

Foreign Military Studies Office

OEWATCH



FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Special Essay: Growing Military Relations between Russia and Nicaragua

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Turkey to Establish Space Agency

12 February 2015

“Turkey has completed preparations to establish a space agency similar to NASA in the United States and to the European Space Agency.”

OE Watch Commentary: *In the last few years Turkey has made important strides in the fields of space and aviation. It has recently announced plans to establish a Space Agency, similar to NASA and the European Space Agency, to have a centralized body which coordinates all space and aviation efforts under one roof. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss the details of this plan.*

As the first passage discusses, the Turkish Space and Aviation Agency is planning to have five departments, one of which is to be allocated to the military. The Agency is being established in the aftermath of previous space projects such as the TÜRKSAT communications satellite (launched in June 2014) and the GÖKTÜRK-2 observation satellite (launched in 2012). It aims to resolve the confusion of authority that arises from the fact that all the departments concerned with these projects are scattered among various government agencies and directorates. The passage claims that the draft bill is ready to be submitted to the Cabinet for final approval, after which it would go to the Parliament for further debate and voting.

The second passage discusses the military component of the initiative, which includes a Space Roadmap and a Space Group Command. With these initiatives the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) hopes to improve its ability to identify a ballistic missile threat in advance and to develop the TAF’s visual intelligence capabilities by utilizing the space dimension. The third passage discusses that the goal is to build Turkey’s first indigenous satellite, the TÜRKSAT 6A, which would be developed by Turkish engineers and produced at Turkey’s Space Systems Integration and Test Center.

These efforts are being designed and developed in coordination with the Turkish Aerospace Industries and Turkey’s main scientific research council (TÜBİTAK). They are all part of a greater goal to end Turkey’s dependence on foreign facilities and become more self-sufficient in technology and defense.
End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

Source: “Yerli NASA kuruluyor: “Türk Uzay ve Havacılık Ajansı (A Domestic NASA is being formed: “Turkey Space and Aviation Agency”),” Havadanhaber.com, 12 February 2015, <http://www.havadanhaber.com/haber/534-teknoloji-yerli-nasa-kuruluyor-turk-uzay-ve-havacilik-ajansi.html>

“Turkey has completed preparations to establish a space agency similar to NASA in the United States and to European Space Agency. The draft law that has been prepared for the establishment of a ‘Turkish Space and Aviation Agency’, which would be directly under the Prime Minister, is planned to pass in Parliament prior to the general elections [on June 7, 2015].

...

The Turkish Space and Aviation Agency will coordinate all space-related efforts in Turkey. The Agency is planned to have five departments, one of which is planned to be allocated to the military. The Agency is being established for projects that started with the TÜRKSAT satellite and the military observation satellite. The agency aims to resolve the confusion of authority that arises from the fact that all the departments concerned with these projects are scattered among various government agencies and directorates. The draft bill is ready.”

Source: “Türkiye’den Uzay Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Adımı (Turkey’s Step [towards] a Space Forces Command),” Bugun.com.tr, 4 January 2015, <http://www.bugun.com.tr/teknoloji/tskdan-yeni-bir-adim-haberi/1421413>

The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), who set out with the “concept of using space for peaceful and defense purposes” has prepared a Space Roadmap. The Roadmap includes the capability to identify a ballistic missile threat in advance and surveillance-reconnaissance to satisfy the need for visual intelligence. Another important project [in the Roadmap] is the Space Group Command. This Space Group Command is expected to be structured by 2023 and aims to develop the TAF’s abilities by utilizing the space dimension.”

Source: “Türkiye Uzay Ajansı Kurulacak (Turkey Space Agency to be Established),” Bilisimdergisi.org, November 2014, www.bilisimdergisi.org/pdfindir/s170/pdf/32-33.pdf

During his visit to the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), Lütfi Elvan [the Head of the Transportation, Aviation and Communication Department] announced that the TÜRKSAT 6A would be built by Turkish engineers and said, “As Turkey, we will produce our satellite with our own engineers in our Space Systems Integration and Test Center.”

Turkey's Outreach to Latin America

13 February 2015

“The goal of this outreach is to develop political, economic and cultural cooperation (bilateral and multilateral) with those countries. With its population of 500 million, its developing economy, its international position, its arts and culture, Latin America is an important region. Turkey can benefit from this potential.”

OE Watch Commentary: In mid-February Turkish President Erdoğan visited Colombia, Cuba and Mexico, meeting with his counterparts in those countries. These visits appear to be the beginning of an outreach to Latin America, as they will be followed by visits to three more Latin American countries (Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia) in the fall. The accompanying passages discuss the importance of these visits from various aspects.

The first passage, focusing on the visit to Colombia, claims that Erdoğan and his Colombian counterpart compared and shared experiences regarding Turkey's peace talks with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Colombia's talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The visit had an economic aspect as well: according to the second passage, around 120 Colombian and Turkish companies attended an economic forum hosted by the Colombian Investment Agency to boost cooperation in areas from tourism to culture to higher education.

From Colombia, the Turkish president went to Cuba, where he made headlines with his proposals to build a mosque in Havana or Santiago. According to the third passage, Erdoğan is interested in Cuba's "Islamic aspect." The final passage also discusses this initiative, claiming that Turkey would like to build a mosque in Havana, which would be the first place of worship for the island's 3,500 Muslims. The passage notes that Erdoğan was sticking to the project, although Cuba's leaders told him that they had already made an agreement with Saudi Arabia to build a mosque in Havana. The author claims that Turkey is conducting a "mosque-building diplomacy" to place itself on the international stage as a leader of the Islamic world that looks after Muslims everywhere.

Erdoğan's final visit was to Mexico, which, as discussed in the third passage, focused on developing bilateral trade and economic relations. To this end, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency will apparently establish a center in Mexico City.

A relatively large group of businessmen accompanied him on these visits. As the third passage claims, the goal of the outreach to Latin America appears to be political, economic and cultural cooperation with the region's 500 million population.

End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)



Turkish President Erdoğan and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto after signing a bilateral agreement on February 15, 2015.

Source: http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_president-erdogan-cuts-short-official-latin-american-visit_372501.html

Source: Cengiz Çandar, "Erdoğan Jobs at Obama in Calculated Move," Al-monitor.com, 13 February 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-united-states-erdogan-obama-kerry.html>

"The visit to Colombia was interesting in terms of learning and comparing the experience of his counterpart Juan Manuel Santos in the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC's armed struggle against Bogota is a longstanding conflict that is presumed to be close to a settlement. Erdoğan is the main protagonist of the peace process he initiated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which shares a similar ideological background with the FARC."

Source: Aydin Albayrak, "Erdoğan's Visit to Latin America to Deepen Ties," Today's Zaman, 7 February 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_erdogans-visit-to-latin-america-to-deepen-ties_371999.html

"During the [Colombia] visit, the two countries will start a couple of initiatives to boost cooperation in techno parks, tourism, culture and higher education in addition to efforts to boost trade and investments. Around 120 Colombian and Turkish companies will attend the economic forum to be hosted by the Colombian Investment Agency."

(continued)

Continued: Turkey's Outreach to Latin America

Source: Sami Kohen, "Dış politikada Latin rüzgarı" (A Latin breeze in foreign policy), Milliyet.com.tr, 11 February 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dis-politikada-latin-ruzgari/dunya/ydetay/2011831/default.htm>

"The goal of this outreach is to develop political, economic and cultural cooperation (bilateral and multilateral) with those countries. With its population of 500 million, its developing economy, its international position, its arts and culture, Latin America is an important region. Turkey can benefit from this potential. But we cannot expect immediate results from this outreach.

...

Let's look at the countries being visited: Mexico is an important country in the region. There are opportunities to develop trade and economic relations with Mexico. To this end, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency will establish a center in Mexico City. In addition, Turkey is close to Mexico through their common membership in the G-20.

...

Cuba has always been a country that Turkey was interested in and formed good relations with. Erdoğan is interested in Cuba's "Islamic aspect." In fact, during his trip he told reporters that he is awaiting an answer to his proposal to build a mosque in Cuba...."

Source: Thomas Seibert, "Turkey's Mosque-Building Diplomacy," Al-monitor.com, 13 February 2015, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-mosque-building-soft-power.html>

"..A state sponsored program to build mosques in countries from Kazakhstan to Cuba has emerged as a foreign policy instrument for Turkey, boosting the country's claim to a place on the international stage as a leader of the Islamic world that looks after Muslims everywhere.

...

During a visit to Cuba this week, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told the government in Havana that Turkey would like to build a mosque in the capital, which would be the first place of worship for the island's 3,500 Muslims. Erdoğan said he was sticking to the project although Cuba's leaders told him that they had already made an agreement with Saudi Arabia to erect a mosque in Havana."

“The country will, by God’s favor, witness your achievements.”

OE Watch Commentary: Heads of state make multiple public appearances every day. Various organizations and groups compete for the honor of hosting presidents, prime ministers and the like, but only a small fraction are able to host a leader’s speech. Such appearances are never random; they are replete with handlers and strategists who calculate the image and message which the leader should promote. The same, of course, holds true for Iran, but the symbolic importance of the Supreme Leader addressing a topic or group is far greater than with many other world leaders for the simple reason that the Supreme Leader gives far fewer public addresses. Hence, it is especially significant that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the end of January gave a lengthy address to engineers and scientists at a nanotechnology exhibition because it suggests that nanotechnology might become a new field which the Islamic Republic is going to invest in.

That said, against the backdrop of falling oil prices the Supreme Leader’s remarks also seem to suggest a reality in which Iranian science and engineering research are going to enter a period of austerity where they will receive fewer subsidies than perhaps before and will instead be expected to raise funds through commercial applications. This also suggests that, as with military technology, Iran seeks to proliferate any technological breakthroughs to its allies, many of whom the United States classifies as terrorist groups or rogue regimes.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

Source: “Bazdid Rahbar-e Enghelab az Nameshgah Dastavardha-ye Fenavari Nano” (Visit of the Supreme Leader to the Exhibition of Nanotechnology Achievements), Khamenei.ir, 31 January 2015. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=28821>

Supreme Leader’s Speech at Nanotechnology Exhibition

Well, the issue of nanotechnology is very important. We do not want to say that it is more important than all other affairs of the country and all other technological matters. This is not what we want to say, but it is one of the most important issues in the scientific and technological progress of the country. We should make this a model for our different tasks and we should preserve these factors in the progress of the country, some of which I referred to. We should complete our plans on a daily basis.

Achievements should not make us arrogant. This is very important. Fortunately, your progress has been very good over the past decade. You have risen to a high rank in the world. You have come seventh in the world and this is very important. However, this should not make us satisfied with what we have achieved so far and it should not make us desire to preserve the current condition. You should move forward and you should not abandon the thought of making progress - in this area - on a daily basis. Moreover, different talents will be attracted to this area. The young boys and girls that I see in this meeting are very talented. If this issue had not been introduced to them, then the ground would not have been prepared for their research and their talent would not have been displayed. We do not know the many talented individuals who exist in our country. We should open the arena so that talents can be recognized and cultivated.

Today, we very much need work. We suffer from a historical backwardness and poverty in scientific and research areas. Although it is true that today we enjoy the fastest rate of scientific progress in the world and that it is much higher than the global average, the best thing that this fast rate can do is to make up - to some extent - for this historical backwardness and poverty. We should continue this until we reach the front lines...

Second, we need to progress. We need this. Today, we can see that the independent political, social and intellectual attitude of the people of Iran and the Islamic Republic has made global bullying powers to show enmity towards us. This enmity is showing itself in many areas. Well, when all this enmity is shown towards us, we should strengthen ourselves and we should achieve the power that we need.

Fortunately, tasks in all areas have moved forward in a satisfactory way and I require that you do not allow the factors behind our progress in the area of nanotechnology - that is to say, showing stability in management, completing plans and avoiding political environments - to be eliminated. One of the most important tasks is that you should not allow the political motives that exist outside to penetrate into your organization because it will ruin things....

...The budget for this area is very small compared to other countries in the world. This issue should receive more attention. I hope that God the Exalted will help you. We too will pray for you. We pray that God will help you. If we live long enough, by God’s favor, we will meet you with more achievements later on. If we are not alive, the country will - by God’s favor - witness your achievements. The issue of channeling the work into the market and sources of wealth - I saw this in a number of reports - is very important.

Who in Iran is looking at On-line Geo-location Products for Surveillance?

29 January 2015

“The next spy network is the technology industry.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The difference between the regular Iranian military and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is that the former is charged with defense of territory, while the latter is charged with defense of the revolution, meaning enemies can be both external and internal. While the accompanying article does not detail much about how on-line geo-location products might be used by Iran, it is, nevertheless, noteworthy that The “Passive Defense Organization,” the IRGC branch which oversees cyber defense and counter-protest operations, has expressed such public interest.*

Not surprisingly, its leaders have been obsessed with controlling or blunting the utility of social media. In the article excerpted below, General Gholamreza Jalali, the chief of the Passive Defense Organization, muses about growing Iranian concern about geo-location products, the vulnerabilities they might cause Iran as well as the opportunities next generation technologies might present should the Iranian government be able to harness them to its advantage.

While many observers assume that globalization and new communication and networking technology automatically promote individual freedom and liberty, it seems such an outcome is far from assured inside Iran.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

Source: “Samaneh-e Jadid Google baraye Taghib Afrad Muhim Ast” (The New Google System for Following Individuals is Important), Tasnim, 29 January 2015. <http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/636795>

The New Google System for Following Individuals is Important

The head of the Passive Defense Organization of the country said “Recently Google has created a new website that provides video satellite footage.” According to a report by the defense bureau of Tasnim, the provincial “Physical Defense and Engineering Managers of Passive Defense for the Provinces” conference was held in the presence of General [Gholamreza] Jalali, chief of the Passive Defense Organization of the country...

The chief of the Passive Defense Organization continued, the first threat that exists in this area, is that the height of infrastructure and remote-sensing systems that photograph and produce images. For example, in the library of the White House, there are photographs that show Natanz and even the entire area of the country is photographed, and they are constantly watching it, and the period to be reviewed can be selected, and they are aware of all the technical information. And, lastly, Google has created a new website that allows a satellite feed to be accessed online, and this also affects the security field that they are able to follow a car or track an important person.

He added another point that the next spy network is the technology industry, and they have contracts and security protocols in various consultancies are able to make use of the information gathered in different fields... The enemy has taken this infrastructure and use this information to pursue their aims.

“Iran now has the capacity to design and build a new generation of satellites.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 2 February Iran launched an indigenous satellite, “Fajr” (Dawn). It was Iran’s fourth launch of a domestically produced satellite since 2009. Just as with the first launch of the “Omid” (“Hope”) on the same date in 2009, this latest launch came against the backdrop of the ten-day annual celebration marking the success of the Islamic Revolution.

Mehdi Sarvi, an official with the Iran Electronic Industry Company (which is owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ economic wing and designated as involved in proliferation by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control), said the satellite, which was launched on a Safir rocket and is orbiting at 280 miles above Earth, had no military function but might be used with regard to shipping, meteorology, or agriculture. Seldom, however, are civilian satellites launched without an advance purpose,

and so it is likely that the Iranian government does have military ambitions for its space program. This is underscored by the involvement of the Minister of Defense, as per the excerpted article, in the satellite’s launch.

Regardless, the technology to launch satellites into space is dual use—the same technology can potentially lead to the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Iranian investment in satellite technology seems to be accelerating. Deputy Head of the Iran Space Agency Hamid Fazeli announced that in the coming year Tehran was preparing to launch three satellites: Zafar (Triumph), Tolou (Sunrise) and Pars. It seems that reports in some Western outlets that Iran has curtailed its space program are premature. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Mahavareh-e Melli Fajr ba Mavafaghit dar Modar Zamin Qarar Gereft” (“Fajr Satellite Successfully Put into Orbit,”) Fars News.com, 2 February 2015. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13931109000748>

Iran Successfully Puts Fajr Satellite into Orbit

President Rouhani said, “The government is determined to continue on the path of progress and, God-willing, in the coming years, before we arrive at the stage, all the country’s requirements in the field of space will be provided to the powerful scientists of Iran based on indigenous technology.”

[Minister of Defense] Gen. [Hossein] Dehghan also congratulated the Supreme Leader, the President of Iran, and the Iranian people for the successful launch of the Fajr, Iran’s fourth domestically-manufactured satellite, into orbit. Dehghan continued to praise advancement by the technology sector, aerospace industry, and Department of Defense, claiming that Iran now has the capacity to design and build a new generation of satellites not only to engage in complex space missions, but also provide services to the aerospace market.

Iran Exporting UAVs to “Friendly” Countries

2 February 2015

“... the abundance of arms and the condition of tawahhush (mayhem) then ideal for jihad ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking at a military conference on 2 February, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Air Force Commander. Amir Ali Hajizadeh declared that Iran would export domestically produced missiles to “friendly” countries like Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, as well as Afghanistan. His list of countries to which Iran would ship missiles suggests Iranian confidence that it can outcompete American influence in Iraq and Afghanistan.

More significantly, while Iranian outlets publishing in English limited themselves to discussion of missile exports, Persian reports on Hajizadeh’s speech, one of which is excerpted below, added an important section on the growth of Iran’s unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) market and the Iranian government’s willingness to export UAVs elsewhere in the region. Indeed, it seems Iran seeks a UAV and air defense arms race. Hajizadeh points to Iran’s alleged downing in August 2014 of an alleged Israeli spy drone to argue that Iran’s air defense is now capable of blunting Israeli incursions. Should this be consistently true, it also suggests that Iran will export anti-drone missiles to its clients bordering Israel in Lebanon, Syria, and perhaps even the Gaza Strip.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

Source: “Ba Sadur-e Mushak Jelu-ye Da’esh va Isra’il Istadim/Pehpad Sadr Kardehayim” (With the Provision of Missiles to the Islamic State and Israel, We are Exporting UAVs), IRINN.ir [Islamic Republic of Iran News Network], 2 February 2015. <http://goo.gl/7e9iec>

We Are Exporting UAVs

...General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)’s Air Force, this morning said... “The Islamic Republic of Iran has helped countries like Iraq, Syria, Palestine and the Lebanese Hezbollah by exporting the technology that it has for the production of missiles and other equipment, and they can now stand against the Zionist regime, Da’esh [Arabic acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], and other Takfiri groups and cripple them,” he added...

In the field of air defense missile systems, it should be recalled that we have arrived at the stage where we have the radar and the capability to identify exactly to detect, identify, and target our enemies at the farthest point, and an indication of this was the destruction of the Zionist regime’s “Hermes” Drone.

With regard to the production of UAVs, General Hajizadeh said, the IRGC Air Force has arrived at complete self-sufficiency in the manufacture of UAVs and the technology for building UAVs as well as the UAVs themselves are being exported to other countries.

“The number of refugees upon which the aid was based had been inflated.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As Spain prepared to withdraw from the Western Sahara in November 1975, its colonial possession, Morocco, which has always claimed the territory, launched the “Green March,” a mass demonstration which sent hundreds of thousands of Moroccans into the territory, escorted by Moroccan troops. It was a successful operation and Morocco absorbed the territory, but, in the aftermath of Morocco’s move and against the backdrop of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Algeria helped form and sponsor the Polisario Front, an authoritarian Marxist group which declared itself the legitimate leaders of the self-styled Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. From its base in Algeria the Polisario battled Morocco in the Western Sahara from 1975 until 1991, when it accepted a ceasefire. While many Sahrawi refugees returned to Morocco or the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, tens of thousands of others ended up in a series of refugee camps in Algeria’s isolated western province of Tindouf, nearly a thousand miles from Algeria’s Mediterranean port of Oran.*

In 1991 the United Nations Security Council established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Rather than simply being a peace-keeping force as are so many other United Nations missions in conflict zones, the role of MINURSO was to hold a referendum among the Sahrawi population in order to determine the final status of the Western Sahara. This operation, however, bogged down in a dispute with regard to procedures and referendum eligibility. Many of those in the Tindouf camps, for example, originate not in the Western Sahara but rather in Mauritania or Algeria itself. Algeria also would not allow free access to independent observers in order to conduct a census. As a result of these disputes, an indeterminate number of refugees have remained in the Tindouf camps the almost quarter century since MINURSO’s establishment.

*Tindouf itself is barren and without any appreciable industry. Many of the refugees survive on international assistance provided by the European Union or other donors. The Moroccans have long suspected that much of the aid goes awry, but because Algeria limits access, it has been hard to detail the diversion of international aid. On 23 January 2015, however, Le Monde Afrique revealed that in 2007 the Anti-Fraud Office of the European Union had published a report that detailed with precision the diversion of humanitarian aid destined for the Tindouf refugees. This article intimates that the report was subsequently “forgotten.” The diversions began with the connivance of the Algerian military in Oran and continued as the convoys made their trek into the camps. The basis for much of the fraud was the Polisario (and Algerian) inflation of the number of refugees. In effect, the European Union was feeding ghosts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

Source: “Bruxelles accuse Alger de détournements d’aide humanitaire” (Brussels Accuses Algiers of Embezzling Humanitarian Aid), Le Monde Afrique, 23 January 2015. http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/01/23/bruxelles-accuse-alger-de-detournements-d-aide-humanitaire_4562455_3212.html

Brussels Accuses Algeria of Embezzling Humanitarian Aid

There is a report from 2007 which has just been unearthed. It is written by the Anti-Fraud Office of the European Union (EU) that traces a well-organized diversion for years of humanitarian aid provided to Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps in Algeria.

The basis of this report was the results of a survey conducted since 2003. It makes serious accusations and gives the names of the suspected ringleaders of the embezzlement scheme which begins in the Algerian port of Oran where it is decided “that which must be delivered and what might be diverted.” In the copy of the report that was obtained by Agence France Presse, those names were redacted....

This report has been “forgotten” for seven years, Ms. Kristalina Georgieva explained that a request for a consultation was refused in 2010, and only the intervention of the European mediator in 2014 got her access. “One of the reasons this embezzlement was allowed to occur was because the number of refugees upon which the aid was based had been inflated,” the Anti-Fraud Office said in its report.

“With thanks to the Islamic Revolution, as time advances, we have more equipment and facilities”

OE Watch Commentary: *Rescue workers crave the latest equipment, and so a press conference featuring an Iranian Red Crescent official praising the purchase of two Iranian-produced hovercraft might seem innocuous. There is reason to suspect, however, that the deployment of two hovercraft in the Caspian is not entirely motivated by search and rescue needs.*

In recent years the Iranian government has sought to expand its naval reach not only in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, but also in the Caspian Sea, where offshore oil drilling has exacerbated unresolved maritime border disputes. In 2009 Iranian authorities towed a drilling rig into Azerbaijani waters and proceeded to drill for oil. While Azerbaijan has asked to buy patrol craft from the United States, that request foundered in Congress on objections from Armenian American activist groups. Hovercraft could add to Iran’s ability to project power against neighboring Azerbaijan in disputed waters.

The two new hovercraft are further based at Iran’s Bandar Anzali Naval Base, where its Jamaran-2 destroyer, launched in May 2013, is also based. Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies across the globe eschew co-location with militaries, and so the Iranian Red Crescent’s acquiescence to base its hovercraft at an active naval base suggests a dual purpose. After all, there are many other piers at Bandar Anzali and other ports in Gilan province.

Nor would this be the first time that the Islamic Republic has utilized humanitarian organizations for more nefarious purposes. Last year the Iranian Red Crescent donated money to Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and the U.S. Treasury Department has designated Iranian charities in Lebanon as being engaged in terrorism. Perhaps if a ship founders in the Caspian, Iranian officials could use their new hovercraft. However, they might also use their existing patrol boats to project power. Nor might the problem be limited to the Caspian Sea.

*Iran produced these hovercraft indigenously. Given its willingness to share technology, as well as its statement that it considers the Eastern Mediterranean its strategic frontiers, it is quite possible that Iranian authorities might soon provide similar hovercraft to Hezbollah, which might, in turn, be able to use them against both Israel and perhaps gas infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean (some of which involve American companies or employ American citizens). **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

Source: “Halal Ahmar Anzali beh du Dastgah Havanaw (Haverkraft) Mojahez Shod” (Red Crescent of Anzali is Equipped with two Hovercraft), Fars News, 2 February 2015. <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81489425/>

Red Crescent of Anzali is Equipped with two Hovercraft

Equipment was unveiled at a ceremony during the 10-day Fajr celebration attended by the director-general of the Red Crescent organization of Gilan, the provincial disaster management, and municipal officials. The managing director of the Red Crescent Organization for the province of Gilan, during the unveiling ceremony for this equipment said, “With thanks to the Islamic Revolution, as time advances, we have more equipment and facilities available to the Red Crescent and all sectors.”

Ali Reza Khosousi [managing director of the Gilan Red Crescent] stated, With special attention to the governor of Gilan as well as well as the crisis management and relief staff for Bandar Anzali, two hovercraft—a two-seater and a six-man version—were given to the Red Crescent. He added that the ability of this equipment to operate in snowy conditions, on muddy land, and in the water will aid relief operations, identifying [other craft], and during crisis and disasters. The director of the Red Crescent for Gilan said that these two craft cost 500 million toman [\$160,000].

“... Iraqi military leaders are complaining that they have no authority over the militias ...”

OE Watch Commentary: The term “popular mobilization” (Hashd Shaabi) was first used to denote groups mobilized to fight the Islamic State (IS) in the summer of 2014. It has now become the catchall phrase for Iraqi Shi’a paramilitary forces. These forces maintain a semi-official relationship with Iraqi military and security institutions, which at best have limited control over the Shi’a militias. As noted in the first accompanying article, public criticism of the popular mobilization forces is on the rise. This, many argue, is exactly the type of reaction IS wished to provoke.

The proposal to establish an Iraqi National Guard is meant to kill two birds with one stone, i.e., create a viable anti-IS Sunni fighting force and tame the Shi’a militias in one fell swoop. On 3 February the Iraqi cabinet sent parliament the long-awaited National Guard draft law (as well as proposed reforms to the Justice and Accountability or “De-Baathification” Law). Optimists now claim that within months the National Guard will be up and running, but the bickering that immediately followed the submission of the draft law would seem to indicate otherwise. As the second article explains, several Iraqi parliamentarians and analysts are accusing the government of submitting a draft law that is different than what was agreed upon earlier. There is little to no indication that influential Shi’a political blocs are on board with the project, as the third accompanying article shows. Even assuming a law is passed, many practical details remained unanswered. Who will pay for the Iraqi National Guard? There is no allocation in the 2015 Iraqi budget for this purported force. The fall in oil prices will create pressure to trim rather than expand the budget. Some wonder whether the US government, a major backer of the idea, is interested in footing the bill. Another important procedural issue requiring clarification concerns the chain of command. Is the prime minister, the various provincial governors, or someone else ultimately in control of the National Guard?

It is easy to see why some may argue for directly arming certain Sunni tribes, a la Sons-of-Iraq. That plan, of course, comes with its own long litany of pitfalls, including



Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.
Source: Wikimedia commons

Source:

العراق: “الحشد الشعبي” تسابق “داعش” بقطع الرؤوس
Othman al-Mukhtar. “Iraq: Popular Mobilization Competes with ISIS in Beheadings,” al-Araby al-Jadid. 8 February 2015. <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/002b9fb5-7c2a-4036-ac31-7dd2106c0219>

... This comes at a time in which Iraqi military leaders are complaining that they have no authority over the militias and that it is impossible to control their men, who are committing one crime after another, all motivated by sectarianism.

Source:

العبادي ينقلب على اتفاقاته
Safa Abdul Hamid. “Al-Abadi Reneges on his Agreement,” al-Araby al-Jadid. 11 February 2015. <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/55c072a1-18ff-46d0-aea0-flcc2fc87346>

... on Monday, the Iraqi cabinet sent parliament a draft law of the National Guard Law that was different than what was agreed upon. ... According to [MP Khalid al-Mafraji] “several articles were different, including the duties of the National Guard commander, the National Guard’s relation to the security council, and whether the provincial commander would be from that province or elsewhere. They also amended several articles without telling anyone.”

(continued)

Continued: Popular Mobilization Forces or Iraqi National Guard?

the IS's proven ability to navigate and exploit tribal dynamics far better than any other entity, whether Iraqi or foreign. The fourth accompanying article throws in a final and important wrench: suppose a successful Iraqi National Guard is formed and able to militarily defeat the IS. What next? The fact is that although the IS may be mismanaging its supposed state, it is not the first to do so in the post-Saddam era. Until a viable governance model emerges, the IS is unlikely to go away.
End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

Source:

العراق: اتهامات بعرقلة تشكيل الحرس الوطني وانتقادات لضمّ «الحشد الشعبي» للجيش
 Mustafa al-Obaidi. "Iraq: Accusations of Blocking the National Guard and Critiques of Incorporating Popular Mobilization into the Army," al-Quds al-Arabi. 15 January 2015. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=280255>

Many Iraqi political factions and citizens are puzzled by the contradictory policies pursued by the government and political parties by incorporating the Popular Mobilizations into the armed forces while refusing to form a National Guard to fight the Islamic State in the Sunni provinces.... The Badr parliamentary bloc, headed by Hadi al-Amiri, said that Iraqis do not need a National Guard to defeat the criminal organization [Islamic State]. They claim that militia volunteers and Popular Mobilizations are able to defeat the organization. Most Shi'a groups share the Badr Organization's position opposing the formation of a National Guard in Sunni areas.

Source:

الحرس الوطني العراقي.. الآمال والعقبات
 Jassim al-Shamri. "Iraqi National Guard... the Hopes and the Obstacles," al-Jazeera. 8 February 2015. <http://goo.gl/B1ePWn>

The other frightening element to this issue is: Who will rule the areas that are liberated from the Islamic State? The former politicians who were unable to stand up to the group and who are appointed by the Baghdad government? The tribal leaders who fight against ISIL? Officers from the National Guard?... One of the greatest dangers of the US arming the tribes... is that these weapons will provide fertile ground for a civil war in Iraq, whether between Sunnis in Anbar and Mosul or between Sunni and Shi'a in Salahaddin, Diyala, and the Baghdad Belts.

“... if you're in a place where the enemy fears you and you fear the enemy, then that is ribāt ...”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Islamic State (IS) has recently begun emphasizing defense. Specifically, the group's propaganda of late has highlighted the concept of "Ribat," meaning keeping watch over and safeguarding the border between the Islamic polity and hostile outside forces. Roughly speaking, the concept may be considered as the mirror image of the offensive jihad most commonly associated with the IS. In the contemporary jihadi understanding, Ribat takes place at what are called "thughur" or strategic chokepoints. While the IS is neither the first nor the only contemporary jihadi group to employ the concept, the prominence of Ribat in recent IS propaganda is noteworthy.*

The number of IS photo essays featuring fighters performing Ribat has spiked in the past several months (some examples are included alongside this commentary). Propaganda videos discussing the importance of Ribat are also popping up with growing frequency. As shown by the accompanying transcript (from a video on Ribat in al-Anbar Province), steadfastness and perseverance are extolled as key virtues for performing this activity. New and recent recruits to the IS, one might venture, are being drilled in the importance of "Ribat fi sabil ilah" (ribat in the path of Allah) before being dispatched to sentry and frontline duties.

*The sixth issue of the IS's propaganda magazine, Dabiq, posted in late December 2014, includes the translation of an essay written by Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir (Abu Ayyub al-Masri), the companion and successor to the IS's founding father, Abu Musaib al-Zarqawi. Al-Masri was killed in 2010, paving the way for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to become the group's current leader. The essay is divided into 31 separate pieces of advice, of which number 20, dealing with Ribat, is excerpted alongside this commentary. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

الدولة الاسلامية//ولاية الفرات// جولة ليلية مع المرابطين على ثغور المسلمين
 “The Islamic State, al-Furat Province, Nighttime Visit with those Performing Ribat at the Muslims’ Strategic Chokepoints,” (transcript from approx. 1:35-2:13), 28 November 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDPA0Gt-F6A>

We are here in the cold and there are planes flying overhead... but inshallah we will remain murabitin (performing Ribat) and persevere... we don't care about the cold or the airplanes overhead...

Source: Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. “Advice for the Soldier of the Islamic State,” 30 December 2014. Dabiq #6. <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/islamic-state/isis-isis-islamic-state-magazine-issue-6-al-qaeda-of-waziristan.pdf>

“My dear mujāhid brother, these are some pieces of advice that I’ve gathered from the mouths of men and the pages of books, although I do not claim to be a man of wisdom...
 [20] Ribāt, ribāt! Meaning, dedicate yourself to jihād in the path of Allah, to guarding the frontlines, increasing the numbers of the mujāhidīn, and terrorizing the enemy, even if you have to remain there for a lengthy period of time. And if you're in a place where the enemy fears you and you fear the enemy, then that is ribāt. Allah (ta'ālā) said, {O you who have believed, perse- vere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful} [Āl ‘Imrān: 200]. Allah’s Messenger (sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “One day of ribāt in the path of Allah is better than the Dunyā and everything in it.”

“... Abdullah spent more than 14 hours a day on the Internet researching explosives ...”

OE Watch Commentary: Syria's armed rebellion relies on a blend of new informational tools and old weapons systems. A successful workshop in the budding rebel weapons industry is hardly imaginable without a young Internet-savvy expert on hand. The first accompanying excerpt, although over two years old, is included to illustrate this point. Indeed, any aspiring weapons-production entrepreneur would be foolish to overlook online resources, given the depth and range of easily accessible information. The Arabic-language Free Syrian Army website (syrianarmyfree.com), to give one example, has a continuously updated forum thread dedicated exclusively to do-it-yourself weapons manufacturing. More contemporary no-frills text and image-sharing sites such as justpaste.it often post original content that is then advertised on Twitter and reposted to forum threads. For instance, a recent note, excerpted for illustrative purposes alongside this commentary, explains how to build a heat-seeking rocket using commercially available parts. The note was viewed nearly 20,000 times in the two months after first being posted.

The deadliest weapons to emerge from the Syrian artisanal weapons industry are improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAM) or “lob bombs.” The best-known Syrian model is dubbed the “Hell Cannon.” Rebel IRAMs often feature blue “Butagaz” canisters, ubiquitous in Syria and ordinarily used to hold butane or propane, repurposed as warheads. In November 2014 a group based in the Aleppo countryside unveiled the latest generation of rebel IRAMs, called the Hamm-1 (Lava-1). According to media reports, it weighs 600-800 kilograms, making it the heaviest in the rebel arsenal, though still lighter than the pro-government forces' own “elephant” IRAM (so-called for the deep moan it makes when launched). The third accompanying article excerpts an interview with the engineer behind the Lava-1.

Rebels have also employed the Internet and social media to help revive aging



Islamic State IRAM, Dayr az Zawr. 12/19/14. Source: <http://justpaste.it/gazwaa>

Source:

الجزيرة نت في معامل سلاح الثوار بسوريا
 “Aljazeera.net Visits a Rebel Weapons Factory in Syria,” al-Jazeera, 12 November 2012.
<http://goo.gl/zqXHun>

Abdullah spent more than 14 hours a day on the Internet researching explosives manufacturing in order to help develop the simple rebel designs...

Source:

فيزيائي مسلم ينشر طريقة صنع الصواريخ الحرارية
 “Muslim Physicist Publishes Design for Heat-Seeking Missile,” 19 December 2014.
<http://justpaste.it/iihf>

What one finds in the English-language videos and books is vague and filled with lies and deception. Useless equipment is added to the missile so that people don't understand how it works... all the materials for this missile are commercially available and their sources are listed in the file with instructions on building the missile...

Source:

“كلنا شركاء” تنفرد بلقاء المهندس الذي صنع الصاروخ الجديد في حلب
 Mohammed Iqbal Balu. “All4Syria Exclusive Interview with the Engineer Behind the New Rocket in Aleppo,” All4Syria, 6 November 2014. <http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/177348>

(continued)

Continued: The New and the Old in Syria's Civil War

Russian weapons systems seized from Syrian military stockpiles. These include Strela (SA-7) MANPADS, known as "Cobra" rockets in Syria. Instructions for potential operators, including ways of using vehicle batteries or other power sources to sidestep the SA-7's expired battery problem, are easily found online. At least two rebel groups have posted instructional videos on using these systems, and at least one detailed Arabic-language manual on operating them has been available online for several years. As the fourth accompanying article shows, one group even claimed to have downed a government chopper last summer using a "domestically-produced anti-aircraft weapon," though this may simply be a SA-7 with a jerry-rigged power source. After all, one should always remember that the Internet is filled with not only useful information, but also troves of misinformation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

Regarding the number of workers and experts involved, Abu Khalid said: "The work team consisted of around forty people, all working with utmost seriousness and industriousness... many of them helped fund the production of the first missile, which did not cost more than three thousand dollars... one of the official rebel or opposition groups needs to adopt this project, as individuals cannot continue funding it themselves but rather it needs institutions that are able to do so. For this reason we started a Facebook page called "Abdullah bin Zubair Battalion – Missiles" so that anyone can communicate with us and we can explain all the details for those who wish to participate..."

Source:

أول صاروخ حراري "صناعة حلبية" يسقط مروحية حربية للأسد..
Omar al-Bakur. "First 'Domestically Produced' Thermal Rocket Brings Down Assad Helicopter," 26 July 2014. <http://goo.gl/I0gXgX>

In a statement received by al-Aan News, the Fajr al-Sham Movement announced: "Following major scientific and military research efforts in its manufacturing workshop, commanders and specialists [of the Fajr al-Sham Movement] were able to domestically produce an anti-aircraft rocket. It was test fired on a regime helicopter above the Nayrab Airport, leading to a direct hit..."



"Hell Cannon"

Source: <http://brown-moses.blogspot.com/2013/05/diy-weapons-in-syria-hell-cannon.html>

Function: Explosive barrel Cannon

Specifications: It can fire more than fifteen types of shells that weigh more than forty kilograms. It also has two locally-made rocket launchers (Rohingya).

Range: 1.5 kilometers.

Effectiveness: Up to 200 square meters.

Projectile: Propane gas cylinder.

Cost of the shell: 15000 Syrian Pounds.

Country of Origin: Syria

Manufacture: Ahrar Al-Shamal Battalions.

Ethiopia's Defense Budget: The Seeming Paradox of Low Expenditures and High Quality

“To sum up, the success of the Ethiopian National Defence Force mainly lies on its investments on skill development of its troops as well as its attention to modernize its military hardware based on domestic products.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Bordering hostile countries and subject to terrorist attacks, one might expect Ethiopia to have an outsized defense budget to meet its security needs. However, as the accompanying article relates, its defense budget, just 1.2 percent of GDP, places it at 116th in the world for military spending. Nevertheless, despite what might seem like a paltry amount, its military is considered to be quite good, with some defense experts placing it in the top three for Africa.*

There are several reasons for this seeming paradox of low military expenditures coupled with high quality armed forces. To begin with, though it ultimately lost the fight to keep possession of Eritrea, it gained a great deal of knowledge during that conflict of what is and is not worthwhile investing in, both material- and strategy-wise, to wage war. Ethiopia's battle-hardened troops, as well as its security agencies, would carry those lessons, as well as others learned from fighting various domestic insurgent groups, forward as they dealt with threats from another border, the one with Somalia. Some say the best lesson Ethiopia learned, which it readily implements, is to launch proactive strikes against its enemies.

Fortunately for Ethiopia much of the border it shares with Somalia, in contrast to the Kenya-Somalia border, is relatively peaceful, in large part because the country has managed to maintain effective control of its peripheral areas. However, al-Shabaab, a radical Islamist group in Somalia, has forged some degree of cooperation (alliance may be too strong of a word) with the Oromo National Liberation Front (ONLF), a separatist rebel group in Eastern Ethiopia, and has plotted against Ethiopia. Once again, in part due to previous lessons learned, to date Ethiopia has been able to foil any significant terrorist attacks by al-Shabaab, though not for lack of trying by the terrorist organization.

Ethiopia has also managed to effectively modernize its hardware through a domestic program of arms development. Much of the equipment utilized by troops in African peacekeeping missions, ranging from bullets to helicopters and tanks, is produced by the manufacturing arm of the Ethiopian military. Thus, Ethiopia, in emphasizing troop training and modern, domestically produced, equipment, has managed to keep its military expenditures low, its armed forces well prepared, and its territory relatively safe from attack.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

Source: Abel Abate Demissie, “Ethiopian National Defense Force – Efficiency for Less,” *The Guardian (Ethiopia)*, 9 Feb 2015, <http://www.thereporterethiopia.com/index.php/opinion/commentary/item/3134-ethiopian-national-defense-force---efficiency-for-less>

Many officials believe that Ethiopian troops are the only forces who are able to defeat Al-Shabaab and that it is precisely the Ethiopian forces that the Al-Shabaab fears the most...In May 2014, Alexander Rondos, the EU's special representative for the Horn of Africa, had reportedly said that “The Ethiopian [troops] scare the hell out of everybody... because they deliver”.

Ethiopia – Al-Shabaab's number one enemy – has been under the persistent threat of attacks by the group. ...

Yet, on several occasions, Ethiopia announced that it has foiled Al-Shabaab's attempts to launch attack within its territory.

There might be several explanations on why Al-Shabaab has not been successful in attacking inside Ethiopia, at least so far. However, it would be difficult to not give due credit to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ethiopian military and security apparatus.

Many defense statistics indicate that the country is among the top three militaries in Africa. According to Global Fire Power (GFP), Ethiopia is the third in military strength (following Egypt and Algeria) and 40th in the world. The 1.2 percent military spending by Ethiopia is very low compared with its neighboring and regional countries...

Much of the utilities to the peace-keeping mission ranging from bullets to heavy armored vehicles, tanks and helicopters are also produced by the National Defense, which runs the military industry's business...In addition to this, the Ethiopian National Defense Force, through its university, the Defense University, enrolls thousands of students and members of the army every year to different degrees.

Therefore, it would not be farfetched assumption to consider ENDF as a classic example of developing an efficient military without making it the burden on the national economy.

Add a New Use for Cell Phones...Stopping Ebola

2 February 2015

“The fighting was intense, but they were pushed back. We inflicted casualties upon them, there were none on our side.”

OE Watch Commentary: *They have been used to foment unrest in Egypt, assist with determining when is the best time to bring a herd to market, and, of course, keep teenagers apprised of where they should rendezvous for their next get-together, but to these many utilizations of cell phones add one more... stopping Ebola. As the accompanying article relates, a European project in West Africa will use mobile phones - part of a communication system developed by a US non-profit - to help ensure patient compliance with experimental vaccine regimes. Additionally, the system will help educate both patients and health workers, collect research data on vaccine use, and support a broader research program Europeans are pursuing in West Africa.*

To an extent, the cell phone is the perfect marriage between communications technology and the needs of community public health programs in Africa. Because of the high cost associated with fixed telephone lines, along with the mind-numbing bureaucracy, which requires months, or even years, to obtain one, cell phones - relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain - have proliferated in Africa. Thus, when a community public health worker needs to check if patients have been compliant in taking their medicines, all he or she often has to do is call, a tremendous boon when patients could be scattered across a large district with inaccessible roads.

Though this is the first time cell phones have been extensively used for an Ebola vaccine trial, they have shown their worth with other public health campaigns. Perhaps most notably was in Bangladesh where they were utilized in a program to detect and diagnose malaria in remote mountain regions.

Looking at the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa, one can see the tremendous potential of cell phones to mitigate some of the problems associated with the disease. As an example, rumors were abundant during the Ebola outbreak, including some that when acted upon were counterproductive to the public health efforts to contain the disease. By using cell phones, rumors can be dispelled and frazzled nerves calmed. Another example where cell phones could come into play is to reduce the population's dependence on the practices of traditional healers, who, unfortunately, provide ineffective Ebola treatments. Thus, cell phones, which have been used by Africans for many purposes - especially farming, herding, and trade - are finding a new role: combating Ebola and, in the process, saving many lives.

End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

Source: “Mobile Phones to Help Ebola Vaccine Trials,” SciDev.net, 2 Feb 2015, <http://www.scidev.net/global/medicine/news/mobile-phones-ebola-vaccine-trials.html>

An upcoming EU-funded research funded project will use mobile phones to monitor trials of Ebola vaccines.

US-based non-profit organization the Grameen Foundation aims to start deploying its Mobile Technology for Community Health (MOTECHE) communication system in the second quarter of the year during upcoming clinical trials in West Africa.

The project is part of a €215 million (around US\$242 million) research programme on Ebola run by the Innovative Medicines Initiative, a public-private health partnership between the European Union and Europe's pharmaceutical industry.

“We will continue to measure the effectiveness of this deployment in real-time and make adjustments as needed to enhance its impact.”

MOTECHE's most important contribution will be ensuring that patients comply with vaccine regimes, the foundation adds.

Wasif Ali Khan, a researcher involved in the Bangladeshi roll-out of MOTECHE, says the technology is useful for dispelling myths around diseases — a problem that undermines Ebola containment — thus leading to earlier and better treatment.

He adds that the use of MOTECHE in Bangladesh lessened people's reliance on local medicine men and informal drug vendors, therefore reducing the risk of inappropriate treatment.

For African Children Who Lost Limbs ...Prosthetics through 3-D Printing

29 January 2015

“Simply extending the disarmament deadline again will only prolong the agony and discredit the organization.”

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article, there are approximately ten million amputees in the world, the majority of them living in less-developed countries. About 300,000 are landmine survivors, a number that continues to grow by 26,000 annually. Unfortunately, prosthetics manufactured in developed countries are generally too expensive for amputees in many African nations. Enter 3-D printing, a revolutionary technology that is finding many applications, and now has one more... making relatively inexpensive prosthetics. As the accompanying article relates, for Ugandan children who have lost limbs, this is a game changer.

To be sure, it is not just landmines that cause loss of limbs in Africa, though these have been especially dangerous to children who might be tending wandering herds or do not understand posted warning signs. Traffic accidents, small infected wounds not treated quick enough which fester into larger wounds, and birth defects all add to the number of children with missing limbs. Then there is the 1994 Rwandan genocide that left thousands maimed, or the terrorists, such as the Lord's Resistance Army, who deliberately mutilate children.

How much of a difference can 3-D printing make? On average a prosthetic made in a developed country costs about \$5,000; the 3-D printer can make one for \$250, a huge savings especially important in countries where per capita income is often significantly less than the \$5,000 cost of a modern artificial limb. For children this reduced cost is especially valuable, as they regularly require new prosthetics as they grow.

The production of prosthetics using 3-D printing in less developed countries is still in the early, some might even say the experimental stages. Questions exist as to their long-term durability. However, the project is off to a promising start, and a technology that was recently in the news for creating a ratchet wrench on the International Space Station is finding a new use back on earth... making affordable artificial limbs for African children. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

Source: Alice Hazelton, "Uganda: 3-D Printing of Prostheses to Be Tried in Uganda," SciDev.Net (AllAfrica.com), 29 Jan 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201501291583.html>

Researchers are to 3-D print cheap, custom-made prosthetics for child amputees in the developing world after winning CAD\$112,000 (US\$90,000) from the Canadian government.

“There are more than ten million people in the world with amputations, most of whom live in developing countries,” says Mitch Wilkie, director of international programmes at Christian Blind Mission Canada (cbm), the NGO leading the project. “Around 300,000 of them are landmine survivors and this number is growing by about 26,000 people annually.”

Conventional prosthetic sockets for the remaining part of patients' injured limbs are made using plaster-of-Paris moulds, but these take up to a week to dry in the sun. Children also require at least two fittings a year - equivalent to around 25 prostheses over a lifetime - to adjust for body growth, making the process expensive for their families.

“We are confident that we can expedite this whole process with 3-D scanning and printing,” says Wilkie. The team hopes to produce prostheses in developing countries for around US\$250. At present, they cost up to US\$5,000 in developed countries.

But Martin Twiste, a prosthetics researcher at the University of Salford, United Kingdom, warns that the suggested materials need to be tested for durability before being used more widely.

Over the next six months, the team plans to conduct clinical field trials with 35 patients at the hospital to compare its technology with current methods.

“We want the technology to benefit as many amputees as quickly as possible,” says Wilkie. Should the trials prove successful, the team envisions offering a package comprising a scanner, software, computer, 3-D printer and training for US\$10,000 to US\$15,000.

“Hunting may be a bow and arrow business, but is the Colonel aware that the lethality of these arrows can be more than even AK-47s?”

OE Watch Commentary: *One of Boko Haram's tactics to cause psychological distance between the Nigerian military and the citizens it serves has been to carry out mass killings of civilians. The military's inability to defend every village and town from Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria has reinforced the feeling among citizens that the military has abandoned them. Yet, one of the ways citizens have risen up and responded to the Boko Haram threat has been to develop their own Civilian JTF (Joint Task Force) militias, which in some rural areas have become the de-facto security force at the local level.*

An article in ThisDay on 10 January 2015 points out that traditional hunters, who often use bows and arrows and rifles from as far back as the colonial era, have in some cases been more effective in combating Boko Haram than the military. This is because they know the local physical terrain and human geography in their hometowns in northeastern Nigeria more than troops who come from different parts of the country. These hunters are therefore able to detect Boko Haram members when they mix into the local population. In addition, the charms and amulets the local hunters use psychologically give them a sense of invincibility and fearlessness when battling Boko Haram, while at close range their bows and arrows can, according to the article, prove highly lethal. Moreover, the article points out that the hunters, like Boko Haram, are not uniformed and therefore are as difficult for Boko Haram to locate as it is for the military to locate Boko Haram members. As a result, the hunters gain an element of surprise when they attack Boko Haram.

*Despite the success of the Civilian JTF hunters in rural areas, there has emerged a rivalry between them and the military, with the latter having called for the dissolution of unprofessional militias. However, the popularity of the hunters among the population in rural areas and their ability to cover ground where the military is stretched thin means they will likely continue to play a counterinsurgency role in Nigeria even despite this friction with the professional military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)***

Source: “The Nigerian Army, Boko Haram Insurgency and the Hunters,” ThisDay, 10 January 2015.

The Nigerian Army, Boko Haram Insurgency and the Hunters

It is true superior weapons confer an advantage to an opponent, but that alone cannot and should not be used as a yard stick to judge who will ultimately win; other parameters need to be considered, two of which [the Colonel] mentioned: intelligence on the enemy and the population of trained fighters. Hunting may be a bow and arrow business, but is the Colonel aware that the lethality of these arrows can be more than even AK-47s? A man with a limb damaged by a gun or grenade can still survive if given the right and prompt medical attention, however, a man given even a scratch by a poisoned arrow would undoubtedly die. I have witnessed a few communal clashes; have listened to stories of men from these conflicts so I know what happens with these crude instruments.

These hunters know better; they prefer to play in the background rather than to the gallery. There is wisdom in hiding who you are from the enemy; there is wisdom in the enemy not knowing where his death blow will come from; whether from afar off or from the person next to him. That element of surprise confers advantage. When these hunters begin to grant interviews, throw parties to celebrate victories, their identity will become public knowledge, that edge of surprise will be lost. [Boko Haram] do not wear uniform, they do not grant interviews, they do not throw parties to celebrate victories; when they appear in their videos, their faces are covered – remaining invisible in plain sight is the name of the game if one must survive against the enemy.

Will Boko Haram Use Livestock Bombs?

30 January 2015

“The security agencies might arrest persons who take their livestock to city centers for grazing, as it poses a security threat to the people.”

OE Watch Commentary: Boko Haram gained international notoriety when it carried out the first suicide bombings in Nigerian history at the Federal Police Headquarters and UN Headquarters in Abuja in June and August 2011. Since the kidnapping of more than 250 girls in Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2014, Boko Haram has also carried out the first female suicide bombings in the country’s – and West Africa’s – history, including 20 separate attacks deploying teenagers in markets, motor parks, and petrol stations. Now, according to an article in Vanguard on 30 January 2015, the Nigerian military suspects Boko Haram is preparing to launch livestock bombs.

While such an assertion may seem exaggerated, Boko Haram has recruited from among Nigeria’s nomadic Fulani herders. It is possible Boko Haram would try to use their livestock – or livestock militants steal from victims – to circumvent the checkpoint inspections that the security forces use to detect militants. The psychological impact of a livestock bomb for civilians would mean they now would have to worry about not only young girls becoming suicide bombers, but also livestock as a weapon of war. This would also allow Boko Haram to further terrorize the Nigerian population. Moreover, the hassle and delays caused by the military’s efforts to inspect young girls and livestock would further alienate people from the military, even if the military responsibly carries out its mission.

This Vanguard article’s report of livestock bombs is another reminder of Boko Haram’s continuing ability to innovate and develop new ways to attack Nigerian population centers, no matter how immoral or unusual the method. At the same time, however, the military’s anticipation of Boko Haram’s use of new tactics is a sign that the military leaders are thinking ahead about ways to defend against Boko Haram’s new tactics. However, if the security forces become overzealous in inspecting girls, livestock and other possible suspicious activities, it could be counterproductive and strain relations even more between the military and civilians. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Boko Haram launched the first suicide car bombs and girl suicide bombs in Nigerian history in 2011, and may now be experimenting with livestock bombs.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-cattle-31dec14/2580661.html>

Source: “Boko Haram Planning to Use Livestock as Bombers, Vanguard, 30 January 2015.

Boko Haram planning to use livestock as bombers

The Federal Government revealed the purported plans by Boko Haram to use male suicide bombers disguised as cobblers (shoe repairers) as well as livestock, like goats, cows, donkeys and camels, to carry out their deadly missions. The general public, including all persons operating within and around the aforementioned places, are advised to be vigilant and mindful of suspicious activities in their environment. [The government spokesperson] stressed that the security agencies might arrest persons who take their livestock to city centers for grazing, as it poses a security threat to the people.

“With less sophisticated weapons, Chadian troops penetrated a hundred kilometers in Nigerian territory and killed hundreds of insurgents and drove out Boko Haram.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 3 January 2015 several hundred Boko Haram militants raided the military barracks in Baga, Nigeria, near the border axis with Chad, Niger and Cameroon. This prompted Chad to intervene to regain control of the Lake Chad region due to the threat that Baga falling into Boko Haram's hands posed to Chad. A French-language article on 2 February 2015 for the Chadian website, alwihdainfo.com, explained why the Chadian forces, who have combat experience fighting jihadists aligned with Boko Haram in northern Mali in 2013, were able to succeed in their initial battles with Boko Haram in early January, including retaking several towns near Baga, where Nigerian and Cameroonian forces could not succeed throughout late 2014.

The key, according to the article, was not that the Chadians had superior firepower compared to the Nigerians or Cameroonians. Rather, the Chadian army was more prepared for the type of combat needed to defeat Boko Haram in the desert areas of northern Borno State near Lake Chad. Whereas the Cameroonians and Nigerians were based in garrisons guarding large towns, the Chadians used their off-road capability in weaponized sport-utility vehicles to chase Boko Haram deep into their desert hideouts. This freedom of movement and the luxury of choosing when and where to engage the enemy enabled Chad to defeat Boko Haram at its own game.

Yet, at the same time, the article may be neglecting several key factors for Chad's success. For example, the Chadians have no responsibility to protect the civilians in Nigeria, as the Chadians are on foreign soil, so they can afford to use their resources to chase Boko Haram in remote areas. Chad also has logistical and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support from France through Operation Barkhane. Finally, as evidenced by the albeit failed negotiations between Chad and Boko Haram for the release of the kidnapped schoolgirls from Chibok, there are relationships between the Chadian government and Boko Haram factional leaders, which means Chad may be able to exploit intelligence acquired from Boko Haram itself and exert a certain amount of pressure on Boko Haram leaders in a way that it appears Nigeria and Cameroon cannot.

Nonetheless, one of the keys for all countries involved in the battle against Boko Haram will be to exercise their own comparative advantages. In the case of Chad, it appears there is much that can be learned and leveraged from their versatile forces. As such, greater cooperation among Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad would likely lead to improvements in their mutual efforts to end the insurgency in Nigeria, which is increasingly spreading throughout the Lake Chad region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

Source: “L’armée tchadienne se bat avec des armes moins sophistiquées que celles des nigériens” [The Chadian army is fighting with Less sophisticated weapons than the Nigerians], alwihdainfo.com, 2 February 2015.

L’armée tchadienne se bat avec des armes moins sophistiquées que celles des nigériens

The Nigerian press wonders why with less sophisticated weapons than those of the Nigerian Army, Chadian forces put Boko Haram on the defensive. With less sophisticated weapons, Chadian troops penetrated a hundred kilometers in Nigerian territory and killed hundreds of insurgents and drove out Boko Haram. They regained Mallam Fatori and Abadam, two Nigerian cities in the northern part of Borno State. The Chadian army has first carried out reconnaissance work before bombarding [Boko Haram], and deployed and launched attacks in the same time and on several axes. It is a professional job that forced Boko Haram to flee.

Nigerian refugees in Diffa and Bosso (Niger) said they were surprised when they saw the Chadian troops successfully kill many fighters Boko Haram by chasing them in Mallam Fatori and Abadam. “Honestly the weapons used by Chadian troops are not as modern as Nigerian soldiers’ weapons,” said Yusuf Toroma, a Nigerian who now lives in Bosso (Niger).

“Surprisingly, most of Chadians troops have an AK-47 rifle, some machine guns and other anti-aircraft weapons they carry on their shoulders. Even the combat aircraft they use differed in no way from those that we see the army of Nigeria. The only difference is those used by Chadians ruthlessly sent off bombs for hours bombs on Boko Haram,” said a witness.

“...a calamity for which the FARC has a great deal to answer...”

OE Watch Commentary: *Disappearings* (as opposed to what is in English the more grammatically correct but insufficiently passive-voiced “disappearances”) were an elemental concern of the founding fathers of the United States. For them, the old English proscriptive writ of habeas corpus was a constitutionally important theme, knowing as they did that one of the worst offenses against the concept of the right to life was, beyond murder, the erasing or extinguishing of a person’s existence. Since at least decades ago, the Spanish language has included ‘to disappear’ as an active verb form. Although often a corollary to or lesser included offense under murder, “desaparecer” leaves surviving family in emotional limbo.

Colombia’s largest remaining guerrilla group, which is deftly engaging the government of Colombia in ostensible peace talks, has a massive blood debt reflected in a rap sheet that includes hundreds and hundreds of forced disappearings. They are but one of many categories of crime for which the population of Colombia will task the FARC leaders to answer, regardless of the formal outlines of a negotiated settlement between the government and that criminal gang. Disappearings are perhaps the worst category of offense as far as social pardon is concerned: they seem never to go away. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Juan Sebastián Jiménez Herrera, “Los 2.760 desaparecidos por las Farc” (The 2,760 Persons Disappeared by the FARC), El Espectador, 6 Feb, 2015, <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/los-2760-desaparecidos-farc-articulo-542637>

“In its 60 years of existence, the FARC has disappeared 2,760 persons. The accusation was made 4 February by the [Colombian] attorney general Alejandro Ordonez by delivering a detailed report about these 2,760 cases of forced disappearance to a delegate of the International Penal Court. El Espectador obtained access to the 80-page document which even includes the name of the disappeared person, their age, and the last place where they were last seen. It is also nothing short of an x-ray image of a calamity for which the FARC has a great deal to answer...”

The report, in brief, is a brief prepared by the Institute of Legal Medicine for the National Registry of Disappeared Persons, based, principally, on complaints made by families of the disappeared....

Meta [department and focal geography of the Casa Verde accords between 1984 and 1986] heads the list along with Caquetá [focal department of the failed Caguán dialogs] each with 318 cases. Antioquia follows them with 271 entries; Narinyo, with 199; Putumayo, with 153; and Guaviare, with 145...As for years, it must be highlighted that between 1998 and 2002 -- that is to say, during the existence of the distension zone [a large area evacuated of Colombian government armed forces] -- 869 registries of forced disappearances at the hands of the FARC were registered, nearly a third of the total....”

“...in recent months discontent within the military class has ‘risen’...”

OE Watch Commentary: *A retired Venezuelan general asked the United Nations in New York for asylum, as he is being pursued by Venezuelan authorities for anti-government activity. In interviews, General Rivero stated that discontent is growing within the active Venezuelan Armed Forces. He has also suggested that armed Cuban elements within Venezuela are prepared to help Venezuela’s Bolivarian government check any uprising from within the Venezuelan Armed Forces. His comments may or may not reflect a salient attitudinal condition or change within the Venezuelan military institution. However, amid the continuing avalanche of negative socio-economic news coming out of Venezuela these days, his assertions bear close consideration and cross-examination as an indicator at least of the timing of a potential political explosion.*

*Meanwhile, the government of Venezuela continues its ham-handed ways, recently announcing a new official rules of engagement (ROE) policy for the armed forces during civil protests: they are free to use lethal force to avoid or contain anti-government demonstrations. The United Nations was unimpressed with the new policy. Irrespective of any new ROE, news regarding what appears to be serious stress within the government’s armed institutions adds another key focal point to what is a growing panorama of ills. This is not to predict that the government of Venezuela cannot effectively repress dissent. It is, however, an election year, major student demonstrations took place in the country only a year ago, and, so far this year, many potential indicators of instability seem to point toward impending trouble. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: EFE, Editor NA el Vie, “Antonio Rivero,” Informe21.com, 30 Jan, 2015, <http://informe21.com/antonio-rivero>

“Retired Venezuelan General Antonio Rivero declared that in recent months discontent within the military class has “risen” due to the crisis that his country has been experiencing, in spite of measures by President Nicolas Maduro to compensate military leaders with “perquisites and promotion”. “The country’s crisis situation -- social, political, economic, and of insecurity -- considerably affects the Armed Forces, and from that point of view there is a discontent,” confirmed Rivero in an interview with EFE in New York

Source: EFE, “El general Antonio Rivero huye de Venezuela y pide protección de la ONU” (General Antonio Rivero fled Venezuela and Seeks UN Protection), Youtube, 30 Jan, 2015, <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20150130/abci-general-antonio-rivero-huye-201501300840.html>

“Thursday, retired Venezuelan General Antonio Rivero came out of the clandestinity in which he had been for eleven months to request international protection in the seat of the United Nations (UN) in New York. ”

Source: Ludmila Vinogradoff, “Venezuela autoriza el empleo de armas letales para <<evitar protestas>>” (Venezuela Authorizes the Use of Lethal Weapons for “Avoiding Protests”), ABC.es, 30 Jan, 2015, <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20150130/abci-empleo-fuerza-letal-venezuela-201501292358.html>

“Minister of Defense, Army General Vladimir Padrino, issued regulation number 0086610, published in the Official Gazette 40.589, 27 January, wherein is established a new model for military control in public order that includes the “use of potentially lethal force, whether by firearm or with some other weapon that is potentially lethal, in order to avoid disturbances...”

Source: DolarToday, “ONU rechaza resolución de Venezuela sobre el uso de armas mortales en manifestaciones” (The UN Rejects Venezuelan Regulation Regarding the Use of Lethal Weapons during Demonstrations), DolarToday, 11 Feb, 2015, <https://dolartoday.com/onu-rechaza-que-fuerzas-armadas-venezolana-reprima-manifestaciones-con-fuerza-potencialmente-mortal/>

“The United Nations Office of Human Rights today rejected the regulation given to the Venezuelan armed forces...that describes the standards of behavior for the Armed Forces when controlling public gatherings and demonstrations...”

Peru Establishes Zones of Exclusion to Combat Narco Flights from Bolivia

5 February 2015

Source: “Perú establece zona de exclusión aérea contra el narco en Bolivia (Peru Establishes Zones of Exclusion to Combat Narco Flights from Bolivia),” Infobae. Accessed on April 27, 2015 from <http://www.infobae.com/2015/02/05/1625014-peru-establece-zona-exclusion-aerea-contra-el-narco-bolivia>

OE Watch Commentary: *In the early 1990s and up until 2001 the Peruvian government actively targeted and shot down suspected narco flights in an attempt to disrupt the air bridge used to shuttle coca base from Peru to Colombia. However, this program was halted in 2001 after a US missionary flight was mistakenly shot down over Peruvian airspace.*

In the years since, small flights have once again become the primary method used by traffickers to move coca base. The only difference is that the air bridge now runs from Peru to Bolivia instead of Colombia. An Infobae report indicates that Peruvian authorities detect anywhere from 3-7 Bolivian narco flights daily in the Valleys of the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers (VRAEM) and Pichis Palcazu regions of Peru. However, current law does not allow the use of force to bring down narco planes. Instead, narco flights are most commonly intercepted after they have landed, which increases the odds of success for pilots, as Shining Path intelligence regarding police and soldier presence is readily available.

*In the coming months this may change, as Peru is now reconsidering the use of force to bring down narco planes. The Peruvian government is also looking to install new military bases and radars, among other measures, to counteract drug trafficking in the highly active VRAEM region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)***

Details Regarding Proposed Legislature

In March 2015, Congress will convene to debate new legislature which if approved, would allow the Peruvian Air Force to use force if civil flights without prior authorization are detected in the Mazamari, Atalaya, Pichari and Malvinas sectors of the VRAEM region. Infobae further reported that zones of exclusion would extend up to 10,000 meters. Use of force, however, would be a last resort action as outlined by Peru’s Antidrug Chief Alberto Otarola. Ideally, the first course of action would be to intercept aircraft by establishing protocols aimed at forcing pilots to land where they would be met by authorities. In the case a forced landing is not successful, in-flight interception would be implemented.

Multi-Tiered Plan

An estimated 85% of all narco flights entering into Peruvian territory originate in Bolivia, but the proposed renewal of no-fly zones is just one of many steps the Peruvian government is taking to disrupt the Bolivia-Peru air bridge. As indicated by Peruvian Defense Minister Pedro Cateriano, the government is also planning to purchase several military planes, in addition to installing four antidrug radars and ten military bases in the VRAEM. Additionally, Peruvian President Ollanta Humala announced the implementation of a new antidrug strategy in June 2014 aimed at incentivizing the voluntary take-up of licit crops in an attempt to limit land used to produce coca leaves. More than a plan to support citizens, the new approach is proactive in the sense that it prevents coca-leaf from being planted by farmers in the first place. As part of this program, the government will aid farmers in converting 5,000 hectares of coca leaves to alternative crops such as coffee and cocoa in the unruly Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE).

Saint Bernard Dogs Used as Drug Mules by Mexican Cartels

11 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Although this incident represents the first of its kind in Peru, it is not the first time that traffickers have utilized dogs as drug mules. In July 2013 authorities in Italy dismantled a trafficking ring comprising individuals from Peru, Ecuador and El Salvador after receiving an anonymous tip that the group was using dogs to traffic drugs. In this case, the dogs were forced to ingest packages of drugs wrapped in black vinyl tape to shield them from x-ray checks. Once in Italy, they would be sliced open to retrieve the packages. In total, the group is suspected of having killed at least 50 dogs. They likely chose Italy, as pets are not quarantined as long as they are healthy and have proper documentation. End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)*

Source: “Detienen en Perú a mexicano y dos perros con cocaína” (Saint Bernard Dogs Used as Drug Mules by Mexican Cartels), La Policiaca. Accessed on 11 January 2015 from <http://www.lapoliciaca.com/nota-roja/detienen-en-peru-a-mexicano-y-dos-perros-con-cocaina/>

A Mexican national identified as Giuseppe Tombolan, 22, was arrested for trying to smuggle about 2.9 kilograms of cocaine from Peru to his country inside the bellies of two St. Bernard dogs. This incident was reported in December 2014, and according to Peruvian authorities, was the first time in which they had seen this smuggling method used. Authorities further added that the drugs were placed in the bodies of the dogs during a surgery in a hotel room. One of the dogs later died from peritonitis which is an infection of the tissue lining the abdomen’s inner wall. Both dogs were also reporting as having high fevers and vomiting. When questioned by journalists about the dogs, Tombolan smiled and stated “they just told me to take the dogs to Mexico.” He did not indicate who “they” were.

First Ever Cocaine Conversion Lab Dismantled in Spain

5 December 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *Since 2011 Colombian-style drug processing labs have been dismantled in Central American countries, including Guatemala and Honduras, but in December 2014 authorities discovered the first ever such lab in Spain. As reported by this source, Spain is a key hub for Colombian cocaine, as it is home to a large internal consumption market. Its geographic proximity to West Africa is also important, as the latter is used to bring large quantities of cocaine from Colombia, which is then shipped into Spain and the rest of Europe. Possible reasons cited by this source as to why Colombians are now shifting the conversion process from jungle labs at home to Spain include a Colombian crackdown on precursor chemicals needed to turn coca leaves into powder and less risk, as coca paste is less valuable than refined cocaine. End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)*

Source: “Desmantelan por primera vez en España un laboratorio para la extracción del alcaloide de coca” (First Ever Cocaine Conversion Lab Dismantled in Spain), El Correo. Accessed on 17 December 2014 from <http://www.elcorreo.com/alava/sociedad/sucesos/201412/05/desmantelan-primera-espana-laboratorio-20141205115405-rc.html>

In December 2014, authorities in Spain dismantled a cocaine conversion lab similar to those found in Colombia. This incident is significant in the sense that it is the first time Spanish authorities have dismantled a lab similar to those used by drug trafficking organizations in the Colombian jungle where an alkaloid is extracted from the coca leaf and then processed. Possible reasons Colombian traffickers may be installing conversion labs outside of Colombia include domestic crackdowns on chemical precursors needed to convert coca leaves into powder and less risk as coca paste is less valuable than refined cocaine.

The lab itself was located in Nijar which has been described as a quiet town with narrow streets in the Andalucía region of Spain. Surveillance on the group of 12 individuals allegedly involved in bringing cocaine mixed with palm kernel meal (animal feed) into the country from Colombia originally began in 2013. During this time, authorities identified multiple suspects including a well-known coca conversion chemist from Colombia coming and going from Spain. Other members of the group were identified as being from Peru, Nigeria and Spain. At the time of the lab dismantling, authorities seized chemical precursors, a hydraulic press, and weapons.

“Narendra Modi’s government is finally letting go of the past and opening a new era in relations with the United States.”

Source: The Diplomat, “Obama’s India Visit: An Indian Foreign Policy Tilt,” 20 January 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/change-of-guard-in-sri-lanka-triggers-introspection-in-china/article6805507.ece>

OE Watch Commentary: *When it comes to US Presidential relations with the government of India, one does not have to look far to find reference to the Nixon-era deployment of the USS Enterprise nuclear aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Indian-Pakistani War. This old chestnut is serious history to old hands and remains so to the commentators of today. The Diplomat provides such a piece as it seeks to put President Obama’s visit to New Delhi on the occasion of India’s 66th Republic Day into historical perspective. This long article provides an excellent example of an Indian commentator’s careful analysis of the significance of the event.*

Other regional sources provide a simple synopsis of the visit’s accomplishments. The Straits Times provides five key agreements, while another article from The Diplomat lists nine expanded takeaways on US-Indian ties.

*This unique visit will have long reaching consequences for the region and the world both economically and politically. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

...The U.S.-India relationship has encouragingly evolved from a period of arms-length interaction predicated on mutual suspicion to one where there is not only a significant convergence of strategic and economic interests and objectives, but also an acknowledgement of these common interests.

President Obama’s visit to New Delhi on the occasion of India’s 66th Republic Day was a significant demonstrator of that acknowledgement. For years, governments in India and the U.S. found it challenging to translate a generally favorable disposition among their citizens into policy....

However, policymakers in Washington, D.C. continue to be uneasy with what they see as India’s reticence on issues ranging from Iran’s nuclear program to human rights violations...

Many in India’s political and bureaucratic circles too still view the U.S. through the prism of Cold War suspicion and cling to an outmoded worldview where, as C. Raja Mohan puts it, “saying ‘no’ [to the U.S.] was considered more heroic than splitting the difference and making progress.” They tend to see the U.S. as an unreliable partner and hold that the U.S. does not do enough to pressure Pakistan on the India-specific terrorist groups it harbors.

Modi’s invitation to Obama (and his subsequent acceptance) to attend India’s Republic Day ceremony was an attempt to break from these positions of old. Both Obama and Modi have demonstrated that there is political will to significantly elevate the U.S.-India relationship. ... an exhaustive and comprehensive vision for further cooperation and collaboration between the two countries ranging from high technology and space to defense, energy and climate change.

On regional security issues, the Joint Statement articulated a common desire to enhance cooperation with Japan ... The Modi government, thus, appears to be seeking to expand India’s diplomatic engagements with the U.S. and Asia’s democracies to more effectively address China’s assertiveness.

...Taken as a whole, the newfound vitality in India’s approach to foreign policy and the pace and extent of its engagement with the U.S. represent a “tilt” in India’s foreign policy orientation. This tilt, though, is not aimed to favor one state against another — as President Nixon’s was in 1971 — but rather aimed at departing from India’s historical, dogmatic reverence for non-alignment in favor of a foreign policy that is proactive and nimble in its pursuit of furthering India’s national interests. There is significant strategic convergence of interests between the U.S. and India today, from the uncertainties associated with China’s emergence as a great power to terrorism and the rise of extremism in the Middle East. However, India and the U.S. will continue to differ on objectives and approaches on some issues.

...For India, the realities of the region demand that it continue to cultivate China as a trade partner and work to evolve mechanisms to manage and resolve territorial disputes with its larger neighbor...

...India’s rise, coupled with an increasing convergence of interests and objectives augurs well for the U.S. In the long run, India’s attempts to shed the last vestiges of antiquated thinking that dominated its conduct of foreign policy will open up many further opportunities for engagement between these two large and vibrant democracies.

(continued)

Continued: President Obama attends India Independence Day

“US President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have unveiled a deal aimed at unlocking billions of dollars in nuclear trade and deepening defence ties...”

Source: Straits Times, “Obama’s Meeting with Modi: Five Key Agreements,” 26 January 2015 <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-asia/story/obamas-visit-india-whats-the-agenda-20150125>

Here are five key agreements and points of discussion during Mr Obama’s visit to New Delhi:

1. Nuclear cooperation

Both countries struck a deal that could open the door for US companies to build nuclear reactors in India by promising insurance cover to US companies that had shied away from an Indian law placing liability on suppliers in case of an accident...

2. Closer strategic partnership

India and the US have announced a closer partnership covering a wide sphere of influence that would extend from Africa to the far reaches of East Asia. ... promoting peace, prosperity and stability” in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions....

3. Defence

...The United States overtook Russia as the biggest weapons supplier to India, the Indian government said in August. India is the world’s biggest weapons importer.

4. Renewable and climate change

The US will provide funding assistance to boost India’s solar energy capacity that can help the country lower its carbon emissions. India wants to ramp up its solar capacity by 33 times over seven years, an ambitious plan that requires investments of US\$100 billion (S\$134 billion)...

5. Economic ties

Both leaders said they will establish several bilateral mechanisms to identify opportunities to boost business, trade and investment ties. Last year they targeted a five-fold increase in annual trade to US\$500 billion...

“It’s been clear for some time now that the United States and India are strategically converging.”

Source: The Diplomat, “9 Takeaways on US-India Ties After Obama’s India Visit,” 26 January 2015 <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/9-takeaways-on-us-india-ties-after-obamas-india-visit/>

... What follows below is a quick distillation of nine highlights out of the released joint statement, joint strategic vision document, and the visit overall...

1. Ahead of this visit, the U.S. made it clear that both energy cooperation and climate change would be on the agenda. Unsurprisingly, one of the first announcements to come out of New Delhi during Obama’s visit was that the two countries had reached an agreement on climate change... Under a new agreement, the United States will also provide funding for renewable energy development in India.
2. Interestingly, the joint statement notes a confluence of two major East Asia-facing strategic initiatives by the two countries. The statement noted the alignment of “India’s ‘Act East Policy’ and the United States’ rebalance to Asia,” and the potential “opportunities for India, the United States, and other Asia-Pacific countries to work closely to strengthen regional ties” as result...
3. On economics, the joint statement ticked all the usual points, promising increased trade and investment opportunities. The phrase “bilateral investment treaty” appears in this joint statement where it did not appear in the September 2014 document,...
4. The U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) once again makes an appearance. ... The DTTI is poised to increase co-

(continued)

Continued: President Obama attends India Independence Day

production, co-development and partnership in U.S.-India military-industrial matters....

5. ... Obama's visit resulted in the revelation of more than a few straight-up hardware deals, including the joint production of parts and systems of the Lockheed C-130 (which India operates), and RQ-11 Raven drones....
6. ...The Joint Strategic Vision document, however, notes that "regional prosperity depends on security. We affirm the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea." ...
7. The statement as usual includes more than a few clauses addressing terrorism, law enforcement, and counter-terrorism. Naturally, both countries will increase their cooperation on these issues. ...
8. One issue that has been on the U.S.-India back-burner for some time now came to the fore during this visit: the issue of nuclear energy and civil nuclear liability in India.
9. ... The statement notes later that India and the United States will "work more closely with other Asia Pacific countries through consultations, dialogues, and joint exercises." ...



RESPONDING TO US PIVOT TO THE INDO-PACIFIC: INDIA'S PRO-ACTIVE ROLE IN MEETING EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES

By Gurmeet Kanwal

The U.S. re-balancing to the Asia Pacific, first announced by the President in 2011, continues to be a topic of analysis and discussion in the nations of that realm. Listening to these voices is essential in understanding the regional perceptions of the policy by our friends, allies, and cooperating nations. Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal's (Retd.) article is one such voice. His insight into India's military capabilities and emerging strategic doctrine provides a valuable glimpse into a major regional player's potential response to the latest U.S. geo-strategic initiative. This presentation also reminds us of the wider area now in consideration, the Indo-Pacific Asia.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/India/Indo-Pacific-security-challenges.pdf>

OE Watch Commentary: *Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha (former head of the Thai Army and leader of the junta that came to power by coup in May 2014) has maintained an open and high level public profile as head of the new government. Press reports and political commentary from the Western media have been primarily negative against the coup and the new prime minister. The tone has continued to be adverse and taken on verbiage of personal attack. Journalists are calling him superstitious and belittling his use of eccentric metaphors.*

Thai and regional news sources are reporting foundational changes in governance that look to insure the junta's influence and power far into the future. The Asian Correspondent points out that the creation of a Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) "is to permanently exert control over an eventually elected government." The Nikkei Asia Review reports that "the military junta ...has plans for a raft of long-term economic and political reform." Former government ministers have been brought back as advisors to the current junta. Details of some of these economic reforms are covered in the article. Several incidents of very detailed intervention by the military government are chronicled. This piece is an example of the more objective treatment provided by regional journals.

*It seems clear that the military junta is preparing long-term political and economic reforms that will be codified in a new constitution, as well as in new laws and regulations. This type of caveat reform has many supporters in the economic realm and many detractors in the political world. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

Source: The Asian Correspondent, "Thai Junta Lays Groundwork for Its Own Guided Democracy," 16 February 2015 <http://asiancorrespondent.com/130632/thai-junta-lays-groundwork-for-its-own-guided-democracy/>

...One line often purported by the Thai military junta is the need to "reform" Thailand's dysfunctional political system before there can be any return to elections or democracy in general. But one of the main motivations of the generals and their allies in the all-appointed government bodies, including the "National Reform Council" (NRC) and the "Constitutional Drafting Committee" (CDC), is to permanently exert control over an eventually elected government.

And exactly this seems to be happening:

Constitution drafters decided ... to set up a national reform body and empower it by adding it to the new constitution, so reform work and plans will be continued by future governments.

Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) member Kamnoon Sidhisamarn proposed the idea of setting up the organisation, reasoning that if the agency's role is spelled out in the new charter, the National Reform Council (NRC)'s work would not be wasted.

"With this national reform body, NRC proposals can be synchronised not just for now, but for the next five years," he said.

Basically it seems that they're creating an extra-parliamentary body that will be constitutionally enshrined and it also seems that they're going to stay longer than the usual four-year term of a government (unless they're going to change that as well), ...

... the military junta and its government bodies doubles down on their project to fundamentally change the Thai political system and also to safeguard their undertaking, making a clear sign that the current powers-to-be are here to stay – even after a somewhat democratic election.

Source: Nikkei Asian Review, "Thai Junta Planning Long-Term Reforms: Experts," 24 July 2014 <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Economy/Thai-junta-planning-long-term-reforms-experts>

... The military has no intention of slipping from sight any time soon, Narongchai told his audience. "We are now in episode 1 which can be called (the) 'military governing.'" He predicted episode 2, "military participating," will arrive in September when an interim government is established with an appointed prime minister. "Episode 3 will be called 'military watching,'" he said. "Don't ever dream that the military will go away."

...Redistributive tax reforms targeting the rich are in the pipeline, said Narongchai. Thailand at present has neither inheritance nor fixed property taxes. This has helped entrench the income gap between rich and poor, and been one of many seeds of political conflict. Whenever the issue has come up in the past, it has been blocked by lawmakers who are themselves already wealthy or aspiring to be.

...Political uncertainty was another concern Supavud raised, noting the NCPO's plan to redraft the constitution by mid-2015 and hold a general election later in the year. According to Supavud, it could take up to 325 days to complete a new constitution, making an election before December 2015 unlikely...

“Hometown diplomacy is emerging as the latest trend to showcase the closeness of ties between countries.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Consensual analysis continues to warn everyone to suspect China’s motives as it expands its economic influence and builds a more modern military. India and China have a shared “coming of age” story as young and emerging nations experiencing rapid growth as regional and global actors. It seems that issues of conflict between the two nations find the most press coverage, as opposed to incidents of cooperation.*

However, even mainstream news sources in India, such as India Times, are reporting some personal elements of the relationship that do not often find their way into Western reporting. President Xi Jinping of China visited India in September 2014 to break a sixty-year hiatus of state visits. The article lays out the reciprocal visit by Indian Prime Minister Modi. As they like to point out, “unlike the US, China did not ostracize him (Modi) over the 2002 riots.”

A more popular and sensational editorial approach is seen on the website WatchChinaTimes.com, where comments made by India’s Air Chief Marshal Arup Raha when addressing a press conference on 29 November 2014 are reported. Indian military leaders are not afraid to point out what they see as a pressing danger from “expansionist China.” Editorialists and bloggers (often retired military officers) are ever ready to launch into speculative analysis that has China on the verge of launching invasions.

More technical and introspective reporting can be found in publications of the numerous India think tanks, both private and public sponsored. Once such article from the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) in New Delhi highlights the emerging prominence of China in outer space. Reporting in CAPS Defence and Diplomacy provides an excellent background on the proliferation of space-based capabilities around the globe, with a focus on China’s anti-satellite capabilities.

Source: Economic Times – India Times, “China: Hometown Diplomacy Expected to Be Part of President Xi Jinping’s Hosting of PM Modi,” 4 February 2015 <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/china-hometown-diplomacy-expected-to-be-part-of-president-xi-jinpings-hosting-of-pm-modi/articleshow/46121562.cms>

Hometown diplomacy mixed with a Silk Road touch is expected be part of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s reciprocal gesture when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits China before end of May.

Xi is expected to take Modi to his home province of Shaanxi and its historic provincial capital, Xian, which was hub of the ancient Silk Road, ...

....Such a practice is not new but has been an increasing occurrence recently and has often coincided with key national strategies, generating widespread public interest, it said.

China was expected to highlight Xi’s mega project -- the new Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road (MSR) -- during Modi’s visit.

....China has invited India to take part in BCIM and the MSR.

....As a special gesture, Prime Minister Modi had accompanied President Xi during the latter’s visit to Ahmedabad last year.

“...by 2050 China will annex Taiwan, the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh ... and occupy the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea...”

Source: www.wantchinatimes.com, “China to Take Taiwan by 2050, Says India’s Air Force Chief,” 8 October 2014 <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20141204000107&cid=1101>

The head of the Indian Air Force (IAF), Arup Raha, has said that by 2050 China will annex Taiwan, the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, the islands in the East China Sea administered by Japan as the Senkaku, reclaim territory in Russia and Mongolia, and occupy the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, reports China’s state media.

....“The strategic gravity has shifted to Asia and Asia-Pacific, but there are huge challenges in terms of security in the region. First and foremost, the assertive China,” Raha said. “The situation is not good, as the peaceful rise of China remains a distant dream. An assertive China is investing heavily in developing military power, especially aerospace power, laying claims on international waters, island territories, and the air space over the South China and East China seas,” India’s Indo-Asian News Service quoted Raha as saying.

Raha quoted from an article written by a prominent security analyst in Hong Kong that says China is growing its capacity to annex Taiwan and south Tibet (India’s Arunachal Pradesh), take the islands currently administered by Japan as the Senkaku (claimed by China as the Diaoyu and Taiwan as the Diaoyutai), occupy the Spratly islands (which are claimed in whole

(continued)

Continued: Conflicts and Concerns between India and China

A comparison of foreign and regional views of the China–India concerns can add insight and augment a Western press view point. End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)

or in part by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Philippines), and recover territory lost to Russia and Mongolia. “I hope it is not true, but there are doubts whether the rise of China is going to be peaceful or not.”

“We have no option but to be prepared to meet such a challenge in the near future,” Raha said....

“China’s strides in counter space activities have already impacted the global space environment ...”

Source: Centre for Air Power Studies, “The Emerging Prominence of China in Outer Space,” 30 January 2015 http://capsindia.org/files/documents/CAPS_Infocus_PP_9.pdf

Space domain earlier dominated by just two countries now involves more than fifty national space agencies. ... Of the major space faring nations in Asia, China has demonstrated rapid expansion in its space capabilities that not only prompts an Asian space race but could have a long term impact on global space environment. Chinese space program is multipronged in nature involving and demonstrating its military ambitions and has raised serious concerns amongst other space faring nations on security of their space assets.

... China has launched a total of four crewed missions between 2005 and 2013 ... It achieved another first in the Asian region with successful launch of space laboratory ‘Tiangong-1’ in September 2011. The subsequent rendezvous and docking of Shenzhou spacecraft with astronauts on board in 2012 and 2013 further consolidated China’s international standing in space. ...

The ambitious manned space programme is progressing smoothly and is aimed towards establishing a large orbital space station ...The space station will cater for scientific experiments helping China acquire advanced satellite, sensor and propulsion capabilities useful for its missile programme....

While China continues to stride on its space advances in support of societal and commercial services, it has consistently worked towards integrating and improvising space services in military domain. It has openly evaluated and tested technologies used in space weapons. On January 11, 2007, China successfully conducted its first anti-satellite (ASAT) test destroying its own inactive polar orbit satellite ‘FengYun-1C’ and creating one of the largest clouds of debris posing danger to global space assets and future space activities. In January 2010, China conducted another test on ground-based mid-course missile interception technology possibly bridging the gap of anti-satellite and missile defense system technologies.....if we scrutinize its space programme from close quarters, it is evident that the technological advances accrued from its space exploration programmes and peaceful projects are actively integrated in military design to develop space weapons....

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past four months the OEW has examined the warming relationship between North Korea and Russia. Some of this renewed friendship is based on purely pragmatic motives. For instance, the Kremlin leadership understands that it needs Pyongyang's support if it wants to move energy resources and other products by land to South Korea. The leadership in North Korea also wants to balance its dependency upon China with a possible Russian source of aid and trade.

Realpolitik concerns lay alongside these pragmatic reasons for improving their mutual relations. Both Russia and North Korea view the US with considerable hostility. Both countries blame Washington for infringing upon their national interests. Pyongyang claims that the US has "occupied" South Korea to prevent unification, while leaders in Moscow assert that America has deliberately stoked political unrest in Ukraine to gain a foothold from which it can attack Russia.

In the decade after the USSR collapsed, Russia basically turned its back toward its former client in North Korea. Russia was then on the path toward democracy, free markets and greater integration with the West. It could no longer turn a blind eye to the political, economic and social abuses in North Korea. The Russian-North Korean relationship remained cool up until quite recently, when the Kremlin leadership apparently adopted the stance "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

The excerpt below from a Russian news source (which recently had a change of ownership when it became too critical of the Kremlin) is an apt illustration of Russia's changed perspective toward North Korea. The author attempts to set the record straight as to what life is really like in North Korea. According to this report, there is little poverty or hunger (reports of famine in the 1990s were highly exaggerated) and there is "more economic freedom in today's DPRK than in the USSR at the time of perestroika." The article goes on to claim that those darkened photos of Pyongyang at night were modified by the US by "painting over some of the illuminations in the North." He concludes by denying any sort of ruthlessness among the North Korean leadership, claiming such reports were jokes fabricated by Chinese bloggers.

Source: Konstantin Asmolov, "Образ врага. Что представляет собой КНДР на самом деле" [Enemy Image. What the DPRK Is Really Like], Lenta.ru, 2 February 2015. <http://lenta.ru/articles/2015/01/30/myth/>

North Korea is one of the most unusual countries in the world. In the West they call it a pariah state, and President George Bush Junior even included the DPRK in the "axis of evil." The demonization of the image of North Korea is promoted by the closed nature of the state and also the fact that P'yongyang deliberately cultivates a reputation as a "tough" regime that it is better to have no contact with....

...Let us begin with poverty and famine. Undoubtedly the situation in the DPRK is not ideal in this respect, but neither extreme poverty nor constant hunger and its associated problems exist in the country. References are frequently made to statistics according to which the Northerners are shorter than their Southern brothers. This is attributed to their not receiving enough protein in their childhood. This is a half truth, because it is not only a question of the shortage of protein-rich food in the North but also the change in the nutritional regime and the departure from the traditional diet in the South, where European cuisine is popular.

...The existence of the developed "parallel economy" in the DPRK also remains a secret to many people in the West, although North Korean migrants in China (shuttle traders rather than refugees) bring the country more foreign currency than the Kaesong Industrial Complex, which is frequently positioned as the sole source of foreign currency (\$100 million as against \$80 million). And if you listen not to propagandist horror stories but to the opinion of specialists, it transpires that in practice there is, if anything, more economic freedom in today's DPRK than in the USSR at the time of perestroika. Illegal economic ties permeate the whole of society, and a significant number of state enterprises are essentially private....

...The famine of 1995-1997 occupies perhaps the main place in the demonization of the DPRK. According to the calculations of certain particularly "competent" authors the number of casualties reached 3 million or even 4 million. However, these figures were obtained by a highly original method: The "assumed estimates of the situation in the worst-affected individual regions" were extrapolated to the whole country. Moreover, losses not directly connected with the famine are added to the victims (for instance, mortality from diseases in the context of reduced immunity)....

...Another "beautiful image" connected with the DPRK is the well-known "satellite photograph" where, against the bright lights of the South, the DPRK looks like a big, totally black patch. This is a very interesting illustration of the way in which the staffers of Radio Free Asia achieved the opposite result to what they were hoping for. Taking a real NASA image, they painted over some of the illuminations in the North so that the difference would look bigger, but while doing so they inadvertently blacked out Vladivostok and several Chinese border cities, which apparently also have no light at night....

...One of the most widespread recent fables about North Korea is the stories about the incredible cruelty of its ruler Kim Jong Un. Thus, there was a lot of ballyhoo

(continued)

Continued: Rosy Russian View of North Korea

Russia's pragmatic reasons for supporting North Korea are easily understood. Less clear are the Kremlin motives in becoming an apologist for the ruling regime in Pyongyang.
End OE Watch Commentary (Kim)

about a report that an official was shot by mortar fire on his orders. None of those who reproduced this news was bothered by the fact that it is impossible in principle to shoot somebody with mortar fire. The news that Comrade Kim fed his own uncle to hungry dogs comes into the same category; it turned out to be a joke by a Chinese blogger...

...There is a widespread impression that the DPRK threatens its neighbors or possibly the whole world. P'yongyang lays no claim to other countries' territories. Admittedly it regards the Republic of Korea as an occupied territory, but Seoul also regards the peninsula as a single country, part of which is temporary occupied by an "anti-state organization."...



The Strategic Implications of Chinese Companies Going Global

By COL Heino Klinck, U.S. Army; Edited by Cindy Hurst, FMSO

China's overseas direct investment (ODI) has become one of the biggest economic stories of the 21st century. In a relatively short time span, China has become the number one overseas investor amongst developing countries as well as the world's sixth largest overseas investor overall with \$150 billion invested in foreign markets. This marks a development of strategic significance with implications that go beyond simple economics. This paper explores China's economic and political strategies of going global as well as the geopolitical implications for national security in political, economic, and diplomatic terms for the United States and other countries.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/FAO/Strategic-Implications.pdf>

Army Ground Unit Grows in Capability and Role Through Helicopter Innovations

OE Watch Commentary: *According to the following article, Chinese ground forces have been ramping up capabilities with new innovations and strategies. Specifically, there is a huge emphasis on helicopter operations, including landings, navigation, fighting, reconnaissance, control, and protection. The article describes an unnamed motorized infantry brigade in the Nanjing Military Region as having transformed into “a new type of Army (ground force) air cavalry rapid reaction assault force.”*

According to the article, the brigade began its transformation as early as 2005. It then conducted its first joint exercise in August 2012, operating as a “whole organic unit in a tri-service tactical level joint exercise.” The article states that this particular brigade was involved in scores of tactical innovations that were recognized by the entire army.

As the capabilities of technical equipment (e.g., UAVs, satellites, robotics, cyber technologies) used in warfare have progress, the Chinese brigade’s party committee realized that modern wars have increased their tempo and that there was a need for rapid mobility capabilities and long-range projection capabilities to be in place to ensure success on the battlefield. Striving to overcome an abundance of hurdles, the brigade worked closely with Army aviation units and scientific research institutes. Together, relying on innovation, they reportedly made huge strides in accelerating the integration of key elements for air-ground operations. Over several years the brigade trained in various grueling exercises, and then in August 2012 it participated “as a whole organic unit in a tri-service tactical level joint exercise for the first time.”

The article is interesting in that it highlights the rigid course of this one brigade. It was able to transform itself from having no content for helicopter landing operation training, no lesson plan for training, no evaluation standard, and no talented personnel to a brigade with a fully functional and capable force.

End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)

Source: Zhu Da, Li Yong, and Liu Yuan, “‘跃’出地平线” (Leaping from the Horizon), Jiefangjun Bao, 30 December 2014, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/1230/c83083-26299171.html>

Leaping from the Horizon

This traditional infantry unit, which had performed illustrious military exploits in the past and was called the “Fierce Land Tigers,” had taken a solid step toward its transformation into a new type of Army [ground force] air cavalry rapid reaction assault force.

The brigade party committee understood this clearly: Modern wars are increasingly faster paced; for the Army, rapid mobility capabilities and long-range projection capabilities have become critical to getting the upper hand in a battleground; the era of conquering the world with “iron feet” is gone forever; and it is necessary to deeply integrate with Army aviation forces so that the brigade can “fly.”

... the brigade, in an actual-combat environment, comprehensively tested the diversified helicopter landing capabilities of “navigation, landing, fighting, reconnaissance, control, and protection,” and this marked the formation of the brigade’s whole organic, large-scale, and whole “system of systems” [ti xi] actual-combat-oriented helicopter landing operation capability.

In recent years, this brigade had successively scored 42 tactical innovation achievements and innovated 26 kinds of helicopter landing operation equipment; its achievements were successively disseminated to group armies, military regions, and even the whole army; and it was commended by the relevant PLA general department as a “first-class unit in military training.”

Today, “wings have been stuck on” heavy armaments, and the brigade has become a rapid-reaction, long-range direct-reach, and multi-element combined campaign assault force. The brigade innovated 15 types of auxiliary appliances for deplaning, including airdrop containers, and a heavy firearms rapid unloading method; formed communication, chemical defense, engineering, artillery, and other combined branches helicopter landing capabilities; and successfully built a vertical strike “iron fist” for helicopter landing operations.

Energy and Environmental Projections through 2020 in China

14 January 2015

“China’s energy development is a major variable in future world energy and geopolitics.”

OE Watch Commentary: *With its ongoing economic growth, one of the biggest challenges confronting China lies in the country’s ability to ensure long-term energy security while also protecting the environment. By 2020, according to the article, China will have developed a “well-off” society, described as “when the gross domestic product and urban and rural per capita income are double what they were in 2010.”*

The author derived his findings from database analysis. The first section of the article offers a comprehensive assessment of the present condition of China’s energy. Energy consumption rises annually, coal occupies a prominent proportion, and energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product declines slowly.

The author notes that “there is a lack of mandatory laws, regulations, and policy measures currently directed at ensuring emission standards,” and then goes on to offer various possible new policy scenarios. First, coal is expected to continue to be the leading source of energy in China, at least until 2030. Second, the years leading up to 2020 are important in China’s economic transition, reform, and development. Third, China is faced with the challenging task of finding a revolutionary solution for clean, efficient energy by 2020 “in the process of advancing new-style industrialization, urbanization, informatization, and agricultural modernization.” China needs to “blaze a green development path that saves energy, lowers energy consumption per unit of GDP, and reduces emissions.” Fourth, China’s energy development will play an important role in future world energy and geopolitics.

In the second half of the article the author offers some predictions for China’s energy environment in 2020. First, he explains that the total primary energy consumption will continue to rise while the consumption of coal, although still the leading source of

Source: Xu Xiaojie, “Energy and Environment in and Policy Choices for Well-Off Society,” *Zhongguo Fazhan Guan*, January 14, 2015, <http://www.chinado.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsID=3565>

Energy and Environment in and Policy Choices for Well-Off Society

China will have comprehensively established a well-off society [xiao kang she hui] by 2020, when the GDP and urban and rural per capita income are double those in 2010, but people presently have limited understanding and knowledge of this well-off society.

There is a lack of mandatory laws, regulations, and policy measures directed at the industrial structure that is tilted toward high energy consumption and at the irrational consumption model.

It is a rather challenging task for China to find, around 2020, a revolutionary solution for clean, efficient energy utilization in the process of advancing new-style industrialization, urbanization, informatization, and agricultural modernization, to blaze a green development path that saves energy, lowers energy consumption per unit of GDP, and reduces emissions...

China’s energy development is a major variable in future world energy and geopolitics. The diversities in China’s energy supply and demand, energy mix, and emissions outlooks will bring major variations in energy and the environment on a global scale. We hold that energy consumption and carbon emissions’ getting into a trend of slow growth after 2020 shows China’s contribution to easing global energy demand growth and controlling greenhouse gas emissions and the temperature rise. The percentage of coal in energy consumption will steadily fall below 60 percent by 2020 and coal consumption by newly built generating sets must be lower than 300 grams of standard coal equivalent per kilowatt-hour. While ensuring sustainable energy development in the country, we must closely cooperate with emerging economies and the world at large and strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation and dialogue to ensure secure, sustainable development of regional and global energy cooperation.

... we estimate that China’s external oil and natural gas dependency ratios will respectively be 60 percent and 41 percent in 2020. This will be the energy security situation facing the well-off society and we will need to cautiously handle and address the issue of safeguarding the stability and security of external oil and natural gas supply.

...we must be aware that the degree of public concern over environmental problems brought about by energy consumption is rising with each passing day and public understanding and knowledge of nuclear power, shale gas exploitation, and some other energy and chemical projects are limited. ... We think the well-off society in 2020 would be unstable, incomprehensive, and unwise without the support of effective public policy on energy.

(continued)

Continued: Energy and Environmental Projections through 2020 in China

energy, will drop. Next, the supply of energy in 2020 will be lower. Third, carbon emissions will be close to 48 percent lower in 2020 than in 2005.

*According to the author, the most serious energy security challenge facing society is China's growing dependence on energy imports, which will continue to rise through 2020. He concludes that, without the support of effective public policy on energy, in 2020 "the well-off society will be unstable, incomprehensive, and unwise." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

“The PLA and the Chinese People’s Armed Police Force (APF) have carried out more than 200 actual troop exercises with their scales at division and brigade levels or above in 2014. These exercises with actual weapons and equipment instead of drama-like performances were very close to actual combats, allowing the exercises to come back to their original goals of upgrading combat power.”

OE Watch Commentary: During 2014 Chinese President Xi Jinping’s goal of establishing a military “China Dream” moved closer to reality. This dream is to create a truly strong military machine for the nation, one based on new information technology that utilizes system-of-system integration.

One way that Xi has helped this cause is to root out corruption in the military, which bled off millions of RMB (China’s official currency) for personal gain. Several top leaders of logistics and of the Central Military Commission have been arrested and charged with milking the military for huge sums of money they did not deserve. As a result Xi and the remaining military leadership have been able to divert cash flows toward the accelerated development of weapons technology.

An increase in military transparency was also noted. The report discussed military diplomacy, the control of sea disputes, efforts to provide for public safety, rooting out of corruption, developing an honest PLA audit system, and descriptions of numerous exercises designed to upgrade the PLA’s combat power.

It is this latter issue that is highlighted in the excerpts below. Of note is that these exercises are now more realistic than in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: “Hong Kong Media: PLA Made Great Changes in 2014,” Jiefangjun Bao Online (in English), 30 December 2014.

An open-sea training taskforce consisting of warships of the PLAN departed from Zhanjiang of south China’s Guangdong province and Sanya of south China’s Hainan province in January 2014 to carry out a joint drill on the penetration of an enemy’s blockade in cooperation with the submarine troop units of the PLAN in the South China Sea, opening the curtain of the new year’s regular combat readiness patrol and open-sea training of the PLAN.

Seven “Red Armies” from seven military area commands (MAC) of the PLA respectively carried out free confrontation drills at the Zhurihe training base against the PLA’s first professional “Blue Army” from May 20 to July 28, 2014. The results showed that the “Red Armies” lost six confrontation drills and won only one, breaking the common thinking of victory for the “Red Army” and failure for the “Blue Army.”

Since May of 2014, the PLA’s seven joint actual-troop exercises codenamed “Joint Operation 2014” were successively carried out in multiple regions and sea areas. These were the PLA’s series of joint actual-troop exercises with the largest scale, largest number of participating troops, most levels of participating troop units, most complete participating factors, longest exercising period, highest organizing difficulty, and most complicated drill subjects since the beginning of the new century. The fierce degree of the confrontation was very rare.

The latest air-combat confrontation examination among fighter-aviation troop units of the PLAAF was held in the desert in northwest China in early September of 2014. During the super-intensity air-combat confrontation examination, the largest in scale in the history of the PLAAF, nearly 100 third-generation fighters with randomly-selected pilots were dispatched as rivals for the air-combat confrontation.

“The detained citizens of Uzbekistan left for military training in Pakistan in 2013 and then returned to Uzbekistan in 2014 to attract young people into the ranks of the Islamic State.”

OE Watch Commentary: Throughout the more mountainous areas of Central Asia extremely low temperatures and heavy snowfall significantly hinder human mobility. As these areas (for example, the Fergana Valley) thaw in the spring months, the volume of migration throughout the area increases. In the 1990s terrorist organizations such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) used these fair conditions to resume their activities in the Fergana Valley, such as taking hostages and ambushing security detachments. As spring draws nearer, Uzbekistan’s security services fear a return of terrorist attacks in the area.

The IMU was reported to have received considerable external funding to support its operations throughout the Fergana Valley area in the 90s. As discovered from a recent interrogation of suspected IMU members, security services of Uzbekistan believe that the organization is currently receiving funds from the Islamic State. Uzbek security services suspect that many fighters among the ranks of the IMU received their training in Pakistan and are likely to attempt to return to the Fergana Valley region.

The accompanying article claims that Uzbekistan’s national security service is convinced that the Islamic State is funding and supporting the IMU in order to destabilize the region. Despite the pervasive presence of official border guards in the area, organizations like the IMU proved themselves capable of quickly crossing the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan in the 1990s and 2000s. Uzbekistan’s security services anticipate the migration of recently trained jihadists from Pakistan into the Fergana Valley area, as well as further recruitment of Central Asian youths to their cause. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)**

Source: “Служба безопасности: ИГ планировала весной теракты в Узбекистане” (Security service: IS planned spring terror attacks in Uzbekistan), RIA Novosti, 3 February 2015. <http://ria.ru/world/20150203/1045616965.html>

Uzbekistan Anticipates Terror Attacks in Spring 2015

In January, the Islamic State was reported to have donated over \$70 million to jihadist groups determined to destabilize the Fergana Valley area, particularly to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

According to analyst Alisher Khamdamov of Uzbekistan’s National Security Service: “Members of IS have prepared for a series of terrorist attacks in spring 2015 on the territory of Uzbekistan, therefore we are especially strengthening measures for protection of the borders.”

Khamdamova stated further that this information was acquired after the interrogation of members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan who had participated in training in Pakistan in 2013, returning to Uzbekistan in 2014 in order to recruit young people for the terrorist organization.

Preventing Return: Tajikistan Grapples with Returning Jihadists

“The general prosecutor reported that, under his direction in the coming days, a headquarters for the identification of recruits and migrants from Tajikistan to hot points of the world will be established.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has expanded its scope of activity in the Middle East, it has also sought to recruit jihadists from Central Asia and to import them from the region (e.g., the Kulyab Province of Tajikistan) to the combat zones. ISIS boasts that it has thousands of Central Asian jihadists among its ranks. These fighters pose a threat not only to security and stability of the Middle East, but also to their republics of origin.*

The prevailing discourse among Central Asian security officials is that they are concerned about the possibility of fighters returning from these “hot spots” and committing acts of violence within the borders of their homelands. As a result, Central Asian security services are seeking ways to limit the mobility of these recently recruited jihadists and to identify their recruiters. The accompanying article illustrates the recent announcement made by Prosecutor General of Tajikistan Yusuf Rakhmanov, in which he stated that Tajik foreign fighters in Syria will be investigated and prosecuted.

Tajik officials are evidently concerned with the recent influx of Tajik fighters into the Middle Eastern conflict zones. By identifying recently recruited jihadists and opening criminal cases against them, Tajik security forces are taking steps to develop an increased capacity to prevent their return and execution of violence on their own soil. The response is timely, considering the fact that Tajik fighters in ISIS have recently made threats of violence to journalists and others in Tajikistan. Security officials in Tajikistan are not taking these threats lightly.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rose)

Source: “Генпрокурор намерен выявить, кто вербует таджиков на войну в Сирию” [The general prosecutor intends to identify who is recruiting Tajiks to the war in Syria], ASIA-Plus, 30 January 2015. <http://news.tj/ru/news/genprokuror-nameren-vyyavit-kto-verbuet-tadzhikov-na-voinu-v-siriyu>

The General Prosecutor Intends to Identify Who Is Recruiting Tajiks to the War in Syria

The General Prosecutor of Tajikistan Yusuf Rakhmonov recently announced that he is pursuing the criminal prosecution in-absentia of 41 out of 85 Tajik citizens suspected of fighting in Iraq and Syria.

The general prosecutor plans to establish a headquarters for investigating the recruitment and importation of Tajiks by members of the Islamic State. “We recall that the Ministry of Internal Affairs recently reported that currently over 200 Tajik citizens are fighting on the side of the Islamic State.”

Yusuf Rakhmonov declined to release any further details. Rakhmonov was appointed to the office of general prosecutor on January 24, 2015, following the departure of his predecessor Sherkan Salimzod.

“Uzbekistan became the first buyer of the Chinese HQ-9 air defense system. Turkmenistan has followed us and made a purchase, but their contract is smaller”

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese interests in Central Asia over the years have been largely economic, with some security aspects, and, as the accompanying article shows, there is a new development in China's involvement with the region. The article comes from a source in Uzbekistan and discusses China's sale of the export version of their HQ-9 anti-aircraft missile system to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. According to a few other sources, the deal may have taken place around a year ago, but was only announced recently. While the missile system would bolster the air defense systems of both countries, it is difficult to see how this upgrade will combat an extremist group with no air assets, which is something that the government of Uzbekistan in particular has stated is one of its main threats to security.

The author offers a couple of explanations on why the missile system is necessary. While it might be a stretch to claim that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan could obtain aircraft to attack Uzbekistan because of its relations with the Islamic State, the missile system gives the country's military an overall technological upgrade. The trump card he mentions could be for dealing with the difficult, and at times tense relationship Uzbekistan has had with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, though neither country has any significant air assets that threaten Uzbekistan. There was a reported violation of Uzbek airspace by a Kyrgyz unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) last year, but this missile system is above and beyond what would be needed to deal with the small UAV that Kyrgyzstan reportedly used or even has in its inventory. This upgrade could put Uzbekistan's air defense on a level closer to that of Kazakhstan, which uses the Russian S-300, the rough equivalent of the Chinese HQ-9.

One other point the author brings up is how this purchase will affect Uzbekistan's status in the Joint Air Defense System of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which over the past few years has been unclear. The author notes that the Uzbek government suspended its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization, but that this is separate from the CIS Air Defense System. Also, the Uzbek government does not participate in joint exercises of the CIS air defense system, but continues to coordinate with the CIS as a whole, uses Russian made air defense systems, and has maintained a bilateral security relationship with Russia. Turkmenistan only participates with the CIS as an associate member and not at all with the organization's air defense system.

Ultimately, the purchase of this Chinese missile system by Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is significant and might be seen as a move to rely less on Russian systems, but it remains to be seen how it will combat some of their more immediate threats.

End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

Source: Chernogayev, Yuri. “Оружие ‘made in China’” (Weapons «made in China»), Anhor, 3 February 2015. <http://www.anhor.uz/columnists/oruzhie-made-in-china>

Weapons «made in China»

This past week was, as always, rich in news. Although, there was one event which significantly changed the military-political situation in the region...the supply of the HQ-9 Chinese missile defense system to Uzbekistan...the Chinese anti-aircraft system HQ-9 is almost the same as the Russian S-300, with minor modifications. As usual, the Chinese bought the Russian S-300 in 1993 and a few years later the Chinese Academy of Defense Technology announced the creation of the new air defense system...

...Uzbekistan became the first buyer of the Chinese HQ-9 air defense system. Turkmenistan has followed us and made a purchase, but their contract is smaller...Our army now has a trump card. In northern Afghanistan and in the Helmand Province are bases of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which does not hide its connection with the IS. And the IS already has its own aircraft – three MiG-21s and pilots...15 years ago Uzbekistan did not exclude preemptive strikes on the bases of the militants...

...The Chinese missile system must now be integrated into the Commonwealth of Independent States Joint Air Defense System...When Uzbekistan suspended its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization we did not think about an individual air defense system...

“...a foreign citizen who performs military service in the Russian Armed Forces (of no less than 3 years) and is a citizen of a former Soviet republic, has the right to receive a Russian passport”

OE Watch Commentary: A recent law passed in Russia which allows foreigners to serve in the Russian Armed Forces is significant for the countries of Central Asia, especially Tajikistan. The accompanying article from a Tajik source is mostly supportive of the new law and the opportunities that it might afford young Tajik men, but there are a couple of things mentioned that might have an impact for Tajikistan and the other countries in the region over the long term. According to the article, Tajiks are interested in joining the Russian Armed Forces, and while the 1.5 million Tajiks working in Russia mentioned in the article might be a high estimate at any given time during the year (low estimates are still at a few hundred thousand), it is certainly possible that several hundred or even a couple thousand Tajiks might enlist. This is in addition to any migrant laborers from Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan who also work in Russia. The salary offered as a contract service member might be a better option than that of a laborer, but with some personnel issues still present in the Russian Armed Forces, it is worth considering how much of a priority this unit (or potentially units) would have for things like equipment, training, or benefits with senior Russian leaders.

The article brings up some concerns, one of which is how members of the unit could be used in armed conflicts outside of Russia. There had been a law in Tajikistan which made participating in any armed conflict outside the country illegal, but this was recently changed to include only participation with an illegally armed group, like in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan.

Another concern is how this new law could contribute to a number of Tajiks permanently moving to Russia. It does not appear that Tajiks could avoid conscription in their own country by instead enlisting in the Russian Armed Forces; one the comments by a retired Tajik general implies that the contractor positions in Russia are for those who have been demobilized. Outside of the potential brain drain this could cause, this could affect the Tajik or Central Asian Armed Forces on any effort to develop or maintain a senior NCO corps. Lastly, one of the other comments by the retired general is critical of the Tajik military and mentions how there are no benefits for military service in Tajikistan. It would be worth watching to see if the government of Tajikistan (or other governments in the region) reacts to this new Russian law by increasing funding for salaries and benefits for their service members. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Gaysina, Liliya. “Служу БЫВШЕМУ СОВЕТСКОМУ СОЮЗУ” (I serve in the former Soviet Union), Asia-Plus, 19 January 2015. <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/sluzhu-byvshemu-sovetskomu-soyuzu>

I Serve the Former Soviet Union

In early January the President of Russia approved amendments to the “Regulations on military service” that will allow foreign citizens to enter into contract service in the Russian Army. It is expected that the bulk of the foreign “Legionnaires” will be Central Asians...contractors can be citizens of any country, a Russian speaker, and not a criminal. Foreigners will be able to serve in NCO positions, but not in units of the Interior Ministry, the FSB or other special forces. The first contract is signed for a period of five years and the recruit must be between 18 and 30...

...a foreign citizen who performs military service in the Russian Armed Forces (of no less than 3 years) and is a citizen of a former Soviet republic, has the right to receive a Russian passport...Putin’s decree was well received in Tajik society...“According to different sources, there are around 1.5 million of our citizens working in Russia, and in most cases, service in the Russian Army is a good alternative to migrant work.” – said retired General A. Habibov...Habibov has said that every year there are 15 thousand demobilized soldiers in Tajikistan, but there are no benefits to completing military service...

...Tajik political scientist Amniyat Abdunazarov focuses on the fact that the “Legionnaires” would be mostly used in armed conflict outside Russia...“...the best of our young men will go into the Russian Army and are unlikely to refuse Russian citizenship, which means that at the completion of their service, they will remain in Russia.” – said Abdunazarov.

“As for the nationality of the boy in the video, it is clear he is Kazakh, but not a native born citizen of Kazakhstan.”

OE Watch Commentary: A video released by the Islamic State (IS) last November caused alarm in Central Asia, and in Kazakhstan in particular, for showing a Kazakh child training with an assault rifle and pledging to slaughter enemies of the IS. The accompanying article examines another video released by the IS that showed an apparent execution of two men who the IS claimed were Russian spies.

There are a few things about the latest video, some of which are brought up in the article, that are worth noting. First, the article features a photograph of the video with the two alleged Russian spies kneeling in front of a Kazakh boy holding a pistol and standing with an unidentified member of the IS (interestingly, the author of this article believes that, while the boy is an ethnic Kazakh, he is “not a native born citizen of Kazakhstan,” possibly from China’s Xinjiang Province). The previous video caused a stir and was quickly blocked in Kazakhstan for showing images that the government regarded as illegal (for spreading extremist ideas). This video swept through social media in Kazakhstan before becoming unavailable through service providers in the country, and it is surprising that this article even published an image of the boy and the two men. The boy is thought to be the same one who was featured in the video from November, though there is no footage in this recent video showing the actual executions.

There have been a few confirmed cases of Kazakh citizens in the IS, but it is reported that they were radicalized outside of the country. Also, except for a few incidents of violence in 2011 and 2012, which were tied to acts of revenge, Kazakhstan is not known for being a country where extremist ideology has taken hold. Lastly, a recent poll in a newspaper in Kazakhstan revealed that more than half of the people do not want the government to contribute funding or any effort to combat the IS. The poll also included comments from people who view the IS as a threat for Kazakhstan, but more of a distant one. Overall, it appears from this article that the most recent video has caused concern in Kazakhstan, particularly with the government, but there is some skepticism among the people about what ties the IS actually has with their country. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Ivanov, Vladimir. “Сделано для Казахстана (Made for Kazakhstan),” Delovaya Nedelya, 19 January 2015. http://www.dn.kz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2521:2015-01-19-05-33-45&catid=3:2011-10-23-11-44-20&Itemid=13

Made for Kazakhstan

A new video from the Islamic State (IS) of an interrogation and shooting of two people from our country who were declared FSB agents started to spread through WhatsApp and social networks in Kazakhstan a few days ago. By the middle of the week, the video became mostly unavailable through Kazakh providers...in contrast to many of the other productions of the “al-Hayat” studio, the video is made almost entirely in Russian...The main character of the video, a skinny 12-13 year old boy, performs as the executioner of the “FSB agents”... at the end of this video is his interview from the previous video, with no translation in Russian, which again shows a specific orientation on a bilingual Kazakh audience...

...In a short interview the two people give their names (Zhanbolat Mamaev and Sergei Ashimov) and say that they are agents of the Federal Security Service of Russia...experts have suggested that the video might be fictional, but nonetheless note that Ashimov showed signs of torture and beatings...our intelligence service notes the lack of communication of the men in the video with citizens of Kazakhstan...

...As for the nationality of the boy in the video, it is clear he is Kazakh, but not a native born citizen of Kazakhstan. According to French journalists there has been an influential faction in the IS of “Chinese” who are in fact Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang (Province)...



“Groups like Jamaat Sabiri (pictured) fighting in Syria reportedly include members from Central Asia (largely Uzbeks and Tajiks), though exact numbers of people from the region is unknown.”
Source: <http://www.chechensyria.com/?p=21915>

Switzerland 2015: Obligatory Emergency Provisions for Each Household Could Be Reintroduced

17 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Recently, Swiss Sunday Newspaper reported on the conclusions drawn from a Swiss federal security exercise carried out in November 2014 – the first in 17 years - by the Swiss federal government, the cantons (equivalent to states), major cities such as Zurich, Winterthur, Lausanne and Lucerne, the operators of critical infrastructure and the military. Given that Switzerland is located in the heart of central Europe, some of the conclusions reached and concerns of the small and neutral country are quite interesting.

The exercise with the federal minister of the interior as the crisis manager, as well as the participation of two members of the Swiss federal council, Ueli Maurer and Simonetta Sommaruga, foresaw a scenario with two national crises:

- a cyberattack on the electricity industry would cause an electrical power outage for 48 hours and, subsequently, shortages would occur for twelve weeks: only 70 percent of the required electricity would be available.
- in parallel, a flu pandemic would infect two million Swiss people (of a total population of approximately 8.2 million) causing 40,000 hospitalizations and 8,000 deaths.

The main finding derived from the exercise was that while Switzerland would be able to handle an epidemic, many have massively underestimated the impact of a prolonged power shortage. Toni Frisch, the project manager of the exercise, has reached three conclusions:

- the central concern pertains to the provision of essential goods, the majority of which are delivered to retail businesses “just in time” today. Within two days, most wholesale and retail businesses would run out of stock and frozen storage would unthaw within 4-5 hours. Therefore, Mr. Frisch recommends that “2.5 million Swiss households should store 10 kilograms of emergency stockpiles as it was done in the past”;
- the underestimated danger of claims for compensation by neighboring countries due to polluted water should be investigated more thoroughly. In case of a prolonged power shortage, sewage treatment plants without emergency power supply would stop functioning within five hours causing sewage water to contaminate rivers such as the Rhine. Since Switzerland delivers water everywhere, claims for compensations due to contaminated water could pose a massive problem;
- the population must be guaranteed that it will be kept informed, but there is a question as to whether all sirens would continue to function in case of a prolonged electricity outage. Perhaps, therefore, time-proven methods such as flyers and placards should be considered.

In response to the recommendations, 20 Minutes, a widely read news online portal and daily newsletter, calculated how heavy and expensive the emergency provisions would be for a four-member household: more than 100 kilograms and 288.75 Swiss Francs (approximately 310 USD). **End OE Watch Commentary (Chadwick)**

Source: “Notvorräte sollen schon bald wieder zur Pflicht werden,” Schweiz am Sonntag, 24 January 2015: http://www.schweizamsonntag.ch/ressort/nachrichten/notvorraete_sollen_schon_bald_wieder_zur_pflicht_werden/

“Rice, salt, crisp bread, water – and a flash light: Crisis prevention for each household”

“The main concern is to sensitize the people, to sharpen awareness for such a situation, in order to prevent panic buying.

Emergency Provisions for Four People

Product	Quantity	Price (Swiss Francs)
Water	36 l	13.20
Tea	200 g	1.80
Coffee	300 g	5.85
Sugar	8 kg	8.80
Oil	8 l	23.06
Rice	2 kg	2.30
Flour	2 kg	1.80
Pods	2.55 kg	4.50
Canned meat	2.72 kg	36
Canned fish	2.48 kg	30.4
Canned vegetables	4.25 kg	8.50
Canned fruit	4.125 kg	4.75
Pickled vegetables	3.2 kg	6.00
Bouillon	120 g	3.00
Biscuits	1 kg	6.80
Salt	2 kg	1.90
Pepper	460 g	9.60
Nuts	1 kg	16.00
Dried fruit	1 kg	8.25
Vinegar	1 l	0.70
Chocolate	800 g	3.90
Honey	800 g	3.00
Rusk (Zwieback)	1.04 kg	12.80
Condensed milk	600 g	5.70
Milk	4 l	5.20
Flash light	1 piece	19.90
Batteries	4 packs	31.60
Matches	5 boxes	2.50
Soap	600 g	1.80
Toilet paper	12 rolls	6.20
Bandages	24 pieces	2.40

100 grams (g) = 3.53 oz. or 0.22 lb.; 1 kilogram (kg) = 2.2 lb.; 1 liter (l) = 0.265 US gal.

Ukrainians Improvise and Innovate Medical Care on the Battlefield

11 February 2015

“A year ago there wasn’t even a name for tactical medicine in Ukraine. Today, the field of tactical medicine in Ukraine is evolving and standards are being upgraded thanks to volunteers and organizations such as Patriot Defence.”

- Dr. Oleksandr Linchevsky, a thoracic surgeon at the 17th Hospital of Kyiv

OE Watch Commentary: *Volunteerism and innovation have played a major support role in Ukraine from the EuroMaidan Revolution through the current conflict. As the revolution morphed into all-out war in eastern Ukraine, grassroots techniques have sustained Ukraine’s efforts against the rebels.*

Now, the self-starter mentality has expanded into the medical realm, since anyone in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions can suddenly find himself needed as a combat medic. The first article describes a medical student turned combat medic instructor teaching Ukrainians emergency medical care wherever they can assemble for classes. The second article regards a Ukrainian game developer who has created a combat medic app for use by anyone with a cell phone in Ukraine’s war-torn east.

*As the new Ukrainian government continues to establish and reinvent itself, grassroots efforts can only be expected to expand and supplement the fight against the rebels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)***

Source: Kyiv Post, 11 February 2015, “Teaching Ukraine’s Soldiers How to Save Themselves, and Each Other, in war,” Alexandra Stadnyk <https://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/teaching-ukraines-soldiers-how-to-save-themselves-and-each-other-in-war-380327.html>

As Russian-launched rockets hit a market in Mariupol on January 24, killing 30 civilians and wounding more than 100 others, Viktoria Kovach rushed to tend to the injured, risking her own life. Kovach, a volunteer combat medic, left medical school to embed with Ukraine’s Azov Battalion as their chief combat medic.

For the last six months, she has tended to their bullet and shrapnel wounds, going wherever they went. “Combat medics are not immune to the brutality of war, but I will do whatever it takes to take care of the boys who are fighting for a free Ukraine,” she says. Kovach, who was trained as a combat medic by Patriot Defence, an initiative that has introduced tactical medicine education to service personnel and combat medics, threw herself into action and treated the injured amid the rubble where the marketplace once stood. “People were scattered throughout the area, covered in blood and in shock from the trauma of the artillery shelling, disoriented and panic stricken. I didn’t expect to see so many people dead,” said Kovach, who was at the battalion’s base just outside the port city on the Sea of Azov.

Combat medics, who have been formally trained in tactical medicine, or combat medicine, in Ukraine, have played a key role in treating soldiers on the battlefield as well as civilians caught in the cross hairs of the conflict that has claimed more than 5,000 lives, according to the Ukrainian government, which has been accused of under-reporting the casualties. Tactical medicine includes instruction on how to perform first aid care under fire and how to care and treat battle-specific injuries, such as gunshot and shrapnel wounds from explosive devices. It greatly differs from civilian medicine, requiring knowledge of how to work in extreme weather, in darkness and without supplies.

Source: Kyiv Post, “Mobile Apps to Help with First Aid Instructions at War Front,” 6 February 2015, Bozhena Sheremeta <https://www.kyivpost.com/content/business/first-aid-379696.html>

Mobile apps to help with first aid instructions at war front

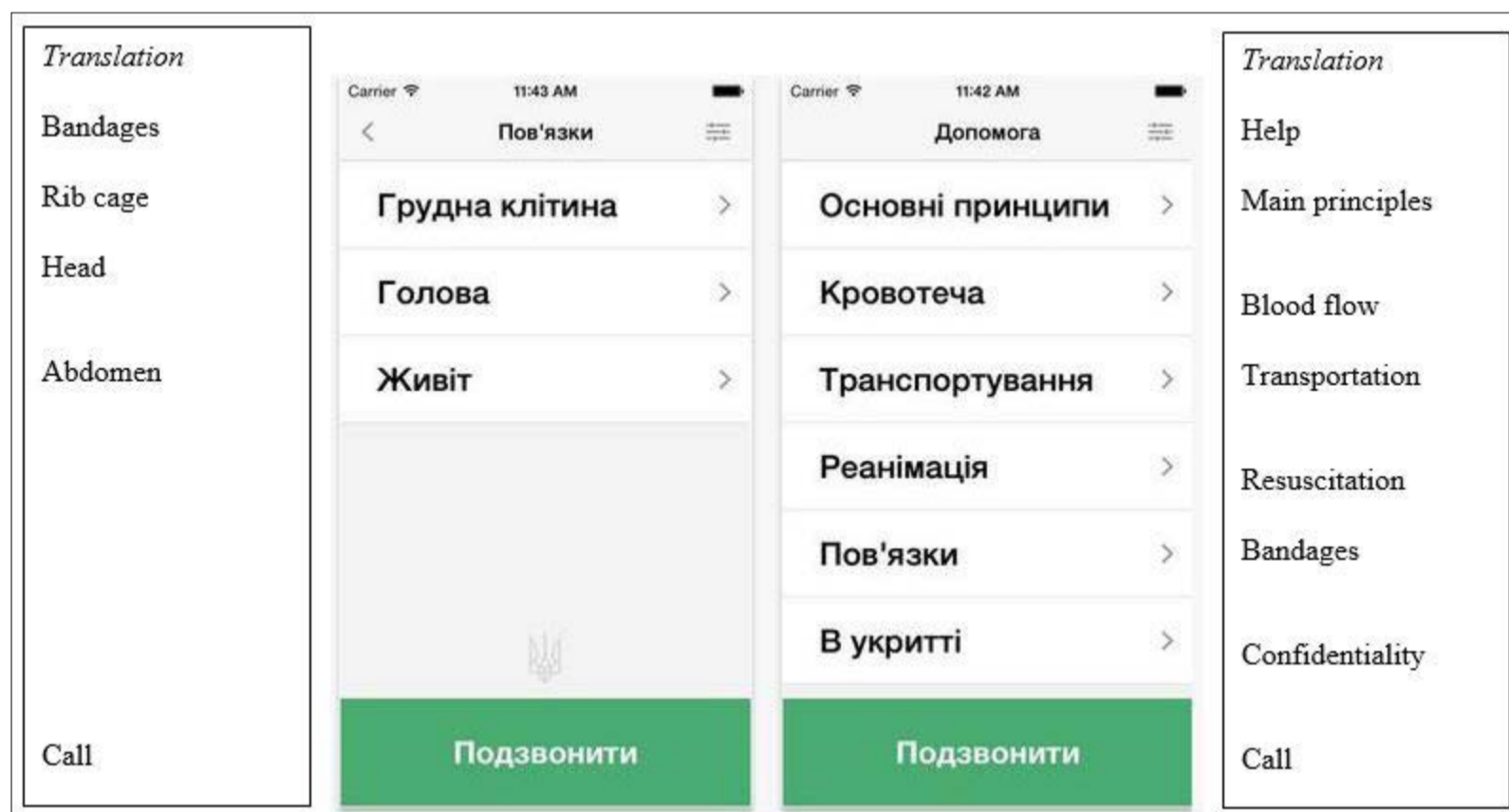
Here’s a timely innovation for Ukraine at war: applications that help people facing life-threatening injuries. Win Interactive, a Ukrainian game developer, created a mobile application that provides first medical aid instructions - Domedychna dopomoha (pre-medical aid). It can be downloaded for free on iTunes and Google Play. The app has six tabs that provide brief explanations on how to correctly transport wounded persons, stop bleeding, apply bandages, and restart a heartbeat and other first aid instructions. The application offers

(continued)

Continued: Ukrainians Improvise and Innovate Medical Care on the Battlefield

guidance both in Russian and Ukrainian. It is also possible to call emergency help right from the app.

Win Interactive's mobile app provides instructions for those wounded during the Donbas war. © iTunes. The instructions have been initially taken from a first medical aid guide issued by the Health Ministry. "We understand that in difficult circumstances, not everyone will be able to examine all tabs in the app," says Win Interactive's Olha Kavunenko. "Besides the military men are often restricted from using mobile phones on the field. But in the evening you can read and understand the basic principles of applying bandages, transporting the wounded." "In a case of emergency a person will know which section to open fast and provide pre-medical aid to a person nearby. Most importantly, this information is with you as long as your phone is in the pocket," she adds. Ukraine is most definitely in difficult circumstances, trying to defend itself against a Russian-led invasion that has killed more than 5,000 people in the last year and led to Ukraine's loss of the Crimean peninsula. Earlier Kyivstar, a major telecom company, launched a free app called First Mobile Aid. All information there is in English only.



Screen capture from smart phone application.

Source: <https://www.kyivpost.com/content/business/first-aid-379696.html>

Rocket Attacks Deep Within Ukraine-held Territory on Eve of Minsk Talks

11 February 2015

“It seems that on the eve of the Minsk meeting, the war party does not intend to surrender,”

- Rossiya 1 Correspondent Aleksey Petrov

OE Watch Commentary: *On the eve of scheduled talks in Minsk, Belarus, the town of Kramatorsk came under heavy rocket attack. According to local officials the attacks killed at least 7 civilians, while 26 civilians and 10 soldiers were wounded. The talks involved Ukrainian President Poroshenko, Russian President Putin, German Chancellor Merkel, Belarusian President Lukashenko, and French President Hollande and were aimed at establishing a peaceful resolution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.*

The town center of Kramatorsk, about 50 km from the front lines of the conflict, came under rocket attack on 10-11 February. The weapons used appear to be the Russian-made Smerch rocket, which has an effective range of 70 km, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense. At least four of the rockets failed to detonate but the areas struck were the Palace of Culture, Secondary School #8, the Traumatology Department of the city hospital, and a 9-story residential building. The apparent misfires signify either malfunctioning hardware or operator failure in adjusting the Smerch's fuse.

*The two articles here describe varied accounts of the event, as well as its purpose. One article notes that the attack, which was approximately 50 km from rebel-held Horlivka, was likely targeting a Ukrainian military headquarters. The contradicting article, from a Russian news source, portrays the entire event as a PR attempt to raise sympathies for Ukraine prior to the talks in Minsk. This is perhaps the best example yet of how every military act or event in the conflict is an information operation in itself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)***

Source: Rossiya 1 Television in Russian, Moscow 1400 GMT 11 February 2015

Russian TV Says Ukraine Staged Missile Attack to Get “Trump Card” at Minsk Talks

Russia's official state television channel Rossiya 1 suggested on 11 February that Ukrainian forces had carried out the previous day's deadly artillery attack on Kramatorsk, a town in Donetsk Region they control, in order to cause the West to harden its negotiating stance at the peace talks in Minsk.

At least 16 people are reported to have been killed and many more, including children, were wounded in the attack.

- Missile allegedly fired from Ukrainian-controlled area

Correspondent Aleksey Petrov's report began with footage of a missile wedged in a crater, with Petrov commenting that “rescue teams were in no hurry” to remove it. A local man said that, instead of emergency services, “correspondents - Americans, Britons and the rest” immediately arrived at the scene.

Petrov then said: “According to Kramatorsk residents, the city was shelled from an area near the Karachun mountain. It is located near Slovyansk in an area fully controlled by the Ukrainian army, far away from the frontline.”

He continued over a map of the area showing a graphic of a missile launcher to the north of Kramatorsk: “Looking at the map, it is clear why the militiamen reject all the accusations outright.”

One of the Moscow-backed rebel leaders, Eduard Basurin, was then shown describing the attack as a “provocation” deliberately staged ahead of the Minsk talks.

Popov commented that residential areas had been deliberately chosen as targets in order to “maximize the number of civilian casualties”.

An “eyewitness”, her face pixelated out, confirmed to Petrov that the city had been shelled from the Karachun area. Petrov explained to viewers why his interviewee's face was obscured: “The Kramatorsk resident is afraid that if her face is shown on air, a criminal case may be launched against her. A draft bill envisaging liability for the public denial or justification of Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014-15 has been sent to the Supreme Council.”

Transdniestria: The Next Donbas?

30 January 2015

“We believe European integration is alien to the Moldovan people, and we don’t need the values that they are trying to impose on us,” - Igor Dodon, the chairman of the Party of Socialists of Moldova (PSRM)”

OE Watch Commentary: *The idea of frozen conflicts in the Black Sea region has become a growing concern for Moldova, as well as NATO members. Recent articles and commentary have noted the comparison between the conflict in Ukraine and the growing threat within Moldova’s breakaway region of Transdniestria. Both Moldovan and Russian leadership have made recent remarks regarding the pro-Russian/Anti-Moldovan sentiment in Transdniestria and Moldova. The notion of an uprising coincides with Moldova’s recent failure to elect a parliament.*

Regarding the Ukrainian conflict, UAVs have been reported crossing into Ukraine from Transdniestria since July 2014. On 12 February three such incidents occurred on Ukraine’s western border, far from the bulk of its military and border guard concentration. Three suspected terrorists who, according to the Ukrainian Border Guard Service, originated from Transdniestria were apprehended in Odessa. The articles here originate in Moscow, the first of which is from Moldova’s Socialist Party, which promotes Moldovan federalization. The second is from a Russian deputy foreign minister, who prescribes an autonomous Transdniestria very much like the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine.

*The “frozen” conflicts are nothing new: Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia were essentially annexed by Russia in 2008. Aside from Ukraine, future conflicts could be seen in Transdniestria, Central Asia and anywhere else that has a portion of its population that affiliates itself with Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Harvey)***

Source: Moldovan people mostly against European integration - Party of Socialists leader, Interfax, 30 January 2015.

Igor Dodon, the chairman of the Party of Socialists of Moldova (PSRM), says the party is determined to cooperate with Russian parliamentarians and pursue a course toward Moldova’s federalization rather than European integration.

“We believe European integration is alien to the Moldovan people, and we don’t need the values that they are trying to impose on us,” Dodon said at a meeting w a delegation of his party with Russian State Duma Chairman Sergei Naryshkin in Moscow on Thursday.

Dodon thanked the Duma for support in the recent elections in Moldova, in which the Party of Socialists had garnered more than 20% of the vote...

...Dodon said he was sure most of Moldovans are against European integration, which can be seen in the results of the early parliamentary elections. Talking about the problem of Transdniestria, Dodon suggested that it could be solved through Moldova’s federalization, where “Transdniestria would have clear and unambiguous status as a federation member.” “Federation member status should also be offered to our friends from Gagauzia, so that Moldova becomes a strong sovereign state,” he said.

Source: Moscow hopes Transdniestria settlement talks will resume soon, Interfax , 23 January 2015.

Moscow is hopeful that progress could be made in the 5+2 negotiations looking for a political solution to the Transdniestrian conflict, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin said in the State Duma. “We hope that the 5+2 format will be revived soon. There has been a brief pause in the work of our representatives, but today prospects have emerged for achieving progress in securing mutual understanding between Transdniestria and Chisinau,” he said. “In this situation, a great deal will depend not on Transdniestria, but on the course of the political processes in the Republic of Moldova,” Karasin said. “In our opinion, Transdniestria, which is our partner, should become a special district with special guarantees and special status within the Moldovan state. This position is currently being discussed by all representatives of international organizations and partners of Moldova and Russia,” the diplomat said...

“In our opinion, Transdniestria, which is our partner, should become a special district with special guarantees and special status within the Moldovan state...”

- Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin

OE Watch Commentary: *Germany has become a highly popular destination for Balkan immigrants seeking a better life. Among the influx of immigrants, in January Germany saw 73% more asylum applications than in December 2014, and 2014 saw the fourth highest number of asylum applicants since Germany's conception.*

As many German pundits claim, these high numbers of asylum seekers not only strain the German asylum system, but also hurt the economies of the countries losing citizens. Despite its small population, Kosovo especially poses a problem as the second largest country of origin. Its unemployment is around 35 percent, and 30 percent of the population lives in poverty; however, poverty alone is not sufficient grounds for asylum, according to the Geneva Convention.

*While a new proposed law in Germany could allow the German government to deport Balkan asylum seekers more quickly, it does not have measures to stem the tide of those seeking asylum. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)***

Source: Sarmadi, Dario, "German Government Plans to Accelerate Deportation of Kosovar Refugees," EurActive, 12 February 2015. <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/justice-home-affairs/german-government-plans-accelerate-deportation-kosovar-refugees-312036>

"Internal Affairs Minister Thomas de Maizière moved to declare Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania safe countries of origin and accelerate deportations of refugees from those countries, sparking outrage among opposition parties and refugee organisations.

If approved, a new law in Germany could make it easier for the country to deport asylum seekers from the Balkans.

Kosovo has become the second largest country of origin, after Serbia. In January, 3,630 asylum seekers came from Kosovo, almost double the number in December. . . Migrants from Kosovo are blocking the lodging capacities, "that we urgently need for actual refugee cases", said Bavarian Internal Affairs Minister Joachim Hermann. Kosovars "unnecessarily cost the state a load of money", he said."

Violence over Kosovar Mining Ownership and Ethnic Insults

29 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The ethnic divide in Kosovo between Serbians and Albanians is a prescient issue within Kosovar politics as Kosovo continues down the road toward complete independence from Serbia. Kosovo is currently recognized by 110 countries, and though Serbia is not one of them, Kosovo and Serbia are engaging in normalization talks in Brussels.*

One of the issues igniting the most recent protests is ownership of the Trepca mine complex, which is located on both sides of the Kosovar-Serbian border. As the accompanying article points out, the mine is technically owned by the Kosovo Privatization Agency and Kosovo's parliament moved to nationalize the mine, but backed down under pressure from Serbia, which claims it owns part of the mine.

*In addition, the article contends that one of the ethnically Serbian members of parliament, Jablanovic, seemingly insulted Albanian war victims and his apology did not settle those he offended. Protesters called for his removal from parliament over the incident, as well as for nationalization of the Trepca mine complex. These two incidents fed the protests in Pristina, which have since calmed down, as Jablanovic was dismissed from the government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)***

Source: Collaku, Petrit, "Kosovo Opposition Calls New Protest After Clashes," Balkan Insight, 29 January 2015. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-opposition-calls-new-protest-after-clashes>

"A hundred and seventy people were injured, mostly police officers, and 120 protesters were arrested amid six hours of violent clashes on Tuesday which saw demonstrators throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at riot police, who fired rounds of tear gas and used water cannon in an attempt to quell the unrest.

The protesters were calling for the resignation of Communities and Returns Minister Aleksandar Jablanovic, who caused anger earlier this month when he called Albanians who blockaded Serb pilgrims visiting a church in the town of Gjakova/Djakovica at Orthodox Christmas "savages".

They were also demanding that the huge Trepca mine complex, the subject of dispute between Pristina and Belgrade, be taken under Kosovo state control.

. . . Government and opposition have blamed each other for the clashes. Kosovo's Prime Minister Isa Mustafa and his deputy, Hashim Thaci, alleged that the opposition parties who organised the protest were trying to seize power.

But the Vetevendosje, which called the rally alongside other opposition parties, insisted that the protest was peaceful until police intervened and caused the violence."

“Serbia is grateful to Russia that it has respected that and that it has always protected Serbia’s sovereignty.”

OE Watch Commentary: This article regarding Vladimir Putin’s visit to Serbia demonstrates the complexity of the Russian-Serbian relationship. Serbia is still on track to join the European Union and does not pretend to vacillate for politics’ sake, despite having one of the closest relationships with Russia of all the Balkan nations.

Serbia refuses to implement sanctions on Russia in response to Russia’s conflict with Ukraine, and instead has enjoyed multiple economic agreements with Russia, including the latter’s newly announced imports of Serbian Fiats and cheese. Russia refuses to recognize

Kosovo’s independence, which Serbia views as support for Serbian sovereignty (although Serbia and Kosovo are inching their way toward normalizing relations, the former’s refusal to recognize the latter as an independent state is not only an ongoing source of tension, but also a significant obstacle in Serbia’s bid for European Union membership).

Serbia and Russia also continue to work on their South Stream pipeline agreement, which will pipe oil to Eastern Europe without traveling through Ukraine. In the article, Putin again noted Russia’s capacity to reduce the amount of gas available, as they did to Ukraine in 2008.

The many celebrations marking Putin’s visit to Serbia, including Serbia’s first military parade since 1985, in which 3,000 soldiers participated, mask many of the complexities of Serbia and Russia’s evolving relationship. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)**

Source: “Vucic Thanks Putin for Russia’s Friendship to Serbia,” Balkan Insight, 16 October 2014. <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/putin-arrives-to-belgrade-s-lavishing-military-parade>

“At a joint press conference with Putin, Vucic said he had ‘good news for the people of Serbia’ because Putin had agreed that Fiat cars produced in Serbia could be exported to Russia. Russia had also agreed to allow imports of Serbian cheese.

‘Serbia is on its way to the EU and it is not abandoning that path,’ Vucic said. ‘Serbia is grateful to Russia that it has respected that and that it has always protected Serbia’s sovereignty.’”

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia has been experimenting with a common tracked chassis for tanks, armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, and other tracked vehicles standard in the Russian Ground Forces MTO&E. The first fruits of this venture are scheduled to be delivered to the Russian Ground Forces in February or March, as the accompanying articles discuss. If the "Armata" chassis proves successful, future Russian weapons systems could well find themselves on it. Three Armata-chassied vehicles (tank, infantry fighting vehicle, recovery vehicle) will be entering military trials in the near future.*

Russia is considering the following Armata based variants:

T-14 Tank

BMP-T infantry fighting vehicle

BREM-T recovery vehicle

USM-A1 general-purpose minelaying system

2S35 Koalitsiya-S 152-mm self-propelled howitzer

BMO-2 transport vehicle for shoulder fired rocket propelled flamethrower operators

TOS BM-2 launch vehicle in system for heavy rocket propelled flame throwers

TZM-2 support vehicle in system for heavy rocket propelled flame throwers

MIM-A multipurpose engineer vehicle

MT-A armored bridge layer

UMZ-A general-purpose minelayer and obstacle clearer

SPM special firefighting vehicle

PTS-A amphibious transport vehicle

Although Russia is experimenting with a common track chassis, these systems are not being proposed for use in the Russian Airborne, as they are introducing their own new tracked armored personnel carriers and infantry fighting vehicles (BTR-MDM & BMP-4) that are not based the Armata chassis. Russia's efforts at expanding standardization apparently only extend to tracked vehicles, as it is still experimenting with a number of old and new

Source: Aleksandr Kurennoy and Aleksey Naryshkin: "Vyacheslav Khalitov, Deputy Director of the Uralvagonzavod Science and Production Corporation Open Joint-Stock Company for Specialized Technology," transcript of Arsenal radio program posted on Ekho Moskv Online, 26 January 2015, <http://m.echo.msk.ru/interview/detail.php?ID=1480668>, accessed 8 January 2015.

Vyacheslav Khalitov, Deputy Director of the Uralvagonzavod Science and Production Corporation Open Joint-Stock Company for Specialized Technology

[Naryshkin] Good evening. You are listening to "Arsenal," moderated today by Aleksandr Kurennoy and Aleksey Naryshkin. Our guest is Vyacheslav Khalitov, deputy director of Uralvagonzavod for specialized technology.

[Kurennoy] Perhaps the hottest issue for discussion that is interesting everyone is the news that emerged recently that the forces will be taking delivery soon -- in February-- of the first consignments of Armatas. Is that so? What is being supplied, and in what numbers?

[Khalitov] We are looking at a commercial consignment, and it will indeed be delivered to the forces in February-March in accordance with the contract with the Defense Ministry.

[Kurennoy] Is that a tank based on the Armata platform?

[Khalitov] We have already talked about how three models are currently being developed, based on the Armata platform: an actual tank, a fighting vehicle -- an infantry fighting vehicle -- and a heavy, armored repair vehicle. The plan is for the experimental commercial consignment to comprise a tank and a heavy I infantry fighting vehicle.

[Kurennoy] And will they enter active service right away?

[Khalitov] No, this is an experimental commercial consignment intended for test exploitation in the forces. In other words, this is a period in which the equipment is used directly by the forces while a control exploitation is carried out at the same time, then conclusions are drawn and decisions are made on modifications. That is the normal process followed in creating technological developments...

Source: "Uralvagonzavod to Deliver 20 New Tanks and Heavy Infantry Fighting Vehicles in Feb-March," 28 January 2015, <http://www.interfax.com/>, accessed 5 February 2015.

Uralvagonzavod to deliver 20 new tanks and heavy infantry fighting vehicles in Feb-March

The Uralvagonzavod corporation will deliver a test batch of tanks and heavy infantry fighting vehicles derived from a new universal combat platform. Deputy General Director Vyacheslav Khalitov has announced. "The batch contains slightly over 20 units of tanks and heavy infantry fighting vehicles," Khalitov said in an interview with Ekho

(continued)

Continued: Russia Considers Standardized Chassis for Most Tracked Vehicles

wheeled chassis designs. (The BTR-82 is the current wheeled armored personnel carrier that is being fielded in the Ground Forces and Naval Infantry.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Moskvy radio. He added that he was speaking of a test batch that will be delivered under a contract with the Defense Ministry in February-March. He said that the advanced T-14 tank, a heavy infantry vehicle and an armored evacuation vehicle are being designed on the basis of Armata...

Large-scale deliveries of the new tanks and infantry vehicles are possible in 2017-2018.

Asked about the number of vehicles derived from Armata that the Russian army could procure Khalitov said that 2,300 units could be in question. However, he did not rule out that the size of procurements may be reduced given the economic situation.

Images Courtesy Sergei Kaprov TASS News Service
Source: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/02/tank.html>

The Armata: the World's First Post-War, Third-Generation Tank
Tactical and Technical Specifications of the T-14 Tank

Main gun (2A82)	125 mm	Firing in motion	Engine
Cannon ammunition stores	45 rounds	Commander's panoramic sight	Four-cycle, X-shaped, 12-cylinder gas turbine super-charger with intermediate air cooling
Automatic loader capacity	32 rounds	Circular view cameras	Carburator System
Combat firing rate	10-12 per min	Heat sensor	
Target detection range	>5,000 m	Afganit active defense system	
Target attack range	7,000-8,000 m	Dynamic defense system	
Engine	1200-2000 hp	Fire aiming and control system	
Engine replacement	0.5 hour	Combat C2 and navigation system	
Maximum weight	48 tons	Active counter-mine defense	
Maximum speed	80-90 kph	Auxiliary power plant	
Travel reserve	>500 km		
Armor strength	>900 mm		
Crew	3 personnel		



OE Watch Commentary: *The T-14 tank, based upon Russia's new "Armata" universal chassis system, weighs approximately 50 tons, but has a chassis that supports approximately 65 tons, likely to allow for future modifications. The road wheels are reportedly based upon the T-80 tank and were used because they were significantly lighter than the T-72 wheels (120kg vs. 194 kg, resulting in an approximately one-ton savings in weight). The T-14 tank will be equipped with an adjustable suspension capable of adapting to varying relief, terrain type, and vehicle speed, resulting in increased speed while moving in columns, as well as over rugged terrain. The suspension system will also alleviate crew fatigue, while assisting the fire control system to deliver accurate fire while on the move.*

Unlike previous Soviet/Russian vehicles, crew safety (survivability) and comfort appear to be a concern. The crew is in an armored capsule that is somewhat roomy compared to other Soviet/Russian tanks. The composite multilayered passive armor protection of the T-14 tank is built with steel made by electroslag remelting and is combined with new composites to protect the T-14 against the most advanced modern weaponry. The T-14 also has the Afganit active protection complex, capable of intercepting shaped-charged grenades, antitank missiles, and subcaliber projectiles.

*The tank's main armament is the 2A82 125-mm smoothbore cannon, capable of firing high-powered munitions, including armor-piercing discarding sabot, guided missile, shaped-charge, and other types of munitions. The T-14 is equipped with the Chelyabinsk A-85-3A X-diesel engine capable of producing up to 1500 hp. It also has a tank information control system (TICS) that monitors all assemblies and components, diagnoses malfunctions, and controls onboard systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, "The Tank Maintains a Circular Defense: New T-14 Tank will Become the Sensation of the Year," Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 3 February 2015, <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/02/tank.html>, accessed 5 February 2015.

The Tank Maintains a Circular Defense: New T-14 Tank will Become the Sensation of the Year

...What distinguishes the new-generation tank from all currently existing tanks in our country and abroad?

The crew of three men is located in an armored capsule in the forward portion of the hull. According to the specialists, the forward projection has multilayered, combined armor protection which can withstand a direct hit of any type of rounds which exist today, [including] sub-caliber and cumulative rounds. In addition, the forward hemisphere is covered with an active defense system which is also able to intercept any type of antitank munition, including sub-caliber rounds, something previously believed to be impossible in principle.

The Armata's active defense deserves special discussion. In fact this is an individual anti-missile and anti-projectile tank defense system. It defends the vehicle from strikes, including those from the air. Thus, even the most modern Apache helicopter will not have a 100 percent chance of destroying a T-14 with its missiles. Active defense is situated along the entire perimeter of the turret at various levels, which ensures complete protection of the tank's most important elements.

The central compartment, where the ammunition stores are located, is protected in such a manner that it is not even threatened by grenadiers who have taken cover in basements. The lower side hemispheres around the turret are shielded by counter-missiles.

The engine and the motor and transmission compartment are located in the rear of the hull. The diesel is domestically manufactured and it has a rather unconventional construction. The published power is not less than 1,500 HP.

The hull is extended and it has seven drive wheels, which speaks to the fact that the tank is of an enhanced weight, possibly about 50 tons.

The combat information and control systems are constructed using modern digital technologies and domestically manufactured solid-state basic elements. The probability of hitting the target with the first shot is close to 100 percent. Constant monitoring of the status of vitally important elements is provided. This allows a possible malfunction to be predicted well before it occurs. This, in turn, significantly enhances the reliability and maintainability of the complex armored vehicle.

The hull is amply provided with video cameras. They allow the crew to observe the situation all around the tank. If required, zooming can be switched on, and a distant object can be viewed in detail. Heat sensing and infrared viewing capabilities are also available under any weather conditions, day or night.

In order to appreciate the real design and technological breakthrough of the Russian tank builders, a rather recent, but classified story should be remembered. It turned out that it is more difficult to design and manufacture a truly new tank than a new aircraft. Fifth-generation fighters are already flying, but only second-generation tanks are in the inventories throughout the entire world. So the Armata will become the first series-produced third-generation tank (although there are those who will dare to list it as fifth generation). But this is not a matter of numbers, but of the fact that armored equipment, despite all of its external simplicity, belongs to the most complex kinds of combat vehicles.

Russia's Counter to the Maydan Movement and Color Revolutions

22 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine emphasized a relatively new perspective from the Russian security establishment, which views the primary threat to Russia's sovereignty as coming not from a mass military invasion, but instead from foreign-sponsored political movements, social organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. In general, Russia believes that the West is warring against it through the use of "color revolutions," the Arab Spring, and the Maydan rally to topple Russian allies and eventually topple Russia itself. In response to these perceived asymmetric threats, Russia is developing its own similarly asymmetric counters.*

*One such counter, as the accompanying article discusses, is through the use of patriotic "storm troopers." These storm troopers are intended to employ the same methods (street protests, and possibly violence) as the foreign-sponsored practitioners of the "color revolutions," the Arab Spring, and the Maydan rally in order to combat those very same movements with their own methods. In the event of any form of mass protests in the streets of Moscow, the Russian security establishment's first response will likely not first come in the form of uniformed security forces, but instead from quasi government-sponsored anti-Maydan organizations, Cossacks, and private security forces. The intent of this approach is to avoid international criticism that other countries (Ukraine, Libya, Egypt, et al.) faced when they used their security forces to put down their own anti-government protests. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Source: Matvey Ganapolskiy: "Devastating Bolt From the Blue. What 'Patriotic Games' With Stormtroopers Could Lead To," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets (Online)*, 22 January 2015, http://www.mk.ru/social/2015/01/21/pogrom-sredi-yasnogo-neba.html?_utl_t=vk, accessed 5 February 2015.

Devastating Bolt From the Blue. What 'Patriotic Games' With Stormtroopers Could Lead To

I want to say something unpleasant to you, only do not be offended.

Detachments of stormtroopers are being formed in Russia, perfectly officially.

For patriotic aesthetes who shrink from that name and who remember that stormtrooper detachments are attributes of the Third Reich, let me remind you that import substitution has been proclaimed in Russia. So we have our very own stormtrooper detachments, assembled in Russia, from our own cultivation, education, and training...

The new Russian stormtroopers call themselves the "Anti-Maydan Movement." The initiative group included representatives of the Combat Brotherhood, the Council of Veterans of Afghanistan, the Central Cossack Army, and the Night Wolves [Russian Patriot Biker Gang]; they announced that they do not intend to tolerate protests in Russia similar to those that took place in Ukraine last year...

When thugs want official recognition they proclaim lofty goals...In Russia the thugs have decided that the authorities and the president need protecting from dissatisfied citizens...

Against whom will the "Anti-Maydan" fight desperately? Judging by the name, it will enter into mortal combat with the Maydan. That terrible, fearful Maydan that brings death and destruction and which smacks of Right Sector, of fascists and Banderites. But this objective is, to put it mildly, fake, disingenuous, because there is no Maydan in Russia...In short, nobody is making any attacks on the authorities or on the president.

Nobody; but our heroes are sounding the patriotic alarm. And Mr. Sablin openly explains that the new movement will consist of approximately 10,000 military men, Cossacks, athletes, and bikers, who intend to "observe opposition rallies." And in the intervals between "observations" the warriors and revolutionaries intend to train at special camps and teach students how to counter color revolution techniques.

What do you call a paramilitary organization that is ideologically supported by the state but is unconstitutional in its essence and is not subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs? What do you call an organization that declares the recruitment of young people and announces training sessions in camps but has no target to oppose, only calls that target "color revolutions"?

Without a doubt these are stormtroopers, no matter how much some people may dislike that word.

OE Watch Commentary: *Electronic warfare (EW) capabilities are being fast tracked for development in the Russian Armed Forces. These capabilities have long been important due to a Russian perception that the West (NATO/US) will maintain air superiority and are overly dependent on certain technologies, such as satellites, sophisticated command and control systems, cruise missiles, and UAVs for effective combat operations.*

In the last few years Russia has deployed the "Moskva-1," "Gimalai," "Krasukha-2," "President-S," and infamous "Khibiny" aircraft-mounted systems, the latter allegedly turning off the electronics on the USS Donald Cook in March 2014 (for background on this incident, see: "Russian EW or IW?," Dec 2014 OEW, and "Russia's Magic Radar," Jan 2015 OEW). The accompanying articles discuss the fielding of Russia's newest EW system, the "Krasukha-S4." This system is roughly the ground-based equivalent of the "Khibiny," as both are reportedly capable of analyzing electromagnetic emissions and suppressing radio-electronic systems to the point that the affected vehicles can no longer detect targets or engage with precision-guided munitions. The "Krasukha-S4" complex is transported by two KAMAZ-6350 8x8 trucks and can reportedly mask an area up to 600 square kilometers from radar and other types of remote sensing systems. The "Krasukha-S4" will likely serve in the Ground Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces (RVSN), as a masking capability not only is seen as a necessity to protect conventional forces, but also is routinely used to protect Ground Forces theater ballistic missiles (9K720 Iskander/SS-26 Stone) and RVSN intercontinental ballistic missiles (RT-2PM2 Topol-M/SS-27 Sickle B & RT-24 Yars/SS-27 Mod 2).

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)

Source: Denis Telmanov, "The 'Krasukha' Has Been Sent to the Far East," *Gazeta.ru Online*, 30 January 15, http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/01/30_a_6393205.shtml, accessed 6 February 2015.

The 'Krasukha' Has Been Sent to the Far East

The Defense Ministry has begun delivering the latest "Krasukha-S4" electronic warfare system to the Eastern Military District [EMD] troops. The system was tested for the Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN) back in 2012; however, the Army received the first 10 sets only in 2013...

On 30 January the Russian Federation Defense Ministry press office reported that EMD EW units will receive several unique modern "Krasukha-S4" systems this year. The system is intended for combating all modern radar stations that are used aboard various types of aircraft, as well as in unmanned air vehicles. In addition, the system's capabilities make it possible to set up radio interference in a wide range of frequencies, without limitation in terms of the location's azimuth or angle. The "Krasukha-S4" uses new digital equipment with superior characteristics," the report says... each system, which comprises two vehicles, has an operating radius in excess of 300 km.

"Everything that has existed hitherto is Soviet-era developments from the seventies. They have become obsolete, for sure. Since then, not only the wavebands have changed, but so have the frequencies on which the homing-guidance heads operate, and the reconnaissance equipment, and the algorithms of its effect. All these changes have been catered for in the new system," Murakhovskiy noted. According to him, the new systems' main difference is full automation, which makes it possible to minimize the human factor and to eliminate the negative impact on our own Army's other EW systems... In addition, the "Krasukha" can conduct electronic reconnaissance by itself and track everything that is irradiating a protected facility...

Source: The Radio-Electronic Technology Concern Reports 2014 Results, *Interfax-AVN Online*, 3 February 2015, <http://www.militarynews.ru>, accessed 8 February 2015.

The Radio-Electronic Technology Concern Reports 2014 Results

The Radio-Electronic Technology Concern (KRET), part of the state corporation Rostekh, fulfilled the state defence order for 2014 in full and on time, the company has announced. The results were reported by the privately-owned Russian military news agency Interfax-AVN on 3 February...

"The Russian Ministry of Defense was supplied with the latest electronic warfare (EW) systems worth 17.1 billion rubles, national identification systems worth 7.2 billion rubles, avionics worth 35 billion rubles and instrumentation worth 1.1 billion rubles. As part of the state defense order, KRET delivered products worth a total of 60.4 billion rubles in 2014," the press service of the concern said in a statement.

In 2014, KRET delivered a total of 500 units of weapons, military and special equipment, including the latest EW systems of the Krasukha and Khibiny families, Vitebsk aircraft protection systems, Rychag-AV helicopter systems, Garmon small-sized mobile radar systems and national identification systems.

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 January European Union (EU) leaders and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a summit in Brussels. While the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine and Russia's \$15 billion loan to the Ukrainian government dominated the summit's discussion and Western press reports about it, some Russian sources reported on Putin's proposal at the conclusion of the summit for the EU to join the free trade zone with the Eurasian Customs Union (a precursor to what Putin plans will grow into a Eurasian Union). The accompanying excerpts provide examples of such reports in the Russian language press.

One Russian expert quoted in the first excerpt, from Vestnik Kavkaza (Caucasus Herald), immediately brings the discussion back to Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership. If Putin's proposal is accepted, he says, there would be no need for Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries to sign free trade agreements with the EU. His comment is quite revealing, as it shows how much the Kremlin wants Eastern Partnership countries, particularly Ukraine, to join Russia's sphere of influence, rather than that of Europe, and how far Putin is willing to go. He is framing Russia-EU relations in the context of positioning Eastern Europe to choose Russia over Western Europe.

Massive protests in Ukraine broke out precisely because Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich chose at the last minute not to sign an association agreement with Europe in November 2013. Prior to this, Putin had pressured Yanukovich and leaders of other Eastern European countries not to sign or initial association agreements with Europe.

Notably, the second excerpt, from Aktau-Business.com, focused on Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev's public support of Putin's idea. This is not surprising, as Kazakhstan itself is a member of Russia's Customs Union, along with Belarus. Nazarbaev also hints that in time the

Source: "Присоединение ЕС к Евразийскому союзу: за и против" (EU Joining Eurasian Union: For and Against)," Vestnik Kavkaza, Caucasus Herald, 29 January 2014. <http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/news/Prisoedinenie-ES-k-Evraziyskomu-soyuzu-za-i-protiv.html>

Earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced at the final press conference of the EU-Russia Summit his proposal to create of a free trade area between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union...

One of the main advantages of the free trade zone between the EU and the Eurasian Union the economist [Head of the Center for Strategic Development and Forecasting at the Institute of Europe Alexander Gusev] called political benefits associated with the Eastern Partnership: "Upon realizing this project there would be no need for Ukraine or countries of the Eastern Partnership to sign the generally corresponding agreements with the EU, because they would get into free trade area, which is being organized under the auspices of the Russian Federation."

Nevertheless, according to Gusev, the Putin initiative has certain competitors. "In particular, since the United States spoke in favor of the creation of the Euro-Atlantic zone of free trade: NAFTA (USA, Canada, Mexico) plus the E.U., the proposal of our president will encounter disagreement from the U.S., because they have made their offer earlier," noted Gusev, adding that we should not ignore the position of China as the main sales agent on the global markets...

Source: "Назарбаев поддержал идею Путина о зоне свободной торговли с Евросоюзом (Nazarbaev Supported Putin's Idea of Free Trade Zone with European Union)," Aktau-Business.com, 5 February 2014. <http://www.aktau-business.com/2014/02/05/o-zone-svobodnoy-torgovli-s-evrosoyuzom.html>

..."We hear and see different expert interpretations and opinions on the Eurasian Economic Union. I think it is necessary to study it more deeply and understand that this is not a political organization. But is it possible? Anything is possible. In the future anything is possible, but today it is a purely economic cooperation, which was necessitated by the needs of our countries", - Nursultan Nazarbayev said on Wednesday at a traditional meeting with accredited in Astana heads of foreign diplomatic missions, the news agency Novosti-Kazakhstan reported...

Nazarbayev noted that he supports the proposal of the Russian president of the future formation of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union...

(continued)

Continued: Putin's Proposal for the EU to Join the Eurasian Economic Union

Customs Union could be more than a solely economic-focused organization.

*This context is crucial to analyzing comments in the third excerpt, also from Aktau-Business.com, by Ingo Mannteufel, director of the Eastern Europe department and the chief editor of the Russian edition of Deutsche Welle, who says that Europe should take Russia's offer. It is crucial to understand exactly what accepting Putin's offer entails. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Source: "Deutsche Welle: ЕС должен принять предложение Путина о зоне свободной торговли от Лиссабона до Владивостока (EC should take Putin's offer of a free trade zone stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok)," Regnum.ru, 4 February 2014. <http://www.aktau-business.com/2014/02/05/o-zone-svobodnoy-torgovli-s-evrosoyuzom.html>

Instead of just planning financial assistance for Ukraine and the future of the country after the departure of Yanukovich, the EU should offer something to Russia also, for example, the free trade zone, believes the director of Eastern Europe department and the chief editor of the Russian edition of Deutsche Welle Ingo Mannteufel .

In his view, in political and economic terms Ukraine is bankrupt. "President Yanukovich... ruined the country. Without financial and political support for Russia, he may have to give up his positions. Therefore it is right that the E.U. and the U.S. are planning financial assistance to Ukraine after the end of the Yanukovich era. However, this financial assistance for Ukraine should be part of a larger strategy, encompassing Russia. Otherwise, these plans will exacerbate political chaos in Kiev and push the actors on the Ukrainian political scene into a civil war," he underscored....



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.

OE Watch Commentary: On 3 February 2015 Kavpolit.com, a news site which covers the broader Caucasus region, published an analysis about recent calls in Armenia to bring Nagorno-Karabakh, a region disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan, into Armenia's territory.

According to the article's author, Tasha Titova, in the current domestic and international climate it is not surprising that such calls are now appearing in Armenia. Russia's economic problems as a result of its standoff with the West over the Ukrainian crisis and Armenia's joining the Russian-led Customs Union, which ties Armenia's currency to the Russian ruble, are having a negative impact on Armenia's already impoverished economy. She writes that the Armenian authorities appear to have little will to resolve the many problems confronting their country, and Russia's rapprochement with Turkey is also worrisome for many in Armenia. To add to that, in the beginning of the year clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces over Nagorno-Karabakh have intensified.

The first group to make public calls about Nagorno Karabakh is a fringe group called Founding Parliament. Raffi Hovannisian, a former presidential candidate who lost the bid for Armenia's presidency in 2013, picked up on the message. According to Titova, he sensed that the Armenian public would be receptive to such ideas in the current crisis. He distributed a civil appeal in which he called for changing power in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and an election of "the first President of United Armenia," likely implying the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia.

Titova writes that many in Armenia would be receptive to ideas of uniting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia, but few would publically support such an idea, particularly in the current unstable political context. Hovanissian and the Founding Parliament do not represent major political forces in Armenia; however, the shift in internal discussions in Armenia towards the status of Nagorno Karabakh is important to watch, particularly in the current climate of instability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Tasha Titova, "Армения: игра на патриотизме. В республике вновь звучат призывы признать Нагорный Карабах и даже принять его в состав РА" (Armenia : Game on patriotism. Calls in the country once again to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh and even accept it into RA [Republic of Armenia]), Kavpolit.com, 3 February 2014 http://kavpolit.com/articles/armenija_igra_na_patriotizme-13689/

...Against this background it is not surprising that the opposition sector has once again re-energized in Armenia. Events on the frontline [at Nagorno-Karabakh], Russia's problems with the West, which apparently ricochet on the the Armenian economy, EEU's [Eurasian Economic Union] inability to confront problems, and Russia's rapprochement with Turkey, as well as the EU, never tired to extend its hand to Armenia— all this pushes the Armenian opposition again to ask the question: are we taking the right path?...

In the beginning, those who began talking about the change of power in Armenia and Karabakh's accession into AR [Armenian Republic] were members of the organization "Founding Parliament," which on Saturday under the guise of a motor rally tried to hold a demonstration demanding regime change. However, the Nagorno-Karabakh police had not allowed them to do this...

The President who was not to be, Raffi Hovannisian, immediately took advantage of the situation, sensing that people are waiting for just such ideas, and distributed a civil appeal for the change of power in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. He also presented his vision of the future – election of "the first President of United Armenia," likely implying unification of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh...

The Armenian public is not enthusiastic about political games around Karabakh - especially now, when crowds of people had recently demanded the withdrawal of Russian 102nd military base in Gyumri. However, politically-biased layers had awoken... Raffi Hovannisian has caught on this movement of the masses...

...In Armenia, even without him [Hovannisian], many believe that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh should be united. It is one thing to talk about it in the kitchen, and quite another - to throw this idea into the media, when the Karabakh issue, and the internal political situation in Armenia are far from stable...

Nonetheless, at present, "Heritage" [Hovanissian's party] and "Founding Parliament" are not the driving political forces in Armenia. And all their calls – are attempts to exploit the situation and add to their political weight. Authorities had not considered, and still do not consider them a serious threat...

But the shift in emphasis in internal discussions towards recognition of Karabakh – is a sign that in a short time the geopolitical situation around the disputed territory may change significantly.

The Kremlin's Plans for Air Force Modernization: Reliance on Domestic Production

4 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 February 2015 Rossiyskaya Gazeta (*Russian Newspaper*), the Kremlin's newspaper of record, published an article about the upcoming modernization of the Russian Air Force. According to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, rearming the Air Force is among the top priorities this year. According to the article, it will receive such items as new radio-electronic equipment and combat aircraft, including Su-35s and MiG35s. These technologies, until recently, had seemed too "fantastic" to attain, but that is no longer the case. They are built domestically, and can not only compete with their foreign counterparts, but in some cases, are also superior to them, writes Sergei Ptichkin, the article's author. The Russian military has spent over 36 billion rubles in 2014 on avionics and measuring equipment, and 17.1 billion rubles on electronic warfare systems.

Since returning to the presidency in 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged to modernize the entire Russian Armed Forces and renewed this intention at the end of 2014, as the Ukrainian crisis continued to grow. The Rossiyskaya Gazeta report should be read in this context.

As Russia's traditional trade partners have increasingly turned away from the Kremlin in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia is looking for alternatives. Dmitry Rogozin, Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the military-industrial complex, has been calling for reducing Russia's reliance on international partners, particularly when it comes to high-tech components, and instead producing them domestically. Such an approach is not without its own difficulties, which the Kremlin does not publically discuss. The accompanying Rossiyskaya Gazeta article, which emphasizes such domestic reliance, appears in line with the position Rogozin has been advocating. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

Source: Sergei Ptichkin, "К истребителю ракета не прорвется. Боевую авиацию прикроют непробиваемым полем" (The rocket won't get to the missile. Combat aircraft will be covered by an impenetrable field), Rossiyskaya Gazeta (*Russian Newspaper*), 4 February 2015, <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/05/zachita.html>

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, speaking at a conference call, said that one of the most important priorities of military development in the current year will be rearming the air force with new equipment.

In addition to the latest combat aircrafts, such as, for example, the Su-35s and MiG-35s, the air force will receive new radio-electronic equipment. Many electronic systems until recently seemed unattainably fantastic.

Management concern "Radio-electronic technology"—the main developer of electronic systems for the army and the air force, has recently provided indicative numbers. The latest set of avionics and measuring equipment alone provided last year to the military was worth more than 36 billion rubles. Systems of electronic warfare [were provided] in the amount of 17.1 billion. And it must be said, the significant resources the Defense Ministry spent have not gone to waste. All samples, received by the military, are built on the domestic component base and in their characteristics are not inferior to foreign analogues, and often surpass them...

Russia Increasing Collaborative Efforts with CSTO Member Nations

3 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian government has been enacting new policies and developing new programs to aid Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member nations.*

The first excerpt describes how during the CSTO summit on 23 December 2014 discussions were opened on the topic of bolstering CSTO nations' defensive capabilities by helping them build a collective Air Force and enhance their overall military infrastructure. The article mentions how states should be able to establish preventative measures against destabilizing militant groups such as ISIS.

The second excerpt describes how the General Staff Military Academy in Russia is opening classes to diplomats, foreign officials, and military personnel of CSTO members. These classes include national security, war strategy, war management, and war economics.

*Possibilities exist that CSTO countries such as Kazakhstan will not only have updated military infrastructure and the support of a Russian-led or at least Russia-supplied Air Force, but also the education for improved coordination of these forces with Russia and other CSTO member nations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Croft)***

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, "ОДКБ остается скорее виртуальной, чем реальной структурой" [CSTO Remains a Virtual Rather than a Real Structure], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 29 December 2014. <http://www.ng.ru>

The fight against ISIL in the Afghanistan region will become a test of the organization's competence.

At the latest Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO] countries' summit yesterday [23 December], a decision was made, at last, to create Collective Air Forces (KAS) within its structure. This fact may be dubbed the most significant event of the CSTO Collective Security Council's (SKB) Moscow session, at which around 20 other issues, apart from the Collective Air Forces' creation, were considered.

It is hardly to be expected that the aviation component will somehow boost the CSTO's competence. Just as it was before, the organization seems set to remain a virtual structure that has not proven its effectiveness in various conflicts that have occurred within the Commonwealth [of Independent States]...

...CSTO Secretary General Nikolay Bordyuzha had reported earlier that the CSTO Collective Air Forces' basis would be the Russian Air Force's 999th air base, which is stationed at Kant, Kyrgyzstan (see *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 April 2013). It has already been reported that this air base has been strengthened with Su-25 ground-attack aircraft and Mi-8 MTV military transport helicopters. This, however, is nothing major since, as the media report, the Collective Air Forces "should include the CSTO member-states' formations of military transport aviation (VTA) and special Armed Forces aviation, of the internal affairs agencies (the police), the Internal Troops, the security and special services, and also of agencies that have powers in the sphere of preventing emergency situations and clearing up their consequences."

Source: Medet Achmetov, "В военной академии Генштаба ВС РФ открылись курсы для чиновников стран ОДКБ" [Military Academy for General Staff Opened Courses for Officials of CSTO Countries], *Kazinform International News Agency Online*, 3 February 2015. <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2742614>

...The War Academy for General Staff is strengthening its forces in Russia in the Academy of Leadership under the leadership of General-Colonel Sergei Makarov, opening courses to leading specialists and state authorities of state divisions in the Collective Security Treaty Organization, who are responsible for different branches of activity in the regional formation of collective security systems...

...Classes are organized in accordance with improving professional programs for improving qualifications. Provided in the program courses are reading, lectures, and practical exercises in disciplines like national and collective security, war strategy, war management and wartime economies.

Classes will be held with the participation of leading teachers of the Military Academy of the General Staff, Deputy Secretary General of the CSTO and the CSTO Secretarial Officials.

OE Watch Commentary: *As initially reported in the December 2014 OEW, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to expand the operations and capabilities of its new command and control center. Ideally, this facility will be able to provide Russia's political and military leadership with up-to-date and in-depth information in all areas related to the country's national security. The accompanying article describes plans for the new center to add open source exploitation (both domestic and international) to its information portfolio.*

The excerpt points out that Russian analysts have developed their "own algorithms for the automated collection, processing, and classification of information... processing open sources of information, and thus [the system] presents the most up-to-date information on a query of interest at any moment, whether it be the situation in Far East regions or in any country of the world." The monitoring system will go beyond mere collection and translation of open-source information, purportedly, also providing "models to produce expert assessments and possible development scenarios," which, in turn, will develop "automated preparation of proposals to the leadership."

The article points out that while the software to run this system will be Russian-made, the hardware will be foreign, and this foreign influence, according to Konstantin Sivkov, President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems and one of the experts quoted, makes this proposal a risky venture. As he points out, "the main source of this information will be the Internet, and the Internet is based on American software and American hardware." The belief that the US controls both the content and flow of Internet traffic is widely held among many Kremlin officials. In order to avoid falling victim to American propaganda, Sivkov recommends that the information first be processed by the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate.

The system will also monitor both domestic and international social media sites for valuable information. As opposed to traditional domestic media, which often faithfully toe the Kremlin position, Russian social media still provide

Source: Denis Telman and Vladimir Dergachev, "Соцсети под колпаком у Шойгу. Минобороны создает систему мониторинга СМИ и блогов" [Social Networking Sites under Shoygu's Umbrella. Defense Ministry Is Creating a System for Monitoring Media and Blogs], Gazeta.ru, 28 January 2015.
http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/01/28_a_6391297.shtml

The Russian Defense Ministry has commissioned a system for monitoring and analyzing the political and socioeconomic situation in the world; it will operate on the basis of open sources of information in several languages, predict the development of the situation on this basis, and propose options for actions to the military leadership. The plan is to complete the commissioning and testing of the system in 2016. Experts draw attention to the ambitions of Sergey Shoygu, who is seeking to broaden the military's field of activity...

... "We have developed our own algorithms for the automated collection, processing, and classification of information, and also models to produce expert assessments and possible development scenarios. The system makes it possible to collect information and compose and process a logical and semantic search query. It operates on a permanent real-time basis, processing open sources of information, and thus presents the most up-to-date information on a query of interest at any moment, whether it be the situation in Far East regions or in any country of the world," Andrey Riznyk, general director of the Sistemy Upraleniya [Management Systems] holding company, reported...

He stressed that a number of highly important tasks -- "the presentation of information about the most significant events in the country and abroad to Russian Defense Ministry officials, the modeling of situation development scenarios, and the automated preparation of proposals to the leadership" -- can be resolved with the aid of these systems.

"Our system is capable of selecting the reports that relate to a given query from the flood of world media information, translating foreign-language text, analyzing it, and incorporating the data in statistics and resultant files. In the same way (there is) also a high-quality automatic speech-to-text translation system. In order to resolve these tasks we took already existing software and adapted it to our tasks," Riznyk noted...

... "Since the system's main task is to produce a picture of the current moment, the emphasis in selecting sources has been placed on current information -- news media or websites, social networking sites, and blogs. On social networking sites the system analyzes the frequency and tone of comments according to the subject," Riznyk added.

The system will be based at the National Center for Control of the Country's Defense, which was opened in December 2014. During the initial stages of work the software and hardware systems will work with five or six languages, but the number may be increased in the future.

Experts questioned by Gazeta.ru feel that not all of the stated operational tasks will be successfully fulfilled. Thus, in the opinion of Konstantin Sivkov, president of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, Russian programmers are capable of creating a system of this standard but the hardware part will be totally foreign.

"The specialist mathematical software that will resolve the task of collecting and analyzing information will be Russian. And it will be effective -- I am in no doubt about

(continued)

Continued: Open Source Center for Russian MoD

a mostly open forum for dissenting voices. Indeed, some Russian media commentators have suggested that social media serve as a non-threatening relief valve for those who do not agree with Kremlin policies. The article rightly points out that, given the MoD's hypersensitivity regarding the threat of color-revolutions, military officials might "categorize any criticism of the regime on social networking sites as 'acts of war,'" and overreact.

*Finally, the article touches upon the expanding reach of the MoD's new command and control center. It points out that open-source exploitation also falls under the mandate of other Kremlin power ministries and suggests that "the Defense Ministry intends to compete" with these agencies. These new sources of information "will increase the significance and opportunities of both the Defense Ministry and the minister even further." If more information translates into power, it appears that the Russian MoD is gaining new muscle. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

that. But the hardware will be based on foreign components because as yet we do not produce this kind of equipment. Furthermore, consideration has to be given to the fact that the main source of this information will be the Internet, and the Internet is based on American software and American hardware," Sivkov noted.

Sivkov is convinced that the data captured by the automated system should not go directly to the Defense Ministry leadership as it may contain false information distorting the picture of the world.

"It is possible to collect a great deal of information from open sources. But it has to be understood that open sources carry items geared to deliberately shaping certain images. You need analysis at the 'but who wanted to say this' level, which no system will be able to do," Sivkov explained.

Furthermore, the system will inevitably also record Internet information that is knowingly fake but is totally indistinguishable from a software viewpoint from authentic information.

"Fakes and fabrications will distort the information picture. Furthermore an enemy, knowing of the existence of such a system, will be able to carry out campaigns to shape the requisite information effect -- and this is simply dangerous."

In order to avoid this, the information from the system should go not to officers at the Center for the Control of Defense of the State but to analysts at the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate, Sivkov feels.

Security expert Andrey Soldatov, chief editor of the Agentura.ru website, also agrees that it will be hard for the military to obtain an objective picture of the world using such instruments.

In his words, the Defense Ministry does not have the necessary experience of this activity as information security was originally handled by FAPSI [Federal Agency for Government Information and Communications] but subsequently, in 2003, these responsibilities were distributed among the FSB [Federal Security Service], the SVR, and the FSO [Federal Protection Service].

At the same time he noted that following the "Arab Spring" almost all organs of power and special services in the world set about monitoring social networking sites....

...Soldatov is afraid that people in the Defense Ministry are "glaringly incompetent" in the information sphere and predicts that the Defense Ministry will track every single thing one after another, categorizing any criticism of the regime on social networking sites as "acts of war": "In a crisis the military may raise the stakes -- go to the president and say that information aggression is being waged against us and we need to respond to it. Chief of General Staff Gerasimov had an article in *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kuryer* in which he talked about new types of aggression like information aggression."

For his part, Konstantin Kalachev, head of the Political Expert Group, notes that Minister of Defense Sergey Shoygu is attempting to take over sectors of work that extend way beyond the framework of the Defense Ministry's immediate tasks.

The Ministry of Defense is preparing for a new type of war. Regional conflicts, including the one in the Donets Basin [Donbas], indeed make such information urgent and in demand. But in fact the Defense Ministry intends to compete with both the FSB and the SVR in this field. Shoygu is turning the Defense Ministry into a mega-department. As he previously tried to do with the Emergencies Ministry. All of these instruments will increase the significance and opportunities of both the Defense Ministry and the minister and even further.

"Of course, this strengthens him in all respects, including for a hypothetical political struggle. The man has big ambitions -- bigger than the Defense Ministry," the expert concluded....

“The Military Industrial Commission spokesman stressed that, if the supplies of imported components will run out and deliveries will be halted, the production of the Su-35S will be frozen and problems with repairs will begin with the aircraft that have been transferred to the Air Force.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As keen observers of contemporary conflict, Russian political and military leaders understand the important role which airpower plays in modern warfare. A key component of their military modernization program revolves around both upgrading and developing new air platforms to defend against probable threats. A prime example of their focus on airpower has been the continued technological development within their multirole Su-35S fighter aircraft. While the basic design of this aircraft dates from the late 1980s, the Su-35S has been retooled and modified over the past two decades to become one of Russia’s most lethal air assets. Some sources claim that this aircraft is equal, if not superior to nearly all of its Western competitors.*

Events over the past year, however, have stymied continued modernization of this aircraft. As the brief excerpt points out, Russian aggression against neighboring Ukraine has complicated the program. Many of the imported advanced components for this aircraft have either fallen victim to the sanction regime or had been produced by Ukrainian suppliers. The article points out that while some Ukrainian suppliers continue to manufacture and export components for this aircraft, the decision to find alternative sources for them has not yet been approved. There are also concerns that purchasing these parts from non-Western suppliers could result in either defective or “infected” components, designed to deliberately damage the aircraft.

*The article also addresses the option of creating the required components for the Su-35S domestically. It points out, however, that such an approach would entail considerable investment in both time and expense. The Russian defense minister remains confident that military modernization plans for the Su-35S remain on schedule, but, given the combined challenges caused by sanctions and the lack of domestic production capabilities, fielding the modernized version of this aircraft will either almost certainly be delayed or it will be equipped with potentially faulty components. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Source: Denis Telmanov: “‘Сушка’ с импортной начинкой; Самолет СУ-35С поступит в войска с иностранными комплектующими” [A Sukhoi with Imported Filling: The Su-35S Aircraft Will Enter the Troops with Foreign Components], *Gazeta.ru*, 5 February 2015. http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/02/05_a_6400845.shtml

...A source on the Military Industrial Commission under the Russian Government told a *Gazeta.Ru* correspondent that the Su-35S will enter the troops with imported components.

“Individual components and assemblies are manufactured abroad, including in Ukraine. There all of the airborne electronics are built on a foreign computer hardware base. And this is a serious problem, while taking into account that this is a totally electronic aircraft.

“We don’t have those components and we won’t them anytime soon. It has not yet been decided what to do with this and the first aircraft will arrive on that, in other words, on foreign elements, and hereafter we will think about it,” *Gazeta.Ru*’s interlocutor said.

In the process, he refused to name the specific components, having cited commercial and state secrets. The Military Industrial Commission spokesman stressed that, if the supplies of imported components will run out and deliveries will be halted, the production of the Su-35S will be frozen and problems with repairs will begin with the aircraft that have been transferred to the Air Force. In the process, he called Shoygu’s task to begin deliveries of the Su-35S to the troops “totally realistic”.

Shoygu named the delivery of the Su-35S to the troops as one of the priorities at the video conference at the country’s new defense command and control center on Tuesday.

“The primary mission this year – is to insure the qualitative conduct of the tests of this aircraft and upgrading its specifications to the requirements of the statement of work,” Shoygu said.

The Su-35S was developed in 2006 based upon the Su-35 multirole fighter aircraft which, in its turn, is a development of the well-known Su-27. One more modification of this aircraft – the Su-30 –is already being delivered to the troops.

The new aircraft is equipped with a radar with a phased array antenna (it provides a picture of the situation with enhanced definition) and with engines, which permit acceleration to supersonic cruising speed (those same engines have been installed in the fifth-generation T-50 fighter aircraft).

A United Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation spokesman refused to comment on the situation, having stated: “We don’t have problems with the production of the Su-35S.” At the same time, a source, who is close to Sukhoi Corporation, explained that they will never manage to replace a number of this aircraft’s components.

“All kinds of ‘cheap parts’ using foreign components are going on there: for example,

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Continued: Modernization Challenges in Key Russian Fighter

the fittings, the regulating pumps, and so forth. They are dirt-cheap but time is needed in order to being to make them here. But the problem is not them but the electronic computer hardware, which no one even intends to make in our country. We will not be able to replace a number of integrated circuits with anything, therefore, we will have to purchase them in finished form. This is dangerous because they are manufactured in the countries of Asia but they have been developed in the Western countries, first of all, in the United States. And no one can guarantee that there aren't some sort of bugging devices or similar nonsense there," Gazeta.Ru's interlocutor pointed out.

He added that they are not talking about the replacement of the Ukrainian parts for the time being since there are no problems with them: The Ukrainians are continuing deliveries, although official cooperation with Russia has been severed....

...AviaPort Agency Main Analyst Oleg Panteleyev explained to Gazeta.Ru that import substitution's main problem consists of expediency.

"When you reject imported components and you need to develop your own at any cost, this is not a problem. The question is only the amount of money, which will be required to do this, and the time that this will take. But we need to understand that an aircraft, even a military aircraft, this is still not an intercontinental missile and you need to abide by certain production profitability parameters and the reasonableness of the deadlines. And two factors emerge here: if we are talking about unique items, which one or two companies in the world manufacture, this is, of course, a dangerous dependence and we need to avoid it. But if these are Korean integrated circuits for \$10 per handful, there is no dependence whatsoever here and there are also no problems," Panteleyev pointed out.

...In the process, he is confident that the organization of an aircraft production line will take "not a month and not a year". "This is a long-term process and it is impossible to immediately change everything just like that, based upon the minister's command. Once again, you need to understand at whose expense all of this will be done," Panteleyev explained.

Sergey Shoygu: Russia's Emergency Defense Minister A Bio-Sketch

By Ray Finch, FMSO

This paper briefly examines the background of Russia's Minister of Defense, Sergey Shoygu, the speculation behind his sudden appointment in November 2012, the challenges he faces, his efforts thus far within the Defense Ministry, and possible future implications -both military and political - surrounding his selection as Russia's chief military representative. This paper posits that should the stars align correctly, as a close friend of President Vladimir Putin, Shoygu could become the next leader of Russia.

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



“The generals are particularly pleased that more than half the military professionals, having completed their service under their first three-year contract, expressed the desire to conclude a new one.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Although the Kremlin has denied any direct military involvement in the ongoing conflict in SE Ukraine, the Russian media have been loudly beating the war drums over the past year. In the Kremlin-supported narrative, the West (the US in particular) has been responsible for sowing chaos in Ukraine, from which it can gain a beachhead to attack Russia. Like in June 1941, pro-Russian patriots have been trying to defend their ethnic comrades from the predations of the new pro-Western government in Kiev. Russia is portrayed as the victim of a pernicious and avaricious West, which is vainly trying to weaken Russia with diplomatic, economic and other measures. The Russian media have depicted the annexation of Crimea and continued support for separatists in SE Ukraine as purely defensive or humanitarian operations.*

The not-so subtle message of this 24/7 media barrage proclaims that Russia is at war. However, it is a strange type of war, where even though battles rage on in the media, Russian officials deny any sort of military involvement. Regardless of the media’s schizophrenic claims, this surge in patriotism has apparently helped with Russian military recruitment. As the excerpt points out, “more and more people want to become professional soldiers in Russia.”

The article describes the addition of 78 new recruiting stations designed to attract military professionals (as opposed to conscripts). These recruiting centers will work hand-in-hand with the military commissariats to ensure that all the legal, medical and administrative requirements are followed. The article suggests that the need for these new recruitment centers is driven by a greater number of young Russians who want to become military professionals. It claims that “beginning in September 2012, something like 6,500 people a month have been concluding contracts for service in the Army and Navy through selection centers.”

The excerpt points out that the quality of these new soldiers is impressive, with “65 percent of contract personnel having higher or secondary education and 11 percent of them joining the Army with a vuz [higher educational establishment] diploma.” More significantly, the article claims that “more than half the military professionals, having completed their service under their first three-year contract, expressed the desire to conclude a new one.”

*The Russian media have helped to stoke patriotic passions over the past year, and, not surprisingly, more young Russian men may be considering a military career. As the situation in Eastern Ukraine remains unsettled, these new contract soldiers will likely find the opportunity to display their patriotism on the battlefield. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

Source: Yuriy Gavrilov, “Завербуют, как положено; Разработан порядок набора в армию профессиональных солдат” [Recruiting the Proper Way; Procedure Drawn Up for Recruiting Professional Soldiers to the Army], Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 10 February 2015. <http://www.rg.ru/2015/02/10/soldati.html>

...Not only military commissariats but also special selection centers will be able to recruit contract personnel to the army on a lawful basis. The very respectable army pay and the whole package of social benefits for cadre service members have done their job. There are more and more people wanting to become professional soldiers in Russia.

Now it is not only commissariats but also 78 special selection centers that are involved in recruiting military professionals. They have been operating de facto for several years now across the country. But hitherto these organizations have not had a proper legal status. This omission is to be made good by amendments to Articles 4 and 34 of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service proposed by the Defense Ministry and supported by a special government commission. The amendments have already been sent to the State Duma for examination....

...Statistics indicate the priority role of these centers in recruiting professional soldiers. According to Defense Ministry figures, beginning in September 2012, something like 6,500 people a month have been concluding contracts for service in the Army and Navy through selection centers....

...According to figures from the Defense Ministry Main Personnel Directorate 65 percent of contract personnel have higher or secondary education and 11 percent of them joined the Army with a vuz [higher educational establishment] diploma. The generals are particularly pleased that more than half the military professionals, having completed their service under their first three-year contract, expressed the desire to conclude a new one. In this case they will remain in the army for at least another five years.

A New Assault Rifle for Russian Forces

24 January 2015



The AK-12 rifle

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AK-12>

OE Watch Commentary: *The AK-12 is another evolutionary development of the Kalashnikov family of weapons. First tested in 2011, the Ministry of Defense announced in January 2012 that they would not be buying any. There were several defects in the new weapon and the Russian Army has huge stockpiles of the AK-74 on hand. Izhmash, the manufacturer, continued to push the AK-12 and tests were again conducted in November 2012. The Ministry inspectors found more defects and again rejected the weapon. Tests scheduled for 2013 were cancelled. In December 2014 the government announced that the AK-12 had passed its tests.*

The AK-12 is shorter, lighter and higher velocity than equivalent assault rifles, and has a telescopic/folding butt stock and can mount any of three Russian grenade launchers. It will be produced in both 5.45×39mm and 7.62×39mm.

The United States had been the primary commercial customer for Izhmash civilian firearms. Izhmash was reportedly facing financial difficulties, and on 16 July 2014 U.S. President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order banning the importation of Russian-made firearms into the United States. The sudden turnaround on the AK-12 acceptance may have as much to do with keeping a vital Russian industry solvent as supporting the Ratnik combat load program. On 20 January Kalashnikov USA (an affiliate of Izhmash) announced plans to establish a factory in the United States to produce commercial shotguns and rifles, including their semi-automatic version of the venerable AK-47.

End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: Tass in Russian, <http://www.itar-tass.com/> 24 January 2015, website of Russian Government Information Agency

Russia's Kalashnikov wins infantry equipment contract with AK-12 rifle

The Russian Defense Ministry has chosen the AK-12 automatic rifle for the Russian Ratnik soldier equipment system, Deputy Defense Minister Yuriy Borisov said today [24 January] on the Russian News Service.

“This is an already decided question, it’s the Izhmash AK-12. The price and the quality seemed attractive to us,” Borisov said.

He added that this year, the Russian Armed Forces may get not 50,000, but 70,000 sets [of Ratnik equipment].

Arctic Winter Live-Fire Exercises Tests Ground Forces Equipment Serviceability

11 February 2015

“The Russian Ground Forces are conducting range firing in the Arctic to determine the serviceability of long-developed systems under conditions of extreme winter. Arctic battalions of the Northern Fleet Strategic Command are conducting field firing at the northern test ranges. One of the tasks is to assess the performance of Gvozdika and Akatsiya self-propelled guns, T-72B3 tanks, and BTR-80 armored personnel carriers under Arctic winter conditions. Over 2000 motorized infantry, artillerymen and naval infantry from the rocket artillery brigade, naval infantry brigade and 80th Arctic Brigade are involved in the firing.”

OE Watch Commentary: The 2S1 Gvozdika [Carnation] is a 122mm self-propelled amphibious howitzer. It employs a special set of wide tracks for the snow and swampy conditions of the arctic. The 2S3 Akatsiya [Acacia] is a 152mm self-propelled howitzer that has wide-tracks as standard issue. Both systems have been around for 45 years and are combat-tested and improved. Maximum range for both using conventional ammunition is short of the article's stated 20-km range, but rocket-assisted rounds are available for both systems. The 2S3 can shoot the 152mm laser-guided, rocket-assisted Krasnapol to reach beyond 20 kilometers. The T-72B3 is an upgraded model of the venerable T-72B main battle tank and the BTR-80 wheeled armored personnel carrier is another veteran system. Field testing the eight-wheeled BTR-80 is interesting since tracked vehicles are generally preferred for cross-country mobility in snow.

The article indicates that these systems will be used for island defense in the Arctic Ocean, as well as ground combat on the northern Russian land mass. **End of OE Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Dmitriy Popov, Moscow MK Online, 11 February 2015; <http://mk.ru/>

Russian Army Starts Field Firing in the Arctic

Toward the end of 2014, Russian military units announced new construction in the Franz Josef Land archipelago. Another military unit will appear there in the next few years. The project is estimated to cost four billion rubles. The Ministry of Defense's plans also include developing the island of Kotel'nyy, which is part of the New Siberian Islands archipelago.

This is why advanced equipment is currently being tested under Arctic conditions. Last year the Pantsir-S anti-aircraft missile gun system demonstrated good results. The Gvozdika self-propelled gun, of course, began series-production in 1970, but its latest version is very new -- it has been in series production since 2008. The Akatsiya self-propelled gun in its latest version has been in series production since 2006, and there are another two trial versions. Both of these systems are designed for the neutralization and destruction of manpower and artillery and mortar batteries, and also the destruction of fighting bunkers with heavy overhead protection, and for clearing minefields and obstacles. Their range of fire is up to 20 kilometers. Krasnapol precision-guided-munitions may be tested. The T-72B3 tank is a Russian main battle tank of the T-72 family. This version was developed as a cheaper alternative to the T-90A until the Russian Army obtains its new generation of tanks. In 2013-2014, 564 such tanks entered the Russian Army. The BTR-80 went into series production in 1984, and, having been modernized repeatedly, is still in production as of 2012. The BTR-80 continues in active production for the military and export, and as of 2011 was in service in 26 countries.

2S3 Akatsiya 152 mm self-propelled howitzer
Source: <http://www.armyrecognition.com/>



“Delivery of combat gear to the Army will begin in March-April of this year....The Ministry of Defense has concluded a three-year contract, which stipulates the annual purchase of nearly 50,000 combat equipment sets.”

OE Watch Commentary: *One of the seminal books for infantrymen is S.L.A. Marshall's The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation, which was first published in 1950. It sought to reduce weight and quantity of combat kit that the US infantryman carried. As Marshall aptly put it, "On the field of battle man is not only a thinking animal, he is a beast of burden. He is given great weights to carry. But unlike the mule, the jeep, or any other carrier, his chief function in war does not begin until the time he delivers that burden to the appointed ground...In fact we have always done better by a mule than by a man. We were careful not to load the mule with more than a third of his weight."*

US studies of the loads carried by soldiers in Afghanistan showed that some infantrymen carried an average of 90 pounds, with some loads being as much as 142 pounds. Afghans often referred to the US infantrymen in the mountains as "the heavy mules." Since the Korean War, much had been done to lighten the weight of individual pieces of infantry kit, but additional "light-weight" gear was added to the total.

*Russia has similar experience fighting in the mountains of Afghanistan, the Caucasus and Southern Ossetia. It is fielding a new set of combat gear that significantly lessens the load on the infantryman, paratrooper or special operator. This is intended to reduce the exhaustion and morale issues that accompany carrying too heavy a burden over too great a distance. Instead of developing the different items in different design bureaus, the Russians have developed the new Ratnik (a Russian term for "warrior" originating in the 9th Century AD) combat load in a single design bureau (with the exception of the assault rifle). Marshal Suvorov, perhaps the greatest figure of Russian military history, set the limit of the soldier's load to no more than the Marshal himself could carry, about 32 kilograms (70 pounds). **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)***

Source: Yuri Gavrilov, Moscow Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online in Russian, <http://rg.ru/> 15 January 2015.

“Ratnik Has Reached the Troops”

Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Oleg Salyukov stated that the Ratnik [Warrior] system has reduced the weight of individual equipment by nearly 1.5 times (from 34 to 24 kilograms-75 pounds to 53 pounds). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the small arms that are part of Ratnik have increased by 1.2 times. The designers have doubled the protection of the integrated body armor. But perhaps the main thing is that they have managed to integrate the new combat gear's command and control system and communications systems with its other elements. This will permit soldiers and officers to accomplish combat missions at any time of day and under various climactic conditions. Experts expect that the effectiveness of their actions will increase by at least 1.5-2 times.

The new combat gear is an integration of protection, destruction, life support, and energy supply systems. Ratnik envisions the use of a total of more than 150 components. A variety of helmets and body armor, combat overalls, a headset with a hearing protection system, protective glasses, and a knee and elbow joint protection set are included. One can use a grenade launcher, an assault rifle, or a sniper rifle. Ammunition, a combat multifunction knife, standard reconnaissance instruments, small binoculars, a light signal flashlight, a shock-resistant and water-proof watch, winter and summer two-sided camouflage kits, and standardized optical and thermal-imaging gun sights supplement the new gear. There is an autonomous heat source, an assault pack, an individual water filter, and lung protection, decontamination, and first aid equipment.

The Ratnik's various elements are suited for ordinary riflemen and also for scouts, driver-mechanics, and other specialists. More than half of the components of the new military gear were developed for the first time and the rest have been modernized. The developers plan to display all of this equipment, which has been manufactured in an export variant, at the arms exhibition in Abu Dhabi this year. The Ratnik made its international debut at the 2014 Paris Eurosatory show.

Future gear, called Ratnik-2 for the time being, is being developed for issue to the troops in 2025-2030.

The Rossiyskaya Gazeta Dossier

The combat gear that exists in the Russian Army right now is first generation. Its elements were developed separately from each other and, as a result, the weight of the equipment that is carried by the soldiers and officers surpassed 34 kilograms. This circumstance was one of the reasons for the development of the Ratnik second-generation combat gear. The experience of combat and the results of the comparative tests of domestic and foreign elements of combat gear and also industry's initiative developments were taken into account during its development.

(continued)

Continued: Lightening the Soldier's Load

With respect to the military gear of soldiers from the West, by way of illustration, shows that they equip American infantrymen with body armor and helmets made from composite materials, protective glasses, a fire-resistant uniform, including gloves and boots, and also night vision instruments and laser target designators. Over 80 items with a total weight of approximately 34 kilograms is included in their gear. According to some assessments, a U.S. infantryman's gear costs from \$28,000 to \$60,000.

RESTRUCTURING THE TACTICAL RUSSIAN ARMY FOR UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

By Lester W. Grau, PhD, TRISA Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO)

Russian wars in Afghanistan (1979-1989) and Chechnya (1994-1996 and 1999-2006) reintroduced their ground forces to nonlinear warfare that lacked a clear front line and a rear area. This paper examines how this combat was fragmented into close-combat fights, and how battles were fought both within urban centers and remote locations.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/restructuring-for-unconventional-warfare.pdf>



Russian Naval Nuclear Submarine Fleet Prepares for Under-Ice Missions

21 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: *The accompanying extract illustrates how this article stresses the readiness and safety considerations practiced by the Russian Navy nuclear force. The 2000 Kursk cruise missile submarine explosion and sinking, which initially drew criticism of President Putin for remaining on vacation during the initial search period and drew accusations of a NATO submarine collision, was a political embarrassment for the new president, who belatedly, but forcefully, went into action. Since then, the Russian MOD has repeatedly stressed the safety procedures and nuclear surety of its strategic force. An interesting note is the training in “using standard navigation equipment for firing torpedoes and missiles.” This is apparently training in case strategic communications and the Arctic GLONASS GPS is compromised. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)*

Source: Andrey Gavrilenko, “In the Arctic Latitudes,” Krasnaya Zvezda Online, URL: <http://www.redstar.ru>]

In the Arctic Latitudes

Crews of Northern Fleet nuclear submarines, including those of the latest “Borey” class, are preparing for voyages under the Arctic ice. At Gadzhiyevo, the Northern Fleet submarine forces’ main base, nuclear submarine command and crew completed a training program for voyages under the ice in the Arctic Ocean’s high latitudes. Special attention was focused on preventing strategic nuclear-powered missile mishaps during Arctic voyages, and using standard navigation equipment for firing torpedoes and missiles. The nuclear submarine crews studied theory and rehearsed ship-crew operations in the event of various emergency situations arising.

Nuclear-powered missile submarines, being a combat component of the Northern and Pacific Fleets, are the core of the Navy’s strike potential. The Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces participate in strategic nuclear deterrence and perform missions at sea using strategic nuclear-powered missile submarines for combat patrols at sea and alert duty in permanent readiness status at the basing locations. The readiness of the strategic and multirole nuclear submarines’ combat service in the world’s oceans is maintained at a level which guarantees our country’s security.

We have trained crews and a professional submarine forces’ command personnel echelon. This experience, magnified by the submariners’ high-quality training at the Navy’s Military Education and Science Center (VUNTs), enables us to have, as a result, the best-trained personnel and officers in the world. The Russian Federation [RF] Defense Ministry and the Naval High Command are giving priority attention to maintaining the Naval Strategic Nuclear Forces’ combat potential at a high level.

Russia's Navy Announces Effort to Develop Automated Naval Aviation Software

16 February 2015

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's Navy is developing new flight technology for naval aviation that could potentially make possible unmanned flight for Russian planes and helicopters. In an interview with the radio station "Echo of Moscow," Igor Kozhin, Chief of the Russian Navy's Naval Aviation, announced that the defense industry was tasked with developing airplanes and helicopters equipped with automated pilot software. With the new flight system airplanes and helicopters would have the option to carry out tasks with either manual pilot control or the new automated pilotless system. According to Kozhin, the system helps reduce risks for pilots when flying 3-4 kilometers.

Additionally, Kozhin announced efforts to develop an automated landing system for naval airplanes. An automated computer program would let pilots land their planes accurately within a one-meter range. According to the accompanying article, the program would reduce the element of human error when landing, especially in dangerous weather or on difficult terrain, the latter being possibly the most advantageous.

The military's development of unmanned flight software will not render human pilots obsolete, however. Pilots ultimately still will decide on which tasks the system will execute. Thus, while the automated system will increase accuracy and decrease mistakes due to human error, a pilot's personal judgment is still required to ultimately guide the mission.

Russia's push for new technology in its aircraft is a continuation of the focus on upgrading military technology. If such developments are carried out, it would be a major gain in Russia's military capabilities. However, with Russia's current financial situation, bringing such developments to fruition may be a loftier task than anticipated. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kangas)**

Source: "Новые самолеты морской авиации России смогут летать без пилота" [New Russian naval aviation airplanes will be able to fly without a pilot], RIA Novosti, 14 February 2015. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150214/1047695116.html

The command of the naval aviation set the industry to the task of creating aircraft and helicopters that can function both with a pilot and without a pilot, reported the chief of naval aviation of the Russian Navy, Igor Kozhin, in an interview on Saturday with the radio station "Echo of Moscow."

"The new airplanes and helicopters that will be developed, will be as such: they will be able to fly in optional versions, in that they can fly with a pilot and without a pilot to carry out tasks. Such a venture we are now putting forth to the industry, and it is realizable in principle," said Kozhin.

Source: ""Система автоматической посадки разрабатывается для морской авиации ВМФ" [Automatic landing system being created for naval aviation of Russia's Navy], RIA Novosti, 14 February 2015. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150214/1047691397.html

An automated landing system with accuracy of a meter will be created for naval aviation pilots in Russia's Navy, reported chief of naval aviation of the Navy Major- General Igor Kozhin.

"We will no create this landing system which will have the landing point accuracy of about a meter. This system is being developed and it will be made, I am absolutely certain of this", - said Kozhin in an interview on the radio station "Echo of Moscow."

Russia Develops another Electronic Warfare Systems

30 January 2015

“Everything that has existed hitherto is Soviet-era developments from the seventies...Since then, not only the wavebands have changed, but so have the frequencies on which the homing-guidance heads operate, and the reconnaissance equipment, and the algorithms of its effect.”

Source: Denis Telmanov, “The ‘Krasukha’ Has Been Sent to the Far East,” Gazeta.ru, 30 January 2015

OE Watch Commentary: According to a recent report Russia's Eastern Military District will soon begin to receive the Krasukha-S4 electronic warfare (EW) system. It was originally scheduled for delivery to the Strategic Missile Troops in 2012, but it was not until 2013 that the first ten sets were delivered. The report notes that, due to outdated equipment, EW systems have not been able to distinguish an enemy missile from a friendly one. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

On Friday [30 January] the Russian Federation (RF) Defense Ministry press office reported that EW subunits would receive several unique modern “Krasukha-S4” systems this year. The system is intended for combating all modern radar stations that are used aboard various types of aircraft, as well as in unmanned air vehicles. In addition, the system’s capabilities make it possible to set up radio interference in a wide range of frequencies, without limitation in terms of the location’s azimuth or angle. “The ‘Krasukha-S4’ uses new digital equipment with superior characteristics,” the report says.

One “Krasukha” provides cover up to 600 kilometers. According to calculations made by military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy, a member of the RF Government Military-Industrial Commission Public Council, it will require several tens of such systems for the Russian Army to provide complete cover for the facilities on the country’s territory.

According to him, the new systems’ main difference is full automation, which makes it possible to minimize the human factor and to eliminate the negative impact on our own Army’s other EW systems.

He added that automation makes it possible to set up targeted interference of a strictly defined frequency, whereas Soviet systems were forced to completely saturate a particular radio-frequency waveband with noise, and this would cause the suppression of our own homing and detection equipment.

According to the MilitaryRussia.ru website’s estimates, the cost of developing and manufacturing an experimental model of the “Krasukha-4” is 258 million rubles. Contracts for the delivery of components for 18 “Krasukha-4” systems have now been secured. They include KamAZ chassis, on which the systems are based, microwave emitters, satellite communications systems, and other equipment.

Another Science Company for Russia's Military

26 January 2015

“The new subunit will make it possible to boost the efficacy of applied-science research and testing in the EW sphere and the training of specialists, and will help in developing data protection methods...”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's military leadership has stated that the State Armament Program's goal is to transform the military. One method to do so is to form science companies that could attract expertise from among a new generation of young scientists. According to Interfax-AVN, the project began on 5 July 2013. These companies are composed of Russian servicemen who will be involved with solving scientific tasks at least 50 percent of their time in the military.

Initially four science companies were formed. They appear to be stationed in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Voronezh. In St. Petersburg the location is the Kuznetsov Naval Academy; in Voronezh, the Zhukovskiy Air Force Academy; in Moscow, the Zverev factory (with optical and electro-optical instrumentation specialties) and perhaps the Bauman State Engineering University (the exact location is unknown). One report stated that the companies would focus on studying strike UAVs, new types of fuel, the development of weapons based on new physical principles, and the improvement of hypersonic warheads.

In February 2014 it was noted that by the end of the year more science companies would be developed. Two such companies that appeared to be under consideration for development were a medical science subunit and a humanities-focused company. In early 2015 it was reported that a “ninth” science company is to be formed at the Tambov electronic warfare training center. This means there are more science companies in existence than are accounted for in the press. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

Source: Anton Valagin, “The Ninth Company Will Become an Electronic One,” Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online, 26 January 2015

A science company will be formed in 2015, based at the Tambov Inter-Branch Center for the Training and Combat Use of Electronic Warfare (REB) Troops, TASS has reported, with a reference to the Russian Federation [RF] Defense Ministry.

The new subunit will make it possible to boost the efficacy of applied-science research and testing in the EW sphere and the training of specialists, and will help in developing data protection methods, the military department explained.

Candidates for recruitment into the intellectual spetsnaz are already being selected at specialized vuz's [higher educational institutions].

The Tambov subunit will become the ninth science company in Russia's Armed Forces. Three subunits have been formed to serve the needs of the National Defense Center, which requires a huge quantity of software, while the rest are working for various combat arms' benefit.

RF Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu stated in December that the number of science companies would increase to 11 in the very near future.

Growing Military Relations between Russia and Nicaragua

Since 2006 Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista Revolutionary Front have progressively increased bilateral relations with Russia in the realms of trade, commerce, agriculture, anti-drug programs, proposed space programs, and infrastructure development. Starting around 2008 Russia also began providing military support to Nicaragua through the provision of funds, equipment and training. In 2011 alone Russia provided Nicaragua with \$26.5 million in military aid—almost nine times more than the U.S. military gave.¹ In response to Russian support, the Nicaraguan Government, with approval from the National Assembly, will allow Russian military formations, ships, and aircraft to remain in the country through June 2015, despite the fact that its constitution prohibits the establishment of foreign military installations on national soil. And in an attempt to maintain continued presence in the country despite constitutional clauses, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has indicated that Russia would like to seek regular access to military facilities in Nicaragua in addition to establishing a military base. Russia is also taking similar actions in Venezuela and Cuba in what appears to be a geopolitical play for strategic military presence in Latin America.

Why Nicaragua?

According to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Nicaragua is geographically desirable, as it will allow Russian vessels access to refueling stations near the equator.² Russia also wants to take part in providing military security during the construction of the Nicaragua Canal. What is interesting to note about the Canal project is that it doesn't have a declaration of neutrality which means that in the event of a conflict, the canal would not remain neutral. In addition, the canal concessions allow for the establishment of a military base. This is significant in the sense that granting Russia the security concession for the canal could actually serve as the cover for a Russian military base from which Russia could potentially host covert programs and agents while simultaneously receiving economic benefits from illegal port activities. It also provides Russians with an operating base that has close proximity to the US. Natural resources including bauxite and potentially large deposits of natural gas in the Caribbean Sea also make Nicaragua appealing to Russia.

Nicaragua Supports Russian Military Presence and Space Programs

President Daniel Ortega has always maintained favorable relations with Russia, especially in the military realm. In 2014, for example, Nicaragua made an exception to its constitution that allowed Russian military formations, ships, and aircraft into the country as part of a six-month training agreement (which ended in June 2014). A second agreement which is in place until June 2015 allows Russian and Nicaraguan soldiers to conduct joint anti-narcotics patrols in territorial waters in the Caribbean and Pacific Ocean. This same agreement allows Russian fleets to provide security during the construction of the Nicaragua Canal.³ When questioned regarding Russian military presence in Nicaragua, Ortega cited US military presence as a justification by stating “How many US military ships visited (our ports) between 2007 and 2012? How many US ships have spent months in our Caribbean and Pacific Ocean ports? Military vessels that have shown up on peacekeeping missions! And how many American soldiers and officers have landed in our country to deploy their bases?... (Foreign) bases are forbidden by the Constitution, but (in reality) bases have still been deployed.”⁴

(continued)

Continued: Growing Military Relations between Russia and Nicaragua

Nicaragua is also supporting Russia's space program, as President Daniel Ortega formally accepted a Russian proposal to build a satellite navigation monitoring system, known as GLONASS, in July 2014. According to Russian open source media, this system will "boost Russia's GLONASS satellite navigation system, the only current alternative to the US's Global Positioning System (GPS) to feature global coverage and comparable accuracy."⁵

Russian Military Support to Nicaragua:

According to President Ortega, Russia's contribution to the Nicaraguan military has been "steady, reliable and extremely important" and the facts bear this out.⁶ Between 2008 and 2009 Russia provided the Nicaraguan Air Force with two modern helicopters, in addition to providing \$(USD) 10,000,000 in "non-reimbursable financial assistance." In March 2013 Russia helped to create an Anti-Drug Training Center in Managua. In April 2013 Russia provided the Nicaraguan Army with a fleet of Tiger armored vehicles, in addition to creating the Mariscal Gueorgui Zhúkov military training center. Support continued into 2014 with the donation of a flight and airborne simulator valued at \$(USD) 15 million.⁷ When questioned about Russian support and equipment donations, President Ortega responded by stating, "Is (the United States) offering to equip our army with modern weapons? We all know that the arms we have are decades old already."⁸

The Perception of Neighboring Countries to Russian Presence in Nicaragua:

For Costa Rica, the idea of a Russian military base in Nicaragua is unnerving, as relations between the two countries are tense. Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís reiterated this idea by referring to Nicaragua as an "uncomfortable neighbor" in March 2014. Solís further added that "We should keep in mind the ties that exist between our countries, but Nicaragua was an aggressor in Costa Rican territory; they invaded (referring to Isla Calero in 2010)."⁹ Citing similar concerns, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Enrique Castillo indicated that Nicaragua is attempting to intimidate its Central American neighbors by arming itself with modern weapons and equipment with the help of Russia.

Conclusion:

Nicaragua appears to be an important first step for Russia in accomplishing its goal of obtaining strategic military presence in Latin America. And although no Russian military bases have been approved for construction in Nicaragua, the idea has been proposed and the constitution has already been modified for initial Russian military presence on Nicaraguan soil. The Nicaragua Canal project which is slated to start in 2015 will also provide Russia with additional years of military presence in the country while simultaneously providing the opportunity to bring additional warships and land-based military equipment. This continued presence will likely allow Russia ample opportunities to further their end goal of establishing permanent military presence in Nicaragua while simultaneously establishing themselves as a strategic ally in the region.

Continued: Growing Military Relations between Russia and Nicaragua

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