, and dialogue, to implement the population-centric approach to ANSPRIJ, as explained by the colonel in article. Thus, living up to the colonel's word—and avoiding losing legitimacy—is the a challenge for the army in dealing with ANSPRIJ. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Civilian vigilantes, such as the Cameroonian men in the adjacent image, have become more common in West Africa response to Boko Haram and now also in response to violence by both militants and the army in Mali:
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/cameroon-vigilantes-foil-suicide-attack/3323250.html

Source: "L'armée, 'sereine' face à la menace du nouveau groupe armé" [The army, "serene", faces a threat from a new armed group.]," *Maliactu.net*, 23 June 2016.

Labeled "enemy" by a new armed group, the Malian army remains "serene" in the face the threat

Labeled an "enemy" by a new armed group, the Malian army remains serene in face of the threat.. The army is reacting to threats uttered against her by the National Alliance for the Preservation of the Fulani Identity and Restoration of Justice (ANSIPRJ). This new armed group wants to do battle with the army in order, according to its leader, to protect the Peul [Fulani] community against the "abuses" which it is the victim thereof.

"We are used to threats," said Colonel Souleymane Maiga. "We remain confident in relation to all this. We continue to work diligently and confidently. In the field, we look for individuals who illegally carry weapons and affect the population. Groups who claim to represent an ethnicity or who are in a position of belligerence, we invite them to join in the peace process."

The creation of ANSIPRJ, which was announced by Oumar Aldjana, the only known leader of the movement, is a response to "massacres" committed by the army against the Peul community in central Mali. According to Colonel Maiga, Mali's army is a "crucible of national cohesion". It brings together "all communities" in Mali and "is not there to commit abuses against part of the population." He invited ANSIPRJ to prove its allegations.

Boko Haram Attacks in Niger Create Additional Nontraditional Security Threats

"The bodies of 34 migrants, including 20 children, were found last week in the Niger desert while trying to travel to neighboring Algeria."

OE Watch Commentary: Starting in May 2016, Boko Haram began launching a series of attacks in southeastern Niger. This was Boko Haram's first large-scale offensive in the country; previously it had only carried out suicide bombings and logistics operations there. While much international attention has focused on Boko Haram's capture of several towns in Niger, the excerpted French-language article from ***Le Matin*** on 16 June discusses how Niger is responding to the emerging humanitarian disaster that is destabilizing the country as a result of the Boko Haram attacks.

According to the article, more than 280,000 Nigeriens have been displaced. The prime minister called for both security and humanitarian support, the former of which came in the form of a Chadian military intervention and latter of which is still dependent on international NGOs and foreign aid. The article also points to the recent rise in Nigerien migration to Algeria and Libya and how the ongoing displacement could further contribute to that trend.

While the risk of Nigeriens joining ISIS in Libya is still small, even despite financial incentives ISIS can offer, the greater security risk is that smugglers benefit from the increase in migration and can use these funds to engage in other criminal activities that undermine the state. Niger has also reported that groups of migrants who fled northeastern Nigeria in the wake of the Boko Haram attacks were abandoned in the desert by smugglers, thus amplifying the human security issues facing the country.

In the near-term future, Niger will continue to be overwhelmed not only by Boko Haram attacks, but also by the ensuing humanitarian crises that the population is facing. The country's leadership is attempting to manage risks in coordination with the neighboring countries and the international community. But the crises elsewhere in West Africa, from Mali to Nigeria, make it difficult for Niger to receive the necessary support to respond adequately to the human and physical security issues.
End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

Displaced people from Niger, such as the family in the adjacent image, have grown in number as a result of a series of Boko Haram attacks in the country since May 2016.
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/refugees-fleeing-boko-haram-flood-niger-diffa-region/2873785.html

Source: "280.000 personnes déplacées ont besoin d'assistance dans la région de Diffa" [280,000 displaced persons in need of assistance in the region of Diffa], *Le Matin*, 16 June 2016

280,000 displaced persons in need of assistance in the region of Diffa

At a meeting, held in Niamey with technical and financial partners and the humanitarian community in Niger, Prime Minister Brigi Rafini launched a solemn appeal to all friendly countries, partners and the humanitarian community to assist his country in managing the situation in the Diffa region.

In terms of food needs, 135,400 people are affected and the cost of the requirements is estimated at 3.214 billion FCFA. According to the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, an ad hoc technical committee comprised of representatives from the government, partners, humanitarian and customs authorities have been set up. The Resident Coordinator of the United Nations reaffirmed its commitment to support Niger in the management of the situation, while stressing the need to define a concerted strategy for effective intervention in Diffa.

The bodies of 34 migrants, including 20 children, were found last week in the Niger desert while trying to travel to neighboring Algeria, said the Nigerian Ministry of Interior. Migrants have been abandoned by smugglers during the week of June 6 to 12, 2016. Only two bodies were "identified", that of a Nigerian and a Nigerian.

More Cocaine Leaving Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: The drug dilemma recurs as a highlighted public debate in Colombia. Colombians note that attitudes and laws in the United States and elsewhere are rapidly softening, at least toward marijuana, but they see the trend as affecting the market for that drug and cocaine as well. According to regional sources, Colombian exportation of cocaine has been sharply increasing, the country being the world's largest producer.

One major news outlet is ringing the alarm, but seemingly advocating legalization of production. An increase in illicit production raises the questions of how much repression of the industry is warranted, what increased repression would do to internal stability, and what legalization would do to public health. The drug war is considered by many Colombians, including the ***El Espectador*** editors, to have been unsuccessful. Typically, the ***El Espectador*** editors conflate marijuana with cocaine, both as a market question and as a social question.

Much of the cocaine industry's robustness, meanwhile, is tied to the political prospects of the FARC, which have been greatly in ascendance lately. According to regional observations, increase in cocaine production may reflect an increase in FARC freedom of operation. The FARC is easily the largest drug cartel, and it appears, as a condition of the negotiated accords with the government, to be on the verge of gaining virtual impunity in large swaths of Colombia's densest cocaine growing regions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...the Colombian coca leaf crops that the FARC committed to destroy are instead increasing,..."

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ef/Flag_of_the_FARC-EP.svg/2000px-Flag_of_the_FARC-EP.svg.png

Source: Editors, "Las drogas, de nuevo" (Drugs, again), *El Espectador*, 8 July 2016, http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/editorial/drogas-de-nuevo-articulo-622952.

"As soon as possible Colombia needs a new way to confront the drug problem...the surface area dedicated to the cultivation of coca in Colombia rose to as much as 69,000 hectares, 44% more than in 2013. The pressured will say this is due to the suspension of glyphosate spraying... "

Source: Efe, "Panamá advierte que producción de coca en Colombia está en aumento" (Panama warns that the production of coca in Colombia is on the rise), *El Espectador*, 7 July 2016, http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/panama-advierte-produccion-de-coca-colombia-esta-aument-articulo-633860.

"This Monday, the new acting minister of Public Security in Panama warned that the Colombian coca leaf crops that the FARC committed to destroy are instead increasing, thereby aggravating the narco-trafficking problem....the Panamanian government announced last week that it will buy a reconnaissance plane and intercept boats to increase the capacity to combat the traffic of drugs along its coasts.

Source: AFP, "Aumentó "notoriamente" envío de cocaína desde Colombia" (The shipment of cocaine from Colombia has increased 'flagrantly'), *El Espectador*, 7 July 2016, http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/aumento-notoriamente-envio-de-cocaina-colombia-articulo-641948.

"...In an interview with the AFP from Turbo in the Gulf of Urabá, commander of Task Force Neptune, General Adolfo Enrique Martínez, said, 'The crops have increased, the quantities and the intention to export the drug have increased flagrantly'...[reporter's question] How do you see the fight against narco-trafficking in the scenario of peace with the FARC guerrilla? [answer] We have a clear azimuth: fight the narco-trafficking threat. We further strengthen our commitment, we keep working to counteract whatever threat...."

Is Colombia Growing a Religion Problem?

OE Watch Commentary: The unfolding accords between the FARC and the government are creating a social context within which many Colombians sense ominously destabilizing phenomena. One of these phenomena is an explosion of religious intolerance in specific geographic areas of the country. Colombia has not experienced these kinds of overtly enforced prohibitions on religious assembly and speech for many decades. Of course, the FARC has always cracked down on or subjugated clerics within the geographic areas it controlled. The brief experiment with the "*despeje*" (a zone cleared of government authority during a peace agreement attempt in the late 1990s) provided sufficient example.

Today, however, the restrictions are not being treated as rights violations, but seem to enjoy the intentional indifference of the government. Christian clergy, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, are being silenced or expelled from the areas being conceded to FARC control under the agreements. It appears increasingly that the accords are to allow a coexistent, parallel vision of citizen and communal rights -- an alternative social contract. Many Colombian observers say this is but another insulting ingredient in an incendiary mix of concessions, surely leading to an even more violent period of internal struggle.
End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

"'it is prohibited for the communities to meet for preaching.'"

Source: Álvaro Jiménez Guzmán, "La falsa libertad religiosa de Santos" (Santo's false religious liberty), *Debate Periódico*, 13 de julio de 2016, http://periodicodebate.com/index.php/opinion/columnistas-nacionales/item/12165-la-falsa-libertad-religiosa-de-santos.

"...the FARC expelled six catholic priests from Putumayo [department], the bishop of Mocoa [departmental capital] claimed that the guerrilla prohibited them from evangelizing or officiating mass... They ordered the six priests to leave for their security. The threats were also for protestant pastors: 'it is prohibited for the communities to meet for preaching'...Where is the legitimate State presence to defend the freedom of religious practice? Nowhere. Total absence in Catatumbo, Guaviare, Caquetá, Norte de Santander. The FARC, ELN, EPL and Bacrim rule.

Much of FARC Apparently Refusing to Disarm

OE Watch Commentary: That much of FARC is refusing to disarm has been something suspected by many analysts since the beginning of the negotiations between the FARC and the government of Colombia. Many of the subordinate organizations are displaying an autonomy that was purported to have not existed. It is no surprise that the organizations most open about their refusal to agree with disarmament and demobilization are those located at the centers of gravity of FARC's cocaine cultivation and transportation. To many Colombians, the more they know about the accords, the more they are disconcerted.
End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

Source: Editors, "El Procurador advierte: el frente 7 de las Farc tampoco se va a desmovilizar" (The Solicitor General warns: FARC front 7 is not demobilizing, either), *El Espectador*, 8 July 2016, http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/procurador-advierte-el-frente-septimo-de-farc-no-se-va-articulo-642177.

"...said front has 300 members, counting guerrillas and militia.... 'Colombians understand peace to mean the end of the armed apparatus of the FARC. If the thousands of militiamen do not concentrate themselves to be demobilized and turn in weapons, the Havana Accord could turn into a huge fraud',..."

Source: Adrián Parrondo, "Un importante frente de las FARC se niega entregar las armas" (An important FARC front refuses to turn in weapons), *Diario ABC*, 7 July, 2016, http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-importante-frente-farc-niega-entregar-armas-201607070606_noticia.html.

Source: Adrián Parrondo, "Un importante frente de las FARC se niega entregar las armas" (An important FARC front refuses to turn in weapons), *Diario ABC*, 7 July, 2016, http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-importante-frente-farc-niega-entregar-armas-201607070606_noticia.html.

"An important FARC front announced this Wednesday its negative to turning in weapons and demobilizing. Reference is to the First Front 'Armando Rios', of relative importance in the Guaviare region in the center of the country."

"The News media are now beginning to reveal that these are the FARC fronts that will probably not demobilize:
First front. Guaviare
Front 16. Vichada. This would be the author of the recent attack on the Orinoco River that they tried to make seem an attack by the ELN, which never has hade much presence in the zone.
Front 44. Meta and Guaviare. Front 57. Border with Panama. Mobile Column Daniel Aldana. Nariño. To this is added the now confirmed urban militias that were not included in the accords and that represent more than 50% of the armed members of the FARC.

Venezuela Apparently Continues to Spend on Armaments

OE Watch Commentary: Elsewhere in ***OE Watch*** we have noted that President Maduro has been acceding to the increased political power of the Venezuelan military. It follows that he might help it increase in physical capacity as well.

Perhaps it makes some narrative sense that this increasing military strength would be justified by an alleged unconventional war waged against the people by class enemies with help from the United States. His rhetoric might seem anachronistic and clumsy, but Maduro is offering it unflinchingly, in the midst of an economic disaster. Perhaps only a small minority of Venezuelans will buy the propaganda, but that few may be enough to keep the Bolivarians in power. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"...a military all the time increasing in power...all the time increasing in size..."

Source: "Nicolás Maduro: El poder militar tiene que seguir incrementándose en Venezuela" (Nicolas Maduro: Military power has to keep increasing in Venezuela), *El Universo*, Guayaquil, 5 July 2016, http://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2016/07/05/nota/5674641/nicolas-maduro-poder-militar-tiene-que-seguir-incrementandose.

"In front of thousands of members of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB), Maduro justified the necessity of 'a military all the time increasing in power...all the time increasing in size', in order to confront ' an unconventional war'.... In these terms the executive referred to what he denounced as a boycott of the economy by part of the opposition -- to include entrepreneurs --, supported by power sectors of the United States that seek to overthrow him."

Who Is In Charge of What in Venezuela?

OE Watch Commentary: Venezuelan Minister of Defense Padrino López continues to gain power within the Bolivarian government apparatus. Now President Maduro has tagged him to head up a Provisioning Mission, which is a superficial contraption intended to grant (or paint official continuity onto) sweeping economic powers to control prices, supplies, and tariffs, make import-export agreements, and so on. It seems that the Bolivarian answer to shortages in Venezuela is a more intense dose of centralized planning, this time by the head general.

In a long interview retired General Clíver Alcalá offers tentative (and a bit condescending) support for the defense minister. The general talks as though he has considerable leverage, which is notable, given that he has been named by international police as one of the leaders of the "*cartel de los soles*," the dominant Venezuelan drug cartel run military generals.

The ***Dolar Today*** headline also suggests what many regional analysts suspect -- that there has been an on-going, subtle transition of power in Venezuela from civilian leaders of the socialist party to military members. Perhaps the minister will one day simply don a civilian suit. In any case, it does not appear that the Bolivarians are despairing or planning to give up on their Revolution. López and Alcalá both claim to be dedicated *Chavistas*. In any case, do not look for Venezuela's economic difficulties to turn around any time soon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

"This designation demonstrates that the current model does not work."

Source: Dólar Today, "¡La Transición Comenzó en Venezuela! Clíver Alcalá: "Maduro reconoce su fracaso al designar a Padrino López" (The Transition Begins in Venezuela! Clíver Alcalá: Maduro recognizes his failure by designating Padrino López), *DolarToday.com*, 14 July 2016, http://m.dolartoday.com/video-la-transicion-comenzo-en-venezuela-cliver-alcala-maduro-reconoce-su-fracaso-al-designar-padrino-lopez/.

"He [President Maduro] recognizes that the ministers of the portfolio, that the Armed Forces will now take care of, has failed. He added that 'This designation demonstrates that the current model does not work'... Alcalá advised Padrino López not to listen to 'the great negotiators who are going to romance you'....'We are going to be with you if you do this well, Padrino'."

Mexican Drug Cartels Use Franchise System in Europe

OE Watch Commentary: Up until recently, Colombians maintained nearly complete dominance over the European cocaine market, but this trend appears to be changing as Mexican cartels fight to create small franchises to grow their business in the region. Opportunity for this growth surfaced as major Colombian cartels underwent flux and fragmentation, leaving supply gaps, particularly in countries such as Spain, where they have traditionally held strong control. Recent moves by Mexican cartels were highlighted by Rob Wainwright (Europol Director), who in excerpt one affirmed that they are creating "franchises" to more effectively traffic cocaine throughout the region. By creating these franchises, Mexican cartels are able to maximize benefits and minimize risks, as they use local criminal groups to move and sell their shipments without ever having to utilize intermediaries. Wainwright further highlights that Mexican cartels have been successful in setting up European-based franchises because the market is not dominated by any specific criminal group, with the exception of the Ndrangheta mafia in Italy and Colombian groups in Spain.

The franchise system was first utilized by Mexican cartels within their own territory, where they are known to contract smaller armed groups who work at the service of a major cartel in a semi-autonomous manner to distribute/move drugs and maintain territorial control. As part of the franchise system, these smaller groups still receive protection and are able to use the business "brand" name to gain the respect they need in territories in which they would potentially meet resistance. These franchises later expanded to the US, as cartels needed local distributors in the form of gangs and other criminal groups to move their products. According to excerpt two, Mexican drug franchises are currently present in at least 48 of 50 US states. It is not surprising then that Mexican cartels are attempting to utilize this same method in Europe, given its success in other locations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

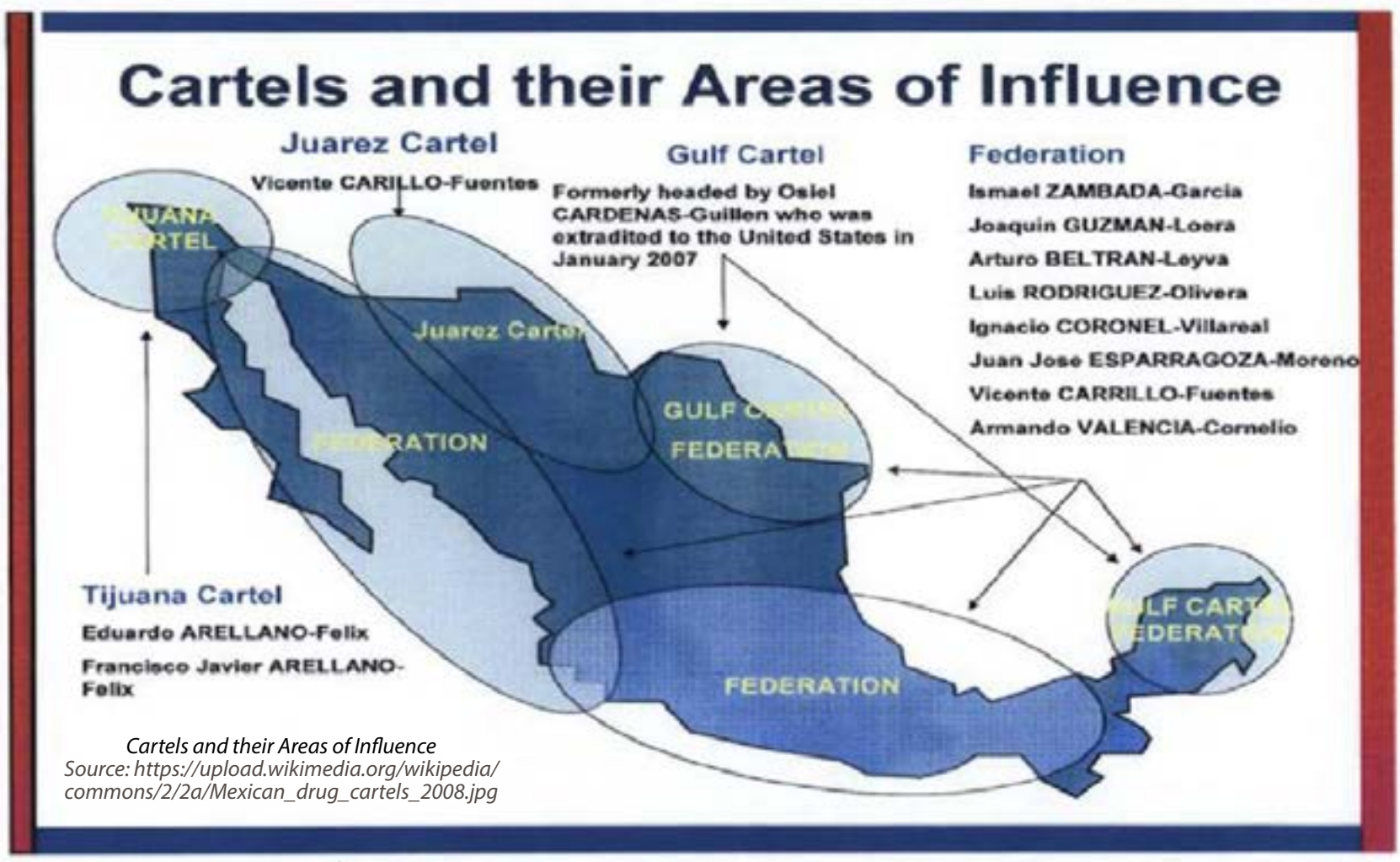
Source: "El narco mexicano usa franquicias en Europa" (Mexican Drug Cartels Use Franchise System in Europe). *El Universal*. Accessed from http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/articulo/nacion/seguridad/2016/04/9/el-narco-mexicano-usa-franquicias-en-europa/

"Rob Wainwright, the Director of Europol, indicated during an interview with El Universal that Mexican drug cartels are using a franchise system to run their operations in Europe. As part of this process, they allow criminal groups to operate under the umbrella of their organization and basically provide them with a so-called "operating license."

"The European drug market is not dominated by mafia groups with the exception of the Ndrangheta in Italy. Instead, the market is run by small groups in various countries who have traditionally collaborated with each other," according to Wainwright."

Source: "El narcotráfico mexicano abrió 235 franquicias en EU" (Mexican Drug Trafficking Groups Open 235 Franchises in the United States). *Excelsior*. Accessed from http://www.excelsior.com.mx/node/703069

"Mexican Cartels are operating in 48 US states where they maintain approximately 235 distribution centers."



Cartels and their Areas of Influence
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/Mexican_drug_cartels_2008.jpg

Challenges Associated with Dismantling Clan Usuga in Colombia

OE Watch Commentary: What do the names Clan Úsuga, Los Urabeños, and the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia have in common? They are one in the same, but by classifying themselves as a "self-defense" organization they are looking to negotiate peace talks with the government in the same manner as the FARC, according to ***El Espectador*** in excerpt 1. This request has been systematically rejected by the government because it is public knowledge that Clan Úsuga is far from having any political agenda. Instead, it is currently the most powerful drug trafficking organization in Colombia, controlling an estimated 60% of the country's internal drug market. It also has presence in areas throughout the country and has a sizable force at its service to move drug shipments and control micro-trafficking activities, according to ***El Universal*** in excerpt 2.

The "Gaitanists" are organized according to a pyramid structure, at the top of which sit "Otoniel" and "Marcos Gavilan," men who have forged their careers over three decades fighting in various wars. Thanks to their time in the ranks of Colombia's Popular Liberation Army guerillas, they know the thickly forested and mountainous region of Uraba like no one else.

Clan Úsuga gradually gained power following the formation of the group in 2006. Its original members came together from various paramilitary groups including the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). It was headed by Daniel Rendon Herrera, alias "Don Mario," until his arrest in 2009. Many thought the group would fall at this time, but it continued to grow, so much so that the Colombian government implemented Operation Agamemnon in February 2015 with the objective of dismantling the group by arresting key leaders, specifically Dairo Antonio Usuga, alias "Otoniel." To date, this has not happened, despite the efforts of more than 1200 police officers, 1000 soldiers, and a fleet of artillery helicopters. According to ***El Colombiano*** in excerpt three, the implication of this ongoing operation is that Clan Úsuga is better equipped and organized than originally thought, and even with the arrest of Otoniel it is likely that the group will be able to continue operations, given that many of the remaining key leaders have long histories fighting in the ranks of paramilitary groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Clan Úsuga pide ser incluido en el Proceso de Paz" (Úsuga Clan Requests to be Included in Peace Process Talks). *El Espectador.* Accessed from http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/clan-usuga-pide-ser-incluido-el-proceso-de-paz-articulo-601328

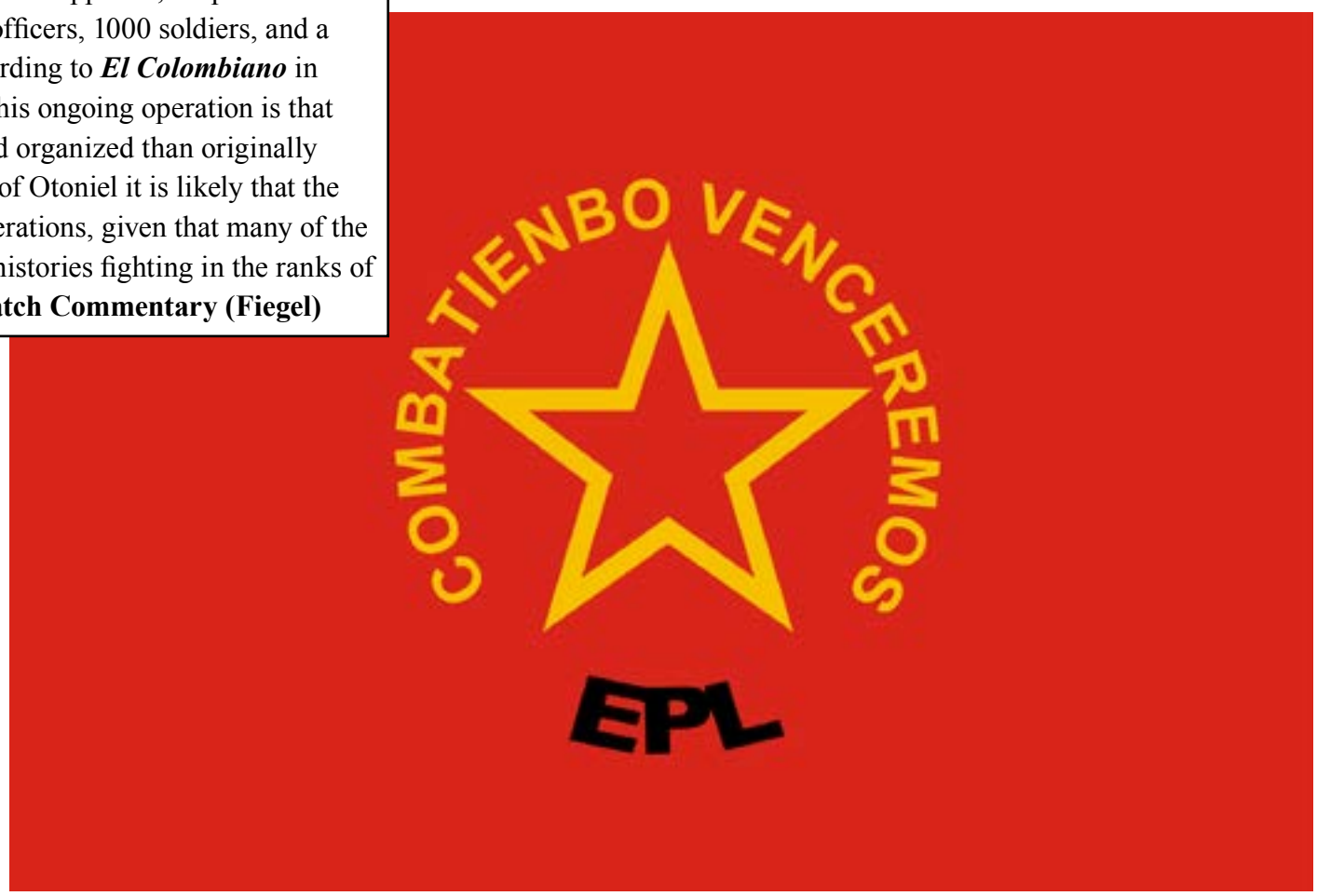
"A spokesperson for Clan Úsuga indicated via a video feed that the organization is interested in initiating peace talks with the government and has asked to be included in the on-going process in Havana as the FARC currently is."

Source: "Clan Úsuga": dónde nacieron, cómo actúan y qué buscan" (Clan Úsuga: Where they Originated, How they Operate, and What they are Looking For). *El Universal.* Accessed from http://www.eluniversal.com.co/colombia/clan-usuga-donde-nacieron-como-actuan-y-que-buscan-223132

"Clan Úsuga controls 60% of the drug market and has presence in 17 of Colombia's 32 Departments. The group also has more than 3,000 individuals working at its service and is known for contracting local gangs to increase their power base."

Source: "Otoniel", auge y crisis del capo más buscado del país" (Otoniel, the Rise of Colombia's Most Wanted Drug Trafficker). *El Colombiano*. Accessed from http://www.elcolombiano.com/antioquia/seguridad/otoniel-auge-y-crisis-del-capo-mas-buscado-del-pais-FM1608304

"Clan Usuga are organized according to a pyramid structure at the top of which sit "Otoniel" and "Marcos Gavilan," men who have forged their careers over three decades fighting in various wars. Thanks to their time in the ranks of the EPL guerillas, they know the thickly forested and mountainous region of Uraba like no one else and will not be easy to defeat."



EPL
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/fb/Flag_of_EPL.svg/2000px-Flag_of_EPL.svg.png

Criminal Groups in Medellin Continue Targeting Children

OE Watch Commentary: In Medellin, Colombia, four "combos" known as los Chatos, los Mondongueros, los Machacos, and los Cachorros order murders, collect extortions, and run micro-trafficking operations. These combos are not to be confused with drug-trafficking organizations, but instead are similar to gangs that operate on a reduced geographic scale. In the case of Medellin, they live, work, and recruit in "comunas," which are Colombia's version of a slum. In terms of size, combos are relatively large groups, and although there are no exact estimates as to how many members operate within them, the first ***El Espectador*** excerpt reported that there may be as many as 5400 single members in the Medellin metropolitan area who work in at least 300 subgroups. This source further indicated that 70% of combo members are under the age of 18 and reported rampant recruitment schemes aimed at targeting the youth population in comunas. Even more disturbing is the fact that more than 570,000 minors in Medellin are supposedly "at risk" of falling victim to recruitment.

An ***El Tiempo*** article delved deeper into this issue and identified some unique reasons as to why children are prone to recruitment in the first place. The second excerpt highlights these reasons, while also pointing out that any strategies implemented by the government to counteract recruitment must be unique to the geographic area being targeted, as one single program will not fit the bill to solve this growing issue. In the meantime, the third excerpt, also from ***El Tiempo***, indicated that families are desperately trying to protect their children from recruitment attempts in comunas by paying combos up to 5000 Colombian pesos per day. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Violencia y menores en Medellín" (Violence and Youth in Medellin.) El Espectador. Accessed from http://www.elespectador.com/opinion/violencia-y-menores-medellin on

"The statistics are alarming. In Medellin there are more than 300 combos with as many as 5,400 members. An estimated 70% of these individuals are under the age of 18. There are also hundreds of thousands of at risk minors in the city who are just a decision away from joining. Added to the problem of growing combos and underage recruitment is that these groups look to obtain more territory and control on a daily basis."

Source: "Combos de Medellín les hacen creer a los menores que son su familia" (Criminal Groups in Medellin Make Recruited Children Believe they are Part of a Family). *El Tiempo*. Accessed from http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/medellin/reclutamiento-infantil-combos-copan-espacios-de-la-familia/15832365

"There are many hypotheses aimed at understanding the reasons why minors join combos in Medellin. The factors surrounding decisions are not simply economic and may be related to Medellin's culture of illegality (think Pablo Escobar). Combos also provide the youth population a sense of family and acceptance. They allow these kids to live experiences and take part in something and this is significant because many of them have never had anything. For these reasons, any strategy aimed at thwarting youth recruitment must focus on individual factors in different geographic regions."

Source: "Bandas reclutaron a 1.745 niños en Medellín en los últimos cuatro años" (Colombia: Report Says Medellin Gangs Recruited 1,745 Minors Over Past 4 Years). *El Tiempo*. Accessed from http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/medellin/reclutamiento-de-menores-en-medellin/16520048

"Another of the allegations that became known yesterday in the Council was the extortions to families in exchange for not to recruiting their children. These are known as vital extortion fees in which families pay up to 5,000 pesos a day. The case of San Cristobal is emblematic, where in 2014 criminals killed two minors: Daniel and Jota, the reason was because their mother stopped paying their share so that they would not take them away."

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e3/La_Palma_-_Roque_de_los_Muchachos_10_ies.jpg

ISIS is Promoting Local Terrorism in Southeast Asia

OE Watch Commentary: Southeast Asian militants who claim to be fighting for ISIS have asked supporters to stay home and unify under one umbrella group to launch attacks in Southeast Asia, instead of being drawn to the fight in the Middle East. According to excerpts in Singapore's ***Asia One,*** the group released a video with Mohd Rafi Udin, a Malaysian militant currently in Syria, who says in Malay: "If you cannot go to (Syria), join up and go to the Philippines." The video also urges Muslims to unite under the leadership of Abu Abdullah, who heads Abu Sayaff and pledged allegiance to ISIS in January. This video comes at a time when Furat Media, an ISIS-affiliated media agency, published the first edition of ***Al-Fatihin***, a newspaper meant for speakers of the Malay Language who have migrated and joined the terrorist group, which is dedicated to the creation of an Islamic State in Southeast Asia, according to commentary from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

As pointed out in excerpts from ***Asia One***, the video was released to mark ISIS's acceptance of allegiances from jihadists in the Philippines, the first formal recognition of a Southeast Asian group, said Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, chief of Malaysia's police counterterrorism unit. "This video is not just propaganda, but is a serious threat. We are definitely expecting more attacks in this region."

As described in excerpts from the commentary, ***Al-Fatihin*** has implications for Islamic State militant activities in Southeast Asia. This publication serves the larger Malay-speaking audience in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Thailand and is possibly the prelude to the declaration of the Philippines as an Islamic-State-governed region. The newspaper allows Malay-speaking IS-affiliated jihadists to have a common identity and feel part of a community within ISIS. This sense of identity and purpose may also motivate ISIS supporters to act militantly within Southeast Asia, as is happening in Southern Philippines and Poso. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

For more information, see: "ISIS Integration with Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines?," *OE Watch*, April 2016

Source: "Southeast Asian Islamic State Unit Being Formed in Southern Philippines: Officials," *Asia One*, 24 June 2016. http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/southeast-asian-islamic-state-unit-being-formed-southern-philippines-officials

Southeast Asian militants who claim to be fighting for Islamic State in the Middle East have said they have chosen one of the most wanted men in the Philippines to head a regional faction of the ultra-radical group, security officials said on Thursday.

The video is significant, experts say, because it shows that Islamic State supporters are now being asked to stay home and unify under one umbrella group to launch attacks in Southeast Asia, instead of being drawn to the fight in the Middle East.

... Mohd Rafi Udin, a Malaysian militant currently in Syria, says in Malay: "If you cannot go to (Syria), join up and go to the Philippines."

In the video, Udin also urges Muslims to unite under the leadership of Abu Abdullah, a Philippine militant leader who pledged allegiance to Islamic State in January.

"This video is not just propaganda, but is a serious threat. We are definitely expecting more attacks in this region," Pitchay ...

The video was released to mark Islamic State's acceptance of allegiances from jihadists in the Philippines, the first formal recognition of a Southeast Asian group, said Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, chief of Malaysia's police counter-terrorism unit.

Flag of the Islamic State.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant#/media/File:AQMI_Flag_asymmetric.svg

Source: "Al-Fatihin: Islamic State's First Malay Language Newspaper," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 23 June 2016. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16155-al-fatihin-islamic-states-first-malay-language-newspaper/

Furat Media – an IS-affiliated media agency – published the first edition of Al-Fatihin, a newspaper meant for speakers of the Malay Language who have migrated and joined the terrorist group, dedicated to the creation of Daulah Islamiyah (IS) in Southeast Asia.

... the newspaper for "muhajirin berbahasa Melayu (Malay-speaking migrants)" could also serve the larger Malay-speaking audience in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Thailand. ...

... is possibly the prelude to the declaration of the Philippi Al-Fatihin provides a platform for

Malay-speaking IS-affiliated jihadists to have a common identity and feel part of a community within a Daulah Islamiyah.

This sense of identity and purpose may motivate IS supporters to act militantly as is happening in Southern Philippines and Poso. In the video "Al-Bunyan Al-Marsus", Abu 'Aun al-Malizi, a Malaysian IS fighter, called on jihadists in Southeast Asia who could not afford to make the journey to IS territories in the Middle East, to either migrate to the Philippines or to kill IS enemies wherever they may be found, even using vehicles to cause their deaths. nes as an IS 'wilayah'.

With Orders from Syria, ISIS Carries Out First Attack in Malaysia

OE Watch Commentary: With a bomb assault that injured eight patrons at an entertainment venue just south of Kuala Lumpur on 27 June 2016, Malaysia experienced its first terrorist attack by ISIS after repeated threats from the extremist group. According to excerpts in the accompanying commentary from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, this attack comes as Malaysian authorities have identified Muhamad Wanndy Mohamad Jedi, a Malaysian living in Syria, as the directing figure of the terrorist network in Malaysia who plans and prepares attacks in Malaysia. Raised in Durian Tunggal, an area between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, Wanndy migrated to Syria in February 2015 and joined the external operations wing of ISIS. In Syria he works with Mohd Rafi Udin, another Malaysian migrant who released a recent Malay propaganda video, and other operations managers to disseminate propaganda, recruit, raise funds, and organize attacks.

As described in the commentary, ISIS central in Syria claimed the attack and issued a statement saying, "two soldiers of the Caliphate from the region of Malaysia" conducted the first attack in Kuala Lumpur, the heart of Malaysia, by targeting a nightclub with a bomb. The statement said the nightclub was attacked for not respecting the month of Ramadhan "by conducting sinful activities."

According to the excerpts, since the June 2014 ISIS declaration in Syria and Iraq, Malaysian authorities have prevented nine plots to attack Malaysia, but they were unsuccessful in detecting and disrupting the recent one in Puchong. This demonstrates that the nature of the current wave of terrorism has changed from group to networked attacks, making it a challenge even for the best security and intelligence services to prevent them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

For more information, see: "Islamic State is Promoting Local Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *OE Watch*, July 2016

Source: "Islamic State's First Terror Attack in Malaysia," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 23 June 2016. http://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/icpvtr/co16163-islamic-states-first-terror-attack-in-malaysia/

After repeated threats the Islamic State (IS) mounted their first successful terrorist attack in Malaysia on 27 June 2016, with a bomb assault on an entertainment venue in Puchong, Selangor. Two IS operatives threw an Improvised Explosive Device (IED)... injuring eight patrons, one seriously.

... Claiming the attack, however, IS central located in Syria issued a statement saying "two soldiers of the Caliphate from the wilayat of Malaysia" conducted the first attack in Kuala Lumpur, "the heart of Malaysia" by targeting a nightclub with a bomb. The statement said the nightclub was attacked for not respecting the month of Ramadhan "by conducting sinful activities".

Since the declaration of the so-called Islamic State in June 2014 in Syria and Iraq, the Malaysian authorities have prevented nine plots to attack Malaysia. However, they were unsuccessful in detecting and disrupting the attack in Puchong. The nature of the current wave of terrorism had changed from group attacks to networked attacks making it a challenge even for the best security and intelligence services to prevent all the attacks.

... The Malaysian media and wire services reported the attack as an act of crime, until IS claimed the attack.

The authorities had identified Muhamad Wanndy Mohamad Jedi, a Malaysian in Syria as the directing figure of the terrorist network in Malaysia. Raised in Durian Tunggal, Wanndy migrated to Syria in February 2015 and joined the external operations wing of IS. ...Wanndy lives in Syria planning and preparing attacks in Malaysia. Working with Rafi Udin and other operations managers, Wanndy's task has been to disseminate propaganda, recruit, raise funds, and organise attacks.

Built in 1907, Jamek Mosque is one of the oldest mosques in Kuala Lumpur.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamek_Mosque#/media/File:Jamekmosque_KL.JPG

Growing Discontent and Islamic State in Southern Thailand

OE Watch Commentary: Growing discontent in Southern Thailand has led to a significant increase in the number of attacks in the region and a surge in radical online activity, as well as the revival of militant groups that were thought to be defunct or dormant, such as breakaway factions of the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), one of the most active insurgent groups in the south, the Malay State of Pattani Raya Army (PULO's armed wing, which was active from 1976-1990) and the Pattani Liberation Army. The resurrection of these groups is a possible game changer to the restive region.

According to excerpts from a commentary from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, since an Islamic school was shut down by the Thai government in 2005, and its land confiscated by the courts in December 2015, the trust between the government and the southern Thai Malay Muslim community has been severely impaired. Through today, this has become the turning point for the insurgency, as seen in the escalation of bombings and attempted bombings since early this year, with a 42% increase in attacks in April. Excerpts from the commentary also note that ISIS may have established links with local insurgents, demonstrated by the group beginning to use ISIS propaganda in social media.

According to the accompanying excerpts, Thai insurgent groups are also using ISIS flags and symbols in their related social media accounts. However, it is unclear whether these groups have adopted the same goals as ISIS. PULO issued a statement in February 2016, declaring that it does not have anything to do with ISIS. Given the spike in violence since this statement, with the increase in online clamor for autonomy and religious connection between the two groups, more investigation is necessary to determine whether there are any links between local insurgents and ISIS.

Excerpts from the ***Bangkok Post*** claim that in coastal areas of Southern Thailand insurgents have also unveiled floating bombs, devices set adrift towards their targets that detonate remotely when they approach, as a new weapon in their arsenal. In late June, two 10-kilogram devices damaged two locations, a fish wharf and boat landing, in Pattani when set adrift in foam boxes. This is the first time insurgents have deployed floating bombs capable of getting close to targets and causing major damage. Since the bombs were set off late at night and no was injured, analysts suspect these were simply a trial run. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

For more information, see: "Southern Thailand Peace Talk Hit Another Bump in the Road," *OE Watch*, May 2016

Source: "Insurgency in Southern Thailand: More Unrest Ahead?," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 4 July 2016. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co16167/#.V3v7JI5OFSE

Growing discontent in Southern Thailand has led to a significant increase in the number of attacks in the region, a surge in radical online activity as well as the revival of militant groups that are thought to be defunct or dormant.

Since the shutting down of an Islamic school (Jihad Wittaya or "Pondok Jihad") by the Thai government in 2005 and confiscation of its land by the courts in December 2015, the trust between the government and the southern Thai Malay Muslim community has been severely impaired. It has proved to be the turning point for the insurgency as seen in the escalation of bombings and attempted bombings since early this year. Although there have been many bombing incidents since 2008, April 2016 alone saw a 42% increase in attacks, ...

The upsurge in violence and online activity has been accompanied by the revival of hitherto defunct and dormant breakaway factions of the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), one of the most active insurgent groups in the south. The resurrection of these groups, which include the Nampra Army (PULO's armed wing that was active from 1976-1990) and the Pattani Liberation Army, are possible game changers to the restive region. (Nampra stands for Negara Melayu Patani Raya or the Malay State of Patani Raya.)

... social media accounts related to Thai insurgent groups have begun using flags and symbols of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) also known as ISIS are ominous; whether these groups have adopted the same goals as ISIS however remains unclear.

PULO had issued a statement in February 2016, declaring that it does not have anything to do with ISIS. However, given the spike in violence since this statement, and the increase in online clamour for autonomy using Islam as a cantilever, more investigation is necessary to determine whether there are any links between local insurgents and ISIS.

Source: "Floating bombs sow fear in far South," Bangkok Post, 20 June 2016. http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1014709/floating-bombs-sow-fear-in-far-south

Insurgents have unveiled a new weapon in their arsenal -- floating bombs, with devices set adrift towards their targets and detonated remotely when they approach.

A fish wharf and boat landing in Pattani were damaged on Saturday night when two 10kg devices, set adrift in foam boxes, were detonated as they drew near. No one was injured, and the bombs were set off late at night, leading some to suspect these were a trial run.

The explosions damaged many fishing boats at the two spots.

Though police have no clear idea as to why the insurgents chose the targets they did, they believe the bombs were an attempt to cause disruption.

Experts said the attacks suggest insurgents have devised a new technique of staging violence. This is the first time insurgents have deployed floating bombs capable of getting close to targets and causing major damage.

Philippine Military Plans Shock and Awe in Sulu Sea

OE Watch Commentary: To combat Abu Sayyaf in the Sulu Sea, the Philippine military will employ the "shock and awe" tactic in its offensive, said Armed Forces Chief Lieutenant General Ricardo Visaya. According to excerpts from ***GMA News*** and ***Malaya Business Insight News,*** Visaya wants to defeat Abu Sayyaf through non-stop operations before the end of his term on 8 December. This new military tactic comes shortly after Indonesia asked the new Philippine government to ensure security in the Sulu Sea, as the two countries continue their joint efforts to secure the release of seven Indonesian sailors abducted by armed Philippine militants. As described in the accompanying article, Abu Sayyaf is holding over a dozen kidnap victims, including the Indonesian sailors abducted on 22 June and a Norwegian tourist, and recently beheaded two Canadian captives. The Philippine military estimates the number of active Abu Sayyaf members to be about 300-400 men scattered in Sulu and Basilan in the southern part of the country.

According to excerpts, Visaya told reporters, "You will see in July that there will be shock and awe [against Abu Sayyaf]... more actions will be seen in the next three months." The Philippine military currently has 11 battalions operating against Abu Sayyaf in Sulu, while there are about 4 battalions in Basilan. With the "shock and awe" tactic, Visaya plans to increase the number of Philippine armed forces in the region, but he did not indicate the exact number.

As described in excerpts from ***Inquirer.net,*** the new military strategy comes after Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi called on the Philippines to guarantee security in Sulu waters during a meeting with his newly inaugurated counterpart, Perfecto Yasay. Indonesia has concerns for its citizens in the Sulu Sea, as the country is currently facing its third hostage situation this year, with all incidents occurring while sailors were in waters off Sulu in the southern Philippines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: "Military to use 'shock and awe' strategy vs. Abu Sayyaf," *GMA News*, 4 July 2016. http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/572371/news/nation/military-to-use-shock-and-awe-strategy-vs-abu-sayyaf

The military will employ "shock and awe" tactic in its offensive against the Abu Sayyaf, which is currently holding several hostages, among them foreigners, in Sulu, Armed Forces chief Lt. Gen. Ricardo Visaya said Monday.

"You will see in July that there will be shock and awe," Visaya told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo. "You are going to see results. It will be a different approach."

... "more actions will be seen in the next three months."

Ending the Abu Sayyaf problem is one of the thrusts of the newly installed Duterte administration.

The al Qaeda-linked group is holding over a dozen kidnap victims, including seven Indonesian sailors abducted on June 22 in Sulu Sea, and a Norwegian tourist. It recently beheaded two Canadian captives.

Military estimates the number of active Abu Sayyaf members to be about 300 to 400 men scattered in Sulu and Basilan.

At present, there are 11 battalions operating against the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu while there are about four battalions in Basilan

A Philippine Naval SWAG participates in a battlefield exercise during a combat medic at Naval Base Cavite.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_Navy#/media/File:Philippine_Navy_Special_Warfare_Group(SWAG).jpg.

Source: "'Shock and awe' ops poised vs Abu Sayyaf," *Malaya Business Insight News,* 5 July 2016. http://www.malaya.com.ph/business-news/news/%E2%80%98shock-and-awe%E2%80%99-ops-poised-vs-abu-sayyaf

Visaya wants to defeat the Abu Sayyaf, through non-stop operations, before the end of his term on Dec. 8, ...

A military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the declaration of Visaya may mean the deployment of more forces and assets to fight the Abu Sayyaf.

Source: "'Indonesia Calls on New PH Gov't to Ensure Sulu Sea Security," ***Inquirer.net***, 2 July 2016. http://globalnation.inquirer.net/140619/indonesia-calls-on-new-ph-govt-to-ensure-sulu-sea-security

Indonesia has asked the new Philippine government to ensure security in the Sulu Sea as the two countries continue their joint efforts to secure the release of Indonesian sailors abducted by armed Philippine militants.

... Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi, calling on the Philippines to guarantee security in Sulu waters during a meeting with newly inaugurated counterpart Perfecto Yasay in Manila on Friday, according to a statement released by the ministry.

Indonesia is currently facing its third hostage situation this year; all incidents occurred while Indonesian sailors were traversing waters off Sulu in the southern Philippines.

After the South China Sea Ruling, What's Next for Vietnam?

OE Watch Commentary: Although not a party to the legal dispute, Vietnam is confronted by dangers and opportunities following a stunning rebuke to China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. According to excerpts in the accompanying article in ***Inquirer.net***, Hanoi should receive a major legal and diplomatic boost in its own efforts to resist China's belligerence in the disputed waters near the Paracel Islands, but the article also notes that China may respond by stepping up its military presence, increasing the danger of hostilities, in an attempt to bolster its severely damaged territorial claims. Vietnam also faces challenges at home to show that it can stand up to its former ally.

As pointed out in the excerpts, the ruling over China's claim to the "nine-dash line" and to waters in the Spratlys did not include a ruling on the status of waters around the Paracel Islands, the western reaches that were seized by China from Vietnam in 1974. Vietnam must now decide whether to bring its case against China to The Hague in a challenge to Beijing's control of waters around the Paracels. The recent ruling is already seen as a major moral and strategic victory for Vietnam, given that officials feel confident that it could win a similar legal victory.

According to excerpts from ***Vietnam Right Now***, Vietnam is also under domestic pressure to show that it can stand against China. Nationalist feelings are already running high in Vietnam amid a widespread belief that China is using its economic and military might to intimidate a smaller neighbor. Vietnamese authorities may fear a repeat of the anti-China riots that occurred two years ago, which shows how explosive a domestic issue the territorial dispute has become. For now, Vietnam will try to tread cautiously as it plots a way through a legal, diplomatic and political quagmire that is fraught with danger.
End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)

Source: "Vietnam faces dilemma after stunning setback for China," *Inquier.net*, 13 July 2016. http://globalnation.inquirer.net/141034/vietnam-faces-dilemma-after-stunning-setback-for-china

Vietnam is confronted by dangers and opportunities following a stunning rebuke to China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Vietnam was not party to the legal dispute, which was brought by the Philippines.

Hanoi, however, will receive a major legal and diplomatic boost in its own efforts to resist China's belligerence in the disputed waters.

The main danger for Vietnam is that China will respond by stepping up its military presence, increasing the danger of hostilities, in an attempt to bolster its severely damaged territorial claims.

There was no ruling, however, on the status of waters around the Paracel Islands, the western reaches of which were seized by China from Vietnam in 1974.

Vietnam must now decide whether to bring its case against China to The Hague in a challenge to Beijing's control of waters around the Paracels.

The blow to China's claim to the "nine-dash line" and to waters in the Spratlys, however, will already be seen as a major moral and strategic victory for Vietnam.

Source: "Vietnam Fears China Backlash," *Vietnam Right Now*, 13 July 2016. http://vietnamrightnow.com/2016/07/vietnam-fears-china-backlash/

But the Communist authorities are under domestic pressure to show that they can stand up to their former allies in China.

Nationalist feelings are already running high in Vietnam amid a widespread belief that China is using its economic and military might to intimidate a smaller neighbour.

Vietnam must feel confident, given the wholesale rejection of China's claims in the Philippines case, that it could win a similar legal victory …

The authorities may fear a repeat of anti-China riots two years ago which showed just how explosive a domestic issue the territorial dispute has become.

Vietnam will for now try to tread cautiously as it plots a way through a legal, diplomatic and political quagmire that is fraught with danger.

Vietnam People's Navy Naval Infantry in Spratly Islands.
Source:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_People%27s_Navy#/media/File:Qu%C3%A2n_%C4%91%E1%BB%99i_duy%E1%BB%87t_binh_%E1%BB%9F_Tr%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Dng_Sa.JPG

A First for China: The Y-20 Heavy Transport Aircraft

OE Watch Commentary: China is rapidly gaining pace in its military transport. A good example is the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) Y-20 heavy transport aircraft. The following excerpts come from three articles discussing the aircraft. The first article is from ***Keji Ribao,*** a high-level Beijing-based daily newspaper. The article is interesting on several levels. First, it is a bit misleading in that it is touting the aircraft as being "self-developed" and "independently designed and developed" in China, possibly as a propaganda tool, leading domestic readers to believe that the aircraft was developed wholly in and by China. According to other sources, though, China possibly relied on Russian technology and/or cooperation from Ukraine in its development. For example, the second article, which originates from Russia, states that the Y-20 relies on four Russian-made Soloviev D-30 turbofan engines. Also, according to the third article, which reportedly derived its information from Indian intelligence sources, China partnered with Ukraine to develop the Y-20.

Another notable question about the first article is its claim that China is the third country to independently develop a large military transport aircraft, following Russia and the United States. Whether this is a simple oversight or it is intentional, it is not true. The Antonov State Company, a Ukrainian aircraft manufacturing and services company, tops the charts with its AN-124 and more recent AN-225, both of whose payload capacities are significantly higher than China's Y-20. While the Y-20 can reportedly carry over 60 tons, the AN-124 has a maximum payload capacity of 150 tons and the AN-225 can carry up to 250 tons, although it typically carries between 150-200 tons (sources say the maximum take-off weight of the AN-255 is 640 tons).

Despite the questionable information, the Y-20 is significant because its successful development is a critical step toward the PLAAF achieving a strategic projection capability. Also, as the first article points out, it can be retrofitted into specialized military aircraft, which can greatly increase the PLAAF's overall operational capacity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Zhang Qiang, "200 吨级运输机对中国空军意味着什么？(What Is the Significance of a 200-ton Class Transport Aircraft to the Chinese Air Force?)" *Keji Ribao*, 7 July 2016, <http://digitalpaper.stdaily.com/http_www.kjrb.com/kjrb/html/2016-07/07/content_343542.htm?div=-1>.

What Is the Significance of a 200-ton Class Transport Aircraft to the Chinese Air Force?

(The Y-20) has allowed China to become the third country, following Russia and the United States, to independently design and develop a large military transport aircraft. A spokesperson for the Air Force indicated that this marks a critical step that the Air Force has taken in achieving its strategic projection capability.

... After its deployment, (the Y-20) will not only be used to execute important strategic transport missions, but also retrofitted into specialized aircraft such as large tankers, early warning aircraft, electronic warfare aircraft, and reconnaissance aircraft, thereby greatly increasing the overall operational capacity of the Chinese Air Force."

Last year, when the United States announced a halt on the production of the C-17 transport aircraft, some US media reported with a sarcastic tone that the production of the US C-17, which is of the same class [as the Y-20], has stopped, but the model for the Y-20, which is China's latest development, has not yet been finalized; this fully reflects the gap between China and the United States with respect to aviation industry.

Source: "China's Newest Military Transporter Aircraft, the Y-20, Has Officially Joined the People's Liberation Army Air Force on Wednesday," *Ria Novosti*, 7 July 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/asia/20160707/1042600914/china-military-plane.html>.

China's Newest Military Transporter Aircraft, the Y-20, has Officially Joined the People's Liberation Army Air Force on Wednesday

The Y-20 relies on four Russian-made Soloviev D-30 turbofan engines. With a payload of 73 short tons (Note: This converts to approximately 66 tons), the aircraft can carry heavy military hardware, including the ZTZ99, China's largest tank.

The PLA Air Force operates a small fleet of Russian-made Il-76 transporters powered by the D-30KU engine...

Source: Ajay Banerjee, "China Ties Up with Ukraine to Nullify India's Edge," *The Tribune Online*, 7 August 2011, <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110808/nation.htm#1>.

Indian intelligence and security agencies have informed the government that China, in partnership with Ukraine, has almost developed a plane to match India.

Ukraine, a former USSR republic, has expertise in military aircraft. China has code-named it Y-20...

The image is a screen capture images from a video showing hightlights of the Y-20 during the 2014 Zhuhai Airshow.
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4MuM0lXnEE

China to Add More National Research Labs by 2020

OE Watch Commentary: China's defense industry is undergoing a huge renovation. The following are excerpts from two articles addressing some of the changes.

The first article explains how China's State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND) plans to improve its innovative capacity in the defense sector by 2020. The article states that SASTIND plans to set up several national labs devoted to defense technology and to overhaul other defense-related labs.

In late 2015 Xi Jinping reportedly announced that China would be making a breakthrough in its military transformation by 2020. The second article offers a list of key military-related areas that are expected to be reformed by 2020. It is worth noting that all the steps listed have either been done or are in the process of being taken. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"China will make a breakthrough in transforming its military by 2020."

Source: Bai Guolong, "国防科工局出台意见加快推进国防科技工业协同创新 (The State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense, Issues Its Opinions on How to Accelerate Collaborative Innovation in the Defense Technology Industry)," *Xinhua*, 28 June 2016, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/2016-06/28/c_129097996.htm>.

The State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense, Issues Its Opinions on How to Accelerate Collaborative Innovation in the Defense Technology Industry

Xu Dazhe, director of the State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense, said that by 2020, the defense industry technology sector will basically have established a scientific and technological innovation system that meets the requirement of the innovation-driven development strategy and has the feature of civil-military integration. It will truly grow into a high plane of the state's scientific and technological innovation powered by high-end human resources, therefore making it able to more efficiently perform the glorious duty function of "supporting national defense and armed forces building, promoting scientific and technological progress, serving economic and social development."

Source: Teddy Ng, "China Vows Breakthrough in Long-Awaited Military Reform by 2020, Including Restructuring PLA Headquarters," *South China Morning Post*, 26 November 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1883606/china-vows-breakthrough-long-awaited-military-reform>.

China Vows Breakthrough in Long-Awaited Military Reform by 2020, Including Restructuring PLA Headquarters

China will make a breakthrough in transforming its military by 2020, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

Key areas of the long-anticipated military reform include:

- *Reorganizing the military headquarters*
- *Rezoning the seven military commands*
- *Setting up new strategic zones and joint operation command systems*
- *Strengthening the Central Military Commission command structure*
- *Imposing strict discipline on the army*
- *Pushing for more innovation*
- *Reforming personnel management system*
- *Pushing for integration between the building of national defense and economic development*

China to Increase its Reserve Forces?

OE Watch Commentary: According to ***GlobalSecurity.org***, in addition to its active ground forces, as of 2008 China had a reserve force that consists of approximately half a million troops and a large militia ready to be mobilized to support the war effort within their home provinces. The PLA reserve is a key part of China's national defense.

The following excerpts come from an article arguing that a strong reserve force and a strategic support force are imperative for safeguarding the nation, which is "facing increasingly complex and diversified threats in various domains." The authors of the article go on to describe some of the main tasks and requirements for a strategic reserve force. What is not clear is whether the authors are urging China to establish a new reserve force or upgrade the capabilities of the existing one. Also not clear is the number of people assigned to such a force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

"The main task for the strategic reserve force is to provide accurate, efficient, reliable information support and strategic reinforcement support. If necessary, it should be able to directly get involved in military operations..."

Source: Song Wei and Wang Lei, "战略支援后备力量建设势在必行 (Reserve Force Building for Strategic Support is Imperative)," *Zhongguo Guofang Bao*, 7 July 2016, <http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2016-07/07/content_149736.htm>.

The safeguarding of the nation's survival and developmental security and defending the state's interests and the people's interests, required a strong strategic support force as a deterrent, and a strong reserve force that matches and complements the functions of the active-duty forces and is capable of taking part in military operations and providing strategic support. ...

The main task for the strategic reserve force is to provide accurate, efficient, reliable information support and strategic reinforcement support. If necessary, it should be able to directly get involved in military operations....

Priority should be given to things in four aspects. Rely on the information industry and relevant resources in the civilian sector, build a reserve force with the capabilities of information support, spectrum management, electromagnetic offensive and defense. Make use of transportation resources in the civilian sector, give full play to the advantageous civil transport capacity, build a reserve force for land-sea-air integrated strategic power projection. In light of the state's maritime development strategy, build a maritime emergency reserve force with the capabilities of safeguarding maritime rights, performing rescue and aid, and escorting ships in distant seas. Focusing on the overall requirement of the space security strategy and the long-term development in the space domain, build a space reinforcement support reserve force with the capabilities of space information and early warning, spaceflight bases maintenance, and space information system building and maintenance.

PLA Reserve Force
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1f/People's_Armed_Police_squad_2.JPG

Armed Chinese Fishing Militias in the South China Sea

OE Watch Commentary: Fishermen in the Chinese port town of Baimajing on Hainan Island are getting everything from military training and subsidies to even fuel and ice, with some of the fishing vessels carrying small arms. According to accompanying excerpts from ***The Straits Times***, Beijing is creating an increasingly sophisticated fishing militia to sail in the disputed South China Sea. However, the Chinese Foreign Ministry denies these reports, saying that the country does not use its fishing fleet to help establish sovereignty claims in the South China Sea.

As the excerpts point out, according to a Hainan government adviser, "The maritime militia is expanding because of the country's need for it, and because of the desire of the fishermen to engage in national service, protecting our country's interests." In describing the Chinese government's engagement in South China Sea, the adviser noted that when "a particular mission in safeguarding sovereignty" comes up, the government authorities will coordinate with the fishing militia, asking them to gather information on the activities of foreign vessels at sea.

According to excerpts in the accompanying article, the fishermen's training includes exercises at sea and requests for fishermen to gather information on foreign vessels, with the city-level branches of the People's Armed Forces Department also providing basic military training to fishermen. The training, which takes place between May and August, includes search and rescue operations, contending with disasters at sea, and "safeguarding Chinese sovereignty."

As described in the article, among fishing boats that regularly go into the South China Sea, state-controlled firms dominate the fleets and are recipients of much of the militia training and subsidies, with the Chinese government also providing global positioning satellite equipment to at least 50,000 vessels, enabling them to contact the Chinese Coast Guard in emergencies, including encounters with foreign ships. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**

Source: "Beijing training 'fishing militia' for South China Sea," *The Straits Times*, 2 May 2016. http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/beijing-training-fishing-militia-for-south-china-sea

The map shows the territorial claims in the South China Sea
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_China_Sea#/media/File:South_China_Sea_claims_map.jpg.

The fishing fleet based in this tiny Chinese port town on Hainan island is getting everything from military training and subsidies to even fuel and ice as Beijing creates an increasingly sophisticated fishing militia to sail in the disputed South China Sea.

The training includes exercises at sea and requests to fishermen to gather information on foreign vessels, …

"The maritime militia is expanding because of the country's need for it, and because of the desire of the fishermen to engage in national service, protecting our country's interests," said an adviser to the Hainan government who did not want to be named.

The city-level branches of the People's Armed Forces Department provide basic military training to fishermen, said the Hainan government adviser.

The training, which takes place between May and August, includes search and rescue operations, contending with disasters at sea, and "safeguarding Chinese sovereignty", said the adviser. …

The government has provided Global Positioning Satellite equipment to at least 50,000 vessels, enabling them to contact the Chinese Coast Guard in emergencies, including encounters with foreign ships, industry executives said.

Several Hainan fishermen and diplomats told Reuters some vessels have small arms.

When "a particular mission in safeguarding sovereignty" comes up, the government authorities will coordinate with the fishing militia, the adviser said, asking them to gather information on the activities of foreign vessels at sea.

State-controlled fishing firms dominate the fleets that go regularly to the Spratlys and are recipients of much of the militia training and subsidies, …

The Foreign Ministry said at a recent briefing that China does not use its fishing fleet to help establish sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. "This kind of situation does not exist," it said.

Chairman Xi on Ensuring Political over Military Strategies

"Under such a complicated situation, only by possessing great military power can we overcome all types of crises and challenges, and safeguard our peaceful development through military strengthening...the Chairman emphasizes that the Chinese Dream is a national strengthening dream, and for the armed forces, that is a military strengthening dream."

OE Watch Commentary: This article does not explicitly address military strategies in China. Rather, it covers the basic thoughts of Chinese Communist Party Secretary and Chairman of the Central Military Commission Xi Jinping on building combat power while simultaneously ensuring the loyalty of the nation and People's Liberation Army (PLA) to the Communist Party. Through the strategy of military reform, which is designed to fulfill the China Dream of a strong military, Party loyalty is maintained. On several occasions Xi points out the importance of PLA loyalty to the government and the need both to retain national sovereignty and to maintain stability. Other focal points are keeping alive the main objective of national revival and pursuing the grand strategy of national strengthening. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Xi Jinping
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/72/Xi_Jinping_October_2013_(cropped).jpg/335px-Xi_Jinping_October_2013_(cropped).jpg

Source: Bi Jingjing, Xiao Dongsong, Zhao Zhouxian, Deeply Study and Implement the 'Military Chapter' of the Party Central Leadership's New Concepts, New Ideas, New Strategies for State Governance," *Jiefangjun Bao Online*, 20 May 2016, pp. 1, 6.

Being capable of prevailing in war is the core, reflecting the fundamental function of the armed forces and representing the fundamental orientation of armed forces building. We must firmly grasp the key link of military strengthening, guarantee that the armed forces are able to act instantly while being summoned and fight victoriously in war. Keeping a fine style is the guarantee, concerning the cardinal character, tenet, and nature of our armed forces. We must further consolidate the foundation for military strengthening, permanently maintain our military's political character.

We should persistently carry out the military strategic principle of active defense, enhance military strategic guidance in a way advancing with the times, and comprehensively use our military power (for war preparedness and war checking, for safeguarding sovereignty and maintaining stability, for deterrence and actual fighting, for war-fighting actions and peacetime military actions, and for resolutely containing and winning wars).

Chairman Xi's important expositions on national defense and armed forces building consistently let political strategies determine military strategies, subject military strategies to political strategies. This typically finds expression in taking the great revival of the Chinese nation as the fundamental end and the strategic commanding height of the party and the state, emphasizing that national defense and armed forces building be approached and advanced in the context of the grand objective of the Chinese Dream.

Maintaining political firmness is to firmly adhere to the political baseline and the strategic baseline without any vacillation, not be confused or stopped by any impact and disturbance, guarantee that there is no deviation from the target direction.

Indonesia Discusses China's Nine-Dash Line

"Among the questions the Philippines has asked the arbiters to address is the validity, if not the legality, of China's nine-dash line. One of the questions is, in effect, whether or not China's nine-dash line, which is not measured from a land base line as required by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to which China is a party, can encroach on the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of other coastal states bordering the South China Sea."

OE Watch Commentary: This article offers an opinion from an Indonesian source on the historical and legal impact of China's nine-dash line, the line used by the People's Republic of China for its claims on the major part of the South China Sea. In particular, the article examines the ambiguity in China's thinking over the years (location of the line, varying number of dashes in the line, failure to take into consideration other national exclusive economic zones, etc.). At present several nations are involved in this discussion, to include Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, among others. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

South China Sea Vectors
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4a/South_China_Sea_vector.svg/2000px-South_China_Sea_vector.svg.png

Source: Siswo, Pramono, "Opinion," as published in the *Jakarta Post Online* (in English), 11 July 2016.

China's historical approach has limitations, which in turn are prejudicial to China's historical claims.

First is the matter of distance. UNCLOS limits the application of historic title to cases relating to the delimitation of territorial sea (see Article 15). Historic title does not apply to delimitation of EEZ, continental shelf, or the high seas. China has openly declared James Shoal as the southernmost point of the South China Sea (SCS) in which China has a historic right. While James Shoal is only 43 nautical miles from Bintulu, Sarawak, it is 1,100 nm from mainland China. UNCLOS is unlikely to allow China to exercise historic rights beyond its territorial sea, 12 nm. The Gulf of Mine case, which was settled at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), coined a legal principle in which EEZ overrides any prior usage rights claimed by other states in the area.

Secondly, China's historical claims are inconsistent. If one were to observe a collection of Chinese maps from 1935 through to 2009, he or she would be confused by the numerous versions of the dash line, which has, at times been cited as an 11-dash line, a 10-dash line, or nine. There are no coordinates to locate the dash line, which has always shifted.

Third, China's historical claim over the SCS has never been supported by a continuous and effective exercise of authority. China's claim has consistently been challenged or faced counter-claim by neighboring states.

And lastly, as the matter concerns ancient history, Indonesia's claim is also backed by strong historical evidence. If China plans to refer to its Yuan and Qing dynasties to make an argument to claim its alleged historic rights over the SCS, including Natuna waters, Indonesia could also refer to its own Srivijaya and Majapahit empires for the same purpose.

Death of Chinese Peacekeeper in Mali Reinforces China's Africa Narrative

"China will only become stronger and more involved in UN peacekeeping operations and will act so the world interprets that,'We are a peace-loving force.'"

OE Watch Commentary: One of the aspects of Chinese overseas influence is the country's participation in international peacekeeping operations. China is one of the world's leading providers of UN forces, with over 2,500 police, military experts and troops abroad. Thus, when a Chinese peacekeeper was killed in an al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)-claimed attack on a UN facility in northern Mali in June 2016, this was not a first for China; other Chinese peacekeepers were killed in, for example, Cambodia in 1993 and Lebanon in 2006.

However, as the excerpted 9 June Chinese-language article from ***Xinhua*** shows, the death of the Chinese peacekeeper in Mali had a significant impact on China's understanding of its role in peacekeeping in Africa. A general from China flew to Mali to honor the death of the fallen peacekeeper, Shen Liang Liang. Unlike the prior peacekeeper deaths in Cambodia and Lebanon, this one occurred in Africa, where the Chinese presence, from military to economic affairs, is, generally speaking, considered threatening to other foreign powers. According to the ***Xinhua*** article, while praising Shen Liang Liang's sacrifice, China also emphasized that it is sending not only peacekeepers to Africa, but also engineers and doctors who are saving lives, thus furthering the Chinese narrative about its constructive and innocuous presence on the continent.

At the same time, however, the ***Xinhua*** article recognized that China has, for the most part, a peacetime army that rarely sees foreign combat. Therefore, peacekeeping operations provide an experiential learning opportunity for the Chinese troops. The article says this assists Chinese soldiers to learn to operate in hot climates like Mali and among different cultural and linguistic groups.

It is also important to recognize that the deaths of Chinese peacekeepers abroad risks domestic criticism. Thus, the praise of Shen Liang Liang and veneration of Chinese peacekeepers are likely an effort to show a domestic audience the importance of their service and undermine any arguments that China's deployment of peacekeepers is not worth the costs. In addition, such praise will boost the morale of current and future Chinese peacekeepers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

In 2015, as seen in the adjacent image, Pakistan president Mamnoon guaranteed to Chinese leader Xi Jinping that Uighur militants had been eliminated from Pakistani territory.
Source: http://www.voanews.com/content/un-peacekeeper-kills-two-colleagues-in-northern-mali/3233946.html

Source: 那个我曾经去过的马里 [That I Have Been to Mali], *Xinhua*, 9 June 2016.

That I Have Been to Mali

Purely from the perspective of actual combat, participating in peacekeeping operations and in real combat increases infantry awareness for China and is a test. To prevent possible attacks in Gao, most units are lined up to prevent surprise attacks by hostile armed personnel. Unfortunately, however, the pain has still not stopped. On June 1, China once again saw a sad peacekeeping operation.

Shen Liang Liang is not the first [Chinese] person in a peacekeeping sacrifice. In Cambodia, a Chinese peacekeeping martyr monument stands today. On the evening of 21 May 1993, Chinese peacekeeping forces were suddenly attacked by unidentified armed men. On 25 July 2006, the Israeli army in the town of al-Khiam in southern Lebanon carried out air strikes, where a UN observation post was attacked and a [Chinese peacekeeper] also made a heroic sacrifice.

Although we were there [in Mali] to help so many poor people and children, it still did not stop the forces of evil. However, can such attacks really stop more than 2,400 Chinese peacekeepers? Today, Shen Liang Liang has fallen and was taken back to his homeland; his comrades still continue in Gao, Mali. China will only become stronger and more involved in UN peacekeeping operations and will act so the world interprets that, 'We are a peace-loving force'!

Examining the Almaty Shooting

OE Watch Commentary: A high-profile shooting that took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 18 July comes only several weeks after a group of men attacked two hunting stores and a military facility in the city of Aktobe in June (see: July 2016 ***OE Watch***, "Questioning the Motives behind the Aktobe Attacks"). The accompanying excerpted article provides a little bit of information on the recent shooting, and there are some things to consider about the shooter's background and possible motive.

The article reports that Ruslan Kulikbayev killed three policemen and two civilians and wounded eight people. In the hours after the incident, a number of witnesses posted videos and photos of the shooting itself (from a distance) and the aftermath in social media. There were also a number of social media posts of the suspect just after he was apprehended in the street.

The National Security Committee claimed that Kulikbayev became influenced by Salafism in prison, and while this might be the case, he may have acted alone instead of in a coordinated effort with others, though he apparently forced someone to drive him to the scene of the crime. He shot the policemen near their patrol vehicle on the street, and the civilians were apparently killed near the scene, but it was not clear if they were targeted or simply bystanders. Kulikbayev also reportedly targeted an office of the National Security Committee, but this did not result in any casualties.

It is worth remembering that during a period of violent incidents in 2011-2012, attackers targeted members of the security services and the police, and while a few civilians were killed, their deaths appeared to have been circumstantial. Some in Kazakhstan believed that one reason for the attacks several years ago was that the men involved took revenge against members of the security services or police. It did not appear that they had plans to target civilians or high-level government officials. Kulikbayev's motive may take some time to discover, but his actions are similar to incidents Kazakhstan has dealt with in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"He was convicted on August 27, 2010 in Shymkent for robbery. On May 8, 2012 he was sentenced for 2 years and 11 months for illegal acquisition and possession of a firearm."

Source: "Убивший полицейских в Алматы сошёлся с салафитами в колонии - глава КНБ" (KNB chief – the killer of the policemen in Almaty associated with Salafists in prison), *Inform Buro*, 18 July 2016. http://informburo.kz/novosti/ubivshiy-policeyskih-v-almaty-soshyolsya-s-salafitami-v-kolonii-glava-knb.html

KNB chief – the killer of the policemen in Almaty associated with Salafists in prison

At a Security Council meeting the head of the National Security Committee said that the instigator of the terrorist attack in Almaty had a criminal record and associated with Salafism in prison…Ruslan Kulikbayev was born on June 11, 1990 in Kyzylorda Oblast…He was convicted on August 27, 2010 in Shymkent for robbery. On May 8, 2012 he was sentenced for 2 years and 11 months for illegal acquisition and possession of a firearm…As a result of the shooting in the city, five people were killed: three policemen and two civilians…

"Photographs of Ruslan Kulikbayev's arrest appeared in a number of news outlets and social media platforms. He was wounded during the effort to apprehend him, but his injuries are not life threatening."
Source: https://ustinka.kz/kazakhstan/society/14423.html

Kazakhstan's Zenit Shipyard Launches a New Ship for Service in the Caspian

OE Watch Commentary: The five littoral states of the Caspian Sea (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia) failed to reach an agreement at a recent meeting in Astana over its legal status as a lake or a sea (if it would be divided equally among the five or would be considered an international body of water). Security in the Caspian Sea region has been a concern for a number of years and, as the accompanying excerpted article reports, Kazakhstan has been strengthening its Navy. The article reports on the launch of a new ship for the Kazakh Navy that is designed for special forces units to counter sabotage in ports, and it demonstrates a couple of things that continue to take place in Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense (MoD).

For the past few years the Border Guards' Caspian Sea detachment has received upgrades to its capabilities, with the deployment of new classes of patrol boats from the "Zenit" shipyard in the city of Ural. "Zenit" also recently constructed what it called a rocket-artillery ship for the Kazakh Navy; however, based on the number of ships being launched and put into service, it appears that the Border Guards have been a higher priority. The launching of this ship represents an effort to bolster the Kazakh Navy and it comes not long after the MoD signed agreements with Turkey and Germany to purchase additional ships for the Navy (see: July 2016 ***OE Watch***, "Business as usual at Kazakhstan's Defense Exposition?").

The dispute over the Caspian has rarely resulted in any violent incidents, and this new ship is more for defensive purposes and the protection of ports. Ultimately, the specialized purpose of the ship demonstrates that Kazakhstan's government continues to put a high priority on security in the Caspian, and the MoD is becoming a larger part of that. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"...the main purpose of the new ship – providing special forces units the means to counter underwater sabotage in port areas..."

Source: "Первый катер для подразделений спецназначения спустили на воду в Уральске" (The first cutter for special forces units launched in Ural), *Kaz Inform*, 12 July 2016. http://inform.kz/rus/article/2924622

The first cutter for special forces units launched in Ural

The first modernized cutter for special forces units for Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense launched today in Ural...the main purpose of the new ship – providing special forces units the means to counter underwater sabotage in port areas...the ship is 13 meters in length and 3.5 wide, with a displacement of around 12 tons...

The importance of the Caspian region in global geopolitics and economics is steadily growing...Kazakhstan, as well as other Caspian states, are interested in maintaining a high level of regional security... The new ship will not only support the fleet, but expand and increase the combat capabilities for these units...

"The Bars class patrol boat "Sardar" just before it was put into service in the Caspian Sea in 2006. More recent classes of ships being produced by the shipyard "Zenit" are smaller and faster."
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/ru/2/2e/Zenith_Sardar.JPG

Security Reforms in Kyrgyzstan

OE Watch Commentary: Former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev received much criticism for changes he made to the country's security services before he was ousted from power in the revolution in 2010. The accompanying excerpted article reports on recent changes the government of Kyrgyzstan made to its security services. The author notes a couple of important points about what took place.

Several of the changes in question only involve transferring different functions or tasks from one agency to another, such as taking the Interior Ministry's task of combating corruption and economic crimes and giving it to the State Service for Combating Economic Crimes (GSBEP). The most significant change that took place is the folding of the Drug Control Agency (GSKN) into a department within the Interior Ministry, though, as noted in the article, this is not the first time that the agency has undergone a major change.

The article mentions that experts in Kyrgyzstan believe drug traffickers influenced Bakiyev to dismantle the agency in 2009. While the author does not allege that this is the case now, the effectiveness of GSKN is questioned, and it is noted that the Interior Ministry has been better at drug seizures. The impact this change will have on Kyrgyzstan's relationship with the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime could be significant and something to watch.

According to the council secretary, the reforms are focused on combating corruption in the security services, and it appears that combating economic crimes has become a priority. The GSBEP is set to take the lead in this effort from the Interior Ministry and even take over some functions from the General Prosecutor's Office. The author is critical of the council and the reforms and the fact that it took two years to produce and finalize them, coming after the head of the Interior Ministry resigned at the end of May for reasons that have yet to be made clear.

Perhaps the most notable part of the article is how the author writes the government is promising that the reforms will provide citizens protection from law enforcement and businesses protection from criminals. If the changes to the security services have the intended effect, this protection might be the way that people measure their effectiveness. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"They are promising us that every citizen will receive protection from law enforcement agencies and businesses will be protected from criminals."

Source: Israilova, Jypara. "Реформа МВД: Что в итоге случилось" (Reforms of the MVD: the results of what took place), *K News,* 5 July 2016. http://knews.kg/2016/07/05/reforma-mvd-chto-v-itoge-sluchilos/

Reforms of the MVD: the results of what took place

A restructuring of the security services of Kyrgyzstan was announced at the latest meeting of the Council of Defense…the council secretary Temir Jumakadyrov stated that "the reforms of the Interior Ministry are to combat corruption…They are promising us that every citizen will receive protection from law enforcement agencies and businesses will be protected from criminals. The bright minds of the Council of Defense prepared these reforms for more than two years…

The reforms:

- *…the functions of the department of the Interior Ministry which is involved in combating corruption and economic crimes will be transferred to the State Service for Combating Economic Crimes (GSBEP)…*
- *The functions of investigation by the General Prosecutor's Office will be transferred to the National Security Committee and the GSBEP…*

A lot of controversy caused a decision on the GSKN (Drug Control Agency)…it will be a subdivision of the Interior Ministry…In 2009 the department had been eliminated by (then) President Bakiyev under the pretext of reforms…Some experts believed that the decision was imposed by drug trafficking groups, which played a major part in the removal of agencies while Bakiyev was in power…

…the agency (GSKN) was established by Kyrgyzstan in the framework of a UN convention and fully funded by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime…the GSKN contributed 17.8 percent of the total number of drugs seized, while the Interior Ministry had 81.2 percent…

Defense Against Hypersonic Weapons a Top Priority

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying interviews with Major General Sergey Babakov, Chief of the Russian Aerospace Forces' Air and Missile Defense Command, and Lieutenant General Alexander Leonov, Chief of the Air Defense for the Russian Ground Forces, discuss Russian concerns regarding air defense. A top concern for both generals, as well as the entire Russian security establishment, is the U.S. fielding of hypersonic weapons. In order to mitigate this threat, Russia is engaging in a host of programs to improve defenses against such weapon systems, including new air defense systems, radars, satellites, and, as the accompanying article from ***Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*** explains, aerostats. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Boris Loznevoy, "Shadows Over Tomahawks: Missile Defense System to Take to the Sky," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 29 June 2016, <http://vpk.name/news/158493_Teni_nad_Tomagavkami.html>, accessed 5 July 2016.

Systems for combating cruise missiles could be deployed on combat platforms anchored above the ground on aerostats. In the opinion of the majority of military analysts, the most likely threat to Russia from NATO, and essentially the United States, is a prompt global attack on strategic nuclear forces and defense and industrial infrastructure facilities by precision weapons carrying nonnuclear warheads.

Creating a solid defense zone around the perimeter of Russia using classic air defense systems (aircraft and multiple rocket launchers) in the immediate future is hardly realistic. There were ideas about using updated MiG-31s for this, but there are a number of fundamental objections: The lack of a sufficient number of them and of the necessary infrastructure (airfields, fuel depots, ammunition, so forth), and also the time spent on an aerial response, which is particularly important when we are talking about minutes. A chain of permanent-readiness air defense positions is unachievable for similar reasons, to which the specific conditions of the Arctic also have to be added. It is also necessary to take account of the fact that a prompt global strike presupposes a massive attack (more than 1,000 right now, and even more in the future), and we would hardly succeed in definitely repulsing it with the aid of surface-to-air missiles and aircraft. Another solution suggests itself.

A weapon module equipped with a powerful radar ensuring the early detection of cruise missiles in flight and electronic warfare equipment creating an effective interference field to jam missiles' control and guidance devices is suspended using an aerostat at the optimum altitude for the effective utilization of the weapons deployed on it. One promising weapon is so-called electron bombs, which can exist in the shape of missile warheads, shells, or stationary munitions and create on detonation a powerful single electromagnetic pulse affecting the cruise missiles' electronic components...from above offer a contrasting target against the backdrop of the ground. The number of modules needs to ensure a solid target zone for electronic warfare systems.

What advantages are provided by the deployment of these systems for combating cruise missiles on combat platforms raised and anchored above the ground on aerostats? First, permanent readiness. Second, cost. To deploy on the ground the equipment for launching an aerostat carrying a combat module and several support facilities (for the personnel, warehousing, energy provision) is several times cheaper than organizing stationary positions. Third, the optimal deployment altitude increases the detection range. Fourth, mobility. There is no difficulty in repositioning the system. Fifth, much fewer stringent requirements with regard to selecting installation sites, which is particularly important in the conditions of the Arctic. Given the significantly lower cost of deploying aerial combat platforms and the potential for improving them, we conclude that they are capable of becoming one of the future areas for the development of air defense systems…the emergence of hypersonic cruise missiles, whose utilization would drastically reduce the response time needed for a preemptive counterstrike. But counterweapons are also developing and sometimes outstripping attack weapons. The main thing is to choose the correct direction of their development and to start developing and delivering them to the troops in time.

Source: "Russian Work on Defense Against Hypersonic Weapons Systems in Full Swing," *Sputnik* Online, 3 July 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160703/1042360880/russian-anti-hypersonic-capabilities-development.html>, accessed 15 July 16.

Russian military scientists' work on developing defensive capabilities against the threat of hypersonic weapons systems is in full swing, according to Ground Forces Air Defense Force chief Alexander Leonov.

Speaking to Russian radio station RSN, Lieutenant-General Leonov indicated that "over the long term, we will be faced with hypersonic targets such as warheads [which do not fly to their target according to a traditional ballistic trajectory], as well as hypersonic aerial vehicles; this trend is very promising. Work to combat these prospective weapons must be organized, and is in fact already being carried out."

The officer indicated that at present, medium and long-range hypersonic missile systems are perceived as the main threat when it comes to hypersonic weaponry.

Late last year, Leonov noted that Russia's air defenses would be looking to achieve the capability to repel hypersonic attacks by the year 2020. "Creating next generation air defenses capable of effectively fighting all types of air attacks, including hypersonic ones, is one of the main directions of development of Russia's air defense forces until 2020," the officer said.

Russia's Ground Forces Air Defense Force is part of the country's ground forces; their current equipment includes advanced mobile missile and artillery-based air defense systems including the S-300 and the S-400 long range SAMs, the Buk, Tor and Strela-10 short to medium range SAMs, and the Pantsir-S1 and Tunguska combined SAM and anti-aircraft artillery weapons systems.

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Continued: Defense Against Hypersonic Weapons a Top Priority

Major General Sergey Babakov, Chief of the Russian Aerospace Forces' Air and Missile Defense Command
Source: https://en.tengrinews.kz/emergencies/Religious-extremists-kill-six-in-Kazakhstan-rampage-263334

Source: Igor Korotchenko, "Air Defense Commander in Chief: The Sky over Moscow is Reliably Protected Against Air Strikes," *Russkaya Sluzhba Novostey* Online, 26 June 2016, <https://life.ru/t/????/424793/ghlavkom_pvo_niebo_moskvy_nadiozhno_zashchishchieno_ot_vozdushnykh_udarov>, accessed 14 July 2016.

[IK] ...Our guest today is Sergey Viktorovich Babakov, head of the Antiaircraft Missile Troops and of Russian Aerospace Forces Air Defense and Missile Defense Command… The number of threats facing Russia is growing and so, simultaneously, are the strike potentialities possessed by whole number of foreign states.... They are, first of all, missile weapons' strike systems and air-and sea-launched cruise missiles. They are the developments which are currently under way in the West and in a number of other countries for building hypersonic carriers; this may become a source of new threats of a fundamentally new kind for our country in the future. In this connection, what is the Antiaircraft Missile Troops' role in guaranteeing our country's national security?

[SB] I would also add to the list of threats from new developments here the wide variety of unmanned air vehicles (UAV's), including the fact that active strike UAV's are being developed. We are currently focusing our closest attention on this. The Aerospace Forces' Antiaircraft Missile Troops occupy – let us put it this way – one of the main positions in the fight against these threats…

[IK] Tell us this: Among the threats being named there are, first of all, cruise missiles, which are able to head for targets, firstly, from various directions, at minimum altitudes, and in a terrain-following mode. Are the Antiaircraft Missile Troops ready to engage such kinds of target? And has the necessary infrastructure been created – first of all artillery – for destroying such aerial targets?

[SB] The Antiaircraft Missile Troops are, of course, prepared for such fighting, but in close collaboration with the radiotechnical troops, because without the radiotechnical troops we are, naturally, blind at the distant defensive lines, and we detect the enemy closer to the impact zones... In order to detect an enemy at the distant defensive lines, a low-altitude radar field is created. The latest models of a low-altitude alert-duty station already exist for that purpose; they are sited in such a way as to cover the maximum area of our state's territory, and, in particular, so as to create the maximally effective density around the facilities being defended. Therefore, given our joint operations with the radiotechnical troops, we are able to detect enemy forces on the farthest approaches, prepare for battle, and defeat them with maximum possible effectiveness…

Russia Experiments with an Operational Reserve System

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation Ministry of Defense has been tinkering with wide-scale reforms of the military reserve system for several years. The current reserve system was inherited from the Soviet Union, and was designed for supporting a doctrine that required maintaining a large strategic reserve of troops that could be mobilized in the event of large-scale warfare. It was composed of conscripts and officers who had completed their mandatory service obligation and had been discharged from active service, with rare and infrequent call-ups to test mobilization capabilities.

Another consequence of the Soviet Union's mass mobilization doctrine was the necessity to maintain units and equipment for these mobilized reserves. These units were/are manned by small full-time cadres who would keep the equipment serviceable and maintain enough institutional knowledge to bring the mobilized reserve up to some level of combat readiness before deployment. Many of these "skeleton units" were disbanded after the 2009 "new look" reforms, as there was a belief that resources were being wasted on maintaining a mass mobilization capability to the detriment of bringing active units up to full levels of operational readiness.

There has been some debate about whether Russia needs to maintain a large strategic reserve or should switch to more of an operational reserve. Opinions vary between two major camps—the reformers, saying that an operational reserve would do far more to enhance security because an operational reserve would be smaller, better trained, more able to quickly become combat ready in a national emergency, and more likely to called in an emergency; and older retired senior officers, who believe that the capability to mass mobilize should be maintained at all costs.

The first talk of an operational reserve was in 2009, when the Defense Ministry announced that 60,000 junior officers were to be dismissed from active service, but would be afforded the opportunity to contract into a reserve status that would pay on average 20,600 rubles ($870) per month. The idea of establishing an operational reserve has apparently gained some traction, based upon pronouncements by Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov.

Reserve reforms may be one of the few instances in the highly controversial arena of Russian military reform where both conservatives and reformers get what they want. Russia appears to be driving full ahead with a reserve system that maintains the large strategic reserve for potential mass mobilization, while developing a better operational reserve that can be called upon more frequently.

Interestingly, the Russian Federation appears to be experimenting with two different models for an operational reserve. The first looks very similar to the US reserve system, consisting of an active reserve component and inactive reserve component (Individual Ready Reserve), with the Russian operational reserve conducting two-week annual training requirements, receiving monthly stipends, and being completely voluntary. The intent is to maintain a cadre of officers and enlisted soldiers who regularly train with particular active units; in the event of their unit's mobilization, the reservist would be called to duty to provide support or backfill, as needed.

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Source: Aleksey Mikhaylov, "Uncovered Reserves: It Turned Out Simpler To Put Clothes and Shoes on Those Called Up From the Reserve Than To Start Up Mothballed Equipment," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 22 June 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/31130>, accessed 15 July 2016.

Supreme Commander Vladimir Putin announced a snap inspection of the Armed Forces on 14 June. This time, however, instead of the video and photo pieces that had become customary about large-scale troop maneuvers, it was possible to see how citizens called up from the reserve were changed into military uniform and how arms and military equipment were drawn at storage depots. The current inspection underscored, as it were, the work which the Russian Federation Defense Ministry leadership had been doing for around three years to create a so-called reserve component…

Russia's military-political leadership made the decision to reform the reserve component three years ago. During the time that has passed, a reserve command element appeared in every military district, which is responsible not only for the call-up of citizens from the reserve and mobilization of military units, but also for their peacetime combat training, as well as for keeping arms and military equipment designated for transfer to the "partisans" in serviceable condition.

According to VPK information, arms and military equipment storage and maintenance depots, central equipment reserve depots, as well as military commissariats were subordinated to the newly established command elements. In addition to this, unique military units appeared in the RF Armed Forces structure -- territorial defense battalions, which in peacetime are at cadre strength, but are rapidly deployable if necessary... intended for fighting enemy commando teams, maintaining order, and assisting law-enforcement entities both in war as well as peacetime, such as during natural and technological disasters.

...work currently continues for forming a so-called first-call reserve. This is where volunteers conclude a contract with the Defense Ministry, receive certain monetary remuneration for being in the reserve, and are obligated to arrive for military service at the first request in order to begin performing their missions. In peacetime that category of citizens undergoes combat training and learns the chosen military occupational specialty.

Exercises in which the military department leadership checked out individual elements of the system being newly established have been held beginning with 2014. Several times territorial defense battalions not only were mobilized, but also redeployed hundreds of kilometers with subsequent performance of assigned missions. Elements of the new mobilization deployment system were checked...

In the first phase of the snap inspection, military district command elements moved out to designated areas and district headquarters brigades deployed command posts and

(continued)

Continued: Russia Experiments with an Operational Reserve System

In the Vostok-2014 military exercise, Russia experimented with a new way to use an operational reserve by way of new stand-alone units called territorial-defense battalions. Such units have appeared elsewhere in Eastern Europe and usually consist of relatively lightly armed infantry who are assigned to secure critical infrastructure in the rear. These forces are not intended to serve in high-intensity combat operations abroad. The intent of this form of an operational reserve is to unburden the active duty force of these duties, allowing the latter greater freedom of movement to conduct combat operations.

Although, Russia is still experimenting with reserve force employment options, it appears to be gravitating toward the territorial-defense unit model. The accompanying excerpted article from ***Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*** discusses the recent call-up of the reserves where reservists were used in territorial defense units. The second excerpted article discusses the process for joining the reserves. Interestingly, it mentions that reserve service may involve not just the troops in the Ministry of Defense, but also the military forces of other Russian security and intelligence services (FSB, MVD-VV, National Guard, etc.). **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: "Military Finance: In the Reserve" *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 13 July 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/31405>, accessed 15 July 2016.

What is the procedure for joining the Armed Forces on a contract for a reserve officer?

The procedure for citizens entering military service under the contract are contained in Article 32-34 of the law "On Military Duty and Military Service" (№ 53-F3 dated 28 March 1998), as well as Article 5 of the regulations on the procedure for military service, approved by presidential decree № 1237 from September 16, 1999. Admission to military service under the contract in the Russian Armed Forces carried out due to the need according to the arising need for military specialists...On request, a reserve officer may apply to the military unit in which the presence of vacant military posts and in accordance with specified requirements…it is necessary to conduct for the draft board: a medical examination, psychological assessment, registration of personal affairs and desired military unit. Military service can take place not only in the Russian Ministry of Defense of Russia, but also in other bodies of executive power [other military forces in Russia's militarized intelligence and security services], which it is provided, in accordance with the level of training and experience activities…

ran communications lines. After updating assigned missions, the reserve command element simultaneously began calling up personnel and deploying military units. Reception stations for those arriving from the reserve were prepared at arms and military equipment storage depots…

In the second phase military commissariat personnel began calling up citizens from the reserve and sending them to units... several territorial defense battalions also were deployed and immediately began executing assigned missions... During the third and final phase those called up from the reserve arrived in military units according to mobilization assignment orders; drew military uniforms, property, and personal weapons; were distributed to subunits; and began drawing authorized arms and military equipment. It should be noted that one more very important element was rehearsed during the exercise -- coordination with the Federal Service of National Guard Troops.

The Defense Ministry leadership has not disseminated an official announcement about results of the snap inspection for now, but VPK learned that results are assessed positively on the whole. The newly created mobilization system is operating. At the same time, specific problems have been identified…The current exercise was a check of readiness of the new mobilization deployment system -- re-created and reformed in a new look after actually having been destroyed -- for operation under conditions of a sudden crisis when there is no time for a warm-up. The country's military-political leadership believes that this specifically is how the RF Armed Forces reserve component must operate... In simple language, the system is working, but its calibration and adjustment and the tuning of certain elements are required.

Emblem of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/11/Medium_emblem_of_the_Ministry_of_Defence_of_the_Russian_Federation_(21.07.2003-present).svg/2000px-Medium_emblem_of_the_Ministry_of_Defence_of_the_Russian_Federation_(21.07.2003-present).svg.png

Russian Coastal Defense Radars that Can 'See' the F-35?

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted articles give an excellent account of the history, physics, and uses of the Podsolnukh and Laguna series over-the-horizon (OTH) radar systems. These systems have been discussed in many recent articles in the Russian media, with claims that these radars can "see" the F-35. Although there has been a long history of Soviet and Russian exaggeration of military capabilities, there is likely some truth in this claim regarding the F-35.

Due to the technical nature of radar technology, some wavelengths can "see" stealth technologies better than others. OTH radar systems use such wavelengths, but there is a problem. Due to the wavelength properties, OTH radars can determine only an approximate location for a stealth aircraft, not an exact location needed for targeting purposes. The value of these OTH radars is not their ability to provide accurate targeting data for air defense systems, but rather their ability to tip and cue the targeting radars of air defense systems. The radar technology used by air defense (targeting) radars has a much higher spatial resolution than that of the OTH radars, but they have much more difficulty finding stealth targets. OTH radars can provide early warning and "point" the targeting radars of air defense systems in the right direction.

There is also another benefit of such systems. Since the Russian Federation has an Integrated Air Defense System (IADS), Russia's various radars and air defense systems are (presumably) networked together. The benefit of OTH radars for this IADS is that the OTH radars may continually monitor the skies, allowing the targeting radars of the air defense systems to lie dormant (not emit energy) until alerted by an OTH radar. This practice could substantially increase the survivability of Russian air defense assets on the modern battlefield, as these air defense systems would be particularly hard to target when not emitting, especially considering Russian tactics that promote frequent position changes to frustrate enemy precision targeting. . **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Vladimir Tuchkov, "The 'Podsolnukh' Radar Sees the American F-35," *Svobodnaya Pressa,* 1 July 2016, <http://svpressa.ru/war21/article/151748/>, accessed 15 July 2016.

The Podsolnukh radar is regarded as a comparatively new type of radiotechnical equipment and not only because this radar was accepted into the inventory in 2006. This very direction of radar equipment itself began to be rapidly developed two decades ago, although the scientific principles, on which it is based, "are as old as electricity"...said RTI Radiotechnical and Information Systems Concern Chief Sergey Boyev.

We previously understood an over-the-horizon radar to be an exceptionally powerful structure, which consists of several tens of thousands of antennas that radiate radio waves and receive radio echoes, on which entire power plants operate. Those radars are capable of detecting aircraft and ballistic missiles, which are located at a distance of 3,000-4,000 kilometers. The effect of the reflection of radio waves from the ionosphere and then from the earth's surface are used in them. After which the signal with the information "about what has been seen beyond the horizon" returns to the radar's reception array. A double-bounce of the wave from the ionosphere, in the ping pong manner, is used in some ("double-hop") radars. Those radars are very expensive, their construction can continue for up to five or more years, and they require tremendous amounts of energy to operate. So, for example, the Don-2N radar radiates 250 megawatts in a pulse. Those radars are called spatial wave over-the-horizon radars. Their primary designation – is missile attack warning.

But over-the-horizon radars with a surface wave are increasingly making themselves known. They have a shorter operating range but, in so doing, are significantly more "technological," beginning with production and ending with operation. The Podsolnukh is being deployed in 10 days and a total of only three people service it...The over-the-horizon surface wave radars take advantage of the effect, under which metric and decametric range radio waves are disseminated along the surface of the earth, figuratively speaking, "while sticking" to it. In other words, diffraction occurs. The reflected wave follows along that same path. But, in the process, heavy damping of the wave occurs even on level sectors of ground. A different situation is when they transmit the wave along the water, in other words, a sea surface. In this case, they manage to glance beyond the horizon by 200-300 kilometers...

The popularity of the over-the-horizon surface wave radar has increased recently as a result of the need to tighten control of the 200-mile economic zone with the goal of interdicting piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing. Of course, those radars have high military potential, which is associated with warning about the preparation of sabotage, military provocations, or an armed invasion. In the process, constant monitoring occurs of not only the surface of the sea but also of the air environment. Over-the-horizon surface wave radars are sometimes called coastal radars, since they deploy them precisely on the coast near the state border...The precise specifications are not being made public. However, one can judge them to a certain extent based upon the Podsolnukh-E radar export variant. The operating range during the detection of various types of military equipment falls within the range of from 200 kilometers to 500 kilometers. Minimal range is achieved during operation with low-tonnage ships and maximum range – with high flying aircraft. However, aircraft can also be located at an altitude of five meters and, in this case, they are detected at a distance of 150 kilometers.

One more Scientific Research Institute of Long-Range Radio Communications (NIIDAR) development in the surface wave radar sphere, later than the Podsolnukh – is the Laguna. Its specifications are more modest: maximum detection range – 250 kilometers, and minimum detection range – 15 kilometers. In the process, 50 naval surface and 10 airborne targets can be tracked simultaneously. However, this radar has its niche with regard to the accomplishment of the most frequently encountered missions. Of course, it is significantly simpler and cheaper than the Podsolnukh. All of the equipment is accommodated in two transportable canisters.

(continued)

Continued: Russian Coastal Defense Radars that Can 'See' the F-35?

The direction of the over-the-horizon surface wave radars is extremely relevant, while taking into account the length of Russia's maritime borders. What is more, the relevance is increasing as a result of the fact that only 30 early radar warning aircraft are in the Aerospace Forces inventory and only three of them – A-50U aircraft – meet contemporary requirements. Their number will increase and the A-100 should eventually appear. However, this is a matter of the future. But one can put a surface wave radar into operation already right now with high frequency. It has been calculated that they need to install radars on the coast with an interval of 370 kilometers to fully cover the border with surface wave radars.

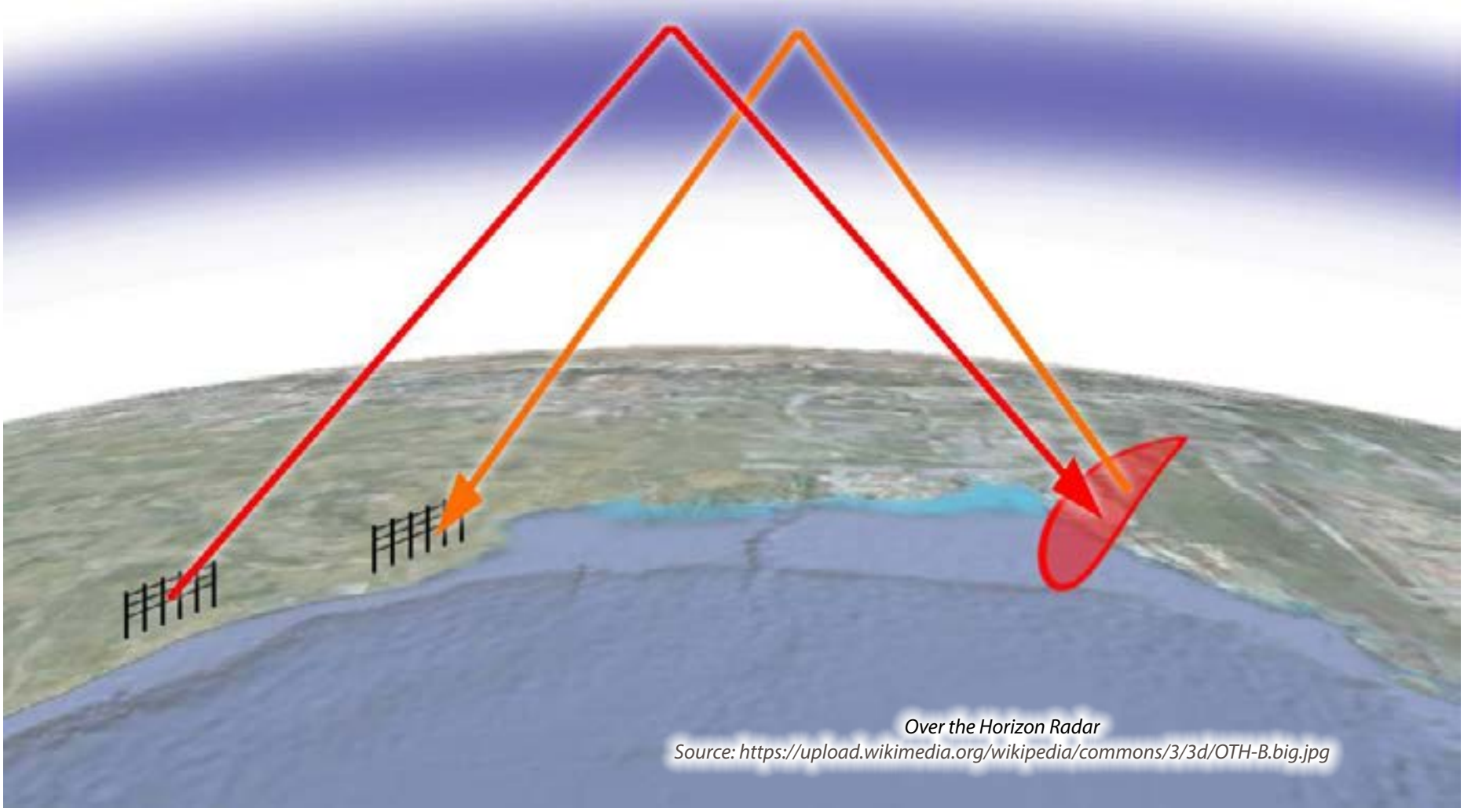
Source: Sergey Ptichkin, "They Will Monitor the Sky in the Arctic: Over-the-Horizon Radars Will Cover the Northern Latitudes," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 27 June 2016, <https://rg.ru/2016/06/27/na-morskih-poberezhiah-rf-nachali-ustanavlivat-rls-novogo-pokoleniia.html>, accessed 15 July 16.

New generation radar sites, which are capable of seeing beyond the horizon, are being installed on Russia's seacoasts. One of them will perform alert duty in the Arctic Zone.

RTI [Radiotechnical and information Systems] Concern General Director Sergey Boyev told that to Interfax Information Agency. In his words, the Ministry of Defense plans to purchase several Podsolnukh Radars for the Navy in 2017, which will be deployed in the Arctic, and also on Russia's southern and western borders…The Podsolnukh Over-the-Horizon Radar is an adequately new development of the domestic military industry. Its state tests were completed only in 2006… three radar sites have been put into operation. They are on the coast of the Caspian Sea and the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan.

Monitoring the surface and air situation is carried out through the creation of a high-altitude radar field using short wave signals, which are disseminated beyond the horizon…The Podsolnukh is capable of simultaneously detecting, tracking, and classifying no less than 300 naval surface and 100 airborne objects at a range of 500 kilometers in automatic mode. The radar not only determines their precise coordinates but also, if necessary, issues target designations on them to ships' weapon systems and complexes and to air defense weapons…

They have also developed an export variant of this radar – the Podsolnukh-3. The radar site's mockup has already been displayed at several foreign naval shows.



Over the Horizon Radar
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3d/OTH-B.big.jpg

The BTR-82 and the Implementation of Modernization

OE Watch Commentary: The BTR-82 is an upgraded version of BTR-80. It was first fielded in 2011 and now can be found in the Russian Ground Forces, Naval Infantry, and Airborne. It is manufactured at the 81st Armored Vehicle Repair Plant in Armavir, Russia, and differs from the BTR-80 due to a 300-hp engine, in place of the BTR-80's 260-hp engine, and a number of design features to protect the crew from mines and small-arms fire. The bottom of the vehicle is designed with a new two-level system for absorbing blasts, and all internal parts of the armored body are covered by a special spall liner to provide better protection from shrapnel and other projectiles. These modifications reportedly give the BTR-82 a twenty percent higher survival rate than the BTR-80.

Versions of the BTR-82 are equipped with air conditioning, digitally-encrypted R-168 radios, and the Trona-1 topographic navigation system. Although Russia will field the new wheeled "Bumerang" BTR in the next few years, the BTR-82 will likely still be in production for the foreseeable future, as its designation refers to not only newly produced vehicles, but also BTR-80s that have been upgraded to the BTR-82 standard. (The BTR-82 is also finding success on the export market, versions of it can be found in found in the armies' of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Syria.) Common variants of the BTR-82 include the BTR-82A, armed with a 30-mm cannon and coaxial 7.62-mm machine gun; the BTR-82AM, designation of a BTR-80 after upgrade to the BTR-82A standard; the BTR-82A1, equipped with an unmanned turret that has a 30-mm cannon and coaxial 7.62-mm machine gun; and the Taifun-M reconnaissance vehicle, developed as an escort vehicle for intercontinental ballistic missile launchers. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss a new improvement to the BTR-82 line, the addition of a thermal sight, and the continual fielding of the system.

Russian efforts to build and/or modernize the BTR-82/BTR-80 line, while simultaneously fielding a new system (The "Bumerang" BTR), parallels Russia's modernization of the T-72 line of tanks while fielding the T-14 tank. The Russian Federation sees no need to completely change out its inventory of older vehicles, and instead has adopted a hybrid approach towards modernization. The Russian Armed Forces have chosen to approach institutional modernization by modernizing older platforms, while simultaneously fielding new platforms. This practice allows them to significantly enhance their combat power through wide-scale modernization, while developing new technologies at a sustainable cost. This approach is far from perfect, but it appears to be a long standing practice, instituted well before the time of current financial difficulties. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Tatyana Vorobyeva, "Central Military District Base in Tajikistan Gets New Armored Hardware," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* Online, 14 June 2016, <https://rg.ru/2016/06/14/reg-urfo/baza-cvo-v-tadzhikistane-poluchila-novuiu-bronetehniku.html>, accessed 14 July 2016.

Subunits of the 201st Military Base stationed in Tajikistan have received approximately 100 new BTR-82A armored personnel carriers under the state defense order...

The BTR-82A is distinguished by enhanced firepower, protection for crews, and new communications systems. A 2A72 rapid-firing 30mm cannon in the module of the tower cannon and machine gun assembly constitutes the armament...

Image courtesy Vitaly Kuzmin
Source: https://en.tengrinews.kz/emergencies/Religious-extremists-kill-six-in-Kazakhstan-rampage-263334

Source: "BTR-82A Will Be Able To 'See' at Night After Upgrade," *TASS Online*, 3 June 2016, <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3332957>, accessed 14 July 2016.

The "Military Industrial Company" is planning to upgrade the BTR-82A armored personnel carrier in accordance with a to a Russian Federation Ministry of Defense order, including the installation of a thermal sight, TASS was told by company general director Aleksandr Krasovitskiy.

"We are now conducting new research and development, upgrading this vehicle (BTR-82A), and installing a thermal sight, so that the vehicle will be able to see perfectly at night. We already have an order for the upgraded APC. It will be named with an additional letter. We will soon finish this research and development," Krasovitskiy said at the KADEX-2016 arms exhibition held in Kazakhstan...

The BTR-82A has enhanced survivability, is equipped with a standardized combat unit, air conditioning system, and modern systems of communication and orientation. The BTR-82A has been supplied to the Russian Defense Ministry since 2011.

Railgun Technology as the Future of Artillery and Aerial Combat

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted articles discuss the long-term prospects for railgun technology in the Russian Armed Forces. Railgun technology has been around since the early 1900s, with the Soviets beginning development of it in the 1950s. The Soviet system consisted of a (powerful) electrical power source, switching device, and electrodes along two rails. Electric current flows through the rails, ignites a fuse, and turns into a plasma cloud. The interaction of the magnetic current with the current flowing through the plasma generates a Lorentz magnetic field that propels a given object along the rails. These types of railguns allow small objects to attain a speed of 6-10 km/sec. In theory, if the plasma cloud itself was ejected, a speed of up to 50 km/sec could be achieved.

Although the possibilities of railguns have long been known, the technology to implement them as a weapon system has been lacking, but this is now changing. Current technology is now making feasible a railgun with an autonomous power source on a mobile delivery system. A Russian implementation of this technology will not be seen in the near future, but it appears to be an area of high interest. Doctor of Military Sciences Konstantin Sivkov proposes that conventional propellant-charged munitions will be inferior to railgun technologies (for military purposes) in the next 40-50 years. Another Russian theorist proposed that railgun technology may eventually be capable of shooting down satellites and other spacecraft. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: "Expert: Railguns Will Be More Effective than Traditional Artillery in Fifty Years' Time," 6 July 2016,<http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160706/1459846304.html#ixzz4Df22FXtt>, accessed 17 July 2017.

Given continuation of the research being conducted now, electromagnetic railguns (railotrons) will be many times more effective than traditional artillery in 40-50 years' time; they will not be able to totally replace the latter, however, Doctor of Military Sciences Konstantin Sivkov, the Academy of Geopolitical Problems president, believes…

"If one considers the models for installation aboard large fighting ships, they have already been built – this is the railgun that has been installed aboard the 'Zamvolt'-type destroyer. In terms of its characteristics, it is as yet inferior to the traditional propellant-charged artillery mounts, but this direction is a highly promising one and, given the continuation of research programs, electromagnetic guns will catch up with artillery 20 years from now in terms of effectiveness and, 40-50 years down the line, they will outperform it by many times," Sivkov said…

"Nevertheless, one must understand that no new weapon replaces previous types, but only complements them, because every type of armament has its advantages and shortcomings…

Source: "Russia Tests Parts of 6th Generation, Railgun Equipped Near Space Warplane," *Sputnik* Online, 16 July 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160716/1043134175/moscow-sixth-generation-fighter-railgun.html>, accessed 19 July 2016.

Russia's largest radio electronics manufacturer gave a glimpse into the future of Russian air superiority confirming on Monday that components for a sixth 6th generation fighter jet are being tested on the 5th generation PAK FA T-50 prototype.

Russia has begun testing hardware elements designed for a future 6th generation fighter jet, heralded as the first combat aircraft that will be able to engage targets from near space, on a 5th generation prototype that is currently undergoing flight trials according to a TASS news agency report…

Vladimir Mikheyev, advisor to the First Deputy Director General of Concern Radio Electronic Technologies (KRET), a subsidiary of Russian Technologies State Corporation (Rostec), revealed that various components of the new jet have been tested on the Sukhoi PAK FA (Prospective Airborne Complex Frontline Aviation) T-50 prototype.

"Standalone solutions that will be applied in the sixth-generation fighter are now being tested on the fifth-generation jet as well as on the ground-based equipment. Separate elements of the flight and navigation system have already been installed on PAK FA [(Prospective Airborne Complex Frontline Aviation) T-50 prototype]," Mikheyev told TASS news…

The sixth generation fighter jets planned to be unveiled by 2025 will consist primarily of swarms of unmanned aircrafts flying at hypersonic speed with developers saying that the jets would be able to transit through space.

The aircrafts will be equipped with electromagnetic cannons – much like the Navy's railgun – which can force an enemy's radio detector out of operation at a 10km range. The super-high frequency weapons is so powerful, however, that it will not be installed on piloted aircrafts as it can harm the pilot.

"In particular, the electromagnetic impulse, with which the SHF's weapon will be hitting the targets, will be so powerful that it will be extremely difficult to protect a human, a pilot from his own weaponry," explained Mikheyev.

The sixth-generation fighter jet has not yet been commissioned by Russia's Defense Ministry, but there are hopes to finish the research and development part of the work until 2020 so that KRET can produce the first sixth generation aircraft by 2025 upon the ministry's order.

Integration of Artificial Intelligence into Network-Centric C4ISR

OE Watch Commentary: Command and control (C2) has long been a problem in both the Soviet and Russian militaries. At the tactical level, radio technology was generally lacking, and the ability to transmit digitally nonexistent.

In the last few years, this has begun to change. The Russian Federation has made great efforts to develop a "network-centric" command and control system. Network-centric warfare can roughly be described as the wide-scale use of networked electronic reconnaissance and targeting systems (satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles, etc.) and mobile formations that can be quickly deployed throughout the entire theater of military operations to deliver decisive strikes on the enemy's flanks and rear, as quickly and efficiently as possible. The Signal Troops appear to be the key to implementing this program, as they man the automated C2 systems, radios, and landline infrastructure required for this endeavor.

At the highest levels, this concept has led to the establishment of a national command center that will reportedly be connected to subordinate command centers at the operational strategic command (military district) and army group levels. At the tactical level, the Armed Forces are overcoming C2 problems and implementing network-centric warfare through a variety of new technologies including new tactical radios, a tactical digital mobile subscriber system (roughly, a military digital cell phone and data system), and tactical laptops and tablets.

Despite these advances, Russia has still had difficulties fielding a modern, unified C2 system for tactical units. The answer to this problem is the fielding of the "Andromeda" C2 system, which has been in development for several years. This system is in many ways similar in purpose and capabilities to the US's Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) system. The Andromeda is intended to provide situational awareness to the commander and allow for the real-time exchange of information from the highest commander down to the squad and even individual soldier. It can reportedly interface with space-based networks and has extensive counter-electronic-warfare capabilities. It utilizes digital mapping technologies, allowing terminal operators to annotate the positions of troops, armaments, and equipment. Vehicles, and in some reports eventually even individual soldiers, will be automatically tracked via a GPS/GLONASS connection. If the fielding of the Andromeda is deemed a success for the Russian Airborne Forces, it is very likely the system would also be adopted by the Russian Ground Forces.

Even if the Andromeda C2 system is not ultimately adopted throughout the Russian Armed Forces, Russia will likely continue to experiment with C2 systems to unify the information domain, integrate fires and effects, and manage robotics and other unmanned technologies to ultimately more efficiently mass and then apply combat power. The accompanying excerpts discuss Russian efforts to introduce artificial intelligence to the battlefield, with the article from Nezavisimaya Gazeta specifically discussing how artificial intelligence is being integrated into a network-centric C2 system for tactical purposes. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: "Expert: Railguns Will Be More Effective than Traditional Artillery in Fifty Years' Time," 6 July 2016,<http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160706/1459846304.html#ixzz4Df22FXtt>, accessed 17 July 2017.

Research command-staff live-fire exercises began yesterday at Moscow's Alabino Range. Western Military District Press Service Chief Colonel Igor Muginov reported that the servicemen of the 1st Guards Tank Army, which is part of Western Military District, "are mastering advanced methods of the conduct of combat operations, having employed the joint tactical echelon command and control systems (YeSU TZ)" during the course of these maneuvers. In particular, the participants of the experimental maneuvers, in which "more than 900 servicemen and over 100 weapons and pieces of military equipment are involved", while using the joint tactical echelon command and control system's equipment and materials, are mastering the missions for the automated guidance of weapons to the target and also its destruction. In other words, artificial intelligence will be involved during the accomplishment of the controller-injected combat actions.

This is an important event for the Russian Army since the work in this direction has been conducted for more than 15 years and the joint tactical echelon command and control system, which is an element of the so-called network-centric wars, while being continuously modernized, has not yet been accepted into the inventory in integral form.

The joint tactical echelon command and control system is a high-tech method of combat operations, under which automated command and control, satellite navigation, aircraft (unmanned aerial vehicle) reconnaissance, and digital radio communications have been integrated into a single whole on the battlefield…The combat employment of elements of the joint tactical echelon command and control system in the Russian Army has never been officially reported. Nezavisimaya Gazeta has also previously reported that the introduction of this system was accompanied by problems and became one of the bases for the removal of former Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov and former Chief of the General Staff Nikolay Makarov from their positions during the fall of 2012. Right now it seems that the situation is improving and, in the opinion of a number of experts, Russia is already the leader here, while developing armored vehicles on the Armata platform, whose weapons will be employed via the joint tactical echelon command and control system, including as combat robots…

The mass media and the blogosphere confirmed at the beginning of 2016 that "The Russian military grouping in Syria has begun to actively use robot equipment and elements of network-centric (in other words, merged into one information network) types of combat operations." Quite a few reports have arrived that the guerrillas had also not managed to destroy a single T-90 tank thanks to the use of effective and high-tech systems (radar sites, radars, electronic warfare equipment, and so forth) by Russian and Syrian servicemen…

(continued)

Continued: Integration of Artificial Intelligence into Network-Centric C4ISR

Yesterday the Ministry of Defense reported that "the guards tank combined formation's artillery, motorized rifle, and reconnaissance subunits, the officers of its staff, and representatives of the defense industrial complex and of the RF Armed Forces Combined-Arms Academy are involved" in the research exercise for the employment of the joint tactical echelon command and control system at Alabino. This attests to the fact that the experimental maneuvers are applied in nature and the future commanders of regiments and formations will not only know this new automated system but also know how to employ it in practice in daily activity.

Source: Ivan Petrov "Strategic Missile Troops Will Make Robotic Scouts and Physicians Operational," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 13 July 2016, <https://rg.ru/2016/07/13/rvsn-vozmet-na-vooruzhenie-robotizirovannyh-razvedchikov-i-vrachej.html>, accessed 17 July 2016.

Russia's Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN) intend to make a number of robotic complexes operational before long. RVSN Commander Colonel General Sergey Karakayev informed journalists of this on Wednesday. According to him, the robots will prove useful to the troops, including for reconnaissance operations and first aid to wounded on the battlefield.

"The RVSN is continuing studies as part of a number of scientific research projects to determine prospects for robotization of troops. Our specialists' main efforts are aimed at developing forms and methods of employing existing models of robotic complexes and at developing requirements for advanced systems," the commander said without giving time periods for making such complexes operational. He did clarify that a number of additional studies and tests will have to be conducted before making new robotic systems operational…

Russian Aremed Forces Logo
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Flag_of_Armed_Forces_of_the_Russian_Federation.gif

Reactions to Armenian-Russian Agreement on Joint Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: On 30 June 2016 the Armenian Parliament ratified an Armenian- Russian agreement to create a joint air defense system. As the excerpt from Russia-based ***Noteru.com*** notes, Armenian officials feel this agreement is to Armenia's advantage. According to the article, not only does Moscow show that it will support Armenia in the event of a conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, but also Deputy Defense Minister Ara Nazarian "even openly said that the Armenian armed forces will retain the right to make use of the air defense forces for their own purposes." Earlier in the month, according to the second excerpt, from Armenia's ***EurAsia Daily***, the government provided few details on the agreement.

As discussion on this topic began in Armenia in mid-June, protests by several dozen people broke out, as the accompanying excerpt from ***APA (Agency Azeri-Press)*** explains, citing ***NEWS.am.*** According to the excerpt, the protestors' slogans included, "We will surrender neither land nor air," "We do not trust Permyakov's army, we trust in the Armenian army," "The next step of betrayal." The reference to Permyakov is about Valeriy Permyakov, a Russian serviceman of the 102nd Russian Military Base in Gyumri whom Armenian authorities suspected of murdering seven individuals in an Armenian family in January 2015 in Gyumri, Armenia's second largest city and the site of a major Russian military base. The murder and the Armenian government's response—handing Permyakov to the Russian authorities— sparked protests in Gyumri and Yerevan. According to ***APA***, one of the protestors, "The signing of the agreement—is a mistake, a betrayal. By signing this agreement, we declare war not only on Azerbaijan but also the on the whole world."

Noteru.com interprets Moscow's moves as a successful attempt to ensure a balance in the region, while keeping the risk of NATO's involvement low. "Now Armenia and Azerbaijan understand that in any event there will be no clear winner in the event of open conflict," referring to Nagorno Karabakh. The article also quotes journalist and historian Yevgeny Trifonov, who feels Russia displayed "friendliness" to Armenia at a time when Armenian-Russian relations "cannot be described today as solely positive." According to Trifonov, "The transfer of Russian air defense systems located in Armenia, to the Armenian military - is inevitable. If Russia did not do this, Armenia would have broken allied relations with Moscow."

It is difficult to imagine how Armenia would have done this given the depth and variety of Russia's control in Armenia and the Armenian government's view of Russia as the ultimate guarantor of its security. Moscow's desire to maintain a balance of power in the region appears more plausible. In addition, the agreement deepens Moscow's influence in the region.

Source: Ilya Krugley, "Общая ПВО России и Армении – затишье в Карабахе (Joint Russian-Armenian Air Defense - a lull in Karabakh), *Noteru.com,* 30 June 2016. http://noteru.com/post/view/18709

The Armenian parliament ratified the agreement on the establishment of a unified air defense system with Russia, and did so with an absolute majority in the vote...

Thus, Moscow made it clear which side it will take in the event that the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh will begin to gain momentum again. Basically, Russia provides its air defense forces in Armenia at Yerevan disposal. [Deputy Defense Minister Ara] Nazarian even openly said that the Armenian armed forces will retain the right to make use of the air defense forces for their own purposes ...

Baku may interpret this as an unfriendly step from Moscow, which could probably push it back to cooperation with NATO ....

However, the likelihood that Baku will look to make a deal with NATO is not very high. Azerbaijan understands that Yerevan will not conduct full-scale actions, though it gained an advantage. ..

Journalist and historian Yevgeny Trifonov said that with this step Russia demonstrated Armenia its friendliness, as relations between Moscow and Yerevan cannot be described today as solely positive: "The transfer of Russian air defense systems located in Armenia, to the Armenian military - is inevitable. If Russia did not do this, Armenia would have broken allied relations with Moscow... in recent years, the attitude to Russia in Armenia has drastically deteriorated: anti-Russian demonstration in Yerevan—are now a normal occurrence. And all because of provision of arms to Azerbaijan. Don't forget that Armenia has good relations with Iran, which has negative sentiment towards Azerbaijan, so Yerevan won't be left without allies and arms suppliers (although Iranian cannot be compared with Russian). So Moscow simply decided to restore the balance in the South Caucasus, moreover, without spending any money. "

In summary: we can conclude that Russia, with a low risk of attracting NATO's attention to the Caucasus, ensured a balance of weapons on both sides and, therefore, likely guarantee a ceasefire in Karabakh. Now Armenia and Azerbaijan understand that in any event there will be no clear winner in the event of open conflict.

EurAsia Daily provides additional background by observing that the agreement came in the context of an earlier $200 million Russian credit for purchasing weaponry. "The loan agreement was signed and ratified last year. However, in spite of the fact that a year has passed since the date of ratification, Armenia has not yet received the products in full." Still, Armenian political analyst Sergey Minasyan, quoted in the article, dismisses a strong link between the earlier loan and the agreement.

According to the article, "military experts say the system gives an opportunity to the Armenian side of constant surveillance of the air situation in the entire region – beginning in the Caspian Basin and ending in Turkey. Given the fact that the anti-aircraft defense system in Armenia that 'covers' the sky - from radars to the S-300 complexes are Soviet or Russian production-based, creating a single 'umbrella' of security by synchronizing the action of these systems becomes quite a solvable task."

(continued)

Continued: Reactions to Armenian-Russian Agreement on Joint Air Defense

Comments in the Russian-language press suggest that the Armenian government continues to see Russia in a positive light. Meanwhile, details on the agreement remain sparse. The very conclusion of the agreement, however, shows that Russia's influence in the South Caucasus continues to deepen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: "В Ереване проходит акция протеста против России" (Protest in Yerevan Against Russia), 13 June 2016. APA (*Agency Azeri-Press*) http://ru.apa.az/novosti_sng/v-erevane-prokhodit-akciya-protesta-protiv-rossii.html

... As APA reports with reference to news.am, several dozens of people are taking part in the demonstration. They are holding posters with the following slogans: "We will surrender neither land nor air," "We do not trust Permyakov's army, we trust in the Armenian army," "The next step of betrayal."

One of the participants, Tigran Khzmalyan, told reporters in an interview that the signing of the agreement means that Armenia will become a target. "The signing of the agreement—is a mistake, a betrayal. By signing this agreement, we declare war not only Azerbaijan but also the on the whole world, " said Khzmalyan ...

Source: "Оружие в обмен на ПВО: о чем договорились Москва и Ереван? " (Weapons in Exchange for Air Defense: What Moscow and Yerevan Agreed to), *EurAsia Daily,* 24 June 2016. https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2016/06/24/oruzhie-v-obmen-na-pvo-o-chem-dogovorilis-moskva-i-erevan

…The Defense Ministry also limited itself to general statement [commenting on the air defense agreement], however, given the context of negotiations on arms supplies as a whole, it is possible that is a supply within the 200 millionth Russian credit…

The loan agreement was signed and ratified last year ... However, in spite of the fact that a year has passed since the date of ratification, Armenia has not yet received the products in full.

Meanwhile, military experts say the system gives an opportunity to the Armenian side of constant surveillance of the air situation in the entire region – beginning in the Caspian Basin and ending in Turkey. Given the fact that the anti-aircraft defense system in Armenia that "covers" the sky - from radars to the S-300 complexes are Soviet or Russian production-based, creating a single "umbrella" of security by synchronizing the action of these systems becomes quite a solvable task.

According to Armenian political analyst Sergey Minasyan, it is possible to find some links between the agreement on air defense and weapon supply. "But I'd prefer to look at these two processes as part of broader formats of interaction between Yerevan and Moscow, both in the CSTO format and bilateral exchanges," - he said in an interview with VERELQ.

Russian-Armenian Talks
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Russian Investigative Report: Court Expertise Turned into "Farce"

OE Watch Commentary: On 14 June 2016 ***Novaya Gazeta***, one of the few remaining independent newspapers in Russia and one specializing in investigative reporting, published a long article, "How Court Expertise in Russia Turned into a Farce." The article, written by Vera Chelishcheva, provides lengthy descriptions of how, according to the author, courts in Russia purposely exclude, and in some cases even prosecute independent experts and instead take as "ultimate truth" what she implies are pro-Kremlin expert opinions, even when those opinions are "absurd." The accompanying excerpts from the article help illustrate this point. They provide an Orwellian picture, reminiscent of some of the most repressive times in Russia's history.

For example, according to one expert, a nongovernmental organization—backed by foreign funds—that worked on HIV prevention by conducting public opinion surveys and distributing free syringes and condoms to people, "takes part in hybrid war in order to change the political regime in Russia," and "destroys our traditions and our national values." To put this story into context, several years ago, the Kremlin went after all foreign-funded organizations by passing a law that required all organizations that received foreign funding and engaged in "political activities" (without a clear definition of such activities) be labelled as "foreign agents."

Two additional examples in the accompanying excerpts are noteworthy. In one, a court found a contemporary artist's work to contain "signs of incitement," based on testimony of an expert who appeared to have little understanding of contemporary art, and, by his own admission, does not even like such art and has not been to an exhibition since 1993. In another example, a court found as "extremist" an image an online publication used— a screenshot of a presentation that a priest made for a local government. His presentation dealt with morality issues—another subject the Kremlin likes to emphasize. The screenshot contained images of Jesus Christ, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and classic Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. The expert, whom the author quotes, described all three individuals as "religious figures," even though neither Putin nor Pushkin could possibly be described as such. Furthermore, the court did not go after the artist or the priest, or anyone in the local government, but only the online publication that reprinted the image.

Contrast these examples with an expert's opinion that slogans such as "wipe out the Kach [offensive slur for Armenian]" and "Russia for Russians" are not necessarily inciting to violence. "[Y]ou never know, people may be joking," wrote the expert. These are typical slogans of racist protestors in Moscow that on many occasions have led to violence against people from the Caucasus or other minorities. The same expert found, "And it should also be figured out…whether or not people are being beat up because they are from the Caucasus, or labels such as 'kach,' 'black', are needed for identification… In such a case, concluded the expert, there is no xenophobia." **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Vera Chelishcheva, "«Убей в себе раба» — призыв к насилию. Как судебная экспертиза в России превратилась в фарс " ("Kill a Slave in Yourself,"—a Call to Violence. How Court Expertise in Russia Turned into Farce") *14 June 2016,* Novaya Gazeta (New Newspaper) http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/73457.html?print=1

Non-governmental organization dedicated to HIV prevention "takes part in hybrid war in order to change the political regime in Russia"; the phrase "kill a slave in yourself" – is "a call to violence towards yourself and to change of the existing system"; and the slogan "beat up the Khach![derogatory slur for an Armenian]" turns out "does not incite ethnic hatred," - all these are excerpts from expert conclusions... Ways to create appearance of objectivity in criminal case investigation abound today, but it is such expertise that occupies a special place, that seems to give certain substance to a case, and to the charges—validity. Even in cases when they are absurd, the court takes this expertise as the ultimate truth. At the same time, independent expertise provided by lawyers are usually not taken into account, [the courts] refuse to interrogate to independent experts, and attempt to prosecute the especially persistent ones. Exceptions are very rare.....

About "hybrid war"

…At the request of the prosecutor's office of Engels, who attempted to label as "foreign agent" the organization "Society" (working on HIV prevention) in Saratov, [expert and professor] Mr. Konovalov provided expert analysis. According to this analysis, "Society," by spending foreign grants on public opinion surveys and distributing free syringes and condoms, "takes part in hybrid war in order to change the political regime in Russia," and also "destroys our traditions and our national values." Mr. Konovalov refused to explain to "Novaya Gazeta" how he came to this conclusion. The Court eventually declared "Society" a "foreign agent," and NGO representatives told me that they were forced to suspend their activities....

Expert does not go to Exhibitions

…The criminal case for inciting religious hatred for Andrei Yerofeyev and Yuri Samodurov ended in a conviction. As lawyer Anna Stavitskaya who representing the interests of the accused reminded Novaya Gazeta, the investigation commissioned art and religious expertise that found signs of incitement, but all the experts had very little connection to contemporary art.

- Independent art experts who observed our processes were horrified by these examinations, - says Stavitskaya. - People who have them carried out, did not understood contemporary art at all. One of these experts admitted in court that he doesn't like contemporary art and the last time he was at an exhibition was in 1993. But the judge still took into account her expertise. And when we brought real experts on contemporary art, the court did not listen to them.

"Christ, Putin and Pushkin - important religious figures"

In March 2015 Roskomnadzor [Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications] issued a warning to an online edition of the "Internet Journal Sib.fm" for placement of extremist materials. This was how the agency deemed the image of Christ, Putin and Pushkin, which were used

(continued)

Continued: Russian Investigative Report: Court Expertise Turned into "Farce"

to illustrate news of a roundtable held by Novosibirsk region's government. A priest spoke during the roundtable of moral and ethical values of today's youth, [and] during his speech on the screen was displayed the controversial image as part of his presentation. There were no complaints neither to the priest, nor the regional government, nor to the art group "Blue Noses" (the author of collage), no claims were filed...

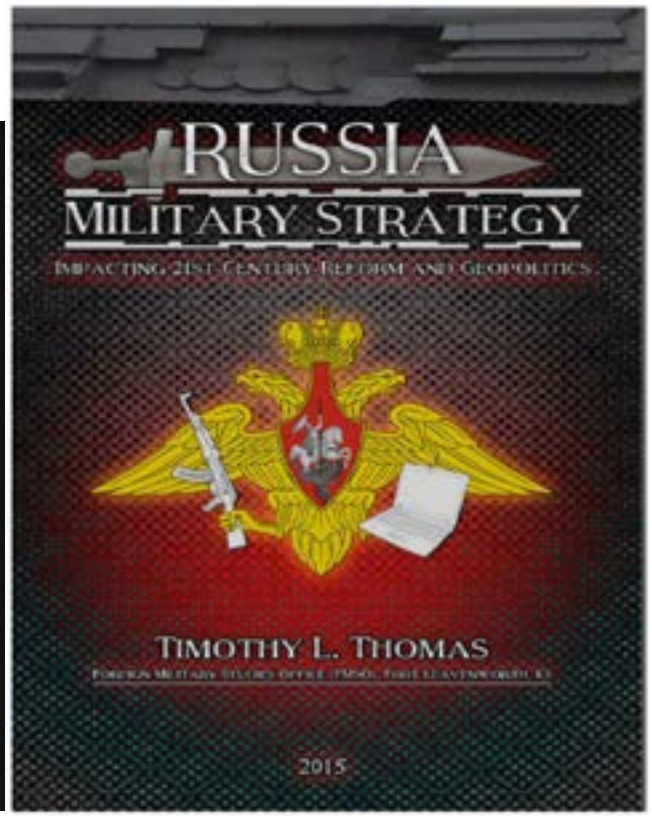
In support of the claim that the collage insulted feelings of believers, Roskomnadzor brought to court an examination, made a recent graduate -culturalist. The main part of the examination perhaps is this, "the caricature insults and degrades the dignity of representative of the Christian religion Jesus Christ, who died almost two thousand years ago"; "... In the screenshot presented for studying (Christ, Pushkin and Putin) contains in caricature form representation of important religious figures ...".

- On the basis of this examination the court found the collage extremist….

Analyzing in its opinion shouts "wipe out the Kach" and "Russia for Russians" expert Kiryukhina displayed creativity: on the one hand, she wrote that the word "beat up", "wipe out"—are calls for aggressive action, on the other - that may be, these word are "humorous" and "frivolous": you never know, people may be joking. And it should also be figured out, says the expert, whether or not people are being beat up because they are from the Caucasus, or labels such as "kach," "black, are needed for identification… In such a case, concluded the expert, there is no xenophobia…

For the past ten years, as Prime Minister and President, Vladimir Putin has led an extensive reorganization and reequipping of his country's armed forces. Further, he has taken several opportunities to reclaim Russian territory that was taken, from his perspective, illegally. This book describes Putin and the military's use of various strategic concepts, the Defense Ministry's new equipment and reform initiatives, and Putin's geopolitical quest for influence in the Arctic and Ukraine. Included in the discussion are some of the unintended consequences of his actions (negative world opinion, sanctions, NATO responses, etc.).

http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas_Russian%20Military%20Strategy_Final_(2%20May%202016).pdf



Russians Renew Concern about the Caucasus as Syria and Ukraine Disappear from the News

OE Watch Commentary: Approximately two years since Russian President Vladimir Putin annexed Crimea from Ukraine and less than a year since his intervention in Syria, both countries are no longer front page news in Russia. According to the accompanying excerpt from ***Vedomosti*** on 27 June 2016, given the declined interest from Russian politicians and TV channels, Russian citizens are "remembering internal problems." This includes, in particular, the Caucasus. According to the latest Levada Center poll cited in the excerpt, fifty-one percent feel the situation in the North Caucasus is "tense," an increase from thirty-three percent in May 2015. According to the article, Russian public opinion about the Caucasus is returning to pre-Crimea levels. Tension in this context implies terrorism and radicalization-related issues. Yet, the author writes, little has actually changed in the region in the last two years, according to regional experts.

It is interesting that the numbers of those undecided, whether pre- or post-Crimea, remained fairly high—between 10 and 20 percent. This is not unusual in an authoritarian country, where people are often afraid to give honest opinions. Nonetheless, the Levada Center remains an independent and the most trustworthy public opinion pollster in Russia.

The article shows that reasons to be concerned about radicalization in the Caucasus remain valid. "Prevention of extremism and counterterrorism have also become a profitable business," according to the author. To give additional context, since September 2015 Russian security services have drastically expanded their terrorism watch lists to include, according to Western press reports, 10,000-15,000 people. The authorities keep a particular close watch on anyone on this list, can interrogate these individuals at any time, and can force them to give DNA samples. The article refers to these as "prophylactic" lists and says, "not only suspects but also their relatives are brought to the police for taking fingerprints and blood samples for DNA." Importantly, according to human rights activists and lawyers referenced in the article, it seems possible to pay a bribe of 300,000-500,000 rubles (approximately $4,660 to $7,766) to be excluded from such lists and also to pay 1.5 million rubles ($23,298) to end "a fraudulent criminal case when a suspect is tossed weapons or ammunition." The article concludes that it is no wonder that more individuals are radicalizing and some are leaving to join the ranks of ISIS.

It is not surprising that with Syria and Ukraine no longer distracting the public from a number of domestic problems, Russian citizens are returning to internal issues. The Caucasus, in particular, will remain a serious driver of instability and violence in Russia and beyond in the near future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Pavel Aptekar,' " Возвращение на Кавказ. Снижение интереса СМИ к украинскому и сирийскому конфликтам заставляет россиян вспомнить конфликты внутренние" (Return to the Caucasus. Decrease of Media's Interest in Ukrainian and Syrian Conflicts Forces Russians to Remember Internal Conflicts), *Vedomosti*, 27 June 2016. https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2016/06/28/647009-vozvraschenie-kavkaz

The decline in interest of Russian politicians and TV channels in the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts has led citizens to remember internal problems. For example, the Russians again assess the situation in the North Caucasus as unstable. According to a recent "Levada Center" survey, 51% of respondents describe the situation in the region as tense, only 28% consider it calm, volatile - 7%, another 14% undecided. But a year ago, in May 2015, almost half of the respondents, 45%, referred to the situation calm, tense - 33%, volatile - 2%, undecided 20%. Assessment of the situation in the Caucasus moved closer to the pre-Crimea situation in January 2014: 60% considered it tense, 18% - calm, 12% - volatile, 10% undecided.

The issue is perception: in the opinions of experts and human rights activists who spoke Monday at a round table on the topic of radicalization of North Caucasus residents, in recent years the situation [in the North Caucasus] has not changed ....

Prevention of extremism and counter-terrorism has also become a profitable business. Entering [individuals] in "prophylactic lists" means that not only suspects but also their relatives are brought to the police for taking fingerprints and blood samples for DNA [information]. According to human rights activists and lawyers, exclusion from the lists costs from 300 000 to 500 000 rubles, cessation of a fraudulent criminal case when a suspect is tossed weapon or ammunition—around 1.5 million. Such practices promote the growth of radical Islam supporters, increase the number of those leaving Russia preserve life and freedom, and include those who join the ranks of ISIS fighters ...

Russian Reaction to Anaconda and Warsaw Summit

OE Watch Commentary: There were no great surprises in Russia's media reaction to the recently completed Polish-led exercise Anaconda (7-17 June) and the subsequent NATO Summit on 8-9 July, which also took place in Poland. As expected, the exercise and the meeting were portrayed as "proof" that NATO harbors aggressive intentions toward Russia. Deploying and training NATO forces closer to Russia's borders supports the overall Kremlin narrative that the West is determined to intimidate and weaken Russia. Typical Russian media reports fail to mention that NATO and Eastern European countries might be anxious after Russia's annexation of Crimea and its continued military involvement in SE Ukraine. The three accompanying excerpts illustrate how the Anaconda exercise and Warsaw Summit were depicted in the Russian media.

The first excerpt comes from the ultra-conservative newspaper, ***Zavtra***, where its military experts decipher NATO actions and announcements. Predictably from such a source, the Anaconda exercise and summit meeting are portrayed in the darkest possible colors. According to military expert Igor Korotchenko, NATO has firmly decided to contain Russia "through intimidation and threats." From Korotchenko's perspective, the minor NATO force deployment to the Baltics and Poland is merely the initial step in deploying "new military airfields, bases, command centers, control centers, warehouses with weaponry, military vehicles for mobilization deployment of troops…. after which, obviously, in the next few years will create a full-fledged military alliance grouping."

The second excerpt comes from a local paper in Kaliningrad (***Kaliningradskaya Pravda***) and was published as the Anaconda exercise was occurring. This article provides local context to the exercise, claiming that some Polish residents were upset at the noise and disturbance caused by the training. It also quoted a handful of locals who were protesting against the exercise and who expressed concern that "Poland began to resemble a frontline zone."

The third excerpt comes from a statement by Alexei Meshkov, an official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, who accused the North Atlantic alliance of a confrontational policy towards Russia. In his statement, he lists all of the Russian gripes against NATO and the US (e.g., massive military exercises, construction of new military infrastructure, missile defense, etc.). As in the other articles, there is no mention of previous Russian actions and statements which might have prompted this increase in NATO defense planning and operations. The Kremlin's one-sided portrayal as to why tensions have increased between Russia and NATO could have dangerous consequences. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: "АНАКОНДА, Интервью с Игорем Коротченко," [Anaconda, Interview with Igor Korotchenko], *Zavtra*, 11 July 2016. http://zavtra.ru/content/view/nato-6/

The Warsaw Summit has shown that Russia is no longer a partner for NATO. For the past twenty years the alliance was talking about Partnership. Today we are talking about "containment" through intimidation and threats. For this purpose, a corresponding military infrastructure is being established on the territory of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland. Near the Russian border in the coming years will be deployed new military airfields, bases, command centers, control centers, warehouses with weaponry, military vehicles for the mobilization deployment of troops. And finally, as the first power notation appears four battalions of NATO, after which, obviously, in the next few years will create a full-fledged military alliance grouping.

Source: Karina Urbitskaya and Alexander Tikhonov, "Голубая 'Анаконда.'" [Blue Anaconda], *Kaliningradskaya Pravda,* 29 June 2016. http://kaliningradka.ru/site_pc/region/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=86739

And at this time in the cozy resort town, immersed in greenery and flowers, explosions were shaking and the locals and tourists. Not everyone here would prefer that a foreign military carried out large-scale maneuvers near a recreation area, located on the shore of the Baltic Sea. An elderly resident of Ustka told us that the very loud planes flying aggravated her insomnia. "Before, during sleepless nights, I could listen to the radio, but the radar from the exercise silenced her radio. All this is quite uncomfortable," she complained…. At the same time in Olsztyn a protest march was held where people took to the streets with placards: "Do not draw us into the war," "Stop NATO". They are scared that Poland began to resemble a frontline zone….

Source: "Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov's Remarks at the Opening of the OSCE Annual Conference," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* 29 June 2016. http://www.mid.ru/ru/home

…We expect an honest discussion on all the current challenges to European security.
Make no mistake, the current state of affairs is dismal. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the lack of a stable and efficient security architecture that could bring together all Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian countries based on the principle of indivisible security comes at a very high price. Today, NATO does not hide its efforts to continue to follow the logic of confrontation in its relations with Russia….
…This is the only way to explain efforts by the Alliance to augment its military capabilities on the "eastern front" and its containment policy towards Russia. This is direct encroachment upon the very foundation of European security. Central and Eastern Europe are being militarized on an unprecedented scale. Almost all NATO countries are on track to increase military spending….
The Alliance is conducting large military training exercises without any justification. Only this month, the Anakonda 2016 exercise - incidentally the largest military training effort since 1989 - coincided with sea maneuvers near Russian borders, involving some 50,000 people from NATO member states and their partner countries….
…All we hear from NATO leaders are plans to ensure a "permanent military presence." There are active efforts to develop military infrastructure with the deployment of rapid reaction forces, front-line coordination centers and warehouses….

…The strategic landscape in Europe is also complicated by US plans to deploy its missile defense system in Europe. It is telling that Washington does not intend to adjust its missile defense planning despite progress in negotiations regarding the Iranian nuclear program. …

Testing Russia's Mobilization System

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian military continues to strengthen its reserve and mobilization potential. As reported earlier (see ***OE Watch***, Dec 2015 "Reserve Capability Development is High Priority for the General Staff"), this new mobilization and reserve system differs from the Soviet model, which emphasized a significant mobilization force required for massive conventional conflict. As the December 2015 commentary pointed out, this new mobilization system focuses upon creating a smaller, more operational reserve that conducts regular musters and annual training. The accompanying excerpts highlight some of the recent developments within the mobilization system.

The first excerpt describes how this mobilization system was tested during a snap exercise in the Western and Southern Military Districts in June. The plan was to alert reservists, assemble and equip them, and then conduct mission-essential training. Though it does not list specifics, the excerpt emphasizes that the reservists were paid for this duty. Previously, there had been questions as to how this new reserve force would be funded.

The second excerpt describes the results of a comparable snap exercise conducted in the Eastern Military district. This article provides more detail, pointing out the many achievements with equipping, training, and maintaining reservists and equipment in field conditions. According to both these reports, the mobilization exercises went like clock-work. However, such adulatory praise is typical of much of the Kremlin-supported media.

The third excerpt provides a more sober analysis of the mobilization inspection, pointing out that while "all equipment planned for deployment was transferred to reservists in the prescribed time, the condition of the motor vehicle fleet leaves much to be desired." The article suggests that in equipping these new reserve units, military districts were inclined to transfer old and obsolete equipment. The excerpt goes on to highlight that "one more very important element was rehearsed during the exercise -- coordination with the Federal Service of National Guard Troops," inferring that the specific duties assigned to the Reserve and the recently formed National Guard are still being worked out.

While the ultimate objective of mobilization is preparedness for conflict, an important by-product is political legitimization. With Duma elections scheduled for September, this focus on defense capabilities could help pro-Kremlin parties do well at the polls. By placing greater emphasis upon Russia's ability to mobilize for war, the Kremlin's political and military leadership may be able to deflect domestic criticism toward the "enemy at the gate." Raising military consciousness via mobilization exercises will not only strengthen the Kremlin's overall political power, but also better prepare the country for future war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Ivan Petrov, "Резервисты стали прибывать в военкоматы в рамках внезапной проверки," [Reservists Began Arriving at Military Commissariats as Part of Snap Inspection], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 15 June 2016.

The Russian Federation Defense Ministry reports that citizens in the Armed Forces reserve have begun arriving at military commissariats. The latest snap inspection -- a special kind of exercise introduced by Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu -- began in the Armed Forces on the day before…. Obligatory reservists are citizens who have performed their military service (conscripted or contract) and have been enrolled in the reserve, and voluntary reservists are a recent innovation where citizens, if they choose, are registered in the Army reserve, regularly attend military reservist active-duty training, and receive monetary payments for this….

….After this the parties are delivered to personnel reception centers right in the military units. The military department noted that those called up from the reserve receive the monetary allowance prescribed for contract servicemen depending on position held and military rank for the time of the exercise. Citizens called up from the reserve also receive clothing and food allowances for the entire period of performing missions as part of active-duty training activities.

The snap inspection will not get by without reservists in Southern MD (YuVO) as well. "During the inspection it is planned to call up servicemen-communicators from the reserve at the Southern MD military communications equipment storage depot stationed in Krasnodarskiy Kray….

Source: Andrey Aleksandrovich, "Snap Inspection: Reservists Have Stood in Formation," *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, 24 June 2016.

A snap combat and mobilization readiness inspection of the military districts' military command and control organs and the weapons and military equipment storage bases was announced in accordance with the decision of the RF Armed Forces Supreme Commander-in-Chief…. A Suvorovskiy Natisk correspondent observed how it proceeded in Primorskiy Kray.

…The combat readiness inspection, which was announced by the Russian defense minister, was supposed to show how rapidly the mobilization of the reserve will occur, if necessary. The military commissariats of all of Primorskiy Kray's rayons were brought up to combat readiness and began to notify and organize the call up from the reserve of specialists to man the subunits. Hundreds of notices were sent and presented, the work of the medical boards was organized, and teams were formed in accordance with the military registration specialties. Buses from all of the Kray's military commissariats transported soldiers, who had already completed their service five years ago and some, 30 years ago, to the weapons and military equipment storage base in Primorye. Now they have once again recalled the intricacies of army life….

…They issued bedding, camouflage, boots, and a full set of uniforms at the personnel reception point. This is VSR-98, the so-called "Flora". They are wearing different camouflage in the Russian Army right now but many sets of uniforms of previous times have remained at the warehouses. Well, they equipped the reservists in it….

(continued)

Continued: Testing Russia's Mobilization System

"...The newly created mobilization system is operating. At the same time, specific problems have been identified, so the military department has something on which to work."

Russian Military Districts.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Aleksey Mikhaylov, "Раскрытые резервы: Одеть-обуть призванных из запаса оказалось проще, чем запустить законсервированную технику," [Uncovered Reserves: It Turned Out Simpler To Put Clothes and Shoes on Those Called Up From the Reserve Than To Start Up Mothballed Equipment], *VPK Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 22-28 June 2016. http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/31130

...Readers are familiar with problems encountered by the Russian Federation Armed Forces after the previous department leadership, in going over to the new look, decided to reform the system of mobilization deployment and eliminate reduced-strength units while at the same time "cropping" the functions of military commissariat...

Russia's military-political leadership made the decision to reform the reserve component back three years ago. During the time that has passed, a reserve command element appeared in every military district that is responsible not only for the call-up of citizens from the reserve and mobilization of military units, but also for their peacetime combat training as well as for keeping arms and military equipment designated for transfer to the "partisans" in serviceable condition....

...According to VPK information, the condition of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and other military equipment was deemed satisfactory on the whole, but motor vehicles proved to be largely a "problem asset." Although all equipment planned for deployment was transferred to reservists in the prescribed time, the condition of the motor vehicle fleet leaves much to be desired....

...It should be noted that one more very important element was rehearsed during the exercise -- coordination with the Federal Service of National Guard Troops....

...The newly created mobilization system is operating. At the same time, specific problems have been identified, so the military department has something on which to work.

Protecting Russian Air Defense Systems

OE Watch Commentary: While significant developments have been made within the Russian Air Force over the past decade, Russian military leaders are well aware of their relative airpower disparity vis-à-vis the US and NATO. Depending upon the source, NATO and the US outnumber Russian military air assets by a factor of at least four to one. To offset this disadvantage, Russian military planners have invested heavily into creating robust air defense (AD) systems. Protecting these AD assets from a possible attack remains a high defense priority. The brief accompany excerpt describes the development of new "special canisters" which can "defend mobile command posts, air defense complexes, radar sites, and other items with complex electronic filling from detection by spy satellites, reconnaissance aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles" by blocking unintentional electromagnetic emissions which emerge during the operation of electronic equipment.

According to the article, production of protective canisters for Russia's most advanced AD systems, the S-400 and S-500, has already begun, while the rest are undergoing testing. Like the Club-K Kalibre missile system, these "stealth canisters are no different than ordinary motor vehicle box vans." Due to "a special coating on their walls…which impedes the dissemination of electromagnetic emissions," pilots and satellites will allegedly be unable to detect these targets. The excerpt also points out that the developers have used a special coating and filters to protect the health of those operating equipment within these new canisters. While the development of such a protective system might fall into the realm of "*maskirovka*" (a set of measures aimed at misleading the enemy), such deception remains a key element of Russia's asymmetric military reform. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"In outward appearance, the 'Stealth' canisters are no different than ordinary motor vehicle box vans…"

S-400 Triumf Air Defense System.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: Aleksey Ramm, "Комплексы С-400 и С-500 сделают невидимыми для авиаразведки противника: В этом году армия получит новейшие системы маскировки оборудования" [They Will Make S-400 and S-500 Complexes Invisible to Enemy Reconnaissance Aircraft: The Army Will Receive the Latest Equipment Camouflage Systems This Year], *Izvestiya Online*,14 June 2016. http://izvestia.ru/news/617785

The Russian defense department has ordered special canisters, which are capable of defending mobile command posts, air defense complexes, radar sites, and other items with complex electronic filling from detection by spy satellites, reconnaissance aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles, which are equipped with reconnaissance complexes, which detect unintentional electromagnetic emissions, which emerge during the operation of electronic equipment.

"This year we plan to obtain canisters, which are designated, in particular, for the latest air defense missile and missile defense systems, including the S-500," a Russian military department spokesman, who is familiar with the situation, told Izvestiya.

A spokesman of the domestic defense industrial complex, which is involved with the development of electronic warfare systems, pointed out that the problem of the defense of complex electronic systems from hostile reconnaissance looms large for Russia at the present time….

…A Russian military department spokesman told Izvestiya that the Ministry of Defense opened the work on the development of the "Stealth" canister already several years ago.

"We are talking about series production canisters of varying length and weight, which are being installed both on motor vehicle chassis and also being loaded onto trucks and trains. At the present time, a portion of the canisters is being series produced, but the rest are undergoing testing. Only equipment will be in some canisters and personnel will also be able to work in some of them," the publication's interlocutor explained. In the words of the Ministry of Defense spokesman, first of all communications systems, radars, electronic warfare complexes and command posts will be transferred to the new "Stealth" canisters.

In outward appearance, the "Stealth" canisters are no different than ordinary motor vehicle box vans, as motor vehicle drivers also call them – "truck cabs", and also mobile canisters, but a special coating is on their walls, and also equipment, which impedes the dissemination of electromagnetic emissions.

"Yes, the screening technologies have been known for a long time. But it is impossible to simply hide within the emissions, by way of illustration of an S-400 radar's electrical equipment. It will interfere with the operation of electronic systems and can be lethal for people under certain conditions. Therefore, in order to achieve the needed effect, we need to combine the special coating and filters," a Russian defense industrial complex spokesman explained….

Russia's Serbian Ally

OE Watch Commentary: Increased tensions between Russia and NATO have reverberated in the Balkans, and especially within Serbia. Over the past decade officials in Belgrade have tried to balance their traditional ties with Russia with continuing to pursue greater integration within Europe. Serbian politicians now appear to be tilting toward Moscow. For instance, even though it pledged respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, Serbia elected not to participate in the Western sanction regime against Russia after its annexation of Crimea and military involvement in SE Ukraine. In return, Russian leaders have fostered a closer and more generous relationship with Serbia. As the accompanying excerpts from Serbian sources indicate, the Kremlin's efforts appear to be paying off.

Shortly after his conservative Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won nearly half of the votes in April parliamentary elections, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic visited Russian leaders in the Kremlin. As the first excerpt points out, during his visit Vucic and Putin discussed "state-of-the-art armament" for Serbia, to include acquiring the S-300 missile system, as well as Russian MI-24 transport-cum-combat helicopter gunships. The article claims that the two leaders reached agreement "about Russian assistance to the Serbian Army, so that sophisticated missiles will be arriving in our country." It goes on to quote a Serbian diplomat who recommends a "full partnership with Russia should be established as soon as possible in order that we should protect ourselves against international threats." This diplomat suggests that having Russia a close ally will presumably allow Serbia to regain control of Kosovo.

The second excerpt elaborates as to how the Kremlin perceives and shares with its Serbian counterparts the "international threats" they are facing. According to this source, the Russian leadership believes that NATO is preparing to create unrest in Serbia and in the wider region. It goes on to allege that "NATO's ultimate goal is to "install an obedient pro-Western regime in Belgrade that would sever all ties with Russia." To prevent such a maneuver, "President Putin ordered an emergency plan for help to Serbia," thereby preventing the spread of another color revolution. In the event of political turmoil, Russia could possibly channel assistance to Serbia through the Russian-Serbian Humanitarian Center, which opened in 2012 in Nis. This Russian-operated center is designed to provide humanitarian emergency response to Serbia and other Balkan states.

Over the past several years (some would say centuries) the Kremlin leadership has worked hard to foster fraternal relations with Serbia. It has provided considerable economic, diplomatic, cultural and military support to its traditional allies in Belgrade. With regard to foreign policy, the Serbian government claims that the country seeks closer integration with the EU, while still maintaining close ties with Russia. However, as the EU has come under greater stress, it appears that Serbia may now be turning more toward Russia. Russia's cultivation and strengthening of a close Serbian ally could have a profound influence upon the future of both Balkan and European security. . **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"Our source said that NATO's ultimate goal was to "install an obedient pro-Western regime in Belgrade that would sever all ties with Russia."

Source: Marija Ilic, "Putin To Give Us Mighty Missiles!" *Srpski Telegraf* , 27 May 2016.

Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic met in Moscow yesterday with one of the world's most powerful leaders, Vladimir Putin, and, according to Srpski Telegraf's information, the two of them discussed state-of-the-art armament! Agreement was reached about Russian assistance to the Serbian Army, so that sophisticated missiles will be arriving in our country. They also discussed current political topics and the Russian president congratulated Vucic on his election victory.

According to our information, negotiations are under way on acquiring the S-300 missile system, which our army has been coveting for inclusion in its arsenals for years. It is believed that, in addition to this system, the sky over our country will be protected by other modern weapons from the air defense arsenals as well, so that Belgrade will also be getting Russian MI-24 transport-cum-combat helicopter gunships….

...The importance of Vucic's visit to Moscow is affirmed by diplomat Vladislav Jovanovic, who tells Srpski Telegraf that full partnership with Russia should be established as soon as possible in order that we should protect ourselves against international threats. "In recent years, our country has been inclining toward improving relations with Western officials. This visit is important in that it will strengthen relations with Moscow, which have been neglected. The Russians are a powerful ally for the preservation of our K-M [Kosovo-Metohija] territory and we must not lose their support," Jovanovic says.

Vucic was received in the Russian president's office at the highest level with all state honors and the two of them spent hours in talks behind closed doors, discussing burning global problems as well as the domestic situation….The Serbian prime minister responded with nothing but words of praise.

"Relations with the Russian Federation mean a lot to us. We particularly value your personal contribution to the promotion of relations between our countries and the strengthening of relations in all areas. It is our duty and our privilege to do everything for relations with Moscow to develop in all directions, in both economics and politics," Vucic told Putin.

(continued)

Continued: Russia's Serbian Ally

"Our source said that NATO's ultimate goal was to "install an obedient pro-Western regime in Belgrade that would sever all ties with Russia."

Source: "Putin's Dramatic Warning: NATO Preparing Evil in Serbia," *Informer*, 8 June 2016.

As Informer learns from well-informed diplomatic sources, in late May of this year Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovic Putin included special military and economic help to Serbia as part of his new foreign policy priorities.

The reason for this sudden decision made by the world's most powerful man, is intelligence retrieved by Russian security agents that NATO is preparing to create unrest in Serbia and in the wider region!

According to our sources, Russian secret service agents have briefed the Kremlin about NATO secret plans to cause political turmoil in Serbia, which would lead to large-scale unrest and political upheaval!

Our source said that NATO's ultimate goal was to "install an obedient pro-Western regime in Belgrade that would sever all ties with Russia."

"The plan is very clear; they want to shake up Serbia from its very core so that it would become an obedient slave of the West once again and so that it would impose sanctions against Russia . . . There is serious proof, testimonies and indications confirming the reports of the Russian services. As soon as he realized this, President Putin ordered an emergency plan for help to Serbia. Vladimir Vladimirovic told his closest aides very clearly that Serbia's case is where official Moscow must prove how serious it is and that today in Serbia Russia is really defending itself," our newspaper's well-informed diplomatic source said....

President Putin meets with Serbian Prime Minister, A. Vucic.
Source: Kremlin.ru

Power to the Northern People

OE Watch Commentary: The June 2015 ***OE Watch*** reported the construction of the Akademik Lomonosov with this commentary: "Naval ships dispatched on disaster response and humanitarian relief missions are often hooked up to a city's surviving electrical grid, providing emergency power to aid workers and critical infrastructure in the crisis area. Russia has expanded this concept to provide sustainable nuclear energy in the Arctic using reactor ships. Of the six largest cities north of the Arctic Circle, five of them are Russian. Supplying these occupants with food and fuel is a major (and expensive) logistics concern. Use of a nuclear reactor ship would certainly ease that problem and encourage population migration into the Arctic region. The warming trend in the north creates another justification for keeping the reactor afloat. Melting ice may be of benefit to seasonal navigation, but melting ice also means melting permafrost, and that means that many areas of existing urban settlement could sink into mud. A 1.5° Centigrade rise in average temperature could begin a melt of Siberia's permafrost. Navigation and the economic activities associated with navigation and natural resources extraction depend upon ports and infrastructure north of the Arctic Circle to ensure their safety and efficiency. Building this infrastructure on melting permafrost will create new engineering challenges. It makes a lot of sense not to build a nuclear power plant on permafrost. Rather, a mobile nuclear power plant would facilitate maintenance and repair plus provide a way move a reactor out of harm's way in the event of a major weather event. Naturally, there are concerns about the impact that a nuclear accident could have on the fragile Arctic ecosystem. Reactor ships could also provide power to the Arctic bases that the Russian military is resurrecting and expanding."

The Akademik Lomonosov may deploy ahead of schedule. However, it is not a ship, but rather a large barge. It is named after Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765), who was a gifted multi-disciplinary scholar who founded Moscow State University. The M. L. Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Lomonosov Crater on the moon and the Lomonosov Ridge below the Arctic Ocean are all named after him. His claim to fame in the Arctic is his "ice-breaking" study on the formation of icebergs and the expedition he organized in 1764, (led by Admiral Vasili Chichagov) to find the Northeast Passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by sailing along the northern coast of Siberia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Sergey Momantov, http://sputniknews.com, 7 June 2016 and Alexi Danichev, http://sputniknews.com, 31 May 2016.

Cutting-Edge Russian Floating Nuclear Power Station Undergoes Mooring Tests

Andrew Timonov, the Director of the Department of Information and Public Relations of Rosatom stated: "Back in 2008 we started the construction of the floating nuclear power plant. It can reach the consumer directly. This feature is especially useful in remote areas. It makes no sense to use such a station in the central parts of Russia, where there is a large saturation of roads and infrastructure facilities. The station is convenient for use in the Far East and Far North."

Timonov said that the unit will be deployed to Pevek, after completing the tests. It will be based in a specially equipped marina, with the necessary network infrastructure already setup. "From there the whole city of Pevek on the Chukchi Peninsula will be supplied with electricity. After functioning for 12 years, the power plant will be shipped to Murmansk, where it will undergo repairs for one year. After that the power plant will return to its base and continue to work."

"This is a Russian know-how. Currently, the floating nuclear power unit Akademik Lomonosov is the only object of its type, the world's only mobile nuclear power plant. Many foreign countries have expressed great interest in this innovative project. For example, for an island nation it is more convenient to drag a ready-made energy block, instead of setting up the whole network infrastructure there." In addition, the vessel can be used as a water desalination plant. Its operational life is expected to be 40 years.

Floating nuclear power stations are planned to be used mainly in the Russian Arctic. Five of these will be used by Gazprom for offshore oil and gas field development and for operations on the Kola and Yamal peninsulas. Other locations include Dudinka on the Taymyr Peninsula, Vilyuchinsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula and Pevek on the Chukchi Peninsula. According to Rosatom, 15 countries, including China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Algeria, Namibia, Cape Verde and Argentina, have shown interest in acquiring such power plants.

Russia does not rule out exporting such nuclear platforms. However, Russia plans to export the energy, not vessels, in order to avoid violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty. As a result, Russia-made floating NPPs will be leased or rented. Russia would prefer granting an ex-territorial status to floating NPPs which currently does not comply with the international norms and treaties. Under the status, countries would use energy produced by the vessels while Russia would own all nuclear materials.

More Arctic Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The SA-15 Gauntlet is an all-weather low-to-medium-altitude, short-range surface-to-air missile system designed for engaging airplanes, helicopters, cruise missiles, precision guided munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles and short-range ballistic missiles. It has tracked and wheeled carriers, as well as a shipboard model. It can fire and acquire on the move.

High wind velocity and low temperatures can be a problem for artillery, missile and aviation systems in the Arctic. The Tor design team is addressing this problem and will field test it as early as this fall. Tor is Russian for torus - a surface of revolution generated by revolving a circle in three-dimensional space about an axis coplanar with the circle. A torus is descriptive of the radar system coverage of the Tor's Doppler radar system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

"A new version of the Tor surface-to-air missile system (ZRK) for use in the Arctic will be mounted on an amphibious platform. Testing of the SAM system is to begin in late 2016/early 2017."

Source: Yekaterina Zgirovskaya, http://www.gazeta.ru, 1June 2016.

Tor is Sailing North

According to a developer at the Almaz-Antey VKO [Aerospace Defense] Concern's Izhevsk Kupol Electromechanical Plant, "Since the Tor has never operated in the Arctic it is necessary both to evaluate the work of the module's systems -- inclusive of radar performance -- in the conditions of the Arctic north with its ultralow temperatures, and to undertake regional adaptation."

A source close to the Ministry of Defense pointed out that there is serious work to be done on the system because "at low temperatures equipment frequently starts to malfunction," therefore -- with the rare exception -- practically any equipment "requires adaptation to the Arctic latitudes, particularly complex equipment such as an air defense system fitted with electronics and sensors."

The Uralvagonzavod Corporation is creating an entire family of Arctic-class over-snow and swamp-capability armored vehicles, including armored transporters, SAM systems, multiple-rocket launcher systems, self-propelled artillery mounts, and other combat modules. The corporation will produce vehicles with a carrying capacities from 3 to 30 tons. It is planned to deploy the SAM system on medium and heavy platforms.

Mikhail Khodarenok, an air defense expert, explained that the primary consideration for such an air defense system is the capability to function in an environment of low temperatures and high wind loads. He believes that it is hardly likely to require any fundamentally new characteristics in comparison with existing Tor missiles. "It implies the creation of a work temperature range that the wind cannot wreck, because the wind can reach speeds of up to 30 meters per second.

Insulation is critical: In the north, if you switch off an electric stove (and the vehicle constitutes an iron box) within 10 minutes it will be very cold inside, accordingly we must provide for self-contained systems of heating and lighting. If the system is on alert duty, then some external sources of heat may also be required," Khodarenok said in a conversation with Gazeta.ru.

Viktor Murakhovskiy, an expert in the field of armaments and military equipment, emphasizes that, to comply with Defense Ministry requirements, Arctic-class equipment must function robustly and consistently with full operability to -55 Celsius [-67 Degrees Fahrenheit].

The Tor-M2U short-range tactical air defense system is in service with Russia's battlefield air defense. The all-weather Tor-M2E SAM system can be deployed within three minutes and can engage aerodynamic targets traveling at up to 700 meters per second at distances between one and 12 kilometers at altitudes between 0.1 and 10 kilometers. It can reach cruise missiles, guided bombs, and UAVs from distances between 1.5 and 7 kilometers at altitudes between 0.05 and 6 kilometers. The Tor-M2 is capable of firing simultaneously at four targets and guiding up to eight missiles. The Tor-M2 comes in two types, tracked and wheeled; the Tor-M2K is mounted on a Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant chassis.

Coastal Defense Conference Held in Arctic

"The primary objective of the training conference is to develop a commanders' uniform approach to command and control of their subunits under various climatic and terrain conditions."

OE Watch Commentary: The 200th Separated Motorized Rifle Brigade got more than the usual amount of rubberneckers in June. The Northern Fleet hosted the annual training methods conference for Russian Coastal Defense Troops. The 200th provided a live fire training exercise for the attendees to observe. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Baltic Fleet
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/2a/Sleeve_Insignia_of_the_Russian_Baltic_Fleet.svg/2000px-Sleeve_Insignia_of_the_Russian_Baltic_Fleet.svg.png

Source: Aleksandr Panyushkin, *Na Strazhe Zapolyarya*, 17 June 2016.

The Northern Fleet hosted a training methods conference for the command personnel of Russian Federation Coastal Defense Troops. It took place under the direction of RF [Russian Federation] Coastal Defense Troops Commander, Lieutenant General Aleksandr Kolpachenko. Participating in the conference were Coastal Defense Troops command personnel as well as commanders of coastal defense missile-gun formations of the Northern, Pacific, Black Sea, and Baltic fleets and the Caspian Sea Flotilla.

Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Proskurov, acting deputy commander of the Northern Fleet Pechenga Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, said that the first phase of an integrated tactical weapons training session was underway in a battalion task force.

This indeed is an impressive spectacle. In the training session commanders had an opportunity to view the performance of combat training under Northern conditions. Although it was summer on the calendar, you could see your breath and the cold, wind, and rain left unforgettable impressions.

"Special attention was given to the maintenance of arms and military equipment," Lt Col Proskurov stated, "both under conditions of the polar day as well as the polar night. We are training personnel for independent mobile actions away from supply bases and to conduct fire and attacks with various weapons in the absence of visible reference points. Our climate requires special training. Rely on no one but yourself. Every soldier, platoon, and company must be mobile."

Last year, a similar training conference was held in the Black Sea Fleet. The difference in locale is striking. Black Sea Fleet Separate Naval Infantry Brigade Commander Colonel Dmitriy Uskov stated:

"At the beginning of training conference activities there were differences of opinion on carrying out particular actions and tactical and weapons training. Now everything has been clarified and smoothed out during the training conference, and subsequently we will apply what we have learned. All of us need to learn and learn. But this is correct, because how else can we fight well?

Russian Interests in the Arctic

"Over the past years, large deposits of oil (up to 30 percent of global reserves) and gas (up to 13 percent), diamonds, platinum, gold, tin, manganese, nickel, and lead have been found in the Arctic. According to some estimates, the total value of minerals in Russia's Arctic zone may reach $30 trillion. In general, the Arctic provides 11 percent of Russia's national revenue."

OE Watch Commentary: A recent June 2016 article on the Arctic provided one of the best overviews of the region in terms of military equipment that is available "all in one place." The article begins with a look at the importance of the region from an oil and mineral perspective, then proceeds to look at the Arctic territory from the perspective of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The author notes that appeals to Russia to provide cost-free access to the Northern Sea Route or to simply share Russia's resources in the area have become more frequent.

The discussion proceeds to an overview of the Western and Eastern Military Districts, and the role of the Northern Fleet in the North Joint Strategic Command. At that point, the remaining seven pages of a nine-page article are devoted to military equipment in the region. Airfields, one super-secret department, aircraft, air defense, naval basing locations, unit designations, ship types, unmanned aerial vehicles, and weaponry of all types are discussed. For the purposes of this summary, only part of the Navy's equipment is cited below. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Dmitriy Boltenkov, "A Cold Hotspot," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer (Military Industrial Courier)*, 29 June 2016.

At the present time, the Northern Fleet includes the following main units and formations. The Northern Fleet's submarine forces are, primarily, four submarine divisions: the 7th in Vidyayevo, the 11th in Zaozersk, and the 24th and 31st in Gadzhiyevo. The fleet's main surface strike formation is the 43rd missile ships division in Severomorsk. The Kola Flotilla of various force organizations comprises, as a brigade: the 7th – surface ships, the 14th – antisubmarine warfare [ASW] and 121st -- amphibious warfare ships, the 161st -- submarines, and the 536th -- coastal missile brigade. Belomorsk Naval Base subunits are based at Severodvinsk. They are brigades of ships under repair (the 16th) and of submarines under construction and repair (the 336th), as well as also the 43rd ship divizion formation for water area protection.

In all, the Northern Fleet has in its inventory has 24 nuclear-powered submarines (of which seven are ballistic-missile armed and four are cruise-missile armed) and six diesel-powered submarines. There are also six small ASW and three small missile ships, nine minesweepers, and four amphibious warfare ships. The combat and rear services support units include reconnaissance, electronic warfare, communications, and surveillance subunits. The fleet's rear services include a logistical support center, a detachment of support vessels, an emergency rescue service, and other units, including a hydrographic unit.

The previously super-secret GUGI department [Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research] has become involved in activities in the interests of the economy. For example, a submarine known as "Losharik" took part in the "Arktika-2012" expedition, assisting in underwater drilling operations on the Lomonosov and Mendeleyev Ridges. The operations were being conducted for the purpose of expanding the borders of Russia's continental shelf and, correspondingly, of enlarging its economic zone.

The most visible realization of any arms program is, indisputably, the building of ships and submarines. In this respect, both the Northern Fleet and the Joint Command of Troops and Forces are awaiting substantial renewals, albeit not as rapid as one would wish.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US government.

Attack on Istanbul Airport: ISIS's Evolving Strategy and Implications

Editor's Note: This essay was composed prior to the events of 15 July. Nevertheless, this issue remains relevant and important.

Source: http://abcnews.go.com/International/explosions-reported-istanbul-airport/story?id=40197077

On 28 June militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) conducted three simultaneous suicide attacks at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, killing 45 and wounding some 240 others. While ISIS has targeted Turkey in the past, this particular attack calls for a detailed analysis for its target selection, timing, links to regional developments, and its implications for the region and the future. Turkish security analysts have examined the attack from many angles, providing local insight and perspectives. Their insights, as presented here from passages from the Turkish media, add to the debate on ISIS's tactics, goals, and regional and global strategies.

The attack raised many questions in Turkey: Why is ISIS targeting a Muslim country, one in which it finds a lot of sympathizers? What are ISIS's strategic goals in Turkey? Why does ISIS never claim responsibility for its attacks on Turkey? What implications will this attack have for Turkey's position on Syria? Will Turkey change its threat priorities and place ISIS above its historical number one security threat, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)? What are ISIS's plans for the future? How will it react as it loses more and more territory in Iraq and Syria?

The Target: Ataturk Airport

The attacks happened at the international terminal of Istanbul's Atatürk Airport, a significant transit hub. This is the third busiest airport in Europe, and considered one of the most secure. In this sense, the attack was targeting Turkey's claims to being an international hub, its economy, its tourism industry, and the business of its domestic airline--Turkish Airlines. However, the fact that the international terminal was selected also suggests targeting Western citizens for their governments' role in fighting ISIS and sending others a message to deter further acts against the group.

Source: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36712557

Two of the attackers used machine guns to create chaos and get through the first layer of security, immediately at the entrance of the terminal, after which they then blew themselves up. Another blew himself up in a car park outside the terminal. The fact that they shot their way through security raises the question of whether such an attack could have been prevented at all. However, despite the tough security at the airport and the impossibility of preventing attackers shooting their way through, many in the Turkish press still debated the presence of a vulnerability. Cevat Önes, the former Assistant Undersecretary to the Turkish Central Intelligence Agency, asked during a Turkish debate on the issue, "What about the fact that they were able to organize themselves in Turkey long enough to plan and conduct such an attack; even after having attacked Turkey before? That is where the vulnerability is. There is an intelligence failure. If ISIS has the organizational capability to strike such a strategic target, then there is a policy problem."[1] Thus the bigger problem, as Turkish expert Aykan Erdemir writes, is that "ISIS seems to be entrenched in Turkey – it has cells, militants, sympathizer base, and it has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to strike at targets across Turkey – in the Southeast, in the nation's capital Ankara, and in different quarters of Istanbul."[2]

This was a more lethal and destructive attack compared to previous ISIS attacks on Turkey. In addition, the target was significantly different than previous ones. Earlier attacks were directed towards certain groups and targeted ethnic, political, ideological and sectarian opposition segments of society.[3] This time, however, the attack on this specific target aimed to rattle the entire Turkish people, its government and its policies. Turkish analysts are pointing to this as a sign that the group is intensifying its attacks in the country. As respected journalist Fehim Taştekin writes,

> IS shifted its target selection, compared with earlier attacks. At Suruc, the targets were leftist youths helping in Kobani [Syria]. In Ankara, it targeted the parties and unions criticizing the government's strategy against the Kurds.... Then there were attacks in Istanbul's Sultanahmet and Taksim neighborhoods, when foreigners were targeted. [The attack] in Istanbul tells us that IS has shifted to attacks that will rattle Turkey in its entirety.[4]

(continued)

The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the US government.

Continued: Attack on Istanbul Airport: ISIS's Evolving Strategy and Implications

The Timing

The timing was significant in three ways. First, it came on the second anniversary of ISIS's declaration of the so-called Caliphate. Second, it came at a time when ISIS is under pressure in Iraq and Syria. According to estimates, as of May 2016 the group had lost 45% of its territory in Iraq and 20% of its previously controlled territory in Syria.[5] Third, it came at a time when the Turkish government is taking steps to normalize its relations with Israel and Russia and do more to seal the border and crack down on ISIS cells inside Turkey.[6] As respected Turkish security analyst Metin Gürcan notes,

> It appears that this attack....[was] conducted on the second anniversary of the declaration of the (so-called) Caliphate, to scare Ankara at a time when Ankara is making sharp U-turns in its foreign policy choices, in its relations with Israel and Russia. With this attack, ISIS is sending the message to Ankara, 'Be careful. If you give me a hard time, you will pay a heavy price.' And it is sending the message to coalition forces, which are squeezing it in both Iraq and Syria that, 'I am still strong and I can disrupt your game with sensational attacks outside the region.'[7]

Why Did ISIS Target Turkey?

Turkey is different than other Western countries for ISIS, because it has a border with ISIS. ISIS attacks in Turkey have different strategic goals than those targeting the West.[8] Turkish analysts point to three main reasons why the group is targeting Turkey.

The first is the increasing Turkish support for the anti-ISIS coalition. As of July 2015 Ankara opened its Incirlik and other air bases to American planes targeting ISIS camps in Iraq and Syria. Ömer Taspinar, a Turkish expert, notes that in the last year the AKP government has been cooperating more closely with the U.S. on antiterrorism and intelligence.[9] ISIS has also been directly confronted by the Turkish military since early 2016, when the group began shelling the Turkish town of Kilis and the Turkish Armed Forces retaliated with long-range rockets.[10]

In July 2015, Turkey opened its air bases to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS.

Source: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36712557

The second factor is the fact that the group is losing territory and prestige in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq there is increasing pressure on ISIS in Fallujah, and in Syria the group is currently about to lose Mambij, paving the way for the fall of Raqqa, its self-declared capital, as well. This would be a turning point both for the Syrian civil war and for the fight against ISIS. Thus, at this critical junction ISIS is trying to deter Turkey from further cooperation with the anti-ISIS coalition in Syria.[11] Foreign policy journalist Cengiz Çandar writes,

> Hitting Turkey devastatingly could have several benefits for IS. One is to deter Ankara from more effective cooperation in the anti-IS coalition, which could also serve as a deterrent for a number of Western countries that might see that IS terror is not waning and therefore would not like to invite it to their own territory. It is also a very strong signal to potential IS recruits all over the world that the organization, despite some losses in Iraq and Syria, is still alive and kicking.[12]

A third possible reason for attacking Turkey is the fact that it is a Muslim country which abolished the Caliphate, making it the biggest "apostate" in the eyes of ISIS. As prominent journalist Mustafa Akyol notes, "IS had upped the rhetoric against Ankara, condemning Turkey as an 'apostate state' and vowing to 'conquer' Istanbul. Since then, as the US-Turkish cooperation against IS continued .... IS' perception of Turkey as an enemy only deepened."[13]

ISIS's M.O. in Turkey: Not Claiming Responsibility For attacks

Although ISIS loudly claims its attacks in Europe, it does not claim responsibility for any of its attacks in Turkey. This was also the case with this latest attack. Analysts suggest that the likely reason for this is that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country, and this makes it harder to justify such an attack as part of a campaign against "infidels." Therefore, ISIS may be trying to avoid the resentment that may arise from killing fellow Sunni Muslims.[14] Writing for the ***Hürriyet*** daily, Tolga Taniş claims,

> First, the fact that Turkey is a Muslim country makes ISIS act differently on Turkey, in the eyes of its followers. They do not want to appear to be 'deliberately killing Muslims.' Second, ISIS's geographic proximity to Turkey, makes Turkey different. However, it should be noted that, following Turkey's decision to open Incirlik base to coalition aircraft, pro-ISIS accounts on social media noted that 'Turkey opened war against the Caliphate.'[15]

(continued)

Continued: Attack on Istanbul Airport: ISIS's Evolving Strategy and Implications

The Use of Central Asians

According to media reports, three attackers from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Dagestan (the Russian Federation) entered Turkey on 25 May, went to Istanbul, rented a flat in the Aksaray neighborhood and prepared for the attack for at least a month.[16] Jamestown analyst Jacob Zenn claims, "...As far as Turkey is concerned, it makes sense for ISIS to deploy [Central Asians] wherever they can blend in; and easily integrate linguistically."[17] Turkish police have identified Ahmet Chatayev, a Chechen terrorist, as the mastermind of the attack.[18] Security expert Metin Gürcan notes that Chatayev started out in Chechnya with al-Qaida, but ended up in Syria with ISIS. Gürcan claims that this points to the convergence of the global networks of al Qaida and ISIS:

> ... the global networks of al Qaida and ISIS are starting to converge. This scary reality is demonstrated by the biography of Ahmet Catayev--the mastermind of the attack on Atatürk Airport, who started out in Chechnya as an al-Qaida member but ended up radicalizing in Syria as an ISIS member. Are ISIS's globalists becoming more like al-Qaida; or is al Qaida becoming more like ISIS, or is a new MUTANT being born from the merger of these two? It is too early to answer this question, but when al-Qaida's ways of doing things and its global network is merged with ISIS's military capabilities and innovative capacity, it is certain that we will lose sleep.[19]

Turkey's Threat Priorities: The PKK versus ISIS

An important aspect of the Syrian crisis that Turkish officials say directly threatens Turkish national security is the formation of an autonomous Kurdish region in northeastern Syria, adjacent to the one in Iraq. Turkey has long feared that such a scenario would embolden efforts for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey or lead to similar territorial claims among its own Kurds. Turkey perceives this as a threat to its territorial integrity, given that almost half of the total Kurdish population of 30 million lives in Turkey.[20]

Furthermore, the most powerful Kurdish group in Syria is the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which Turkey considers to be the Syrian contingent of the outlawed PKK. The PKK has raised its attacks on Turkey to unprecedented levels since July 2015. Thus, Turkey's position on Syria has been defined by preventing the PYD from achieving territorial continuity along a part of its 560 mile border with Syria.[21] Journalist Cengiz Çandar writes,

> The pro-Sunni Islamist rule of the AKP under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is in an increasingly sectarian fight in Syria. Its priority is to thwart Kurdish gains under the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and [its armed wing] People's Protection Units (YPG) against IS in the Rojava region [in northeastern Syria], a de facto autonomous region of Syria.[22]

With the latest attack, many have questioned whether Turkey is at a strategic juncture and whether it is time for it to rearrange its threat priorities. Journalist Ismet Berkan writes,

> On the issue of Syria, the PKK does not need to be forgotten; the biggest source of the horrific terror we have been experiencing in the last year is the PKK; while bombs were exploding at the airport in Istanbul, the PKK also exploded one in Van. But the ISIS threat has to take a higher priority than before; and the fight against the PKK should not prevent [Turkey] from doing all it can to root [ISIS] out of the Turkish border region.[23]

Similarly Mustafa Akyol claims, "And if we Turks had any delusion of seeing IS as somehow less dangerous than the PKK, then we must have been woken by the ferocious attack on the Ataturk airport."[24] Fehim Taştekin echoes this and calls for a change in Turkey's policy on Syria, writing, "These direct attacks against Turkey by IS point to the imperative of making changes in Ankara's policy in Syria."[25]

The Future of ISIS

Many Turkish analysts claim that even if ISIS is cleaned out from Iraq and Syria, it will continue to exist ideologically. They argue that sleeper cells will continue to exist and the countries closest to their locations will be targeted. Turkey in particular will be targeted because ISIS has already established networks in the country and learned about war and terror tactics. Thus, analysts argue that Turkey should expect more attacks from ISIS. Many also claim that as ISIS loses more and more territory in Iraq and Syria, it will transition from a structure seeking statehood into a more traditional terrorist organization. Metin Gürcan makes an ominous prognosis regarding ISIS's future:

> As ISIS is squeezed in Iraq and Syria, it is fragmenting into a 'Globalist' and a 'Localist' segment. Let me tell you what will happen. By the end of 2016, ISIS will split up into two. The 'localists' will retreat into the Sunni population within city centers in Syria and Iraq where Sunnis are dominant and continue their armed 'struggle' on a smaller scale. The 'globalists' will merge with Al-Qaida and give birth to a new MUTANT global radical Salafi terror wave which will define the next 10 years.[26]

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Continued: Attack on Istanbul Airport: ISIS's Evolving Strategy and Implications

In another piece, Gürcan warns,

> As ISIS is cornered in Iraq and Syria, the 'globalist' strain within ISIS, who are led mainly by militants from the Caucasus, Central Asia and Turkey and who think that the fight should be spread out into the region and then the world, is getting stronger. Globally, the fight between al-Qaida's Syria arm, Nusra, and ISIS in Syria is becoming less and less meaningful, and the global networks of al Qaida and ISIS are starting to converge.[27]

The latest attack by ISIS in Turkey demonstrates that Turkey and the region will be directly affected by how the Syrian crisis unfolds for several years to come, because they will have to co-exist with the resulting structure. Turkey may be left with the presence of ISIS-affiliated or like-minded groups on its longest border or ideological sympathizers and sleeper cells inside its borders. These are compounded by greater global dangers, involving such groups' potential acquisition of dangerous weapons, which will have consequences far beyond he Middle East.

ISIS attacks targeting Turkey:

11 May 2013: Twin car bombs exploded in Reyhanli, killing over 50 and injuring hundreds.

20 March 2014: Three ISIS militants attacked and killed a Turkish soldier and policeman in Nigde province.

17 June 2014: ISIS captured the Turkish consulate in Mosul, Iraq, and held its 49-person staff hostage until September 2014.

5 June 2015: ISIS bombed a pro-Kurdish pre-election rally in Diyarbakir, killing five.

20 July 2015: An ISIS attack killed 34 and injured 100 people in Suruc.

10 October 2015: Over 100 people were killed and 500 injured after bombs went off near Ankara's railway station, targeting a rally opposing Turkey's conflict with its own Kurdish population.

12 January 2016: An ISIS suicide bomber attack on Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul killed 13 foreign tourists in the heart of Turkey's tourist district.

19 March 2016: An ISIS attack killed four foreign tourists and injured 39 in Taksim, Istanbul.

1 May 2016: 3 policeman were killed and 23 injured outside a police headquarters in Gaziantep.

28 June 2016: ISIS suicide attackers killed 45 and injured 240 at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport.

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