

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



Volume 6
Issue #3
March 2016

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

SPECIAL ESSAY:

Strategic Landpower: The View from China

**TURKEY**

- 3 Russian-Turkish Tensions Peak in Syria
- 4 Mass Refugee Flow from Aleppo Expected into Turkey
- 5 Turkey and Saudi Arabia Expand Military Ties

MIDDLE EAST

- 6 Iran: Strengthening the Basij
- 7 Iran: Basij Recruiting for Syria Fight
- 8 Iran Tests New Cruise Missile
- 9 Nile River Dam Continues to Dominate Egyptian-Ethiopian Relations
- 10 Power Struggles in Libya's National Army
- 11 Russia in Syria: 4th Corps and Desert Falcons

AFRICA

- 13 Nigeria's Other Conflict: Violence Flares Again in Oil Rich Niger Delta Region
- 14 Nigeria Looks to Nollywood to Improve Civil-Military Relations
- 15 Jihadist Attacks and Negotiating Sharia in Mali
- 16 African Countries Continue to Consider AU Intervention into Burundi
- 18 Militancy in Senegal: Complacency or Time for Concern?
- 19 Nigeria Restoring Confidence in Multi-National Joint Task Force

LATIN AMERICA

- 20 New Twist in Coups — Making a Military Oil Company
- 21 How Bad Can Venezuela Get?
- 22 ELN: The Other Colombian Guerrilla
- 22 Bolivian Referendum Goes against Evo
- 23 Guatemala's Water Contamination Problem
- 23 Violence Levels in El Salvador Fuel Migration Surge in Costa Rica

- 24 Argentina's Russia Ties Assessed as Macri Takes Power
- 25 Mexican Congress Considering Increased Authorities for Military
- 26 Kidnapping Migrants Rampant in Tamaulipas

INDO-PACIFIC ASIA

- 27 Are Returning Southeast Asian ISIS Fighters Fueling a JI Resurgence?
- 28 Local Analyst Sees Possibility that Islamic State Combatants May Regroup in the Philippines
- 29 Can the New Lao People's Revolutionary Party Leader Handle the Pressure?
- 30 Even After the Jakarta Attacks, there is Potential for More Lone Terrorist Cells
- 31 Islamic State Attack in Jakarta May Lead to Counterterrorism Cooperation with China

CHINA, KOREA, JAPAN

- 32 China's Space Station Quest: Making Progress
- 32 PLA Marine Corps Training for All-Terrain Combat Capability
- 33 Xi Announces Establishment of Five PLA Theater Commands; "Historic Progress of the PLA in Building its Joint Operational System."
- 34 First Commander of the PLA Army Interviewed
- 35 Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to Change Asian Transport Connectivity

EUROPE

- 36 Bosnian Police Receive Russian Training

CENTRAL ASIA

- 37 Gauging Russia's Focus on Tajikistan
- 38 Remembering the Tajik Civil War in Kazakhstan
- 39 Small Arms in Kyrgyzstan

RUSSIA, UKRAINE

- 40 Death of GRU Chief Spotlights GRU-FSB Rivalry, and Way Ahead
- 42 Electronic Warfare: Russia's Next Generation, and Beyond
- 44 Noncommissioned Officers in the Russian Armed Forces
- 47 Helicopter Mine Development Furthers Russian Area Denial Capabilities
- 48 The Evolution of the Russian Military Police System
- 50 The Role of Radio-Technical Troops in the Russian Armed Forces
- 53 Ukrainian Politician on Russia, Syria, and the West
- 53 Lavrov on Major World Challenges in 2016 and on Russia in Ukraine
- 55 Russia's History in the Caucasus: Repetition of Same Mistakes?
- 56 Ottawa Stands Firm on Support for Ukraine
- 57 Benefits for Russian Volunteers who Fought in Ukraine?
- 58 Rogozin's January Visit to Serbia
- 59 Russian Military Housing-Significant Progress
- 60 Formation of the 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army
- 60 China Wants to Team Up with Russia in an Arctic Expedition
- 61 Beefing Up the Rescue and Salvage Support on the Northern Sea Route
- 62 Ruslan the Cold Warrior
- 63 Still More Arctic Construction in 2016
- 63 What Do You Do when the Snowmobile Runs Out of Gas?
- 64 Russia Has Satellite Problems

SPECIAL ESSAY

- 65 Strategic Landpower: The View from China

The Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is part of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G-2's Operational Environment Enterprise and for 30 years has conducted open source research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues, emphasizing those topics that are understudied or unconsidered.

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

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

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

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

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

Contact FMSO at:

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

ON THE COVER: PLA emblem, surrounded by (clockwise from upper-right) Chengdu J-10 fighter, PLA honor guard, and a 'Type 98' tank.

Sources: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_Emblem_PLA.svg; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J-10a_zhas.png; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Honor_guard_of_the_People%27s_Liberation_Army.jpg; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Type_98_tank_raised_view.jpg

OEWATCH

Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

Volume 6 | Issue 3

March | 2016

Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Turkey	Karen Kaya
Middle East	Kevin Freese Michael Rubin Lucas Winter
Africa	Robert Feldman Jason Warner Jacob Zenn
Latin America	Geoff Demarest Brenda Fiegel Kevin Freese
Indo-Pacific Asia	Cindy Hurst Anthony Ortiz Jacob Zenn
China, Korea, Japan	Cindy Hurst Christopher Marsh Tim Thomas Blaise Zandoli
Europe	Alyssa Jackson
Central Asia	Matthew Stein
Russia, Ukraine	Chuck Bartles Anna Borshchevskaya Liam Burnside Ray Finch Les Grau Tim Thomas

Editor-in-Chief
Editors

Design Editor

Tom Wilhelm
Ray Finch
Harry Orenstein
Keith French

Russian-Turkish Tensions Peak in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's involvement in Syria has complicated Turkey's plans in the region. Prior to Russia's involvement Turkey was working to establish a "safe-zone" along the Turkish-Syrian border to drive ISIS out of the 68-mile area west of the Euphrates River and into Aleppo Province. Turkey hoped to stop Kurdish expansion in the north of Syria, particularly to prevent the Syrian Kurds from achieving territorial continuity among their three cantons in northwestern Syria. In addition, it was hoping that the Syrian opposition would capture Aleppo, thereby weakening the Assad regime. However, Russian actions in Syria have upended these plans and brought Turkish-Russian tensions to an all-time high. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss these increasing tensions.

The first accompanying passage notes that relations between Russia and Turkey have been deteriorating since 24 November 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russian jet which had violated its airspace. It notes that tensions have escalated dramatically since then, and are now at a point which includes the risk of armed conflict between the sides in Syria. The passage notes that Russian air strikes in Syria have helped the Syrian Kurdish group YPG (the armed wing of the Democratic Union Party, or PYD), which Turkey considers to be an affiliate of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). With the help of Russian airstrikes this group has made gains along the Turkish border and even fired into Turkey, to which the Turkish military has responded by shelling them.

The second passage notes that this shelling has prompted criticism from Russian officials, who have been stating that Turkey supports jihadi and other terrorist groups in Syria. Similarly, the passage discusses the Turkish prime minister's comments regarding Russia, in which he notes that Syria, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine are all facing threats to their territorial integrity due to Russian aggression. The third passage, by noted foreign policy expert Soli Özel, points out that Russia finds it unacceptable for Turkey to have any say in the future of Syria and wants to minimize Ankara's influence on the future of Syria. He claims that this is why Russia is supporting the YPG there. In the fourth passage Özel claims that Russia is trying to pull Turkey into a trap by forcing Ankara into a ground operation in Syria.

Russia's increasing military presence in countries surrounding Turkey, along with its bases in the Black Sea and presence in the Mediterranean, suggests that Russia has encircled Turkey from both the north and the south, creating concern in Turkey that tensions will continue to escalate. In light of these developments, it appears that the era in which the two countries' relations were defined by "compartmentalization" (working together on mutual interests despite differences on issues such as Syria, Egypt, Ukraine) is over. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).**



Source: "Türkiye-Rusya gerilimi NATO'yu ürkektirdi" (Turkey-Russia tensions have made NATO nervous), *Zaman.com.tr*, 18 February 2016, http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_turkiye-rusya-gerilimi-natoyu-urkektirdi_2347539.html

"Relations between Turkey and Russia have been deteriorating ever since Turkey downed a Russian jet on 24 November [2015] saying that it violated Turkish airspace. The crisis, which has been escalating due to statements coming from both Ankara and Moscow, have reached a point that risks the two countries fighting in Syria. The YPG, which is an affiliate of the PKK, has gained new territory near the Turkish border thanks to Russian airstrikes, and has started firing into Turkish territory, to which the Turkish Armed Forces have responded by shelling YPG targets."

Source: "ABD'den sakinleşme çağrısı" (U.S. calls for calm), *Al Jazeera.com.tr*, 15 February 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/abdden-sakinlesme-cagrisi>

"Turkey's shelling of YPG targets north of Syria, have prompted criticism from Russia. The Russian Foreign Ministry, who issued a statement today, accused Turkey of assisting 'new jihadi groups and paid soldiers.' The Russian Foreign Ministry who claimed that Ankara supports 'ISIS and other terrorist organizations' expressed 'their most serious concerns regarding the aggressive acts of the Turkish authorities on their neighbors.' [Turkish] Prime Minister Davutoglu, in a joint statement with his counterpart in Ukraine said, 'The territorial integrity of three countries are under Russian threat; Georgia, Ukraine and Syria. In addition, Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is also under threat due to Russian support to Armenia.'"

Source: Soli Özel, "Savas tehlikesi" (The danger of war), *Haberturk.com.tr*, 17 February 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1196693-savas-tehlikesi>

"[Russia] finds it unacceptable for Turkey to have any say in the future of Syria and wants to minimize Ankara's influence on the future of Syria. This is why it is supporting the PYD/YPG forces there."

Source: Soli Özel, "Oyuna gelmek" (To be played), *Haberturk.com.tr*, 10 February 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1193259-oyuna-gelmek>

"It appears now that Russia is trying to pull Turkey into an even bigger trap. This trap is to force Ankara (who can't send assistance to the groups it supports, and whose access lines to Aleppo have all been cut) into a ground operation in Syria."

Mass Refugee Flow from Aleppo Expected into Turkey

OE Watch Commentary: The battle for Aleppo is sending tens of thousands of refugees fleeing toward Turkey. The country, which has already spent more than \$10 billion on hosting more than 2.5 million refugees, fears the fall of Aleppo will send hundreds of thousands more towards its borders. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the developments in Aleppo and Turkey's fears regarding a new wave of refugees, including statements by the president criticizing the United Nations for not doing enough.

The first passage discusses the developments in Aleppo. It notes that, with the help of Russian air support, the Syrian military has cut off the connection lines between Turkey and the opposition forces in Aleppo. It points out that thousands of refugees are trying to come to the Turkish border town of Kilis. In addition, it quotes Syrian Human Rights Observation Center President Rami Abdurrahman as saying that the Syrian military's control of the supply lines between Turkey and the opposition has dealt a big blow to the opposition: "Within 72 hours, the regime has regained what it had lost in three years. If the rebels lose the last supply line they have, this will mark the beginning of the end of Aleppo." The passage also notes the Turkish prime minister's remarks in which he claims that 60,000-70,000 people are moving toward Turkey from the camps in northern Aleppo.

The last passage points out comments by Turkish President Erdoğan in which he laments the lack of support from the UN. He is quoted as saying that this last wave of refugees is caused mostly by the attacks by Russia and Assad, which he claims are targeting the civilian population. Despite this, he notes that the UN is calling on Turkey instead of taking preventive measures against those who perpetrated these attacks: "This is disingenuous. They are telling us to open our borders... OK, but, UN, what good do you do, what is your duty? How have you supported Turkey, who has spent 10 billion dollars on refugees, until now? ...This is not what the UN was established for." Turkish leaders have repeatedly called for more international aid and support in dealing with the refugee crisis from Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).**

“Due to the air operations in Aleppo, 10 thousand new refugees are waiting at the Turkish border. 60-70 thousand people are moving toward Turkey from the camps in northern Aleppo.”

Source: “Suriye Ordusu Halep, Mülteciler Türkiye Kapısında” (Syrian Army [at the gates of] Aleppo, Refugees [at the gates of] Turkey), *Bianet.org*, 5 February 2016, <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/171826-suriye-ordusu-halep-multeciler-turkiye-kapisinda>

“With the help of Russian air support, the Syrian military has cut off the connection lines between Turkey and opposition [forces] in Aleppo. Thousands of refugees are trying to come to the [Turkish] border town of Kilis. The Syrian Human Rights Observation Center President Rami Abdurrahman said that the Syrian military's control of the supply lines between Turkey and the opposition have dealt a big blow to the opposition. Abdurrahman said “Within 72 hours, the regime has regained what it had lost in three years. If the rebels lose the last supply line they have, this will mark the beginning of the end of Aleppo.”

...
Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, in his press statement following the Syrian Donors Conference, said that in the last one week, Turkey has accepted 10 thousand people fleeing from the Yamadi Camp in North Lazkiya. Davutoglu also noted that...

“Due to the air operations in Aleppo, 10 thousand new refugees are waiting at the Turkish border. 60-70 thousand people are moving toward Turkey from the camps in northern Aleppo.”

Source: “Halep kuşatması: Mülteciler sınır kapısında bekliyor” (The Aleppo offensive: Refugees are waiting at the border gate), *Agos.com.tr*, 5 February 2016, <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/14271/halep-kusatmasi-multeciler-sinir-kapisinda-bekliyor>

“As the Syrian army, with the support of Russian war planes, tries to completely encircle the opposition in Aleppo, thousands of Syrians have been coming to the Turkish border.

Source: “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan BM'ye eleştiri” (President Erdogan criticizes the UN), *TRThaber.net*, 11 February 2016, <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-bmye-elestiri-234942.html>

“Erdoğan, who spoke at the Turkey Young Businessmen's Confederation, called on the UN to call on other nations to help, said the following: “I would like to underline some facts. This wave of refugees is caused mostly by the attacks by Russia and Assad, which target the civilian population. Despite this, the UN is calling on us instead of taking preventive measures against those who perpetrated these attacks. This is disingenuous. They are telling us to open our borders... OK, but, UN, what good do you do, what is your duty? How have you supported Turkey, who has spent 10 billion dollars on refugees, until now? ...This is not what the UN was established for.”

Turkey and Saudi Arabia Expand Military Ties

OE Watch Commentary: Following several high level visits between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the two countries are expanding military ties. They have decided to form a “Strategic Cooperation Council” to coordinate and develop relations in the defense and security fields, as well as in the economic, political spheres. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the significance of this development.

The Turkish prime minister, along with a delegation including the Turkish chief of the General Staff, visited Riyadh in late January 2016. This visit was preceded by Turkish President Erdogan’s visit to Riyadh in December 2015. The first passage notes that the militaries of the two countries are looking for ways to develop bilateral cooperation, with a view to particularly expand military cooperation. The common goal is for the armed forces of the two countries to display a joint position regarding how to respond to regional problems. They are also discussing military exercises and military training cooperation. The passage points out that the increased cooperation between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Saudi military comes at a time when tensions between Iran and the Saudis are high.

The second passage points out that Saudi jets to be used in the fight against ISIS arrived at the Incirlik base in Adana in mid-February. The article claims that this will mark the first time that the Incirlik Base will be used by a non-NATO member. The third passage underlines that Turkey is participating more enthusiastically in the policies of Saudi Arabia, with whom it is establishing increasingly closer ties.

These developments reflect the interests of both countries to establish a strategic partnership and come at a time when the two sides have shown an initiative to achieve greater understanding on several issues with regards to Yemen and Syria. Turkey had also agreed to join the military antiterrorism Islamic coalition that the Saudi Minister of Defense had declared in December 2015. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).**

“[Turkey] is participating more enthusiastically in the policies of Saudi Arabia-- with whom it is establishing increasingly closer ties...”

“...[Saudi Arabian] jets to be used in the fight against DAESH, have arrived at the Incirlik base in Adana. Thus, the Incirlik Base will be used by a non-NATO member for the first time.”



The Turkish Prime Minister Ahmed Davutoglu (L); and the Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud shaking hands with the Turkish Chief of the General Staff Hulusi Akar during their visit to Saudi Arabia in late January 2016..

Source: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/suudilerle-tatbikat-40052331>

Source: “Suudilerle tatbikat” ([Military] exercises with the Saudis), *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 10 February 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/suudilerle-tatbikat-40052331>

“An official gave the following information regarding [the Turkish Chief of the General Staff] General Akar’s visit [to Saudi Arabia]: ‘In the near future, Turkey and Saudi Arabia will establish a ‘High level Strategic Cooperation Council’... The militaries are looking for ways to develop bilateral cooperation. The Chief of the Saudi Arabian General Staff had come to Turkey. Akar’s visit is to reciprocate this. These mutual visits aim to expand military cooperation with Saudi Arabia. The common goal here is for the armed forces of the two countries to display a joint position regarding how to respond to regional problems. In this framework, we are discussing military exercises. Military cooperation will also take place in the ‘training’ field. The increased cooperation between the Turkish Armed Forces and the Saudi military, comes at a time when tensions between Iran and the Saudis are high. Ankara is acting with the possibility that Iran may be uncomfortable with this rapprochement.”

Source: “Suudi Arabistan jetleri Incirlik’te” (Saudi Arabian jets in Incirlik), *Milliyet.com.tr*, 14 February 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/suudi-arabistan-jetleri-incirlik-te-gundem-2194093/>

“The Undersecretary for the Defense Ministry of Saudi Arabia General Ahmed bin Hasan has said that the jets to be used in the fight against DAESH, have arrived at the Incirlik base in Adana. Thus, the Incirlik Base will be used by a non-NATO member for the first time.”

Source: Soli Özel, “Cenevre’den ötesi” (Beyond Geneva), *Haberturk.com.tr*, 3 February 2016, <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/1190075-cenevreden-otesi>

“[Turkey] is participating more enthusiastically in the policies of Saudi Arabia-- with whom it is establishing increasingly closer ties-- of prolonging the [Syrian] war, and making Iran pay a price.”

Iran: Strengthening the Basij

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian government has long used the Basij—a paramilitary incorporated into the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—as the face of internal security. While the Law Enforcement Forces might conduct more regular police work, Basij operations tend to focus more on countering ideological enemies and encouraging fealty to the Islamic Revolution through after-school programming and university organizations, and by policing morality. If the Iranian parliament gets its way, the Basij might soon become an even greater factor in Iranian society and politics.

The excerpted article highlights the Iranian parliament’s consideration of a bill to increase the Basij presence in almost every village, district, or urban neighborhood. While the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission within the parliament will review the legislation and any resulting law must be approved by the Guardian Council, both will likely uphold the measure. Should it be implemented, it suggests that the regime may be preparing for a new cultural revolution to weed out elements of reformism or moderation. The Guardian Council’s recent disqualification of 99 percent of reformist candidates seeking parliamentary seats indicates a desire by the clerical hierarchy within Iran to consolidate more hardline control.

Interestingly, however, there is some conservative push-back to the proposal to increase the Basij’s influence, as influential parliamentarian Ali Motahari suggested that neither the presence of the Basij units in residential areas was necessary nor would they necessarily preserve security. Here, the issue might be less a lack of sympathy toward the Basij’s ideology and more a recognition that prolonged Basij presence in residential areas might precipitate a spark which could form the basis for a larger protest movement as occurred after clashes between Iranian security forces and ordinary Iranians in 1999, 2001, and 2009. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin).**

“They prepared an emergency amendment...to increase the Basij’s influence around the country”



The Parliamentary Debate on a Bill to Augment the Basij.
Source: Iranian Labor News Agency (<http://goo.gl/cZangk>)

Source: “Hazor-e Basij dar Shahrekha-ye Maskoni, Halat-e Amniyat-e va Nizami Darad,” (Increasing the Presence of the Basij in Neighborhoods, and in Security and Military Roles), *Iranian Labor News Agency*, 27 January 2016. <http://goo.gl/sLcndw>

Increasing Basij Presence in Neighborhoods

According to the parliamentary correspondent of the Iran Labor News Agency, [Conservative parliamentarian] Ali Motahari spoke out against the approval, citing Article 2 of Chapter 4 of the Basic Law of the Basij, yet with 108 votes in favor, 54 against, and six abstentions, from a total of 211 parliamentarians at the session, and with regard to some ambiguity concerning this article, the commission called for a review of elements of this legislation, and referred it to the National Security Committee of the Parliament....

And they prepared an emergency amendment to Article 2 of Chapter 4 of the Basic Law of the Basij and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, in order to facilitate the reorganization and increase the Basij’s influence around the country, in cities, towns, districts, residential complexes, villages, ministries, offices, schools, universities, seminaries, and scientific centers, federations, clubs, and sports centers, and oblige all executive agencies to cooperate.

Note 1: In all factories, workshops, institutes, and both manufacturing and service companies, a Basij organization shall be formed.

Note 2: All executive agencies referred to in Article 5 of the Civil Service Management Act of 2007 shall set up programs to cooperate with the Basij, and take the necessary steps to ensure that the manpower and equipment are available at all facilities.

Iran: Basij Recruiting for Syria Fight

OE Watch Commentary: Whereas Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has denied that Iranians are fighting in Syria on behalf of the Bashar al-Assad regime, both the near daily announcements of the deaths of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members from fighting in Syria and the excerpted article—detailing Basij recruitment of volunteers for missions in Syria—contradict any argument downplaying increasingly direct Iranian presence in the Syrian conflict. Recruitment occurs under the guise of defending the shrine[s], the most important of which is that of Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali, which lies in Damascus. For several years, the Iranian government has described Iranians captured by Syrian opposition forces as religious pilgrims rather than fighters. The open discussion of the IRGC and Basij organizing volunteers to defend Shi'ite shrines in Syria affirms the statements of Syrian opposition forces and belies earlier Iranian denials.

Nor does the portrayal of the volunteers as mere advisors seem plausible, as greater military expertise is a requirement for any advisor who seeks to make a qualitative difference; rather, it seems that the Basij is recruiting less experienced Iranians to engage more directly in the fight against Syrian opposition groups and perhaps the Islamic State as well. That 28 Basij-recruited volunteers have been killed fighting in Syria—and perhaps dozens more once Iran's other provinces are factored in—further indicated that missions Iranian diplomats downplay as advisory only are far more engaged in combat.

That the IRGC must hold recruitment drives to man the fight in Syria raises questions regarding the broader Iranian deployment to Syria. While the Revolutionary Guards exists to protect not only Iran's territory, but also its ideology, the fact that it must recruit volunteers rather than simply order members into Syria may raise questions about fissures within the organization between a more ideological leadership and a significant and perhaps majority portion who joined the Corps less for the ideology and more for the pay and privilege, especially in juxtaposition to service in the conscript army. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Greater Tehran Basij unit registered volunteers to acts as advisors in Syria.”



Students in Iran sign up to defend the Shrine of Zainab in Damascus, Syria.
Source: Namnak.com, <http://goo.gl/z1uBzw>

Source: “Nahaveh Sabatnam az Davtaliban Modafa’ Haram” (Registering Volunteers to Defend the Shrines), *Shargh*, 27 January 2016. <http://goo.gl/TT165y>

Registering Volunteers to Defend the Shrine

Gen. Mohsen Kazemini, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for Greater Tehran, with reference to the dispatch of defenders of the shrine, said, “The Greater Tehran Basij unit registered volunteers to acts as advisors in Syria, and they trained many of these individuals, although they only sent a few to the country. Nevertheless, the volunteering represents a love in this region for the Guardianship [the Supreme Leader] and the Islamic Revolution.” The commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps for Greater Tehran said, “Of those that have trained to work as advisors in Syria, only a few were sent to the country.”

Gen. Kazemini, with regard to sending our country's fighters to Iran in order to carry out advisory functions, said, “Our presence in Syria, it is pure and to defend Islam... And, until now, 28 individuals from Tehran have been martyred as defenders of the shrine, but these statistics given the number of people from across the country who served as defenders of the shrine is actually quite small, and it also shows the maneuverability and that the warriors defending the shrine can triumph over all the conspiracies of the Zionists and Arrogance [United States].”

Iran Tests New Cruise Missile

OE Watch Commentary: The Iranian Navy and the corollary Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy held large-scale “Velayat-94” exercises in the Strait of Hormuz, Sea of Oman, and northern Indian Ocean. Perhaps not by coincidence, the exercise coincided with the formal implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the lifting of most international sanctions. While the Iranian Navy’s warning off of the USS Monterey from the exercise area and an Iranian UAV’s overflight of the USS Harry S. Truman made headlines in the West, the Iranian press also focused on the unveiling of a new surface-to surface cruise missile christened “Nour” (“light”).

During the exercise, the Iranian Navy launched the “Nour,” with a reported range of 92 miles, both from the shores of the Makran Coast adjacent to the Sea of Oman and northern Indian Ocean, and from onboard ships. The launch highlights continued indigenous military developments. While the Iranian government might purchase new military equipment, ordnance, and systems from Russia, China, and elsewhere, the unveiling of the “Nour” signals the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ plan to maintain its indigenous military industries.

The range of the missile and its reported success also present challenges to US forces in the region. While the Persian Gulf has always presented specific challenges to the US Navy because of the narrowness of international sea lanes and its relative shallowness, the “Nour” could make operations more dangerous in the region for all US forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“All missiles completed the test-fire successfully.”



Launch of the New ‘Nour’ Cruise Missile
Source: Fars News Agency, http://media.farsnews.com/media/Uploaded/Files/Images/1394/11/09/13941109000225_Photo1.jpg

Source: “Azmayesh Mawfaqiyat Amiz Mushakha-ye Kruz ‘Nour’” (Successful Test of New ‘Nour’ Cruise Missile), *Defa Press*, 29 January 2016. <http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/68028>

Successful Test of New ‘Nour’ Cruise Missile

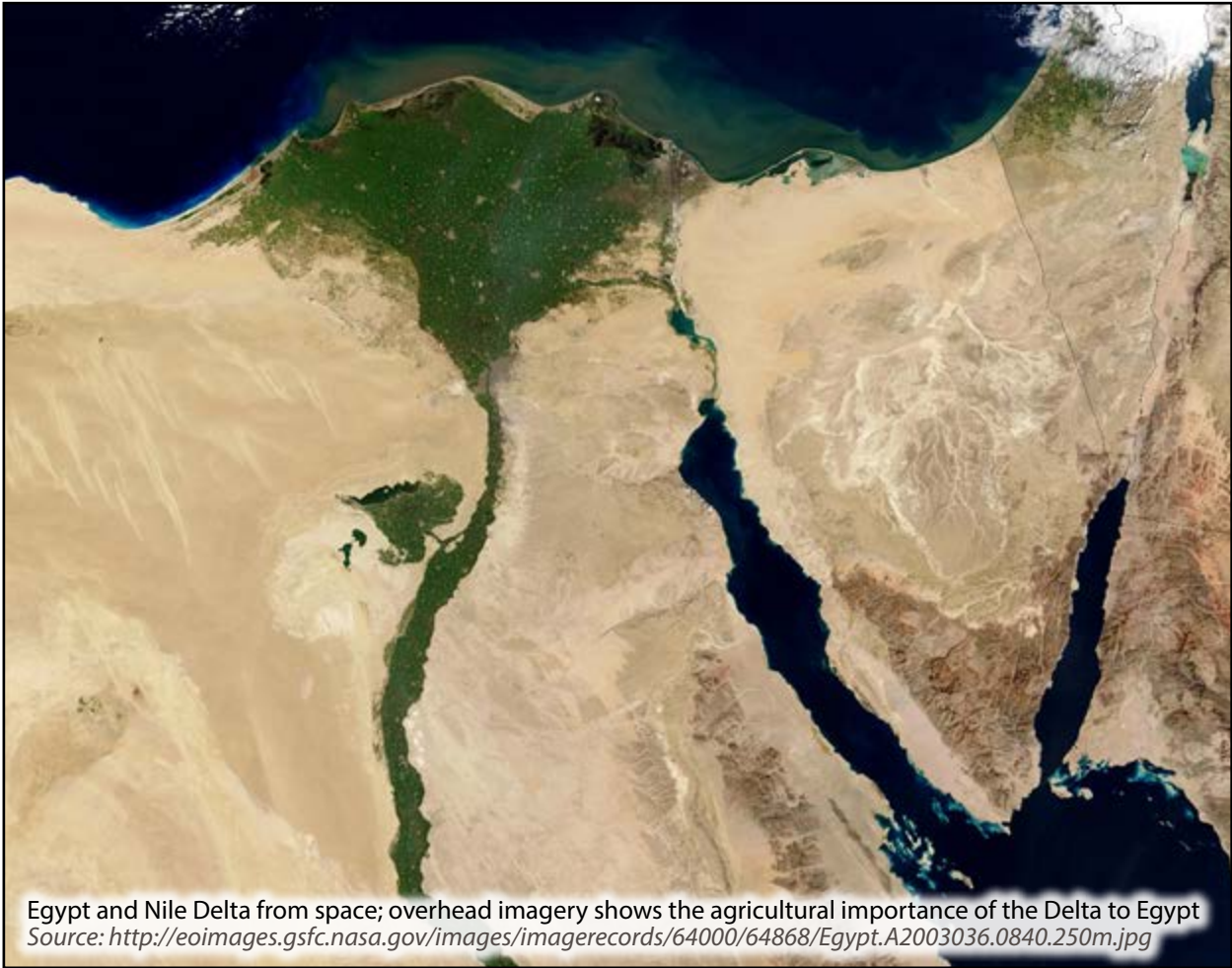
According to a dispatch from the Defense Press correspondent at Konarak [near Chahbahar], Admiral [Sayyid Mahmoud] Mousavi, speaking at the Velayat-94 naval exercises today after firing several “Nour” sea cruise missiles from both the Makran coast and the naval vessel ‘Alborz’ stated that surface vessels today simultaneously launched the Nour surface-to-surface cruise missile toward pre-determined targets and successfully completed the mission....

Mousavi noted that “Despite the enemy’s electronic hostile actions against the Iranian navy’s missile systems, no disturbance was caused in the launching of the planned missiles and all missiles completed the test-fire successfully.”

Nile River Dam Continues to Dominate Egyptian-Ethiopian Relations

OE Watch Commentary: Much has happened since then-President Mohammed Morsi considered military strikes against Ethiopia’s Renaissance Dam, in what was considered a major international blunder (see *OE Watch*, December 2013), but the dam continues to dominate Egyptian and Ethiopian relations. Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia are still conducting negotiations over technical, legal, and financial issues (first excerpted article). Although current Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has taken a more cooperative approach than his predecessor, Egyptians outside the government continue to voice concerns that the dam could have disastrous implications for Egypt. For example, one blogger, citing a study from Japan, predicts accelerated erosion of the Delta, resulting in destruction of agricultural production and displacement of millions of people (second excerpted article).

Although such criticism is unlikely to affect Egyptian foreign policy directly, it could stimulate additional support for political opposition within a country that is still recovering from the Arab Spring. As far as Egyptians are concerned, Egypt is still the gift of the Nile; it is very unlikely that any issue will ever take precedence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Egypt and Nile Delta from space; overhead imagery shows the agricultural importance of the Delta to Egypt
Source: <http://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/64000/64868/Egypt.A2003036.0840.250m.jpg>

Source: Staff author(s), “Unnamed Sources Say Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia To Resume Renaissance Dam Talks ‘Within a Month’,” *Egypt Independent*, translation from Al-Masry al-Youm, 11 February 2016, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/further-negotiations-renaissance-dam-addis-baba-within-month-sources>

Sources participating in the meetings on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam said ... the water ministers of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia agreed ... on holding a new series of negotiations in Addis Ababa within a month ... The three countries reviewed during the meetings in Khartoum their visions on the technical offers ...

Source: Walaa Hussein, “Will Renaissance Dam Flood Egypt’s Mediterranean Coast?,” trans. Pascale el-Khoury, *Al Monitor*, 19 January 2016 <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/01/ethiopia-egypt-renaissance-dam-flooding-sea-environment.html#ixzz3zyazXVM4>

... The study by Sameh Kantoush, a professor at Japan’s Kyoto University who specializes in dams and water resources, warns of the potential for a number of bleak scenarios involving environmental deterioration The dam, as currently designed, would affect the quality of Egypt’s drinking water and potable water stations, as well as the Egyptian-Sudanese water reserves in Lake Nasser ...The only way to avoid these impacts is to create dams that generate power but do not hold back water and sediments, he said. “Within 10 years, the course of the Nile River toward Egypt and Sudan at the lower part of the Renaissance Dam will be reduced by more than 5 meters [about 16 feet]. The dam will [intensify] the erosion of the river course, threatening to affect [Egypt’s] Mediterranean coast, potentially totally submerging the Delta areas.” ...



Renaissance Dam reservoir
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Renaissance_Reservoir.jpg

Power Struggles in Libya's National Army

OE Watch Commentary: General Khalifa Haftar (Haftar) is the head of the Libyan National Army (LNA), the armed forces of the internationally recognized government based in the Libyan city of Tobruk. In mid-December representatives from the Tobruk government agreed with their Tripoli-based opponents to form a U.N.-sponsored national unity government to help stave off Libya's growing ISIS problem. The Tobruk-based parliament, however, blocked the agreement from going forward. According to the first accompanying excerpt, from the daily *al-Quds al-Arabi*, Haftar was behind the obstructionism. His fear is that he and top loyal military leaders in the LNA will lose their jobs and influence in the new government.



Khalifa Haftar
Source: By Magharebia [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:General_Haftar.jpg

Around a week later Haftar's spokesman publicly resigned, accusing his ex-boss of rampant corruption. As the second excerpt, from the daily *al-Hayat*, explains, a power struggle may be underway within Haftar's camp (known as "Operation Dignity"). The spokesman fled to a military base under the control of al-Mahdi al-Barghathi, who was to be appointed defense minister in the new national unity government. Tensions are also rising between Haftar and Ibrahim Jadhran, the head of the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) militias in control of Libya's "oil crescent," which recently came under ISIS attack. As noted in the third accompanying excerpt, from *al-Jazeera*, Jadhran claimed that Haftar and ISIS are "two sides of the same coin." He and his allies accused Haftar of stirring tensions in the town of Ajdabiya in order to draw PFG forces away from areas under ISIS attack.

The inability to form a national unity government complicates the prospects of multilateral foreign intervention in Libya. On the day that the conditional national unity agreement was signed, Haftar spoke approvingly of Russian intervention in the region, expressing his willingness to work with the Russian antiterrorism coalition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"... we are ready to work with any country that leads, especially Russia, since we see that they are serious ..."

Source: بعض مفارقات التدخل العسكري القادم إلى ليبيا
"Paradoxes of the Coming Military Intervention in Libya," *al-Quds al-Arabi*. 31 January 2016. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=474748>

The biggest obstacle faced by the unity government is the refusal of GEN Khalifa Haftar to the U.N. agreement's stipulation that security and military posts can be filled with the unity government merely receiving confidence... Haftar's rejection of the National Unity government will delay the expected Western military intervention, which will lead Western countries to a compromise that pleases the general and his regional backers. This, though, will once again threaten the U.N. compromise, as the Tripoli government and parliament will reject such a compromise.

Source: انشقاق عن حفتر مؤشر إلى تخطيط أوراق
"Defections from Haftar Indicate a Reshuffling of the Deck," *al-Hayat*. 22 January 2016. <http://www.alhayat.com/m/story/13584937>

...after his statement al-Hijazi fled to the Tank Battalion 204 HQ, which is loyal to COL al-Mahdi al-Barghathi, the candidate to be defense minister in the national unity government. Some consider this an indication that al-Barghathi is involved with other officers in defecting from Haftar, in order to try to remove him from the political scene and pave the way for new leadership to emerge for the army formed following the agreement in Skhirat... Haftar's confidants have sought to downplay the importance of these developments, considering them to be the result of a struggle over positions...

Source: هل تنظيم الدولة وحفتر وجهان لعملة واحدة؟
"Are ISIL and Haftar Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *al-Jazeera*, 6 January 2016. <http://goo.gl/0nByFy>

... Ali al-Hassi, the spokesman for the Petroleum Facilities Guard in the central region, said that ... Haftar's forces tried to keep them busy by starting a battle in Ajdabiya, seeking to draw the forces stationed in the oil terminals out to Ajdabiya to engage Haftar's troops and thus empty the oil crescent of troops to confront ISIS... The head of the Petroleum Facilities Guard in the central region, Ibrahim Jadhran, said in a televised statement that "Haftar and ISIS are two sides of the same coin."

Source: فجر جديد في ليبيا وأجواء احتفالية في توقيع اتفاق الصخيرات
"New Dawn' in Libya and Festive Atmosphere after Skhirat Agreement Signed," *al-Hayat*. 17 December 2015. <http://goo.gl/D78DVB>

In a press conference following his meeting on Wednesday with the U.N. envoy to Libya Martin Kobler in Marj, eastern Libya, Haftar said: "What we see in terms of the Russians is that they are effectively fighting terrorism, and our main problem is terrorism... whoever can lead in this regard, with are with them. In the Russians we see indications that they are serious about fighting terrorism, and in the upcoming period we may have a view in this regard... we are ready to work with any country that leads, especially Russia, since we see that they are serious."

Russia in Syria: 4th Corps and Desert Falcons

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian Army's fledgling 4th Corps is considered a key ground component of Russia's campaign in Syria (for background see: "Russia in Syria; Perspectives of the Russian Intervention in Syria,"

OE Watch, Nov 2015. According to the first accompanying article, from pro-Hizbullah website *al-Ahed*, the 4th Corps includes field artillery teams using advanced Russian weaponry (possibly embedded with Russian troops). The article claims that the 4th Corps has been trained by Russia and equipped with "152-mm howitzers with digital fire control linked to Russian satellites," as well as rocket systems "capable of launching 200 rockets at once." Per the article, each corps "battalion" (katiba) is furnished with two Russian UAVs for artillery spotting.

Pro-Assad paramilitary units, which the Syrian military refers to as its "reserve forces" (*quwat radifa*), make up the bulk of what we may call the 4th Corps' light infantry. In January 2016, for instance, reserve forces entered the Sunni rebel-held town of Salma in Latakia Province following bombardment by artillery guns and Russian aircraft. As the second excerpt notes, several pro-Assad militias were involved: the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, Hizbullah, the National Defense Forces (NDF), and a pro-Assad paramilitary organization calling itself the "Naval Commandos" (*Maghawir al-Bahr*). This last group operates as part of the "Desert Falcons" (*Suqur al-Sahara*), a militia whose importance has grown since Russia became directly involved in the Syrian battlefield last September.

Steel tycoons Ayman and Mohammed Jaber, who are close to the Syrian president's brother Maher, launched the Desert Falcons as a private military company in 2013. Initially, the Syrian government hired the Desert Falcons to guard oil facilities and protect convoys from ISIS attacks in the desert of Homs Province. They were paid with oil revenues and organized as a private company rather than around a specific community, religion or political party, as was the case with most pro-Assad militias (most are nonetheless likely from the Alawite community).

The Desert Falcons specialize in reconnaissance and ambushes. One propaganda video shows them using small quadcopter UAVs for reconnaissance and, as the third article notes, they carry RPG-22 (Netto) one-shot anti-tank rockets in addition to standard light and medium weapons.

Perhaps befitting to a private military force, the Desert Falcons are as much a brand as an effective fighting unit; as the fourth accompanying article notes, their recruitment efforts have spread to many cities and towns in Syria. Their fighters have proven their value to Russian efforts. In November 2015 they helped rescue the surviving Russian pilot from the downed Russian Su-24. In a mid-January press briefing, Russian Lieutenant General Sergey Rudskoy praised their efforts in the operation to retake Salma. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"... Russia took charge of organizing and arming it, fully integrating it with Russian airpower ..."



Syria Desert Falcons.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/mohammadgaber11/photos/pb.868311203288675.-2207520000.1455035014./870473739739088/?type=3&theater>

Source:

الفيلق السوري الرابع.. القصة الكاملة

"Syria's 4th Corps: The Full Story," *al-Ahed*. 15 October 2015. <http://goo.gl/Zv3HY8>

The 8th of 45 articles of the agreement called for forming a new Syrian detachment... named the 4th Corps. Russia took charge of organizing and arming it, fully integrating it with Russian airpower in the battle to liberate north Syria ... Russia provided the corps with 152-mm howitzers with digital fire control linked to Russian satellites; each of the corps' battalions has two drones linked to Russian satellites which send images and intelligence to the satellite; these are then sent back to the highly precise digital link. The 4th corps also has artillery capable of launching 200 rockets at once, guided by drones and Russian satellites. Russian units are also training the corps to use modern weapons and communications equipment, including helicopter gunships. The corps are supported by Russian Sukhoi, Mi-28N attack helicopters specialized in hunting tanks, armored vehicles and enemy artillery at night and under any climactic conditions; Ka-52 (Alligator) modern helicopters are also involved in the operations. A group of Mi-26 helicopters are also being prepared...

Source:

سلمى: إنقضاء «الفيلق» بات وشيكاً

"Salma: The 'Corps' Assault Is Imminent," *al-Hadath*. 18 December 2015. <http://www.alhadathnews.net/archives/169326>

The [Syrian] Army was able to regain control of the gunmen's checkpoints on the mountain after days of fighting bolstered by Russian airstrikes and missiles and Syrian artillery. The crucial element, though, was the infantry push toward these points... The "Desert Falcons" and units from the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, as well as an elite unit from Hizbullah, another from the Syrian Army and a fourth from the National Defense Forces, all participated in the decisive operation....

(continued)

Continued: Russia in Syria: 4th Corps and Desert Falcons

Source:

“Desert Falcons Militia: From Protecting Oil Wells to Regime Assault Troops against Turkmen and Kurdish Rebels,” *Zaman al-Wasl*. 17 December 2015. <https://zamanalwsl.net/news/67052.html>

ميليشيا صقور الصحراء .. من حماية آبار النفط إلى رأس حربة النظام ضد ثوار التركمان والأكراد

The Desert Falcons are one of the regime Army's main supporters in terms of experience, weapons and military experience. Most of them are Alawites and have been trained by Iranian military trainers and range in age between 25 and 40. They number in the hundreds, and most have prior military experience...The militia has become the regime's main attack force in recent battles, conducting special operations to overtake and storm positions in rural Lattakia... with support from Russian warplanes... the militia appears to be better equipped and organized. In addition to personal and medium-caliber weapons, they are equipped with advanced Russian RPG-22 anti-armor rocket launchers.



Russian 152mm Msta-B howitzers in Syria.
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSKEbje2S88>



Sukur al-Sakhra brigade has specialists on technical reconnaissance

Source:

حين تتحدث الغالبية الصامتة.. قصص سورية لا تُروى
“When the Silent Majority Speaks: Syrian Stories that Are not Told,” *al-Safir*. 18 January 2016. <http://assafir.com/Article/5/467407>

“Desert Falcons” has become a well-known “brand” in the field of recruitment. Its branches are spreading in many cities and towns. A few young men will open a branch in their neighborhood to build an armed group which they then command and brag about, even though their activities are largely limited to marching and parading...within their own neighborhood!

Desert Falcons reconnaissance quadcopter mini-UAV.
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzjWSlwzAew>



The RED DIAMOND is the Army's leading e-journal highlighting current threats in the Operational Environment. It is produced by the Threats Intelligence Support Activity (US Army TRADOC G-2) and posted at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/files/25364306>.

Nigeria's Other Conflict: Violence Flares Again in Oil Rich Niger Delta Region

OE Watch Commentary: American news media frequently report on the conflict in the northeastern part of Nigeria, where government forces are battling Boko Haram. However, less attention appears to be paid to the Niger Delta in the country's south, though, as the accompanying excerpted article reports, violence is flaring there again as oil is stolen from pipelines and security forces responsible for protecting that infrastructure have been killed.

The region had been relatively quiet since 2009, the year an amnesty deal was enacted, providing the militants who had fought for a greater share of the delta's oil wealth with job training and monthly cash payments. However, that shaky peace appears to be falling apart. In an incident described in the article, while individuals were siphoning off oil from a ruptured pipe, a firefight broke out between them and security forces. The security forces heavier firepower eventually caused the thieves to retreat. Later, however, several security forces were killed when responding to an explosion which had possibly been set as bait to lure them into an ambush.

It is not entirely certain why there has been such a large uptick in violence in this area, but two theories seem to stand out. First is possible anger over the arrest of Tompolo, a prominent former commander of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, on corruption charges. Second is the government's efforts to end the amnesty program. With oil revenue falling, Nigeria is looking to cut costs. While both theories have merit, it is probably a blend of the two that has stirred the former militants to return to arms, with the threat of losing their monthly stipend perhaps the stronger motivating factor. However, whatever the cause or causes for the attacks, with Nigeria fighting a costly war against Boko Haram at the same time oil revenues are sliding, the country is finding it difficult to provide the additional resources necessary to prevent the Niger Delta from once again fully erupting. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“In their bid to ascertain where the explosion was from, [Nigerian security forces] were reportedly attacked by vandals said to have used the explosion as a bait.”

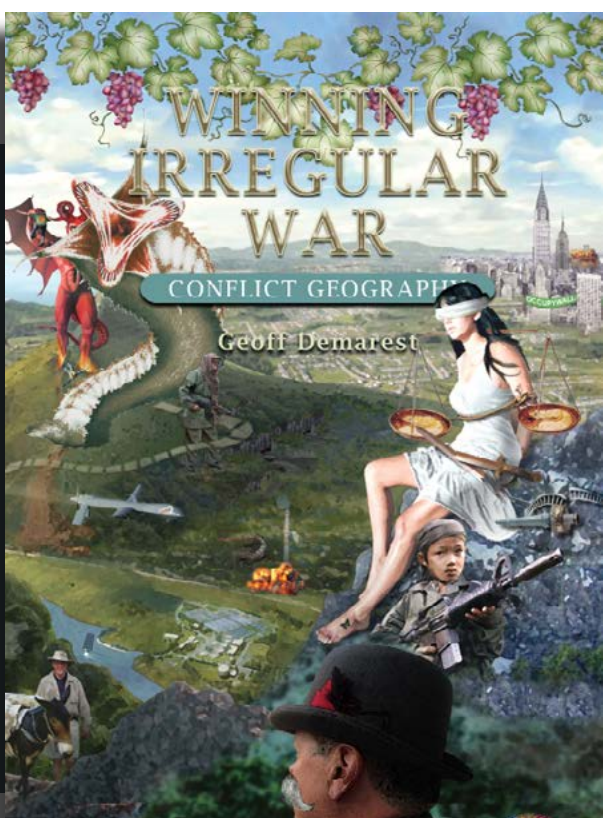
Source: Evelyn Usman, “How Vandals Ambush, Kill Five JTF Operatives in Arepo,” *Vanguard* (Nigeria) 6 February, 2016, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/02/vandals-ambush-kill-five-jtf-operatives-in-arepo/>

Pipeline vandals Thursday night, laid ambush on the Anti Pipeline Vandalism Joint Task Force, JTF in Arepo area of Ogun state, killing five operatives. The operatives were suspected to be naval personnel.

The incident described as a reprisal attack, occurred barely 24 hours after the Joint Task Force, comprising the Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Army and the National Security and Civil Defence Corps NSCDC, had launched series of attacks at the pipeline vandalism syndicate in the area, which led to series of arrest and startling discoveries.

While vandals were siphoning petroleum product from a burst Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation pipeline. They were said to have opened fire on the personnel but later bowed to their superior fire power, abandoning their trucks and containers filled with the siphoned petroleum product.

This is coming on the heels of the continued disappearance of security operatives assigned to patrol the area.



Geoff Demarest's *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.' In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest raises new and overlooked concepts related to modern conflict in a provocative manner designed to stir up debate and critical thinking. As Geoff Demarest puts it: "I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious."

Nigeria Looks to Nollywood to Improve Civil-Military Relations

OE Watch Commentary: In many ways the Nigerian military has historically needed to wage battles on two fronts: on one hand, it has always been concerned with the traditional military fight against both internal and external aggressors; on the other, it has historically needed to wage a war of reputations, having a need to bolster its reputation and foster trust within the population. As the attached article details, the Nigerian government is enlisting Nigeria's vibrant Nollywood cinema industry to co-produce films to portray the Nigerian military in a positive light, in hopes of improving civil-military relations in the hunt against Boko Haram.

In general, the Nigerian military has had a troubled reputation within the country. On one hand, the military has been one of the most powerful institutions in Nigeria. To that end, the country experienced 29 years of military rule between 1960 and 1999, at which point the country transitioned to the incipient democracy that it is today. Even outside of the country, the military has been powerful, outstripping all other West African militaries *combined* since the country's independence. Yet, the Nigerian military has been accused of having a lack of professionalism and consistency in its command and control structure. Moreover, it has gained some degree of infamy not only in Nigeria, but also outside, where its members in ECOWAS' 1990 ECOMOG mission in Liberia were accused of widespread looting, rape, and even extra-judicial murders, and in extra-judicial killings and detention abuse of suspected Boko Haram insurgents. In the pursuit of Boko Haram militants, certain communities have been reluctant to cooperate with the military, precisely for this reason.

For its part, Nigeria's Nollywood film industry is also an increasingly powerful institution in the country - currently the third-largest film industry in the world. However, it has never had a particularly political bent, and it is unclear how Nigerians will understand what will amount to pro-government and pro-military propaganda films.

The observer should take away a few lessons. First, the creation of films for such purpose underlines the important role that the Nigerian government understands civilians to play in the fight against Boko Haram. Second, the move also underlines the fact that it realizes and takes seriously the downsides of having an often distrustful population in the fight against a domestic insurgency. Third, the move also gives insight into the specific tactics - cinema - that the Nigerian government views as being capable of converting hearts. The extent of collaboration - and potential effectiveness of such a move - remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“[Nigeria] has a vision.... to develop a military/civil relationship that will close the gap between the military and the civilians.”



The Nigerian military is now actively collaborating with the country's vibrant Nollywood film industry in hopes of improving historically tenuous civil-military relations in the country.

Source: <http://static.pulse.ng/img/incoming/origs4650994/9599728385-w900-h600/76-producers.jpg>

Source: Abulude, Samuel. 2016. "Nigeria: Army Wants Collaboration With Nollywood On Boko Haram War Movies," *Leadership* (Abuja, Nigeria). 17 February. <http://leadership.ng/entertainment/501939/army-wants-collaboration-nollywood-boko-haram-war-movies>.

To foster a robust relationship between civilians and the military, the Nigerian Army has opened a window for collaboration with Nollywood filmmakers on movies that will endear the military to the people, including a possible story about insurgency war against the Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram.

The chief of civil/military affairs, Nigerian Army Headquarters, Major General Rogers Ibe Nicholas, at the unveiling of a movie entitled "76," which is set against the backdrop of war and nation building, described the partnership as part of the new focus of the military in the new dispensation under the leadership of Major General Tukur Yusuf Buratai, Chief of Army Staff.

The execution of the movie was also done with the approval and support from the Nigerian Army....

Gen. Nicholas said, "With every regime come different concepts and ideas. So with the coming of Gen T.Y Buratai as Chief of Army Staff, he has a vision which is to have a professionally responsive Nigerian army in discharge of its constitutional mandate. And part of that is to develop a military/civil relationship that will close the gap between the military and the civilians. "That is what we are trying to do. The issues of people not having channels to complain are now a thing of the past.

Jihadist Attacks and Negotiating Sharia in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: Despite hope to the contrary, the wave of Islamist insecurity that has plagued northern Mali over the past several years seems to not be improving. As the accompanying excerpted article details, in mid-February 2016 northern Mali experienced two different terrorist attacks, in two different northern Malian cities, from two different Islamist groups, on two different targets. In short, the complexities and seemingly growing strength of Islamist insurgencies in northern Mali have reached such a fever-pitch that observers like the accompanying excerpt's author are beginning to suggest that, rather than continue to fight what appears to be an unfruitful battle against the sundry Malian jihadist groups, the best course of action might just be to negotiate with their leaders and allow the installation of a moderate form of sharia law.

Mali's current state of affairs is largely the result of a rapid collapse of the government in early 2012. At that time, after a coup in the presidential palace in Bamako left a power vacuum, various coalitions of Islamist groups (including affiliates of AQIM, as well as newer groups like Ansar Dine and, later, Ansaru) would form loose alliances with secessionist-minded ethnic Tuareg nomads in the northern stretches of the country to essentially occupy the northern two-thirds of the Malian state. A combination of French and ECOWAS forces worked early on in attempts to dislodge the Islamists, and later the 12,600-person UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) would attempt to securitize the region. Elections held in 2013 seemed to offer hope.

However, fast-forward four years and the insecurity persists. A dense web of Islamist groups with ever-shifting alliances continues to operate in northern Mali. In addition to those already mentioned, newcomers include elements supposedly linked to ISIS, some affiliates of Boko Haram, and, perhaps most troublingly, a relatively new outfit called al-Murabitoun. This latter group has gained particular infamy in the past months: in November 2015 the group claimed responsibility for a takeover on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali, which killed some 21 people, and later, on 16 January 2016, the group also claimed responsibility for a similar style of attack on The Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which killed 28 (see: "Who is al-Murabitoun?" **OE Watch**, February 2016).

As a result of the increasing prominence of such groups - even in the face of a moderately robust UN peacekeeping presence - some Malian observers think that it might be time to negotiate with leaders and consider the benefits of allowing the installation of sharia law. Such a proposal has inherent benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, this alternative proposal could indeed work to quell fighting in the north on two fronts: both for Islamist groups, who (ostensibly) want the installation of sharia law, and ethnic Tuaregs, who desire political autonomy from the Malian state. On the other hand, previous negotiations with such insurgencies have proven to be rather unfruitful. Even if a pseudo-independent or autonomous northern state came about, likely infighting among groups within it could engender just as much insecurity as the current conflicts themselves. Where a reasonable middle ground can be found is yet to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“How should the Republic of Mali deal with Ghaly? Should we negotiate with him? Why not? Negotiation, far more than simply repression, is the only means to resolve the Malian problem.”

Source: Sanogo, Lonsani. 2016. “Mali: Attentats Repetitifs Au Nord - Tant Que Kidal Sera Hors de La République” [Mali: Repetitive Attacks in the North - The Malian Republic's Loss of the Kidal?], *Le Pays* (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso). 15 February. <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201602150837.html>.

[L]ast week, two terrorist attacks were perpetrated in the cities of Kidal and Timbuktu. The AQIM attack in Timbuktu killed 3 Malian soldiers, while in Kidal, 6 UN peacekeepers were felled by bullets from members of the Islamist movement, Ansar Dine.

It's difficult to explain the resurgence of these terrorist attacks in north Mail, given that northeastern Mali is now home to (UN) MINUSMA, near which operates a coalition of movements to de Azawad, and cells from GATIA (?), which recently signed an accord about how to manage the question of security in Kidal.

Essentially, it appears as though there is a problem of coordination amongst all of the forces in the region.....

We must, among others, work to bring the cities of Kidal and Timbuktu back to Mali [and away from jihadists], assuring that the Malian army has control over them. If that is accomplished, we can be assured that it will help to control the jihadists....

How should the Republic of Mali deal with Ghaly? Should we negotiate with him? Why not? Negotiation, far more than simply repression, is the only means to resolve the Malian problem. One could, for example, begin to apply sharia law, in its most “noble” forms: that is to say, by respecting Islamic texts and their Koranic prescriptions, without any extremism, so as to pacify Iyad and his networks, and therefore, avoid a total cutoff of Kidal from the Republic.

Moreover, it is time to renew MINUSMA's mandate to be more than just a peacekeeping force vulnerable to attacks from the jihadists, but instead, a force that could instead become of an offensive on the ground.

In any case, the jihadist attacks on the 12 of February sent a very bad signal to the populations of northern Mali.

African Countries Continue to Consider AU Intervention into Burundi

OE Watch Commentary: To intervene, or not to intervene? That appears to be the fundamental question percolating within the halls of the African Union (AU), and especially in the foreign and defense ministries of individual African countries, as member states regard with trepidation and lament the still tense situation in Burundi. As the accompanying excerpted articles from around the African continent detail, governments and members of civil society have varying outlooks on the appropriateness of an AU intervention.

At the heart of the issue is a spate of ethnic violence that has characterized the Burundian political landscape since its president, Pierre Nkurunziza, allowed himself to run for (and win) an unconstitutional third presidential term in July 2015. Dissidents clashed with government forces, and, before long, death tolls reached hundreds. Since mid-2015 observers have been worried that the government's crackdown on opponents could well be the beginning of a genocide, though to date only around 400 have been killed. For its part, the AU has been watching the situation carefully, and in December 2015 it decided to deploy a 5000-person observer mission, the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU), to protect civilian lives and ensure that violence in the country did not spread. Quickly, Nkurunziza categorically rejected the presence of an AU monitoring mission, claiming that such a force would essentially be "an invasion." He later went on Burundian national radio claiming that the Burundian military would attack AU peacekeepers if they entered the country. Since then the AU as a whole, as well as its individual member states, have had various outlooks on the appropriateness of such an intervention.

As per the first excerpt, Tanzania has come out in vocal support of the MAPROBU mission and has been taking steps to urge the Burundian government to accept such a force. Tanzania has tangible interests in the resolution of the conflict: an estimated 190,000 Burundians have fled into its border since the conflict began. Moreover, as per the second excerpt, the regional East African Standby Force (EASF) has also said that it will deploy into the theater if a force is accepted. Kenya, already fighting its own al-Shebab insurgency along its border with Somalia, looks to join Tanzania as another leader in the EASF deployment.

South Africa - somewhat surprisingly - declared in December 2015 that it would not send troops, despite requests from the AU to serve as a lead nation in the mission. South Africa cited the fact that it has no spare troops left for deployment, given that it already has around 2000 peacekeepers deployed to missions in South Sudan, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Mozambique Channel. Yet, as the author of the third article relays, discussions are circulating within South African political circles as to whether one of the continent's most powerful states is shirking its leadership responsibility to the continent by not sending troops.

Other typical contributors to African peacekeeping missions might also well be missing in action, should a Burundi mission materialize. Nigeria's preoccupation with Boko Haram at home makes it an unlikely contributor, while Africa's largest peacekeeping supplier, Ethiopia, is potentially already overstretched on its commitments too. Then, there's Burundi: well known as an eager contributor to African peacekeeping missions, this time, enthusiasm for such activities is distinctly low. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“Is South Africa shirking its duty to send troops to Burundi as part of an African Union mission to try to prevent the mounting violence there from spiraling into total civil war and mass atrocities?”

Source: Mutambo, Aggrey. 2016. “Tanzania Supports Plan to Send 5,000 Troops to Troubled Burundi.” *The Daily Nation* (Nairobi, Kenya). 10 January. <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Tanzania-supports-plan-to-send-troops-to-Burundi/-/1066/3027690/-/2umbrq/-/index.html>.

Tanzania has become the first East African Community member to openly support the deployment of peacekeeping troops to troubled Burundi, despite Bujumbura referring to the proposed mission “an invasion”.

During a meeting with African Union Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma last week, Tanzanian Foreign Minister Augustine said the peacekeeping mission was essential, as it would protect civilians, even as the community looked for a permanent solution to the crisis...

The meeting...signifies the urge of Tanzanian Government to end tension and bloodshed that has seen more than 190,000 Burundians flee into Tanzania, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees...

It is estimated more than 400 people have been killed since April when Mr. Nkurunziza controversially decided to contest for a third term....

Source: Ghana, News. 2016. “Eastern Africa Standby Army Likely to Join AU Peacekeepers.” *News Ghana* (Accra, Ghana). 17 February. <http://www.newsghana.com.gh/eastern-africa-standby-army-likely-to-join-au-peacekeepers/>.

“The EASF will be happy to be part of the MAPROBU as it will be a force deployed to show solidarity with Burundi because the force is meant to be a preventive force to secure the environment for the dialogue to happen and suggest solutions for Burundi,” said Kabisa.

The EASF is made up by ten countries including Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

On Dec. 17, 2015, the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a resolution on the deployment of 5,000 troops dubbed the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU) to prevent genocide or massive killings, which the Burundian government strongly opposed....

(continued)

Continued: African Countries Continue to Consider AU Intervention into Burundi

Source: Fabricius, Peter. 2015. "SA Faces Conundrum over Burundi Conflict." *Independent Online* (South Africa). 21 December. <http://www.iol.co.za/news/sa-faces-conundrum-over-burundi-conflict-1962711>.

Is South Africa shirking its duty to send troops to Burundi as part of an African Union mission to try to prevent the mounting violence there from spiraling into total civil war and mass atrocities?

This week the African Union's Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) announced after meeting in Addis Ababa that it had authorized the deployment of a 5000-strong African Protection and Prevention Mission to Burundi (Maprobu) to protect civilians and prevent the violence degenerating into full-scale civil war....

But Pretoria declined because it said it had no spare troops available, as more than 2 000 were already participating in peace missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Mozambique Channel.

Other media reports suggest that Kenya – already deeply embroiled in the fight against Al-Shabaab in Somalia – will instead contribute to Maprobu, as part of the East African brigade of the African Standby Force.



Clashes in Burundi

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/globovision/17013051114>

Militancy in Senegal: Complacency or Time for Concern?

OE Watch Commentary: Senegal is one of the more stable countries in a West African region mired in insurgency. The region also has become victim to terrorist attacks in recent months, including at hotels in Bamako, Mali and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in November 2015 and January 2016 respectively. Senegal is fortunate to be an exception to the region's negative security trends. For the most part, Senegal has avoided major domestic conflict and not been affected by the extremism or instability of its neighbors.

However, on 22 January 2016 a French-language article for the Senegalese publication, *Buzzsenegal*, highlighted the issue of Senegalese fighting in Libya with ISIS, suggesting that this can lead to openings for the Islamic State to target and destabilize Senegal. The article features an interview of a Senegalese fighter in Sirte, which is a city under the control of ISIS. The fighter, who is part of the so-called Senegalese colony in the city, vows to return to Senegal to destroy Sufi shrines that ISIS considers heretical.

In light of the competition between ISIS and Al-Qaeda, the former has extra incentive to carry out and claim its first major attack in the Sahel. Such an attack would promote its narrative that is expanding in Africa, especially at a time when its so-called West Africa Province (Boko Haram) is suffering setbacks as a result of the Nigerian military offensive. It would also allow ISIS to upstage the media attention AQIM has received after its hotel attacks in Bamako and Ouagadougou. In particular, the template for an ISIS attack in West Africa would be an urban invasion Paris-style attack like the one it carried out in November 2015 and attempted again in Jakarta in January 2016, but with lesser success (only two civilians were killed in Jakarta compared to 130 in Paris)

This article should also be seen in the context of recent arrests of Senegalese funders of Boko Haram in Niger. A sense of preparedness—rather than complacency—is needed from Senegalese security forces, as well as their partners regionally and internationally, to prevent emerging trends from becoming a violent reality in the country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“I visited brothers who wanted to begin in Senegal with arms, but we easily agreed to fight alongside our brothers [in Libya] and acquire more experience to return to the country.”



The killing of Ethiopian Christians by Islamic State militants in Libya led to protests in Ethiopia (featured in the adjacent image); now there is increasing evidence of various sub-Saharan nationalities fighting in Libya, including Senegal, which can lead to further instability in Libya and throughout the region.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/ethiopians-mourn-libya-killings-at-rally/2729877.html>

Source: “Abu Jafar Diop, djihadiste sénégalais: « Nous reviendrons pour combattre les soufis jusqu’à ce qu’ils arrêtent Gamou et Magal! » [“Abu Jafar Diop, Senegalese jihadist: “We will fight for the Sufis until they stop Gamou and Magal!”], *Buzzsenegal*, 22 January 2016.

Abu Jafar Diop, Senegalese jihadist: “We will fight for the Sufis until they stop Gamou and Magal”

[Jihad] is the only way to apply the Sharia. I visited brothers who wanted to begin in Senegal with arms but we easily agreed to fight alongside our brothers [in Libya] and acquire more experience to return to the country. Our commitment is to the Caliphate and the proclamation of Sheykh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, imam of the believers.

The Islamic State is also different from other Jihadist groups because it is the way of the Prophet. And all these actions can be supported by evidence from the Koran and the Sunnah. None of us would wish to die naturally. We pray day and night to be part of the martyrs in the cause of Allah. And we love death as the infidels love life

Senegal is ruled by disbelief. Our fight is not limited to members of the government but also the sufis are included. We will fight for our way until they stop touring the [sufi] tombs of their marabouts (teachers).

And as for the burqa ban, it just shows that Senegal is a great enemy of religion such as France, America, Russia ... And we fight for religion and not for anything else.

Even if my mother falls into apostasy, I will not stay another night in the same house without cutting her throat.

Nigeria Restoring Confidence in Multi-National Joint Task Force

OE Watch Commentary: Nigerian president Muhammed Buhari made a bold claim after taking office in 2015 that Boko Haram would be defeated by the end of the year. Before the year came to end he declared that Boko Haram was technically defeated. Although the offensive the Nigerian military launched in 2015 has forced Boko Haram to withdraw from almost all towns it occupied before Buhari came into office, there are still many doubts about the wisdom, let alone veracity, of Buhari's declarations. The assault of Boko Haram on the city of Maiduguri in Borno State on 30 January 2016, which killed more than 60 civilians, as well as the constant suicide attacks in the Nigeria-Cameroon border region, seems to undermine Buhari's claims of Boko Haram being defeated.

An article in *The Nation* on 19 January 2016 nonetheless shows Buhari's high level of confidence about the state of the country's counterinsurgency efforts. According to Buhari, Boko Haram is on the run, which may explain the surge of attacks in Cameroon as Boko Haram retreats to rear bases across the border. In this regard, Buhari's mention of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNTJF) is of great importance. While Buhari affirms that Nigeria has borne the brunt of Boko Haram's atrocities and expenditures to combat the militants, he also recognizes that Nigeria's neighbors are also vital in ending the insurgency.

As Boko Haram moves to its fallback positions, Nigeria will count on Cameroon, as well as Chad, Niger, and Benin, all of which are part of the MNTJF, which is intended to coordinate efforts so these five countries can eliminate the militants' camps and trafficking networks in the border region. In addition, Buhari wants to work with these countries on sociological and ecological issues to revive the economy in Boko Haram-affected areas. If Buhari succeeds domestically in keeping the pressure on Boko Haram and helps unite the efforts of countries that are part of the MNJTF, then his post-election promise of Boko Haram's impending defeat may be hard to criticize when history looks back on his first days in office. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“[Boko Haram] are currently not holding any territory today as we speak.”

Source: “‘We’ve Driven Boko Haram to Fall-back Positions,’ Says Buhari,” *The Nation*, 19 January 2016.

We’ve driven Boko Haram to fall-back positions, says Buhari

President Muhammad Buhari said that Nigeria has made significant progress towards ending Boko Haram insurgency since his assumption of office. Buhari said in collaboration with the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Nigerian Armed Forces have driven the terrorist group from Nigerian territory into “fall-back positions”. In a statement by the Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, the President said: “They are currently not holding any territory today as we speak.”

[Buhari] told the United Nations Secretary-General that Nigeria would persistently pursue global action to reverse the drying up of Lake Chad and save the lives of those who depend on it for survival. “With all due respect to our neighbours, Nigeria has been worst hit by the drying up of the Lake Chad and we are hoping that the global community will support the process of halting the drying up of the lake, ” Buhari said.



Chadian troops played a large role in counter-insurgency operations in northern Mali in 2013, and will also play a crucial role in the success of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to combat Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region in 2016.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/chad-sending-troops-to-help-cameroon-fight-boko-haram/2600762.html>

New Twist in Coups — Making a Military Oil Company

OE Watch Commentary: Up to a point, the referenced titles text speaks for themselves. The Venezuelan military has a new corporate business, the “shareholders” of which are a handful of senior ranking generals chosen by the Minister of Defense, Chávez loyalist Vladimir Padrino López. This is great work if you can get it, and could dovetail nicely with any illicit drug smuggling and money laundering an officer might have to supervise.

There are no legal limits on what the new corporation can or cannot do in furtherance of the business. As a lesser-included to the making money, the corporation is authorized to go anywhere and use any means of transportation to get there. There is no requirement for public accounting or records of any kind, and, importantly, the Venezuelan legislature will have no oversight role. The regime is taking away from the legislature a large portion of whatever “power of the purse” it hoped it would have. The move seems to be in line with the socialist regime’s emergency decree and stacking of the country’s Supreme Court as part of a strategy to wrest any leftovers of power from the national legislature, which is now controlled by the opposition.

Control of the oil industry is a golden key to the lion’s share of the nation’s convertible wealth and a further step in the direction of one-party state control of everything. We can speculate this also has something to do with keeping the military loyal, but to whom? Company officials report to the Ministry of Defense, not to the President. Some reporting indicates that the surprise gazetteer notification is actually an innovative silent coup d’état – that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is about to be gone or at least reduced to insignificance. Reports have it that as this is being written he is looking for asylum somewhere.

Whoever ends up as top Venezuelan Bolivarian, we should be on the immediate lookout for Cuban, Chinese or Russian involvement, especially via their military contacts. This looks like a win-win for a group of Bolivarian military professionals.

End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)

“...How very strange...they took to legalities to create a Corporation, and not to build Socialism...”

Source: *DolarToday*, “ESTO ES MUY GRAVE: Pdvsa paralela podrá explotar todos los recursos mineros del país sin rendir cuentas” (THIS IS VERY GRAVE: A parallel PDVSA [The national petroleum corporation] will be able to all of the mineral resources of the country without public accounting), *DolarToday*, 15 February 2016, <https://dolartoday.com/esto-es-muy-grave-pdvsa-paralela-podra-explotar-todos-los-recursos-mineros-del-pais-sin-rendir-cuentas/>

“Senior officials of the FANB [Bolivarian National Armed Forces or Fuerzas Armadas Nacionales Bolivarianas] manage, since it was formalized last Thursday, a mining, oil and gas company which, according to some critical economists, is a parallel PDVSA [the existing national petroleum corporation].

In Official Gazette No 40.845, dated February 10 of the current year, published as Presidential Decree No 2.231, was the creation of the Autonomous Military Mining, Petroleum and Gas Company (Camimpeg), attached to the Ministry of Defense.

A Gazette [document of official record] that ALL of the currently serving ministers of the President of the Republic signed was approved by the Supreme Justice Tribunal. In said Gazette was approved the configuration of an Autonomous Company that due to its mercantile status has a assembly of shareholders formed of 5 (five) persons named by the Minister of Defense and who report to Padrino López [Vladimir Padrino López, the Minister of Defense].

The Company will have Caracas as its domicile, ‘empowered to carry out operations and establish agencies, branch offices and representations in whatever other place in and outside of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with the authorization of the ascribing organ and approval General Assembly of Shareholders.

Likewise, Camimpeg will have as its objective the realization of licit service activities related to petroleum, gas, mineral exploitation in general without ‘any limitation’.

Equally, the anonymous company ‘will be employed in the area of rehabilitation and maintenance of oil wells, repair maintenance and administration of drilling perforations, fabrication and maintenance of pump stations and compressor plants in land and marine areas, among other functions.

It will also have active participation in the import, export, distribution, commercialization, resale of chemical products for the mining, petrochemical, and oil and gas industries such as degreasers, thinners, aromatic solvents, thickeners, surfactants.

Another of its many [activities?] will be to provide transport services at the national and international level in areas of lake transport, maritime and land transport at the national and international level, through the provision of watercraft, tugs, boats, trucks, tows, etc.

As though this were not enough, the presidential decree sets forth that the duration of the mercantile corporation will be 50 years.

Camimpeg will be ‘autonomous’, its Budget will be administered in support of its mercantile interests and will not be subject to the Petroleum Ministry or Pdvsa [the existing national oil company], and even less will their operations be subject to legislative oversight of the National Assembly.”

(continued)

Continued: New Twist in Coups — Making a Military Oil Company

Source: Rosa Natalia, “La petrolera CAMINPEG será un supra estado hecho a la medida de los militares, Padrino López dio un golpe de estado y ahora es Presidente paralelo” (The petroleum Company Caminpeg will be a supra-state made to order by military officers, Padrino López couped the state and is the parallel President), *apoorrea*, 2 February 2016, <http://www.apoorrea.org/actualidad/a222795.html>

“For those still celebrating the ‘change’ inside the [National] Assembly where they still debate in a thousand fantasies how the downfall of the government is going to occur, the strike was of such velocity that they didn’t even notice. For those who await, now without much hope, the rectifications of the government and retaking of the socialist pathway, we are astonished at the complicity and submission of the all of the top government officials...”

...Everything was imagined, but never a Coup d’État via Official Gazette. Unprecedented. This new super-refined method is one for the history books...

...How very strange...they took to legalities to create a Corporation, and not to build Socialism...

...A Coup d’État with the complicity and silence of all of the political actors of the opposition and of the government!!”

How Bad Can Venezuela Get?

OE Watch Commentary: The news coming out of Venezuela from Venezuela itself, from regional Spanish-language sites, and even from Spain itself is becoming curiouser and curiouser. For instance, estimates now suggest that inflation in 2016 will exceed 720%. Caracas shopping malls now have only four hours of electric power per day. The number of Zika virus cases in the country is hard to estimate accurately, but may be in the many thousands. The country is not producing enough food.

As another of this month’s OE articles relates, the military is taking over the oil production enterprise, the Minister of Defense perhaps even becoming a parallel President. Some other sea-change economic news recently broke as well. President Maduro dramatically increased the price of domestic gasoline, and changed the official exchange rate policy toward a floating index. These measures, welcomed by some economists, may be too little, too late.

The Venezuelan government blames all this dark news on a strategy perpetrated by the United States. Others blame the Venezuelan government’s socialism and rampant corruption, not to mention the collapse in the price of oil. A theory exists in the academic ether that the failure of a state invites violent conflict. One has to wonder just how failed the Venezuelan government, economy and institutions can get before open armed resistance begins -- or if the Bolivarian model of coercive socialism, as exported to the continent by the Cubans, will prevail to leave us with a Cuba-Continental. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“The economic crisis in Venezuela is threatening to turn into a humanitarian tragedy.”

Source: El Mercurio, “¡EL PUEBLO PASANDO HAMBRE! Venezuela, al borde de la crisis humanitaria” (The People are Starving! Venezuela, on the brink of a humanitarian crisis), *DolarToday*, 14 February, 2016, <https://dolartoday.com/el-pueblo-pasando-hambre-venezuela-al-borde-de-la-crisis-humanitaria/>; 14 February 2016, El Mercurio.com

“The economic crisis in Venezuela is threatening to turn into a humanitarian tragedy. It is no longer a matter of numbers, like the 22% that the economy has contracted since December, after three years of recession, or the lack of basic comfort items, but the scarcity of basic medicines, cleaning utensils and foodstuffs as necessary as milk or flour. It is about how the acquisitive power of the Venezuelans has crashed dramatically as a result of inflation, that this year will exceed 720% according to an alert of the International Monetary Fund.”

Source: Editors, “Queda cerveza hasta marzo, informó Caveface” (There will be beer until March, Informs Caveface [Chamber of Venezuelan Beer Brewers]), *Sumarium.com*, 17 February 2016, <http://sumarium.com/queda-cerveza-hasta-marzo-informo-caveface/>

“...‘Inventories of this raw material are enough to operate at current levels of production until the end of March...if the ‘importation permits are not immediately approved and foreign currency liquidated’ for the malt providers, there exists a risk of ‘immediate interruption of production on that date’...”

Source: El Nacional Web, “¡LO ÚLTIMO! Congressista colombiana asegura que Unasur solicitó asilo para Nicolás Maduro” (The Latest: Colombian congresswoman insists that UNASUR asked for asylum for Nicolás Maduro) *El Nacional*, 17 February, 2016, http://www.el-nacional.com/politica/Congresista-colombiana-Unasur-Nicolas-Maduro_0_795520451.html#.VsRrB9OVn1M.twitter.

“We received information of a meeting between [Ernesto] Samper [former Colombian president and now head of UNASUR] and the Administration evaluating whether to give asylum to Maduro and his family upon request of UNASUR What danger!” [Twitter tweet from María Fernanda Cabal]

ELN: The Other Colombian Guerrilla

“...The so-called ‘Army of National Liberation’ carried out the downing of an electric tower...”

OE Watch Commentary: The FARC has been conducting a negotiation with the government of Colombia to secure a favorable political stasis in its war there. So far it appears that the process has been a success for the FARC in that the government has made concession after concession in spite of the fact that the FARC had been put on its heels militarily.

The ELN (National Liberation Army) has for decades now been the lesser, other guerrilla organization, at times cooperating with the FARC and at times in intramural conflict with it. The ELN has been looking to make a deal with the government along the lines of what the FARC seems to have achieved. So as to improve its position, the ELN has been doing what it can to show its strategic extortion capacity through violent propaganda of the deed. In turn, the administration of President Manuel Santos has been making overtures to the ELN, signaling its intention to accommodate.

A strange event this month was emblematic of the situation. The ELN was invited by the government to erect a bust of one of its founders in a remote town. Although the townspeople, having suffered a history of abuse at the hands of the ELN, disapproved of the event, the national government forced it. As with the negotiations with the FARC, such enthusiastic willingness by the government to salute a terrorist organization (formally designated as such by the US State Department) is not setting well with a large slice of Colombian opinion makers. Like the FARC, the ELN has enjoyed foreign sanctuary and logistic lines, is involved in a wide variety of economic predation activities and illicit trade, has committed thousands of violent crimes, and is aligned with the Bolivarian movement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Radio Caracol, “Con ataques a redes eléctricas el ELN conmemora 50 años de muerte de Camilo Torres” (With attacks on electric grids the ELN commemorates 50 years of the death of Camilo Torres [an early ELN leader]), 15 February 2016, http://caracol.com.co/emisora/2016/02/15/cartagena/1455534966_162322.html

“The so-called ‘Army of National Liberation’ carried out the downing of an electric tower located in Las Piñas township, in Aguachica county, Cesar Department leaving the counties of Morales, Bolivar along with all of its sub-counties, Aguachica and Gamarra in Cesar Department, where power began to be reestablished a few hours ago.

Source: Oiga Noticias, “En plena ola de violencia del ELN, Iván Cepeda rinde homenaje al terrorismo” (In the midst of a wave of ELN violence, Iván Cepeda pays homage to the terrorism), *Oiga Noticias*, 14 February 2016, <http://oiganoticias.com/2016/02/14/en-plena-ola-de-violencia-del-eln-ivan-cepeda-rinde-homenaje-al-terrorismo/>

At the 50th Anniversary of the death of Camilo Torres, the ELN attacks the society and the armed Forces. Meanwhile, Senator Iván Cepeda went to the county of Carmen de Chucuri, in Santander Department, to render homage the leader of a guerrilla group that has tortured and massacred millions of Colombians.

Source: Ricardo Puentes, “¿El Carmen de Chucurí sufrirá la venganza del ELN-FARC y Santos?” (Will El Carmen de Chucuri [a county in Northeast Colombia] suffer the vengeance of the ELN-FARC and Santos?), *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, 10 February 2016, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/el-carmen-de-chucuri-sufrira-la-venganza-del-eln-farc-y-santos.html>

“Although 10 of the 11 councilmen of the community said they did not approve of the event, today, 10 February 2016, the mayor had received more than ten phone calls from the Ministry of the Interior asking how the preparations were going for the homage to the ELN and announcing that before day’s end the Minister Juan Fernando Cristo would himself call to confirm that everyone was collaborating for the reception of the guerrillas and their friends this February 14th.”

Bolivian Referendum Goes against Evo

OE Watch Commentary: In late breaking news, it may be that Bolivian President Evo Morales has lost a referendum regarding his being able to stay in the presidency past 2019. That is still a long time away and, as Venezuela shows us, once a socialist party takes power in Latin America it is not easily turned out. Still, this would be another surprising electoral loss for Bolivarian Socialism of the XXI Century in Bolivia.

Last year the governing party unexpectedly lost a large number of municipal elections. Part of the rejection might be due to a sex-and-corruption scandal in which a young paramour reportedly gave birth to an out-of-wedlock child fathered by the president. While that might not have been a particularly big deal, she then gained a senior executive position in a huge Chinese corporation doing business in Bolivia. A beauty in her twenties, her qualifications for both roles were clear to the voting public.

In any case, increasing evidence suggests that Bolivarian Socialism may not be the dialectically ascendant feature of continental life that some had feared. The pendulum seems to be in full swing away from the left. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Editors, “Referéndum de Bolivia: los primeros resultados indican un triunfo del ‘No’” (Bolivian Referendum: first results indicate a triumph for ‘No’), *Infobae*, 22 February, 2016, <http://www.infobae.com/2016/02/21/1791791-referendum-bolivia-los-primeros-resultados-indican-un-triunfo-del-no>

“The first returns give a triumph for the ‘No’ by 65.99% against 34.1% for the ‘Yes’...If the scenario is confirmed, it would be the first major direct loss in the 10 years that Morales has been in power, one of the last representatives of what is called socialism of the XXI century. Earlier, in 2015, his party had lost key positions in local elections...”

Guatemala's Water Contamination Problem

OE Watch Commentary: More than eight residents sustained injuries after fighting over scarce potable water reserves in Coatepeque, Guatemala, in June 2015. This situation was isolated, but is significant, as it may serve as an indicator of future internal conflict within the country over potable water supplies. It is important to note that Guatemala does not lack supply, but as reported by *El Pais*, 90% of available sources have some degree of contamination. In a separate source, Guatemala's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources stated that only 40% of water sources are contaminated, which likely means actual contamination lies somewhere above 40% and below 90%.

Looking at the actual population, factors such as growth in both rural and metropolitan areas has contributed to lack of a potable water supply. *El Pais* indicated that from 1976 to the present Guatemala's population has more than doubled, increasing from 7.5 million to 15.8 million. However, rules and regulations at even the most basic level have never been implemented to protect the water supply. In fact, industrial waste is commonly discharged into lakes and rivers. The population also uses these same lakes and rivers as veritable garage and sewer drop sites, further complicating the contamination issue.

An obvious solution to the contamination would be to implement water treatment plants and to regulate industry dumping practices, but at this point proposed legislation has consistently been rejected. Even if the government does consider changing current laws, implementing them would require time and significant government investment, leaving millions in need of a vital natural resource in the meantime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: "Las aguas sucias de Guatemala" (Guatemala's Dirty Water Supply). *El Pais*. Accessed from http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/06/24/actualidad/1435177135_432060.html

Disputes between residents fighting over supplies of clean water are currently being reported in Guatemala. Open source channels indicate that anywhere from 40-90% of the countries' total water supply may be contaminated. This may be because there are currently no laws in place in Guatemala to regulate water use. For example, the boring of wells is authorized, chemical waste can be dumped into bodies of water without repercussion, and industrial and mining companies are able to use unlimited quantities of water at no cost.

Source: "Agua potable, plantas de tratamiento y energía, las deudas pendientes en comunidades" (Potable Water, Treatment Plants, Energy, and Pending Debts in the Community). *La Hora*. Accessed from <http://lahora.gt/agua-potable-plantas-de-tratamiento-y-energia-las-deudas-pendientes-en-comunidades/>

According to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), about 40 percent of the water sources in Guatemala (29,747 billion cubic meters) have some degree of contamination due to the lack of specific legislation regarding the issue. This organization further reported that an average of 84,991 billion cubic meters of water are available in the country. Of this quantity, 33,996 billion cubic meters are contaminated by industrial and domestic discharges that end up in tributaries. In an attempt to curb contamination issue, Congress proposed passing a General Water Law nearly 13 years ago, but resolutions have never been passed.

Violence Levels in El Salvador Fuel Migration Surge in Costa Rica

OE Watch Commentary: Migration patterns in Central and South America generally occur in a south to north direction, with the majority of individuals looking to settle in the US. However, the Costa Rican daily *La Nacion* is reporting reverse migratory patterns, with increased numbers of individuals from El Salvador applying for refugee status in Costa Rica due to excessive violence levels in their homeland. The source of this violence is allegedly gang related and has resulted in large-scale extortion of middle-class families, rape, murders, and overall chaos shadowed by unwavering impunity, as reported crimes remain unpunished. Nicaragua reported the same migratory trend, but indicated that most Salvadoran families end up relocating to Costa Rica or Panama for economic reasons.

Similar north-south migration patterns from El Salvador occurred during the 80s, when an estimated 20,000 Salvadoran nationals fled their homeland on tourist visas to escape violence and political persecution associated with the Civil War that plagued the country for more than a decade. In the years following the start of the war Costa Rica tightened its immigration policy in an attempt to curb the flow, but to this day porous borders shared with both Nicaragua and Panama facilitate the migratory process. For this reason, and the fact that Costa Rica is still considered a highly desirable (continued)

Source: "Salvadoreños buscan refugio en Costa Rica por la delincuencia" (Salvadorans Seek Refuge from Crime in Costa Rica). *La Nacion*. Accessed from <http://www.elsalvador.com/articulo/sucesos/salvadorenos-buscan-refugio-costa-rica-por-delincuencia-97482>

Motives behind migration patterns are generally economic and political, but violence indices also play a role. As this source points out, violence levels in El Salvador soared during 2015 with an average of 18 murders per day in the small Central American country with a total population of 6.29 million. Per capita, the murder rate averaged out to 104 per 100,000 marking the country as the most violent in the western hemisphere. La Nacion indicated that the high violence levels are directly related to gang activity in which an estimated 70,000 Salvadoran nationals are involved. These same violence levels are also the impetus that has prompted many to flee the country and apply for refugee status in neighboring Central American countries, with the highest number of requests reported in Costa Rica.

La Nacion further reported that initial refugee application increases were noted in 2013 and 2014 when 144 and 307 (continued)

Continued: Violence Levels in El Salvador Fuel Migration Surge in Costa Rica

destination in the region, Salvadorans will likely continue to choose it as an alternate destination to the United States for relocation as long as gang violence continues to complicate security issues at home. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

were submitted, respectively. During the first 8 months of 2015, this number soared to 421 and continues to increase. This is concerning to Costa Rican migratory officials as per an organizational spokesperson, “many of the applicants have criminal records in El Salvador and are attempting to flee from justice in their native country.” Conversely, Nicaragua has received over 20,000 refugee applications from Salvadoran nationals but this source indicated that once in the country, most families will attempt to enter Costa Rica for economic purposes.

Argentina’s Russia Ties Assessed as Macri Takes Power

OE Watch Commentary: Recent presidential elections in Argentina put an end to the remarkably long 12-year reign of Kirchnerism, named after the former President Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) and his wife, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (2007-2015). While in power the Kirchners developed a closed/protectionist economic policy which welcomed countries such as China and Russia but excluded other regional and international players. Regarding Russia, some open source channels heed coming changes in trade and defense agreements as center-right President Mauricio Macri settles into office. This is likely because Macri has publicly voiced his desire for change and the need to renew ties with Brazil and the US, as cited in the *Contexto* and *La Nacion* excerpts.

Russia currently maintains relatively extensive agreements with Argentina and stands to lose out if they are withheld. For example, Vladimir Putin and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner signed a “strategic partnership” in April 2015 that included oil and gas deals, plans for Russian funding of a hydropower facility and an agreement for Russia to help build a nuclear power plant in Argentina. There are also pending deals regarding the purchase of defense equipment. The cooperation extended to diplomatic relations too. Argentina has backed Russia’s position on Ukraine, while Putin has offered political support in Argentina’s international legal dispute with so-called vulture funds over the value of defaulted government bonds.

Relations between Russia and Argentina have obviously been good in recent years. What stands to be seen in the coming months is how Macri will work with Russia to modify, maintain, or completely cancel past agreements as he looks to open doors with other regional and international suitors. As seen in the first excerpt below from *Russia Direct*, some analysts believe that the Macri policy will maintain the current foreign policy with Russia. Other analysts feel that Macri will scrap the Kirchner economic policy while looking to improve relations with the US, as seen in the *Contexto* excerpt. In doing this, some of the trade agreements maintained with Russia would likely change, but at present none of the standing agreements have been nullified or even modified. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

Source: “As Argentina Turns to the Right, What Has Russia Lost?” *Russia Direct*. Accessed from <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/argentina-turns-right-what-has-russia-lost>

Vladimir Travkin, chief editor of *Latin America Magazine* indicated that Macri’s victory will not lead to any significant changes in relations between Moscow and Buenos Aires. He supported this claim by stating, “We buy a lot of products and foodstuffs from Argentina. The Argentines buy energy products and equipment from us – and for them, this is very important. In addition, we have been developing cooperation in the military-technical sphere. On the whole, our relations are mutually beneficial, and are at a high level.”

Source: “El fin del populismo”: el análisis de The Economist sobre el triunfo de Macri.” *Contexto*. Accessed from <http://www.contextotucuman.com/nota/28037/el-fin-del-populismo-el-analisis-de-the-economist-sobre-el-triunfo-de-macri.html#sthash.9uy8loFr.dpuf>

“The previous era (referring to Kirchnerism) has come to an end. And it ended at a time when Argentina finds itself in a very difficult economic and geopolitical situation – the country has been virtually isolated from all of the intensive integration processes that were taking place in the world. The country’s economy under the current president, and before that, under her late husband Nestor Kirchner, was too closed, too protectionist,” according to Vladimir Sudarev, deputy director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Alexander Gusev, director of the Institute of Strategic Planning indicated that he expects Macri to reach out to the US when he stated “The new head of Argentina is fully a pro-American politician. This can be felt from the sentiments he has been expressing for a long time. Of course, Mr. Macri will operate primarily within the framework of the agreements that have been concluded with the United States.”

Source: “Macri visita hoy Brasil y Chile en un viaje exprés” (Macri Visits Chile and Brazil). *La Nacion*. Accessed from <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1851216-macri-visita-hoy-brasil-y-chile-en-un-viaje-expres>

The Kirchner protectionist policy is one of the stringent in the world and has harmed relations with Brazil and with other countries of the southern hemisphere. In fact, Argentina has remained aloof from the Pacific Community Association, and nothing was achieved with Brazil during the Kirchner administration. As part of his election pledge, Macri promised to change this and made Brazil his first official visit following his election in December during which time he lifted trade restrictions and discussed realistic exchange rate policies.

Mexican Congress Considering Increased Authorities for Military

OE Watch Commentary: Since his inauguration Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has sought to decrease the role of the Mexican Armed Forces in domestic security operations – a goal clearly distinct from his predecessors. He himself has considered reliance upon the military to exacerbate rather than mitigate crime, but the Mexican perspective is mixed: although Mexicans are very supportive of their Armed Forces, there are also widespread concerns about turning into a militarized state.

For the most part, Peña has failed to achieve significant change, because of the scale of organized crime in Mexico and endemic corruption in civilian police forces. Now members of his own party, the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI), are pushing a different agenda – clarifying, if not strengthening, the legal authorities of the military in domestic operations (first excerpted article). This is not the only strategy Mexico has employed. For example, the federal government has established unified commands in trouble spots to coordinate efforts by security forces from different levels of government (second excerpted article). However, these programs too have relied upon military support and leadership and, when interagency coordination is not enough, the military usually provides the forces (third excerpted article). The PRI's proposed legal reforms may never be manifested in reality, but the real question will be the extent that the president will support such a major change of strategy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Historic photo of Mexican House of Representatives (lit. Chamber of Deputies).
Source: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c16668/>

“The Assembly has to see guaranteed its legitimate independence...”



Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto with Secretary of Defense (SEDENA) and Secretary of Navy (SEMAR) during September 2013 Mexican Independence Day parade.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a8/EPN._Desfile_Militar_D%C3%ADa_de_la_Independencia.jpg

Source: Enrique Méndez, “El PRI busca legalizar la participación de las fuerzas armadas en tareas de seguridad” [PRI seeks to legalize participation of armed forces in security tasks], *La Jornada*, 02 February 2016, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2016/02/02/politica/005n1pol?partner=rss>.

To begin the regular session of the House of Representatives, the PRI anticipates that the party will present an initiative to legalize the presence of armed forces in operations on the street. “In the PRI we are committed to advancing a legal framework that provides certainty to our armed forces, especially when they support the public security work”, revealed Mexican Representative Luis Felipe Vázquez Guerrero.... “One of the big challenges for the Congress is to boost creation of legal instruments that strengthen the legal basis for action by the armed forces in activities of defense abroad and domestic security,” he insisted.

Source: Julio Sánchez, “Es necesario fortalecer a policías: Renato Sales” [It is necessary to strengthen the police: Renato Sales], *Sexenio*, 30 January 2016, <http://www.sexenio.com.mx/articulo.php?id=71595>.

National Security Commissioner Renato Sales Heredia stated that it is necessary to strengthen the municipal security bodies, and it should happen through Unified Command ... the commissioner explained that the Unified Command does not take any municipal police function...

Source: Diego Borbolla, “Sedena despliega 3 mil 500 elementos en Chilapa” [SEDENA deploys 3500 personnel to Chilapa], *Azteca Noticias*, 28 January 2016, <http://www.aztecanoticias.com.mx/notas/seguridad/242346/sedena-despliega-3-mil-500-elementos-en-chilapa>

Approximately 3500 personnel from the Defense Department (SEDENA) will remain deployed in Chilapa Guerrero in response to the instability that has been reported in recent days ... 200 Federal Police personnel will also participate in these actions ...

Kidnapping Migrants Rampant in Tamaulipas

OE Watch Commentary: Despite government efforts and some measurable progress, kidnapping remains a major problem in Mexico. Ironically, government efforts to stop transnational organized crime, which have involved dismantling the leadership of major organizations such as the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, have contributed to the problem, since subordinate gangs have been forced to diversify activities to raise revenue as smuggling drugs has become more difficult. Consequently, Tamaulipas, the epicenter of the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, has become the kidnapping capital of Mexico (first excerpted article).

The most common victims, however, are not wealthy businessmen and tourists, as might be expected. Central American illegal migrants are actually in the crosshairs. Large numbers of Central Americans are kidnapped routinely in Tamaulipas, especially in border cities such as Reynosa (second through fourth excerpted articles). This makes sense, as they are the proverbial low-hanging fruit for kidnappers: there are large numbers of Central American migrants transiting Mexico to the US via Tamaulipas; migrants are isolated from support networks; migrants frequently have money saved up by their families to finance their travel; migrants are easy to identify and target since they stand out among the locals; and migrants are often loathe to approach the police out of fear of deportation. It is also politically sensitive, as Mexico is itself a country with large-scale emigration, dependent upon remittances.

Consequently, although the Mexican government wants to prevent illegal activity in and through its territory, there is a real human rights issue that Mexico has to balance with security. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**

Tamaulipas State Police Logo.
Source: Wikipedia



Central American migrants who crossed US-Mexico border.
Source: <http://m.editorials.voa.gov/a/a-refugee-parole-program-for-some-central-american/2531785.html>

Source: Staff author(s), “Alcanza Tamaulipas primer lugar en secuestros en tanto baja en resto del país” [Tamaulipas reaches first place in kidnappings while rest of country has lower rates], *Nuevo Laredo Express*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.nuevolaredoexpress.com/alcanza-tamaulipas-primer-lugar-en-secuestros-en-tanto-baja-en-resto-del-pais/>

During 2015 the number of kidnaping victims decreased 29% and extortion decreased 14.5%, but homicide increased 0.47% in comparison to 2014, according to a report produced by the Director of the National Public Safety System (SESNSP). ... In the case of kidnapping, Tamaulipas occupied first place in number of victims, with 327 persons affected, followed by 187 in Mexico State, 116 in Veracruz, and 110 in Guerrero.

Source: Staff author(s), “Aseguran a 16 centroamericanos en Reynosa” [Sixteen Central Americans Arrested in Reynosa], *El Mañana*, 06 February 2016, <http://elmanana.com.mx/noticia/92453/Aseguran-a-16-centroamericanos-en-Reynosa.html>

The Tamaulipas Coordination Group (GCT) reported that, during a security and surveillance patrol, state police officers received an alert that there were several apparently kidnapped people in a house ... in the Rivera del Carmen neighborhood ... Tamaulipas Force officers found 16 migrants ... 14 said they were from Guatemala and 4 said from El Salvador ...

Source: Staff author(s), “México: Explosión pone fin a secuestro de 60 migrantes en Reynosa, Tamaulipas” [Mexico: Explosion puts an end to kidnapping of 60 migrants in Reynosa, Tamaulipas], *Ruben Luengas* redaction from EFE, 10 February 2016, <http://rubenluengas.com/mexico-explosion-pone-fin-a-secuestro-de-60-migrantes-en-reynosa-tamaulipas/>

This Tuesday a gas explosion occurred in a safe house where at least 60 migrants were being held against their will ... in the municipality of Reynosa ... as a result of the explosion, five of the migrants were burned, although only three required hospitalization ...one of them revealed to authorities that they had been held more than one week and that almost all of them were from Guatemala.

Source: Staff author(s), “Rescatan a cuatro migrantes guatemaltecos secuestrados en Tamaulipas” [Authorities rescue four Guatemalan migrants kidnapped in Tamaulipas], *Vanguardia* redaction from NOTIMEX, 4 February 2016 <http://www.vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/rescatan-cuatro-migrantes-guatemaltecos-secuestrados-en-tamaulipas>

State Police officers from the Tamaulipas Force rescued four Central American migrants, whom they found kidnapped in [Reynosa] ... those responsible for imprisoning the emigrants ... fled after spotting the police operation.

Are Returning Southeast Asian ISIS Fighters Fueling a JI Resurgence?

OE Watch Commentary: A dangerous homegrown radical group in Indonesia could be experiencing a resurgence. According to the first excerpted article, there are concerns that Jemaah Islamiah (JI), an Indonesia-based homegrown radical network “with a far deadlier track record” in the region than ISIS, could be making a comeback. According to the article, JI had been degraded after a crackdown had put hundreds of its members behind bars following past attacks against Western interests.

Interviews with two former members revealed that the group is making a comeback and “is currently in preparation level. While they have not yet conducted any operations, they are recruiting people and strengthening their knowledge, education, network, and finances.”

The second excerpted article discusses some of the concerns, such as JI recruitment of these ISIS fighters who return to their homes in Southeast Asia. There are more than 1000 Southeast Asian ISIS fighters currently in Iraq and Syria, “with 2,000 to 3,000 camp followers.” The majority of Southeast Asian ISIS fighters come from Indonesia and Malaysia. The article explains that, while some fighters return home after being disillusioned with ISIS, they could still regroup with old jihadi networks such as the JI in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

Fearing that these groups could resume their violence in various parts of Southeast Asia, Jasminder Singh, a senior analyst of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, asserts that the problem needs to be confronted head on. He insists that such scenarios require regional and international cooperation to combat them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“JI is currently in preparation level. They have not done any operations, but they are recruiting people, strengthening their knowledge, education, network and finances,”

Source: “Jemaah Islamiah Active Once More,” *The New Paper Online* (Singapore), 16 February 2016, <<http://www.tnp.sg/news/world-news/jemaah-islamiah-active-once-more>>.

Jemaah Islamiah Active Once More

...two active members and one former member of JI have revealed that it (Jemaah Islamiah) is active again. It is enlisting new supporters, raising funds and sending men to train in war-torn Syria.

“JI is currently in preparation level. They have not done any operations, but they are recruiting people, strengthening their knowledge, education, network and finances,” said Nasir Abas, a former member.

Jakarta-based security analyst Sidney Jones believes JI’s membership is back to around 2,000, where it was before its most notorious attack - the 2002 bombing on the resort island of Bali that killed over 200 people, most of them Australians.

JI once had cells across South-east Asia, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, with a goal of establishing an Islamic state across the region.

Source: Frances Mangosing “Analyst: Southeast Asian Fighters of ISIS May Regroup in PH,” *Inquirer.net*, 20 January 2016, <<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/135309/analyst-southeast-asian-fighters-of-isis-may-regroup-in-ph>>.

Analyst: Southeast Asian Fighters of ISIS May Regroup in PH

A security analyst warned of the serious implications of Southeast Asian fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) located in Iraq and Syria who are poised to return to their home countries in the future.

Jasminder Singh [senior analyst of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University in Singapore] said these fighters may regroup with old jihadi networks such as the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

The ISIS fighters have been returning home “due to disillusionment with ISIS.”

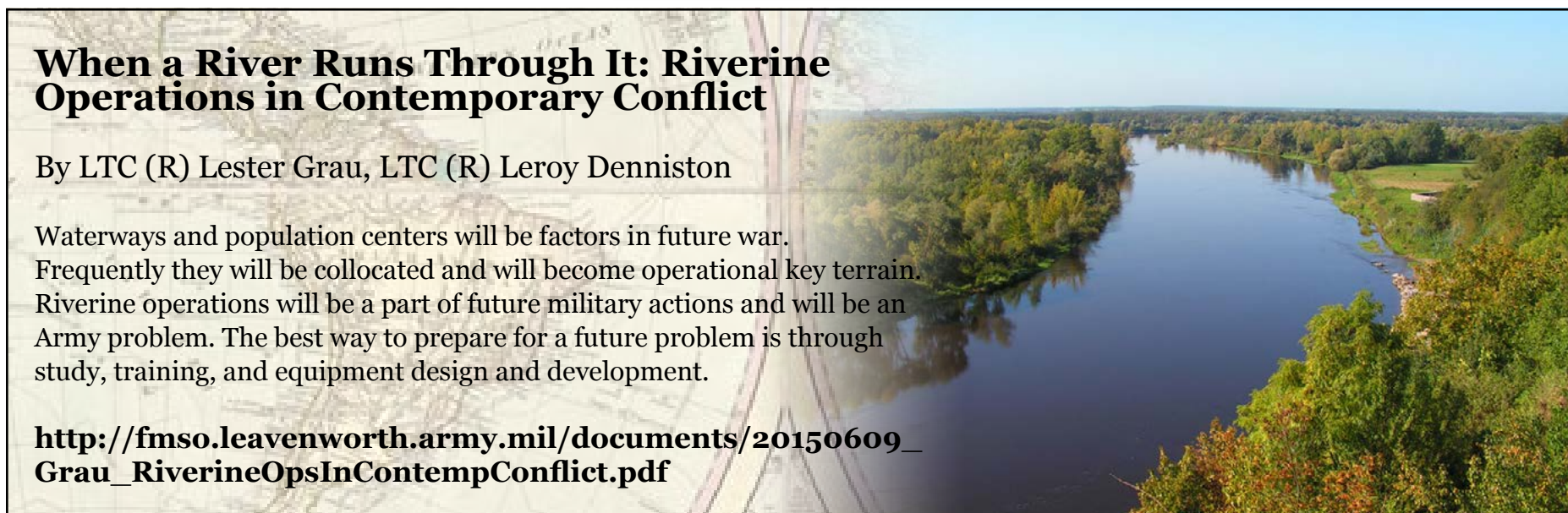
“For them the dream of an Islamic paradise was shattered by the brutalities and atrocities they witnessed, especially the beheadings and wanton killings of civilian Muslims, Shias and Sunnis alike,” Singh said.

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

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

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

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



Local Analyst Sees Possibility that Islamic State Combatants May Regroup in the Philippines

OE Watch Commentary: There is a possibility that Southeast Asian combatants currently fighting with ISIS in Iraq and Syria may regroup in the Philippines. According to excerpts from the accompanying article in The Philippines’ *Inquirer.net*, Jasminder Singh, an analyst of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, says these fighters may regroup with old jihadi networks such as the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. They could also “resume violence and sectarian conflict in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia.” When they return it is possible that they will target foreigners in the region, including foreign embassies and busy districts with economic and political interests, such as hotels and shopping malls.

As described in excerpts from the accompanying article, to date, there are more than 1000 Southeast Asian fighters with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, with 2000-3000 camp followers. A majority of these Southeast Asian combatants are from Indonesia and Malaysia. Thailand, Philippines and possibly Myanmar are also represented.

According to excerpts quoted from Singh, ISIS fighters have been returning home “due to disillusionment with ISIS. “For them the dream of an Islamic paradise was shattered by the brutalities and atrocities they witnessed, especially the beheadings and wanton killings of civilian Muslims, Shias and Sunnis alike.” He added that many of these Southeast Asian fighters expected glamorous jobs; however, they were only given menial tasks.

Singh’s analysis presents Southeast Asia with the regional challenge of thwarting the return of battle-hardened combatants. “It has become clear that no one state can manage the threat posed by IS (or ISIS). It will require regional and international cooperation, including the need to get assistance from Turkey and Iraq to send captured local fighters back for charges.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)

Source: “Analyst: Southeast Asian fighters of ISIS may regroup in PH,” *Inquirer.net*, 20 January 2016. <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/135309/analyst-southeast-asian-fighters-of-isis-may-regroup-in-ph>

A security analyst warned of the serious implications of Southeast Asian fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) located in Iraq and Syria who are poised to return to their home countries in the future.

Jasminder Singh, a senior analyst of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said ... there is a possibility of these combatants to regroup in the Philippines.

To date, there are more than 1,000 Southeast Asian fighters of the ISIS in Iraq and Syria, with 2,000 to 3,000 camp followers. Majority of these Southeast Asian combatants are from Indonesia and Malaysia. Thailand, Philippines and a possibility of Myanmar are also represented, Singh wrote.

Singh said these fighters may regroup with old jihadi networks such as the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

Furthermore, they could “resume violence and sectarian conflict in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia.”

It is also possible that they will target foreigners in the region, including foreign embassies and busy districts with economic and political interests such as hotels and shopping malls.

The ISIS fighters have been returning home “due to disillusionment of with ISIS.”

“For them the dream of an Islamic paradise was shattered by the brutalities and atrocities they witnessed, especially the beheadings and wanton killings of civilian Muslims, Shias and Sunnis alike,” Singh said.

He added that many of these Southeast Asian fighters expected glamorous jobs, however, they were only given menial tasks.

“It has become clear that no one state can manage the threat posed by IS (or ISIS). It will require regional and international cooperation, including the need to get assistance from Turkey and Iraq to send captured local fighters back for charges,” Singh said.



Islamic State fighters in Anbar province, Iraq.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Iraq_and_the_Levant#/media/File:Islamic_State_%28IS%29_insurgents,_Anbar_Province,_Iraq.jpg

Can the New Lao People's Revolutionary Party Leader Handle the Pressure?

OE Watch Commentary: Bounnhang Vorachit, the new ruling Communist Party chief of Laos, faces daunting international challenges, together with a heavy weight of expectations domestically. According to excerpts in the accompanying article from *The Straits Times*, Laos has taken the helm as chairman of ASEAN as the regional organization launches a difficult project of region-wide economic integration and grapples with disputes over territory in the South China Sea that pits three member-nations against superpower China. While implementing these challenges abroad, Vorachit must also execute domestic policy to meet expectations that await him following the success of his predecessor.

According to excerpts, under Sayasone Choummaly, Vorachit's predecessor, Laos' economy grew by 7-8 percent annually and made impressive progress in meeting targets for poverty reduction. In late January the Communist Party set an ambitious new goal of 7.5 percent annual growth for the next five years under Vorachit 's leadership. It also adopted an action plan to lift Laos out of "least-developed" status by 2020. This will be no easy task, given that the global economy has significantly slowed.

As described in the accompanying article, there are four reasons why Vorachit faces international challenges. First, as chair of ASEAN, he has a duty to champion the interests of all member-nations. Second, Laos has its own interests to protect as a neighbor and trading partner of China. Third, China and Vietnam have significant historical influence over Laos, but they are now embroiled in conflict over territory in the South China Sea. Finally, according to the article, US Secretary of State John Kerry, who visited Vientiane in late January, is seeking to curb China's ambition to control the whole of the troubled sea. Decisions made by the government under Vorachit's leadership will have consequences not only for Laos, but also for the entire region.

End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)

Source: "Laos' New Leader Faces Difficult Times: The Nation" *The Straits Times*, 26 January 2016. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/laos-new-leader-faces-difficult-times-the-nation>

... Mr Bounnhang Vorachit - the new ruling communist party chief ...

The heavy weight of expectation awaits him. Under his predecessor Choummaly, Laos' economy grew by 7 to 8 per cent annually and made impressive progress in meeting targets for poverty reduction.

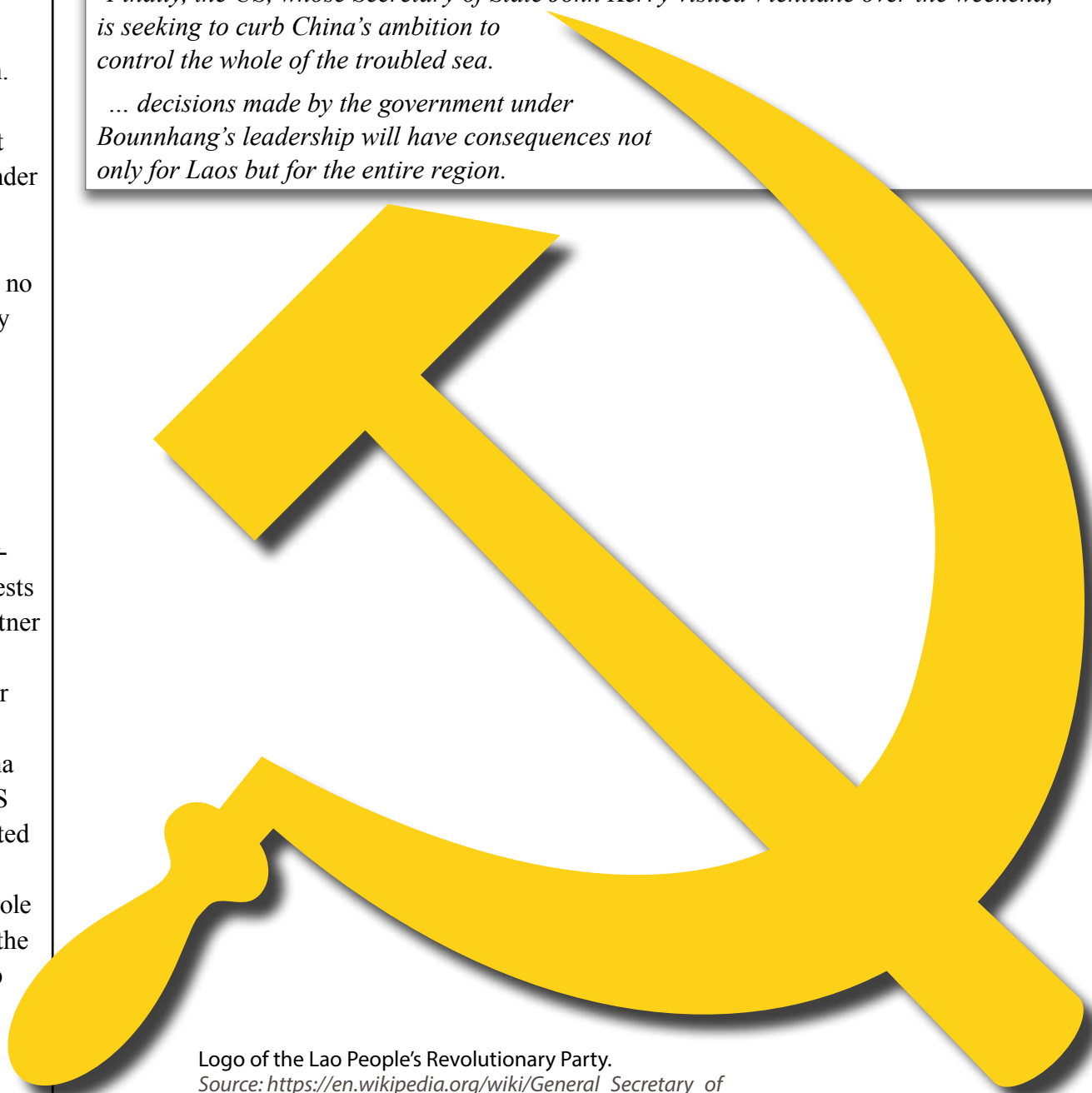
... the Communist Party set an ambitious new goal of 7.5 per cent annual growth for the next five years - under Mr Bounnhang's leadership. It also adopted an action plan to lift Laos out of "least-developed" status by 2020. This will be no easy task, given that the world economy has significantly slowed.

The international challenges Mr Bounnhang faces are, if anything, even more daunting. Laos has taken the helm of Asean just as it launches a difficult project of region-wide economic integration and grapples with disputes over territory in the South China Sea pitting three member-nations against superpower China.

First, as chair of Asean, it has a duty to champion the interests of all member-nations. Second, it has its own interests to guard as a neighbour and trading partner of China. Third, China and Vietnam have significant historical influence over Laos, but they are now embroiled in conflict over territory in the South China Sea.

Finally, the US, whose Secretary of State John Kerry visited Vientiane over the weekend, is seeking to curb China's ambition to control the whole of the troubled sea.

... decisions made by the government under Bounnhang's leadership will have consequences not only for Laos but for the entire region.



Logo of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Secretary_of_the_Lao_People's_Revolutionary_Party

Even After the Jakarta Attacks, there is Potential for More Lone Terrorist Cells

OE Watch Commentary:

Following the 14 January attacks in Jakarta, Indonesian police have foiled potential terrorist attacks in at least three other locations, according to Jakarta police chief Inspector-General Tito Karnavian. According to excerpts from the accompanying article in Singapore's *Channel NewsAsia*, the terrorist attack plots were hatched by seven people, who are among thirteen suspects arrested in various provinces following attacks in Jakarta. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks in Jakarta, which were a series of explosions and gunfire at a main intersection in central Jakarta, not far from the Presidential Palace and US Embassy. At least eight people – four attackers and four civilians – were killed, and 23 others were injured.

In an in-depth interview with *Channel NewsAsia*, Karnavian comments that the group was preparing to execute its own mayhem when arrested. "Henro is the leader of the other cell. He also [had] a plan to attack other targets," he said, adding that the suspects had still been in the process of determining their targets.

As described in the accompanying article, when caught, the group had already acquired guns from a prison near Jakarta, in Tangerang, with the help of a convicted terrorist. The guns included one revolver and eight pistols that had been smuggled out of the prison.

According to Karnavian, the current network of terrorist cells in Indonesia is structured yet flexible and operates at the grassroots level. He also supports the theory of the Indonesian counterterrorism squad Densus 88, which believes ISIS is trying to create "lone-wolf cells" to allow the terrorist network to continue plotting attacks even if one or two cells are destroyed.

As the world's most populous Muslim country, Indonesia regularly sees threats of terrorist attacks. Karnavian realizes that these threats may originate domestically. By recognizing local terrorist elements, Indonesia is in a better position to counter these threats. However, based on the country's population size and demographics, Indonesian authorities need to remain active to keep track of terrorist movements. **End OE Watch Commentary (Ortiz)**



Police post damaged by terrorist attack.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Jakarta_attacks#/media/File:2016_Sarinah-Starbucks_Jakarta_Attack_7.JPG

Source: "Indonesian Police Foil Three More Possible Terror Attacks after Jakarta Blasts" *Channel NewsAsia*, 22 January 2016. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/indonesian-police-foil/2447894.html>

JAKARTA: Indonesian police have foiled potential terror attacks in at least three locations ... Jakarta police chief Inspector-General Tito Karnavian revealed in an exclusive interview with Channel NewsAsia ...

The plots were hatched by seven people, who are among 13 suspects arrested in various provinces following the mid-day attack ...

The group, according to Inspector-General Tito, was preparing to execute their own mayhem when arrested.

"Henro is the leader of the other cell. He also got a plan to attack other targets. The timing is likely to be different," he said, adding the suspects were still in the process of determining their targets.

The group had already acquired guns from a prison in Tangerang, Banten province ... with the help of a convicted terrorist, the police chief said. One revolver and eight pistols had been smuggled out of the prison.

The current network of terror cells in Indonesia is structured yet flexible and operates at the grass-root level, according to the police chief.

He also cited Indonesian counter-terrorism squad Densus 88, which believes the Islamic State militant group is trying to create "lone-wolf cells" to allow the terror network to continue plotting attacks even if one or two cells are destroyed.

Islamic State Attack in Jakarta May Lead to Counterterrorism Cooperation with China

OE Watch Commentary: On 14 January 2016 a group of militants, including four suicide bombers, launched an attack on a Starbucks and a shopping mall in an area of Jakarta near diplomatic facilities and popular with foreigners. ISIS immediately claimed the attack, which was its first in Southeast Asia. The social media postings of Indonesian Syria-based mastermind Bahrun Naim suggests he hoped to duplicate ISIS' mass-casualty attack in Paris in November 2015, but failed in that "only" two civilians were killed.

Two factors may account for the low death toll in the attack. First, unlike the Paris attackers, who trained in Syria and then entered Europe with the migrants flows, the attackers in Jakarta received their training locally. Second, one month before the attack in Jakarta, Indonesian security forces broke up a cell near Jakarta that might have been the second half of the attack and which could have caused more casualties.

Despite coming out relatively unscathed after this attack, an article in *Jakarta Post* on 22 January 2016 on the security forces' response to the attack emphasizes that Densus 88, Indonesia's well-trained counterintelligence unit, will have significant difficulties preventing future attacks. The article reports that Indonesian security forces recognize that the country's maritime borders are extremely porous. Even though these borders are well-patrolled, the security forces cannot catch all militants shuttling between the islands of Indonesian and southern Mindanao, Philippines.

Moreover, there are up 1000—if not more—Indonesians, Malaysians and Filipinos fighting with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Indonesian security forces struggle to track all of them, but lack a coherent defense against their social media recruitment activities. At least one of the attackers in Jakarta was a follower of an Indonesian jihadist funder, who communicates online even from his prison cell.

The article also mentions ten Uighurs from China who have been arrested in the last year operating with ISIS cells in Indonesia, including the cell broken up one month before the Jakarta attack. As a result, Indonesian security forces will begin to cooperate more with China on the issue of Uighur migration in Southeast Asia and possible relationships between their trafficking networks and militant groups. In the context of the growing presence of ISIS in Southeast Asia, this Indonesian-Chinese cooperation could be part of a broader trend of regional counterterrorism responses.

This cooperation could include a growing role for both Indonesia and China. Indonesia is the most likely target of attacks in the region, while China is the region's most powerful country and the home to the Uighurs, whose migration and role in militancy has become a concern in Indonesia and China, as well as other countries in the region.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

“Jakarta says it is working with China to stem the flow of Uighur militants, who police say are responding to a call by Santoso, Indonesia’s most high-profile backer of Islamic State, to join his band of fighters.”



A group Uighurs was convicted in Indonesia in 2015 of trying to join Sulawesi-based Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, which pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015.
Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/indonesia-uyghur-07132015150809.html>

Source: “Indonesia Concerned with Ease of Entry by Uighur Militants,”
The Star, 22 January 2016

Indonesia concerned with ease of entry by Uighur militants

The ease with which three separate groups of ethnic Uighur militants sneaked into Indonesia is ringing alarm bells for security forces, who are on high alert for a far deadlier attack than last week’s assault on Jakarta. At least 10 Uighurs, who hail from China, arrived in the world’s most populous Muslim nation over the last 18 months to join radicals, exposing an extensive support network ready to welcome wannabe militants.

“There is enough security at the main entry point,” the country’s police chief, Badrodin Haiti, said. “But there are more traditional points for entering illegally, where usually fishermen bring people in.” With around 500 Indonesians taking one-way trips to join Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, authorities had not considered the Southeast Asian nation’s porous border to be a pressing security issue until recently.

Jakarta says it is working with China to stem the flow of Uighur militants, who police say are responding to a call by Santoso, Indonesia’s most high-profile backer of Islamic State, to join his band of fighters. Police suspect Mehmet was one of several militants, including the four Indonesians who launched last week’s Jakarta attack, who received funding from Islamic State members in Syria. Two more Uighurs were arrested this month after police found bomb-making equipment at their house.

China’s Space Station Quest: Making Progress

OE Watch Commentary: 2016 is going to be a busy year for China’s space missions as the country struggles to gain ground in the industry. According to the following excerpted article, the country plans to conduct more than 20 space missions this year, which is the most missions ever undertaken in a single year. Along with launching satellites in support of Chinese navigation and observation systems and the maiden flight of two rockets, China is making strides toward its goal of constructing its first space station.

The excerpted article offers an excellent rundown of China’s plans. Leading up to its goal of having an operational space station within the next six years, China plans to “launch the core module of its space station in 2018 to test related technologies and research engineering issues.” China anticipates its space station will become fully operational in 2022.

China has lagged far behind in space and satellite technology. Putting it into perspective, the country launched its first satellite in 1970, while the former Soviet Union and the United States had launched their first satellites 20 years earlier, in the 1950s. China sent its first person into space in 2003, more than four decades after the United States and the Soviet Union had first accomplished the feat. The first space stations were the Soviet Union’s Salyut 1 in 1971 and the US Skylab in 1973, approximately five decades before China’s first space station is expected to become active. While the lag time between China’s accomplishments and those of the United States and the Russia has grown over time, this year should prove to be a good one for China, as it makes a concerted effort to push forward. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“This year will see more than 20 space launches, the most missions in a single year.”

Source: Zhao Lei, “Twenty Missions Prepare to Lift Off in 2016,” *Xinhua*, 8 January 2016, <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/sci/2016-01/08/c_134990792.htm>.

Twenty missions prepare to lift off in 2016

“This year will see more than 20 space launches, the most missions in a single year.”

With these ambitious space projects proceeding well, China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp is finalizing the development of the next-generation carrier rockets.

To accommodate the frequent space missions, the academy [China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology] has increased its annual manufacturing capacity from a maximum of eight rockets up to 20 and has substantially reduced the time required to develop each new rocket.

PLA Marine Corps Training for All-Terrain Combat Capability

OE Watch Commentary: The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is training its Marine Corps to go beyond a typical maritime mission. On the first day of 2016, more than 2000 soldiers from the Marine Corps and an unspecified special operations regiment of the PLA participated in a full-scale training operation that tested transportation, logistics, and combat capability under harsh conditions. In the following excerpted article Rear Admiral Li Xiaoyan, Deputy Chief of Staff of the South China Sea Fleet of the PLA Navy, offers some insight into the training exercise and the Navy’s future training endeavors.

The soldiers were transported to a training base in Xinjiang via highway, waterway, railway, and air. According to Li, the commanding officer of the exercise, “So far, this is the longest-distance power projection of the PLA Navy involving the most number of approaches.” The training tested the Marines’ combat capabilities under extreme cold weather conditions, which is part of the process toward achieving the goal of all-terrain combat capability.

While training in the Gobi desert presents a vastly different scene from typical maritime conditions in which Marines would normally be accustomed, Li explains that it “will help enhance the PLA Navy’s special operations troops’ capability of undertaking various tasks regardless of regional, spatial, and climatic restrictions.”

Going forward, according to Li, the PLA is considering further integrating civilian resources into its power projects to make the training more efficient. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Yao Jianing (editor), “Rear Admiral: Marine Corps’ Winter Training in Gobi Desert a Normal Practice,” *China Military Online*, 18 January 2016, <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2016-01/18/content_6861582.htm>.

Marine Corps’ Winter Training in Gobi Desert a Normal Practice

During the training, the troops carried out realistic training on a string of subjects, including offensive operations and actual-troop confrontation in the Gobi Desert under extreme cold weather conditions, which fully tested the marines’ combat capability.

The Marine Corps has participated in trans-MAC training at the Zhurihe Training Base, at cold northeast China, on plateaus, and in the Gobi Desert successively, and have made progress and accumulated experiences, but it hasn’t reached the goal of all-terrain combat yet.

We are doing our best to make progress and improvement through training, so as to enable the marines to better adapt to different environments. We are constantly improving its all-terrain combat capability.

It’s realistic training all the way through. Starting with power projection, we designed enemy scenarios, put the troops in realistic confrontations, cancelled the previous adaptive training and directly started confrontational training. This training is closer to real combat in terms of the form of the organization.

Xi Announces Establishment of Five PLA Theater Commands; “Historic Progress of the PLA in Building its Joint Operational System.”

OE Watch Commentary: As yet another step in the overhaul of China’s military structure, on 1 February 2016 President Xi Jinping announced the establishment of Five PLA theater commands: the Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, and Central Theater Commands. The five new theater commands are established on the basis of the functions and institutions of the former seven Military Area Commands (MAC). Under the leadership of the Central Military Commission, the Party’s highest organ that oversees the military, the five new theater commands are equivalent to the former MACs, and the top commanding officers are also equivalent to the former MAC commanders. As the theater commands come online, the former seven MACs - Shenyang, Beijing, Lanzhou, Ji’nan, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Chengdu - will be canceled. Most of the new theater commanders previously headed one of the MACs, but many were given command of theaters far from their original power base. Was this a move to ensure that no commander maintains a network of personal loyalty that could possibly supersede Party authority?

At a press conference with China’s Ministry of National Defense following the announcement, Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun answered journalists’ questions about the establishment of the theater commands. In response to a question about why the change was being made, he answered that the change “is made on the principle that the Central Military Commission (CMC) takes charge of the overall administration of the Chinese armed forces, the theater commands focus on combat readiness, and the various military services pursue their own construction and development.”

One looming questions remains: Is there something to the geographic naming versus being named in correspondence to a Chinese city that was the center of the old MACs? The fact that Xi mentioned in his speech that “the theater commands are responsible... for responding to security threats in their strategic directions” supports that idea. Does this mean that, rather than an inward and domestic focus that seemed to be the focus of the old MACs, the new theater commands have an external orientation as well, focused on a “strategic direction” beyond China’s borders? **End OE Watch Commentary (Marsh)**

“Xi pointed out that the theater commands are responsible for such missions as responding to security threats in their strategic directions, maintaining peace, deterring wars, and winning battles.”

Source: “Li Yuan Dong (李原东), “中国人民解放军五战区成立，司令员、政委名单公布” (Chinese People’s Liberation Army establishes Five Theater Commands, list of Political Commissars Published), *China.com*, 1 February 2016, <http://xj.china.com/xjbb/xwbb/11165913/20160201/21393023.html>

Chinese People’s Liberation Army establishes Five Theater Commands

On February 1, 2016 Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the establishment of five theater commands and their “joint operational institutions,” calling the move one “of great and far-reaching significance in ensuring the PLA to be capable of fighting and winning battles and effectively safeguarding China’s national security.”

Xi pointed out that the theater commands are “responsible for such missions as responding to security threats in their strategic directions, maintaining peace, deterring wars and winning battles,” and that they will play “significant roles in safeguarding the overall situations concerning the national security strategy and the military strategy.”

“All the theater commands should devote themselves to studying how to fight wars, research the principles of winning modern warfare, speed up the formulation of the theater commands’ strategies, perfect their combat plans, and focus on joint training, so as to obtain the initiative in future warfare,” Xi said.

One area that received significant emphasis was Xi’s several references to joint operations. He pointed out that all “theater commands should command joint operations in a highly effective way, enhance their command capabilities, strengthen joint command, joint operations and joint support within the theater commands, and organize troops to complete routine combat-readiness and military operations.” Xi also announced in his speech that, along with the founding of the five theater commands, there was also being established “joint operational commanding institutions of the theater commands,” and that this was “a strategic decision made by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC with an eye to realizing the ... dream of a strong military.” Finally, President Xi, who also simultaneously is Chairman of the Central Military Commission, added that the move indicates “historic progress of the PLA in building its joint operational system.”

Xi concluded his speech by saying that “all the theater commands should always be prepared for war, so as to safeguard China’s national sovereignty, security, and development interests.”

First Commander of the PLA Army Interviewed

OE Watch Commentary: On 31 December 2015 General Li Zhocheng took the military flag from President Xi Jinping and became the first commander of the PLA Army. Li stated that this is a strategic requirement that is instrumental in the fulfillment of the China Dream and the strong army dream. Building a modern Army is a strategic choice, he noted, in line with the new revolution in military affairs. In the article, he brings up several of items that have been discussed in the past in regard to the construction of a PLA-type battlefield of the future (weapons based on new physical principles, the informatization of weaponry, use of elite forces, training the force for fighting, etc.). This is a step toward deepening military reform and improving the management system. It is conducive to the establishment of a strategic and campaign command system as well. The main issue that was entirely new in Li’s interview was the discussion of the recent theater changes. He noted that it is “necessary to break the current military region system, strive to establish a ‘CMC [Central Military Commission]-theater commands-combat units’ operations command system and a ‘CMC-service commands-combat units’ force leadership and management system.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

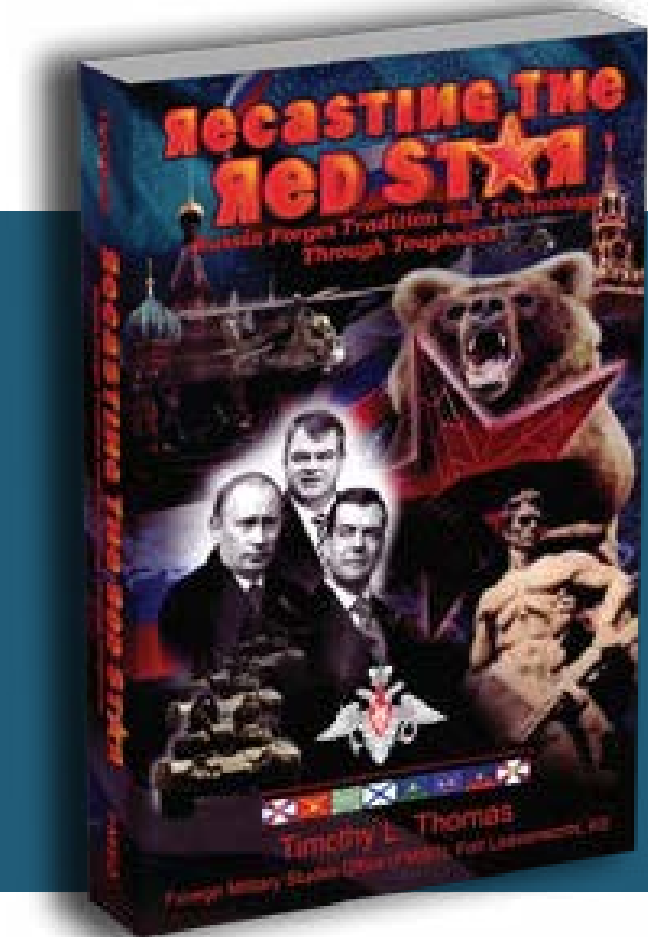
“To propel the Army’s development from being big to being strong, it is necessary to get rid of the inert mindset of maintaining a ‘large-sized Army,’ and it is also necessary to repudiate the incorrect ideas about ‘the Army Being Outdated’ and ‘the Army being useless,’ so as to seize the opportunity, actively make changes, catch up with the trend, keep pace with the times, maintain strengths, and take the lead in making developments.”

Source: “Exclusive Interview of Li Zuocheng by Renmin Ribao after He Was Appointed to be the First Commander of the PLA Army,” *Renmin Ribao Online*, 31 January 2016, p. 6.

Consistently take combat power as the sole and fundamental yardstick, deeply study the characteristics and laws of Army building, accurately grasp our functional status around the crucial issues of how to build, how to manage, how to train, and how to use the Army force...

Adhere to information dominance, take information power as a pivotal factor in shaping and enhancing combat power, set great store by the building of information systems and giving efficient play to the role of information, promote the Army’s transformation from mechanization to informatization.

Persistently orient force building to the performing of tasks, vigorously develop new-type combat forces, strengthen the Army units’ digitalized, three-dimensional, special, and unmanned operation capabilities, and transform the Army’s operations from a regional dense pattern to a whole-territory operation pattern.



Tim Thomas’s *Recasting the Red Star* describes Russia’s culture of military thought through its modernization effort. Adding to his robust library of work on the subject, Tim Thomas illuminates Russia’s Defense Ministry reform efforts, the Russian national security strategy take on the operational environment, and a relevant review of the Russian military doctrine.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to Change Asian Transport Connectivity

OE Watch Commentary: In late January 2016 the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) officially launched operations at its Beijing, China, headquarters. Taken from AIIB's mission statement, the bank is established to invest in "the development of infrastructure and other productive sectors in Asia, including energy and power, transportation and telecommunications, rural infrastructure and agriculture development, water supply and sanitation, environmental protection, urban development and logistics, etc." As a multilateral lender, AIIB is funded by its constituent members, currently 57 countries, drawn from every continent except North America.

AIIB's significance lies in three areas: 1. with a \$100 billion in capital that will be augmented through borrowing to increase the total lendable pool, AIIB has significant capacity to fund Asian infrastructure projects and thereby change how goods flow around Asia and beyond; 2. with over 30% of the bank's voting rights, China has the influence, though not dominant decision making, to have the bank function as it sees fit; 3. while AIIB's failure would reflect poorly on China's economic and diplomatic leadership, the more likely scenario is that its success will likely diminish the influence of existing multilateral institutions, e.g., the Asian Development Bank (ADB), led by Japan, and the World Bank and IMF, both of whose largest voting member is the US.

The concept of a dedicated, multilateral Asian infrastructure lender was put forth as official Chinese policy by President Xi Jinping in October 2013. Japan and the US did not welcome this proposal, but it met with varying degrees of eager anticipation by 56 other countries (not including China). Since AIIB is at least a year away from its first loan, its real import is unknown. However, what can be said is that China did not go to the effort and expense – it contributed \$50 billion of the bank's total contributed capital – to not use AIIB to further its strategic ends. Second, the fact that AIIB is headquartered in Beijing while the World Bank and IMF are both located in Washington, DC is relevant to making Beijing a larger center of gravity in global economic policy making.

In the first article, published by China's *Xinhua*, a Chinese academic represents China's leadership of AIIB as its transformation from a simple participant in an order devised by Western powers into a contributor or possibly "driver" of global economic policy. China is the world's second largest economy, so it is natural that it enjoy influence over global institutions. The real question is: Will that influence be exercised in a cooperative, rules-based, transparent manner or a strongly revisionist approach that jeopardizes Asian prosperity and security?

The second article, published by Germany's *Deutsche Welle*, covers the AIIB's Chinese president-elect's insistence that it is a complement, not a competitor to existing institutions. Likewise, he states that AIIB lending will help integrate Asian economies to the benefit of all. A key milestone to keep in sight going forward with its operations is to what extent AIIB funded infrastructure projects tie other Asian economies to China's. If its projects help lower transport costs more or less across the board, then all will benefit. If those projects slant significantly toward integration with the Chinese economy, then they will be trade diverted from other global economies, leading to a loss in global trade and a relative increase in China's importance to the region.

The third article highlights the very different regional perspectives on the influence of AIIB and China's leadership. As a representative example of attitudes throughout the world, governments are generally optimistic that they will get a meaningful piece of the billions of dollars AIIB will start pushing into projects in the coming decade. These funds will undoubtedly change transportation networks across the Eurasian continent from Korea to Russia and points further west. However, there are those, mostly out of government, who are suspicious that China's AIIB leadership may lead to a disregard for the environment and limit their nations' ability to resist Chinese political pressure.

From a purely commercial perspective, it is likely that AIIB projects will lead to greater regional economic growth. If the projects lead to greater trade and communication for each recipient, then it is likely that China's influence over these economies and their governments will not materially increase. However, if AIIB projects are typified by an "all roads lead to China" practical impact, then we will see a reduction in other Asian nations' range of independent policy action both politically and economically. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)**

Source: "AIIB to Make Substantial Contribution to Global Economic Governance," *Xinhua*, 15 January 2016. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/15/c_135013561.htm.

To Chen Fengying, research fellow at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the opening of the AIIB marks China's "shift from a participant of the global governance system to a contributor of it," reflecting a shift in the country's ability to manage global economic issues.

Source: "China-Led Development Bank AIIB Formally Established, To Commence Operations in January," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 December 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/china-officially-launches-new-development-bank-aiib/a-18985025>.

Although the AIIB is being seen as a challenge to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), China insists that the aim of the new multilateral lender is to promote regional economic cooperation rather than compete with existing financial institutions. "The popularity of AIIB stems from its win-win nature as the bank serves to enhance connectivity among Asian countries by supporting infrastructure development," Jin Lique, AIIB's president-designate.

Source: "Thailand Bets on China-led AIIB to Finance Massive Infrastructure Needs," *East by Southeast*, 16 February 2016. <http://www.eastbysoutheast.com/thailand-bets-on-china-led-aiib-to-finance-massive-infrastructure-needs/>.

The Thai government foresees it will benefit from intensified diplomatic rivalries between China and Japan. During a speech in April 2015, Thailand's energy minister Narongchai Akrasanee, cannily asserted that "one thing we have learned is that if we welcome the Chinese, the Japanese will come running." Support for the AIIB in Thailand has not been unanimous, however. Kasit Piromya, a former foreign minister and current advisor to the Democratic Party of Thailand, criticized the creation of the AIIB as "part of China's global strategy to dominate" and argued at the Asian Financial Forum that "China will be dictating terms and that will further weaken the ASEAN community."

Bosnian Police Receive Russian Training

OE Watch Commentary: Bosnia's Republika Srpska was officially created in 1995 to offer limited autonomy to the Serbian-majority regions of Bosnia Herzegovina. In 2015 Russia's and Republika Srpska's interior ministers signed a protocol that agreed to Russian training of the Republika Srpska Special Police.

As indicated in the accompanying excerpt, this agreement is designed to strengthen mutual operations on terrorism, counter-narcotics, and human trafficking. In addition, it will provide an opportunity for Republika Srpska to purchase armored cars, water cannons, and Kalashnikov rifles.

Bosnia is not the only country to expand cooperation with Russia in military and economic issues over the past year. Serbia also engaged in a joint military drill with Russia in September 2015 as well as developing plans for a Russian-Serbian helicopter repair center. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

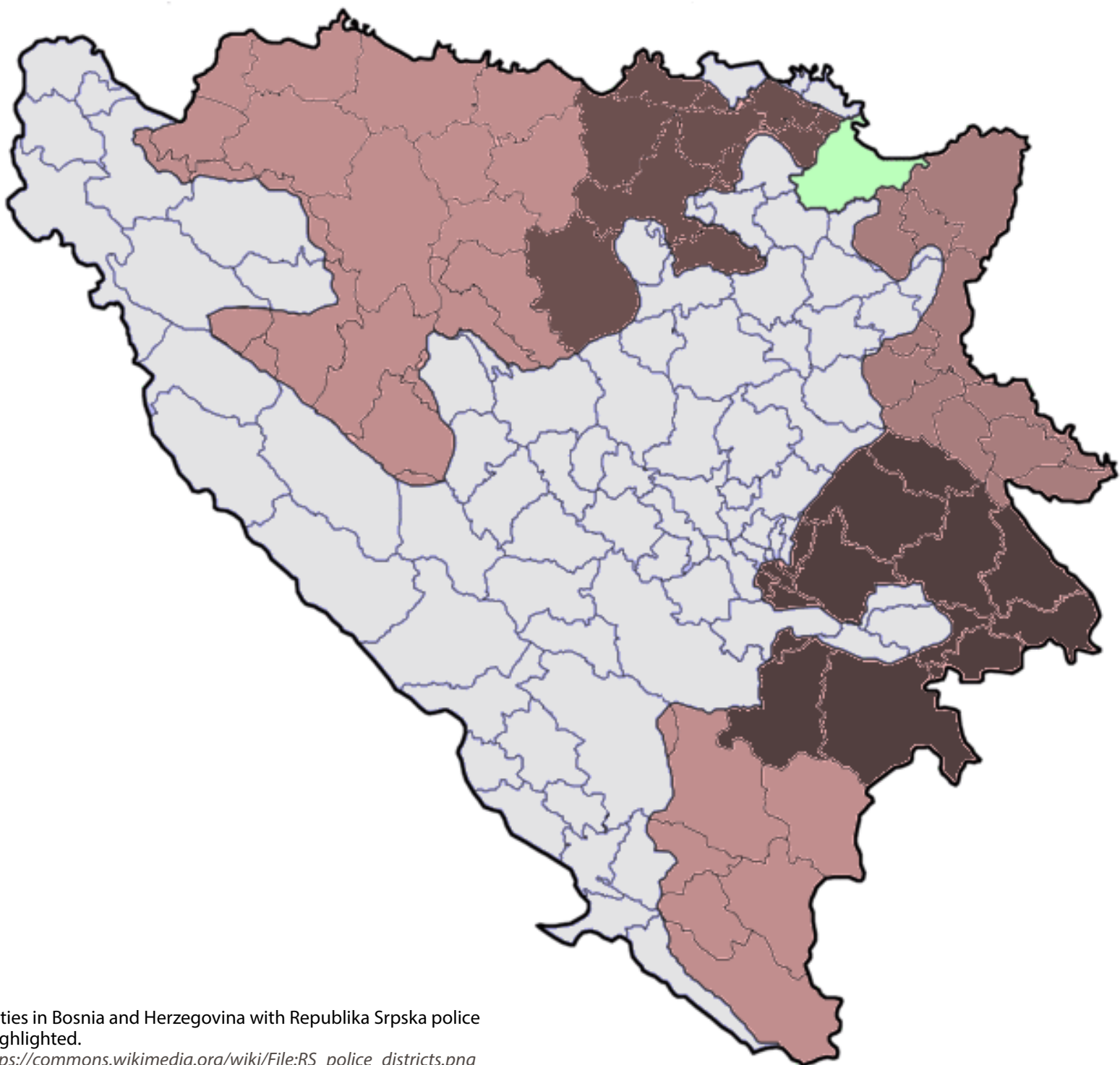
“[The] government will soon send its special police units for training in Russia and is also keen to buy military equipment from Moscow”

Source: Rodolfo, Toe. “Russia to Train Bosnian Serb Special Police.” *Balkan Insight*. 19 February 2016. < <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/republika-srpska-police-to-get-trained-in-russia-02-19-2016>>

“Dragan Lukac, Interior Minister of Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia, said the entity government will soon send its special police units for training in Russia and is also keen to buy military equipment from Moscow.

... He added that working with the Russian police would be of great importance, especially in terms of dealing with terrorism.

... According to Lukac, cooperation with the Russian police should also concern exchanges of information in the fight against narcotics and human trafficking.”



Municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Republika Srpska police districts highlighted.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RS_police_districts.png

Gauging Russia's Focus on Tajikistan

OE Watch Commentary: Russian Armed Forces periodically conduct joint military exercises with Central Asian forces outside of the Collective Security Treaty Organization that involve a large number of soldiers and a dozen or more aircraft or weapon systems. The accompanying article discusses a joint Russian-Tajik exercise that is set to take place in March in the Khatlon and Gorno-Badakhshan regions of Tajikistan, while another article reports on a new development with the 201st Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan. There are few things that can be taken away from both pieces.

If the information on the exercise is accurate, it will be the first of its kind with paratroopers dropping into Gorno-Badakhshan, in addition to the large number of people involved. The article notes that the exercise will be carried out by Tajikistan's General Staff and include reservists and government personnel, so it is possible that the number of participants could be as many as fifty thousand people. However, it is unknown how active of a role they would take. Additionally, there is no confirmation of how many Russians from the 201st will participate.

The other article reports on the 201st changing from a division into a brigade. This is the second significant change to the unit after the 149th Motorized Rifle Regiment moved from Kulyab to Dushanbe at the end of 2015 (see: "Changes to the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan" *OE Watch*, January 2016). The Russian Central Military District reports that the switch to a brigade is for strategic purposes because of the situation in Central Asia, though Russian Ground Forces had already changed their divisions into brigades several years ago; this had yet to take place for the 201st.

This all comes at a time when Russian assistance for the Central Asian region has been reduced. While there is no connection between the restructuring and the exercise noted in either article, Tajikistan continues to be a focal point for Russia. While there have been no reports in recent months of a reduction in Russian security assistance to Tajikistan, events like the exercise and the restructuring are worth noting over a long-term period. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The Russian 201st military base in Tajikistan will be changed this year into a brigade staff without losing combat capability”



Soldiers from Russia's 201st Motorized Rifle Division prepare for a field training exercise in Tajikistan. It is unknown how many soldiers from the 201st will participate in a large-scale exercise in Tajikistan in March 2016.

Source: <http://politikus.ru/army/26635-ucheniya-rossiyskih-voennyh-nachalis-v-tadzhikistane.html>

Source: Yuldashev, Avaz. “Таджикистан и Россия проведут масштабные учения в Хатлоне” (Tajikistan and Russia will carry out a massive exercise in Khatlon), *Asia-Plus*, 1 February 2016. <http://news.tj/ru/news/tadzhikistan-i-rossiya-provedut-masshtabnye-ucheniya-v-khatlone>

Tajikistan and Russia will carry out a massive exercise in Khatlon

A large-scale operational-tactical exercise of the armed forces, reservists, and government personnel will be carried out by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Tajikistan in the territory of the Khatlon garrison in early March...it will engage around 50 thousand soldiers and officers and will also include service members of the 201st Russian military base in Tajikistan. “The number of Russians that will take part in the exercise is under negotiation.” – said the source...The exercise will involve aircraft, armored vehicles, and artillery...

...the commander of the Central Military District of the Russian Armed Forces was quoted by Russian media that the exercises in March will also involve paratroopers jumping into the border region of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region...in August a unit from the Samara Motorized Rifle Brigade will take part in the joint CSTO exercise “Unbreakable Brotherhood – 2016”...Central Military District soldiers will also take part in the SCO’s “Peace Mission – 2016” and with the CSTO’s rapid reaction force “Frontier – 2016” and “Interaction – 2016”.

Source: “Штат Российской военной базы в Таджикистане будет сокращен” (The staff of the Russian bases in Tajikistan will be reduced), *Asia-Plus*, 30 January 2016. <http://news.tj/ru/news/shtat-rossiiskoi-voennoi-bazy-v-tadzhikistane-budet-sokrashchen>

The Russian 201st military base in Tajikistan will be changed this year into a brigade staff without losing combat capability...As reported by the press service of the Central Military District, the strategic direction of the division will be to increase its mobility, but reduce its staff in relation to events in the Central Asian region...

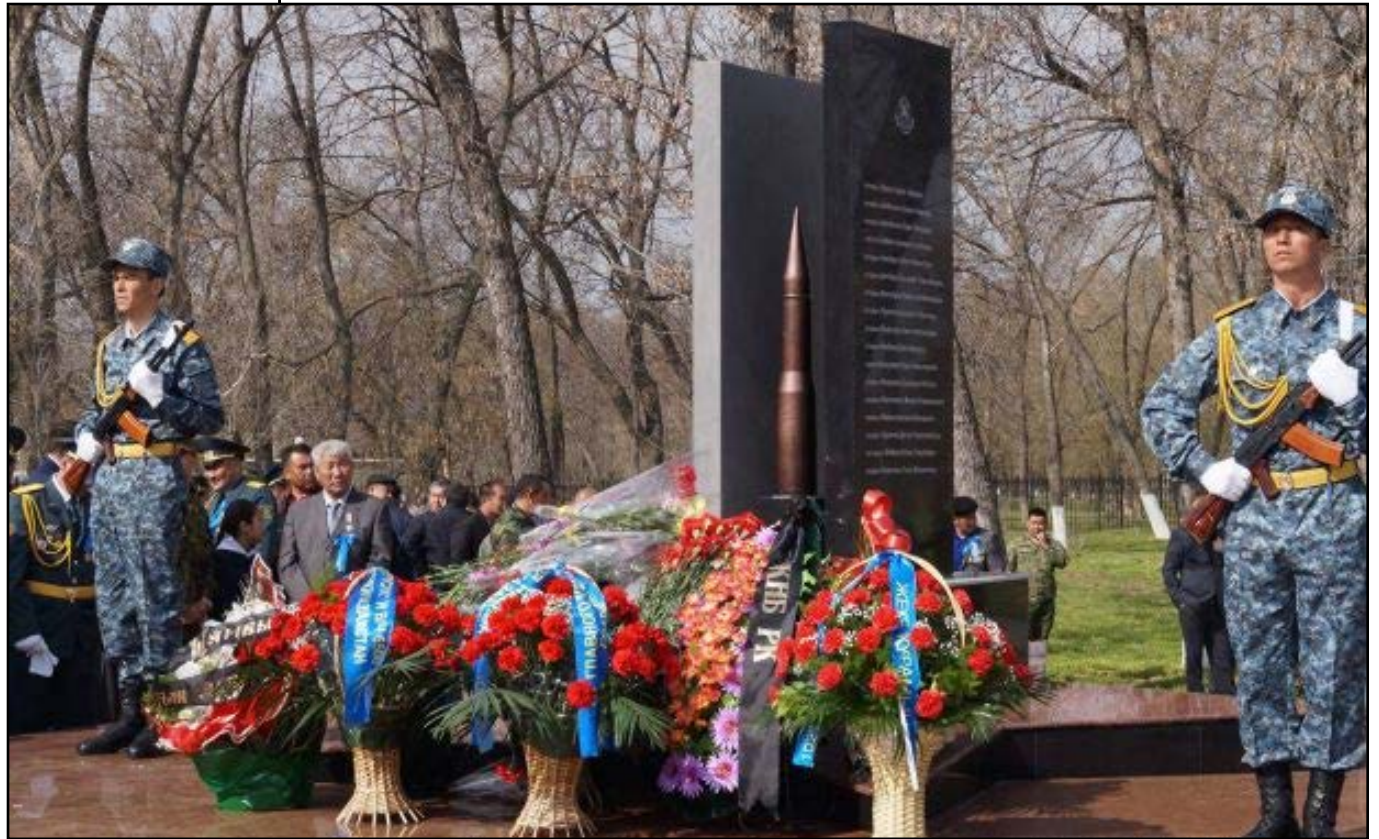
Remembering the Tajik Civil War in Kazakhstan

OE Watch Commentary: The Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) Peacekeeping Force that deployed to Tajikistan during the civil war (1992-97) consisted largely of Russian soldiers, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan each contributed a battalion. The history of Central Asian involvement in the CIS peacekeeping force is often forgotten, but, as the accompanying article shows, Kazakhstan's experience in Tajikistan has been growing in significance over the past couple of years. The article reports on a memorial service that took place in Astana on 8 February, the anniversary of the withdrawal of Kazakhstan's units from Tajikistan.

The monument for the 17 soldiers from an Interior Ministry unit who were killed in April 1995 is actually not the only one of its kind in Kazakhstan. In addition to the one in Astana, over the past couple of years there have been others erected in the cities of Shymkent (where that Interior Ministry unit is garrisoned), Aktau, Petropavl, and reportedly in Semey. The veterans association mentioned in the article has been behind the push to recognize Kazakhstan's participation in the CIS peacekeeping force, particularly the soldiers who served in the unit. These soldiers have not received status as veterans or the subsequent benefits, and the association has been working to have them recognized as such.

Outside of Kazakhstan's experience with the CIS peacekeeping force, several articles have appeared in the media in the past year highlighting the experiences of officers from the Kazakh Peacekeeping Battalion (KAZBAT) in UN peacekeeping missions as observers or experts on mission. These articles also looked at the history of KAZBAT's deployment to Iraq from 2003-08. It is worth remembering that the government of Kazakhstan has been actively trying to deploy a unit from its peacekeeping battalion on a UN mission over the past several years, but that this has yet to take place. In any case, the recent ceremony in Astana shows Kazakhstan's past involvement in peacekeeping operations is receiving increased public recognition alongside participation in UN missions, but what comes out of this remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“February 8th marks 15 years since the withdrawal of Kazakhstan’s separate infantry battalion from Tajikistan and the completion of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan’s first mission”



A monument to the 17 soldiers from an Interior Ministry unit killed during the Tajik Civil War was erected in the city of Shymkent in 2015 and was one of several such monuments constructed in Kazakhstan in the past few years.

Source: http://www.dailynews.kz/society/v_pamjat_o_bojtsah_kazbata_pogibshih_na_tadzhiksko_afganskoj_granitse_otkryli_monument_v_shymkente

Source: Syzdykbayev, Azamat. “В Астане воздана дань погибшим на таджикско-афганской границе казахстанским солдатам” (In Astana tribute is paid to Kazakhstan’s soldiers killed on the Tajik-Afghan border), *Kazpravda*, 8 February 2016. <http://www.kazpravda.kz/multimedia/view/v-astane-vozdana-dan-pogibshim-na-tadzhiko-afganskoi-granitse-kazahstanskim-soldatam/>

In Astana tribute is paid to Kazakhstan’s soldiers killed on the Tajik-Afghan border

February 8th marks 15 years since the withdrawal of Kazakhstan’s separate infantry battalion from Tajikistan and the completion of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan’s first mission...Soldiers, officers, veterans, and the mothers of those killed in action laid wreaths and flowers at the monument in Astana of the seventeen soldiers from Kazakhstan who were killed on April 7, 1995 on the Tajik-Afghan border...

“Kazakhstan’s unit in the protection of the border as part of the CIS Peacekeeping Force in Tajikistan became an important factor in the stabilization of the Central Asian region.” – noted the head of the Association of Veterans (participants of combat on the Tajik-Afghan border and other armed conflicts) and organizer of the ceremony LTC Murat Mukhamedzhanov...On the same day veterans and military-patriotic associations held a forum at the National Museum of Kazakhstan dedicated to the anniversary of the withdrawal...

Small Arms in Kyrgyzstan

OE Watch Commentary: Small arms and ammunition are periodically reported as missing from various armories in Kyrgyzstan, though the highest-profile case of this took place during the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, when significant losses occurred from armories of the military and security forces around the city of Osh and in the districts of the Jalal-Abad Oblast. The accompanying articles report on a recent discovery and seizure of a weapons cache in Jalal-Abad and the arrest of an officer in the Interior Ministry. and they provide an updated look at small arms in Kyrgyzstan.

The article from *K News* states that the cache contained over six thousand rounds of ammunition and a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launcher, while the article from *Kabar* reports on the arrest of an Interior Ministry officer of the Jalal-Abad Oblast on charges of selling weapons and ammunition. *Kabar* notes that the ammunition seized on 14 January was part of that sold by the officer, but this does not provide a complete picture of the cache. In addition to the ammunition, the article from *K News* mentions that security forces found an RPG launcher, though it is difficult to determine what model it is from the photograph. A video of authorities going through the cache shows that it appears to be a grenade round in a case with makeshift handle (see: <http://kabar.kg/rus/law-and-order/full/100929>).

It is possible that this launcher is an RPG-2, but it could also be an SPG-9 recoilless rifle round. The article from *Kabar* states that the officer sold assault rifles, pistols and ammunition, but nothing about an RPG. A report on the losses from June 2010 included a few dozen SPG-9 rounds as still missing. Perhaps most importantly, the seizure did not include any assault rifles or pistols sold by the Interior Ministry officer.

While there were a number of small arms that went unaccounted for following the June 2010 losses, this did not result in a significant rise in crimes committed with firearms, but did add to the market of illegal small arms. Ultimately, the seizure of the cache did remove a portion of this market available for criminals, but the articles also show that small arms in Kyrgyzstan continue to be an issue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“A weapons and ammunition cache was found in a town in the Jalal-Abad region on January 14 as reported by the public affairs section of the GKNB of Kyrgyzstan”



A photograph of the seized weapons cache released by Kyrgyz authorities showed the boxes of 5.45mm and 7.62mm ammunition as well as the supposed rocket propelled grenade launcher.

Source: http://zanoza.kg/doc/331423_gknb_obnaryjil_shron_oryjiia_prinadlejashiy_pribyvshemy_iz_sirii_kyrgyzstancy.html

Source: “У прибывшего из Сирии кыргызстанца обнаружен схрон оружия” (A citizen of Kyrgyzstan who had been in Syria was found with a cache of weapons), *K News*, 15 January 2016. http://www.knews.kg/action/74202_u_pribyivshego_iz_sirii_kyrgyzstantsa_obnaruhen_shron_orujiya/

A citizen of Kyrgyzstan who had been in Syria was found with a cache of weapons

A weapons and ammunition cache was found in a town in the Jalal-Abad region on January 14 as reported by the public affairs section of the GKNB of Kyrgyzstan. “More than six thousand rounds of 5.45 and 7.62mm ammunition and a rocket propelled grenade launcher were found in the cache.” – read the statement...

A citizen of Kyrgyzstan, who had recently been in combat in Syria, was arrested. It has been established that he was involved with the terrorist group that was eliminated in July 2015...

Source: “ТКНБ задержан сотрудник УВД Джалал-Абадской области, продававший оружие террористам” (The GKNB arrested a member of the UVD of the Jalal-Abad Oblast for selling weapons to terrorists), *Kabar*, 21 January 2016. <http://kabar.kg/rus/law-and-order/full/101195>

The Public Affairs section of the State National Security Committee of Kyrgyzstan has reported the arrest of a member of the UVD of the Jalal-Abad Oblast for selling weapons to terrorists...the suspect was involved in the sale of automatic weapons, pistols and ammunition to members of international terrorist organizations. Part of this ammunition was discovered and seized on January 14 of this year...

Death of GRU Chief Spotlights GRU-FSB Rivalry, and Way Ahead

OE Watch Commentary: The unexpected death of Colonel General Igor Sergun in early January 2016 left the post of Chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Russian General Staff vacant. Normally, a replacement would quickly be put into position, with little fanfare, but this was no normal situation. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Versiya*, the unusually long time it took to fill the position was due to some Kremlin infighting between proponents of the GRU and Federal Security Service (FSB) about who would be the next Chief of the GRU. There have been some turf battles between the organizations, and apparently the GRU has come out on top, due to a GRU man, Lieutenant General Igor Korobov, being placed at the organization's head. Korobov's appointment continues a precedent started in the 1990s, where the Deputy Chief of the GRU for Strategic Intelligence is selected as Chief of the GRU.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* outlines some of the responsibilities of the GRU including operating illegals and overseas field stations, determining enemy dispositions, and discovering nuclear secrets. It also has directorates specializing in signals and space-based intelligence and cryptanalysis, and controls the GRU Spetsnaz brigades. As the article discusses, Korobov must concern himself with not only strategic intelligence matters, such as the enemy's industrial, transportation, and economic capabilities, but also tactical matters such as the relationship of the GRU Spetsnaz to the Ground Forces and the penning of doctrine for snipers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Igor Dmitriev, "Game of Thrones: Shoigu Defended the Independence of the GRU From the FSB," *Versiya Online*, 15 February 2016, <<https://versia.ru/shojgu-otstoyal-nezavisimost-gru-ot-fsb>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

Game of Thrones: Shoigu Defended the Independence of the GRU From the FSB

The new head of the Main Intelligence Directorate [GRU] of the Russian Ministry of Defense is Lieutenant General Igor Korobov. According to our information, this appointment was made after an intense undercover struggle between different powers within the Kremlin.

Victory was had by the "Army clan" headed by Sergei Shoigu over the "FSB clan" headed by Sergey Chemezov of Rostec.

...What really happens in the GRU is anyone's guess. Its structure, staffing and even biographies of the heads is a state secret...Due to the similarity of their missions, the GRU and SVR [roughly the foreign intelligence branch of the FSB] have a rivalry dating back to Soviet times...

It is believed that the GRU and SVR/FSB have different views of the world. The GRU wants a Russian alliance with the East and does not care about the "democratic image" of our country. While the SVR/FSB want to be friends with the Western elite and therefore consider it necessary to front a "democratic veil"...

The "Army clan" is now ahead... The new chief of the GRU is Lieutenant General Igor Korobov, who previously held the post of First Deputy- Chief of Strategic Intelligence. It seems all too obvious- who will become the boss, when the post became vacant other than the First Deputy? So why did it take Russia's leadership more than a month to make a decision? But then why the Russian leadership lingered more than a month without taking a decision?... there was a major struggle between secret services about whose protégé would lead the GRU...



Above: Russian Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) emblem.
Source: <http://xfilespress.com/Data/Sites/1/001gru.jpg>

(continued)

Continued: Death of GRU Chief Spotlights GRU-FSB Rivalry, and Way Ahead

Source: Aleksey Mikhaylov, “Control of the Main Strike: What Problems Can the New GRU Chief Resolve?,” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 10 February 2016, <<http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29104>>, accessed 16 February 2015.

Range of Duties

...The work of the GRU is associated primarily with illegals and overseas field stations seeking information on the latest pilot projects of the military-industrial complex of the likely adversary, the disposition and arms of his troops, and his nuclear secrets. The structure is composed also of directorates specializing in signals and space-based intelligence, cryptanalysis....

Understandably, such activity is strictly “secret”. At the same time, on the other hand, the GRU is also responsible for the employment and organization and establishment of army intelligence units, which are under the command of the GRU.

Following the return to the GRU of the SPETSNAZ brigades, for a brief time during the “New Look” these units were transferred to the Ground Troops, the directorate’s structure, according to some information, also had control of the special operations forces. So aside from strategic, signals, and space-based intelligence, the new GRU chief and his subordinates will have to handle Spetsnaz units and subunits and the centers of special operations forces and participate in the reorganization of the intelligence arms of the Ground Troops, Navy, and Airborne Troops.

Reports from the Localities

At the request of *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, intelligence officers spoke about current problems and their possible solutions...One source with a wealth of work experience said that commanding officers are being taught command and control of troops in combat, but not told how to perform and organize intelligence-gathering.

Personnel problems are still abundant...many officers with special training and great experience were discharged during the “New Look” reforms, now servicemen who know little of intelligence are being appointed to the positions that have been created. Serious reorganization is required here...The publication’s sources advocate more vigorous work between GRU units and the Ground Forces...



Source: <http://we-love-russia.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PHOTO020216-106.jpg>



Lieutenant General Igor Korobov and General Sergei Shoigu.

Source: <http://img.gazeta.ru/files3/3/8054003/upload-02-pic905-895x505-47593.jpg>

Strong reconnaissance elements are required, reconnaissance companies in the maneuver brigades and spetsnaz battalions [for special reconnaissance] in the combined-arms armies...not only the structure but also the particular features of the employment of the new Spetsnaz subunits require a thorough updating.

Some VPK sources believe that there are coming to be too many Spetsnaz units and subunits to the detriment of the elements handling signals intelligence...Special teams need to be somehow inserted in the enemy rear, then evacuated. Aviation, helicopters particularly, is needed...The intelligence battalions and brigades need more drones, such as the Orlan [UAV] particularly...We need to build up the manpower and resources of signals intelligence, to increase their capabilities...

One further headache of the combined-arms intelligence officers are the recently formed sniper companies, for which the brigade intelligence chiefs are responsible. “There are as yet no regulatory documents, no combat-training program. But we already have the companies,” a sniper officer affirms...

Electronic Warfare: Russia's Next Generation, and Beyond

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation has made electronic warfare (EW) capabilities a high priority for development. Although EW was considered vital even in Soviet times, the impetus for recent developments likely stems from the aftermath of the 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict, when Russia lost five aircraft in the first two days of fighting. Only after the arrival of Russian EW troops were Georgian air defense systems suppressed. This lesson was not lost on the Russian Federation: not only would EW be important for countering the capabilities of technologically advanced opponents, but it is also useful for combatting technologically less advanced opponents. After the conflict Russia allocated funds for the development of new EW systems and made organizational, personnel, and industrial changes. The result of these endeavors was the emergence of Russia's next generation of electronic intelligence and jamming systems, including the President-S, Moskva, Krasukha-4, Rtut-BM, Rychag, Lorandit, Infauna, Borisoglebsk-2, and Khibiny.

These next generation defensive and offensive EW systems are found throughout the Russian Armed Forces. Like the US Navy and Air Force, Russia's Navy and Air Force have significant EW capabilities. Where Russian and US EW capabilities radically differ is the use of these systems by the fighters on the ground. While the US Army and Marine Corps have few EW assets, the Russian Ground Forces and, to a lesser extent, Airborne (VDV) and naval infantry have dedicated EW companies, battalions, and brigades. The Russian Ground Forces even appear to be EW's main proponent in the Russian Armed Forces.

In terms of structure, Russian maneuver brigades have EW companies capable of jamming GPS signals that are essential for precision weapons (R-330ZH Zhitel), disrupting radio-controlled fuses (SPR-2 Rtut), and jamming communications (R-934B/ R-378B/ R-330B Mandat). Russia's largest and most powerful EW systems, such as the Murmansk-BN, Krasukha, Leer-3, and Moskva, are found in the Ground Forces' EW brigades. While the EW companies have tactical functions, and appropriate ranges suitable for protecting their assigned maneuver brigades, the EW brigades have the ability to work at the tactical, operational, and possibly strategic level. These include wide area cellular communications jamming, GPS location spoofing, reconnaissance and communication satellite jamming, and disrupting early warning aircraft, such as the E-3 Sentry (AWACS).

The accompanying excerpted articles discuss some of the capabilities of Russian EW brigades and Russian efforts to create new EW systems based on new physical principles. Due to Russia only using one manufacturer, the Electronic Technologies Concern (KRET), for EW equipment manufacturing, it is likely that any such discussed innovations will be implemented by KRET. Russia's reliance on a single manufacturer also appears to be an effort to standardize EW systems in order to reduce costs and accelerate development times. If Russia does discover new physical principles, they could quickly be implemented.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

“The introduction of “light” and other new technologies in EW, including the use of graphene electronics, will resolve the problem of suppressing all future multi-position radars.”



A few of the vehicles in 'Murmansk-BN' system.

Source: <http://rusila.su/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/tpHx1Lv.jpg>

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, “Jammers to Blind: New Generation Electronic Warfare Systems Are Being Created,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 21 January 2016, <<http://www.rg.ru/2016/01/22/oruzie.html>>, accessed 10 February 2016.

Jammers to Blind: New Generation Electronic Warfare Systems Are Being Created

The suppression of enemy radio signals may undergo a revolutionary change. The photons that carry light interact with electromagnetic waves, resulting into a lethal symbiosis.

The concern involved in the development of systems of electronic warfare (EW) and the Foundation for Advanced Studies have created a special laboratory “for the case studies in the field of radio photonics”. Work is in full swing there. The introduction of “light” and other new technologies in EW, including the use of graphene electronics, will resolve the problem of suppressing all future multi-position radars.

And this is very timely. Because, figuratively speaking, an entirely new type of wars may start already “tomorrow”. In these 21st century battles, “due to the integration of the methods of cyber warfare with the means of destruction in the framework of network structures, EW will become the type of a combat to determine the outcome of the battle”...

Today, electronic warfare systems are widely used in the ground forces, military aviation and the navy. The creation of a kind of protective screens around the ground positions of troops, shock air groups and warships often makes it impossible to hit them even with the most ultra-precise bombs, missiles and shells...

Well, let's be realistic. There is no wonder weapon, but we hope that domestic electronic warfare systems can still derange most modern Tomahawks [US cruise missile, filled with the most modern electronic “brains”].

(continued)

Continued: Electronic Warfare: Russia's Next Generation, and Beyond

Source: "Electronic Warfare Crews Have Been Alerted in the Central Military District," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* Online, 3 February 2016, <<http://vpk-news.ru/news/29041>>, accessed 10 February 2016.

Electronic Warfare Crews have been Alerted in the Central Military District

Today, at 0600, An electronic warfare (EW) brigade stationed in the Sverdlovsk region, equipped with the newest EW complexes: "Krasukha", "Murmansk", and "Moskva", has received a mobilization order, according to the press office of the Central Military District.

These EW crews will conduct a movement to a training area, where they will simulate finding militants, suppressing communications and command posts, and conducting other types of electronic interference...

Source: Yuriy Rossolov, "Shortwave Screen," *Krasnaya Zvezda* Online, 18 January 2016, <<http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/component/k2/item/27355-korotkovolnovyj-zaslon>>, accessed 10 February 2016.

The Murmansk-BN system has been successfully mastered in Kamchatka...

The Kamchatka Separate EW Center received two Murmansk-BN modern automated systems for radio-electronic suppression of enemy shortwave communication lines. In march mode each of them comprises a mobile fleet of seven heavy multi-axle automotive vehicles on a KAMAZ chassis with appropriate hardware. When combat-deployed, the latest system occupies an area of 640,000 sq. meters. The Murmansk's "main weapon" consists of powerful antennas that make it possible either to block radio communications or to disrupt and hamper them to a high probability at specified distances. And loss of connectivity in a real combat environment, as is known, means loss of command and control with all the ensuing negative consequences...

It is not surprising that on-duty deployment of the system, for the regulation 72 daylight hours, has been accompanied by a great emotional uplift with high professional standards (currently one Murmansk-BN is deployed on combat duty, another is in a maintenance area in the second tier).

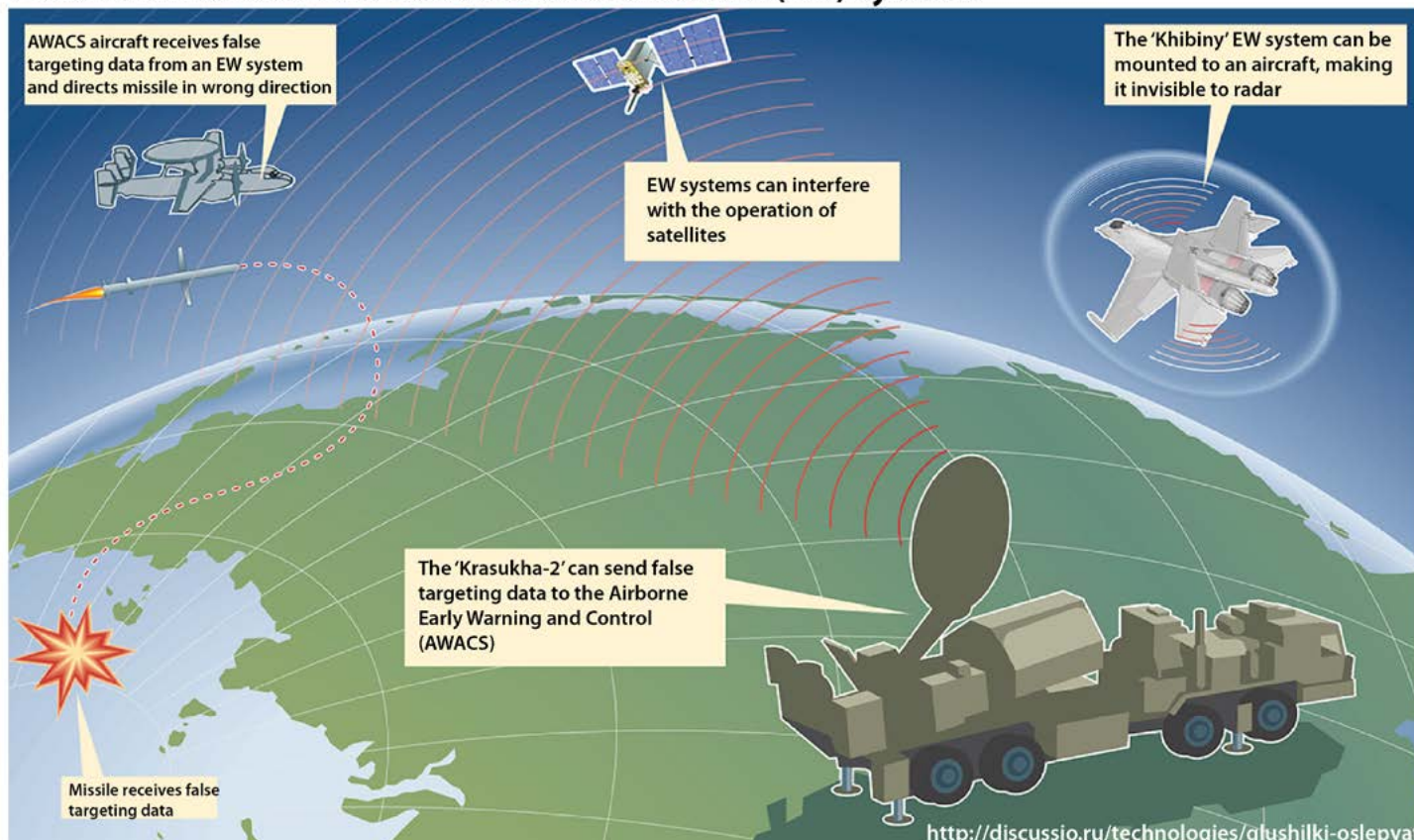
"In reality it is 72 hours of constant, painstaking work, including with the involvement of engineering forces and assets," Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimir Temchenko explained. "Just marking-out one of the antenna fields, takes up to three hours."

The scale of activities involved in the deployment of the system is indicated not only by the area of the antenna field with sides of 800 meters and the amount of equipment and fittings placed on it, but also the literally gigantic, soaring 32-meter hydraulic telescopic antenna masts attached to the ground by stays which from a distance resemble a giant spider web...

"The Murmansk-BN is a system of a 21st century arsenal," Captain 3rd Class Roman Nechayev, chief of staff of the 471st Separate EW Center, stated. "The basis of operation of the latest system comprises modern mathematical principles. In its specifications it surpasses its predecessor by almost several orders of magnitude. For example, the stations of the old fleet were rated at five kW. The Murmansk-BN's figure in certain modes of operation can reach 400 kW."

Other features of the new equipment are also impressive, in particular, its range of effective application. The distance of 3,000 km for the Murmansk-BN is not the limit. This means that in the capable hands of the Kamchatka EW specialists the system is capable from its deployment site of performing tasks both on its territory and far away from its approach routes. And if necessary, outside the 12-mile economic zones, from Chukotka to islands in the Sea of Japan...

Possibilities of Next Generation Electronic Warfare (EW) Systems



Noncommissioned Officers in the Russian Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted interview with Lieutenant General Andrey Kholzakov, Deputy Airborne Troops Commander, discusses some recent developments in the Russian contract NCO system. It also lays out some major differences between Russian contract NCOs and their Western brethren.

In the Russian system, contract NCOs are sometimes referred to as “officer assistants.” This description of NCOs would be considered derogatory in the West, but this is the way Russian NCOs are intended to function. Not only do Russian NCOs fill a different niche than Western NCOs, they are also trained differently. There are several career paths for Russian contract NCOs in the Russian Armed Forces, but the “leadership” path involves the NCO graduating from a two year and nine month academy. This amount of training is comparable with the amount of education/training a new Russian lieutenant receives while attending a military academy (4-5 years).

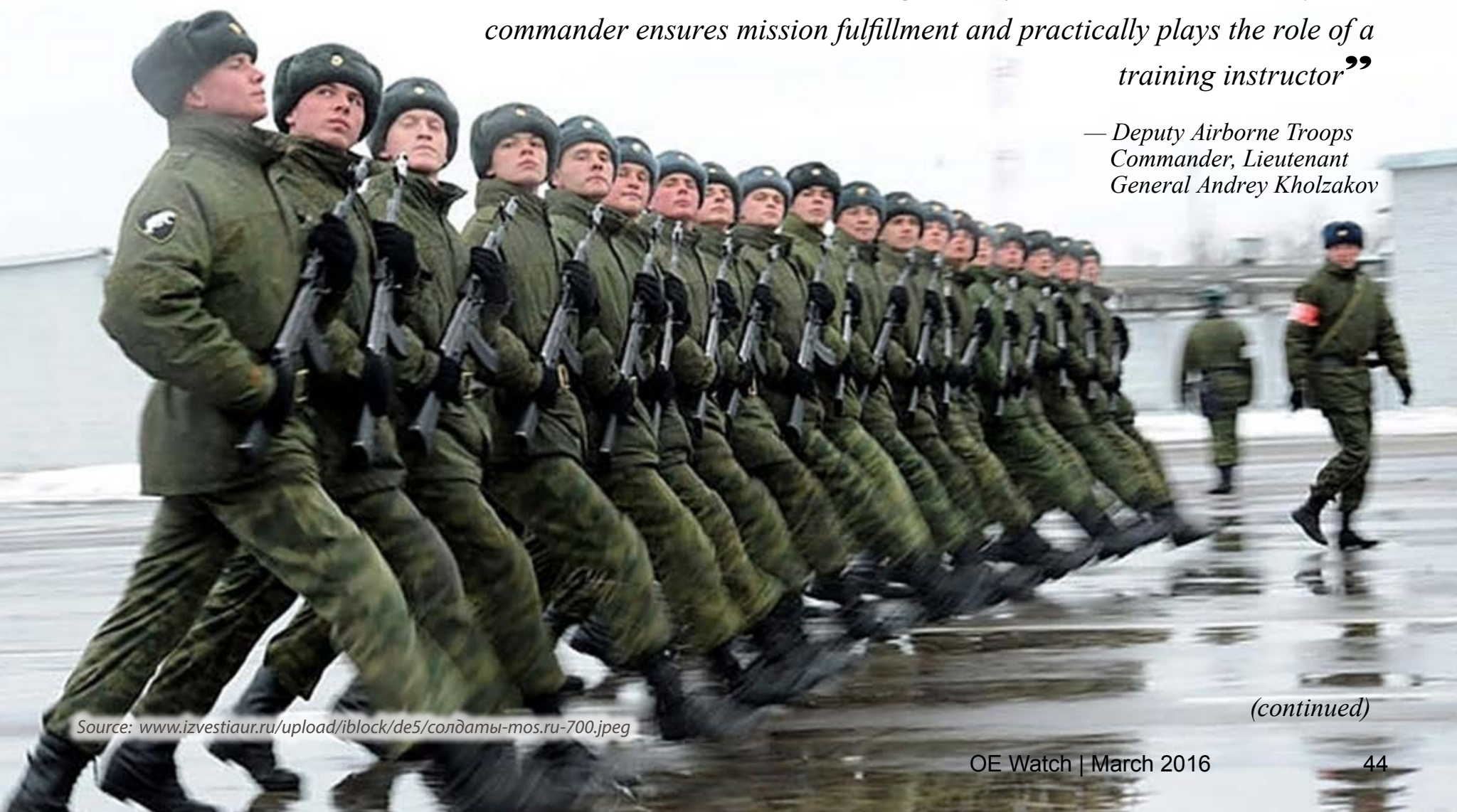
Another interesting aspect of the article is the view of small-unit training. Although contract NCOs are in the ranks, the primary trainers are still the officers, as it was in Soviet times. Clearly, the Russian Armed Forces do view enlisted professionalization as being important, but they are taking a much different path towards this end. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Source: http://vologda-portal.ru/upload/iblock/fe3/DSC_0024.JPG

“Professional sergeants deal with situations when certain requirements are not observed, when a shooting drill is failed, whereas a military unit commander ensures mission fulfillment and practically plays the role of a training instructor”

— Deputy Airborne Troops Commander, Lieutenant General Andrey Kholzakov



Source: www.izvestia.ru/upload/iblock/de5/солдаты-mos.ru-700.jpeg

(continued)

Continued: Noncommissioned Officers in the Russian Armed Forces

Source: Anatoliy Yermolin, "Russian Paratroopers' Participation in International Airborne Troops Competitions of 2015 and Preparation for 2016 Contests," *Ekho Moskvy* Online, 28 November 2015, <<http://echo.msk.ru/programs/voensovet/1666594-echo>>, accessed 10 February 2016.

Interview of Deputy Airborne Troops Commander, Lieutenant General Andrey Kholzakov

[A. Yermolin] Good afternoon, everyone listening to us, we are on air with our "Military Council" talk show hosted by me, Anatoliy Yermolin. Our guest and expert today is the Deputy Airborne Troops Commander, Lieutenant General Andrey Kholzakov... Would you tell us in a few words what the training objectives are and how they were achieved?

[A. Kholzakov] The training objective for this year has been to assess the performance of sergeants who graduated in the last few years [from the Ryazan' Airborne Troops NCO Academy], the progress they have made in their military service, and their capability to play a leading role, with a special focus on junior command personnel [squad leaders]...

[A. Yermolin] As a matter of fact, you have outlined the content of our discussion today. Tell us, please, about sergeants: It will be really interesting to hear from you about them. We have talked quite a lot about this subject, particularly in this studio, as we did 5 years ago -- or probably even more, correct? There emerged the idea to establish a professional corps of junior commanders; and our discussions went on as to why sergeants were needed...



[A. Kholzakov] Yes, starting from 2010 the Ryazan' Airborne Troops College started to produce classes of graduates. [from the NCO Academy] However, they were diverse and oriented toward different goals. At first, the college students graduated only as squad leaders, platoon deputy commanders, and later on we broadened our training programs to make them more technical, because we understood that sergeants were not supposed to be just subunit [squad] commanders on battlefield, bearing in mind the complexity of modern combat machinery and numerous electronic devices coming into service... For the last few years, sergeants have graduated and have also been assigned to units other than the VDV, in the Ground Forces, naval infantry, etc...

[A. Yermolin] These are more mature men, aren't they? As compared to just contract recruits?...

[A. Kholzakov] ...today this type includes servicemen who have completed their compulsory army service, or people who are transitioning from the civilian sector. The third category includes very young people who want to dedicate themselves to army service, so a somewhat intermediate type is formed. We cannot say there is a precise type, but on the average those who enter military service are 19-20 years of age, although there may be persons aged 23 to 24.

Top: Patch of the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School

Source: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Рязанское_высшее_воздушно-десантное_командное_училище#/media/File:Мо_нарзнаки102_1.png

Above: Deputy Airborne Troops Commander, Lieutenant General Andrey Kholzakov

Source: <http://www.newsvl.ru/stories/2015/03/28/133300/#gallery39>

(continued)

Continued: Noncommissioned Officers in the Russian Armed Forces

[A. Yermolin] They receive specialized secondary training and basically, they study for three years, correct?

[A. Kholzakov] They study at the specialized training programs department of the Ryazan for 2 years and 10 months.”

[A. Yermolin] ...What is the current status of the rank of sergeant?...

[A. Kholzakov] ...First of all, having completed his training a person receives a diploma, right? The person becomes a certified sergeant. We don't say all of them, just some of them...Some people rejoin the army after they have returned to civilian life, have worked as civilians, have had some rest, whatever. Such a person is checked, he comes, gets reenlisted, and something like a year or two later if he has leadership skills or has completed a military training course in the past, right...? He is appointed as a squad leader. Everything is formalized by the certification commission, and we try to ensure that the whole process is transparent...And if they share their wits and knowledge with each other, then it allows them to become the members of the modern NCO Corps...Their average age is 26 to 32-33 years...

[A. Yermolin] They are men in full vigor, so to say.

[A. Kholzakov] Yes, they are. These are people who understand that they have made progress by their own efforts, reached a qualifying standard, participated in military exercises, and have a squad under their command. That is, they can train the recruits, even contract recruits or young men joining the army, and teach them discipline. Every sergeant has knowledge he has gained in the course of secondary vocational training...Recently we had to change a number of standards due to the advanced equipment and machinery coming into service...

[A. Yermolin] We have discussed this subject -- the NCO Corps-- in such detail, because all these years from the very moment the first ideas appeared we have been analyzing it thoroughly. Basically, do you have a positive feeling that a NCO Corps is being formed?

[A. Kholzakov] Certainly, the NCO Corps is changing.... You know, in the current situation it is impossible to give orders and require their immediate execution. There should always be a subordinate who is responsible for checking out how your military unit or platoon is being trained. The platoon commander is responsible for the platoon personnel training. And when it comes to certain training nuances or segments.... Professional sergeants deal with situations when certain requirements are not observed, when a shooting drill is failed, whereas a military unit commander ensures mission fulfillment and practically plays the role of a training instructor, although we have driving instructors on staff. It's a narrow specialization, and whenever there is a training component, a nuance that requires the special attention of certain staff members, the problem is solved by the sergeants.

[A. Yermolin] Meaning, there is a career development training course for officers, right?

[A. Kholzakov] Yes, there is, we select candidates for the career development course, we have year-long and six-month training programs, we provide the officer training and subsequently appoint those who complete the course to serve in positions for which they meet the requirements.

[A. Yermolin] What about the tradition of enrollment in military academies?”

[A. Kholzakov] Next year we will carry on the tradition of enrollment in the military academies, and about 35 applicants will enter the Frunze Academy. Next February we will conduct the selection of candidates, and then will train them specifically for admission to the academy.



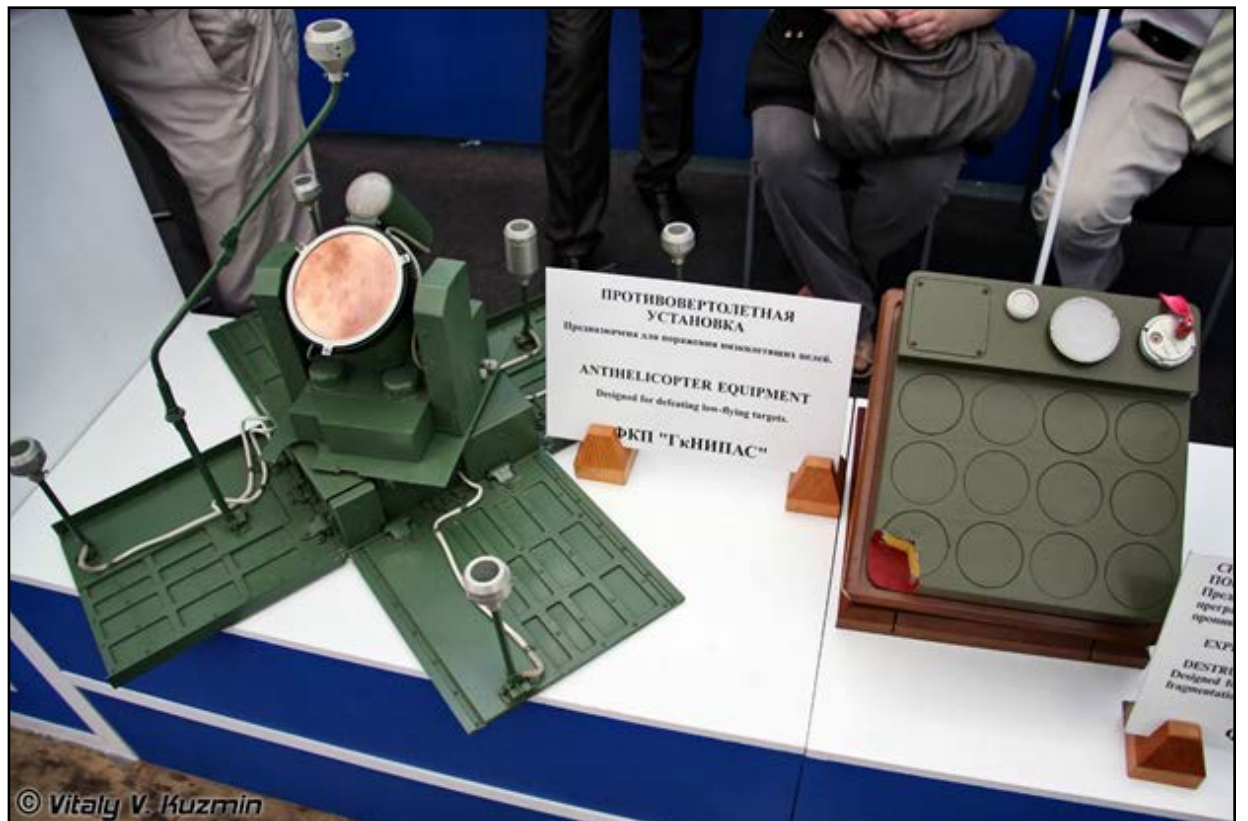
Helicopter Mine Development Furthers Russian Area Denial Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: Russian area denial capabilities, including air defense systems, surface to surface missiles, electronic warfare capabilities, and coastal defense systems, have had a fairly high profile of late. The accompanying excerpted article highlights the development of a lesser known, but just as interesting, area denial capability- helicopter mines.

The term “helicopter mine” is somewhat of a misnomer, as these mines are designed to exploit the low altitude routes that helicopters and relatively slow flying close air support and artillery spotting aircraft utilize. The specific mine mentioned in the article is likely the anti-helicopter mine (PVM) showcased by Russia in 2012. The reported specifications of the PVM vary, but the device purportedly weighs about 12 kilograms and features a copper penetrator that can penetrate up to 12 millimeters of armor at a distance of up to 100 meters. It is armed when a low flying aircraft triggers one of the device’s acoustic sensors, which can detect an aircraft at up to 1000 meters. After the acoustic sensor is alerted, the aircraft’s location is approximated, after which the system physically turns the warhead and an infrared sensor towards the target. The infrared system further refines targeting and then fires the copper shaped-charge warhead at the target, with speeds approaching 2.5-3 km/sec. The PVM can remain armed up to three months.

The PVMs were purportedly designed to protect military and civilian facilities, troops, coastlines, areas where air assaults are possible, and antitank mines from mine clearing by helicopters. Other uses include hindering enemy use of runways on enemy airfields and deterring the enemy from low flight in general.

Even if the PVM is not accepted into the Russian inventory, if it follows the pattern of other Russian weapon developments and the system is effective, then it may well find itself in the lucrative export market. Any low-cost method for deterring aviation will likely be popular with much of Russia’s current customer base. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Source: Image courtesy Vitaly Kuzmin; <http://i.imgur.com/dK2CAwQ.jpg>

Source: Russia is Developing New Anti-helicopter and Anti-transport Mines,” *RIA Novosti* Online, 23 January 2016, <http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160123/1364016222.html>, accessed 10 February 2016.

A number of new mines are being developed in the interests of the Russian Armed Forces, in particular: anti-vehicle, anti-landing, anti-helicopter, and wide area mines. As was stated this Saturday during live radio broadcast on “Russian News” by Colonel Ruslan Alahverdiev, Deputy Chief of the Russian Armed Forces’ Engineer Troops.

“There is development on new anti-vehicle, anti-landing, anti-helicopter, (to defeat low-flying helicopters), wide area mines (nearing production), and anti-amphibious mines” said Alahverdiev.

In addition, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were created.

“These mines have been tested, and characteristics determined, which are most important. They were manufactured to comply with the technical requirements specified in the Second Protocol of the Geneva Convention. The first requirement is that the mines self-destruct when no longer needed, so they are not a threat to the civilian population,” - said Alahverdiev.

According to Alahverdiev, these new mines can be deployed remotely.



Source: Image courtesy Vitaly Kuzmin

The Evolution of the Russian Military Police System

OE Watch Commentary: During Soviet times the commander of a subunit or a unit had the authority to send subordinates to the local guardhouse (jail) for discipline infractions. This practice was subsequently abolished by the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reasoning being that only a judge had the right to imprison someone. Commanders were unhappy with this reform because, according to the new rules, there is a required court proceeding, and only after due process could he send the soldier to jail. Since months could elapse between the discipline infraction and the punishment, few commanders were interested in pursuing charges. This reform left commanders without their previously most effective method for dealing with discipline problems. Only commanders who could find other means to enforce unit discipline maintained order. Some officers attributed the loss of their jailing authority as a reason that “dedovshchina” (brutal hazing) became more problematic in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In order to impose discipline and decrease the number of embarrassing hazing and corruption problems, the establishment of a Military Police Corps was proposed by both civilian and the military authorities.

The path to the establishment of a Military Police Corps in the Armed Forces has been a long one. In 1992 the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office proposed the creation of a Military Police Corps to conduct criminal investigations and combat economic crimes, but the State Duma did not pass the bill. In 1996, due to some embarrassing corruption incidents, the State Duma Committee for Defense again proposed the establishment of a Military Police Corps outside of the military’s chain of command, but the proposal encountered resistance from the military and was eventually dropped due to funding concerns. In 2005 Human Rights Commissioner Vladimir Lukin suggested creating a Military Police Corps to combat hazing, and in 2006 the high-profile case of Private Andrey Sychev, a conscript who lost his legs from a severe hazing incident, caused President Vladimir Putin to back the idea. After a few more false starts, in 2012 former Chief of the Russian General Staff General Nikolay Makarov announced that by 1 December 2012 military police units would begin operations, and that a Defense Ministry main directorate and units in the military districts and the fleets had already been established. On 25 March 2015 the charter defining the military police’s structure, functions, and tasks was confirmed by Presidential Edict No. 161.

In terms of function, the Russian military police are intended to uphold law and order, provide physical security, conduct investigations into acts of disciplinary and general criminal misconduct, and ensure traffic safety. In certain situations they provide protection for victims, witnesses, and other participants in criminal proceedings, such as service personnel, military court judges, and military prosecutors. They have assumed control of Ministry of Defense disciplinary units and garrison guardhouses. They are also considered an agency of inquiry in the Armed Forces, which gives them the authority to conduct inquests.

In the past, when commanders wanted to conduct an investigation, they appointed one of their subordinate officers as an investigating officer for the matter. Usually these officers had no investigative or legal experience, and would have to conduct an investigation with little guidance. Now, when an investigating officer is appointed, he may request assistance from the military police, with the eventual goal that all investigations in the Armed Forces will be

(continued)



Source: “Common Radio Frequency Will Link Military Police with Other Security Agencies,” *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 1 February 2016, <http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12075823>, accessed 10 February 2016.

The Russian Federation Armed Forces military police will receive new radio sets in 2016. It is planned to standardize communication devices and use Russian-made models, especially since radio sets have currently been developed which are not inferior to imported models in terms of performance, and in many respects are superior to them. Journalists were told of this in a conversation with Major General Igor Sidorkevich, Chief of the Main Directorate of Military Police.

“The new communication devices will operate on the same frequencies as used by federal security agencies. This will greatly increase effectiveness and timeliness when carrying out joint activities with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Emergency Situations Ministry, Federal Narcotics Service, military investigative bodies, and other forces,” Igor Sidorkevich explained.

“It is planned to fit the sets to military police motor vehicles, provide mobile patrol models, and install fixed sets in command posts. If it happens that military police units from different regions are involved in supporting large-scale events, coordination should be organized on a single frequency band,” Igor Sidorkevich concluded.

(continued)

Continued: The Evolution of the Russian Military Police System

conducted by the military police. Although this practice will relieve the commander of some administrative burdens, there is reporting that the intent of this reform is to remove any commander influence in order to ensure a fair and thorough investigation.

The approximately 20,000-strong Military Police Corps operates under the authority of the Russian Armed Force's Prosecutor General and his subordinate military prosecutors. This command relationship allows the military police to cordon off or blockade military garrisons and areas without consulting the unit commander. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss recent developments in Russia's Military Police Corps.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Source: "Russian Federation Armed Forces Police Vehicles to Get New Insignia," *Russian Ministry of Defense Online*, 28 January 2016, <http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12075180>, accessed 10 February 2016.

The color and graphical designs of Russian Federation Armed Forces military police vehicles have been confirmed. In accordance with Russian Federation Government decree No. 21 of 21 January 2016, military police vehicles will be painted in a protective color with a blue stripe and have the inscription "MILITARY POLICE," and as heraldic symbol the emblem of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

"Vehicles equipped to the new requirements, will be used for duties including the organization of patrols in garrisons," Major-General Igor Sidorkevich, Chief of the Russian Federation Armed Forces Main Directorate of the Military Police, said. "Patrols not only on foot but also in vehicles will increase the efficiency of activities aimed at ensuring law and order," the head of the Main Directorate of the Military Police explained.

According to him, all drivers who will operate vehicles equipped with special light and sound signals will undergo a mandatory course in safety training and will receive an appropriate permit. They will also be trained to operate the communication devices which will be fitted to the patrol vehicles.



Left: Major General Igor Sidorkevich, Chief of the Main Directorate of Military Police
Source: http://structure.mil.ru/management/details.htm?id=11810035@SD_Employee

The Role of Radio-Technical Troops in the Russian Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary:

In Russian, the term “radio-technical means” is defined as technical devices that utilize the electromagnetic energy of radio waves to transmit information for reconnaissance and intelligence collection, navigation, etc. This broad term can be subdivided by function into reconnaissance and intelligence collection, recognition and identification, communications, navigation, control of facilities and weapons, etc. The accompanying excerpted interview of Colonel Vladimir Filippovich, Deputy Chief of Radio-Technical Troops, gives a good view on the role of the radio-technical troops who serve in Russia’s newly created Aerospace Defense Forces. (For more information on Russia’s new branch of service see: “Prompt Global Strike Program Drives Russian Aerospace Reforms” OEW, September 2015.)

Filippovich explains what specific radio-technical functions his troops perform (manning of strategic air defense radars) and the relationship to, and the division of responsibilities among, other Russian military and civilian entities with roles in strategic air defense. These organizations include strategic air defense units (S-300s, S-400s, S-500s), aviation, space-monitoring forces, and civil air traffic control. The second article provides details about the new Voronezh-series radars that Russia is bringing into service, which will be operated by radio-technical troops. Russia believes these types of radars, and other less conventional means, such as high-flying blimps and low-flying satellites, are vital early warning capabilities to mitigate risks stemming from the hypersonic weapons that Russia presumes the US is building. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Aleksey Durnovo, “Objectives and Tasks for Aerospace Forces Radiotechnical Troops,” *Ekho Moskvy* Online, 12 December 2015, <<http://echo.msk.ru/programs/voensovet/1674458-echo/>>, accessed 10 February 2016.

[A. Durnovo] Good afternoon everyone, we are on the air with our “Military Council” as usual, on Ekho Moskvy. My name is Aleksey Durnovo, with great pleasure I would like to introduce our guest today -- Colonel Vladimir Filippovich, Deputy Chief of Radiotechnical Troops, of the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces...

[A. Durnovo] Well, let us start right away. Tell us, please, about the Radiotechnical Troops. What are they?

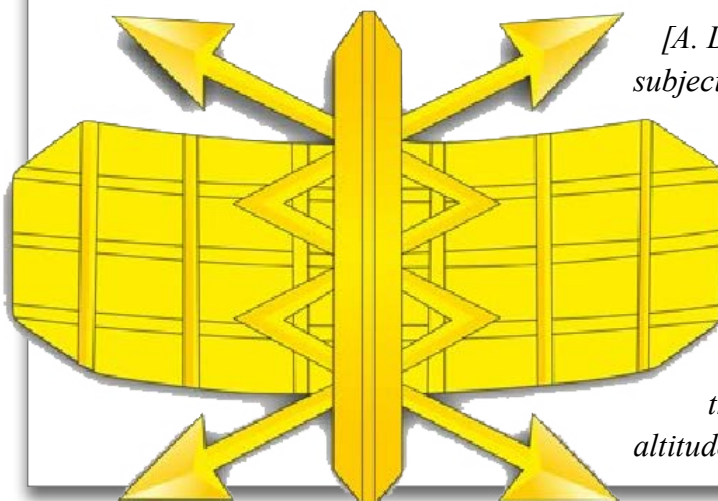
[V. Filippovich] ...they protect the state border and control Russian Federation airspace. They perform tasks in peacetime and wartime...That means providing radar support for [civil] aviation flights and, second, providing combat information to the Antiaircraft Missile Troops and electronic warfare troops.

[A. Durnovo] ...We thought that the border guards were responsible for border protection. How do you participate in border protection?

[V. Filippovich] Well, state border protection -- it is not only the border guards, who are stationed on the ground, it is also the Navy, which is responsible for maritime border protection. And we are “all as one” responsible for the state border protection in the airspace. It is not any less important than border protection on the ground or at sea, so to say...the tasks of air traffic control are mainly entrusted to Federal Air Transport Agency. In other words, they are the ones who deal with these issues directly. But in regard to the state border, every aircraft which crosses the border is being tracked...

[A. Durnovo]...now we are talking about the airspace in particular. So what does it have to do with space?

[V. Filippovich] ...the Aerospace Defense Forces basically is comprised of three pillars. The first pillar is the air force, the second is anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense, and the third is the space troops...in regard to the Radiotechnical Troops...we see the situation in the air and on the ground for 4,000-4,500 kilometers. There is the space component as well, and radar reconnaissance, which itself can already see for 9,000-10,000 kilometers. There is also radio reconnaissance, which allows us to detect respective activity on respective airfields on timely basis, and to pass the information to us in advance of the fact that some aircraft on some airfield is getting ready for takeoff, so we can be prepared to locate it and monitor its actions...



[A. Durnovo] Well, since we have touched on the subject of technical equipment, tell us, please, how did the technical equipment of the Radiotechnical Troops has been developing over the course of time? What did you start with, and what do you have now?

[V. Filippovich] ...today we can say that there are radar tracking stations that exist that have a detection range up to 1,200 km and altitude in line -- about 150 km. In *(continued)*



Deputy Chief of Radiotechnical Troops, of the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces
Source: http://old.redstar.ru/2008/12/27_12/21.jpg

Continued: The Role of Radio-Technical Troops in the Russian Armed Forces

“How can air defense exist without Antiaircraft Missile Troops and Radiotechnical Troops?”

— Deputy Chief of Radiotechnical Troops, of the Russian Federation Aerospace Forces

our plans we would like to have radar tracking stations in service with a detection range of 1,500 km and with respective altitude also of 150-600 km...

[A. Durnovo] Vladimir Mikhaylovich, tell us, please.... Right now the Russian Federation has an aerial mission in Syria. Are you, the Radiotechnical Troops, participating in this mission?

[V. Filippovich] Well, we have already discussed this topic today. Well, How can air defense exist without Antiaircraft Missile Troops and Radiotechnical Troops? Of course, it cannot. These are the three, so to say, pillars, that work on the same mission under any conditions, pursuing one and the same goal. Therefore, there are our respective compounds as well.

[A. Durnovo] Vladimir Mikhailovich, since we have started to talk about the staff, tell us please, who trains the personnel for you?

[V. Filippovich] Well, as of today the primary military college is the one in Yaroslavl'. The specialists of the Antiaircraft Missile Troops, as well as specialists of Radiotechnical troops are being trained there. The term of training is 5 years...

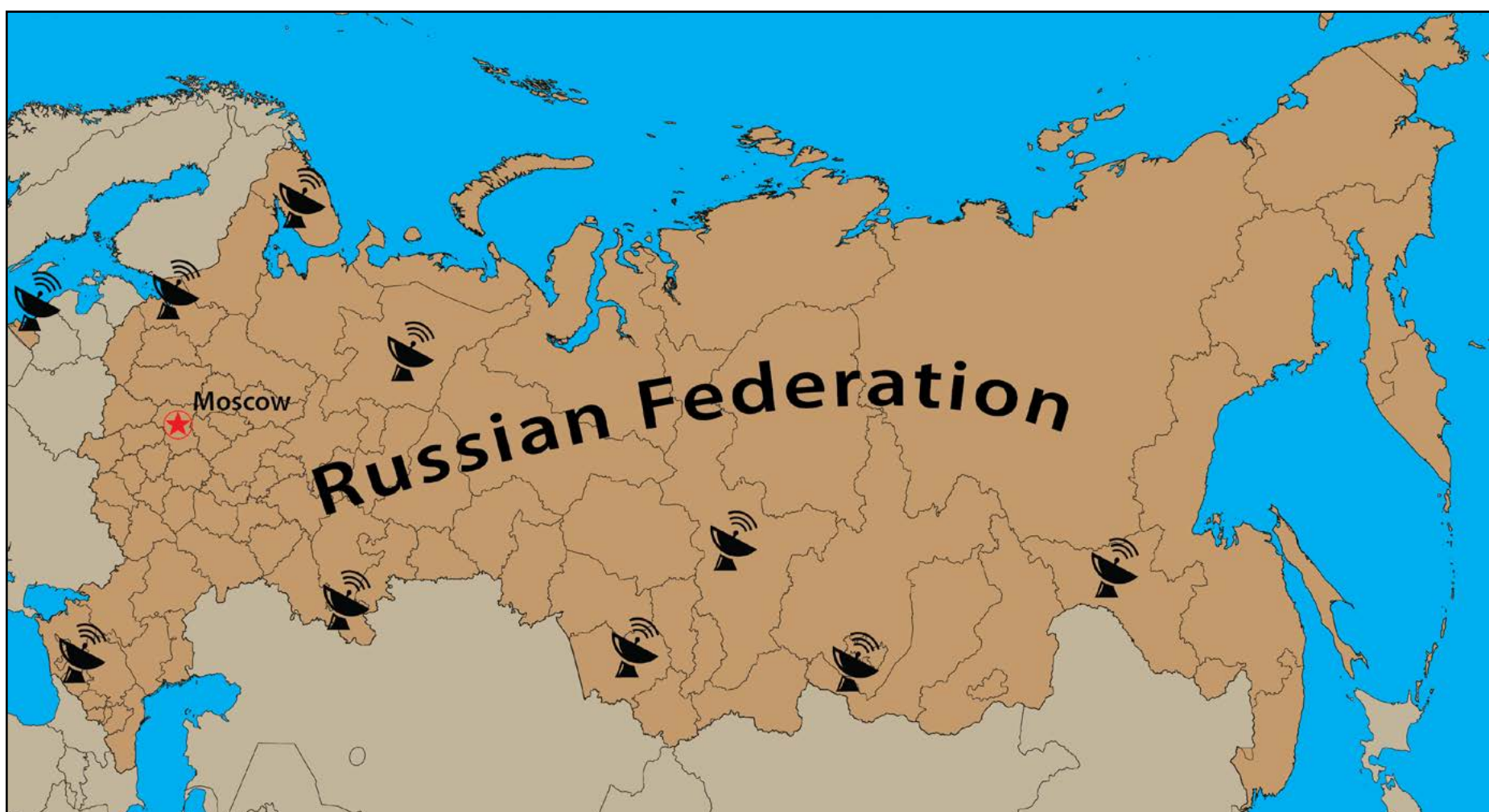
[A. Durnovo] And tell us, please, if we take the percentage ratio, what is the percentage of servicemen who serve under contract, and what percentage is based on conscription?

[V. Filippovich] You see, the fact is that everything depends on the region where the particular military unit is located... If it is farther from Moscow, right?...But what do we strive for? We are striving to have 80-90% of servicemen under contract...



Voronezh-Series Radar

Source: <http://militaryrussia.ru/i/284/610/QzVM9.jpg>



Expected Voronezh-Series Radar Dispositions

(continued)

Continued: The Role of Radio-Technical Troops in the Russian Armed Forces

Source: “Fly Meet Web: Russia Building a Powerful New Early Warning Radar Network,” *Sputnik Online*, 12 January 2016, <<http://sputniknews.com/military/20160112/1033015555/russia-early-warning-radar-network.html>>, 10 February 2016.

Earlier this month, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that 2016 will see the introduction of three powerful ‘Voronezh’-series early warning radar systems. Adding to four stations of their type already in operation, the new systems’ appearance will help lead, by 2020, to a full-scale modernization of the Russia’s early warning radar network.

The Voronezh radar station is the third generation in Russian early-warning radar design, providing for the long-distance monitoring of airspace inside and outside Russia against ballistic missile attack.

Developed by the Moscow-based Radio Engineering & Information Systems Concern and the Distant Radio Communication Scientific Research Institute, the new system, featuring a high level of standardization and prefabrication, takes about a year to build and get up and running, in comparison to previous generations, which required 5-10 years...

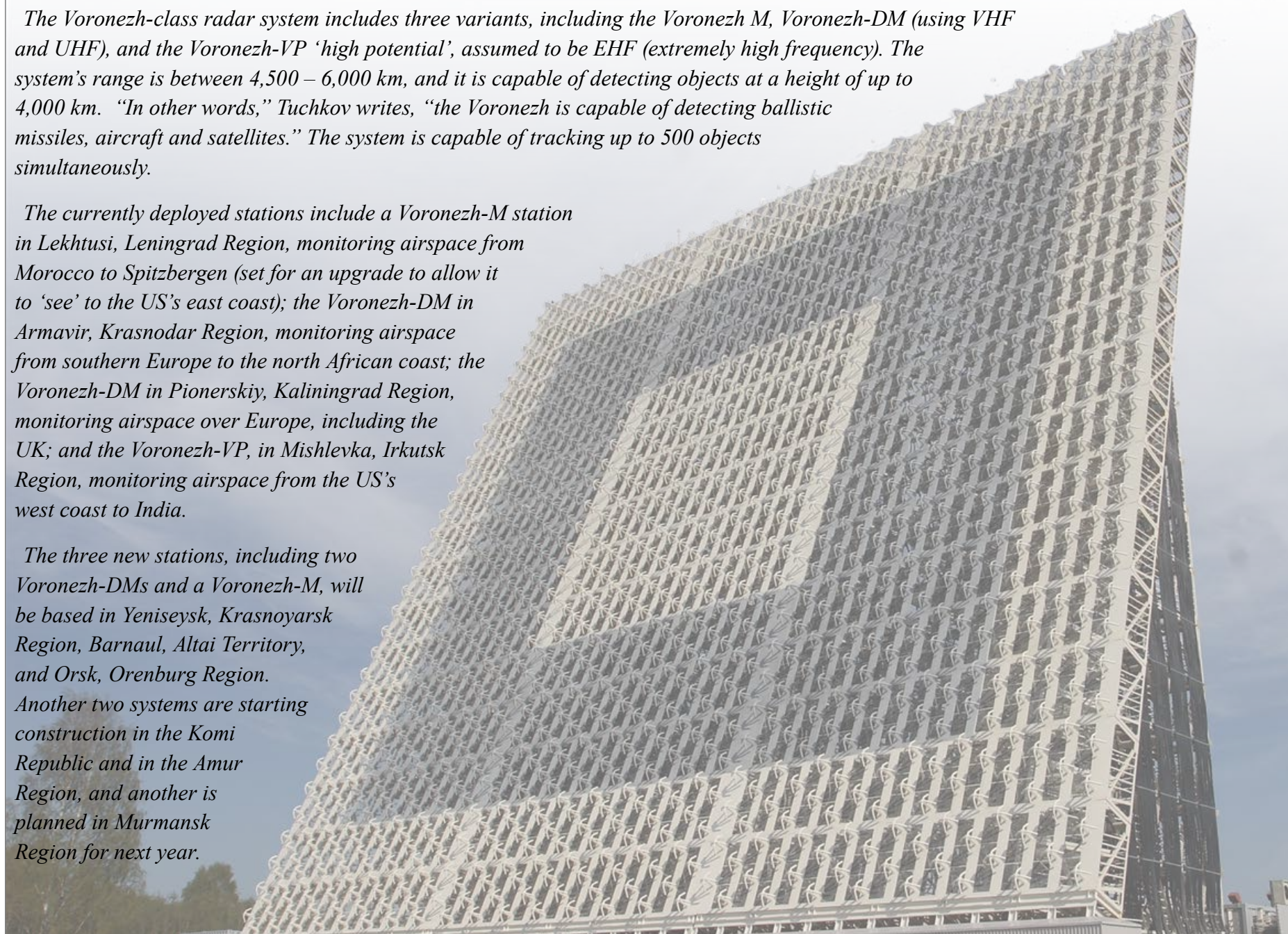
“Compared to the Daryal radar, which consumes 50 MW, two of Voronezh’s three variants consume 0.7 MW, with the third, ‘high potential’ variant consuming 10 MW. This is beneficial not only in terms of operating costs, but also in terms of its less cumbersome distilled water cooling system.” As a result, the new stations are substantially cheaper – 1.5 billion rubles (about \$19.6 million US) versus 10-20 billion (\$130-\$261 million) for the various classes of previous generations.

Tuchkov explains that “the reduced size and power consumption and simultaneous maintenance of high technical and operational characteristics is possible thanks to the miniaturization of equipment, as well as the use of powerful computers, which together optimizes work stations and allows for higher resolution at lower power consumption.” At the same time, the expert notes, the new system’s high level of standardization makes upgrades easier.

The Voronezh-class radar system includes three variants, including the Voronezh M, Voronezh-DM (using VHF and UHF), and the Voronezh-VP ‘high potential’, assumed to be EHF (extremely high frequency). The system’s range is between 4,500 – 6,000 km, and it is capable of detecting objects at a height of up to 4,000 km. “In other words,” Tuchkov writes, “the Voronezh is capable of detecting ballistic missiles, aircraft and satellites.” The system is capable of tracking up to 500 objects simultaneously.

The currently deployed stations include a Voronezh-M station in Lekhtusi, Leningrad Region, monitoring airspace from Morocco to Spitzbergen (set for an upgrade to allow it to ‘see’ to the US’s east coast); the Voronezh-DM in Armavir, Krasnodar Region, monitoring airspace from southern Europe to the north African coast; the Voronezh-DM in Pionerskiy, Kaliningrad Region, monitoring airspace over Europe, including the UK; and the Voronezh-VP, in Mishlevka, Irkutsk Region, monitoring airspace from the US’s west coast to India.

The three new stations, including two Voronezh-DMs and a Voronezh-M, will be based in Yeniseysk, Krasnoyarsk Region, Barnaul, Altai Territory, and Orsk, Orenburg Region. Another two systems are starting construction in the Komi Republic and in the Amur Region, and another is planned in Murmansk Region for next year.



Ukrainian Politician on Russia, Syria, and the West

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 January 2016 Vladimir Ogryzko, Ukrainian diplomat and Ukraine's former Foreign Affairs Minister under pro-Western president Viktor Yushchenko, wrote an article in Ukrainian publication *Novoye Vremya*. The article's title sums up his main point, "Syria, Assad, and the 'Good' Putin. A Trap is Being Prepared for the West." Ogryzko feels that Russia is preparing a trap for the West when it comes to negotiations on Syria. He writes that Putin will use what he describes as "Moscow's typical diplomatic tricks" — pretend to be interested and try to help, while others refuse to cooperate. "[T]he appearance of news that Putin is ready to give up [Syrian President Bashar] Assad (a statement later refuted) — is a combination played out in order to show to the West, 'you see, I'm good, I asked Assad to leave, but he refused.'" Indeed, news in the Western press briefly appeared earlier in January 2016 that Putin had asked Assad to step down earlier. In response, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov quickly said that not only had Putin never asked Assad to step down, but also never offered him political asylum.

Ogryzko is optimistic about Western response to Russia. He is confident that the West will not grant Russia any concessions, especially lifting of sanctions in response to its aggression in Ukraine because "[t]he United States is convinced that Russia is not helping the Western coalition in the fight against terrorism, and only helps Bashar Assad's regime to stay in power." Such expressions of confidence are common among pro-Western Eastern European analysts and politicians who look to the West for leadership. At the same time, despite such expression of confidence, Ogryzko still ends his article by urging not to take Russia's statements seriously. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Vladimir Ogryzko, "Сирия, Асад и «хороший» Путин. Западу готовят ловушку," ("Syria, Assad, and the 'Good' Putin. A Trap is Being Prepared for the West), *Novoye Vremya* (New Time), 26 January 2016. <http://nv.ua/opinion/ogryzko/sirija-asad-i-%C2%ABhoroshij%C2%BB-putin-zapadu-gotovjat-lovushku-93174.html>

...I think, in the backdrop of recent statements by the Americans that they will begin ground operation against ISIS, it is highly unlikely that in the near future the West will give Russia any concessions. The United States is convinced that Russia is not helping the Western coalition in the fight against terrorism, and only helps Bashar Assad's regime to stay in power.

...Now, when the West understood this, it will not be easy for Putin to achieve the lifting of sanctions, about which European politicians have been mentioning recently ...

I think also that the appearance of news that Putin is ready to give up Assad (a statement later refuted) — is a combination played out in order to show to the West, "you see, I'm good, I asked Assad to leave, but he refused."

These are Moscow's typical diplomatic tricks: remember Smirnov in Transnistria ("We want to make things normal, but he is against it") and separatists in Donbass ("We are committed to the settlement, but the rebels are not allowing us"). Russia's cunning has long been known to all, and such statements should not be taken seriously.

Lavrov on Major World Challenges in 2016 and on Russia in Ukraine

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 January 2016 Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov gave an annual press conference. As the accompanying excerpts from the pro-Kremlin *Izvestiya* describe, "A record number of journalists - more than 200, have been accredited for the annual briefing of the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Such interest is due to the difficult political situation in the international arena."

According to the excerpts, at the briefing, Lavrov named what he described as three main challenges facing the world in 2016: "creation of a fair democratic system," "fight against terrorism," and "the negotiability of partners." He did not explain what he meant by the first challenge. The Kremlin typically pays lip service to the importance of democracy, but does nothing else to actually advance it. On the second challenge of terrorism, he referred to the fight against ISIS. For many months now the Kremlin had urged the creation of a joint international coalition to fight ISIS, although numerous Western experts confirmed that the vast majority of Russian airstrikes in Syria since September 2015 have not been against ISIS, but rather in support of the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Nonetheless, Lavrov praised *(continued)*

Source: "Сергей Лавров назвал главные мировые вызовы," ("Sergei Lavrov Named Main Challenges to the World"), *Izvestiya*, 26 January 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/602545>

... The main challenge facing the world in 2016 - is the creation of a fair democratic system. This was stated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

... Russian Foreign Minister reminded how the Iran's nuclear program issue had been solved when Russia and the United States made joint efforts to ensure that all sanctions against Tehran were removed and the concerns of the international community over its nuclear program disappeared.

...

The Russian Minister said the second challenge is the fight against terrorism.

The third challenge facing the international community in 2016, according Lavrov is the negotiability of partners.

- And that's a problem - Lavrov said, reminding of how the Syrian crisis negotiations were conducted. (continued)

Continued: Lavrov on Major World Challenges in 2016 and on Russia in Ukraine

Russian air strikes in Syria as constructive in the fight against terrorism.

Lavrov's third point on "negotiability of partners" is directly related to his second point. *Izvestiya* writes that on this point he "mentioned the lack of willingness of European and Middle Eastern colleagues to discuss issues using good judgment, and to resolve the problem of the Syrian conflict unless interests were satisfied." He does not mention it directly, but by "partners" he also means the US. His statement is all the more ironic since it is Russia that has consistently been most interested in satisfying its own interests, which were less about finding a genuine peaceful solution than about positioning Russia as a key great power that serves as a counterweight to the West in the Middle East.

Interestingly, to reinforce his point about "negotiability" and "working together," Lavrov said that Iran's nuclear program issue had been solved when Russia and the US "made joint efforts to ensure that all sanctions against Tehran were removed and the concerns of the international community over its nuclear program disappeared," as *Izvestiya* summarizes. Yet international concerns about Iran's nuclear program have not disappeared in the minds of many.

Lavrov also discussed Ukraine. He declared that Russia never violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum by annexing Crimea in March 2014—a document that, according numerous analysts and policymakers, obligated Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty. Yet Lavrov said, "[t]he Budapest Memorandum contains only one single commitment: not to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. No one did." He then added that Ukrainians for their part are violating the rights of Hungarians in Transcarpathia.

However, Article 2 of the Budapest Memorandum clearly says that Russia and other signatories "reaffirm their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." The document does not single out nuclear weapons as a sole exception. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

He mentioned the lack of willingness of European and Middle Eastern colleagues to discuss issues using good judgment, and to resolve the problem of the Syrian conflict unless interests were satisfied...

A record number of journalists - more than 200, have been accredited for the annual briefing of the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Such interest is due to the difficult political situation in the international arena ...

Moscow believes that the key issue of 2015 was Russian President Vladimir Putin's initiative to establish a broad coalition against terrorism under the aegis of the UN.

- The actions of Russian aerospace forces in response to the request of the Syrian leadership have helped to reverse the situation in Syria and ensure the narrowing of the space controlled by terrorists, -announced Lavrov.

Although, it also became clear who is really fighting terrorists, and who is their accomplice and tries to use them in their own selfish purposes.

Russian minister also expressed concern that the United States refuse to co-ordination with the Russian military on the objectives and position of the militants in Syria.

The Russian Minister also expressed concern that the United States is refusing to co-ordinate with the Russian military on the objectives and the locations of the militants in Syria.

... Minsk agreements remain the only mechanism for reducing tension in Donbass and regulating the general political situation in Ukraine. Lavrov said that within the framework of this package of measures Moscow will offer Kiev all assistance to achieve a "national consensus."

Russia has not violated the Budapest Memorandum.

- The Budapest Memorandum contains only one single commitment: not to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. No one did, and no threats to using nuclear weapons against Ukraine were voiced. More likely the situation had been reversed, - Lavrov said.

Ukraine, according to Lavrov, infringes on the rights of Hungarians in Transcarpathia...

Russia is not planning to return Crimea to Ukraine because of Crimea is Russian territory in accordance with the expression of the will of the people of the peninsula...

Russia's History in the Caucasus: Repetition of Same Mistakes?

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 January 2016 Russian news site *RBC.ru* published a long article by Amiran Urushadze, entitled “How the Russian Empire Ruled the Caucasus.” *RBC* strives to provide balanced news in Russia in what is currently a very difficult media environment. The accompanying excerpts are from the *RBC's* Politics section. It is rare that a news site would publish an article in this section on history rather than current events, yet the Russian empire's long and complicated history with the Caucasus is especially worth understanding when looking into the current events in this region.

According to Urushadze, the Russian tsars had always aimed to incorporate the Caucasus into the Russian Empire. Yet, he writes, this process was wrought with confusion and failed policies. Importantly, the Kremlin, according to Urushadze, keeps repeating the same mistakes: “The Caucasus for the Russian policy –are a multiple repetition, a return to old problems... [t]he Russian Empire had bet not on institutions, but on personalities. This made it possible to own the Caucasus, but has not made them a part of the Russian state.”

Urushadze's examples of poor policies include the attempt to implement in the Caucasus policies carried out in Russia. However, the local population only met these policies with confusion and distrust. He writes that they rebelled when they lost their traditional legal norms and practices.

Urushadze's more in-depth example is the Kremlin's granting complete authority to local governors in the Caucasus, mainly for reasons of “pacifying” the region rather than truly making it part of Russia. Ironically, for all attention the Kremlin paid to the region for military or political purposes, it displayed profound neglect towards the region otherwise. Urushadze does not say it directly, but he appears to hint at neglect from the development standpoint. This is consistent with his point about the Kremlin's failure to implement institutions and therefore truly make the Caucasus an equal part of Russia. Here he quotes the last governor of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai, who wrote in 1915, “It is impossible not to recognize that since the decade that passed after the joining of the Caucasus to the Russian Empire very little attention has been paid to these most rich outskirts ...”

The points Urushadze raises about betting on personalities over institutions, neglect, focus on rule, and “pacification” rather than making the Caucasus an equal part of Russia all ring true today. To give but a few examples, the Kremlin installed corrupt Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov to keep the republic in check after fighting two secessionist wars there. Kadyrov maintains a degree of stability from the Kremlin's perspective—in exchange for financial compensation—but rules Chechnya with as an iron fist and does little to foster real growth. As a whole, the Caucasus remain poor and underdeveloped, a source of continued strife, and a target of the Russian authorities' discriminatory and abusive policies and practices.

End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

Source: Amiran Urushadze, “Как Российская империя управляла Кавказом,” (“How the Russian Empire Ruled the Caucasus”), *RBC*, 25 January 2016. <http://www.rbcdaily.ru/politics/562949999339296>

The Caucasus for the Russian policy –are a multiple repetition, a return to old problems... Ruling the Caucasus has always meant ruling a special place using special rules...

“[D]o not judge the Caucasus region as a separate kingdom. I wish to merge it using all possible measures with Russia, so that everything consisted of one whole,” as the Emperor Nicholas I defined the goal of imperial policy in the Caucasus, which remained relevant to his ruling heirs. But how to achieve this merger?

The attempt to spread to the southern outskirts the rule of all-Russian gubernatorial laws and norms brought terrible confusion. The reform, barely held in 1840-1841 caused discontent among the people who became deprived of their usual legal principles and traditions...The search for the optimal form Caucasus' merger with Russia continued.

The next attempt was the formation in 1845 of the Caucasus governorship—administrative institute, uniting the entire territory of that area (the North Caucasus and South Caucasus or Transcaucasia). The Caucasian governor received unprecedented professional rights and privileges. Ministers of the Russian Empire were deprived of directing the activities of their departments in the Caucasus: all threads of administration were in the hands of the governor. His sovereignty was supplemented with the right of direct appeal to the monarch, bypassing the bureaucratic capital...

The Caucasus governorate was the product of a crisis situation. Governors had worked on developing the entrusted-to-them region, but the main thing was—they fought a war with Shamil's imamate, claiming sovereignty of the great power under the “white king.” Shamil put down his arms in 1859. Five additional years later, the resistance of the Northwest Caucasus' Circassians was broken. The governorate assured military victory and the long-awaited “pacification” of the Caucasus

The words of the last governor of the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, writing with a mixture of anxiety and surprise to Nicholas II in 1915 ring as a sad conclusion, “... It is impossible not to recognize that since the decade that passed after the joining of the Caucasus to the Russian Empire very little attention has been paid to these most rich outskirts...”

Ruling the Caucasus has proved almost more difficult than joining it [to Russia]. Disseminating innovative nationwide all-Russian norms in the Caucasus brought about a lack of understanding among the local population. The Russian Empire had bet not on institutions, but on personalities. This made it possible to own the Caucasus, but has not made it a part of the Russian state.

Ottawa Stands Firm on Support for Ukraine

OE Watch Commentary: Canada has been unwaveringly consistent in its opposition to the Kremlin aggression against Ukraine. Ottawa has championed the recognition of Ukraine's territorial integrity and its status as a sovereign state in the international community. The accompanying brief excerpt on the Canadian Operation UNIFIER in Ukraine further demonstrates Ottawa's concern in helping to resolve the Ukrainian crisis. As the article points out, Operation UNIFIER "is not a combat mission, but rather a capacity building mission taking place jointly with the US military and other partners."

Canada has enjoyed close relations with an independent Ukraine since 1991. Even before the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine became home to numerous waves of immigration from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Today, Canada is home to a large Ukrainian diaspora, with over a million citizens of Ukrainian background. Since the conflict began in SE Ukraine, Canada has been providing even more "investments in economic development, reinforcing democratic institutions, and humanitarian aid."

**End OE Watch Commentary
(Burnside)**

Source: "Additional Canadian Mechanized Brigade to Join Operation UNIFIER in Ukraine," *Interfax*, 11 January 2016. <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/316402.html>

Starting January 10 and throughout the rest of the month, the first group of approximately 200 Canadian Army soldiers from the Fifth Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, based in Valcartier, Quebec, will be deploying to Ukraine for Operation UNIFIER.

"This important training mission demonstrates that Canada, together with our other allies, stands proudly in support of our Ukrainian friends," said Canadian Minister of National Defense Harjit S. Sajjan.

Operation UNIFIER is Canada's military training mission to Ukraine. "This is not a combat mission, but rather a capacity building mission taking place jointly with the US military and other partners."

"Canada's support to Ukraine includes investments in economic development, reinforcing democratic institutions, and humanitarian aid," the Canadian Defense Ministry said.

Benefits for Russian Volunteers who Fought in Ukraine?

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past two years a handful of Russian politicians have proposed legislation designed to provide benefits to those (non-military) Russian volunteers who participated and aided the separatist forces in their conflict in SE Ukraine. As the brief excerpt points out, “several thousand” Russian volunteers felt compelled to assist their ethnic comrades in the Donbass region. The excerpt goes on to say that of these volunteers, more than 200 were killed and about 300 injured. The Russian government, however, has been reluctant to pass such legislation. Not only would caring for these non-military veterans add to their current economic challenges, but such legislation would also amount to a frank acknowledgement that these volunteers were fighting for Kremlin interests.

The article describes how some of these volunteers were motivated to volunteer after seeing reports of alleged Ukrainian atrocities on Russian television. They interview one participant who claimed that after seeing what the “Ukraine-fascists” were doing in Donbass, he realized he had to stop them, or soon his “children would soon be playing with shrapnel.” This same volunteer, who was injured in the fighting, recalls the indifference of Russian medical personnel, who while treating him remarked “We did not send you there.” As the excerpt points out, many of these volunteers have been forced to rely upon nongovernmental organizations and other volunteer groups for their medical care. Besides a lack of medical care, the article describes some of the difficulties these volunteers have had finding employment after they return home, since some of them did “not always [present] a positive image.”

The article ends on an ambiguous note, suggesting that the Russian state will work out some sort of hybrid mechanism to recognize the service of these volunteers. The article concludes by quoting one of the volunteers who claims that he will soon return to the Donbass region because “we need to clean out the evil spirits from this region.” If this article is any indication, it would appear that this conflict and the question of benefits for those Russian volunteers involved in this fighting are far from being resolved. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Elizabeth Maetnaya and Vladimir Dergachov “Мы вас туда не посылали” [We did not send you there], *Gazeta.ru*, 31 January 2016. http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2016/01/31_a_8046455.shtml

The Union of Donbass volunteers, combining those who fought in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions on the side of the unrecognized republics, demands that these men gain the status of combatants. In total, according to their data, in the Donbass region fought several thousand people (a full register is not made), with more than 200 were killed and about 300 injured. The participants themselves say they want to receive this status to share in the respect of society....

Ismanov recounts what prompted him to fight against the “Ukraine-fascists”... “I couldn’t just sit on the couch and do nothing. If I didn’t go fight, my children would soon be playing with shrapnel.”

...After Ismanov was injured he recounted how he was treated by medical personnel when he returned to Russia. “They spoke to us like we were cattle, like we were some little runt, saying ‘We didn’t send you there.’” ... “We had to rely upon care from various volunteer agencies and veteran’s groups.”

....”The lack of a clear status of volunteers in Russia gives rise to difficulties with employment and with law enforcement issues, - he says. - One of his friends from Novosibirsk was unable to open a bank account, after the management pointed out that they could be subject to justice under “financing of terrorist activities.”...

...The deputy head of the unit of Donbass Volunteer Union (FBC) Mikhail Pimenov says that when many of the militia look for work, they failed “because the volunteers in Russia is not always a positive image.” ...

...The former commander of the militia DNR, Oleg Melnikov said that the Duma is unlikely to adopt a law on the status of volunteers and give them the status of combatants. Firstly, it would be contrary to Russia’s position in the Minsk talks, where it positions itself as the arbiter of the conflict, rather than a member of hostilities on the side of LNR and DNR. In addition, given the current difficult economic conditions, the authorities are not likely to add several tens of thousands of people to their benefit roster, he said....

...Ismanov Erkin said that in the coming days he will return to the Donbass because the situation has escalated... “we need to go there to clean out the evil spirits from this earth.”



Separatist Regions in Donbass.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39279410>

Rogozin's January Visit to Serbia

OE Watch Commentary: As expected, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin's visit to Serbia in mid-January demonstrated the Kremlin's increasing political and military clout in this country (for more information, see "Strengthening Russian-Serbian Military Ties," *OE Watch*, Jan 2016). According to the first excerpt, Rogozin had discussions with officials in Belgrade who are interested in purchasing Russian advanced air defense and MiG-29 fighters. The article points out that these purchases will be facilitated by the recently formed Russian-Serbian Commission for Military-Technical Cooperation. Rogozin went on to ensure his Serbian counterparts that "we [Russia] will provide direct support to our ally in the Balkans. We will consider your request in the shortest amount of time."

During his visit, Rogozin did more than merely discuss Russian weapon sales to Serbia. As the second excerpt points out, this outspoken Kremlin official warned against Serbia's aspirations to join the EU, insinuating that in doing so Serbia would become a victim of Europe's refugee crisis, resulting in a flood of dangerous refugees, who would "frighten Serbian women from going out in the street." According to Rogozin, instead of looking to Brussels, Serbia should look toward a closer partnership with Russia.

During his visit, Rogozin also went out of his way to meet with Serb nationalist leader Vojislav Seselj, a highly controversial figure who has been indicted by the Hague Tribunal. The second excerpt suggests that this meeting was designed to express Russian anger at the fact that Montenegro recently received an invitation to join NATO. Besides offering the carrot of selling advanced weapon systems, the Kremlin, presumably, is prepared to back opposition parties within Serbia to derail Belgrade's plans for drawing closer to the EU or NATO. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Ivan Safronov "Российское оружие удержит Балканы в равновесии" [Russian Weapons To Keep Balkans in Balance], *Kommersant Online*, 15 January 2016. <http://kommersant.ru/doc/2891412>

Kommersant has learned that in response to Croatia's plans to buy MGM-140 ATACMS tactical missiles from the United States, Serbia has taken an interest in Russian air defense systems, such as Tor, Pantsir, and Buk, as well as MiG-29 fighters. The requests of the Serbian military have already been sent to Moscow. The recently established commission for military-technical cooperation between the two countries will examine them by the end of January.

The fact that the Serbian Ministry of Defense has submitted to the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSVTS) a wish list of weapons was announced by Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Rogozin at the end of his visit to Belgrade. "We will consider this list most carefully and, as far as possible, will oblige," he promised.

According to Kommersant's information, the requests of the Serbian military will be considered by the recently established Russian-Serbian commission for military-technical cooperation....



Dmitry Rogozin, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia .
Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/catalog/persons/238/events/19387>

Source: L. Gedosevic and B. Jelovac, "Rogozin's Rap; How Did We Deserve That, Russian Brothers," *Blic Online*, 15 January 2016.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitriy Rogozin is the first Russian official who publicly said that Russia actually did not want Serbia in the EU.

Although many statements have been issued by Moscow to the effect that Russia lent full support to Serbia's membership to the EU, Rogozin "took off his gloves" in his visit to Belgrade and said that "Serbia should be careful about harmonizing its foreign policy with the EU so that women were not frightened about going into the streets because of migrants."...

...He also poked Belgrade in the eye when he met with SRS [Serbian Radical Party] leader Vojislav Seselj, an indictee of The Hague Tribunal. Serbia has a clear pro-EU policy and did not deserve the manner in which Rogozin made his assessments about Serbia's path to the EU nor his meeting with Seselj.

In fact, Serbia has resisted informal pressure from Brussels to join the sanctions against Russia, it has deepened cooperation, and always pointed out its friendly ties with Russia....

...The reason for Rogozin's explosive statement and his more than cordial meeting with Seselj should be sought in the fact that Montenegro recently received an invitation to join NATO.

Russian Military Housing-Significant Progress

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to make progress in resolving the long-standing housing shortage for both retired and active-duty personnel. Two measures which have been implemented over the past three years (a cash subsidy and a military mortgage program) have helped to reduce the housing waiting list to a manageable level. As the brief excerpt points out, providing decent housing to those who serve in the military has had a positive effect on morale and readiness.

The author begins by describing the awful housing conditions for military officers in the early 1990s, when living quarters were overcrowded and in poor repair. He then recounts the attempts by the MoD to address the housing shortage by building apartments in remote locations, which few were willing to accept. He points out that this “purely arithmetic approach to the housing problem in this situation was unacceptable.” Up until 2012 there were still over 82,000 military personnel waiting for housing.

The housing situation began to dramatically improve after the implementation of a housing subsidy program, whereby those on the waiting list were eligible to receive a one-time housing subsidy to purchase housing on the open market (for more information, see “New Housing Options,” OEW March 2014). According to the author, the housing waiting list has dropped to just 31,000 in 2015 and will decrease by another 6,500 in 2016 thanks to this subsidy program.

The article also briefly describes the recently implemented military mortgage system, whereby soldiers accumulate savings while on active duty which will ultimately be used to buy housing when they retire. The excerpt points out that the popularity of this system continues to improve, with more than 160,000 military personnel participating in this program since it began in 2012. The proceeds from this mortgage program allowed the MoD to construct over 28,000 military housing units in 2015. The article concludes by pointing out that the quality and performance of the military depend to a large degree on a “decent standard of life and living conditions for the people themselves in uniform.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: Vadim Koval, “Новоселье ‘грозит’ неизбежностью” [Housewarming “faces” the inevitable], *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*, 5 February 2016. http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2016-02-05/3_novoselie.html

In our unit, formed near Omsk in February 1990, only the first arrivals were lucky with housing.... When I was still a bachelor lieutenant, I actually “escaped” from a makeshift dormitory of our military unit to a “three ruble apartment” located in an ordinary nine-story apartment building, where 15 of us lived. In the end it came down to the fact that the bunk-beds were unable to accommodate all the residents of this “hostel.” There was only enough room when some were absent, on duty, a business trip or vacation....

...Paradoxically, even though there had been a huge financial investment over the past decade to resolve the housing issue by building apartments in remote locations, problems remained. It was discovered that a purely arithmetic approach to the housing shortage was unacceptable. In addition, further military reforms which caused personnel cuts further aggravated the housing waiting list.

Nevertheless, in the last few years, under the mandate of Sergei Shoigu, a solution to this problem has drawn much closer.

As the head of the Department for Military Housing, Sergey Pirogov, recently said, since 1 January 2012, the military housing list has shrunk by more than 2.7 times:.. from 82,400 to 31,000...Last year [2015], 7,100 were provided with housing and another 6,900 purchased apartments with housing subsidies.... There has also been a steady increase in those participating in the mortgage system, which since 2012 has almost doubled and now stands at 160,300 people....

...The army must become better not only with regard to technical and performance measures. It is also necessary to provide a decent standard of living conditions for those who serve in uniform....



Public housing buildings along Korovinskoye Shosse in Moscow.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Public_housing_in_Russia#/media/File:Korowinskoie.jpg

Formation of the 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army

OE Watch Commentary: The 45th Air Army was formed in the Trans-Baikal region in 1957 and was renamed the 23rd Air Army in 1967. Therefore, there is some connection with the northern regions. The Soviet Union had separate air defense armies. This new combined formation seems an effective way to manage and secure Arctic airspace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“With the formation of the new units and an extensive surveillance system, Russia is taking its Northern Fleet to a new level.”

Source: Trude Pettersen, <http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/trude-pettersen>, 9 February 2016

In order to enhance control over Arctic air space, Russia has set up an air force and air defense forces within the Northern Fleet

On 5 February, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced the formation of the 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army of the Northern Fleet. This development comes one year after Russia established its Arctic Joint Strategic Command with the Northern Fleet as the mainstay of the new strategic formation.

Russia is also building up an advanced tracking system, which is already partially in operation, which provides a picture of air and water movement. Radio-radar units and an air defense missile regiment equipped with S-300 missile systems are now on combat duty on the Franz Joseph Land, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya and New Siberian Islands archipelagos.

A number of additional bases are under development. Alongside old Soviet bases and airfields that have been re-opened and modernized, several new bases have been built on the country’s north coast and on islands in the Arctic. By 2018, Russia intends to have a total of nine operating Arctic airfields. Russia plans to continue extended training activity in the Arctic in 2016, including airborne drops on the North Pole.

China Wants to Team Up with Russia in an Arctic Expedition

OE Watch Commentary: China has been steadily expanding its role in the Arctic and Antarctic and now hopes to join Russia in a joint expedition this year. China has been mapping and charting Arctic waters and looking to increase trade traffic on the Northern Sea route. China and Russia have participated in joint endeavors, and it will be interesting to see if there will be a joint expedition.

It seems awfully late in the planning cycle to conduct an international expedition to the Arctic this year. Long-standing annual expeditions do not always go smoothly. Last year, the Russians created enough administrative difficulties to foil the joint Norwegian-Russian polar bear count expedition. Russia and Norway have experienced recent problems and the thwarted polar bear count is probably a direct result. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Beijing hopes to organize a joint Arctic research expedition together with Russia this summer.”

Source: Trude Pettersen, <http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/trude-pettersen>, 9 February 2016

China wants to join Russia in Arctic expedition

China’s State Oceanic Administration (SOA) is planning its seventh Arctic research expedition in 2016 and will, for the first time, try to arrange a joint Arctic Ocean expedition with Russia, according to the Chinese news agency Xinhua.

China, which was granted permanent observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013, has enhanced its focus on Arctic development in the last years. Shipping, research and access to the natural resources are the main reasons for China’s increased interests in the Arctic. The country set up its first Arctic scientific research base, Yellow River Station, on Svalbard in 2004.

In 2012 the icebreaker “Xue Long” (Snow Dragon) became the first Chinese polar expedition to sail all along the Northern Sea Route into the Barents Sea. Upon return the vessel sailed a straight line from Iceland to the Bering Strait via the North Pole, the so-called “future central Arctic shipping route”.

In 2013 the China-Nordic Research Center (CNARC) was established in Shanghai. The center consists of ten member institutes – four Chinese and six Nordic from Finland, Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden. CNARC’s purpose is to provide a platform for academic cooperation to increase awareness, understanding and knowledge of the Arctic and its global impacts. The center shall also promote cooperation for sustainable development of the Nordic Arctic and coherent development of China in a global context.

China also wants to enhance scientific research in the Antarctic, and plans to establish an air service team for Antarctic exploration “which will help form a full monitoring platform of the land, sea and air.” Technology and equipment adapted to the polar environment as well as monitoring and application service systems will be developed, the State Oceanic Administration said.

Beefing Up the Rescue and Salvage Support on the Northern Sea Route

OE Watch Commentary: The Russians have six search and rescue vessels; all are icebreakers and diesel powered. The new “Spasatel Demidov” is one of four MPSV07-class vessels. They have a sea endurance of 20 days. This is the smallest of the three classes of search and rescue vessels and will be the second one of its class home-ported in Arctic waters.

The Arctic coast is a long stretch and vessels home-ported in Murmansk on the Western end are pressed to cover the entire length effectively. The question is: What is the new vessel’s home port?

All three classes of Russian search and rescue vessels are large, running from 73 meters to 86 meters in length. There are two larger MPSV06-class search and rescue vessels - the “Spasatel Murman” [also home-ported in Murmansk] and the “Spasatel Beringov Proliv” [home-ported in Sakhalin]. Five other search and rescue vessels are being built or scheduled to be built.

Russia is serious about opening the Northern Sea Route as a viable commercial and strategic entity and is building the infrastructure necessary to support it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russia has put much effort into improving search and rescue capacities on the Northern Sea Route, the Arctic shortcut between Europe and Asia. In addition to opening a series of search and rescue centers along the route, from Murmansk in the West to Provideniya in the East, Russia has started construction of several different types of salvage vessels.”

Source: Trude Pettersen, <http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/trude-pettersen>, 29 January 2016

Fourth rescue vessel for Arctic delivered

In December Nevsky Shipyard delivered “Spasatel Demidov”, the fourth and final example in a series of multipurpose salvage vessels for the Ministry of Transport. The shipyard’s website <http://www.nssz.ru/en/novosti/2015/nevsky-shipyard-delivered-the-vessel-spasatel-demidov.html> states: The series are described as the biggest and most significant vessels to be built by Russian shipyards at the expense of the federal program “Development of the Russian Transport System 2010-2015.”

The vessels are 73 meters long and have deadweight of 1,171 tons. They are intended for rescue and salvage operations, providing technical support and assistance to vessels in distress, and towing ships and offshore structures in ice and in open water. The vessel’s technical capabilities allow it to re-float vessels that have run aground or are reef damaged, pump water from flooded compartments, tow emergency vessels to a place of refuge, search, rescue, evacuate and accommodate people, as well as to support underwater diving works to depth up to 300 meters, and to survey the sea bottom and damaged objects at depths up to 1,000 meters.

The vessel has the capability of extinguishing burning fuel on water, extinguishing fires on floating and coastal objects, and clearing up oil spills and oil products, including those with a flashpoint below 60 °Centigrade [140 ° Fahrenheit].

The homeport for “Spasatel Demidov” has not yet been announced. The vessel follows the first three in the series “Spasatel Karev”, which is based in Novorossiysk [Black Sea], “Spasatel Kavdeykin”, which is based in Murmansk [Barents Sea], and “Spasatel Zaborshchikov”, which has Vladivostok [Sea of Japan] as its homeport.



Russian icebreaker.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_icebreaker_in_Antarctica.jpg

Ruslan the Cold Warrior

OE Watch Commentary: Ruslan was a folk tale mighty warrior of Kievan Rus who was immortalized by Alexandr Pushkin in his epic poem, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, published in 1820. It became a famous opera composed by Mikhail Glinka that premiered in 1842. There have been several movie adaptations as well.

The 80th Independent Motorized Arctic Brigade is now training with the commercial TTM-4902 “Ruslan” all-terrain vehicle. The brigade is scheduled to receive the “Artika” armored squad carrier in 2019, which will be modeled on the “Ruslan,” and the brigade will have experienced drivers ready for the Arktika when it arrives. Ruslan will also fill a cross-country transport gap until the Artika arrives.

According to the 1 February Popular Mechanics website, the Ruslan has four sets of independently powered tracks, a road speed of 29 miles-per-hour, and a water speed of 5 miles-per-hour. It is a favorite with Arctic geologists and has 8 bunks and a rear compartment capacity of 16 passengers (or 10 soldiers plus kit). The front compartment contains the Kamaz 330-horsepower turbo-diesel engine and can transport six passengers, including the driver. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Northern Fleet’s coastal defense training area was the site where drivers from the Arctic Brigade tested the readiness of an amphibious all-terrain vehicle. While crossing Arctic terrain, soldiers overcame obstacles such as sparse stands of trees, ravines and boulders. These tests provided professional experience for the drivers and good unit experience with the transport of this brigade (which was founded in 2015). The all-terrain vehicles performed without a hitch in low temperatures and two-meter deep snow.”

Source: *Defending Russia*, www.defendingrussia.ru/a, 18 January 2016.

Motorized Rifle Infantrymen of the Northern Fleet conduct test-drives of Arctic All-Terrain Vehicle

The all-terrain TTM-4902PS-10 is a tracked-articulated vehicle that is divided into two sections. The first compartment contains the engine and can transport six passengers, including the driver. The second compartment of the personnel carrier model can transport ten personnel. This model can be reconfigured as a medical treatment facility (with sleeping arrangements) or as a command post.

The vehicle can operate in temperatures of plus to minus 50 degrees Celsius (+122° to -58 ° Fahrenheit). The vehicle keeps its engine and fuel warm. The vehicle’s minimal ground pressure, articulated chassis and powerful engine gives it good cross-country mobility without seriously effecting its speed and hauling capacity. The articulated chassis allows it to climb vertically under varying circumstances. The vehicle can climb a 1.8 meter (5.9 foot) obstacle.



Arctic Brigade amphibious landing of Ruslan vehicle at Dudinka during last summer’s riverine operation of the Yenisei River

Still More Arctic Construction in 2016

OE Watch Commentary: The major infrastructure construction in the Arctic was completed in 2015, but there will be 12 additional airfields and 10 radar stations constructed there this year. That is still plenty of work in the far north. Further, there is an-ongoing effort to improve or develop equipment for Arctic combat. The “Krasukha” radio-electronic jamming system, which first appeared in the Russian inventory in 2012, has been modified and fielded for Arctic service. Improvements in avionics are on-going, as proven platforms are modified to fly in this severe climate. The Mi-8MTSH-V assault transport helicopter is a combination gunship and transport. The Mi-8 HIP is a 50-year-old veteran with a respected record flying in high altitudes and cold climes. The Mi-8MTSH-V made its debut in 2015 and should perform even better than its grandfather. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu noted that the construction of military facilities in the Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef and Severnaya Zemlya Archipelagoes, as well as the Nova Sibersk Islands, was completed. The infrastructure included self-contained administrative and living complexes and military bases, airfields and firing positions for artillery units and subunits.”

Source: Military Informant, <http://www.militaryinformant.com>, 2 February 2016.

Russia completing construction of infrastructure in the Arctic

In 2016, the military will continue to build and perfect its arctic infrastructure and also to equip the northern group of forces with personnel, arms and technology. They also plan to build 12 airfields and ten radar stations in the region.

KRET (a Radio-Electronic Technology Company [Concern] based in Moscow), is actively involved in developing the region. KRET has developed a facility especially for the Arctic which duplicates the extreme low temperatures and the technical difficulties which must be overcome in these climatic circumstances. Within the parameters of its responsibilities, KRET has achieved a new level of improvements in the operation of Arctic equipment for aviation, air defense, the Navy and electronic warfare forces. The unique systems designed for radio-electronic combat and radar detection which KRET delivered to the Ministry of Defense have supported the determined defenses of the Russian sector of the Arctic.

As one example, KRET has provided the air defense forces in the Arctic with a new, highly-effective ground-based electronic warfare systems from the “Krasukha” family and also participated in the modernization of aircraft which are based on the airfields at Murmansk, Vorkuta, Norilsk and Anandiyar. Kret has updated avionics for the Arctic version of the Mi-8MTSH-V helicopter. This helicopter can quickly transfer forces and material to a threatened sector. No less important, this aircraft can be used in peaceful missions, for example for work on the Arctic shelf or to support polar scholars.

What Do You Do when the Snowmobile Runs Out of Gas?

OE Watch Commentary: Sled dogs and reindeer may seem a bit outdated in modern warfare, yet mountain troops still find the mule the most-reliable form of high-altitude mountain transport available. Russian police in the far north have already learned that dog sleds and reindeer can go where snowmobiles cannot and are pursuing felons on dog and reindeer-drawn sleighs.

The scouts of the 80th Separate Motorized Rifle Arctic Brigade are now learning this lesson. So far, there has been no announced TO&E changes to include mushers and drovers, but it is still early days. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Soldiers from the Northern Fleet’s Arctic Brigade have, for the first time, learned how to use the traditional means of transportation of the indigenous peoples of the North – reindeer and dog sledding.”

Source: Trude Pettersen, <http://www.thebarentsobserver.com/profil/trude-pettersen>, 1 February 2016

Arctic Soldiers Training with Reindeer

The training was conducted in Lovozero on the Kola Peninsula, in the heartland of the Sami population in Russia. The participants came from the Arctic Brigade’s reconnaissance company.

In temperatures down to -30°C [-22°F] the soldiers learned how to handle dog sleds and reindeer sleds and how they can be used tactically in raids. Reindeer herders and dog mushers told the soldiers about how to care for and train the animals.

During World War II the Red Army established several reindeer battalions in the Arctic. Reindeer were used for transportation of equipment, evacuation of wounded, getting scouts behind the enemy lines, and even evacuation of wrecked aircraft and their crews.

Men from the indigenous people of Sami, Nenets and Komi were mobilized in the battalions. Over 10,000 wounded were evacuated using reindeer. Reindeer were also used in raids and rear area sabotage missions, including an attack on the Fascist airfield in Petsamo in 1942.

Russia Has Satellite Problems

“Kommersant was informed that the military will resume orders for communication satellites (product 14F112, Meridian) according to sources in the space rocket sector and Defense Ministry...Based on the conference results, the president agreed to allocate around R14 billion for four “Meridians” and, in addition, not less than R8 Billion will be spent on their launch equipment”

OE Watch Commentary:
Russia is in the process of developing a new-generation space communications vehicle. Unfortunately that vehicle, the “Sfera-V” satellite, will not be ready any earlier than 2021.

The Sfera-V was to replace the “Meridian” satellite series in 2018. The delay is primarily caused by weight issues. The Sfera-V is unable to be lifted into orbit via “Proton-M” and “Angara-A5” rockets. As a result of the delay, the Defense Ministry will receive an extra 14 billion rubles to help it execute defense tasks; specifically, the money will be spent on four Meridians. An additional eight billion rubles will be spent on launch equipment, in particular the “Soyuz-21” launcher and “Fregat” booster stages. The Meridian’s operational period in orbit is seven years. They will be used to perform assigned tasks until the time when the Sfera-V is operational. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Ivan Safronov, “Billions Will Be Spent on Communications,” *Kommersant Online*, 11 February 2016.

“Meridian” (product 14F112) is a series of dual-purpose communications satellites that were developed under a Defense Ministry order by the “Information Satellite Systems” Open Joint-Stock Company named for Academician M. F. Reshetnev. The satellites are part of the Unified Satellite Communications System, Stage 2 (YeSSS-2).

They all operate in a high elliptical orbit, where they have replaced obsolete “Molniya-3” and “Molniya-IT” communications satellites. Working in harness with “Raduga”-type geostationary apparatus within the YeSSS-2 framework, the “Meridians” had to perform a range of civilian and military tasks. For example, to provide communication between seagoing ships, ice-zone reconnaissance aircraft, and land-based coastal stations in the Northern Sea Route area.

According to unofficial information, a signal for combat engagement of strategic nuclear forces could, if necessary, be issued via its channels.

In other words, if the military did not return to the “Meridian” project, they would risk being left without a single vehicle in high elliptical orbits by 2021.

Several Kommersant sources in the space industry acknowledge that the decision to purchase additional “Meridians” is a temporary solution: The military need [space] vehicles that are capable of providing communications across practically the entire Arctic territory, but “Meridians” will not cope with that task in full measure.

Source: *Interfax* (in English), 19 February 2016.

“Problems with import substitution, in particular as far as electronic components are concerned, have led to a considerable increase in the weight of Sfera-V type satellites,” said a source in Russia’s rocket and space sector. “It so happened that Proton-M and Angara-A5 carrier rockets that Russia has today are unable to lift satellites of this type equipped with new, Russian, components to a highly elliptical orbit, the source said.

Keeping NBC Relevant

Flame Weapons in the Russian Armed Forces

By Charles Bartles

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

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

Strategic Landpower: The View from China

Introduction

Many elements of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) visualization of the future land battlefield coincide with the warfighting functions of the US military. *ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, May 2012, defines a *warfighting function* as a group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes) united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives. The six functions are mission command, movement and maneuver, fires, intelligence, sustainment, and protection.¹

The PLA's visualization of the battlefield is more holistic than just these functions, as expected, since such a view is a common trait of oriental analysis. In particular, the topics of war control and target or vital point identification appear to be centers of special attention in addition to battlefield and force construction.

Over the past three years the journal *China Military Science (CMS)* has examined many of these issues. Whether the identification of these topics is the result of PLA lessons learned from an examination of the contemporary battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan is difficult to ascertain. Since *CMS* is the only source used in the analysis, the report cannot, of course, be considered comprehensive. However, the thirteen topics that follow (each is a separate article in *CMS*) do offer a general summation of how a future PLA battlefield is shaping up:

General Concept of a Modern Battlefield

- Construction of a land battlefield
- The conduct of joint operations under informatized conditions
- Examining the concept of strategic prepositioning
- Distance attenuation through offshore military base construction
- Warfighting experimentation in laboratories

Forces on a Modern Battlefield

- Building new type operational forces
- Infantry fighting force considerations and training
- The development of new-type operational forces

Battlefield Theories

- The conduct of "war control"
- Handling military crises
- Identifying turning points in the form of warfare

Target Identification

- Vital point identification
- Target-centric operations

The authors of these articles come from a variety of regional and institutional perspectives, to include the Xinjiang, Nanjing, Guangzhou, and Jinan military regions; the Defense Information College; Zhongnan University in Hubei; and the Beijing Crisis Center. Most of these articles were published in 2013, with the exception of two that were published in 2014.

This article will cover several, but not all, of these discussions. For access to the complete article, go to the FMSO website at <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil>. Also, see the Chinese section of this OE watch

for an update on the PLA's battlefield construction plan.

General Concept of a Modern Battlefield

The Construction of a Modern Land Battlefield

Major General Wang Congmin, Deputy Commander of the Xinjiang Military District, discussed several considerations a PLA commander must take into account when constructing a modern land battlefield. He defined a land battlefield as "a place where opposing sides fight desperately for their lives in an attempt to accomplish a certain objective."² The modern land battlefield is a "multi-element space for realizing a high degree of information sharing and real time exchange guided by information technology under informatized conditions."³ It now includes related electromagnetic spectrums (sea, sky, and space) and networks, where the primary operational mode is joint operations. The land battlefield is nonlinear and three-dimensional as well as multi-element.⁴

Wang writes that the land battlefield has become global, where accuracy, range, and kill capability have been elevated. Joint operations are the major mode of operation. Land battlefield construction is focused on optimizing operational effectiveness while integrating command information and firepower:

It is centered on the construction of battlefield information infrastructure facilities, information systems, and information resources, and the building of a comprehensive information network that integrates information acquisition, transfer, processing, and protection into a single system in order to pull various operational factors, such as intelligence, reconnaissance, command and control, troop maneuver, precision attack, and damage assessment together to form an organic entity.⁵

The land battlefield construction project serves as a high efficiency support platform for real-time decision-making.

Wang states that land battlefield construction should be guided by military strategy, with the practical strategy being the integration of "reconnaissance, attack, assessment, and protection."⁶ Reconnaissance and defense should be integrated into a single entity; peacetime construction must be integrated into wartime construction; system construction must be digitized; and military and civilian construction must be integrated. Constant preparedness is required, indicating that the battlefield will be fluid (rapid maneuver), global, joint (with blurred boundaries between strategy and tactics), and virtual. The *initiative will be in the hands of the side with more control over the virtual battlefield*. Commanders must be able to adapt to changes in strategy, evolving operational modes, weapon developments, organizational reforms, and changes in an opponent's activities and behavior. New operational concepts must be included in planning, while strategic directions must be scientifically formulated.⁷

In summary, Wang's article indicates that a modern PLA land battlefield will be constructed from the following elements (the US warfighting function most closely associated with each element is cited at the end of each entry in brackets []):

1. An awareness system (early warning, reconnaissance, real-time assessment system) [intelligence]
2. A stable command and control system (with a reliable decision support system that integrates operational assessment, combat decision-making, operational planning, situation generation, war-game application, and laws of war into a single system) [mission command]

(continued)

Continued: Strategic Landpower: The View from China

3. A concealed comprehensive position system that integrates offense and defense into one unit (order should be defensive and blocking positions, counterattack positions, and offensive positions from which attacks can be launched in specific directions) [protection]
4. A linked network information system (the nucleus of the land battlefield construction project, to include satellites and optical fiber) [mission command]
5. An efficient reserve system to allocate logistic materials in a reasonable fashion [sustainment]
6. An accurate information resource system (concerning geography, hydrology, and meteorology) [helps enable fires]
7. A military transportation system covering the entire area for ease of delivery [movement and maneuver]
8. A protection system that integrates hardware with software.⁸ [protection]

On the Concept of Strategic Prepositioning

The modern battlefield was further described by PLA lecturer Wei Daiqiang (a lecturer in the Department of Military Thinking and Military History at the Nanjing Political College) as a place where the strategic prepositioning of forces and materials must be studied in order to attain a strategic advantage and reduce uncertainty. Several definitions of strategic prepositioning were discussed. Wei noted that the official 2011 book *Military Terminology of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* defined strategic prepositioning as the arrangement or distribution of troops, material, and equipment in preparation for satisfying future strategic needs. Wei stated that the noted PLA strategist, retired General Li Jijun, defined strategic prepositioning as a practice of military strategy that enables the seizure of strategic opportunity; and that a principle of war is to use battlefield creation and strategic prepositioning as a means for gaining strategic and battle initiative. The authors of the 2001 *The Science of Military Strategy* noted that all strategic thoughts are embodied in foresight and prepositioning. Another author wrote that strategy is essentially a strategic prediction and strategic prepositioning.⁹

The prepositioning concept involves a number of activities, to include the prepositioning of logistics, the development of mobilization potential, an "investment layout" in peacetime before war, and an assessment of various time constraints (which were stated as at risk, at war, and in the transition of various strategic phases). Strategic prepositioning is part of a nation's war preparation planning. It is most effective when a potential enemy's deployment positions are known, even though the time of war or its place are not. In effect, strategic prepositioning attempts to reduce uncertainty and offers the chance to gain the initiative by being ready for any eventuality.¹⁰

Wei notes that strategic prepositioning can be viewed as the potential released by a boulder rolling down a tall mountain. This requires determining ahead of time the strategic direction wherein the threat lies. The development of a strategic preposition (via forces, logistics, mobilization, etc.) is reminiscent of the concept of *shi*, or the development of a strategic advantage. As Wei notes, it is similar to the Western idea of prepositioning with regard to the Trojan horse.¹¹ This indicates the need to establish a strategic advantage through strategic prepositioning. Finally, he states that strategic prepositioning is also needed in China's national development strategy to guard against sudden turns in the international situation, such as in the areas of economics or diplomacy.¹²

Forces on a Modern Battlefield

Building New-Type Operational Forces

Lieutenant General Jia Xiaowei of the Guangzhou Military Region discussed how new types of operational forces might be used. Such forces increase combat effectiveness and improve innovation. The side that gains the initiative will have the power to change the situation. New-type operational forces must have special characteristics, to include timeliness, high efficiency, and the ability to be relative to the contemporary situation. Future war will be based on the "three no's" of warfare: "nobody" (unmanned weapons such as robots or drones), "no-see" (invisible, such as stealth fighters), and "no-hear" (silent, such as infrasound weapons that create psychological havoc). With regard to the latter, the author further explained the meaning of "silent," writing that it included new physical energy and bio-energy weapons in order to change "shock and awe maneuvering and attacking military actions of the past into silent and surreptitious actions."¹³ In a somewhat related discussion of new concept weapons, Jia included direct energy, kinetic, genetic, geophysical, and soft-kill weapons:

Directed energy weapons include laser, electromagnetic pulse, and particle beam weapons. Kinetic energy weapons include hypervelocity chemical energy launchers, kinetic energy interceptor munitions, and electromagnetic guns. Genetic weapons include microbiological weapons and particle genetic weapons. Geophysical weapons include ionospheric jamming and climate weapons. Soft-kill weapons include infrasonic, omnidirectional radiation, and non-lethal chemical warfare agents.¹⁴

The new-type operational forces' construction depends on the strength of China's national science and technology innovation capability. The PLA must protect friendly operational systems while "at the same time finding the 'acupuncture points' and 'floating ribs' of enemy operational systems."¹⁵ These systems must be paralyzed. Developments must provide an asymmetrical advantage over an opponent; system advantages must be optimized in accordance with security needs; full use of China's advantages must be used in the creation of asymmetrical developments; and developmental paths must be perfected. Examples of such forces include cyber-warfare, space warfare, remote warfare, and unmanned warfare. These forces will be tested and evaluated, and combat standards will be developed in the form of capability indexes. Further, the author notes that it remains necessary to continue to use self-criticism as a methodology and to integrate both civilian and military forces into the new-type operational force.¹⁶

Battlefield Theories

Understanding and Seizing the Turning Point in the Transformation of the Form of Warfare

An Armed Forces development can depend on whether its leaders can accurately predict and seize turning points in the transformation of the form of warfare. Defense Information College Professor Zheng Zhonghui investigated the formation of turning points in the era of information warfare, which, from his perspective, is vital for guiding the transformation process.

Identifying a turning point requires an analyst with a broad strategic view and sense of innovation. Science and technology are the main elements for analysts to consider, as they help distinguish the form of warfare (mechanized, information, nuclear, etc.) from one era to another. Scientific and technological achievements drive the devel-

Continued: Strategic Landpower: The View from China

opment of inertia. The objective rule of war remains to exploit advantages and overcome disadvantages. When warfare capabilities are no longer unique, the way of waging war becomes routine. For example, mechanized warfare's transformation stopped when the army's maneuverability and fire power became limited and it was recognized that information technology had superseded it, thereby expanding a platform's sensing, accuracy, location, decision-making, and intelligence capabilities.¹⁷

A turning point is a strategic opportunity whose value is often inversely proportional to the clarity of the transformation. That is, the technological transformation may not be clear to others and thereby offers friendly forces a strategic opportunity for reform. The army that survives is the one constantly seizing strategic opportunities. Benefits are directly proportional to the timeliness of decisions.¹⁸

Zheng stated that the "key to exploiting the turning point is to base it on the condition of the country and army and to seize the timely opportunity subjectively and objectively." Turning points can be exploited in two ways: by realizing before other nations that change has happened and reform is needed; and pushing for reform from behind, that is, trying to discover turning points in existing forms of warfare. The first case could be exemplified by the use of foresight to predict the next turning point based on new developments in science and technology. Of course it is best to gain the initiative and find a turning point before others. The second case could be exemplified by transitioning from a combat power generation mode to an information-based systems approach, since the information turning point has occurred and nations are attempting to exploit it.¹⁹

With regard to military reform the author noted the following:

When a military reform properly crosses a turning point and moves along a new trajectory, it will push the transformation of warfare upward in a spiral pattern until a new form of warfare is formed. The basic marker for gauging the performance of the transformation is the efficiency of warfare, that is, the cost-benefit ratio of the resources committed to warfare...²⁰

Two areas of concern as potential turning points to Zheng are what is termed the networking and intelligence stages. The former is a type of warfare that transcends space and time using the shared resources of the network to extract maximum advantage by interacting with entire operational systems; and the latter is a thought process or use of knowledge where the form of warfare will take on the characteristic of "robotized combat + networked combat systems + automated system linkages," that is, the fusion of man and machine. This latter point is of vital strategic significance for PLA operations, since mobile intelligent terminals will help enable the information flow among commanders, combat platforms, and various individual soldiers.²¹

On Control of War

In 2014 Lieutenant General Liu Shenyang, Deputy Commander of the Jinan Military District, wrote on the concept of controlling warfare. He noted that in order to properly shape a favorable situation, defuse crises, and stop war, a combination of hard and soft measures should be utilized. If they fail, then PLA forces must be able to "accurately regulate and control its objective, strength, tempo, and scope in order to contain the opponent and gain control over war initiatives."²² Wars must be actively shaped to create a favorable situation and victory must be planned (instead of simply fought for). Control must win

out over infinite destruction. This requires not only precision command and control but also the comprehensive use of a combination of physical destruction, the shaping (even intimidation) of public opinion, and psychological deterrence.²³

Control of war has become more difficult simply due to the more complex international strategic environment. Now, financial and energy crises, maritime disputes, new technology revolutions, and the expanded role of geopolitics are exacerbating crises. Liu writes that what is needed is a new strategic ideology, one that provides advanced deterrence and the maintenance of stability while taking advantage of China's strategic opportunity. This adheres to the China Dream theory of peaceful development as well.²⁴

A war of control is defined as the ability "to flexibly utilize military means in conjunction with political, economic, cultural, and diplomatic tools in a struggle in order to grasp a favorable situation, effectively regulate a crisis, and aggressively curb war during the process of planning and preparing for war."²⁵ Liu writes that this is a change from conventional thought, which focused on annihilating forces in a specific direction. The focal point of a war of control is to be proactive with regard to China's long-range fundamental interests and global national strategy. It also involves controlling the behavior of an opponent and one's own objectives and actions. The idea is to "create a situation to produce some tangible influence over the political trend and strategic decisions in certain countries or regions so that attempts to harm our interest will be abandoned."²⁶ Strategic objectives, the most important issue for strategic control, should not exceed the reach of means. Capabilities must be constructed in such a way as to create an asymmetric advantage in order to reach a strategic balance.²⁷

Liu made it clear that war guidance must be in sync with political purpose, that key nodes must be controlled, and that favorable situations must be created. Centers of gravity and basic situations (the appropriateness of deterrence theory, etc.) must be monitored for changes. Flexible strategic guidelines will be used to address various threats from different strategic directions. Meanwhile, the PLA will continue to improve its combat power potential in order to protect national interests. The PLA, whose central mission is to maintain stability and sustained development, must be creative with regard to which geopolitical strategic key points it will prepare to defend, in case intervention is necessary. The unrestricted escalation of any conflict must be prevented.²⁸

At the strategic level a war of control is reflected by global warfare, which is constructing warfare in a strategic direction, planning perimeter security, and proceeding with the construction of strategic mobility forces and overseas deployments. At the tactical level in military campaigns, target-centric warfare (TCW) is defined as an "operational theoretical system used to make operational decisions, organize combat operations, and regulate the progress of war against vital points and key nodes of an operation's system under informatized conditions."²⁹ The concept of war control can also be used to guide a transformation of military construction and to boost a country's military capability through the creation of new weapon systems, whereby deterrence and combat capabilities are both enhanced.³⁰

Continued: Strategic Landpower: The View from China

Target Identification

Identifying Vital Points on the Informatized Battlefield

Lieutenant Colonel Yu Weichao, from the Armored Forces Academy in Anhui, and Senior Colonel Wang Shuguang and Colonel Zhao Hui, both from the Nanjing Army Command College, wrote on a target centric warfare (TCW) subset, vital points. They defined a vital point of an operational system as “a key objective or a crucial position that can impact the global safety of the operating system.”³¹ When in combat, the term refers to a “focal point both sides usually attempt to attack, destroy, or occupy”; thus, it is a system that has a major effect on combat activities or the development of a situation in warfare.³² These points can change often. Under informatized conditions, vital points to attack thus become reconnaissance and detection systems, weapon control systems, EW equipment, and command and communication systems. These are points of significant military value that affect the stability of an operating system. They are normally configured in conjunction with important command posts or high-tech weapons. A point of strength is usually a vital point of an operating system, but not necessarily, since points of weakness can also be taken as vital points if they result in system destruction.³³

Due to their importance, it is imperative to look for and attack enemy vital points if a nation is to be victorious on the battlefield. These points are always under the threat of jamming, reconnaissance, or attack. Therefore concealing and protecting friendly vital points is also an imperative. While it is possible to single out strategic, campaign, or tactical vital points, the distinction is fading away in light of the characteristics of modern warfare. Levels of warfare are often skipped over and move directly to the strategic level. The authors note that in military science, “vital points actually refer primarily to conflicts related to the outcome of an operation.”³⁴ Active measures can allow vital points to remain through transfer, maneuver, adjustment, or decentralization. Non-vital points can become vital ones when conditions shift, such as passive changes in objective factors.³⁵

In the informatized era, attaining information superiority becomes the top priority as nation's try to gain the initiative in warfare. It is thus necessary to destroy the enemy nerve center (the C4ISR system); disrupt the command and control system; sabotage the logistic supply system; and destroy the enemy's firepower support system. Elite forces or powerful weapons from various branches of the armed forces can attack vital targets to dismember and paralyze enemy operating systems, such as command and control, communications, information warfare, firepower, and support and protection systems. Transportation hubs and important military installations are also vital targets. Thus, almost any operational system with high information content can be considered as a vital point. The overall intent is to “split up enemy deployment, limit enemy maneuverability, paralyze enemy systems, and weaken enemy fighting capability to accelerate the progression of combat as a whole.”³⁶

Attacks on key nodes cannot be done randomly but must be done deliberately, since that is the only way to disrupt network connectivity. Identifying key nodes enables the determination of whether a network is fragile and capable of sustaining a cascading failure from an attack. Destroying sensitive links, interrupting information flows, or paralyzing networks through the identification of vital points can be achieved on three levels: attacking these points, avoiding these points and attacking weaknesses in related systems, or by collapsing an entire system. Attacks are accomplished through firepower or through the use of

pure information. Sabotage, surprise attacks, or the gradual accumulation of a strategic advantage are three methods to do so. The authors note in closing that the commander must be “able to take subjective initiative under objective material conditions to utilize his forces and weapons in a flexible manner.”³⁷

Conclusions

The construction of the PLA's future battlefield will apparently be populated with some new and some familiar issues. Acupuncture war, the three no's, system sabotage, and other such factors will undoubtedly be utilized, and these have been written about for years. Offshore bases will be constructed. The PLA intends to use asymmetric means to shape warfare, yet they hope that they can exert control over conflicts and crises and avoid destruction when various asymmetric means are utilized.

Limiting uncertainty, controlling wars and crises, and prepositioning forces and resources are factors discussed in other works that should be considered. Force prepositioning will take into account distance attenuation, among other factors. The battlefield will be designed to help keep politicians in power, secure national interests, and maintain domestic stability, thereby enabling PLA forces to exploit strategic opportunities and advantages.

Long-range plans appear to include the following:

- Developing a new strategic ideology that provides advanced deterrence and stability measures and shapes favorable situations for exploitation
- Revamping concepts regarding future wars such as developing unique ways of waging war so that it does not become routine
- Developing long distance and high-intensity air and space attacks, attacking rear and homeland COGs, and shaping crises through long-range planning of events
- Constructing systems based on command, reconnaissance, firepower, and assault troops
- Developing battlefield operational support resources and an information resource system with a linked network information system; attacking the enemy as one big network
- Constructing defensive battlefield facilities at key nodes
- Developing public media for new roles
- Gaining control through system sabotage and “transcendent warfare”
- Developing neuroscience-type weaponry
- Using asymmetrical means where possible (cyber-warfare, space warfare, remote warfare, unmanned warfare, etc.)

Weapon developments with the potential to thwart US technology include the following:

- Electronic jamming, network attack, anti-radiation destruction, anti-satellite weapons, new concept weapons (lasers, microwaves, particle beams, directed energy)
- Asymmetric warfare weaponry (no other points were listed to explain what this means)
- Nanotechnology, gene technology, quantum technology, elite forces
- Directed energy weapons such as electromagnetic pulse and particle beam weapons. Kinetic energy weapons

Continued: Strategic Landpower: The View from China

include hypervelocity chemical energy launchers, kinetic energy interceptor munitions, and electromagnetic guns. Genetic weapons include microbiological weapons and particle genetic weapons. Geophysical weapons include ionospheric jamming and climate weapons. Soft-kill weapons include infrasonic, omnidirectional radiation, and non-lethal chemical warfare agents.

Finally, threats to China’s warfighting battlefield plans, forces, theories, and targets must be considered. US technology and force deployments appeared to be the most often mentioned threat in the journal, followed by the need to either contain an information advantage of a potential enemy or to cause the enemy to lose information advantages over a period of time. Public media could become a threat if China’s involvement in a conflict is not justified and an enemy force’s involvement is. Overall, while the threats to China’s existence were not extensive, the majority of the authors cited felt that threats were sufficient enough to warrant requests for huge sums of money in current and future PLA budgets.

This focus on various elements of the PLA’s battlefield construction plan came before the recent 2015 *White Paper* that indicated land power is now taking a back seat to sea and air power. This is representative of a trend worldwide. However, the *White Paper* (on China’s Military Strategy) states the following:

In line with the strategic requirement of mobile operations and multi-dimensional offense and defense, the PLA Army (PLAA) will continue to reorient from theater defense to trans-theater mobility. In the process of building small, multi-functional and modular units, the PLAA will adapt itself to tasks in different regions, develop the capacity of its combat forces for different purposes, and construct a combat force structure for joint operations. The PLAA will elevate its capabilities for precise, multi-dimensional, trans-theater, multi-functional, and sustainable operations.³⁸

Based on the discussion above, it appears that planning for the construction of a land battlefield continues unabated. The PLAA continues to improve its combat readiness system with inter-connected strategic directions, combined arms, and systematized operational support in order to ensure an agile and effective response if needed. Further, the PLAA continues to prepare to support the numerous military operations other than war (earthquakes, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism emergency rescue, disaster relief, and other operations).³⁹ In short, the PLAA has plenty on its plate and will continue its construction of a future battlefield.

Endnotes

1. See http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/adrp3_0.pdf

2. Wang Congmin, “Thoughts on the Construction of a Modern Battlefield on Land,” *China Military Science*, No. 5, 2013, pp. 93-100.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Wei Daiqiang, “A Review of Research on the Concept of Strategic Prepositioning,” *China Military Science*, No. 5 2013, pp. 147-154.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Jia Xiaowei, “Strategic Considerations on Promoting the Building of the PLA’s New-Type Operational Forces,” *China Military Science*, No. 3 2013, pp. 92-98.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Zheng Zonghui, “Considerations on Understanding and Seizing the Turning Point in the Transformation of the Form of Warfare,” *China Military Science*, No. 2 2013, pp. 72-79.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Liu Shenyang, “On War of Control—Mainly from Military Thinking Perspective,” *China Military Science*, No. 2 2014, pp. 1-8.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Yu Weichao, Wang Shuguang, and Zhao Hui, “An Analysis of Vital Points in Operations Systems,” *China Military Science*, No. 2 2013, pp. 104-110.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. “China’s Military Strategy,” *Xinhua* (in English), 26 May 2015.

39. Ibid.