

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*

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**ON THE COVER:** "Africa Shattered"  
Source: FMSO

# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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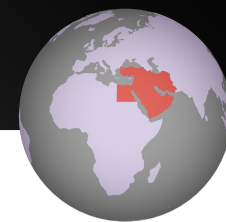
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# Turkey Launches 'Operation Euphrates Shield' in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 24 August, Turkey launched its largest military operation into Syria to date, sending tanks, planes and ground forces into the Syrian city of Jarabulus. The accompanying passages from the Turkish press discuss Turkey's operational goals for this operation, as stated by the President and experts. They all note that the operation's goals were twofold: To clear the Islamic State (ISIS) from its last remaining frontier with Turkey and to ensure that the Syrian Kurdish forces (Democratic Union Party-PYD) forces do not fill the vacuum. As the passages point out, Turkey considers the PYD as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which has escalated its terror attacks inside Turkey since July 2015.

As the first accompanying passage notes, Turkish President Erdoğan said about the operation on 6 September: "We need to demonstrate our presence in the region. If not, terrorist groups such as [ISIS], the PKK and its Syrian offshoot [PYD]... will fill the vacuum." The second passage, by Burhanettin Duran, the general coordinator for a pro-government think-tank in Ankara, says Turkey's aim is to develop a comprehensive approach not to just fight ISIS, but also to block PKK and PYD aspirations in Iraq and Syria. He points out that the Turkish government views the creation of a PYD-controlled statelet in northern Syria as an equally serious threat to Turkey's national security as the PKK gaining control over northern Iraq. (The PKK uses its bases in northern Iraq to launch attacks on Turkey.) The third passage by a pundit also echoes this view.

Because Turkey considers the Syrian Kurdish group PYD as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), they fear that any gains by the PYD in Syria also have the effect of emboldening the PKK inside Turkey. For this reason, Turkish officials view the Syrian crisis as a "domestic issue". In 2011, when the crisis erupted, then-Prime Minister (now President) Erdoğan said: "We do not view the Syria issue as an external issue or an external problem. Because the Syria issue is our domestic issue. We have an 850 km border with Syria, along with familial, historical and cultural ties. Therefore what happens in Syria can never allow us to be idle observers to it." Operation Euphrates Shield is a reflection of this view. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

*“Erdoğan said ... We need to demonstrate our presence in the region. If not, terrorist groups such as [ISIS], the PKK and its Syrian offshoot ... will fill the vacuum.”*



The situation as of 19 September.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish\\_military\\_intervention\\_in\\_the\\_Syrian\\_Civil\\_War#/media/File:Turkish\\_Offensive\\_in\\_Northern\\_Syria.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_military_intervention_in_the_Syrian_Civil_War#/media/File:Turkish_Offensive_in_Northern_Syria.png)

**Source:** Semih Idiz, "Turkey demands role in Mosul battle, but coalition unconvinced," *Al Monitor.com*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/turkey-iraq-syria-isis-raqqa-mosul.html#ixzz4KTTJ21kd>

*“Erdoğan told reporters ... “We need to demonstrate our presence in the region. If not, terrorist groups such as [ISIS], the PKK and its Syrian offshoot the YPG will fill the vacuum,” he said.*

**Source:** Burhanettin Duran, "Why is Turkey eager to liberate Raqqa and Mosul?" *Daily Sabah*, 12 September 2016, <http://www.dailysabah.com/columns/duran-burhanettin/2016/09/12/why-is-turkey-eager-to-liberate-raqqa-and-mosul>

*“Turkey’s aim is to develop a comprehensive approach not to just fight IS, but also to block PKK and PYD aspirations in Iraq and Syria.... According to the government, the creation of a PYD-controlled statelet in northern Syria is an equally serious threat to national security as the PKK gaining control over northern Iraq....”*

**Source:** Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Cerablus gerçekleri (Jarabulus realities)," *Cumhuriyet*, 26 August 2016, [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/590945/Cerablus\\_gercekleri.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/590945/Cerablus_gercekleri.html)

*“So, that does Turkey want? Ankara wants to control Jarabulus to prevent a continuous Kurdish presence in its southern border. It does not have any absolute desire to fight ISIS; but it does have an absolute desire to prevent any Kurdish structure in Syria. And it sees that taking Jarabulus is the only way to achieve this.”*

1 Izbul, Can. "Erdoğan: "Suriye İç Meselemiz, Gereğini Yapmak Durumundayız (Erdoğan: "Syria is our Domestic Issue, We have to do whatever is Necessary"). *Amerika'nin Sesi* (Voice of America), 7 August 2011. <http://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/erdogan-suriye-ic-meselemiz-geregini-yapmak-durumundayiz-127078293/898713.html>



## Israel Activates Iron Dome against Rockets from Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** In mid-September, after a period of quiet for months, an escalation of spillover incidents from Syria into Israel took place. Several Syrian mortar shells hit the Israeli Golan Heights, prompting Israeli Air Force strikes on Syrian military targets. In response, for the first time, and in a significant escalation, two anti-aircraft surface-to-air missiles were fired from Syria at the Israeli Air Force. This led Israel to station an “Iron Dome” anti-missile battery in the Golan Heights for the first time since 2014. On 17 September, this battery successfully shot down two artillery shells fired at the Golan Heights—the first time an Iron Dome battery successfully intercepted a rocket from Syria. The accompanying passages from the Israeli press discuss this development, and how Israel’s position may be shifting as a result.

The first passage by Ben Caspit, a senior analyst for Israeli newspapers, discusses how Israel’s position may be changing given the escalation. He points out that until now, Israel’s position has been to retaliate against mortar shells or stray artillery fire from Syria’s civil war (that landed in Israeli territory) by tit-for-tat artillery fire and occasional retaliatory air strikes against Syrian troops or positions loyal to President Assad. He notes that this was part of a formula developed by Israel, that held the Syrian government responsible for fire (whether intentional or inadvertent) that ended up in Israeli territory. However, he points out that Israel has concluded that an automatic response targeting the Syrian army may not necessarily be the right response anymore. He quotes a senior Israeli military official as saying that “It is not impossible that the next time this happens, the various rebel groups will be the ones to take a hit from us.... We are completely aware of the fact that it is not just mortars and bombs fired by Assad’s army that are landing in Israeli territory. On quite a few occasions, it is rebel fire. As such, the immunity granted to the rebels until now is over. From this point on, whoever is responsible for the fire will suffer the brunt of the response.”

The second passage also notes Israel’s general policy of targeting the Syrian army in response to anything that came across the border into Israel. The author quotes a statement by the Israeli Defense Forces which also points out the shift. The statement says, “The IDF sees the regime as responsible for what happens in its territory, with that being said [the army] will not hesitate to act against any opposition forces in Syria.”

The first passage also notes that these developments are a result of Russian involvement in Syria, which have boosted Assad’s self-confidence. The passage quotes an Israeli military official as saying that “Assad is back in the game, even in the Golan Heights. This means that we must do everything we can to ensure that the game doesn’t reach us.”

It appears that as Syrian President Bashar Assad turns his attention to the Syrian Golan Heights and attempts to retake control of it from the various rebel groups there, Israel may see more and more such incidents. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya).**

*“[Israeli military official said]... Russian involvement boosted Assad’s self-confidence, and he is back in the game, even in the Golan Heights. This means that we must do everything we can to ensure that the game doesn’t reach us. That’s exactly what we’re doing.”*

**Source:** Ben Caspit, “How will Israel respond to Assad’s warning?,” *Al Monitor*, 19 September 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/israel-shifts-tactics-vis-a-vis-syria.html>

*“Until now, whenever a mortar shell or stray artillery fire from Syria’s civil war landed in Israeli territory in the Golan Heights, Israel made a point of attacking a Syrian position or mortar belonging to the Syrian troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. It was part of a formula developed by Israel over the past few years, ever since the Syrian civil war started lapping against the border fence in the Golan Heights. So far, the strategy has proved itself effective; the Israeli Golan Heights have remained relatively quiet, apart from a rather random and even rare dribble of mortar fire that landed here and there, in unpopulated areas.*

...

*Over the past two weeks, however, the situation has changed. The number of mortar shells landing in the Israeli Golan Heights has increased considerably. Meanwhile, Israel has concluded that an automatic response targeting the Syrian army has worn thin and is not necessarily the right response. “It is not impossible that the next time this happens, the various rebel groups will be the ones to take a hit from us,” a senior Israeli military source told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity. “This game must end. We are completely aware of the fact that it is not just mortars and bombs fired by Assad’s army that are landing in Israeli territory. On quite a few occasions, it is rebel fire. As such, the immunity granted to the rebels until now is over. From this point on, whoever is responsible for the fire will suffer the brunt of the response.”*

...

*Israeli air force jets and drones, which took part in a sortie targeting one of Assad’s military installations Sept. 13, were surprised when the Syrian anti-aircraft system fired two anti-aircraft surface-to-air missiles at them.*

...

*These frequent trickles of mortar fire have forced Israel to station an “Iron Dome” anti-missile battery in the Golan Heights for the first time in a very long time. This battery has already succeeded by shooting down two artillery shells fired at the Golan Heights on Sept. 17.*

...

*A military source told Al-Monitor.... Russian involvement boosted Assad’s self-confidence, and he is back in the game, even in the Golan Heights. This means that we must do everything we can to ensure that the game doesn’t reach us. That’s exactly what we’re doing. So far, we’ve been successful for the past five years. We will not let anyone ruin that statistic.”*

*(continued)*





## Continued: Israel Activates Iron Dome against Rockets from Syria

**Source:** Judah Ari Gross, "No, Syrian rebels aren't tricking the IDF into providing aerial support," *Times of Israel*, 15 September 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/no-syrian-rebels-arent-tricking-the-idf-into-providing-aerial-support/>

*"According to Israeli logic in recent months, it doesn't really matter which group fired the specific projectile: The Syrian government is ultimately responsible for whatever comes across the border, and so the Syrian army will be targeted...."*

*In a statement about the Tuesday night bombing run, the IDF also clarified its position on the issue.*

*"The IDF sees the regime as responsible for what happens in its territory, with that being said [the army] will not hesitate to act against any opposition forces in Syria," the army said in a statement."*



Iron Dome missile at ILA Berlin Air Show 2012.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ILA\\_Berlin\\_2012\\_PD\\_037.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ILA_Berlin_2012_PD_037.JPG)



The Iron Dome anti-missile system.  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron\\_Dome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Dome)



## Iran: Khamenei Calls for Developing New Offensive Weaponry

**OE Watch Commentary:** Under terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the corollary UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran is not supposed to spend unfrozen assets and repatriated cash on offensive military platforms for at least eight years, with offensive loosely defined by the UN Register of Conventional Arms. Alas, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei seems to have no desire to abide by such restrictions. According to the excerpted article from a news portal close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Supreme Leader specifically demanded that Iran not only develop new defensive military capabilities but offensive capabilities as well. This theme was repeated on September 2 during Friday prayer sermons, suggesting that Khamenei does not want his statements interpreted as pandering to a single event but rather a declaration of strategy. Accordingly, Khamenei may be signaling that he has no intention to wait for legal restrictions to be lifted before the Islamic Republic begins importing weaponry such as armor, new missile systems, and aircraft technically prohibited by Iran's agreements. Iranian diplomats may seek to augment their offensive capabilities with any or all of three strategies: First, they may seek to shield themselves at the United Nations with a Russian veto over any renewed sanctions. Second, they may argue that the JCPOA is null and void because the United States has not fully abided by what Tehran interprets as the requirement to lift non-nuclear sanctions and to bolster the Iranian economy. Lastly, they may simply seek to bolster their indigenous weapons program, reverse engineering whatever they acquire abroad or setting local production in a more authorized manner. Whichever strategies they choose, it appears that Iranian military acquisitions have only just begun. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Calls on Iran to Augment Offensive Weaponry.  
Source: Leader.ir, [http://leader.ir/media/album/original/49784\\_636.jpg](http://leader.ir/media/album/original/49784_636.jpg)

**Source:** “Tavan Defah’i va Tahajemi ra Afzayesh Dahid ta Zurguyan Ahsas Tahdid Konand ,” (“Increase Offensive and Defensive Capabilities Until the Bullies Feel Threatened”), *Tasnim News*, 31 August 2016, [goo.gl/tiZtG9](http://goo.gl/tiZtG9)

*The Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyah on Wednesday hosted an exhibition of defense industry achievements of the Iranian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, and his Excellency Ayatollah Khamenei, supreme commander, for more than two hours visited the showcase of advanced technologies, indigenous, and knowledge-based technologies developed by students, researchers, and local experts which will help augment the military capabilities of the armed forces.*

*In this exhibition, achievements in the field of designing and manufacturing a variety of advanced systems and equipment pertaining to missile, radar, marine, optic, armor, drone and communications were put on display...*

*Radar systems used for “watching, tracking, hunting and electro-optical fire control” were in another booth. In this section, Ministry of Defense officials presented a report on the radar section of domestically-manufactured Bavar 373 defense system, which is more advanced than its foreign-made prototypes.*

*After that, Ayatollah Khamenei, during a meeting with officials, researchers and experts of the Ministry of Defense, said enhancing the “defensive and offensive” capabilities of the country was the inalienable and undeniable right of the country... There are no limitations on the development of our defensive and military capabilities. Advancing in these domains is our duty.”*





## New Radar System Defends Iranian Airspace

**OE Watch Commentary:** With regard to operational requirements, the Iranian military sees their future needs as the ability to conduct urban warfare and close quarters fighting on land. While Iran embraces an asymmetric strategy both on land and at sea, defense of its airspace has always been a weak spot. During the Iran-Iraq War, almost every major Iranian city with the exception of Mashhad was within range and hit by Iraqi missiles. More recently, Iranian officials have grown concerned by unauthorized over flights, especially from foreign-operated drones.



The Nazir Radar System

Source: Fars News Agency, <https://goo.gl/Zd4N7X>

In the excerpted article, which was published in many different Iranian news and defense-specific websites, Abdollah Reshadi, commander of Iranian air defense in its northeastern region (along the Turkmen and Afghanistan borders), declared that Iran has upgraded its radar systems since the end of sanctions and that it can respond in “less than a minute” to incursions. He specifically spoke of the recent tightening of Iranian control in “the skies over the country’s southern territorial waters.” In particular, Iranian officials credit the Nazir radar system. General Farzad Esmayeeli, commander of Khatam ol-Anbia Air Defense Base, said that with the Nazir, “no radar-evading flying object can enter the Islamic Iran’s skies without permission.” That may be an exaggeration, but Iranian efforts to upgrade air defense and develop an indigenous ability to respond to drones suggest that it hopes to eliminate one of its chief vulnerabilities. The Supreme Leader seemingly leading the charge on this indicates that he retains a firm grip on broader military strategy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Enemy activities can be detected promptly, in less than a minute...”

**Source:** “Fa’liyat-e Doshman beh Movaqe’ Shenansi Mishevad” (“The Activities of Our Enemies are Detected on Time”) *Cherif.ir*, 2 September 2016. <https://goo.gl/RbtRZE>

*The commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Defense Base in the northeast area said, defense does not only include the headquarters, and all the forces of the army, Revolutionary Guards, and Basij, but also takes the form of an integrated defense network. According to the Mehr News Agency, Brigadier General Abdollah Reshadi, in a speech prior to the Friday Prayer sermon this week in the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, said, in the time of the imposed [Iran-Iraq] war, there were 1,000 regions for special pictures, and these were under the control of radar systems. He added, these systems were maintained by technical forces and at that time, we were faced with sanctions, all of the systems were up-to-date for that time whereas on the other side, Iraq had updated all of the systems to use for the attack against Iran....*

*Reshadi added, defense was present in several operations, for example, in Valfajr 8 [Operation Dawn 8 during which Iranian forces recaptured Faw], different types of enemy aircraft and helicopters were destroyed, and established an answer for Iran for aerial tactics, and four enemy aircraft were destroyed daily, and the enemies came to fear and chose to flee...*

*He added, “An integrated defense network not only includes the headquarters, but also the army, revolutionary guards, and Basij, and all of the groups should be represented in an integrated network defense, and Reshadi said that enemy activities can be detected promptly, in less than a minute, and can be firmly dealt with... [This is why] we were able to witness the arrest of the American Marines, and why enemy aircraft have no choice but to apologize.*

*He added, the defense of our country is under control 24 hours a day, and the Supreme Leader insists on a front-line defense against the enemy until the enemy is no longer able to encroach on Iranian territory.*



## Iran Purchases AK-103s from Russia

### OE Watch Commentary:

The implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the signing of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 lifted or revised many existing sanctions on Iran. The Iranian military has used its cash influx to restock its military, purchasing new missile systems and tanks from Russia and potentially purchasing combat aircraft—technically illicit under the terms of Resolution 2231—from Russia and China. Now, according to the excerpted article from an official Iranian defense portal, the Iranian military is purchasing new assault rifles from Russia. The article describes the AK-103, and explains why it is the right choice for the Iranian military. The fact that an Iranian defense website must justify purchase of a Russian weapon rather than an American weapon might suggest that many rank-and-file soldiers would prefer M-16s over Russian models. The Iranian insistence that a larger caliber bullet is an advantage is questionable, given the additional weight that Iranian soldiers would have to carry, especially since the article suggests that Iran's main focus for the future will be in urban warfare and the type of close-quarters fighting that has occurred in both Iraq and Syria. The fact that Iran sees the future of its military needs to be the ability to conduct the type of urban warfare conducted in Syria is especially significant, because it suggests that even if the Syria war concludes, Iran's aims in Yemen and elsewhere might be to replicate such proxy wars of attrition.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

*“The AK-103...will be the right weapon for our armed forces.”*



Iran has purchased AK-103s from Russia  
Source: Defapress.ir, [http://www.defapress.ir/IDNA\\_media/image/2016/08/154443\\_orig.jpg](http://www.defapress.ir/IDNA_media/image/2016/08/154443_orig.jpg)

**Source:** “Moshkhasat AK-103: Aslahah Polermeri” (“Profile: AK-103, Plastic Gun”), *Defa Press*, 7 August 2016, <http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/94695>

*According to news recently released to our media, Iran bought a number of guns from Russia such as the AK-103, so that they might be placed at the disposal of our armed forces. From this brief report, here is what is known about the weapons, and we will also examine a comparison to two Western weapons....*

*The AK-103 is from the AK-100 series, and in this model, the Russians have reverted to the famous 7.62mm caliber, and the guns have benefited from it. The basic design of this weapon is based on the AK-74M and its body is made from polymers and plastic components.*

*The AK-103 weights about 3.6 kilograms (7.9 lbs) and has a length of 943 millimeters (37.1 inches), and fires at a rate of 600 round per minute with a bullet muzzle velocity of 715 meters/second (1600 miles per hour) and an effective range of around 500 meters (1640 feet). This weapon is also involved in the export market, and it has been exported to India, Libya, and Saudi Arabia...*

*Therefore, with respect to the material, it can be said that the AK-103 in terms of accuracy and compared with American weapons, ranks lower than the M-16, but due to the use of 7.62mm rounds and its more effective range, will be the right weapon for our armed forces.*

*On the one hand, given that there is an AK-47 production line in Iran, and that the arms industry can easily produce these weapons, and on the other hand, because parts can be interchangeable between AK-47 and AK-103 and taking into account the future of urban warfare as close combat and given the fighting in Syria and Iraq, it will be better to use weapons such as the AK-103 and the 7.62 mm bullets.*





## Shia Symbolism: Iran-Backed Militias Resurgent in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** In an August 2016 interview, retired Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) commander Mohammed Ali al-Faliki discussed the creation of a new IRGC-backed force called the “Free Shia Army” (also known as “Shia Liberation Army”). According to the accompanying passages from the interview, the new formation will include Shia fighters from various nationalities who will fight wherever Shia sites are in danger. Al-Faliki seemed especially bullish on Afghans, whom he called “the main reason Damascus did not fall into opposition hands.” The Afghans fighting for the loyalist camp in Syria (“the Fatimid Brigade”) are mostly refugees in Iran whom the IRGC has recruited with material incentives such as land, jobs, and educational opportunities for family members. As the excerpt notes, they are deployed “in the name of defending Shia holy sites in Syria.”

Defending religious sites from Sunni jihadists has become the rallying cry for Iranian-backed militias in Syria and beyond. Although Iranian leadership has used symbolic monuments to mobilize Shia groups since the 1979 revolution, the current phenomenon in Syria also has roots in the decade preceding the 2011 protests in Syria, when Iranian money helped fuel a boom in Syria’s religious tourism industry. Shia sites were revamped and expanded as tour groups from India, Pakistan, and Iran descended on Damascus and other parts of the country.

One of the sites restored with Iranian patronage during this period was a shrine honoring Sukayna (Sakina), a daughter of the Prophet Muhammad’s revered grandson Hussayn. The Sukayna Shrine is located in the rebel-friendly, Sunni-majority Damascus suburb of Darayya. By late August 2016, Darayya had been left in ruins after years of tight government siege and air campaign; which forced the remaining Sunni rebels to negotiate safe passage out for themselves and their families. Shortly after the Sunni population withdrew, the leader of a loyalist Shia militia was photographed praying near the partially destroyed Sukayna Shrine. As noted in the second accompanying article, social media chatter from “Syrian, Iraqi and Lebanese fighters” highlighted the importance of protecting the shrine.

In early September, the prominent Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat* reported that 300 Shia families from Southern Iraq would be relocated to various parts of Damascus and its periphery, including Darayya. The accompanying excerpted article claimed that the Iraqi militia Harakat Hizbullah al-Nujaba (HHN) would be in charge of the population transfer. HHN, which is a second-generation splinter group from Iraq’s Mahdi Army, refuted the claim the following day. HHN is among the most successful militias in the contemporary Syria-Iraq battlefield. Its leader makes no secret of receiving training, weapons and guidance from Iran. Its cadres permeate Iraq’s intelligence and police forces, while also controlling important trade and industry in the country’s south. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... in the name of defending Shia holy sites in Syria...”



HHN logo  
Source: <http://alnujaba.com/about-us.html>

**Source:** قيادي بالحرس الثوري يكشف عن قوة شيعية عابرة للحدود “IRGC Commander Unveils Cross-Border Shia Force,” *Arabi21*. 19 August 2016. <http://goo.gl/N1wGM9>

According to Faliki: “The Afghan Shia under the command of [Qassim] Sulaimani were the main reason Damascus did not fall into opposition hands... In 2014 a group of 50 retired IRGC generals who participated in the Iran-Iraq war was sent to Syria. I was one of them... We have paid a great price to support Shia in Yemen and Bahrain”... The IRGC has recruited tens of thousands of Afghan fighters residing in Iran, in exchange for material incentives including giving their families land, employment in IRGC enterprises, and study grants in Iranian universities for the fighters’ family members. Most of the Afghan Shia, who have been recruited and sent as part of the “Fatimid Brigade,” live in the city of Mashhad, which has become an Afghan recruitment center. Afghan Shia clerics linked to the IRGC and Basij play the main role in recruitment, in the name of defending Shia holy sites in Syria.

**Source:** مقاتلون طائفيون يوجهون أنظارهم إلى “مقام سكيينة” في داريا “Sectarian Fighters Set their Sights on the Sukayna Shrine in Darayya.” *Enab Baladi*, 26 August 2016. <http://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/99907>

As soon as there were intimations of an agreement to empty Darayya of its civilians and fighters, the Twitter hashtag [#Sayyida\_Sukayna] began trending among Syria, Iraqi and Lebanese fighters... some accounts spoke of meetings between the IRGC and Lebanese Hizbullah leaders to rehabilitate Darayya and possibly welcome Iranian and Lebanese to “expand the shrine”...

**Source:** النجباء تنقل عوائل من الجنوب العراقي إلى سوريا لأغراض التغيير الديموغرافي “Al-Nujaba Changes Demographics by Transferring Families from Southern Iraq to Syria.” *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 6 September 2016. <https://goo.gl/WOiyhd> (translation via: [http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/31603/Iraqi\\_Shiite\\_Militias\\_Seeking\\_Demographic\\_Change\\_Syria/](http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/31603/Iraqi_Shiite_Militias_Seeking_Demographic_Change_Syria/))

The militias of the Iraqi Harakat al-Nujaba Movement have begun to relocate Shiite families from southern Iraq to areas of Syria, including Daraya and Moadamiya... At least 300 Iraqi families were being transported there with the aim of creating demographic change, in coordination with regime officials in Syria. The source added that the al-Nujaba Movement — headed by Akram al-Kaabi, and which is close to Iran and has direct links to the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei — was the one in charge of organizing the plan. Each family will be given a salary of about \$2,000 and a house to live in.



## Mini-UAV Proliferation in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Cheap mini drones have become increasingly visible in the Syrian conflict. These video-capable, rotary-wing commercial drones provide exceptional propaganda footage; along with improved reconnaissance, command and control capabilities for small units. A propaganda video from a recent Sunni rebel attack on a loyalist checkpoint in Quneitra Province, for instance, uses aerial footage to clearly show the retreat of loyalist forces. The checkpoint was located on a hilltop and the retreat of loyalist forces would not be observable without the aerial view enabled by the mini drones.

According to the first accompanying article, “most forces in Syria” have UAV surveillance capabilities. The article claims that Syria has “agents and sales centers” for DJI, maker of the popular Phantom quadcopter (for more information on the DJI Phantom, see: “DJI-Phantom COTS UAV,” *Red Diamond Threats Newsletter*, August 2016). The mini-drone market is growing rapidly, and the entry of companies such as China’s Xiaomi will increase supply while lowering prices. The proportion of Syrian combat footage posted online which includes overhead shots has grown steadily throughout 2016.

Mini-UAVs are not used exclusively for surveillance. In August, Lebanese Hizbullah fighters in Aleppo Province posted footage of a rotary wing mini-drone dropping Chinese MZD-2 submunitions on adversary positions. A few days later, the transnational Sunni jihadist group Jund al-Aqsa uploaded video of a similar attack on loyalist forces in Hama. The damage in both cases appeared to be minimal.

The third accompanying excerpt discusses an interview with Abu al-Baraa, a Syrian army defector who developed Jund al-Aqsa’s armed quadcopter. Abu al-Baraa is a tinkerer - he was also behind an earlier attempt at improvising rechargeable batteries for use with SA-7 MANPADS captured from the Syrian military. He claims to have come up with the idea of arming a quadcopter after seeing “a social media post about food being delivered by drone in the West.” He initially worked alone, doing online research and developing prototypes. He pitched the idea to several rebel groups and was taken up by Jund al-Aqsa, which apparently had enough DJI Phantom 3s to sacrifice some for testing. Abu al-Baraa claims his design is now being further refined and will be adopted by several other rebel groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...The idea of arming a surveillance drone came after I saw a social media post about food being delivered by drone in the West...”



Jund al-Aqsa projectile dropped from Quadcopter  
Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op\\_hRfPhsFs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op_hRfPhsFs)

**Source:**

طائرات بدون طيار تباع بشمال سوريا عبر وكلاء حصريين  
“Unmanned Aircraft Sold in Northern Syria via Exclusive Agents,” *Arabi21*. 16 July 2016. <http://goo.gl/WZhhQw>

*Syrian activists played down the importance of a recent report published by the Pentagon regarding ISIS UAVs used for video and surveillance. They noted that most forces in Syria already have such capabilities... “they are a commercial product that can be easily obtained, and pointing this out is hardly an important discovery deserving such media attention”... “Did you know that there are agents and sales centers in Syria for DJI Phantoms?”... the Chinese companies sells small cargos of no more than 50 planes to merchants who then transfer them to Syria in their own way, despite the many obstacles placed on buying these types of aircraft...*

**Source:**

طائرة من غير طيار معدلة للقصف الجوي من تطوير حزب الله اللبناني  
“Hizbullah Develops Modified Attack UAV,” *Main Battle Tanks Blog*. 10 August 2016. [http://anwaralsharrad-mbt.blogspot.com/2016/08/blog-post\\_10.html](http://anwaralsharrad-mbt.blogspot.com/2016/08/blog-post_10.html)

*Social media websites posted a video showing a drone belonging to Lebanon’s Hizbullah which had been modified to launch a limited attack against Syrian opposition positions in Aleppo, using submunitions small in both size and impact. The video clearly shows an aircraft launching two Chinese-made MZD-2 submunitions which were mostly likely extracted from Chinese-made 122-mm rockets...*

**Source:**

“سجیل..“ الفصائل تقصف نظام الأسد بطائرات استطلاع  
“‘Sajil’... Rebels Strike Assad Regime with a Drone,” *Arabi21*. 4 September 2016. <http://goo.gl/tCh1IK>

*Abu al-Baraa said: “The idea of arming a surveillance drone came after I saw a social media post about food being delivered by drone in the West. I began a long study and intensive research on the Internet on the weight these drones can bear and decided on one that could carry 500 grams. I studied the drones that were in the possession of Jund al-Aqsa and their ability to maneuver with the excess weight, finally determining the weight they could bear. There was a challenge with the distance the drone would have to travel, so I designed a circuit board to cover this distance. After great exertion and effort I obtained successful results, leading to the first test under the name “Sajil-1” ... He explained that the Sajil-3 is almost ready and will correct all previous errors. The initial development was on his own, but is now a joint effort that includes plans to develop drones in the hands of opposition factions. Abu al-Bara chose Jund al-Aqsa rather than another group to test his design because they were the only ones that asked him to do so. Other factions were concerned that their drones would be lost if the trials failed and the drone exploded.*





## Saudi Arabia and China in the Arabian Sea

**OE Watch Commentary:** In last August, a high-level Saudi delegation led by the kingdom's de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman visited China. The two countries signed over a dozen trade agreements and Memoranda of Understanding during the inaugural meeting of what they termed the "Saudi-Chinese Joint Committee." None of the reported agreements involved weapons purchases or defense cooperation, but the following day the Saudi newspaper *al-Watan* (citing the Chinese English-language *Global Times* as its source) claimed that Saudi Arabia had agreed to purchase an unspecified number of Chinese-made Pterodactyl drones, as noted in the first accompanying passage. The Pterodactyl, or Wing Loong, is a medium-altitude, long-endurance attack UAV, a Chinese version of the MQ-1 Predator. This is the second report of Saudi Arabia agreeing to purchase an unspecified number of Pterodactyls; the first was in April 2014.

Bin Salman's visit comes amidst Saudi calls for deeper cooperation with China. The second accompanying article argues that the two countries are "coming from similar starting points" by having comparable economic development plans in place (China's "One Road, One Belt" plan and Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030"). One of the goals in Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" plan is to establish a government-controlled domestic arms manufacturing industry that can meet 50% of Saudi Arabia's total arms expenditures by 2030. As the third excerpt notes, this is a potential growth sector for Saudi-Chinese defense cooperation.

Earlier in 2016, China and Saudi Arabia were reported to be on the verge of independently establishing military bases in Djibouti. As the Chinese base proceeds apace, the Saudi base remains little more than an expression of interest. The fickleness of ties between the rulers of Djibouti and Gulf States notwithstanding, this expression of interest should be taken seriously.

A key theme in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is self-sufficiency. Strategically, this entails greater capacity to independently project power in the region. According to the fourth accompanying article, also from *al-Watan*, the planned Saudi base in Djibouti is motivated by the absence of a "hegemonic power in the Arabian Sea" and driven by a broader strategic vision to counter the perceived Iranian threat. Saudi Arabia will not suddenly turn toward China to achieve its regional strategic designs, but a gradual Saudi pivot toward the east is plausible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**



“...There is no hegemonic power in the Arabian Sea ...”

Saudi Arabia  
Vision 2030 logo  
Source: <http://vision2030.gov.sa/en>

**Source:** المملكة تشتري عددا من طائرات الزاحف المجنح  
“Saudi Arabia Buys Several Pterodactyls.” *Al-Watan*, 31 August 2016. [http://alwatan.com.sa/Politics/News\\_Detail.aspx?ArticleID=275907&CategoryID=1](http://alwatan.com.sa/Politics/News_Detail.aspx?ArticleID=275907&CategoryID=1)

*Saudi Arabia has signed a contract with China to buy an unspecified number of planes known as Pterodactyls or Wing Loongs. They are medium-altitude long-endurance UAVs, according to a report in the Global Times.*

**Source:** السعودية والصين: انطلاقة جديدة  
“Saudi Arabia and China: A New Start.” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 30 August 2016. <https://goo.gl/MlrcVY>

*Saudi Arabia and China are coming from similar starting points, as each has a grand project: Saudi Arabia has “Vision 2030,” which calls for the restructuring of many social and economic pillars; China has a plan to revive the ancient Silk Road, which linked to the Middle East. Both countries are opening up to the world in a new and planned way, with the aim of improving the situation of the international community in general and of the two countries in particular.*

**Source:** رؤية 2030 من وجهة نظر صينية  
“Vision 2030 from a Chinese Perspective.” *al-Jazirah* (Saudi Arabia), 26 August 2016. <http://www.al-jazirah.com/2016/20160826/wz1.htm>

*Chinese officials have on various occasions expressed China's desire to coordinate its “One Road, One Belt” plan with the kingdom's Vision 2030 plan... Vision 2030 calls for establishing a 100%-government owned holding company for military industry and for 50% of military spending to be done locally by 2030. This is a grand goal that requires precise planning by leaders, strong will, and fixed steps. Saudi Arabia may benefit from China, which has had successful experiences and critical studies on this issue.*

**Source:** لبنان أم جيبوتي  
“Either Lebanon or Djibouti.” *al-Watan*, 28 July 2016. <http://www.alwatan.com.sa/Articles/Detail.aspx?ArticleID=31359>

*...a political and military position that will serve for the next ... Were this military base to become a reality it would be our first base abroad.... Having a military base in Djibouti would not serve military goals in the Red Sea or Yemen... but would be very useful as a naval launching point in the western Indian Ocean... There is no hegemonic power in the Arabian Sea... it may be time to reconsider our strategic priorities. The idea of opening a base in Djibouti may be a starting point for expansion in the right direction.*



## Israel and NATO Upgrade Ties

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 16 September, Israel opened a permanent mission at NATO's headquarters in Brussels. This significant upgrade of ties follows a May 2016 decision by NATO to invite Israel to open a permanent office and assign an official Israeli representative. The accompanying passages from Middle Eastern sources discuss the background of this development. Although Israel had numerous channels to NATO before, none of them were operating directly out of alliance headquarters in Brussels. The permanent and daily access to NATO headquarters will provide greater opportunities for cooperation and provide more access to exercises, events and programs.

As the passages discuss, Israel and NATO had been in talks on improving relations for years, but the opening of the mission had been vetoed by Turkey. During a period when Turkey's relations with Israel were at a critical low, (from 2010-2016) Turkey had been adamantly opposed to any further NATO cooperation with Israel. In February 2012, then-Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said that Turkey would never allow Israel to use any NATO facility.<sup>1</sup> Turkish sources also claimed that Turkey blocked Israel's participation in NATO's 2012 summit.<sup>2</sup> However, following a long period of Israeli and Turkish efforts to normalize relations, it appears that Turkey dropped this position. The first passage notes that the invitation was "a result of pressure by other NATO members on Turkey.... to drop its veto on closer alliance ties with its former ally."

The second passage, from the Turkish mainstream *Hürriyet* newspaper points out the May 2016 NATO decision was made after Turkey lifted its veto. The passage notes that a high-level Israeli official claimed that Turkey dropped its veto in an effort to normalize its relations with Israel. The two countries did in fact sign a reconciliation deal the next month, in June 2016. The third passage quotes Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu as saying how grateful he is to NATO for the invitation; and his comments that Israel stands ready to help NATO in its fight against terrorism and is prepared to share its intelligence and experience in this effort.

As the final passage from the *Times of Israel* notes, Israel is not a member of the 28-nation alliance, but has enjoyed military cooperation with NATO in a number of fields and is currently a partner of the Mediterranean Dialogue, a NATO outreach program with seven friendly nations bordering on the Mediterranean; which also includes Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Mauritania and Morocco. The passage notes that Israel's representative to NATO will be Leshno-Yaar, who is also Israel's current ambassador to the European Union. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

- 1 "Davutoglu says will never let Israel use NATO facility in Turkey," *World Bulletin*, 17 February 2012. <http://www.worldbulletin.net/haber/85965/davutoglu-says-will-never-let-israel-use-nato-facility-in-turkey>
- 2 "Türkiye'den İsrail'e Chicago Vetosu (Turkey Vetoes Israel's Presence at Chicago Meeting)," *Stargazete.com*, April 23, 2012. <http://www.star-gazete.com/dunya/turkiyeden-israile-chicago-vetosu/haber-550053>

*"... the NATO decision was taken after Turkey lifted its veto."*

**Source:** "Israel opens NATO office as ambassador presents credentials," *i24news.tv*, 16 September 2016. <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/125551-160916-israel-opens-nato-office-as-ambassador-presents-credentials>

*"Israel and NATO had been in talks on improving relations for years, however, the opening of the mission had been stymied by Turkey, a key regional ally of Israel until 2010 when Israeli commandos stormed a Turkish aid ship bound for Gaza, leaving 10 activists dead. Israel and Turkey have since normalized relations and signed a reconciliation deal in June."*

**Source:** "İsrail, NATO karargahında temsilcilik açacak (Israel will open a representative [office] at the NATO headquarters)," *Hürriyet.com*, 4 May 2016. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/israil-nato-karargahinda-temsilcilik-acacak-40099143>

*"An official speaking to the Haaretz newspaper in Jerusalem said that the NATO decision was taken after Turkey lifted its veto. A high-level Israeli official claimed that this was a sign of Turkey's efforts to normalize relations with Israel."*

**Source:** "Netanyahu: Israel Will Help NATO States With 'Collective Struggle' Against Terror," *The Algemeiner*, 15 June 2016. <http://www.algemeiner.com/2016/06/15/netanyahu-israel-will-help-nato-states-with-collective-struggle-against-terror/#>

*"Netanyahu told the ambassadors [of NATO member states], "I look forward to this opportunity to discuss our common interests, based on our common values. I want to thank NATO for inviting Israel to open an office in your headquarters in Brussels... Israel has much to contribute to NATO. I believe NATO has much to contribute to Israel..."*

*"We stand ready to help NATO in this collective struggle [terrorism]. We are prepared to share our intelligence and our experience to help in this common effort."*

**Source:** "Israel's first ambassador to NATO presents his credentials," *Times of Israel*, 16 September 2016. <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-first-ambassador-to-nato-presents-his-credentials/>

*"Israel is not a member of the 28-nation... NATO, but has enjoyed military cooperation with the body in a number of fields and is currently a partner of the Mediterranean Dialogue..."*

*...  
Leshno-Yaar is also Israel's ambassador to the European Union, responsible for relations between the Jewish state and the 28-member bloc.*

*...  
In June, an Israeli expert told AFP that the invitation was a result of pressure by other NATO members on Turkey, which joined in 1952, to drop its veto on closer alliance ties with its former ally."*





## Split in Boko Haram Leads to Intra-Group Fighting?

**OE Watch Commentary:** In August, ISIS announced that it was replacing Boko Haram's long-time leader, Abubakar Shekau, with Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the son of the founder of Boko Haram, Muhammed Yusuf. Quickly, Shekau rejected the claim that he had been ousted, insisting that he remained as the group's true leader, even as al-Barnawi's leadership gained credence amongst some of the group's members. In short, Boko Haram has now seemingly split into two camps: those loyal to the "old guard" (Shekau) and those loyal to the new guard (al-Barnawi).

As per the accompanying article from a reporter who has canvassed many towns in Boko Haram-affected northern Nigeria, the two factions are in the midst of an internal power struggle. The author calls this "an emerging ideological split and brutal supremacy battle"

between members of the factions, with civilians frequently caught in the crosshairs. According to locals, each rival faction controls a specific area: Shekau loyalists are mostly entrenched in central and southern Borno state and the Sambisa Forest, its historical area of operation; while al-Barnawi's factions retain more control over the transnational Lake Chad area, at the nexus of the borders of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Members of the rival factions actively trailing and killing each other. Meanwhile, the entire situation is rendered more chaotic as a result of the presence of a variety of other actors, including the arrival of foreign mercenaries, other foreign fighters, and the shifting allegiances and associations of civilians in the area to either of the two factions.

For its part, the Nigerian army has had mixed reactions to the intra-group split. On one hand, it has expressed that it is glad to hear of the fracturing of the group, assuming that it signals a weakening of Boko Haram. To that end, it is unapologetically pursuing members of both factions. However, as relayed in the article, others from the Nigerian military doubt the importance of the division, claiming it may be a public relations ploy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

*“There is serious disarray now, and most of the Boko Haram fighters are apparently confused. Those loyal to Shekau are being trailed by the other faction and vice versa. It is now killing, killing and killing.”*



Boko Haram is now experiencing internal fighting, with some members loyal to longtime leader Abubakar Shekau (depicted at left) actively targeting Boko Haram affiliates loyal to the newly installed leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi (depicted at right).

Source: <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/news/shekau-vs-barnawi-the-battle-for-boko-haram-s-soul/162159.html>

**Source:** Idris, Hamza. "Shekau Vs. Barnawi: The Battle for Boko Haram's Soul." *Daily Trust (Abuja, Nigeria)*. 11 September 2016. <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/news/shekau-vs-barnawi-the-battle-for-boko-haram-s-soul/162159.html>

*“Boko Haram assailants stormed Tumor, a sleepy community along the Nigerian border with Niger Republic and slit the throats of 10 people...in the emerging ideological split and brutal supremacy battle between the hardhearted leader of the Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, and the new point-man of the Islamic State in West Africa-backed faction of the group, Abu Musab Al-Barnawi...”*

*There is serious disarray now, and most of the Boko Haram fighters are apparently confused. Those loyal to Shekau are being trailed by the other faction and vice versa. It is now killing, killing and killing,” [a local] said...*

*Findings by our reporter reveal that while the ISIS-backed Al-Barnawi has an upper hand in northern part of Borno State, which shares borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon along the shores of the Lake Chad, Shekau is still dominant in the central and southern parts of the state, where the large swathes of the Sambisa forest are located....*

*“While only security officials can confirm if Al-Barnawi has started receiving support from ISIS or not, what we know is that they have black mercenaries from neighboring countries who barely speak our local dialect,” he added....”*





## The Ethno-Military Dimensions of Current Ethiopian Instability

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since November 2015, riots from the Oromo ethnic group in Ethiopia have led to what is arguably the country's most unstable period since the end of the socialist Derg regime in 1991. According to the excerpted article, the riots have become deadlier over the past year, killing over 400. The article also notes that the riots are partially rooted in citizens' perceptions of the Ethiopian military being dominated by ethnic Tigrays, which make up only 4% of the total Ethiopian population.

The current widespread protests in Ethiopia began in November 2015 when the central government in Addis Ababa announced that it was expanding the capital territory southward, into land held by ethnic Oromos. Protests against the central government, a rarity, ensued. The crackdown on protestors was swift, brutal, and according to nearly all international observers, disproportionate. Protests against the central government have spread to include members of other ethnic minorities, including the Amharas, and others. The Ethiopian government sees the protests as particularly dangerous, because the country's economic growth has come from holding together, often through repressive means, an otherwise ethnically heterogeneous country. Ethiopia is among the fastest growing countries in the world, at 8% annually.

The article from a former Ethiopian government official points out that another central part of the riots is the question of the ethnic makeup of the military. In short, ethnic Tigrays played an important role in overthrowing the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991, as members of the insurgent Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Given their success in helping to topple him, ethnic Tigrays from the TPLF have had an outstripped role in government, at one point. According to the article, 37 new generals were appointed in 2012, and "almost all of them were Tigrayan" despite the fact that only 4% of the country is actually Tigray. The irony is that it is the Ethiopian military and police that are working to put down the current protests.  
**End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

*“[The new government in 2012] appointed some 37 generals, almost all of them Tigreans,”*



Protests by ethnic Oromo citizens have put Ethiopia in the most insecure position it has been in since 1991. One enduring component of the protests is the perceived domination of the Ethiopian government - and especially the military - by members of the ethnic Tigray minority.  
Source: <http://africanarguments.org/2016/09/16/behind-the-ethiopia-protests-a-view-from-inside-the-government/>

**Source:** Saado, Juneydi. "Behind the Ethiopian Protests: A View from Inside the Government." *AfricanArguments (Global)*. 16 September 2016. <http://africanarguments.org/2016/09/16/behind-the-ethiopia-protests-a-view-from-inside-the-government/>

*“...Meles died in the summer of 2012 after 21 years in power. As he was the main actor blocking reform due to fears of losing personal power, many believed his departure could lead to a fresh start....*

*However, the reaction from the TPLF leadership was extremely negative.... They appointed a non-Tigrean – Hailemariam Desalegn – to be Meles' replacement, but this gesture was totally disingenuous as they simultaneously took swift measures to cripple the new PM's power.*

*To begin with, they appointed some 37 generals, almost all of them Tigreans, before the new prime minister took office in violation of the constitution which gives such power to the prime minister and president.*

*They reduced the prime minister's control over ministries by increasing the number of deputy prime ministers from one to three, with each ministry having to report to these deputies rather than the PM himself.*

*The Chief of Staff of the armed forces, the chiefs of intelligence, and foreign affairs remained in the hand of the TPLF. Several senior advisors were appointed to Hailemariam, almost all of them Tigreans. And while most of the hardline TPLF members who were pushed out in 2001 began to work covertly with the system again, those in government opposed to the increasing one-party monopoly were either demoted or, as in my case, purged.”*





## AU Considers Pros and Cons of AU-led Intervention Force in Mali

**OE Watch Commentary:** The African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council is considering deploying its own counter-terrorism force in Mali, to fight alongside the extant UN operation, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MINUSMA. The meetings of the AU Peace and Security Council remain closed; but the snippet offered in the accompanying report by the pan-African Institute of Security Studies, provides a rare revelatory insight as to what is going on behind the scenes.

In January 2012, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a separatist group fighting for Tuareg autonomy in the north of Mali, took control over the region; several months later in March, the national government of Amadou Touré was overthrown in an army mutiny due to its response to the MNLA rebellion. Chaos ensued in the northern stretches of the country, with the MNLA allying and then fighting with sundry Islamist groups, including Ansar Dine, and an al-Qaeda offshoot, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). In January 2013, the Islamist groups were expelled from the north by the French and African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Today, terrorist attacks still occur, despite the ceasefire signed in the Noukchott process of 2015, and the continued presence of the UN's MINUSMA mission.

In short, the AU is contemplating whether to send its own mission to Mali due to the recognition of the limitations of the MINUSMA mission: because it is a UN-mandated peacekeeping mission, it is prohibited from firing unless fired upon. As a result, it can only play defense, and not actively work to root out lingering terrorist presence. Though the AU's Peace and Security Council has sent a team to Mali to investigate what such a mission would resemble, as of this writing, the exploratory process as not yet ended. Indeed, numerous issues – including how to operate in Mali's hot, dry climate, and the lack of resources, among others - would be important hurdles to overcome prior to deployment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

*“We believe that an [African Union] intervention brigade is one way of [strengthening the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, or MINUSMA], particularly seeing that MINUSMA's classical peacekeeping mandate does not seem to allow it to engage in offensive anti-terrorist operations.”*

**Source:** Institute for Security Studies. 2016. “Peace and Security Council Report #84.” Institute for Security Studies (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). <https://www.issafrica.org/publications/peace-and-security-council-report/peace-and-security-council-report-84>.

*“An AU-led regional intervention force for Mali is not a new idea... Speaking to the PSC Report last year, the former president of Burundi, Pierre Buyoya, the High Representative of the AU for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), said: ‘We believe that an intervention brigade is one way of doing so [strengthening the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, or MINUSMA], particularly seeing that MINUSMA's classical peacekeeping mandate does not seem to allow it to engage in offensive anti-terrorist operations...’*

*....Some sources at the AU Peace and Security Department say that the envisaged regional force demands careful planning, because the mission will be set up in the difficult working environment of northern Mali. Notably, the extremely hot, dry climate and the thick dust in the region present difficulties for the mission...The Malian government's limited presence in the north also presents challenges for such a regional force, which will have to set up its headquarters in unfamiliar terrain.*

*Moreover, the AU's counter-terrorist efforts face criticism for the slow pace of operationalizing worthwhile frameworks. This is largely due to the poor commitment and coordination of states in the region, as well as uncertainty around the funding of robust and multi-stakeholder operations. MINUSMA already faces resource and capacity constraints that inhibit it from meeting its peacekeeping mandate. Over the years terrorists in the Sahel have benefitted from these weaknesses in the AU's counter-terrorism strategy.”*

Members of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Mali. The African Union is considering sending its own peace enforcement contingent to Mali, citing insufficiencies in the MINUSMA's traditional peacekeeping mandate, which prevents it from pursuing offensive anti-terrorist activities.  
Source: <http://minusma.unmissions.org/en/personnel>







## Colombian Ex-President Does Not Like the Peace Agreement

“...*The Havana Agreement erases the line between victim and murderer...*”

**OE Watch Commentary:** Former Colombian presidents have lined up for and against the agreement that the FARC has made with the administration of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. While the most outspoken among those ex-presidents opposed to the agreement is probably Álvaro Uribe Vélez [who served from 2002 until 2010], Andrés Pastrana [1998-2002] has been especially critical about the accords during the run-up to the plebiscite that is to take place on October 2. While polls show the accord likely to be approved, many influential voices are expressing their dismay. The accompanying portion of an interview with Andrés Pastrana offers us a good summary of some of the most intensely felt objections. Former President Pastrana is not known to find himself on the same side of issues with former President Uribe, or the latter with the leadership of Human Rights Watch. In their warnings about the accords, however, they seem to be in agreement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Ramón Pérez-Maura, interview, “Andrés Pastrana: ‘Las FARC se acaban como guerrilla, pero siguen como cártel’” (Andrés Pastrana: “The FARC will cease to be a guerrilla, but will continue as a cartel”), *ABC*, 12 September 2016, [http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-andres-pastrana-farc-acaban-como-guerrilla-pero-siguen-como-cartel-201609110220\\_noticia.html](http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-andres-pastrana-farc-acaban-como-guerrilla-pero-siguen-como-cartel-201609110220_noticia.html)

*“Andrés Pastrana Arango was negotiating with the FARC for three years when they were commanded by Manuel Marulanda Vélez, ‘Tirofijo’. He went absolutely alone to the Caguan, without his security knowing, in order to seek the path to peace. It wasn’t possible. ... His intrepid determination to achieve peace then makes it incomprehensible for some why he is now campaigning for the ‘No’ in the plebiscite ...*

*[From interview:]*

*Q. How do you explain a country divided in the face of a prospect for peace after so many years of conflict?*

*A. The President has determined to sell the idea that for the sake of the Havana accords the end justifies the means. ...*

*Q. In this [that the FARC will continue to traffic in drugs] you have been very critical, maybe because the matter touches a very personal chord...*

*A. Clearly, because all this is the consequence of the death of Plan Colombia by demand of the FARC. The plan was conceived together with President*

Bill Clinton as a social and military offensive against drug trafficking and eventually against the guerrilla. It was so successful that with some renovated Armed Forces and Police the FARC was made to sit down at the table again and to reduce coca cultivation from 180,000 hectares during my administration to 40,000 during the Uribe administration. But, by demand of the FARC, Santos lowered his arms and gave up Plan Colombia’s head. Today it reaches 200,000 hectares and the business of the FARC cartel doubles in size every two years....

*Q. Let’s talk about the transitional justice, which is especially questioned. ‘Truth Commission’ — seems normal that in whatever process of this type there needs to be such a commission. Then why your criticisms?*

*A. The Havana Agreement erases the line between victim and murderer. The [legal] concept of the [culpable killer] is lost. Taking off from there, from the history that they hope to re-write according to their whim, from the simulation of justice staged in a pseudo-tribunal, everything remains under suspicion.*

*Q. We are talking about three million hectares that are going to be turned over to the FARC, and in this moment there are in this country some six million hectares, more-or-less, and the FARC has at this moment under its control about a million. Therefore, the majority of the productive land of the country would fall under its control. In what position does this leave the rest of the country and how is it going to be managed?*

*A. That is what I call a question-determination [a question that answers itself]. Ernesto Samper [another former president [1994-1998], whose presidency was purchased by the Cali Cartel, will manage at least half of the productive lands of the country at his whim. He is Santos’s right hand man, is very close to the FARC and to Nicolás Maduro. The accord leaves private property in question and the Tribunal complete liberty to interpret property to its taste.*



Former Colombian president Andrés Pastrana Arango.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andres\\_Pastrana\\_Arango\\_%282001%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andres_Pastrana_Arango_%282001%29.jpg)





## Major Public Speech by FARC Chief

**OE Watch Commentary:** The current leader of the FARC gave an open air speech to a large gathering of FARC adherents and press in southeastern Colombia, with a large percentage of the FARC leadership present. The meeting was not only uncontested by the government, but condoned by it even to the extent that the president released a number of FARC prisoners so they could attend the meeting. Styled as the Tenth National Conference, it becomes one and perhaps the last in a line of major planning meetings of the FARC conducted over a period of five decades. The portions of the speech extracted for this OE Watch piece do not give it full justice. Regional analysts will want to pour over it. The tone of the FARC leader's presentation was clearly one of satisfaction if not vitriol. Singled out for special praise was Hugo Chavez, part of a repeated highlighting of the importance of the bolivarian alliance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

*“...our adversaries are seen obligated to recognize our complete right to political franchise...”*

**Source:** Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, “Discurso del jefe de las FARC del 17 de septiembre de 2016, en la apertura de la ‘conferencia guerrillera’ (17 September 2016 speech by the FARC chief at the opening of the ‘guerilla conference’),” *Youtube*, 17 September 2016, <https://youtu.be/F7p6j0TCQ7g?list=PL4BUIQBKuHekhIT-4TtpQrj778akweCi>

*“Comrades, we discover ourselves meeting here, after fifty-two years of continuous political and military confrontation with the Colombian State, with the purpose of celebrating our Tenth National Conference, the premier level of democratic event contemplated by our Statutes. ...*

*Contrary to what our contradictors and gratuitous criticizers might preach, we in the FARC-EP find ourselves far from being an organization of exclusively military nature, ...*

*We have obtained the sitting at a conversation table with them, and to move forward a Final Accord of the Termination of the Conflict, with which it is left definitively clear that in this war there do not exist winners or losers, at the same time our adversaries are [nevertheless] seen obligated to recognize our complete right to political franchise, with the broadest guarantees. ...*

*Peace insists that the power of the media is no longer used as another instrument of the war. ...*

*Our deepest aspiration is to arrive with our message to many more [people], until we achieve that the torrent for great transformations turns out to be uncontainable. ...*

*We have to pay special homage to the memory and the abnegation of that titan of the peoples of Our America, Eternal President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, without whose support and initial impetus none of what has been achieved would have been possible. ...*

*I declare officially installed the Tenth National Conference of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Army of the People. Find in your hands Colombia's destiny.”*

## Venezuela's Socialist Civil-Military Consolidation

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to a few well-informed analysts, the Venezuelan military has been transforming toward a force oriented as much internally as externally, and to have a leading role in economic planning and management. That evolution has taken a more decided step in the face of the food supply problems that the country is currently enduring. The military has been charged with the management of the regime's Plan Provision, which is aimed at delivering basic foodstuffs and hygiene supplies to the population at large. The portmanteau *agroalimentario [agriculture-food]* is used to describe the broad purview of the military-led management system. The notion ties agriculture and diet as a mission, and thus gives vast authority to the military hierarchy to make decisions about crops, foodstuff transportation and food product choices, as well as food distribution and pricing. The article does not suggest the military will be efficient, but only that it will be in charge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** Sofia Nederr, “Adoctrinan a militares para que cumplan tareas en la Misión Abastecimiento” (They are indoctrinating military officers to fulfill Mission Provision tasks), *El-Nacional.com*, 18 September 2016, [http://www.el-nacional.com/politica/Adoctrinan-militares-cumplan-Mision-Abastecimiento\\_0\\_923307757.html](http://www.el-nacional.com/politica/Adoctrinan-militares-cumplan-Mision-Abastecimiento_0_923307757.html)

*“Analyst José Alberto Olivar points out that the governmental inefficiency is being transferred to the armed institution. ...*

*On 5 September, Padrino López [Minister of Defense] reminded his subordinates of the path they must follow: ‘The visión of the new FANB [National Bolivarian Armed Forces] is to be profoundly socialist and at the service of the people. During a review of units at Guasualito he pointed out that the military organization combated paramilitarism, but must also struggle against the economic warfare [perpetrated by the United States]. ...*

*Employment of military officers in national developmental functions forms an important juncture of the military doctrine hoisted by comandante Hugo Chávez. José Alberto Olivar, specialist in civil-military relations, pointed out that training for the new doctrine has developed over the last ten years. ...*

*León Heredia [nfi] assures that Venezuelan generals are a group of managers and that participation in the food provisioning program is as salient a mission as the rest of the chores with which the men in arms are entrusted ....*

*A preeminence of military officers over civilians exists in the institutions of the State. ...*

*According to what has been revealed by the High Command, the optimization of the deployment of the Armed Forces in agricultural zones and commercialization networks will allow for the achievement of dietary stability. ...”*



## Alleged Brazilian Assassins Hired to Murder Paraguayan President

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 2 September 2016, a red alert was initiated in Paraguay after multiple sources uncovered a possible assassination attempt against the country's president, Horacio Cartes. The alert was issued after authorities gathered information indicating that a prominent drug trafficker known as Jarvis Pavao Chimenes allegedly paid Brazilian hitmen \$5 million to carry out the assassination in retaliation for recent drug seizures and his transfer to another prison, where he could no longer run his business. The first accompanying excerpt from a Paraguayan newspaper discusses this development.

Narco related assassinations of political figures are not uncommon in Latin America but individuals most commonly targeted are governors, mayors, congressman, and senators; not presidents, which makes this case unique if it turns out to be true. For this reason, Pavao Chimenes took a bold step if he did indeed order this assassination as it could generate grave repercussions for him and his organization. The second excerpt, which claims that “the extent to which drug trafficking has permeated certain areas in Paraguay points to high-level political involvement in the country; possibly even at the presidential level,” raises the question of what type of deal he may have struck with high-ranking government officials to plan such a vicious attack. Alternatively, this could simply be a case of a crazy drug trafficker who felt power and money could exact the perfect revenge without regard to the possible repercussions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The extent to which drug trafficking has permeated certain areas in Paraguay points to high-level political involvement in the country; possibly even at the presidential level.”*

**Source:** “Organismos de seguridad activan alerta roja ante información de atentado contra Cartes (Security Organizations Issue Red Alert Following News of Assassination Attempt Against Cartes).” *Ultima Hora*, 2 September 2016. <http://www.ultimahora.com/organismos-seguridad-activan-alerta-roja-informacion-atentado-contra-cartes-n1020811.html>

*“Interior Minister Francisco De Vargas confirmed that intelligence reports corroborated information regarding a planned assassination attempt against President Horacio Cartes....*

*...Human intelligence reports from inside the prison further indicated that the hit was ordered by Jarvis Pavao Chimenes in retaliation for recent large-scale drug seizures totaling an estimated \$85 million and his transfer from the Tacumbu Prison to the Specialized National Police Association. Supposedly Pavao Chimenes is angry because he is no longer able to run his business while incarcerated.”*

**Source:** “Paraguay: escenario de una guerra del narcotráfico en total impunidad (Paraguay: Breeding Ground for a Narco War with Complete Impunity).” *Actualidad RT*, 17 July 2016. <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/213408-paraguay-escenario-guerra-narcotrafico-total>

*“The extent to which drug trafficking has permeated certain areas in Paraguay points to high-level political involvement in the country; possibly even at the presidential level.”*



**China's cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and inference. The policy appears to have three vectors. These three aspects—peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner—dominate China's cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/3Faces%20of%20the%20Dragon.pdf>





## Tri-National Force Created to Fight Mara Salvatrucha in the Northern Triangle

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 28 July 2016, President Juan Orlando Hernandez of Honduras personally visited President Jimmy Morales of Guatemala and simultaneously sent a delegation to El Salvador to propose the creation of a tri-national anti-gang force. Initial agreements were quickly made, and in late August, Honduras took the lead and deployed forces dedicated to dismantling key operational centers utilized by the estimated 25,000 active Mara Salvatrucha members in areas throughout the country. It is expected that Guatemala and El Salvador will form an active part of the tri-national force by early October.

Gang presence and associated violence is nothing new in the Northern Triangle (the region formed by Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), but in the past 20 years the power base of the Mara Salvatrucha gang (factions known as the MS-13 and 18th Street Gang) has grown to the point that it now threatens the national security of these countries. As indicated in the first excerpt, in 2015 alone, murder rates and extortion in the Northern Triangle soared. Upticks in this type of activity are said to be directly related to the nearly 70,000 gang members operating in this region. As the first excerpt indicates, by creating a tri-national force, these countries hope to improve internal and shared border security as well as intelligence sharing. The creation of this new force is viewed as a positive step in improving regional security. However, as the second excerpt notes, police and prosecutorial bodies also need to join forces in order to create additional joint strategies in fighting transnational crime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

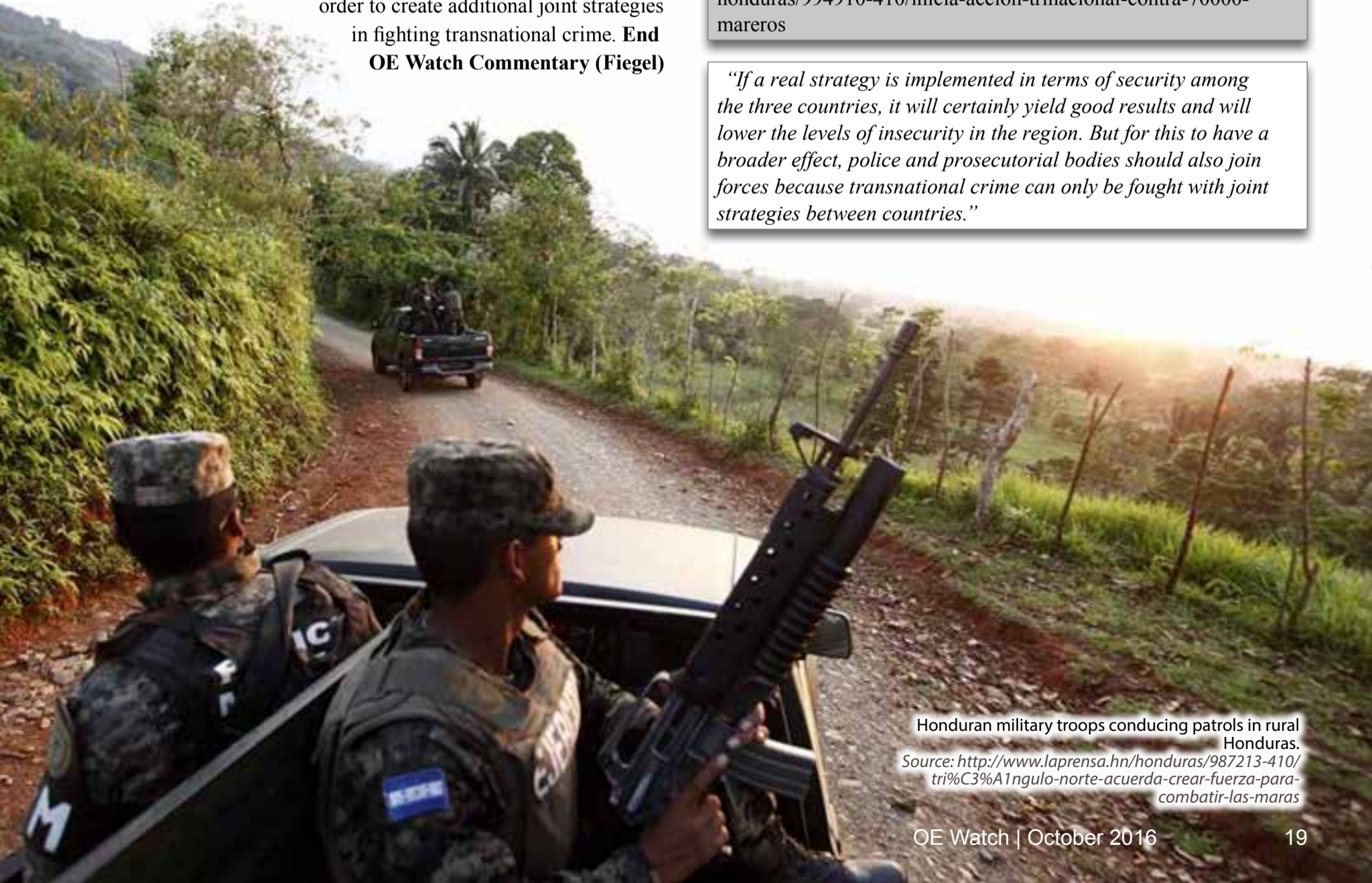
**Source:** Triangulo norte acuerda crear fuerza para combatir las maras (Northern Triangle Creates Agreement to Combat Las Maras). *La Prensa*, 6 August 2016. <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/987213-410/tri%C3%A1ngulo-norte-acuerda-crear-fuerza-para-combatir-las-maras>

*“In 2015, El Salvador had the highest murder rate in Central America with 6,640 reported homicides. Guatemala ranked second with 5,677 and Honduras ranked third with 5,148. Many of these murders were carried out by gangs. Furthermore, extortion activity conducted by the Mara Salvatrucha in the Northern Triangle served as a principal income generator. Those most commonly targeted include public transport companies and small businesses....*

*...“The tri-national force seeks to stem the flow of gang members in the region as president Hernandez of Honduras reported that many [gang members] cross borders to commit criminal acts. In addition, it is believed that the creation of a tri-national force will facilitate the flow of intelligence sharing to carry out arrests. To start, this force will have its command headquarters along the shared border between Honduras/El Salvador, but there are hopes to extend its presence across the entire border region.”*

**Source:** “Inicia acciones trinacional contra 70000 mareros (Actions Taken to Fight Against 70,000 Mara Salvatrucha Gang Members).” *La Prensa*, 29 August 2016. <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/994910-410/inicia-acción-trinacional-contra-70000-mareros>

*“If a real strategy is implemented in terms of security among the three countries, it will certainly yield good results and will lower the levels of insecurity in the region. But for this to have a broader effect, police and prosecutorial bodies should also join forces because transnational crime can only be fought with joint strategies between countries.”*



Honduran military troops conducting patrols in rural Honduras.

Source: <http://www.laprensa.hn/honduras/987213-410/tri%C3%A1ngulo-norte-acuerda-crear-fuerza-para-combatir-las-maras>





## Illegal Immigration Problems Continue to Plague Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** In recent months, Colombian authorities have been fighting an uphill battle against illegal immigration into the country that seems to have no end in sight. Thousands from Venezuela attempt to enter the country daily, hoping to acquire basic necessities such as food and water, and if they are lucky, a day of work. Cuban and Haitian migrants from Ecuador flock into Colombia in hopes of continuing their journey north. The accompanying passages from Colombian news sources discuss the Colombian perspective on this problem and focus on three noteworthy issues.

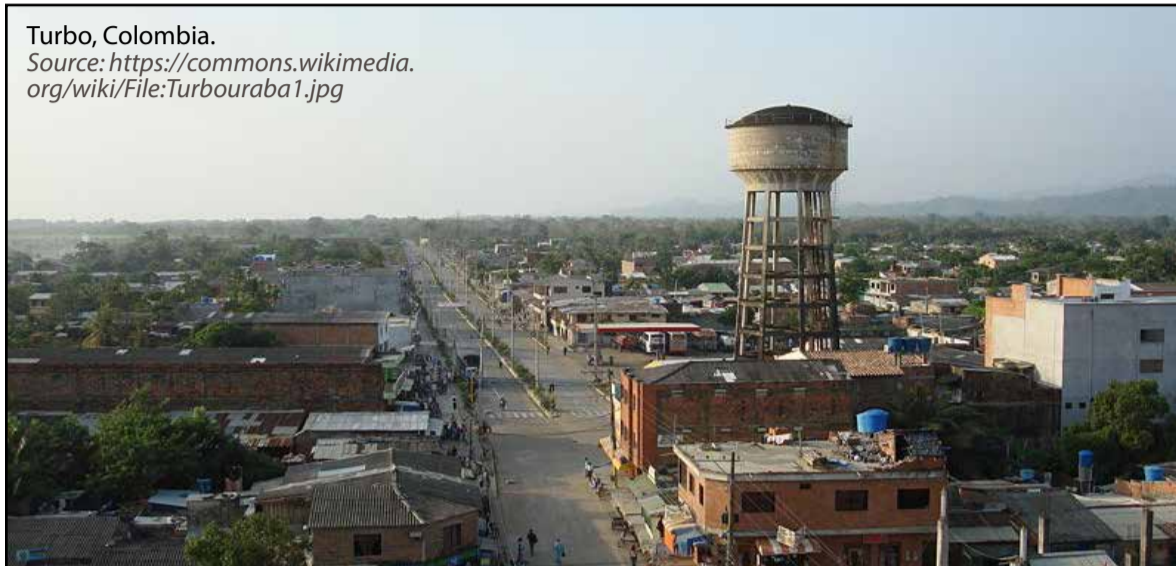
First, as noted by *El Espectador* in the first excerpt, immigration into Colombia is partially self-perpetuating in the sense that select government institutions are directly linked with illegal immigration in certain parts of the country. Cases highlighted in Medellín—Colombia’s second largest city—demonstrate how public registrars issued Colombian passports and IDs to illegal immigrants, to facilitate their movement from Colombia into Panama.

Second, thousands of Cuban nationals who entered the country illegally are currently stranded in Turbo, Colombia further exacerbating an already problematic immigration situation. As cited in the second excerpt, the Cuban nationals want the Colombian government to put them on flights to Mexico, but Mexico is no longer receiving these flights. Colombia is also opposed to sending Cuban nationals on these flights, because the government feels that in doing so, they could be aiding human trafficking organizations by providing transportation to these individuals.

Finally, as discussed in the third excerpt, the Colombian government feels that it will be hit by an additional wave of Venezuelan immigration; given that select border checkpoints along the Colombia/Venezuela border which had been closed for a year, have been re-opened. These discussions suggest that Colombia realizes that it is facing an immigration crisis. Proposed solutions include creating a national committee that will focus solely on human trafficking/illegal immigration in addition to working with neighboring countries and the United States to create shared plans to fight this issue collaboratively. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“... the Mexican government informed Colombia that they will longer be receiving flights filled with Cuban nationals into the country.”*

Turbo, Colombia.  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turbouraba1.jpg>



**Source:** “Registrador de municipio en Antioquia lideraba red de tráfico de migrantes (Municipal Registrar Acted as Leader of Human Trafficking Ring in Antioquia).” *El Espectador*, 29 September 2015. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/registrador-de-municipio-antioquia-lideraba-red-de-traf-articulo-589438>

*“Colombian authorities recently dismantled an illegal human trafficking network that was aided by employees of the National Migration Service, the National Registry, and the Directorate of Criminal Investigation. This group allegedly issued false Colombian passports and identification cards for \$800. With these documents, illegal immigrants were able to enter into Colombia from Ecuador and then [go] on to Panama from Uraba (northern Colombia).”*

**Source:** “Migrantes en Colombia: un flujo que no se detiene (Illegal Immigration in Colombia: An Unstoppable Wave).” *El Espectador*, 31 July 2016. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/elmundo/migrantes-colombia-un-flujo-no-se-detiene-articulo-646524>

*“We have a group of approximately 1,300 Cuban nationals in Turbo, Colombia. They entered into the country illegally and are asking that we send them to Mexico on a flight so that they can enter into the United States. What is our problem with this request? First, the Mexican government informed Colombia that they will longer be receiving flights filled with Cuban nationals into the country. Second, we as a nation have clear legislation against human trafficking and by putting these individuals on flights, we are actually acting as enablers to human trafficking organizations. Finally, even if they did send flights with stranded illegal immigrants, we don’t even know who they are where they are from. Many have fake documentation and we cannot differentiate Cubans from other nationalities.”*

**Source:** “Frontera estara abierta desde este sabado de forma gradual (Gradual Re-Opening of Colombia/Venezuela Border on Saturday).” *El Herald*, 12 August 2016. <http://www.elheraldo.co/nacional/frontera-estara-abierta-desde-este-sabado-de-forma-gradual-277872>

*“Official sources have reported that approximately 20,000 Venezuelan citizens crossed the border into Colombia during the first five hours following the re-opening of select shared crossing points which were closed for almost a year. The highest crossing rates were reported along the Simón Bolívar International Bridge where tens of thousands of people continue to wait to enter Colombia. In an attempt to control migratory flow, border crossing points will only be open from 5 AM until 8 PM and Venezuelans entering into Colombia will be required to use an entrance/exit pass.”*





## Coyotes: The Migratory Bridge between the Community and the Border

**OE Watch Commentary:** Human migration, legal or illegal, is a simple fact of life and has gone on since the beginning of time. In some cases, moving from point A to point B is legal and simple, and does not require any outside help. In other cases, travel may span thousands of miles and include multiple international border crossings, which is when human smugglers commonly known as “*coyotes*” come in to play. From a law-enforcement perspective, *coyotes* may be classified as pariahs, greedy, self-serving, and even criminal. However, individuals and families who have benefited from the services of a *coyote* may describe them in a much different manner.

A study conducted by sociologist Ricardo Puerta of Honduras concluded that any positive or negative migratory experiences may actually be directly correlated to the type of *coyote* chosen by clientele. Puerta claimed that even in the criminal world of human trafficking, there are varying levels of service-related integrity. Puerta highlighted this information in an article released by Honduran news source *El Herald* where he discussed four different types of *coyotes*: the community *coyote*, the chain *coyote*, the five-star *coyote*, and the border *coyote*. The accompanying excerpts from the article discuss the characteristics of these distinct *coyote* types. These excerpts do not attempt to convince anyone that *coyotes* are good or bad, but instead, provide information as to how different *coyotes* run their human trafficking businesses. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“The five-star coyote... picks up customers directly from their homes and charges them anywhere between \$7,500 and \$10,000 per person.”*

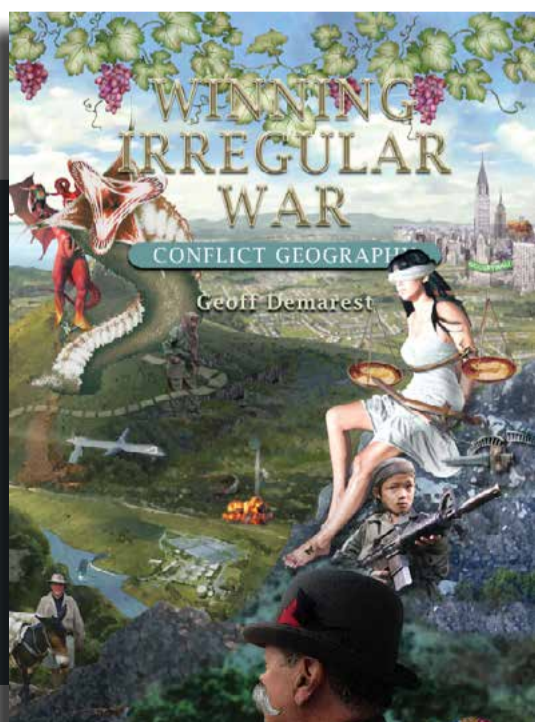
**Source:** “El coyote, puente migratorio entre la comunidad y la frontera (Coyotes: The Migratory Bridge between the Community and the Border).” *El Herald*, 4 August 2016. <http://www.elheraldo.hn/minisitios/hondurenosenelmundo/986477-471/el-coyote-puente-migratorio-entre-la-comunidad-y-la-frontera>

*“The community coyote: this individual operates in their own community. Everyone knows who they are as they work directly with schools and churches. Community coyotes are also generally trusted by the local populace as they are directly responsible for taking their clientele across the border without the help of any intermediaries. When compared to other types of coyotes, the community coyote has most popular image with customers as they live in the same communities that they work in.*

*...The chain coyote: this type of coyote does not work alone. Along any given route, clients may be handed off to other coyotes multiple times. Normal travel times for individuals traveling with this type of coyote are approximately 15 days. Rape, kidnapping, blackmail, and extortion are very common with chain coyotes.*

*...The five-star coyote: this individual picks up customers directly from their homes and charges them anywhere between \$7,500 and \$10,000 per person. These individuals tend to work with women and children and are usually referred by past customers for future jobs.*

*...The border coyote: this individual is usually American or at least appears to be. They are generally light-skinned and drive a nice car. Their clients may be brought to the border by a five-star coyote. At that point, the border coyote is known to pick up the women and children and claim them as their own family members. Since the border coyote generally only transports clients short distances (from one side of the border directly to the other), their fees tend to be lower than those of other coyotes (\$1000).”*



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

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/WIrW_2015.pdf)



## Are Transparent and Competitive Elections Possible in Nicaragua?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Nicaraguan presidential elections will be held this November, but some news channels are reporting that it will be impossible for the process to be transparent and competitive. As the first excerpt discusses, according to the vice-presidential candidate of the opposition Independent Liberal Party (PLI), this is because Daniel Ortega, Nicaragua's standing president, is doing everything in his power to undermine the opposition. For example, as the passage notes, in June 2016, a controversial Supreme Court ruling annulled the candidacy of Luis Callejas (then-PLI party leader and presidential hopeful), and mandated that Pedro Reyes—an ally of Ortega—be the candidate and PLI party leader. While the PLI can still run in the elections, the overall consensus of the party is that it would be pointless, as their views will not be represented. The party suffered another blow in early August after Reyes removed 28 PLI congressmen after they voiced disagreement with his appointment as party leader.

The questionable transparency and competitiveness of the process are not the only problems. Two years ago, Nicaraguan lawmakers approved constitutional changes allowing Ortega to be re-elected indefinitely. Some claim that with this move, Ortega is looking to hold onto his presidency for life. If re-elected in November, he will serve his third consecutive presidential term (he was also president of Nicaragua from 1979-1990). More ironic still is that his chosen running mate for the November elections is his wife, Rosario Murillo. As indicated in the second excerpt, Murillo has always had an important voice within the government, but her selection as the vice-presidential candidate is both surprising and significant because not even the world's most recognized political power couples have ever run a presidential election on the same ticket. With virtual PLI exclusion, constitutional changes allowing Ortega indefinite re-election, and Murillo as the vice-president candidate, opponents feel Ortega is taking all possible steps to ensure that he wins the elections without opposition and that he or his family continue as absolute leaders in Nicaragua. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“She [Rosario Murillo] has been the power behind the throne.”*

**Source:** “¿Por qué es tan cuestionado el camino de Daniel Ortega hacia una nueva reelección en Nicaragua? (Controversy Surrounding the Re-Election of Daniel Ortega en Nicaragua).” *BBC Mundo*, 29 August 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-37113096>

*“Violeta Granera, an independent vice-president candidate of the PLI, said: “Right now, we don’t have the conditions for free, transparent and competitive elections. We are not withdrawing from the elections, Mr. Ortega is doing everything he can to expel the Coalition. Ortega, like President Maduro in Venezuela, wants to isolate Nicaragua.”...*

*...“Luis Callejas of the Coalition for National Democracy (CND) announced his withdrawal from the elections this Wednesday. The Constitutional section of the Court ruled that the legal representation of the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) belongs to Pedro Reyes, with whom the CND doesn’t feel represented. An opposition representative Eduardo Montealegre claimed Reyes’ PLI doesn’t represent the “real opposition” and claimed it was rather a “cooperation party” with the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. He ruled out any alliance with Reyes or any other political party, and announced they would start a “civic fight.”*

**Source:** “Nicaragua: Rosario Murillo, la poderosa y extravagante mujer de Daniel Ortega que se convirtió en su compañera de lista para la reelección (Nicaragua: Rosario Murillo, the Powerful and Extravagant Sentimental Companion of Daniel Ortega as a Potential Presidential Running Mate).” *BBC Mundo*, 3 August 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-36969850>

*“No important political action in the country happens without her being involved. She is the visible face of the regime, but she’s much more than that and she’s more than an adviser. She’s been the power behind the throne.”*

## Transition in the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan - From Conscripts to Contract Soldiers

by Matt Stein

**Kazakhstan’s Armed Forces have been working to modernize, reform and expand their capabilities since the state became independent in 1991. Much of the attention on this development has been on security cooperation with Russia, the United States and other partners, but there have also been internally driven efforts that could have just as significant an impact. One of these efforts over the past several years has been the increase in the number of professional contract soldiers in the Armed Forces, which is part of a plan to have contract soldiers make up 99 percent of the Armed Forces by the end 2016. While the result has yet to be announced, an examination of Kazakhstan’s effort to have its Armed Forces made up of contract soldiers will show how this effort has been progressing and the impact this could have on the capabilities of the country’s Armed Forces and on the Central Asian region.**

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Stein%20-%20Transition%20in%20the%20Armed%20Forces%20of%20Kazakhstan%20-%20From%20Conscripts%20to%20Contract%20Soldiers.pdf>





# Prayut Chan-o-Cha Stirs the Pot in Appointing “Outsider” as Army Chief

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over time, three different military factions have developed in Thailand. They are the Eastern Tigers (also known as Burapha Phayak), which currently have a stranglehold over the country (both Thailand’s Prime Minister, General Prayut Chan-o-Cha and his Deputy Prime Minister, General Prawit Wongsuwon belong to this military faction); the Special Forces (also known as Red Beret); and the Divine Lineage.

In May 2014, General Prayut assumed control of the country after staging a military coup. He then created a military-dominated national legislature and was subsequently appointed, non-democratically, as prime minister. Prayut has now appointed a new army chief who is from a different faction – the Special Forces - causing concern that the appointment could create a shift in power and maybe even prompt a counter coup.

Prayut’s appointment of General Chalermchai Sitthisat to army chief, according to the first accompanying article, has some observers seeing the prime minister’s move as a calculated risk. The piece notes that Prayut may be loosening the long-standing grip that the Eastern Tigers- and therefore his own power base- had maintained in the past, in order to appease the different factions in case he has to legitimately run for prime minister in free elections, which are planned for the end of next year. The second article reviewed, quotes a domestic figure in Thailand who argues that the move could prompt a counter coup, as it will weaken the power of the Eastern Tigers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“...observers feel Gen Prayut’s involvement in Gen Chalermchai’s nomination was intended to “seize back power” from Gen Prawit who has been in charge of military affairs since the coup.”*



Prayut Chan-o-Cha  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General\\_Prayut\\_Chan-o-cha\\_%28cropped%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Prayut_Chan-o-cha_%28cropped%29.jpg)

**Source:** Wassana Nanuam, “PM Shores Up Support of Military,” *Bangkok Post Online*, 11 September 2016. <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1083088/prayut-shores-up-support-of-military>

*Some observers also believe Gen Prayut [Chan-o-Cha] approved the appointment of Gen Chalermchai Sitthisat to shore up backing from the main army ranks should he move into contention for the post of prime minister despite no standing for election.*

*As the latest military reshuffle neared, many observers were waiting to see if there would be any clash between Gen Prayut and Gen Prawit [Wongsuwon, the deputy prime minister] who wanted the Burapha Phayak (Tigers of the East) stranglehold on army chief to continue.*

*In the royally endorsed reshuffle published in Royal Gazette on Friday, however, assistant army chief Gen Chalermchai was named to replace Gen Teerachai Nakwanich, who retires at the end of this month, putting an end to weeks of speculation.*

*Gen Chalermchai is known to enjoy the support of Privy Council president Prem Tinsulanonda and privy councilor and former prime minister Gen Surayud Chulanont, who is also a red beret... political observers believe Gen Prayut was concerned to secure the blessing of Gen Prem and Gen Surayud, who still command wide respect in the army, in case he became premier as an “outsider”.*

*Other observers feel Gen Prayut’s involvement in Gen Chalermchai’s nomination was intended to “seize back power” from Gen Prawit who has been in charge of military affairs since the coup.*

**Source:** Chiang Mai and Max Constant, “Thai Junta Move Could Prompt Counter Coup, Says Analyst,” *Anadolu Agency*, 14 September 2016. <http://aa.com.tr/en/analysis-news/thai-junta-move-could-prompt-counter-coup-says-analyst/646100>

*[Prem] Tinsulanonda, who has been a king’s favorite since his days as army chief at the end of the 1970s, has been one of the most influential players in the country for almost four decades — often behind the scenes. He is highly respected within military circles and his choices have often prevailed during military reshuffles.*

*The analysts said they consider the move by Chan-ocha to appoint Sitthisat a clear blow to the political ambitions of Wongsuwan.*

*“In that way, Prayuth Chan-ocha weakens Prawit Wongsuwan. He keeps Prawit down,” said Chambers.*

*Last month, a military-sponsored draft constitution was approved at a referendum. The constitution opens the way for a non-elected “outsider”, including a military officer, to become prime minister after the country holds elections that are planned for the end of next year.*

*The fact that the army commander is now not from Chan-ocha’s faction, and that the commander of the first army — the key military unit involved in coups — belongs to the Divine Lineage group and is known for being “adventurous” makes this hypothesis [possibility of a coup] credible...*



## Duterte Gives Indonesia Access to Territorial Waters to Destroy Terrorists

**OE Watch Commentary:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte strongly advocates against crime and has granted Indonesia access to Philippine waters to thwart terrorist activities in the troubled Mindanao area. According to the excerpted article, Duterte was recently in Jakarta, Indonesia where he met with Indonesian President Joko Widodo. The visit followed an attack on Duterte’s hometown of central Davao City, on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, in early September, in which the Abu Sayyaf group reportedly detonated a bomb, killing 14 and wounding some 70 people.

As a result of continued terror and hijacking threats in the region, Duterte has given Indonesia free access for its forces to enter Philippine territorial waters to “simply bomb off terrorists spotted there.” Nick-named “The Punisher,” Duterte was inaugurated in June and has been taking drastic measures to try to rid the country of its ongoing terror threat and crime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“(If) the chase began in Indonesia, ... (and if it) continues in international waters and if they are really fast enough also (to get) inside... Philippines waters they [Indonesian authorities] can go ahead and blast them [terrorists] off. That’s the agreement,”*

**Source:** Ted Tuvera and Joyce Ann L. Rocamora, “Duterte Tells Indon Forces Chasing ASGs: ‘Blow ‘em up,’” *The Daily Tribune*, 9 September 2016. <http://www.tribune.net.ph/headlines/duterte-tells-indon-forces-chasing-asgs-blow-em-up>

*“Indonesian maritime forces will be allowed to sail along Philippine waters as a cooperative measure to thwart terrorist movements in the Mindanao area, President [Rodrigo] Duterte who was in Jakarta for a state visit yesterday said.*

*... Duterte said that he will allow forces of other states to “simply bomb off terrorists spotted there.”*

*“(If) the chase began in Indonesia, here, (and if it) continues in the international waters and if they are really fast enough also (to get) inside now the Philippines waters they can go ahead and blast them off. That’s the agreement,” Duterte said.*

*The perennial threats of piracy and even the prominent abduction of seven Indonesian nationals by Abu Sayyaf Group mid-2016 have prompted the two countries (Indonesia and Philippines) to launch coordinated patrols to respond to any similar emergencies.”*

## Thailand’s Struggling Economy: Can the Military-Run Country Turn Itself Around?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since the 2014 military coup in Thailand, the economy has been struggling, but now the country’s top economic advisor Dr. Kobsak Pootrakool has a plan to turn things around. The accompanying passage discusses the three-pronged overhaul that Dr. Pootrakool envisions for the country: a build-up of infrastructure, a restructuring of the country’s industrial base, and sweeping reform of the agricultural sector.

While the article discusses each one of the three proposals, the most significant central platform of the overhaul is the creation of a so-called Eastern Economic Corridor. The article describes a zone that will be connected by high-speed rail networks and highways, and will include the modernization of deep-sea ports, and include a ferry network to establish the country as a regional hub for trade.

Despite its current economic struggles, Thailand is reportedly South-east Asia’s second-largest economy after Indonesia. The stakes are high for the country to turn its economy around; as its current military-run government continues to strive for domestic and international acceptance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“The proposed infrastructure build-up carries an initial price tag of US\$8.5 billion...”*

**Source:** Leslie Lopez, “Thai Military Plans Three-Pronged Economic Overhaul,” *Straits Times*, 9 September 2016. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/thai-military-plans-three-pronged-economic-overhaul>

*“Dr. Kobsak, who is chief lieutenant to the military’s economic point man, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak, said that the overhaul is three-pronged: an infrastructure build-up to boost connectivity, a restructuring of Thailand’s industrial base to move it away from equipment manufacturing operations to higher value-added industries, and a sweeping reform of the vast agricultural sector.*

*The central platform of the overhaul involves the creation of a so-called Eastern Economic Corridor, covering the already established industrial provinces of Chon Buri, Rayong and Chachoengsao.*

*This zone will be connected by high-speed rail networks and highways, and will involve the modernizing of deep-sea ports in the area to establish Thailand as a regional hub for trade. A ferry network that will link Chon Buri province with Phetchaburi in the south is also in the pipeline to improve connectivity in the Gulf of Thailand.*

*The proposed infrastructure build-up carries an initial price tag of US\$8.5 billion... through government-led spending, but this is expected to jump to US\$40 billion over the next decade with the zone earmarked to attract new industries such as airplane maintenance and petrochemical processing facilities. The aim is for it to become the logistics hub to serve the neighboring economies of Cambodia and Vietnam.”*





## Indonesia Appoints a New Intel Chief

**OE Watch Commentary:** At parliament recently, Indonesia appointed a new intelligence chief, General Budi Gunawan. After only two hours of questioning, closed to the public, the House Commission announced that Budi was “fit and suitable” for the position.

Interestingly, Budi previously had served as the country’s National police deputy chief commander to which he was appointed after accusations of corruption for allegedly accepting bribes. However, all charges were dropped.

Budi is well connected politically. According to the first article, he was the personal aide of Megawati Sukarnoputri when she was president in 2001. He was also current President Joko Widodo’s only nominee for the position.

According to the second article, Budi laid out his concerns over various international and domestic threats, asserting that the intelligence agency should improve its early detection system to prevent and tackle any threats to the country’s national security. Along with radicalism and terrorism, Budi outlined several international and domestic threats, to include proxy and cyber wars. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“External threats that endanger national security are getting more complex, asymmetrical and have no certain patterns. BIN (Badan Intelijen Negara – Indonesian State Intelligence Agency) should improve its performance to make a better early detection system to prevent and tackle any threats that can endanger our national security.”*

**Source:** Edo Karensa, “Parliament Approves Budi Gunawan as New Intelligence Chief,” *Jakarta Globe Online*, 7 September 2016. <http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/parliament-approves-budi-gunawan-new-intelligence-chief>.

*“In his prepared speech to the commission — before the question and answer session which was closed to the public — Budi had addressed various domestic and international threats against national security, including proxy and cyber wars.*

*The top spook-elect outlined programs to stifle radical, terror and communist groups in the country and promised more measures would be taken to protect Indonesian citizens from attacks and kidnappings by armed groups overseas.*

*The intelligence agency will focus on early detection to prevent sectarian conflicts, border disputes and political and physical conflicts during local elections in 2017 and 2018, Budi said”.*

*Budi was the personal adjutant of former president and current chairwoman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) Megawati Sukarnoputri when she was president in 2001.*

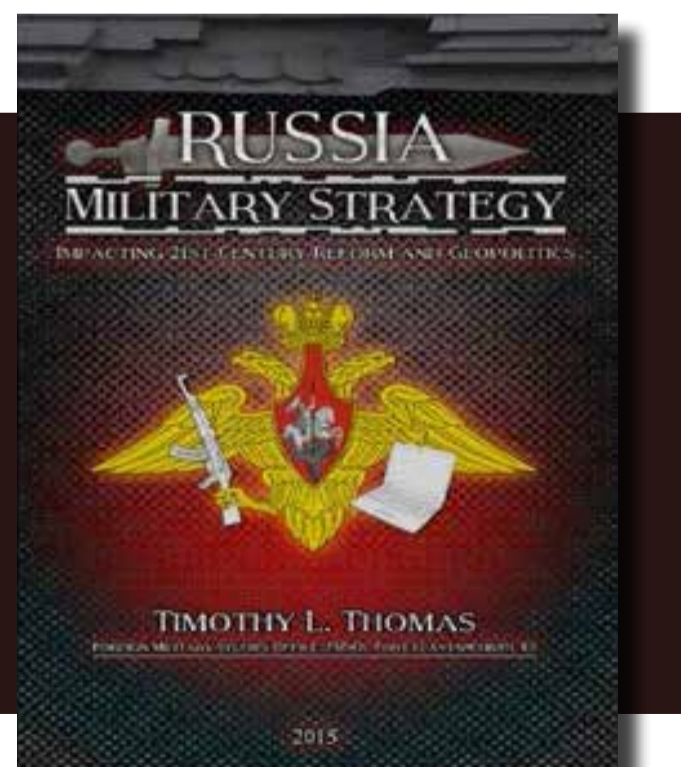
**Source:** Marguerite Afra Sapiie, “Budi Gunawan Vows to Improve Spy Agency,” *The Jakarta Post Online*, 6 September 2016. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/09/07/budi-gunawan-vows-to-improve-spy-agency.html>

*“External threats that endanger national security are getting more complex, asymmetrical and have no certain patterns. BIN (Badan Intelijen Negara. This is Indonesia’s State Intelligence Agency) should improve its performance to make a better early detection system to prevent and tackle any threats that can endanger our national security,” Budi told lawmakers on Wednesday.*

*Several external threats include the political tension concerning the South China Sea, drug trafficking, cyber war, conflicts at border areas, terrorist financing and also the rapid spread of radical ideologies that have endangered the country’s well-being, he added.”*

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

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas\\_Russian%20Military%20Strategy\\_Final\\_\(2%20May%202016\).pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Thomas_Russian%20Military%20Strategy_Final_(2%20May%202016).pdf)





## Indonesia Advances Naval Preparedness in Armada Exercise

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since 2005, Indonesia’s Armada Jaya exercises have attracted attention in Southeast Asia. At that time, Indonesia and Malaysia were experiencing tensions over maritime territory disputed between the two countries. Now, ahead of the next Armada Jaya exercises in September 2016, Indonesia’s maritime concerns have changed since the previous decade. Now Indonesia is more active in defending its claims in the South China Sea (or what it calls the Natuna Sea) disputes, collaborating with the Philippines on counter-piracy, and eliminating illegal fishing vessels in its waters.

According to the adjacent Indonesian-language article in *Sindonews.com*, Indonesian president Joko Widodo oversaw the Armada Jaya exercises, which were scheduled for the first three weeks of September. The exercises involved naval warships and aircrafts and the testing of surface-to-air missiles from speedboats. The article also states that 7,000 personnel would take part in the exercise. This is an increase from the 5,000 personnel that took part in the exercise 2005 and the 4,000 personnel that took part in 2011.

As the article indicates, the size of the exercise this year is unprecedented. This reflects Indonesia’s increasing focus on its archipelagic waters, especially as incidents with Chinese fisherman continue to rise as well as threats from sub-state actors. Nonetheless, Indonesia’s maritime defense strategy remains primarily defensive; the country does not seek to project its assets outside Indonesian waters.

In the future, Indonesia can be expected to further strengthen this defensive posture, but it will likely also increase cooperation with neighboring Southeast Asian countries and possibly also extend its naval capabilities to external sea lines and economic zones as the country’s maritime trading interests grow. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“The Armada Jaya XXXIV / 2016 exercise is the highlight of the Naval exercises in order to improve the professionalism of navy soldiers.”*

**Source:** “TNI AL Akan Uji Coba Rudal C-705 di Latihan Armada Jaya XXXIV/2016 [National Armed Forces Will Test Missile Exercise C-705 at Armada Jaya XXXIV / 2016], *Sindonews.com*, 31 August 2016. <http://nasional.sindonews.com/read/1135434/14/tni-al-akan-uji-coba-rudal-c-705-di-latihan-armada-jaya-xxxiv-2016-1472610999>

*The Head of Information Department of the Navy said the exercise is scheduled to be reviewed by President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) as it is implemented in the Java Sea from early September to the third week of the same month.*

*The Armada Jaya XXXIV / 2016 exercise is the highlight of the Naval exercises in order to improve the professionalism of navy soldiers, and is also a follow-up test of multilevel training and carried out by elements of the Integrated Fleet Weapon System (SSAT).*

*Warships, aircraft, marines and strategic weapons of the Navy, in the form of surface-to-surface missiles from fast boats will also be used in this exercise.*

*Likewise, Surface and Underwater Torpedo (SUT) as well as KRI various caliber cannons and heavy weapons marines will be used. About 7,000 personnel and 39 warships (KRI) of various types are involved in this exercise.”*

As seen below, the Indonesian navy has upgraded its capabilities, including targeting illegal fishing vessels and also to protect interests in the South China Sea.  
 Source: <http://www.voanews.com/a/day-in-photos-march-14-2016/3235278.html>







## A Japanese View on Limited War and Escalation

**OE Watch Commentary:** As an island nation, Japan's strategic thinking is driven by its vulnerability to being cut off from either the Asiatic mainland or the global commons. Throughout modern Japanese history (since the 1790s), the fear of invasion from either northern (Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands chain) or southwestern (Ryukyu Islands chain) archipelagic approaches have structured its defensive posture.

As the accompanying passage from a Japanese source demonstrates, Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine; as well as China's salami-slicing strategy in the South China Sea, has brought the specter of limited war more fully into Japan's security consciousness. Japanese planners have a two-fold concern: 1) the success of the Russian model of using unofficial forces, and 2) the perceived lack of response to both Russian and Chinese paramilitary operations.

Japanese thinkers worry that superpowers are restricted in their response to operations that employ limited ends and means, due to the balance of forces favoring the aggressor and the quick securing of strategic objectives. From this perspective, when an aggressor chooses limited war as a military strategy, escalation control rests with the aggressor, not the defender. This is true at both the conventional and even theater nuclear level. The response in Japanese defense circles has been to focus on increasing the military's ability to strike back flexibly and quickly to an attempt to seize Japanese islands, and to combine asymmetric means, including anti-ship missiles, with high-end conventional capabilities, such as 5th-generation fighters.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Auslin)**

*“This strategic thinking reflects the recognition of a new era: success or failure of a foreign policy is decided in a “gray zone” in-between wartime and peacetime, in hybrid conditions combining conventional and non-conventional combat.”*

**Source:** Yoshiki Kawamura, “限定戦争とエスカレーション (Limited War and Escalation),” *Briefing Memo*, National Institute for Defense Studies News, April 2016, <http://www.nids.go.jp/publication/briefing/pdf/2016/201604.pdf>

*“The concept of “limited war” developed in the US early in the Cold War. In the framework of the Cold War between East and West, its main focus was to avoid total war by managing regional conflict through controlling escalation and limiting military ends and means. Later, the nuclear balance of terror established between the United States and the Soviet Union made the use of nuclear weapons no longer an option. This led the limited war argument to move to center stage, discussing the possibility of controlling conflict escalation by thinking about how to use conventional military strength effectively for intervention in the Third World. This argument for limited war, which had moved from the basic concept of preventing direct confrontation between major powers to focusing on asymmetric battle between great powers and small nations (non-nuclear powers), has been drawing attention again in recent years, due to current international crises (Ukraine and the South China Sea). The new focus of limited war is again drawing attention as a form of crisis management between nuclear regional powers, or as regards to the actual use of force.*

*In Asia, the assumption is that there would be an early [US] attack on missiles [the 2nd Chinese Artillery], radars, and the control centers which are deployed on the Chinese mainland, so as to disable China's ability to impose an anti-access/area-denial strategy against an Air-Sea Battle strategy. However, there is concern that such a crisis may rapidly escalate, due to the increasing likelihood that China would launch a pre-emptive attack before being disabled by the US military.*

*In this way, we must be seriously concerned about “vertical” escalation, including the risk of a nuclear response quickly emerging among nuclear-capable regional powers. On the other hand, in a “salami slicing” strategy like that being practiced in Ukraine and the South China Sea, the side intending to change the status quo attempts to achieve its goals by presenting a fait accompli while avoiding an outbreak of traditional war between states...This strategic thinking reflects the recognition of a new era: success or failure of a foreign policy is decided in a “gray zone” in-between wartime and peacetime, in hybrid conditions combining conventional and non-conventional combat.*

*In contrast to the Cold War, when the strategy of limited war was invented due to a strategic demand to limit the ends and means of military use so as to avoid escalation to nuclear war, we are now witnessing an era in which utilizing limited military ends and means makes it easy to achieve political goals.”*

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

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

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

[http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609\\_Grau\\_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf](http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/20150609_Grau_RiverineOpsInContempConflict.pdf)



## China's New '4+2' Service Branch Structure

**OE Watch Commentary:** Xi Jinping, China's President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, recently inspected the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Strategic Support Force and the PLA's Joint Logistics Support Forces. His visits indicated the final step in the creation of the so-called '4+2' service branch structure. This means that the four major military service branches, the PLA Ground Force, the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force, and the PLA Rocket Force are now supplemented with two specialized forces, the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force. The accompanying passage from a Chinese source discusses this structure. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

**Source:** Ma Haoliang, "北京观察：解放军“4+2”新架构 (The PLA's New '4+2' Structure)," *Ta Kung Pao Online*, 17 September 2016. <http://news.takungpao.com/mainland/focus/2016-09/3370431.html>

*"By now, the PLA's new '4+2' structure of military forces has come into being, consisting of the four major military service branches, namely the PLA Ground Force, the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force, and the PLA Rocket Force, plus the two specialized forces set up separately, namely the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force. In the current round of the military reform, the PLA Rocket Force was created on the basis of the former Second Artillery Corps, and its status was raised from a service sub-branch to a service branch on an equal footing with the PLA Ground Force, the PLA Navy, and the PLA Air Force. The PLA Rocket Force has been equipped with its own military uniform, a departure from the past practice of adopting the uniform of the PLA Ground Force, whereas the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force are not called a military service branch but are instead just referred to generally as a 'force.'*

*In terms of functional positioning, the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force shoulder the important mission of providing support and logistical support to the four major military service branches. The PLA Strategic Support Force has functionally integrated the various kinds of support forces with a strong strategic, foundational, and support nature. The PLA Joint Logistics Support Force is a main player in carrying out joint logistical support and strategic and battle support. Unlike the major military service branches, these two forces do not have a clearly defined independent combat space.*

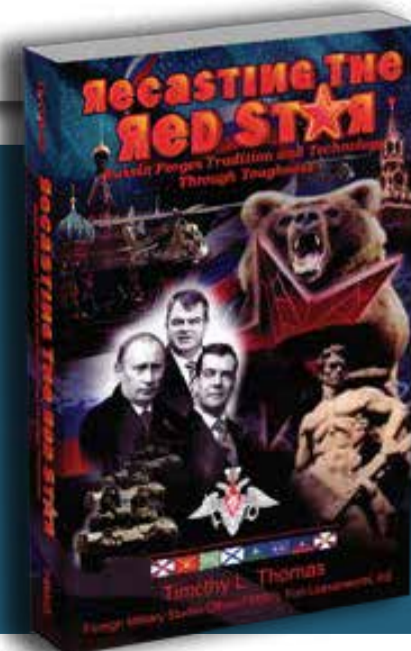
*Second, in terms of personnel strength, the four major service branches are singly unified. In other words, the PLA Ground Force consists of all officers and men of the ground force and the PLA Navy consists of all officers and men of the navy, but the members of the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force come from all major military service branches such as the ground force, the navy, the air force, and so on.*

*In terms of team formation, these two forces have mainly inherited some of the military forces under the former major headquarters and military regions. The PLA Strategic Support Force has integrated the electronic confrontation team and the technical reconnaissance force under the former PLA General Staff as well as the military aerospace force and others under the former PLA General Armament Department. In addition to providing support for the four major military service branches, the PLA Strategic Support Force has some of its own new combat forces. The PLA Joint Logistics Support Force has integrated the rear bases under the former PLA General Logistics Department as well as the relevant resources under the seven former military regions.*

*Similarly, within the "4+2" force structure, the PLA Strategic Support Force is at the military region level as are the four major military service branches, but the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force is established at the army level."*

*"By now, the PLA's new '4+2' structure of military forces has come into being, consisting of the four major military service branches, namely the PLA Ground Force, the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force, and the PLA Rocket Force, plus the two specialized forces set up separately, namely the PLA Strategic Support Force and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force."*

**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.**







## Japan Justifies Military Expenditures for South China Sea Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** In anticipation of increased tensions with China over disputed islands, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe requested a budget proposal to increase the country's defense spending. If approved, Japan would significantly upgrade its missile defense capabilities, purchase new submarines and post more troops in islands close to the maritime border with China, thus bolstering its defenses against China. A Japanese-language article on *searchina.net*, which covers China-related economic and political news, on 1 September, however, seeks to downplay, or at least rationalize, these potential new expenditures in light of criticisms of Japan abandoning its pacifist constitution, especially from Chinese media.

The article points out that the budget increase would only be 2% over last year and that defense spending has increased by an average of less than 1% since 2001. Thus, Chinese concerns are overstated. Moreover, the article points out that vigilance is needed on Japan's part considering China's unilateral actions in Japan's coastal waters as well as in the South China Sea.

The article brings out some of the key contradictions in Japan's post-World War II defense posture. While seeking to preserve its pacifist constitution, relying solely on defensive capabilities risks allowing China to engage in aggressive actions that undermine the interests of Japan, the US and other Southeast Asian allies. In this sense, the country's pacifism can hamstring Japan and, should there be a major threat of conflict, it could ultimately force Japan to abandon the pacifist constitution altogether. Thus, although the article does not make this point, Japan's budget increases are at the same time also helping the country to deter China and maintain the pacifist constitution for the longer-term. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“While it is true that there is an increase in the defense budget, the background is that there is a growing sense of vigilance in this military buildup about the unilateral moves of China.”*



Japan's increased defense budget is aimed at defending islands such as the Senkakus, as seen in the adjacent image, but there are also concerns about whether the country is adhering to its pacifist constitution. Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/china-japan-dispute-islands/24708082.html>

**Source:** 警戒せよ！ 防衛費を増加させる日本は「積極的に軍事力を拡大」している＝中国メディア [“Japan by increasing the defense budget is ‘aggressively expanding its military power’”]: Chinese Media, *searchina.net*, 1 September 2016.

*“Japan by increasing the defense budget is “aggressively expanding its military power”*

*“In the budget request of the fiscal year 2017, the Ministry of Defense's 168.5 billion yen is a record high. In China there is a growing concern for Japan's increased defense spending. Recently Chinese media reported that Japan continues to expand the defense budget.*

*However, since the defense budget of 2001 there has been a year-by-year 0.8% increase in defense spending that has continued to increase every year. This includes the budget for ballistic missile defense (BMD), for Japan-US joint development and local capacity-building of missile surface-to-air guided missiles, the deployment of security forces to the Nansei Islands, and the acquisition of F-35 fighter aircraft.*

*But the Chinese have intruded into territorial and coastal waters in the South China Sea in recent years. While it is true that there is an increase in the defense budget, the background is that there is a growing sense of vigilance in this military buildup about the unilateral moves of China.”*



## China Assesses Terrorist Attack on its Embassy in Kyrgyzstan

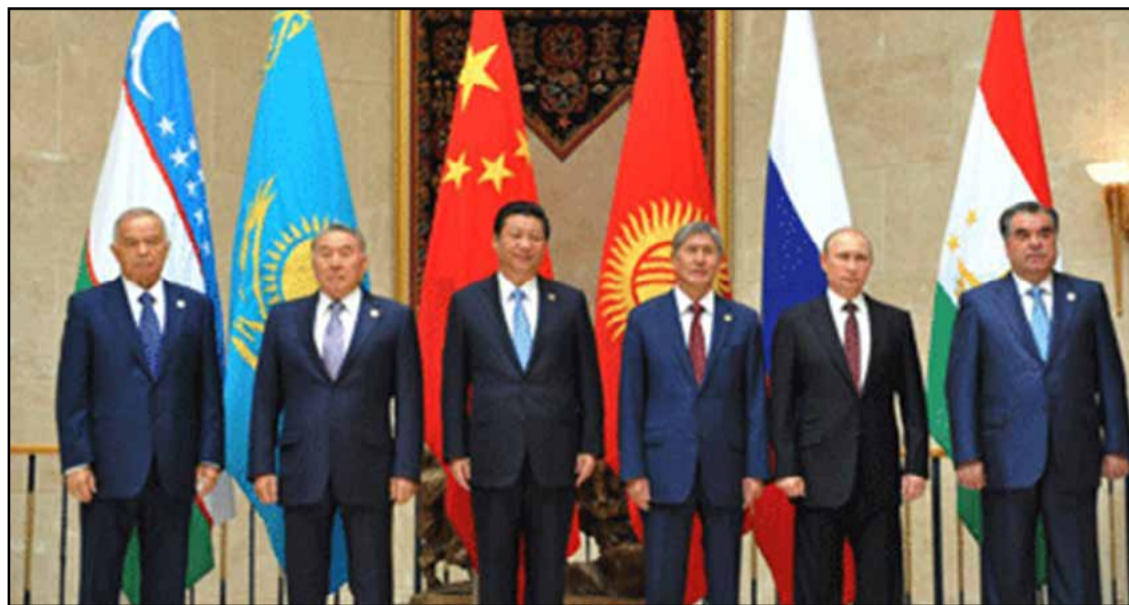
**OE Watch Commentary:** On 30 August, a suicide bomber struck the Chinese embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, injuring three Kyrgyz security officers. The attacker has since been identified as a Chinese Uighur who was deployed from Syria by the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (Jabhat al-Nusra has since rebranded as Jaysh Fath al-Sham). This was the first major attack on Chinese interests in Central Asia in recent years and the first suicide attack in Central Asia in nearly a decade.

One day after the attack, on 31 August *military.china.com* posted a Chinese-language article analyzing the attack in the context of other regional trends. The article accurately blamed the attack on a Syria-based Jabhat al-Nusra allied militant group commonly known as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (but which calls itself Turkistan Islamic Party). It also suggests the attack on the embassy may have been a response to China's killing a group of alleged Uighur militants, who were caught illegally crossing the border from China to Kyrgyzstan in 2014.

The article also traces the history of militancy and ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan and emphasizes the country's constant instability. It concludes that the outflow of extremism from Afghanistan (and now Syria) into Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan's economic decline, and the "geopolitical hodgepodge" and "powder keg" of the Fergana Valley, could lead to a situation akin to the Chechen wars in Kyrgyzstan that would radiate to the Chinese border. The hospitalization—and eventual death—of Uzbekistani president Islam Karimov, also in August 2016, may only exacerbate insecurity, as he had always attempted to tone down tensions in the region.

The article thus recommends China strengthen its anti-terrorism cooperation with Kyrgyzstan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Moreover, it recommends China look at the attack in Bishkek with the lens of al-Qaeda's early attacks on US interests in East Africa in the late 1990s. Thus, if the attack in Bishkek is seen in China as a sign of more attacks to come, China will likely ramp up its anti-terrorism posture in Central Asia and possibly also other vulnerable regions where there are significant Chinese interests, such as Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

*“The current situation in Central Asia is at a critical moment. On the Kyrgyzstan side, there was just a terrorist attack; on the Uzbek side, the political strongman, 80-year-old president Karimov, was recently hospitalized due to a cerebral hemorrhage.”*



Chinese president Xi Jinping visited Central Asian leaders at the SCO Summit in Bishkek in 2013, as seen in the adjacent image, and since then there have been further discussions on anti-terrorism cooperation between China and Kyrgyzstan.

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/east-asia-beat/xinjiang-09212013201817.html>

**Source:** 中亚已无可回避地成了中国海外反恐的主战场 [Central Asia is inevitable becoming China's main battlefield of terrorism overseas] *military.china.com*, 31 August 2016. [http://military.china.com/critical3/27/20160831/23436438\\_all.html](http://military.china.com/critical3/27/20160831/23436438_all.html)

*“In Kyrgyzstan danger will continue. In June 2010, in southern Kyrgyzstan large-scale ethnic conflict took place. In January 2014, Chinese and Kyrgyzstani border troops killed more than a dozen criminals. Then there was the suicide attack on the Chinese Embassy on August 30, 2016, where the driver died on the spot and three employees were injured. Fortunately, the Chinese diplomats were unharmed. These personnel have been identified “East Turkistan” elements.*

*After the war in Afghanistan, many international terrorists have gone into hiding [in Central Asia] by taking advantage of local complex ethnic relationships and the countries' relatively weak defense capabilities. In Central Asia, the Fergana Valley has the most rampant terrorist activities. Staggered in middle of the map, Central Asia's powder keg is the Fergana basin. Inter-ethnic conflicts have occurred there, and Fergana has become the geopolitical hodgepodge.*

*The “East Turkistan” elements in Fergana are very active, and can establish a presence in Afghanistan for terrorist training and strengthening ties with Central Asia and other international terrorist organizations. Andijan could become a second Chechnya and if extremists gain a foothold in Andijan, it will become a base for terrorists.*

*The China embassy attack shows once again that the three forces have been activated, and will likely target Chinese overseas targets. “East Turkistan” elements in Kyrgyzstan are close to Xinjiang, with cultural proximity, and the unstable situation in Central Asia and the complexity of the ethnic conflicts allows the terrorists to be able to find survival on its soil.*

*The current situation in Central Asia is at a critical moment. On the Kyrgyzstan side, there was just a terrorist attack; on the Uzbek side, the political strongman, 80-year-old president Karimov, was recently hospitalized due to a cerebral hemorrhage.”*



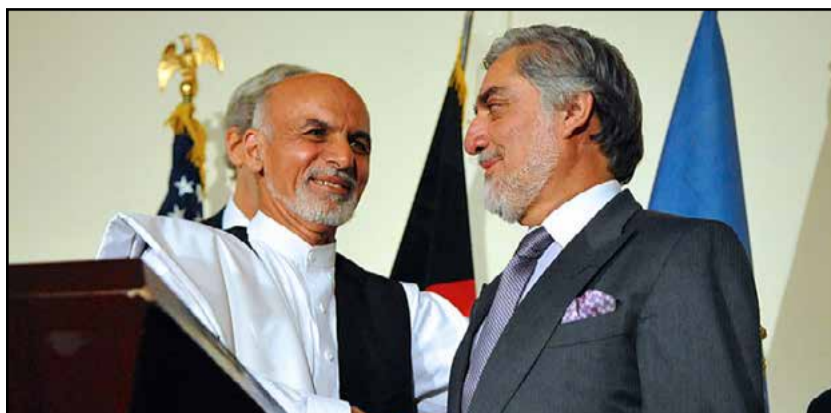


## Assessing the National Unity Government in Afghanistan

**OE Watch Commentary:** The formation of Afghanistan's national unity government two years ago may have ended the dispute over the 2014 presidential election, but as the accompanying excerpted articles show, there are a number of issues that remain. The first article from *Tolo News*, dated 3 September, reports on frustration at the government, particularly over corruption and lack of security. The article mentions that opposition groups stated that they will offer an alternative to the national unity government, but it is not clear if they are referencing the October 2016 parliamentary elections or other political activities. There are also questions about how the elections will take place in the midst of fighting in a number of districts across the country.

The articles from *Khaama Press* and *Tolo News* provide insight into one of the issues that the national unity government has been criticized for. They report on the negotiations for a peace agreement between the Afghan government and Hezb-e-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The articles note that these negotiations have been going on for two years but a peace agreement, expected to be signed on 10 September, has been delayed. It is worth noting in the second article from *Tolo News* that the agreement does not include the Taliban. According to the article, the High Peace Council will start negotiations with the Taliban following the signing of the agreement with Hekmatyar. The peace agreement could alleviate some frustration against the national unity government, but the articles show that there are other issues that remain. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“As the National Unity Government approaches its second anniversary, some opposition groups have said that if government does not fulfill its promises to the people, they will offer an alternative instead of NUG.”*



President Ashraf Ghani (left) and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah (right) form the core of the national unity government in Afghanistan, created in 2014 following the disputed presidential election.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashraf\\_Ghani\\_shakes\\_hands\\_with\\_Abdullah\\_Abdullah.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashraf_Ghani_shakes_hands_with_Abdullah_Abdullah.jpg)

**Source:** Majidi, Tariq. “NUG Slammed For Not Implementing Commitments,” *Tolo News*, 3 September 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/two-years-of-nug/27076-nug-slammed-for-not-implementing-commitments>

### ***NUG Slammed For Not Implementing Commitments***

*“...political analysts insist that the national unity government (NUG) has not implemented the accord which they signed when they formed the government. They also accuse the NUG leaders of having created many commissions and councils over the past two-years to hide their negligence... The NUG leaders vowed at their inauguration ceremony that they would stamp out corruption and that they had serious plans to maintain security.*

*... Mohammad Amin Farhang, a political analyst said: “There is a proverb that says if you do not want to get results from work, then form a commission. The NUG also created the anti-corruption high council and still its functions are not known. They promised to bring peace, but you hear the head of the peace council also resigned...As the NUG approaches its second anniversary, some opposition groups have said that if government does not fulfill its promises to the people, they will offer an alternative instead of NUG.”*

**Source:** “Peace deal with Hekmatyar’s party likely to be signed today,” *Khaama Press*, 10 September 2016. <http://www.khaama.com/peace-deal-with-hekmatyars-party-likely-to-be-signed-today-01862>

### ***Peace deal with Hekmatyar’s party likely to be signed today***

*“A peace deal between Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Afghan government is expected to be signed later today, sources close to Hekmatyar have said. The sources further added that the draft peace agreement between Hezb-e-Islami and the Afghan government has been amended during the negotiations...A spokesman for the High Peace Council of Afghanistan Mohammad Amin Muzafari earlier said they expect to conclude the peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami...”*

*This comes (after) reports emerged earlier suggesting that the party has issued new impossible-to-meet demands to sign a peace agreement with the Afghan government... According to the reports, the new demands included cancellation of pacts with the United States, a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops and that it be signed by a new government.”*

**Source:** Shahid, Anisa. “Peace Agreement To Be Signed with Hezb-e-Islami,” *Tolo News*, 19 September 2016. <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/27342-peace-agreement-to-be-signed-with-hezb-e-islami>

*“The High Peace Council (HPC) said on Monday that a peace agreement with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e-Islami party will be signed this week...Peace talks with Hekmatyar started two years ago, but talks with Taliban started during Hamid Karzai’s presidency. The HPC was established six years ago under Karzai, however, it is said that this council has not had made any important achievement in the way of peace talks with Taliban...the HPC said it will start peace talks with Taliban upon the completion of the peace agreement with Hezb-e-Islami.”*



## Uzbekistan after Karimov

**OE Watch Commentary:** The death of President Islam Karimov caused concern in Uzbekistan and across Central Asia about how a succession of power would play out and what, if any, changes would take place with a new president. The accompanying excerpted articles report on how Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev became the interim president and what this could mean for Uzbekistan.

The article from *Podrobno* discusses that Uzbekistan's Parliament did not follow the formal way of choosing the next president. According to Uzbekistan's law on succession, the President of the Senate, Nigmatulla Yuldashev, should have taken over interim duties until elections could be held. The article notes that the appointment of Mirziyoyev instead of Yuldashev did not come as a surprise to many. It also points out that Yuldashev conceded the position to Mirziyoyev, at least publically. While the succession did not follow the law, the transition did not result in violence, which had been one of the main concerns immediately following Karimov's death. Attention is now on what Mirziyoyev will do as president. As the political expert in the article notes, he will likely continue many of the things set up by Karimov, including his foreign policy.

The second article, from *Review* is the text of Mirziyoyev's speech to Uzbekistan's Parliament on 8 September, which confirms assessments that he will not make major policy changes. Mirziyoyev mentions in his speech that good relations with Russia will continue to be a priority and that Uzbekistan will not be involved in any political-military blocs. Most media sources in Russia and Central Asia do not believe that the new president will change course and rejoin the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which Uzbekistan withdrew from in 2012. Instead, the new president will most likely continue to pursue bilateral relations, particularly when it comes to security.

If there is one area worth watching for any changes, however small, it could come in defense acquisition. In the past few years under Karimov, Uzbekistan's Armed Forces acquired transport aircraft, armored vehicles, and reportedly new air defense systems from countries other than Russia. Whether Mirziyoyev follows along with acquisitions from other partners remains to be seen, especially since a number of weapons systems and equipment in Uzbekistan's inventory continue to age. Ultimately, the transition from Karimov to Mirziyoyev appears to have taken place with no significant issues. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Former President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in April 2016. While Uzbekistan suspended its membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2012, bilateral ties with Russian remained an important of the country's foreign policy.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2016-04-25\\_Vladimir\\_Putin\\_with\\_President\\_of\\_Uzbekistan\\_Islam\\_Karimov,\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2016-04-25_Vladimir_Putin_with_President_of_Uzbekistan_Islam_Karimov,_01.jpg)

**Source:** Tikhonov, Maks. "Эксперт: Мирзиёев воплощает в себе статус-кво в стране (Expert: Mirziyoyev embodies the status-quo in the country)," *Podrobno*, 9 September 2016. <http://podrobno.uz/cat/politic/ekspert-mirziyev-voploshchaet-v-sebe-status-kvo-v-strane/>

### **Expert: Mirziyoyev embodies the status-quo in the country**

*"The appointment of Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev as interim president of Uzbekistan was a little surprise, as many had expected Parliament will follow the formal way of choosing President of the Senate, Nigmatulla Yuldashev...as noted by the expert, (Mirziyoyev) appears as a guarantee of the continuation of the course set by Karimov...according to (expert) Sattarova, the country's foreign policy will not change and bilateral relations will continue to be given priority...Security issues will grow bilateral relations between Tashkent and Moscow...Mirziyoyev was approved as interim president at a special joint session of the Oliy Majlis on 8 September..."*

**Source:** "Шавкат Мирзиёев: Идеи и программы Первого Президента Узбекистана станут для нас руководством к достижению поставленных целей (Shavkat Mirziyoyev: The ideas and programs of the First President of Uzbekistan stand as a guide for us to achieve them)," *Review*, 9 September 2016. <http://review.uz/index.php/novosti-main/item/9623-shavkat-mirziyoyev-idei-i-programmy-pervogo-prezidenta-uzbekistana-stant-dlya-nas-rukovodstvom-k-dostizheniyu-postavlennykh-tselej>

*"Speech by Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev at a joint session of the Legislative Chamber and Senate of the Oliy Majlis:*

*...On (Karimov's) initiative, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan was developed and implemented, the cornerstone of which is peacefulness, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and addressing emerging conflicts only through peaceful means...*

*...in order to further strengthen the position and prestige of Uzbekistan in the international arena, we will continue to actively pursue the Foreign Policy Concept. This position, as before, is the non-alignment to any military-political blocs, preventing the deployment of military bases and facilities of other states on the territory of Uzbekistan, as well as the deployment of our troops abroad...The priority direction of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is the development of relations with the CIS states, and all-around strengthening of friendly relations with the Russian Federation...The national interests of Uzbekistan include active participation and cooperation with the UN, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the CIS, and other international organizations..."*





## Upgrades to Georgia's Air Defense System

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian-Georgian War in August 2008 exposed several vulnerabilities in the Georgian Armed Forces, including air defense capabilities. The excerpted accompanying article discusses an update to a deal that Georgia made with France to upgrade these capabilities; and a recent visit to Georgia by the French Defense Minister.

The deal was initially signed in June 2015, but only a few details of it have been revealed since then. There were reports when the deal was signed that it included the Grand Master 200 radar system and Crotale missiles, both produced by Thales; however, the accompanying article notes that a portion of the money is for a purchase from missile developer MBDA France. The article also notes that Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria reiterated support for the deal, which was signed under his predecessor, former Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli who resigned from her position on 1 August 2016.

In 2009 a Russian think tank, the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies published "The Tanks of August," a collection of articles which examined the August 2008 war. One of the articles noted that the Russian Air Force experienced unexpected losses during the war, but only two downed aircraft could be attributed to Georgian air defense forces. Russian Ground Forces had mistakenly shot down the others.

The Georgian Armed Forces acquired the Israeli "SPYDER" air defense system at some point in the past several years (reportedly even before the 2008 war), but its inventory is largely made up of Russian systems. The only Russian-made air defense system in Georgia's inventory that received significant upgrades is the 9K33 Osa (Wasp). It may not be known for some time if Georgia is purchasing radar, command and control or surface-to-air systems with this agreement, but it appears that it is applying lessons learned from the 2008 war with Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*“Late last year Georgia entered into a loan agreement with the French bank Société Générale for financing acquisition of air defense system from France.”*



The Israeli "SPYDER" surface-to-air missile system can be mounted on various models of trucks and is one of the most advanced air defense systems currently in Georgia's inventory.  
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SPYDER.jpg>

**Source:** "French Defense Minister Visits Georgia," *Civil Georgia*, 10 September 2016. <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=29428>

### **French Defense Minister Visits Georgia**

*"French Defense Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, who is visiting Georgia on September 10-12, met his Georgian counterpart, Levan Izoria, on Saturday... France took the lead in helping the country to have its efficient air defense capabilities. He also said that a French air force officer has been assigned to Georgia to oversee the process. Late last year Georgia entered into a loan agreement with the French bank Société Générale for financing acquisition of air defense system from France..."*

*EUR 52.65 million from the total loan amount is designed for purchasing unspecified equipment and services from ThalesRaytheonSystems, which produces ground-based surveillance radars and air defense command and control systems, and EUR 24.98 million is intended for acquisitions from missile manufacturer MBDA France... Georgian Defense Minister Izoria said it was reiterated at the meeting with his French counterpart that the contract on air defense systems remains in force and will be fully implemented. On September 12 Le Drian will travel to Sachkhere in the Imereti region to participate in a 10-year anniversary of Mountain Training Schools, which was launched with the French assistance..."*





## Details of Russia's Ballistic Missile Defense Countermeasures

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Federation has generally been highly critical of the US's role in the global world order and has often challenged the US through various multilateral and unilateral means. The Russian Federation believes that her most important means of resisting this perceived US hegemony is through the strategic deterrence that her nuclear weapons provide. Even in the worst of economic times, Russia has been able to rely on her strategic nuclear forces for nuclear parity with the US and for strategic deterrence. However, for Russia, the combination of the US's development of two very different programs in the 2000s changed this status quo of parity for the first time. As the accompanying passages discuss, Russia believes that the anti-ballistic-missile defense and Prompt Global Strike programs are designed to degrade Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities. The accompanying articles discuss technologies that Russia is developing to defeat these programs; including hypersonic glide vehicles, hypersonic missiles, and new intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Regarding Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense (ABM), Russia has generally not expressed much concern about current US missile defense assets positioned away from its borders, as it has touted its missile technologies in the Topol, Yars, Bulava, and Iskander missiles that they claim have the capability to avoid anti-ballistic missile defense technologies. As both excerpts point out, in terms of strategic deterrence, what concerns Russia is the future, and evading the next generation of US anti-ballistic technologies. Russia's current concern about the ABM is its belief that the MK-41 launch system used in the Aegis-Ashore ground-based missile defense complexes being stationed in Poland and Romania are also intended for offensive purposes since they are capable of employing Tomahawk cruise missiles. Although Russians believe that the SM-3 kinetic energy missiles present no threat, the ability to rapidly repurpose the MK-41 launchers to fire Tomahawk cruise missiles that can target Russian ICBM sites presents a great threat. Some in the Russian security establishment have argued that if the emplacement of the MK-41 launchers near Russia's border does not breach the letter of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, it certainly breaches the spirit.

Regarding the Prompt Global Strike (PGS) program, Russia believes that it was developed as a way of neutralizing Russian military capabilities by eliminating Russia's strategic deterrent forces by only using conventional weapons. By some Russian estimates, up to 80% of Russia's nuclear arsenal could be destroyed without the use of any US nuclear weapons, by a PGS attack. There has been much Russian chest thumping about the ability of Russian ballistic missiles to avoid the current capabilities of any US anti-ballistic-missile system, but apparently Russia sees the possibility of Russian strategic nuclear assets being destroyed in or on their launch platforms as a much more grave threat. The ability of the US to perform precision guidance operations is understood and respected. Russia has been particularly interested in the US's development of hypersonic missile and hypersonic missile launch platforms, and how these assets could be integrated into PGS. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“The Sarmat missile, whose development began in 2009, has been touted as Russia's response to US projects including the Prompt Global Strike initiative, and as well the effort to deploy missile defense near Russia's borders. If nothing else, Moscow hopes that the new missile and its payload will deter US efforts to gain strategic superiority over Moscow, or, in the worst case scenario, to launch a surprise attack on Russia.”*

**Source:** Vladimir Tuchkov, “Hypersonic Killers of American Missile Defense: Tsirkon and Item 4202 Will Come Into the Army by 2020,” *Svobodnaya Pressa Online*, 21 August 2016, <svpressa.ru/war21/article/154848/>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*In an interview with the Rambler portal, Tactical Missile Weapons Corporation (KTRV) General Director Boris Obnosov expressed confidence that by 2020 Russia will have developed hypersonic missiles with a speed of Mach 6-7. He believes such missiles will substantially weaken capabilities of the probable enemy's missile defense forces (PRO) “It is clear that at such speeds, with missiles having the capability of flying in the atmosphere at a speed 7-12 times that of sound, all systems of defense against them will be rather weakened.”*

*Obnosov asserts that several dozen specialized scientific research institutes and industrial enterprises are taking part in the project for creating hypersonic missiles, and KTRV is one of the leaders in this subject area not only in Russia, but also in the world. Much has been said of late about hypersonic missiles. They already are being planned for use even in particular strike complexes, both ground as well as naval, although both we and the United States began creating them considerably earlier...*

*After a period of hard times, however, developments were renewed and now it can be said with confidence that Russia has created a minimum of two hypersonic missiles which are going through the test phase. This is the Tsirkon antiship cruise missile of the 3K-22 complex, lead developer of which is the Scientific Production Association of Machine Building (NPO) in suburban Moscow's Reutov. Like Raduga, it also belongs to KTRV. An export version of the missile designated BrahMos is being created in parallel for the Indian Navy....*

*The work to create Tsirkon is proceeding so swiftly that it is proposed to complete state tests next year and launch series production in 2018. In this connection the forecast by the KTRV general director regarding 2020 will appear rather cautious....*

*...But Project 4202 seemingly is capable of surpassing the speed level set by Boris Obnosov. This missile also is being created in the NPO. More accurately, this is not an*

*(continued)*





## Continued: Details of Russia's Ballistic Missile Defense Countermeasures

**Source:** "Sarmat ICBM: 8 Megatons at Hypersonic Speeds, Arriving 2 Years Ahead of Schedule," *Sputnik Online*, 7 September 2016, <<https://sputniknews.com/military/20160907/1045062797/sarmat-ahead-of-schedule-analysis.html>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*"independent" missile, but an intercontinental ballistic missile warhead which, after separation from the launch vehicle, behaves specifically as a hypersonic cruise missile, maneuvering freely both in yaw and pitch. According to various estimates, the missile's speed can range from Mach 7 to Mach 12. Therefore experts assert that not only are state-of-the-art missile defense weapons absolutely impotent against it, but also those which the United States has not yet begun to develop.*

*Prototype tests are being carried out using obsolete RS-18B Stiletto silo-based ICBMs, which serve to boost the hypersonic missiles. After Item 4202 is made operational it will be placed both on new RS-28 Sarmat ICBMs as well as on advanced developments. It is expected that this will occur in the period from 2020 through 2025. Production of 20 hypersonic warheads is planned in the first batch. They will make upkeep of the American missile defense system senseless. Three hypersonic nuclear warheads will be mounted on each Sarmat.*

*On Monday, a defense industry official told Russian media that the mass production of the RS-28 Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, a new multi-warhead, super-heavy missile designed to defeat anti-missile systems, would begin in 2018, two years ahead of schedule. Defense analyst Vladimir Tuchkov explains what made this possible.*

*The Sarmat, being developed by the Makeyev Rocket Design Bureau in the city of Miass, just east of the Ural Mountains, will replace the RS-36, a family of ICBMs and space launch vehicles that entered service in the 1970s and 1980s.*

*Featuring a large payload capacity, the heavy missile is expected to carry up to 10 heavy warheads, or 16 lighter ones, or a combination of warheads and countermeasures meant at overwhelming enemy missile defenses.*

*Most concerning to foreign defense observers is the prospect of the Sarmat being armed with Project 4202, a hypersonic glider which, after separating from its ICBM launch vehicle, will be able to accelerate to speeds between Mach 7 and Mach 12, acting like a hypersonic cruise missile, and capable of maneuvering to overcome any existing or prospective missile defense to reach its target.*

*The Sarmat missile, whose development began in 2009, has been touted as Russia's response to US projects including the Prompt Global Strike initiative, and as well the effort to deploy missile defense near Russia's borders. If nothing else, Moscow hopes that the new missile and its payload will deter US efforts to gain strategic superiority over Moscow, or, in the worst case scenario, to launch a surprise attack on Russia.*

*Russia's Strategic Missile Forces initially expected the arrival of the first parties of the new missile by 2020, in accordance with the state's defense program to the year 2020. But on Monday, a source within the Russian military industrial complex told Russian media that "the first Sarmats will be introduced to the Strategic Missile Forces no later than 2019, and most likely – in 2018."*

*Commenting on the news, Vladimir Tuchkov, military analyst and contributor to the independent online newspaper Svobodnaya Pressa, emphasized that the quickened pace of development was made possible by the modernization of the industrial base at the Krasnoyarsk Machine-Building Plant, where the production of the Sarmat missile is set to take place. Thankfully, Tuchkov added, the modernization of the enterprise's production capabilities came at a very timely moment, in view of the deterioration of relations between Russia and the NATO bloc, led by the United States. "The new missile will be a powerful deterrent, significantly outperforming all existing carriers of nuclear weapons," the analyst noted...*

Source: <http://russia-insider.com/sites/insider/files/Sarmat.jpg>







## Kavkaz-2016 Exercise Emphasizes National Mobilization Capabilities

**OE Watch Commentary:** Much of the analysis of Russia's recent Kavkaz 2016 has focused upon the impact of the exercise on Ukraine, but the Kavkaz 2016 exercise has also revealed Russian efforts to increase its national mobilization capabilities. As the accompanying articles from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and *Gazeta.ru* discuss, the Kavkaz 2016 exercises have involved transitioning the civilian economy to a wartime footing and practicing wartime command and control relationships. These preparations may seem odd in the era of "indirect and asymmetric methods," but talk of war is rampant in the Russian media. This discussion does not involve the "hybrid war" that the West often mentions, but large scale maneuver warfare that was seen in the Second World War, or as was expected during the Cold War.

The second excerpt mentions the possibility of the Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters (MChs) being incorporated into the Ministry of Defense (MoD). The MoD started drifting into MChs's lane several years ago when it established a disaster relief regiment. If MChs is subsumed by the Ministry of Defense, this reform could be seen as a better way of streamlining command and control and readying the government for a war footing. The Russian Federation has already formed a National Guard to centralize command and control of several of the major, internally focused, militarized security services. The result of the MChs reform, if implemented, is that the myriad of militarized intelligence and security services that Russia inherited from the Soviet Union, will now be placed in three "umbrella" organizations, the Ministry of Defense (MoD), National Guard, and Federal Security Service (FSB). **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



100th Separate Logistical Support Regiment. Source: [https://vk.com/page-60767131\\_49082397](https://vk.com/page-60767131_49082397)

**Source:** Oleg Odnokolenko, "The Ministry of Defense Rehearses the Transformation of the Country into an Integrated Military Encampment: Three Military Districts, Two Fleets, and the National Economy Are Involved in the Snap Inspection Measures," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 26 August 2016, <[http://www.ng.ru/armies/2016-08-26/2\\_minoborony.html](http://www.ng.ru/armies/2016-08-26/2_minoborony.html)>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*"Based upon the decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Southern, Western, and Central military districts, the Aerospace Forces, the Airborne Troops, and also the Black Sea and Northern fleets were placed on alert and brought up to full combat readiness on Thursday..."*

*During the course of the combat readiness inspection of the troops, who stand on guard of the western borders, they also plan "to rehearse" variants of the transfer of industry to a wartime footing. It is precisely that conclusion that follows from Sergey Shoygu's order to military leaders to master jointly with the federal and local executive authorities the issues of "coordination and the practical fulfillment of the mobilization tasks by industry enterprises"...*

*Of course, it is unlikely that they will permit Sergey Shoygu to transfer the macaroni plants to the production of cartridges for the period of the inspection – although that variant is stipulated in wartime. But it is already obvious that the national economy will be involved in the measure...*

*Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Oleg Salyukov also received a mission with a subtext. He was tasked not only "to provide the overall leadership for the preparation of the units and formations for the operations at the exercises," but also to test the command and control of Southern Military District and the territorial defense troops under "wartime conditions"...*

*(continued)*





## Continued: Kavkaz-2016 Exercise Emphasizes National Mobilization Capabilities

*“The banks must also carry out mobilizational measures; after all, even in the years of the Great Patriotic War the USSR Sberbank paid wages regularly to all servicemen who were fighting on the front. This is a system that must always work.”*

— Aleksey Leonkov, a military expert for the journal “Arsenal Otechestva”

**Source:** Vladimir Mukhin, “The Ministry of Defense Accomplished Missions, Which Are Characteristic of the MChS at Exercises in Southern Military District,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 19 August 2016, <[http://www.ng.ru/politics/2016-08-19/2\\_uchenia.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/2016-08-19/2_uchenia.html)>, accessed 30 August 2016.

**Source:** Yekaterina Zgirovskaya and Yelena Malysheva: “Wartime Central Bank. Ministries and Central Bank Become Involved in Surprise Inspection of Russian Army,” *Gazeta.ru Online*, 29 August 2016, <<https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2016/08/29/10165451>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*“The troop logistics support and combat support exercises that began in Southern Military District last week end tomorrow. Nezavisimaya Gazeta has already written that these are planned preparatory maneuvers for the Kavkaz-2016 Strategic Command-Staff Exercises that began earlier than the planned time period due to the Ukrainian saboteurs’ attempt to penetrate into the Crimea. However, not only this turned out to be their main distinctive characteristic.*

*...We have ascertained that they [logistics support and combat support exercises] rehearsed the coordination of the logistics support troops system’s totally new structures during the course of the exercises. Of them, some are designated not only for defense but also for operations in situations, which the RF Ministry for Affairs of Civil Defense, Emergency Situations, and Elimination of Natural Disasters (MChS) accomplishes. A number of experts are inclined toward the opinion that this was not done by chance. And it is possible that the reorganization of the MChS into structure, which will be subordinate to the military department, is drawing near. The exercise scenario points to that conclusion. The RF Ministry of Defense reports that the recently created RF Ministry of Defense 100th Separate Support Regiment was airlifted from the Moscow Region to Krymsk Airfield. According to the exercise scenario, the elimination of the aftermath of an emergency situation (flooding) and rendering assistance to the population in accommodations was its mission...*

*Nevertheless, precisely a regiment, which accomplishes similar functions, has been created in the Ministry of Defense structure by the decision of Sergey Shoygu, who headed the MChS for more than 10 years. RF Deputy Defense Minister General of the Army Dmitriy Bulgakov stated that “100th Regiment – this is an unusual regiment in the Armed Forces. It was formed based upon the defense minister’s decision and is designated to accomplish varied missions, including for the evacuation of the population, searching through debris, for work in areas of flooding or fire, and to augment troop groupings”. Military Expert Lieutenant-General Yuriy Netkachev directs attention that the Ministry of Defense troops very often come to the assistance of the population in the elimination of natural disasters...he thinks. It duplicates the MChS functions to some extent. “I will not be surprised if the country’s leadership will decide to reform the MChS into a structure, which will be a component of the Ministry of Defense. Then the duplicating functions will drop off by themselves. And the reorganization of the MChS bureaucracy will yield significant savings,” the expert is confident...”*

*“The Bank of Russia, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and other federal executive bodies have been brought into the surprise inspection of the Russian Army announced by the president. Gazeta.ru sought to clarify how the Central Bank will be inspected for readiness to work “in wartime conditions.”*

*...Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu instructed Deputy [Defense] Minister for Finance Tatyana Shevtsova to organize an inspection of the system of financial support for command and control organs and troops in the southwestern strategic salient on the transition from peacetime to wartime.*

*“It is also planned to inspect the readiness of a number of enterprises in the defense industry complex in southern Russia for the performance of the assigned mobilization tasks for the delivery and maintenance of arms and military and specialized equipment in the interests of the groups of troops (forces) that are being created,” the Defense Ministry announced....*

*...According to the Russian president’s Press Secretary Dmitriy Peskov the mobilizational events in subunits of a number of Russian ministries are “routine activity and normal practice.”*

*...According to Leonkov, in the course of the inspection mobilizational measures such as the evacuation of organs of power to a bunker are also being rehearsed. “The banks must also carry out mobilizational measures; after all, even in the years of the Great Patriotic War the USSR Sberbank paid wages regularly to all servicemen who were fighting on the front. This is a system that must always work.*

*“They can carry out measures to protect corporate networks, the performance of transactions, and so forth. The nature of warfare is completely different nowadays and one of its components is the jamming of any transfer of information in the enemy’s territory. And if communication with the regions was severed and the financial system was rendered lifeless because of the breakdown of communication, which it would be impossible to restore, everything would grind to a halt, it would be sabotage. Nowadays it is possible to impact this at a distance. It is essential to test this communication,” the expert explained to Gazeta.ru...”*



## Russia Integrates Military Capabilities into Civil Communications Infrastructure

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Federation is reportedly engaging in two different lines of effort to enhance military capabilities by integrating them with civil communications infrastructure. The accompanying articles from Russian sources discuss these initiatives.

The first accompanying article from *Izvestiya* discusses a plan to mount electronic warfare systems (Pole-21) on cell phone towers. The systems are meant to help protect fixed sites and strategic infrastructure by scrambling the signals emitted by GPS, GLONASS, Galileo, or Beidou that are often used for precision targeting. Precision guided weapons may also be equipped with other, less accurate, guidance systems. But as the accompanying graphic demonstrates, increasing the circular error probability of a given cruise missile by even a few meters can significantly degrade its effectiveness against hardened targets such as missile silos.

Although the article implies these systems will be left “on” to continually emit a jamming signal, it is more likely that these systems would only be turned “on” when hostilities are expected, as this jamming would cause significant problems for civil aviation, communications, and many other services that are precision navigation and timing dependent.

The second article from *Izvestiya* discusses the possibility of using Russia’s existing GSM cellular towers as a detection system for unmanned aerial vehicles, cruise missiles and light aircraft. These initiatives coincide with other efforts to prepare Russia for large-scale conventional warfare, such as massive “snap” exercises, reformation of the reserve system, exercising wartime command and control relationships, and testing the nationalization of the industrial base in the event of a transition to a wartime footing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“Already right now more than 250,000 mobile communications base stations are operating throughout the country and this network is constantly being expanded...The average density of their deployment totals 11 units per square kilometer. This permits us to form a round-the-clock, jam-resistant, multichannel airborne target detection field based upon the signal that is reflected from them with the capability of the transmission of the data to PVO [air defense] and PRO [missile defense] air defense missile complexes.”*

— General Director of the  
Roselektronika Joint-Stock  
Company, Igor Kozlov

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Vladimir Zykov, “The Ministry of Defense Will Jam GPS from Cellphone Communications Towers: A New Radio Jamming System Will Defend Strategic Facilities from Enemy Cruise Missiles,” *Izvestiya Online*, 25 August 2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/628766#ixzz4IHrzF0XI>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*The Russian Ministry of Defense has accepted into the inventory the Pole-21 radio suppression system, which defends Russian strategic facilities from enemy cruise missiles, guided bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles, which use the GPS, GLONASS, Galileo, or Beidou satellite systems for navigation and guidance to the target. The latest jammer, which was developed by Scientific and Technical Center of Electronic Warfare is the R-340RP radio jammer that is integrated with the transmission and reception antennas that are installed on cellular communications towers, which are merged into a single network, which covers entire regions like a dome that is impenetrable for satellite navigation signals.*

*“At the present time, the tests of the item have been completed and the system has been accepted into the inventory,” a Russian Ministry of Defense spokesman, who is familiar with the situation, told *Izvestiya*...“The transmission of an elementary signal from a satellite lies at the foundation of all satellite navigation systems. Therefore, the slightest deviation from the designated frequency even for milliseconds will result in a loss of accuracy. “The transmission of a signal occurs in an adequately narrow band, which is also called the ‘reference frequency,’” Independent Military Expert Anton Lavrov, one of the authors of the book “Brother Armed”, said. “State-of-the-art jammers are directed precisely at blocking the reference frequency, which it doesn’t pose any great difficulty to jam, while taking into account its narrowness and the availability of an adequately powerful noise jammer.”*

*We must point out that all four satellite navigation systems, the signals of which the Pole-21 must combat, use closely spaced frequencies, which end up in the interval from 1176.45 to 1575.42 MHz. The fact that even a transmitter with an output of a total of 20 watts in order to jam the radio signals in this range in a radius of 80 kilometers attests to the latest Russian system’s capabilities to create an impenetrable jamming dome....*

*...At the same time, the system has one shortcoming. As is indicated in its description, “The fact that this complex creates jamming both for the enemy, who is using the GPS radio navigation system, and also for domestic consumers of this GPS radio navigation system and also for its Russian GLONASS equivalent”...*

(continued)





## Continued: Russia Integrates Military Capabilities into Civil Communications Infrastructure

**Source:** Dmitriy Litovkin, Vladimir Zykov, and Aleksey Ramm, “They Will Connect GSM Networks to the Missile Defense System: The Latest Rubezh Development Will Detect Flying Objects Based Upon a Change of a Cellular Network’s Electromagnetic Field,” *Izvestiya Online*, 1 September 2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/629906#ixzz4IxmjX5qi>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*The Russian Ministry of Defense has accepted into the inventory the Pole-21 radio suppression system, which defends Russian strategic facilities from enemy cruise missiles, guided bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles, which use the GPS, GLONASS, Galileo, or Beidou satellite systems for navigation and guidance to the target. The latest jammer, which was developed by Scientific and Technical Center of Electronic Warfare is the R-340RP radio jammer that is integrated with the transmission and reception antennas that are installed on cellular communications towers, which are merged into a single network, which covers entire regions like a dome that is impenetrable for satellite navigation signals.*

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Required numbers of cruise missiles to destroy ICBM launch silos with a 95% probability							
Required number of cruise missiles depending on Circular Error Probability (CEP)							
3 meters		5 meters		8 meters		10 meters	
Per silo	For all silos	Per silo	For all silos	Per silo	For all silos	Per silo	For all silos
5	900	14	2520	35	6300	54	9720

Source: <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/27617>



Source: <http://mtdata.ru/u1/photo7FB8/20604295228-0/original.jpg>





## Russian Efforts to Further Network-Centric C4ISR Integration

**OE Watch Commentary:** Network-centric warfare can roughly be described as the integration of networking techniques into warfighting systems. In particular, it is the wide-scale use of networked electronic reconnaissance and targeting systems (satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles, etc.) linked with mobile formations. This type of warfare is meant to be quickly deployable throughout the entire theater of military operations to deliver decisive strikes on the enemy's flanks and rear, as swiftly and efficiently as possible. The accompanying passages from Russian sources discuss Russia's efforts to advance their network-centric warfare capabilities.

The Soviet Union, and later the Russian Federation, had long desired the ability to field a modern network-centric C2 system, but had lacked the technical means to do so. This situation has changed rapidly in the last few years as Russia has become home to a thriving information technology sector with military industries that are quite adept at developing and fielding new technologies. Russia has established a national command center that will reportedly be connected to subordinate command centers at the operational strategic command (military district) and Army Group levels. At the tactical level, the Armed Forces are overcoming C2 problems and implementing network-centric warfare through a variety of new technologies. These include new tactical radios, a tactical digital mobile subscriber system (roughly a military digital cell phone and data system), and tactical laptops and tablets. The accompanying article from *Izvestiya* discusses how this integration is progressing in regard to individual vehicles at the tactical level, while the articles from *RIA Novosti* and *Sputnik* discuss how communications essential for network-centric warfare will be maintained through a combination of High Frequency radio transmissions, a Russian military "internet," along with other, more traditional means such as conventional satellite communications. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“The speed of data processing will ensure high-quality real-time control over military units during war and in peacetime.”*



R-168 Radio.

Source: Image Courtesy: Vitaly Kuzmin

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm, "The VDV Will Be Able To Command and Control the 'Armata' Online: The Coordination of the Airborne and Ground Troops Will Be Improved Significantly Thanks to the Integration of Armored Vehicles into the 'Andromeda-D' Automated Command and Control System," *Izvestiya Online*, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/628366>>, accessed 15 September 2015.

*“The advanced Russian combat vehicles of the Armata, Kurganets, and Bumerang families will be compatible with the Airborne Troops Andromeda-D automated command and control system. Thanks to that decision, airborne troops commanders will be able to not only issue orders to the crews of the latest tanks, armored infantry vehicles, and armored transport vehicles in real-time, but will also receive all of the information about the technical and tactical state of the armored vehicles, beginning with the speed and direction of travel and ending with the availability of fuel and lubricants and the remainder of rounds and projectiles...*

*Communications are carried out via radio, radio-relay, and space lines of communication and one can work with the computer not only at the command or surveillance post but also while moving, right up to the front line...The computers have special software with electronic maps so that each user would be able to input online changes to the location of enemy troops, weapons, and equipment. In the majority of cases, our troops are automatically entered into the program based upon the GPS/GLONASS positioning of the connected computers.”*

(continued)





## Continued: Russian Efforts to Further Network-Centric C4ISR Integration

**Source:** “United Instrument-Manufacturing Corporation to Complete Tests of Latest “Elusive” Radio Set in 2017,” *RIA Novosti Online*, 18 August 2016, <[https://ria.ru/defense\\_safety/20160818/1474656550.html](https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160818/1474656550.html)>, accessed 15 September 2016.

“In 2017, United Instrument-Manufacturing Corporation (OPK) will complete testing of the latest communication device, which will prove “elusive” to signals intelligence and electronic warfare equipment, the corporation’s press service reported on Thursday.

In the future, the new radio transceiver will serve as a backup for satellite communication equipment, supporting data transmission at comparable speeds over long distances.

“United Instrument-Manufacturing Corporation has created a technology that will offer a threefold improvement in data protection and will allow for transmitting data over hundreds of kilometers, even in hard-to-reach areas. This unique development in Russian radioelectronics is undergoing tests as part of a ground-based communication complex that is currently being tested... The plan is to complete testing of the new device in 2017,” the report states.

The press service specified that a new technology ensures the requisite level of communication reliability – a broadband waveform that employs software radio frequency tuning. This allows the device to overcome jamming and allows it to “elude” signals intelligence and electronic warfare equipment.”

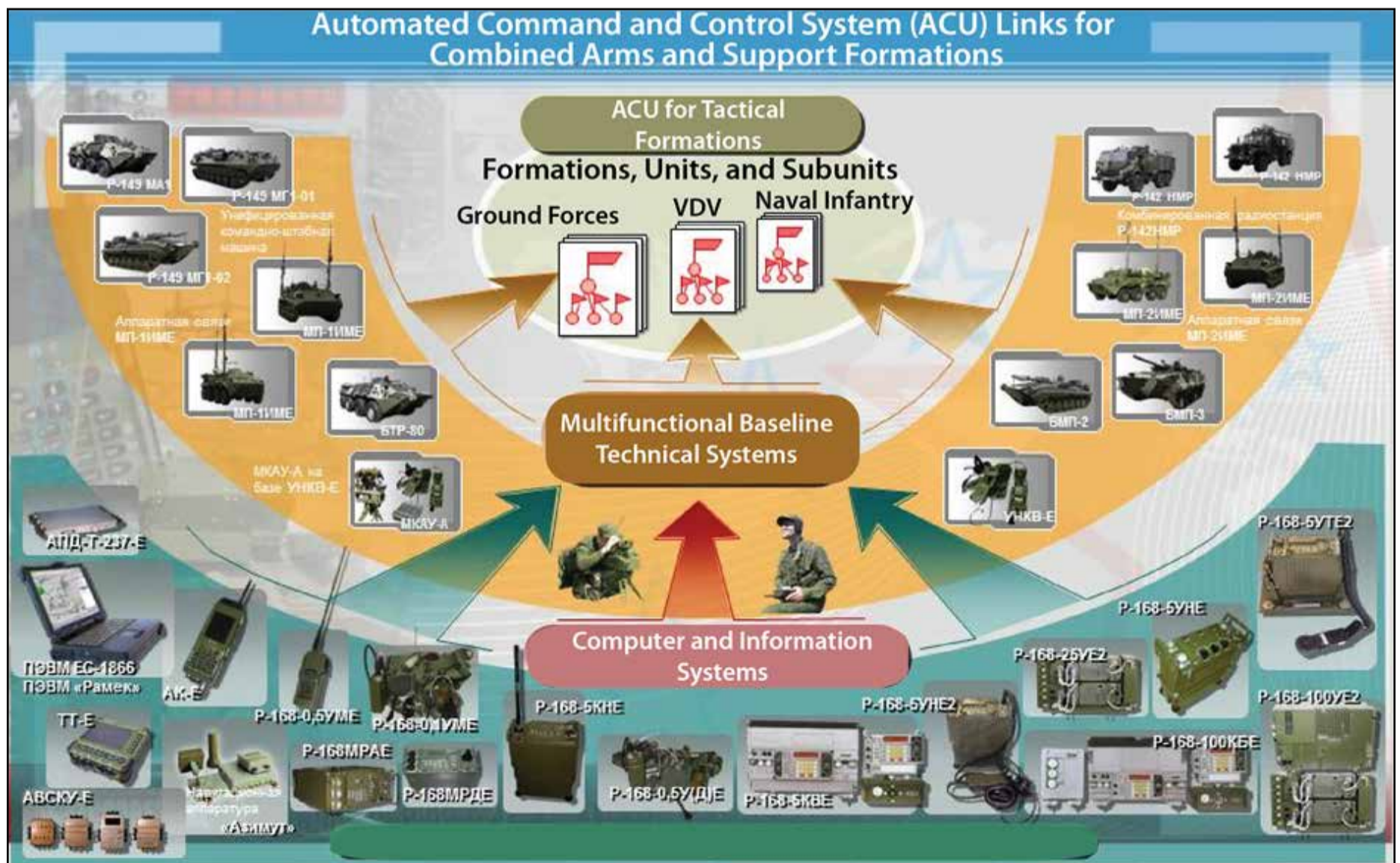
**Source:** “Russia’s Armed Forces to Boast Their Very Own Hack-Proof Internet,” *Sputnik Online*, 10 September 2016, <<https://sputniknews.com/russia/20160910/1045174832/russia-army-internet.html>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

“The creation of an Internet-like telecommunications system for the Russia Armed Forces capable of executing over 30 million operations a second took center stage during a roundtable of defense industry experts held as part of the Army-2016 expo. The ambitious project will require fiber-optic and coaxial communication lines as well as wireless technology. The speed of data processing will ensure high-quality real-time control over military units during war and in peacetime. The participants of the roundtable discussed the creation of a ramified high-speed communications system for the Armed Forces that would not be hacked, ensure multiple backups of data traffic, commutation and information delivery...”



Platoon/squad leader tablet PC.  
Source: Image Courtesy: Vitaly Kuzmin

Source: Graphic Courtesy: bastion-opk.ru/







## The Nature of 'Future War'

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian Major General Vladimir Slipchenko used the phrase “sixth generation warfare” to describe the 1991 Desert Storm and its aftermath. Sixth generation warfare follows “fifth generation warfare,” which focused on the role of nuclear weapons. “Sixth generation warfare” is characterized by the increasing use of precision guided munitions (PGMs) and the growing importance of the informational aspects of war (information/psychological operations, C4ISR, Electronic warfare, cyber warfare, etc.). Russian security professionals sometimes also refer to this as “new generation warfare” or “future war”.

The accompanying article from *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* discusses one Russian analyst’s view of this type of warfare. Most Russian security professionals believe that aerospace (air and space) is now a theater of military action (TVD), pointing to the 2015 consolidation of the Aerospace Forces and Air Force into an Aerospace Defense Troops. In line with Major General Slipchenko’s view, the author discusses how precision guided munitions and the informational aspects of war will be decisive and require a rethinking of the way conventional operations are conducted. The author frequently discusses the importance of space based capabilities, specifically how they are key requirements for US operations by citing various US doctrine and manuals regarding space operations.

Although the author discusses many current views shared by the Russian security establishment, there are some points where there are significant differences in Russian opinion. Many in the Russian security establishment would likely take issue with the author’s “air and space centric” view of warfare, that discounts the role of the Russian Ground Forces. The author also discounts the role of nuclear weapons; while many Russian security experts would argue that Russian nuclear weapons, and the strategic deterrence that they provide, are essential for achieving political and strategic goals. Aside from these points, the view of future warfare that the author proposes is in line with mainstream Russian views on the topic, especially the informational aspects. This is evident in the accompanying article from *Interfax*, which discusses the establishment of information warfare centers for the Kavkaz-2016 exercises.

**End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Makmut Gareev, Jacob Kipp (former FMSO Director) and Vladimir Slipchenko discussing Future War.

**Source:** Oleg Bozhov, “How They Will Wage War in the Future: Tanks Rumble Through the Sky,” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets Online*, 9 August 2016, <<http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/08/09/kak-stanut-vesti-voynu-vbudushhem.html>>, accessed 14 September 2016.

*By general acknowledgment, the main feature of wars of the future is that they shift from the ground into the aerospace environment. Doctor of Military Sciences Vladimir Slipchenko, author of a number of books on sixth-generation wars, always asserted that war of the future will change many customary ideas in areas of strategy, operational art, and tactics...*

### ***So what will wars of the 21st century be like?***

*There will not be a clearly marked axis of main attack. The attack will begin to be delivered simultaneously from all axes of a theater of military operations. The offensive and defense of combined-arms subunits, units, formations, and major formations and the tank battles — all this is disappearing into the past before our eyes. In case a defending side in such a war attempts to employ tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery, then enemy precision guided munitions (PGM) immediately will turn them into range targets, which will be destroyed from a distance without entering into contact, direct contact, with them. This is why a theoretical substantiation of sixth-generation wars no longer presumes the involvement of large groupings of ground troops... terms as “front,” “rear,” and “forward edge” simply will become extinct, since combat operations will be conducted mainly in aerospace over the territory of an entire country or several countries...*

*In such a war it already will be difficult to identify the difference between strategy and operational art, since in the final account command and control of troops, forces, and assets will be reduced basically to three commands: “detect,” “decide,” “destroy.” ... Wars of the future do not presume occupation at all. Victory can be won chiefly by destroying enemy economic potential. In such a war it is enough to use strategic attack forces and PGM to inflict a crushing defeat on enemy means of retaliatory attack, destroy the most important and key military installations, and destroy*

*(continued)*





## Continued: The Nature of 'Future War'

his economy, power supply system, and lines of communication; and in addition, demoralize the population using information warfare techniques, after which the enemy state's political system will fall to pieces on its own...

...Russia's political leadership and the Russian Defense Ministry are taking these US plans into account in developing their own Armed Forces...Taking this experience into account, the conclusion can be drawn already today that the following factors are becoming the chief features of armed warfare of the future:

- the aerospace operation is the main means of achieving objectives of modern war;
- exclusion of man from the immediate zone of confrontation;
- availability of nuclear weapons has no decisive influence on achieving political and strategic missions of modern war;
- in modern war a military operation is conducted on an enormous territory with no clearly defined front line under conditions of fluidity of ongoing operations as well as a significant dispersion of forces and assets;
- engaging targets at enormous distances requires state-of-the-art PGM of varying range, including created on new physical principles, as well as their means of delivery — airborne, sea-based, and in the future also space-based. That is why capabilities of those arms and branches of troops which have such platforms come to the fore: Air Force, Navy, Aerospace Defense Troops, as well as Electronic Warfare Troops;
- ensuring coordination of troop operations, operational leadership, as well as reconnaissance under conditions of war are within the power only of space assets, which are capable of providing surveillance of enemy facilities to the full depth of his operational alignment.

And most important: to wage such a war a state must have a highly developed science and economy capable of creating PGM, state-of-the-art communications systems, and means of command and control — that entire combat and intellectual potential required for victory in a new-generation war.

**Source:** "Information Warfare Group Formed During the Kavkaz 2016 Exercises," *Interfax*, 14 September 2016.

The first information warfare practice took place during the Caucasus 2016 strategic command-and-staff exercises, Russian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Gen. of the Army Valery Gerasimov said.

"The first information warfare practice took place during the Kavkaz 2016 strategic drills. We set up an information warfare group during those exercises. The mission accomplished by this group is as essential as the tasks of the gunfire planning group. This is how important this work is. This is how we appreciate it," Gerasimov told a press briefing at the Russian Defense Ministry on Wednesday.

The Main Operative Department of the General Staff, its divisions - information warfare centers in military districts, information warfare forces, radio-electronic warfare forces, and units from the state secret protection service - participated in the fulfillment of that mission, he said.

"In principle, operations of information warfare forces are equivalent to operations of gunfire means and forces. They may even prevail at a certain stage. All these issues were practiced during Caucasus 2016 exercises," Gerasimov said.

## Keeping NBC Relevant Flame Weapons in the Russian Armed Forces

By Charles Bartles

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

[http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Flame\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Flame_2015.pdf)



## The Russian Airborne's Next Generation of Combat Vehicles and Beyond

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the accompanying article from *Izvestiya* discusses, Russia is concluding testing on the “Sprut-SDM-1”— the newest iteration of the Sprut self-propelled antitank gun (Sprut-SD). This modernized version will be operated by the Russian Airborne (VDV) and Naval Infantry. The Sprut-SD is based on the BMD-4 chassis, amphibious, can be parachute dropped by Il-76 and An-124 transport airplanes, and is equipped with a smoothbore 2A75 125 millimeter gun (which is a modified 2A46 gun) which are installed on all Russian tanks. The field testing of the Sprut-SDM-1 began after only 36 of the Sprut-SDs entered service. This practice appears to be common in the Russian Armed Forces. Russia sees no need to completely upgrade the entire force with new models of equipment, instead preferring to phase in incremental improvements on new or refurbished equipment that will coexist with earlier models. The article from *Vzglyad* discusses the Zauralets-D project, a self-propelled artillery gun/mortar that was being considered for the VDV. This project is now being abandoned in favor of the Lotos self-propelled artillery gun/mortar. The article from *Interfax* discusses that design work is now beginning on the BMD-5 (airborne fighting vehicle), as a replacement for the BMD-4M.

If Russia fields the BMD-5 in the next few years, the Russian VDV will be simultaneously operating various versions of BMD-2s, BMD-3s, BMD-4s, and BMD-5s. This practice could be challenging, as parts would need to be maintained for each of these systems, yet Russian logisticians have few reservations about the practice. This fact is due to the Russian system of modernization. Unlike many Western countries, there is no bidding process for new combat vehicles. In Western countries, due to the bidding process, when new vehicles are introduced, each usually comes with unique components which must be added to the national supply system. In the Russian system, all Russian BMPs and BMDs are manufactured by *KurganMashZavod* (Kurgan Machine Company), and since Russia pursues an evolutionary, as opposed to revolutionary, system of modernization, a majority of major subsystems (engines, transmissions, hydraulics, suspension systems, etc.) and parts may be used on subsequent models. An added benefit of this process is that the critical defense industry plants and design bureaus can always be kept “warm,” by continually designing and manufacturing new products. These practices allow lower production costs and permit smaller production runs that are economically feasible. Although these articles discuss only Russian VDV combat vehicles, these production practices are found throughout the Russian defense industry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“A more state-of-the-art digital weapon control system with a combined gunner’s sight with a night vision thermal-imaging channel and automatic target tracker was installed during the modernization to the 2S25M 125-millimeter self-propelled antitank gun for the Sprut-SDM1...”* — *Tractor Plants Concern Spokesman*



Source: Image Courtesy: Vitaly Kuzmin

**Source:** Dmitry Litovkin, “The ‘Flying Tank’ Will Get a Guided Missile: The Sprut-SDM1 Self-Propelled Artillery Mount will be Able To Use the New Complex To Destroy Tanks, Helicopters, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles,” *Izvestiya Online*, 23 August 2016, <<http://izvestia.ru/news/628367#ixzz4IHTFKGv0>>, accessed 31 August 2016.

*“The Ministry of Defense is concluding the plant tests of the latest modification of the Sprut-SDM1 self-propelled, airmobile, 125-millimeter antitank gun for the Airborne Troops. A military department spokesman told *Izvestiya* that one of the new vehicle’s primary differences is the weapons control complex (KUV) with the latest missile, which is capable of destroying at a distance of up to 6,000 meters even a tank with reactive armor in the form of containers with explosives, which are suspended above the conventional armor.*

*The latest item has been totally integrated with the digital fire control system (SUO), thanks to which the Sprut SDM1’s firing accuracy has not only been increased but it has also become possible to fire at low-flying and low-speed targets, for example enemy helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.*

*The new self-propelled gun has received a modernized missile, which is fired through the gun tube and was developed based upon the Invar-M round [NATO designation AT-11 Sniper]. The high-end shaped-charge round is located in the missile’s nose and ensures the penetration of reactive armor, including reactive armor that is made in the embedded version. The main shaped-charge round directly destroys the target. A variant of the missile with a high-explosive thermobaric impact warhead has been developed for the destruction of fortified engineering structures.*

*“A more state-of-the-art digital weapon control system with a combined gunner’s sight with a night vision thermal-imaging channel and automatic target tracker was installed during the modernization to the 2S25M 125-millimeter self-propelled antitank gun for the Sprut-SDM1,” a Tractor Plants Concern Corporate Management Company spokesman told *Izvestiya*. “The state-of-the-art sensors provide fire corrections due to wind, the vehicle’s own rate of movement, and so forth. Furthermore, the capability has appeared for the commander to conduct fire from an additional machinegun mount, including at the upper stories of buildings, domination heights in the mountains, and helicopters” ....*

(continued)





## Continued: The Russian Airborne's Next Generation of Combat Vehicles and Beyond

**Source:** "Decision Adopted on Creation of Self-Propelled Guns for Airborne Troops under Lotos Project," *Vzglyad Online*, 16 August 2016, <<http://www.vz.ru/news/2016/8/16/827048.html>>, accessed 15 September 2016.

*"The development of self-propelled guns for Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) is being conducted under the Lotos project, which is a development and replacement of the Zauralets-D project, Dmitry Semizorov, general director of the Central Research Institute of Precision Engineering (TSNIITochmash), stated.*

*"We achieved serious scientific and technical groundwork in the Zauralets which has now been transferred to the Lotos work," Semizorov said in a TASS interview. He also noted that the military has set the task of commencing serial production of the new self-propelled gun in 2020... In October last year, the developer reported that the Zauralets self-propelled gun, designed to equip the VDV, had passed preliminary testing.*

*In December 2014, Semizorov announced the beginning of the development of a new artillery gun for the VDV. Semizorov noted that in 2016 it is planned to supply the troops with a small batch, with large shipments scheduled from 2017 through 2024...It should also be recalled that in May this year the developer promised to hand over 144 BMD-4M's to the VDV in 2016..."*



Sprut-SD

Source: Image Courtesy: Vitaly Kuzmin

**Source:** "Russian industrialists developing prospective airborne assault vehicle BMD-5," *Interfax*, 11 September 2016.

*"The industry has started working on the technical profile of a prospective airborne assault vehicle, the so-called BMD-5, a representative from Volgograd Tractor Plant said at a roundtable held at the Army-2016 international military-technical forum on Friday.*

*"The analysis of armored vehicle developments in NATO and East Asian countries shows that there is a design trend for front-drive tracked vehicles with a crew placed in the armored part of a vehicle's body. In view of this, we are proposing an outline of a prospective BMD with the 100+30 (a 30-millimeter cannon and a 100-millimeter launcher) armament compartment being designed for the BMP-3 'Dragun'" the plant's representative said..."*



Source: Image Courtesy: Vitaly Kuzmin





## Banking on Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** In early 2013, the Chief of Russia's General Staff (V. Gerasimov) published an article which described how he perceived the current and future nature of war. As opposed to Clausewitz, who regarded war as an extension of politics, Gerasimov took a more holistic approach, arguing that all sorts of nonmilitary measures could be used to weaken one's opponent. To spark widespread protest in the target population, Gerasimov suggested that war would first be fought on the economic, information, diplomatic and political fronts before the actual employment of armed force. (For additional background on Gerasimov's article, see Charles Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review*, Jan/Feb 2016).

Since Russia's armed involvement against Ukraine, there have been growing concerns among Kremlin officials that the West will further employ these non-military means to foment protest and a possible "color revolution" to unseat the current leadership. As the brief excerpt points out, one area of special concern is the economic realm, where although Western sanctions have been in place for over two years, there are fears that more drastic measures might yet be adopted. The article describes a mobilization exercise conducted at the end of August "to evaluate the readiness for work in "wartime" conditions of structural subunits of the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Federal Agency for State Reserves, and the Bank of Russia." One of the primary objectives of the exercise was to establish procedures to ensure that the country's financial system would continue to operate in the event that "communication with the regions was severed."

Over the past two years, much of the Kremlin rhetoric (and that of the Kremlin-sponsored media) has stressed defense awareness and the necessity of mobilizing for potential conflict. Some analysts have posited that this increased military readiness to defend against an external threat has merely been a tool to strengthen the legitimacy of the current Kremlin leadership. This article from the pro-Kremlin source, *Gazeta.ru* appears to suggest, however, that some within the Kremlin firmly subscribe to the vision of future war described by General Gerasimov and are taking active measures to defend against an attack against Russia's economic system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"...if communication with the regions was severed and the financial system was rendered lifeless because of the breakdown of communication, which it would be impossible to restore, everything would grind to a halt, it would be sabotage."*



President Putin meeting the head of the Bank of Russia, Elvira Nabiullina.  
Source: [www.en.kremlin.ru](http://www.en.kremlin.ru)

**Source:** Yekaterina Zgirovskaya and Yelena Malysheva, "ЦБ военного времени. Министерства и ЦБ привлекли к внезапной проверке армии России," [Wartime Central Bank. Ministries and Central Bank Become Involved in Surprise Inspection by Russian Army] *Gazeta.ru*, 29 August 2016. <http://www.gazeta.ru/army/2016/08/29/10165451.shtml>

*The Bank of Russia, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and other federal executive bodies have been brought into a surprise inspection by the Russian Army announced by the president. Gazeta.ru sought to clarify how the Central Bank will be inspected for readiness to work "in wartime conditions."*

*Surprise inspections by the Russian Army have been taking place in the country for three years now, and territorial executive bodies and a number of ministries and departments are also becoming involved. Within the framework of an inspection being conducted 25 through 31 August, the military are to evaluate the readiness for work in "wartime" conditions of structural subunits of the Ministry of Communications and Mass Media, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Federal Agency for State Reserves, and the Bank of Russia.....*

*...The Finance Ministry explained to Gazeta.ru that this federal body "is carrying out specific measures within the framework of the inspection of the troops' combat readiness." "Questions of coordination of actions with other departments are being rehearsed and the viability of support systems and readiness to respond promptly to a sudden change in the situation are being inspected. The inspection is taking place in normal mode. We are planning to complete it on schedule and with a positive outcome," the Russian Finance Ministry Press Service said.*

*... "They can carry out measures to protect corporate networks, the performance of transactions, and so forth. The nature of warfare is completely different nowadays and one of its components is the jamming of any transfer of information in the enemy's territory. And if communication with the regions was severed and the financial system was rendered lifeless because of the breakdown of communication, which it would be impossible to restore, everything would grind to a halt, it would be sabotage. Nowadays it is possible to impact this at a distance. It is essential to test this communication," the expert explained to Gazeta.ru....*





## Morale Support for Kavkaz 2016

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian military conducted its largest training exercise of the year in early September, when more than 120,000 soldiers and civilians participated in the Kavkaz 2016 strategic command and staff exercise. The first excerpt from the Russian news agency *TASS* quotes the chief of the Russian General Staff, Valery Gerasimov as saying that “it was a hard test for commanders of all ranks. It put to test all staffs and military control agencies and their ability to coordinate operations by combined forces in theaters of combat operations.”

The second excerpt, from the military newspaper of the Southern Military District, describes a few of the morale-boosting tools used by the military to help soldiers handle the stress and to deal with the mental and physical strains of this exercise. The article points out how a “morale and psychological field support center was deployed” at the training area, where personnel provided “intensive and specific informational/propaganda, military-social, psychological, cultural/recreational, and spiritual work with service personnel.” Besides “conducting social and civic training exercises,” service members also had the opportunity “to read items from fresh special editions of the Defense Ministry newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*,” and a number of other military newspapers. Soldiers had access to movies and TV as well as to a facility “where songs and dances were performed by army and navy ensembles.” The article further describes the measures taken to provide religious support for both Orthodox and Muslim personnel.

With impressive displays of strategic maneuver, coordination and firepower, the Kavkaz 2016 exercise demonstrated that the Russian military continues to strengthen its overall combat readiness. Furthermore, it appears that Russian defense officials understand that key components underpinning this readiness are adequate resources to support the “morale and psychological support” for soldiers in the field. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** “More than 120,000 people take part in Caucasus-2016 drills,” *TASS*, 9 September 2016. <http://tass.com/defense/898820>

*Opuk Training Area, Crimea. More than 120,000 people, both military personnel and civilians, have taken part in The Caucasus-2016 exercise, but no more than 12,500 were engaged simultaneously, the Chief of Russia’s General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, told the media on Friday....*

*...Gerasimov described the drills as the “culminating point of intensive military training.”... “It was a hard test for commanders of all ranks. It put to test all staffs and military control agencies and their ability to coordinate operations by combined forces in theaters of combat operations,” Gerasimov said....*

**Source:** Mikhail Malygin, “Уроки боевой работы в поле,” [The Lessons of Combat Work in the Field] *Voyenny Vestnik Yuga Rossii*, 2 September 2016.

*This year, methods for working with personnel have been checked out in a real combat training situation in connection with the preparation and staging of the Kavkaz-2016 strategic command and staff exercise.*

*In August a special exercise to provide morale and psychological support for the grouping of troops (forces) in the Southwestern Strategic Sector was staged simultaneously at several Southern Military District training grounds... In particular, a morale and psychological field support center was deployed on unfamiliar terrain within a very short space of time at the Opuk training ground (in the Republic of Crimea)....*

*...[Malygin] Gennadiy Anatolyevich, what distinguishes a modern morale and psychological field support center when its activity is being organized directly as part of the troops’ combat procedures?*

*[Ochkin] Primarily the compact size of the facility and its mobility — that is to say, its agility, flexibility, and capability for action and interaction between the morale and psychological field support center’s structures. All the necessary conditions were created in the tent camp for intensive and specific informational/propaganda, military-social, psychological, cultural/recreational, and spiritual work with service personnel. Its main focus is on mobilizing the personnel to successfully perform their combat tasks....*

*...The development in service personnel of the group psychological qualities needed for the successful conduct of combat operations, the raising of the fatigue threshold, the enhancement of work capability and level of sustainability of professional and combat skills, and the mobilization of the personnel to successfully resolve their tasks was their main objective in the exercises....*

*...The information facility conducted social and civic training exercises with service personnel. Here service personnel also had an opportunity to read items from fresh special editions of the Defense Ministry newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Southern Federal District newspaper *Voyenny Vestnik Yuga Rossii*...*

*...The cultural/recreational facility at the training ground also worked at full stretch. It was based on a mobile field club incorporating a frame-structure movie theater accommodating up to 150 people. Russian TV news channels were relayed through video projection equipment with the aid of satellite dishes....Another facility that operated non-stop was the field concert platform, where songs and dances were performed by army and navy ensembles....*

*...[Malygin] What distinguished army and navy priests’ religious activity at the training ground?*

*[Ochkin] We deployed two work facilities — for Orthodox service personnel and Muslim service personnel — to carry out spiritual/morale and individual work with personnel and conduct religious services at the training ground....*



## Private Russian Soldiers in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian military marked its one-year anniversary of conducting combat operations in Syria last month, and while the conflict continues to rage, the Kremlin leadership has repeatedly praised its military for their efforts. As the first brief excerpt from a recent speech by President Putin points out, the “actions of the Russian military in Syria deserve the highest assessment as they are meant to defend Russia’s national interests and help anti-terror efforts to protect civilians.” A question arises, however, as to which military forces President Putin was referring to. According to a detailed article published last month by the Russian business daily *RBK*, the Russian government is increasingly relying upon private military companies (PMCs) to conduct sensitive ground operations in Syria. (For additional background, see “Russian Ground Forces in Syria?” *OE Watch*, Dec 2015).

This article begins by examining previous attempts to establish and legalize PMCs within Russia, noting that the key questions regarding oversight and funding have yet to be resolved. Another concern revolves around the dangers in authorizing organizations with the potential to “undermine the security of a state.” Regardless of the lack of legislation, the concerns over the loyalty of these companies, and the criminal statutes prohibiting mercenary activity, the article affirms that “private military companies do exist in Russia.”

The article focuses on the Russian PMC known as “Vagner” and its close relationship with the “Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) Special Operations Forces.” It points out that personnel employed by Vagner are co-located with a GRU unit and appear to share the same training facilities. Funding for this PMC remains murky, and the authors suggest that wealthy business owners contribute to the company in exchange for lucrative military contracts. Quoting a Defense Ministry official, the article points out that the monthly salary of a Russian contract employee with Vagner operating in Syria would range between 150,000-250,000 rubles per month (\$2,300-\$3,900). The authors speculate that there are likely between 1,000-1,600 Russians employed with PMCs currently working in Syria.

The article also touches upon compensation for those employees who are wounded or killed in action. Precise evidence has been difficult to uncover as employees sign non-disclosure statements which could potentially forfeit their benefit if surviving relatives reveal this information. While “a Defense Ministry officer insists that only 27 “private soldiers have been killed in the Near East,” a “former officer of the private military company speaks of a minimum of 100 deaths.” Transporting these employees and their supplies also remains non-transparent, and the article describes a mixture of official and unofficial logistic means and routes into Syria. The article concludes that PMCs will not be disbanded anytime soon, quoting a comment by President Putin from 2012 that Russian PMCs are “indeed an instrument for the realization of national interests without the state’s direct participation.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“This private military company is indeed an instrument for the realization of national interests without the state’s direct participation,”*



Vladimir Putin with the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Bashar Assad.  
Source: [en.kremlin.ru](http://en.kremlin.ru)

**Source:** “Putin praises actions of Russian military in Syria,” *TASS*, 20 February 2016. <http://tass.ru/en/politics/858227>

*“The actions of the Russian military in Syria deserve the highest assessment as they are meant to defend Russia’s national interests and help participants in anti-terror efforts to protect civilians,” Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday.*

*“The combat skills of our military are being improved now in the military operation in Syria. Fighting in this Middle East country, our servicemen and officers are defending Russia’s interests, extinguishing terrorists who call our motherland their enemy and who don’t hide their expansion plans, including into the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),” the president said at a reception in the Kremlin dedicated to the Fatherland Defender’s Day marked in Russia on February 23....*

**Source:** Ilya Rozhdestvenskiy, Anton Bayev, Polina Rusyayeva, Yelizaveta Surnacheva, “Призраки войны: Как в Сирии появилась российская частная армия,” [Phantoms of War: How A Private Russian Army Appeared in Syria] *RBK Online*, 25 August 2016. <http://www.rbc.ru/magazine/2016/09/57bac4309a79476d978e850d>

*“All over the world, private military companies are an enormous business: “Private soldiers” not infrequently replace armed forces. In Russia, they are outside the law. But the prototype of Russian private military companies — “the Vagner group” — has been road-tested in Syria, and the authorities are once again thinking about legalizing it....*

*The military unit at Krasnodarskiy Kray’s Molkino farmstead is a secure facility. It is here that the 10th separate brigade of the Defense Ministry Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) Special Operations Forces is stationed, *Gazeta.Ru* has written. The first checkpoint on the path to the base lies a few dozen meters from the Don Federal Highway.... Behind this checkpoint is the camp of a private military company, one of the officers of the troop unit claims....*

*...This structure does not have an official name, the name of its leader and its earnings are not disclosed,*

*(continued)*





## Continued: Private Russian Soldiers in Syria

*and the very existence of the company, which is possibly the largest in the market, is not advertised: Formally, the activity of private military companies is illegal in our country....*

*The last attempt to legalize private military companies in Russia was undertaken in March 2016...The government opposed the adoption of the law, noting in a comment that the draft law contradicted Article 13, Part Five of the Constitution: "The creation and activity of public associations whose aims or actions are aimed at <...> undermining the security of a state and creating armed formations is prohibited."... Despite the absence of a law, private military companies do exist in Russia. ...*

*...In order to make their work abroad easier, Russian private military companies register subsidiary structures in offshore companies.*

*...Russian troops did not participate in a full-scale ground operation in Syria, but in March 2016, General Aleksandr Dvornikov, commander of the Russian force grouping in the country, stated that individual tasks were being performed by fighters on the ground. "I will not conceal the fact that units of our special operations forces are also operating on Syrian territory," he said in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta. In his words, the military were performing additional reconnaissance of facilities for the purpose of airstrikes, guiding airplanes to their targets in remote regions, and performing "other special tasks."*

*...the Internal Troops veteran, who had seen both Chechen campaigns, was in Syria as the officer of a private military company known as "the Vagner group."...It is the GRU that secretly oversees the "Vagner group," a Defense Ministry officer and an FSB [Russian Federal Security Service] staffer confirmed to RBK, the latter adding that this detachment came into being after "the situation in the world became more tense."*

*The "Vagner group" appeared in the Near East not long before Russia began to officially deploy its bases there in the fall of 2015, the Defense Ministry officer says and a source familiar with the course of the operation confirms. All told, almost 2,500 persons took up position near Latakia and Aleppo; the operation was led by officers not only of the GRU, but also of the FSB, he adds.*

*...There was no shortage of applicants: In 2016, there were between 1,000 and 1,600 officers of private military companies in Syria at one time, depending on the tenseness of the situation, a source familiar with the course of the operation says....*

*...For private investors, the funding of private military companies is a way of proving their loyalty, an interlocutor in the Defense Ministry explains, for example, for closer cooperation with the military department. ...*

*...It is very difficult to calculate the costs of maintaining a private military company with a numerical strength of several thousand men. The Vagner group does not pay for the lease of buildings or its plot of land...Asked whether the restaurateur's companies are linked to the funding of the "Vagner group," a high-ranking federal functionary merely smiled and replied: "You must understand that Prigozhin offers very tasty meals."...*

*...Whereas contracts to service the base pass through electronic platforms, expenditure on the pay of the private military company's fighters is almost impossible to trace: The salary is issued mainly in cash, fighters from the "Vagner group" claim....*

*...The pay of a private military company officer in Syria rarely exceeded R250,000-R300,000 per month, a Defense Ministry officer clarifies in conversation with RBK. He agrees with the minimum threshold of R80,000, but estimates the average pay for a rank-and-file soldier at R150,000 plus combat payments and compensation payments....*

*...It is the private military company that bears the main losses on the Russian side in Syria, RBK's interlocutors familiar with the details of the operation say. Their information on the number of deaths differs. A Defense Ministry officer insists that only 27 "private soldiers" have been killed in the Near East, while one former officer of the private military company speaks of a minimum of 100 deaths....*

*...RBK contacted the family of one of the slain soldiers of the private military company, but his relatives refused to talk. ...An officer from the "Vagner group" claims that nondisclosure of the terms of working in the private military company are a condition of the family's receiving compensation.*

*...Fighters make their way to Syria under their own steam; there is no centralized departure, one mercenary explains. But freight for the "Vagner group" is delivered by sea, on the ships of the "Syrian express." ...The format of the "express" can be notionally divided into three parts: naval vessels, ships that had earlier performed civilian voyages and later became part of the Navy, and chartered bulk carriers belonging to various kinds of companies all over the world...*

*...A big role in the liberation of regions of the historical part of Palmyra was played by the private military company's fighters, a former officer of the group says....*

*It is not entirely correct to describe the "Vagner group" as a private military company, another representative of this market believes. "The detachment does not set itself the task of earning money, it is not a business," he clarifies. In the case of the "Vagner group", the interests of the state, which required forces to perform delicate tasks in Syria, coincided with the desire of a group of former servicemen to earn money while performing missions in the interests of the country, RBK's interlocutor close to the FSB leadership explains.*

*"The advantage from private military companies is the possibility of using them abroad, when the use of regular armed forces is not very appropriate," Aleksandr Khranchikhin, deputy director of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, believes. He effectively repeats a remark by Vladimir Putin. "This private military company is indeed an instrument for the realization of national interests without the state's direct participation," Putin, who at that time occupied the post of head of government, said in the spring of 2012....*

*...At the same time, he is confident that private military companies will not be disbanded — the unit has proven its effectiveness.*



## Bears at the Bering Strait

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russians are planning a coastal defense division on the inhospitable Chukotka Peninsula at the Russian end of the Bering Strait. Details are sketchy except that the troops will have All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and the veteran MTLB (Russian transport vehicle for combat) for coastal patrolling. The real questions are about TO&E artillery, helicopters, missiles and air defense systems. The division will belong to the Eastern Military District. The accompanying passages discuss Russia's plans for this future military force.

The peninsula is the geographical point where the Arctic Ocean meets the Pacific Ocean. The Bering Strait region is a very rugged combination of terrain and weather. Flying over it, sailing through it or traversing its ground are all challenging and weather dependent. The US experience in the Aleutian Island Campaign in that region in World War II proved a slow, bitter slog to force out a smaller Japanese force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“Speaking at a Defense Ministry meeting, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu confirmed that “there are plans to form a coastal defense division in 2018 on the Chukotka operational direction.”*

**Source:** “Symmetrical Response: Russia will get Division of Troops 85 km off US Border,” *Sputnik Online*, 28 August 2016. <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160828/1044714139/russian-coastal-defense-division-chukotka-analysis.html>

*Defense Analyst Sergei Ishchenko of the independent online newspaper Svobodnaya Pressa pointed out that no other details have been provided on this future military force. “However, it’s obvious that this is not just ordinary news, not least because what we’re talking about is the creation of a serious military force just a stone’s throw away from the United States: only the Bering Strait will separate the Russian coastal defense division from Alaska. At its narrowest point, that’s only 86 km away.”*

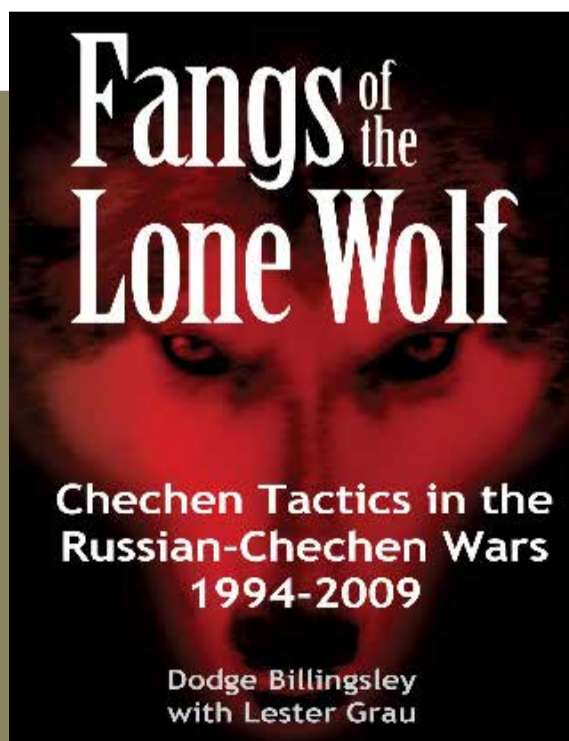
*Today, the Russian military “does not actually have a single coastal defense division. Therefore, there is no model on how it may look, and how it will be staffed. The only similar force is based in Crimea – consisting of the 126th Separate Coastal Defense Brigade of the Black Sea Fleet (formerly the 36th Separate Brigade of the Ukrainian Navy, which changed sides almost in its entirety to Russia in 2014). But a brigade-sized force is far from being a division. Its combat capabilities are much more modest.”...*

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm, “Российская арктическая пехота пойдет в бой на квадроциклах Читайте далее (The Russian Arctic Infantry Will Go into Battle on Quadricycles),” *Izvestia Online*, 26 August 2016. <http://izvestia.ru/news/628923>

*Informed sources in the Russian Ministry of Defense told Izvestiya of the decision to create battalions mounted on quadricycles. The military is deciding how many new military subunits are needed to guard the coastline of Chukotka, and which all-terrain vehicles the arctic infantrymen will use to accomplish their missions.*

*“Testing of several types of quadricycles has been successfully conducted by the soldiers of the 80th Arctic Brigade. The vehicles earned only positive responses,” a “North” Operational Command spokesman, who is familiar with the situation, told Izvestiya. “Of course, at first glance, it would be more logical to mount the motorized riflemen on snowmobiles. But, first of all, they will operate in the coastal zone, where the snow is not that deep and there are many rocks. Second, summer, even though short, still occurs in Chukotka when the snow disappears. Snowmobiles are useless in those conditions....”*

*“Several motorized rifle arctic battalions mounted on four- and six-wheeled quadricycles will be part of the coastal defense division, which will deploy in Chukotka in 2018.”*



Books on guerrilla war are seldom written from the tactical perspective and from the guerrilla’s perspective. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf*: is an exception. These are the stories of low-level guerrilla combat as told by the survivors. They cover fighting from the cities of Grozny and Argun to the villages of Bamut and Serzhen-yurt, and finally the hills, river valleys and mountains that make up so much of Chechnya. Dodge Billingsley, the primary author was embedded with Chechen guerrilla forces after the first war, so he knows the country, the culture, the key actors and the conflict. Yet, as a Western outsider, he is able to maintain perspective and objectivity. *Fangs of the Lone Wolf* provides a unique insight into what is becoming modern and future war.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/E-Pubs/Epubs/Fangs-of-the-Lone-Wolf.pdf>





## Large UAV Debut over Arctic Delayed

### OE Watch Commentary:

Even in the Russian design bureau world, sometimes short development to fielding time requirements slip. The design bureau is not making any statements, but the talk on the street is against an on-time show and cost overruns in the Altair UAV project. The passage from Russian-language *Inkazan* discuss a Russian military expert's views on the cost and timeline of the project; and the capabilities of the Altair UAV, which are linked to Russia's interest in developing the Arctic.

The Altair UAV is named after the 12th brightest star in the sky and part of the Aquila [Eagle] constellation. Of interest, the US Predator B, a functioning large, long-range US UAV with significant flight endurance, was also called Altair during its development. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“The vehicle weighs 5.5 tons, its flight endurance is over two days, and its range is 10,000 kilometers. It will be able to climb to 12 kilometers.”*

**Source:** “Серийное производство разработанного в Казани беспилотника для Арктики вряд ли начнется в 2018 году — эксперт (Mass production in Kazan drone unlikely to start in 2018 - expert),” *Inkazan*, 23 August 2016. <http://inkazan.ru/2016/08/23/serijnoe-proizvodstvo-razrabotannogo-v-kazani-bespilotnika-dlya-arktiki-vryad-li-nachnetsya-v-2018-godu-ekspert/>

*“A prototype of the unmanned aircraft flew for the first time in August 2016. Tests took place in Tatarstan. The design bureau stated that they do not comment or give out information on any project. [Russian military expert] Fedutinov noted that news on this subject indeed is very limited. Like the majority of other projects being carried out in support of the Russian Defense Ministry, this one is classified. “I believe the maiden flight took place without any kind of serious incidents, since existing experience shows it is difficult to conceal information about accidents, and this of course is a positive sign,” Fedutinov stated.*

*Fedutinov reminded this publication that Sokol Experimental Design Bureau received the right to do scientific research to create a large UAV with significant flight endurance in 2011. The development of UAV systems is difficult and costly. At that time the amount of the contract from the Defense Ministry was announced as one billion rubles. “The amount issued to the company for the project presumably in late 2014 certainly was many times more. I believe the final figure will exceed planned expenditures,” Fedutinov stated.*

*He further stated that the Altair UAV will be able conduct reconnaissance and data relay with the help of communications systems. The vehicle weighs 5.5 tons, its flight endurance is over two days, and its range is 10,000 kilometers. It will be able to climb to 12 kilometers. “It is no accident that the Arctic is linked with development of this UAV. Russia's interests in developing the Arctic dictates the need for a military presence, including the need for aerial surveillance, which unmanned aviation systems could provide” Fedutinov reasoned.”*

## Plumbing the Cold, Briny Depths

### OE Watch Commentary:

The prime months for Arctic exploration and training are August and September and the Northern Sea Fleet is busy. The “Vizir” — Russia's Northern Fleet hydrographic ship — is charting the depths, salinity and currents off the entire Russian Arctic coast. Some of this work may support Russia's claim that the underwater land mass of Russia stretches to the North Pole. Other findings may help determine the limits that icebreakers of various classes may penetrate during the long, cold winter. Clearly, findings will assist surface and subsurface navigation. So its long days and, hopefully, calm seas for the Russian scientists bobbing in the Barents and points eastward. The accompanying passage from a Russian news source discusses the expedition. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

*“The Northern Fleet hydrographic ship “Vizir” has departed on the latest Arctic expedition.”*

**Source:** Dmitri Grigoryev, “Гидрографы Северного флота отправились в Арктику (Northern Fleet Hydrographers Have Headed Out to the Arctic),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 16 August 2016. <https://rg.ru/2016/08/16/reg-szfo/gidrograficheskoe-sudno-sf-vizir-ushlo-v-arkticheskuiu-ekspediciu.html>

*“The Northern Fleet hydrographic ship “Vizir” has departed on the latest Arctic expedition. According to the Northern Fleet press office, the ship has left its permanent basing site at Mishukovo settlement, Murmanskaya Oblast, and set course for the Barents Sea's northern zone. What lies ahead for the expedition is geodesic and hydrological research of the Barents, Kara, and Laptev Seas and, if weather conditions are favorable, the East Siberian Sea.*

*The Northern Fleet press office reports that the expedition will last almost two months and that the military hydrographers' return to base is expected in October. During the expedition, new geographical discoveries could occur in those Arctic sea water areas that are now free of icebergs.*

*The Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense Press Service and Information Directorate reported earlier that the “Vizir” had returned from its previous Arctic expedition in October last year. At that time, the military hydrographers visited, for the first time in that Northern Fleet service's history, a little-studied Arctic area close to the Severnaya Zemlya Islands.*

*The previous expedition lasted 41 days and conducted oceanographic research at 30 geographical locations.*

*Using modern apparatus, the researchers recorded the sea-floor relief in Arctic areas remote from the Northern Fleet's main basing locations, and also took measurements of the Kara and Barents Seas' depths over a route covering more than 5,000 kilometers.”*



## The General Staff on Kavkaz-2016

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia's southern sector, which borders primarily on Georgia and Azerbaijan and includes the North Caucasus (Chechnya, Dagestan, etc.), is an area bearing special attention, according to Russia's Chief of the General Staff, General Valeriy Gerasimov and Deputy Defense Minister, General Dmitriy Bulgakov. This is due not only to the region's past history but also as a result of today's ongoing confrontations in nearby Afghanistan and Syria. For this reason Russia recently conducted an Armed Force's exercise known as Kavkaz-2016 in the region. The exercise paid special attention to the state of combat readiness and level of outfitting of troops in the Southern Military District. It also examined problems associated with ensuring the uninterrupted financial support of the district's troops in wartime. Phase one of the exercise ran from 5-7 September. It was designed to examine the border area and learn how to isolate areas of potential use to illegal elements. Phase two ran from 7-10 September. It exercised command and control issues associated with such operations. Kavkaz-2016 devoted special attention to the development of unconventional thinking in the operations of formations and subunits. Operational groups of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), and the Ministry of Extraordinary Situations (MChS) also took part in the exercises. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

*“He [Gerasimov] stated that the Southwestern Axis is of great importance today for ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation. ‘This is dictated by the fact that the belt of international instability is approaching Southern Russia as a result of the escalation of the situation in the Near East. This fact is moving us to take steps to preserve stability in the North Caucasus,’ General of the Army Gerasimov explained.”*



Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Valeriy Gerasimov.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valeriy\\_Gerasimov\\_%282015-05-12%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Valeriy_Gerasimov_%282015-05-12%29.jpg)

**Source:** Russian Federation Defense Ministry's Department of Information and Mass Communication, "Chief of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces General Staff Told Journalists Preliminary Results of the Strategic Command and Staff Exercise Kavkaz-2016," *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation* website, 14 September 2016. [http://eng.mil.ru/en/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12096033@egNews](http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12096033@egNews)

*“Special attention in the exercise was given to the redeployment of formations and military units to operating areas of simulated bandit forces and terrorists,” General of the Army Gerasimov noted. A grouping of aviation and air defense forces executed missions in support of the Ground Troops. Problems of delivering strikes against bases and facilities of fighters, sealing off air channels for supply of illegal armed force elements, and repelling air strikes of the enemy supporting them were worked out. Readiness of the air defense system was checked. Forces of the Black Sea Fleet and Caspian Flotilla conducted a naval blockade of the operational area, prevented the withdrawal of bandit forces by sea, and freed vessels seized by terrorists.*

*He [Gerasimov] stated that the Southwestern Axis is of great importance today for ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation. ‘This is dictated by the fact that the belt of international instability is approaching Southern Russia as a result of the escalation of the situation in the Near East. This fact is moving us to take steps to preserve stability in the North Caucasus,’ General of the Army Gerasimov explained.”*

*“In fire engagement we succeeded in working problems as part of the establishment of a unified information system, which includes receipt of intelligence and immediate delivery of pinpoint strikes,” the head of General Staff announced.*

*He [Bulgakov] emphasized that with the involvement of our science new approaches to the supported process both in the organizational as well as technical respect were worked out with consideration of Southern MD troops being reequipped with new models of arms and military equipment and the improvement in operational preparation of its territory and infrastructure.*

*According to him, on the whole during the snap inspection of combat readiness, the exercises confirmed the readiness of the material-technical support system for supporting the mobilization deployment of troops (forces) on the Southwestern Strategic Axis, including the transport movement of troops arriving from other strategic axes; and the capability of maneuvering supplies in support of the groupings of troops (forces) being established.*





## Eastern Military District Command Staff Exercise Examined

### OE Watch Commentary:

Russia's eastern sector recently conducted a command staff exercise that involved a notional enemy (played by a reinforced motorized rifle company) and a remotely monitored battlefield. As the accompanying passage from a Russian source discusses, all types of weapons and equipment were deployed against a make-believe opposition, to include Iskander-M operational missile systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, reconnaissance squads, Ka-52 helicopters, BM-21 Grad missile launchers, 153 mm Giatsint-S self-propelled guns, Shmel rocket launchers, snipers, BMP-2s, and UR-77 mine clearing vehicles. Of interest is that, like exercise Kavkaz-2016, the exercise emphasized the development of creative thought, a point often dismissed by Western analysts of Russia who consider the latter's exercises as too conscripted. The exercise also stressed the ability of commanders and staffs to develop nonstandard solutions to training tasks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Thomas)**

*“Departing from routine procedure and seeking nonstandard solutions to the training tasks that arise is a requirement to which the command and staff training exercise leadership HQ gave top priority from the outset. But so, of course, is strict observance of the demands of safety and of conducting modern warfare competently.”*

**Source:** Olga Kapshtyk, “Нестандартные решения. ПРИВЕТСТВУЮТСЯ (Nonstandard Solutions [are] Welcomed),” *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, 2 September 2016. <http://debri-dv.com/filedata/files/1718.pdf>

*“And now the exercise has begun. The missile formation’s personnel perform a mock ballistic missile launch from an “Iskander-M” operational missile system. It has been executed from a training complex in the Yevreyskaya Autonomous Oblast. The missile has successfully destroyed a target on the Amurskaya Oblast range, having flown a distance of around 300 kilometers.*

*The designated targets’ destruction is clearly visible through binocular lenses. The destroyed targets include the notional enemy’s command and control post. This enables the motorized rifle formations to switch to an attack, which is accompanied by an intensive artillery strike.*

*On the improvised battlefield there is not a single draft serviceman. In action, professionals capable of deciding the outcome of a battle in a real situation show their worth.*

*Departing from routine procedure and seeking nonstandard solutions to the training tasks that arise is a requirement to which the command and staff training exercise leadership HQ gave top priority from the outset. But so, of course, is strict observance of the demands of safety and of conducting modern warfare competently.*

*During the mock offensive operation, intensive artillery bombardment is being used against the notional enemy troops by BM-21 “Grad” missile launchers, 153-mm “Giatsint-S” self-propelled guns, and a “Sani” mortar. From the air, a bomb attack by Su-24 bombers is being inflicted on concentrations of the notional enemy troops. Flamethrower subunits armed with the “Shmel” infantry rocket launcher, as well as pairs of snipers, have been mobilized in the operation. The preparations for the combat vehicles’ offensive were made by military engineers who drove lanes through minefields using UR-77 mine clearing vehicles.”*



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## Choosing Alliances, Creating Fissures: Understanding How the Emergence of ISIS in Africa Affects the Relationships Between Boko Haram, Al-Shebab, and Al-Qaeda

On the African continent, ISIS is the new kid on the block. Having emerged in its current global form in approximately 2013<sup>1</sup> with operations centered primarily in Iraq and Syria, ISIS' entrance into Africa was more of a secondary goal. Currently, ISIS' primary stronghold in Africa is in Libya, especially the city of Sirte, though other locations throughout the continent have been feeling its presence as well. As of mid-2016, Somalia has endured at least two successful attacks by ISIS;<sup>2</sup> Kenya has been threatened with an ISIS-related anthrax scare;<sup>3</sup> and South Africa was warned by the US in May 2016 that an ISIS attack around Ramadan of that year could be likely.<sup>4</sup>

ISIS' entrance into the African operational environment has also meant that the group has encountered pre-existing insurgencies, many of which hold broadly similar, Islamist goals. Among others, extant African insurgencies operating on the African continent include those interested in creating Islamic caliphates and ruling territories via an ultra-conservative and violent interpretation of sharia law. Such pre-existing groups include Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in West Africa, and al-Qaeda in East Africa (AQEA) in the Horn of Africa, and other local insurgencies have, to some extent, *affiliated or considered affiliating* with Al-Qaeda in these regions, including Boko Haram in West Africa, and al-Shebab in the Horn of Africa. And, while it might seem logical that such pre-existing Islamist insurgencies would welcome the entrance of a similarly minded ally in the form of ISIS, this has not necessarily been borne out in practice.

Indeed, the ways that the two regional al-Qaeda branches and their "local" insurgent partners of Boko Haram and al-Shebab have interpreted the emergence of ISIS into their areas of operation could not be more divergent. For its part, in March 2015, Boko Haram officially pledged allegiance to ISIS and in so doing, effectively renounced any allegiances to AQIM. (Yet, more recently, in August 2016, the fissures between the former Boko Haram and ISIS were put on display, as the latter announced the installation of a new leader of Boko Haram, causing a split within the groups). Conversely, al-Shebab has had a radically different relationship with ISIS. Despite overtures from ISIS that al-Shebab should join it, al-Shebab has been staunchly *opposed* to forging a relationship with ISIS and has now begun to severely punish its members who advance pro-ISIS rhetoric or advocate for the groups' mergers. In broad terms then, Boko Haram has adopted a decidedly pro-ISIS outlook (recently called into question), while al-Shebab has adopted a decidedly anti-ISIS outlook.

What accounts for these divergent outlooks on ISIS, held by the two most prominent Islamic terrorist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa? Why has Boko Haram seemingly been pro-ISIS, while al-Shebab is decidedly anti-ISIS? More macroscopically, what are the implications of this divide for the US and the global community?

### Boko Haram

Boko Haram is an Islamist militant group based in northeastern Nigeria, which has, since approximately 2009 sought to create and Islamic caliphate in that area of the country under the rule of sharia. Under the current leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group has attacked both government forces and Christian and Muslim civilians. As of mid-September 2016, the group has killed an estimated 25,859.<sup>5</sup>

Of all insurgent groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, Boko Haram has been ISIS' most stalwart ally, at least until recently. On 7 May 2015,

Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, released a message pledging allegiance, or *bayat*, to ISIS. ISIS formally accepted Boko Haram's pledge six days later on 13 March 2015. As such, Boko Haram as a group and the territories it holds were incorporated into ISIS as a *wilayat*, or province, named Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyah (West African Province). Boko Haram's pledge to ISIS garnered global attention, as it signaled a merger between the deadliest groups in both the Middle East and Africa, creating what one observer, perhaps hyperbolically, described as "a marriage from hell."<sup>6</sup>

What factors led to this desire from Boko Haram to ally itself with ISIS? On the broadest plane, ISIS and Boko Haram may be said to hold the same goals: the carving out of caliphates in otherwise secular states in which to install sharia law. For Boko Haram, its primary goal is to reinstall the Sokoto Caliphate that existed between 1804 and 1903; for its part, ISIS has created at least ten global *wilayats* around the world, though they vary in the degree of ISIS control. Second, there is a degree of respect between the groups for what each has accomplished. Third, some members of Boko Haram's admiration for ISIS' sophisticated use of social media, especially Twitter and YouTube. To the latter point, some have noted that even before its merger with ISIS, Boko Haram had increased its video production quality to mimic those of ISIS, and had even adopted the same music as ISIS in the so-called "opening credits" of its films.<sup>7</sup>

Since their merger, politics on the ground have given credence to the notion that the Boko Haram-ISIS alliance is more than just nominal. For one, Nigerian security forces have arrested numerous affiliates of ISIS within the country. In January 2016, Nigerian military apprehended alleged ISIS recruiter Abdussalam Enesi Yanusa in the city of Kano. An undergraduate at the Federal University of Technology in Minna, Yanusa was allegedly trying to recruit Nigerians to join ISIS, and was planning on traveling to Libya for training.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in June 2016, Nigerian security forces arrested five people, again in Kano, who were involved in an ISIS sleeper cell.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, reports have also circulated suggesting that Nigerians – including former and current Boko Haram affiliates – are themselves joining ISIS' ranks in Libya. Other instances of ISIS' presence in Nigeria can also be felt. Troublingly, Nigerian media outlets were abuzz when it was revealed in May 2016 that ISIS had seemingly created a phone app, called Hu-roof, to teach children the alphabet through the use of images of guns, canons, and tanks.

Yet, this "marriage from hell" hit a decidedly rocky patch in August 2016, when ISIS announced via in its newspaper that Abu Musab al-Barnawi, had been named the new leader of Boko Haram. For his part, Shekau quickly disavowed this change in leadership, asserting that he remained at the helm. At the heart of ISIS' attempt at a wholesale replacement of Shekau was his tactical choices: namely, his tendency to allow and encourage Boko Haram to launch attacks against Muslims, including with child suicide bombers, a trend that ISIS found to be too radical and anathema to its interests. Since the announcement, the once meaningful alliance between Boko Haram and ISIS has been called into question, with members of Boko Haram now claiming allegiances to either Shekau *or* al-Barnawi. Indeed, some in Nigeria now fear that the split could in fact simply signify a clearer division of terrorist labor between the groups, with Shekau's faction focusing on anti-Muslim attacks, with al-Barnawi's faction entrench-

(continued)





## **Continued: Choosing Alliances, Creating Fissures: Understanding How the Emergence of ISIS in Africa Affects the Relationships Between Boko Haram, Al-Shebab, and Al-Qaeda**

ing itself as the anti-Christian arm of the group. Meanwhile, reports have been rife of internecine fighting between the factions.

Indeed, even before the announcement that led to the rift between the two, Boko Haram's alliance with ISIS was believed to be likely less pronounced than had been assumed by the international community. Irrespective of their aforementioned similarities, Boko Haram and ISIS have never been not entirely intuitive bedfellows. While ISIS conceives of itself as waging a global jihad – with attacks like those in Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016 – Boko Haram's areas of violence are generally localized to the Lake Chad Basin region, and the countries of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. In short, Boko Haram's aspirations are far less geopolitical than ISIS's. To that end, in May 2016, US officials suggested that the relationship between Boko Haram and ISIS was indeed not nearly as profound as had been thought. With the ability to track flows of finances, they asserted that actual transfers of cash or arms were minor. Instead, officials argued, Boko Haram had affiliated itself with ISIS for “branding purposes” though meaningful linkages were few.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, what of the other major terrorist group in West Africa, AQIM? It should be noted that indeed, while Boko Haram has long been assumed to have some connections with AQIM, their relationship has never been truly profound.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, AQIM is now engaged in a sort of turf war with Boko Haram and ISIS, fueled primarily by AQIM's newfound sense of insecurity by being crowded out of the insurgency landscape in West Africa. Indeed, whereas al-Qaeda affiliates in other parts of the world – like the al-Nusra Front in Syria, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – are *gaining* territory, AQIM's territorial holdings have been undermined by ISIS' presence, especially in Libya<sup>12</sup>, where ISIS has *de facto* control of the coastal city of Sirte. As some have noted, AQIM's early approach to ISIS's presence in West Africa was to allow ISIS to take the spotlight, and arguably expend its resources in what AQIM expected to be an overzealous burnout. Yet, this plan has backfired: as one analyst has said, “The price of quiescence from al-Qaida's perspective is [its new] irrelevance” in West Africa.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of this reputational insecurity, capped by Boko Haram's 2015 alliance with ISIS, AQIM has also stepped up its own attacks across West Africa in the past year. The primary motor keeping AQIM's reputation for carnage alive in West Africa is a new militant group, called al-Mourabitoun. Formed from a merger between the former Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and the “Masked Men's Brigade,” al-Mourabitoun officially became a part of AQIM in December 2015. Since then, it has been unleashing a wave of terror across West Africa, claiming three of the highest-profile terrorist attacks in that region in the past year. These included the November 2015 attacks on the Radisson Blu hotel in Mali that killed 22; the January 2016 attacks on the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso that killed 30; and the March 2016 attacks on Grand Bassam Beach in Côte d'Ivoire that left 21 dead. Notably, al-Mourabitoun has shown the tendency to target francophone West African countries – Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire – in retribution for France's leadership in counter-terrorism efforts throughout the Sahara and Sahel. To that end, it is the case that the uptick in attacks from al-Mourabitoun are intended to signal the group's enduring relevance and capacity to carry out high-profile lethal operations in the face of other formidable groups, especially ISIS and Boko Haram.<sup>14</sup>

### **Al-Shebab**

Al-Shebab, or “the Youth,” is a fundamentalist Islamic group that operates primarily in southern and central Somalia. Since 2006, al-Shebab has been working to overthrow various iterations of the central government in Somalia, based in Mogadishu. Al-Shebab formed as a breakaway group from the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a group of sharia courts from southern Somalia that attempted to control Mogadishu from June to December 2006. However, when Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2006, along with a subsequent African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the UIC was defeated, and al-Shebab came to rise. Since then, al-Shebab's primary goal has been the ousting of the current government of Somalia, as well as ridding the country of the presence of AMISOM. To that end, al-Shebab's tactics include suicide and car bombings of Somali government buildings, and targeted killings of members of AMISOM, which is comprised primarily of troops from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, and Ethiopia. Importantly, al-Shebab has been an affiliate of al-Qaeda since 2012, serving as the *de facto* East African branch of the group.

As opposed to Boko Haram, which has shown at least a nominal commitment to working with ISIS, al-Shebab has been far less eager to do so. ISIS leaders have been reaching out to al-Shebab leaders since at least 2015. In so doing, they have asked the latter to abandon its linkages with al-Qaeda, and instead, form “Wilayat Somalia,” or the Somali Province of ISIS. In no uncertain terms, al-Shebab's leader, Ahmad Umar, has rejected these overtures.<sup>15</sup> In September 2015, al-Shebab sent out an internal memo to its members officially rejecting ISIS' calls: this memo stated that not only would al-Shebab remain loyal to al-Qaeda, any defectors to ISIS would be punished by death.<sup>16</sup> And indeed, al-Shebab has been acting on these threats. Reports continue to circulate on social media that the al-Shebab police, known as the Amniyat, are actively arresting ISIS sympathizers from within al-Shebab. Moreover, a senior al-Shebab official from the Middle Juba region of southern Somalia, known for his pro-ISIS outlooks, was ambushed and killed by other members of al-Shebab for his defiance.<sup>17</sup> Not only has al-Shebab put a moratorium on its own members leaving to go to ISIS, it has also seemingly openly taken on ISIS itself, killing members of the group who have been at the forefront of advocacy efforts to get al-Shebab to switch allegiances.<sup>18</sup>

While al-Shebab's September 2015 declaration stopped a wholesale changing of allegiances from al-Qaeda to ISIS, it was not entirely successful at mitigating the attractions of ISIS: indeed, a new pro-ISIS offshoot of al-Shebab, called Jahaba East Africa, is now serving as the official ISIS representative group in East Africa. Jahaba East Africa was created in October 2015 by Abdiqadir Mumin, a former senior al-Shebab leader in the Puntland region of Somalia, along with approximately 20 followers<sup>19</sup> from his former unit of 300 soldiers based in the Galgala Hills.<sup>20</sup> In April 2016, Jahaba East Africa pledged bayat to ISIS, and in so doing, castigated al-Shebab in a public statement for remaining affiliated with al-Qaeda, writing:

“We in Jahaba East Africa are advising all East Africans to leave al-Shabaab and their sponsor groups, like Al-Muhajiroun, Al-Hijra and Ansar Islam....Like Al-Shabaab the sponsor groups have not understood the binding obligation of the

*(continued)*



# Continued: Choosing Alliances, Creating Fissures: Understanding How the Emergence of ISIS in Africa Affects the Relationships Between Boko Haram, Al-Shebab, and Al-Qaeda

Khalifah (caliphate)...We are telling the mujahedeen in East Africa that al-Shabaab has now become a psychological and physical prison.<sup>21</sup>

Jahaba East Africa's members are thought to be more diverse than al-Shebab's. While al-Shebab is made up of primarily – though not exclusively – ethnic Somalis, Jahaba East Africa is composed of Muslims from across east Africa, including ethnicities from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Sudan, and Eritrea. Reports have revealed that the pro-ISIS and anti-ISIS split within al-Shebab has – as in the case of Boko Haram – largely been dictated by age: older, established members of al-Shebab want to stay allied with al-Qaeda, while younger members, especially tech-savvy ones, prefer to switch to ISIS. In no uncertain terms, the rise of Jahaba East Africa signals ISIS' clearest presence in East Africa.

In the same way that ISIS's entrance into West Africa has created new fault lines of allegiances in that area, so too has ISIS' entrance into East Africa generated new forms alliance amongst insurgent groups that stand to be exploited. While it is the case that in West Africa, the powerhouse Islamist insurgency, Boko Haram, has *allied* with ISIS – leaving erstwhile pseudo-partner al-Qaeda in the dust – in East Africa, it is ISIS that has been left high and dry, but for the emergence of the relatively small Jahaba East Africa. Indeed, al-Shebab's alliance with ISIS is hampered not only due to its desire to retain ties with al-Qaeda, but also, to a certain extent, to the incommensurability of their goals. Whereas ISIS holds as its goal the creation of caliphates around the globe, al-Shebab is more parochial in its aims: it seeks instead to oust the government in Mogadishu, which entails simultaneously chasing out international peacekeeping forces, especially the AMISOM force, from its area of operation.

## Conclusion

Several lessons should be learned from the foregoing discussion. First, it is the case that what happens in one part of the continent seemingly affects groups in other parts. Indeed, upon Boko Haram's pledge of bayat to ISIS in March 2015, it urged other Islamist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa to follow suit.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, others have argued that ISIS's more advanced internet tactics have led both Boko Haram and al-Shebab to become sophisticated in their own use of social media, in effect copying ISIS' strategies.<sup>23</sup> Yet still, other observers suggest that a "contagion effect" is underway, where Boko Haram's endorsement is likely to compel other African insurgent groups – though perhaps not al-Shebab – to ally with ISIS.<sup>24</sup>

Second, observers should recognize the fact that the entrance of ISIS into Africa intuitively presents challenges, but also, might possibly present new opportunities to combat the groups. On one hand, it is clear that the entrance of new extremist elements into many of the unstable states in Africa is not a good sign. However, we might also rightly interpret that the fissures in the contemporary African security landscape with the entrance of ISIS might be exploited. In West Africa, the alliance between Boko Haram and AQIM is on the rock, and the new ruptures between the pro-Shekau and pro-Barnawi factions also more likely signal a weakening, and not strengthening, of relations. Meanwhile, in the Horn of Africa, a palpable antagonism between Al-Shebab and ISIS/Jahaba East Africa is emerging, and an impending reconciliation looks unlikely. Figuring out how to effectively exploit the new tensions between Islamist insurgent groups in Africa should be considered a priority for the future.

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