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In This Issue

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Nations Seek Solution to Restore Peace to South China Sea	2
CAMEROON: Unclaimed Hospital Attack May Prompt Further Unrest	8
HUNGARY: Economic Relief Policy Proposed to Promote Higher Birth Rates	9
RUSSIA: Government Reveals Intentions to Build Independent Internet Network	10
SIERRA LEONE: President Declares National Emergency to Curb Sexual Violence	11
SOMALIA: Al-Shabaab Attacks May Signal Danger for Foreigners	12
VENEZUELA: Maduro's Control of State Functions Presents Challenges for Opposition	13

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Nations Seek Solution to Restore Peace to South China Sea

Summary: Southeast Asian nations that share territory with China in the South China Sea (SCS) recently changed their posture towards Beijing's expansion in the region. Between 2014 and 2019, ASEAN nations shifted their stance from apathetic and allowing expansion to proactive and preventing further expansion through FONOPS and International Institutions. However, some countries did the opposite and sought to strengthen ties with China while others remained neutral on the dispute. Ultimately, the consensus among all claimants concluded with a call for China's demilitarization of the waters to decrease tensions in the region and maintain its stability and peace. This article focuses on China's continued expansion in the SCS and analyzes the different responses by ASEAN countries and how they have evolved in the last five years.

Background: After World War II, Allied Powers established the San Francisco Treaty ending the Allied occupation of Japan as well as the status of claimants made by the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan). The treaty did leave out one element to the PRC: islands in the South China Sea known as the Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, and Prates Islands, which China claims through the Nine Dash Line (a geographical maritime border that China historically claims located the SCS extending to the tip of Indonesian Territorial waters), formerly the 11 Dash Lines. The Nine Dash Line also extends in the territorial waters of The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Taiwan.

Beginning in March of 2014, China began the construction of artificial islands in the Fiery Cross Reef region of the SCS with no direct opposition from Southeast Asian Nations. In four years, China established large artificial islands capable of launching long range strategic bombers.

China took advantage of ASEAN Nations unwilling to act in the SCS and established military installations within the EEZ's of both Malaysia and The Philippines. With the strategy of using historical claims and non-military equipment in the early stages of island construction, the International Community did not question China's intentions. With China's use of the coast guard, naval units can now project Chinese power and expansion further south towards Indonesia and the Strait of Malacca. The map on page 3 shows the current Chinese claimant and the location of the key disputed islands.

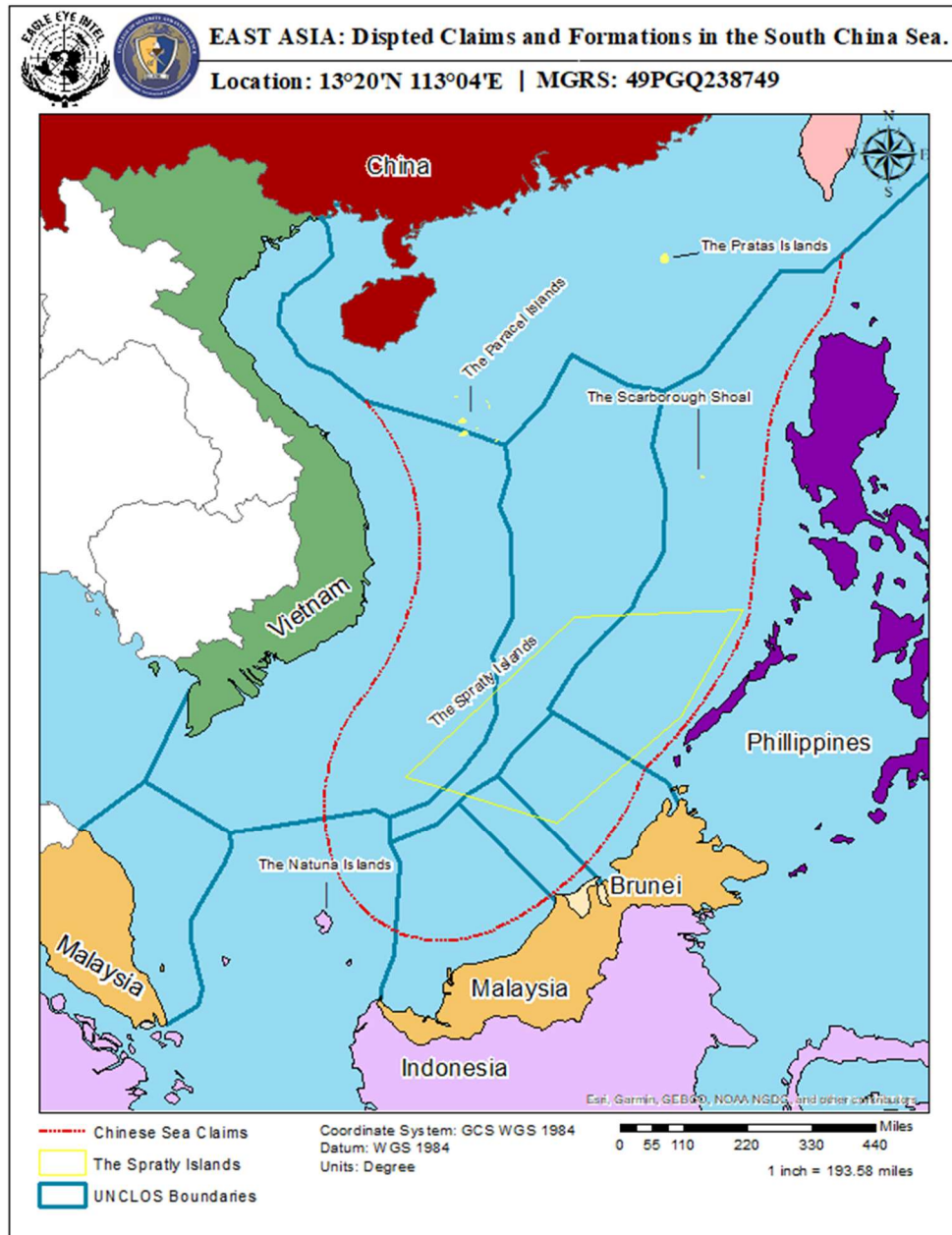
Key Intelligence Questions:

- How will China respond to the ASEAN nations' call for its demilitarization of the SCS?
- Will ASEAN nations push for a diplomatic resolution over military conflict?

Key Terms:

- SCS: South China Sea
- ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- FONOPS: Freedom of Navigation Operations
- EEZ: Economic Exclusive Zone - A 200 nautical mile zone off the coast of each country giving it rights to sovereignty fishing and natural resources.
- BRI: Belt Road Initiative - A strategy developed by the Chinese Government to invest and build infrastructure in Europe, Asia and Africa.

- MDT: Mutual Defense Treaty
- UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea



Development & Analysis:

Philippines:

A historical US ally in the region, the Philippines supported FONOPS and stood with the West in opposition to China's "crusade" throughout the SCS. This rhetoric mainly stemmed from the country's territorial dispute with China over the Spratly Islands and the Scarborough Shoal (a collection of islets, reefs, and shoals located about 120 miles from the coast of Luzon, a Philippine island). The Philippines claims it has sovereign rights over the shoal within its 200-

nautical-mile EEZ, which international law supports, but China still stakes a claim to it. Tensions especially escalated between the two nations in 2012 during a two-day standoff at sea after the Philippines caught eight Chinese fishing boats illegally fishing at the Scarborough Shoal. During an attempt to arrest the fishermen, two Chinese surveillance ships placed themselves between the Philippine Navy and the fishing boats to prevent the arrests until the Philippine Navy withdrew first. This event added to the Philippines' increasing contempt towards China's aggressive presence SCS that not long after the incident, the Philippines filed a case against China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). The PCA ruled in favor of the Philippines, stating that China violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in its EEZ by constructing artificial islands and directly interfering with Philippine fishing and energy exploitation. More significantly, it ruled that China had no legal basis in claiming rights to the resources or islands within its "Nine-Dash Line" claim--meaning it had no historic title to the SCS.

These events occurred under former Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, who had strong ties with the West, upheld the anti-Chinese expansionism rhetoric, and made clear its intent to defend its territorial claims against the "regional hegemon." Although the majority of the Philippine population continues to uphold this position, current Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte does not. Instead, his China-friendly rhetoric strays far from the previous sentiments under Aquino and former presidents. For instance, when Duterte took office in 2016, he immediately cast aside the PCA ruling, refusing to enforce it and even siding with China on the dispute. To further his friendliness with China, Duterte offered Beijing joint development of natural gas reserves in their disputed waters and encouraged Chinese investments and infrastructure projects in the Philippines. He did, however, request that China halt the militarization of its man-made islands and allow Filipino fishermen to return to Philippine-claimed waters.

This new China-friendly attitude indicates a shift in the Philippines' stance towards China's continued expansion in the SCS as well as a shift in the country's close ties with the US, which may be weakening under the current Duterte administration. In December 2018, Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana requested a review of the 1951 MDT between the Philippines and the US, which defines when the two would come to each other's aid if either falls under attack. The call for a review comes during a time of increasing tension in the SCS--especially between China and the US--which Lorenzana claims is the Philippines' "most difficult security challenge." The Duterte administration questions the relevance of the treaty, as it no longer sees China as large a threat as it did before. Manila most likely fears that the current treaty's terms could endanger the security and stability in the region and is considering scrapping the treaty altogether to decrease tensions and find a balance between its relationship with both Beijing and Washington. If the Duterte administration chooses to terminate the treaty, it would signify Manila's willingness to distance itself from a historical ally and maintain its ties with China.

Brunei:

In contrast to the other ASEAN claimants of the SCS, Brunei does not occupy any land features in the sea. Instead, it only claims its 200 nautical-mile EEZ and maintains no permanent military presence there to enforce its claim--which is why many call it the "silent claimant." Another reason for this nickname lies in the country's complete lack of opposition to Chinese

expansionism in the region. In fact, Brunei aligns with China in this dispute because it strongly supports BRI and hopes to benefit from it. The country is currently concerned with its declining economy and views Chinese investment as a solution to its problem. Oil and gas make up more than 60% of Brunei's GDP and over 95% of its exports, but the domestic oil and gas reserves will run out within the next few decades. Because of this, China promised Brunei it would help diversify its economy away from a dependence on oil and gas and make it more sustainable. In return, Brunei ignored calls to a unified ASEAN response to China in the SCS and continues to stand with China and its initiative--a position unlikely to change in the near future unless the small country finds economic stability elsewhere.

Malaysia:

Malaysia claims seven land features in the Spratly islands, which China, the Philippines, and Vietnam also contest. Malaysia only wishes to retain the islands it already claims and took a similar position regarding China's expansionism in the SCS: a strictly neutral one. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad stated in November 2018 the country's SCS policy, which consists of three key features. The first stresses the freedom of navigation of the SCS. Malaysia reiterated its stance that the SCS should remain accessible to all ships that pass through it and that such accessibility must exceed the importance of China laying claims on the major sea route. The second emphasizes the protection and preservation of small states' interests in the SCS in the midst of Chinese expansionism. This possibly means that Malaysia will allow the expansion to continue as long as it respects the ASEAN nations' claims and does not infringe upon their sovereign territories--meaning that constructing artificial islands is acceptable but taking or occupying already claimed islands is not. The third stresses the demilitarization of the SCS--by all parties as opposed to just China. Mohamad in June 2018 stated that the region must not be militarized, but remain "a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality." He also emphasized the elimination of warships in the SCS, claiming that warships stationed there or conducting freedom of navigation exercises in the waters will lead to increased tension and potentially war. Mohamad almost certainly made this statement to allude to FONOPS, hinting at his disapproval of the operation and all other freedom of navigation protests or exercises conducted by the West. He argued instead that ASEAN nations should be the ones conducting such exercises, but then countered the statement warning that it "would not be wise" for ASEAN countries to adopt a confrontational stand against China. Malaysia will almost certainly maintain its neutral stance in the SCS dispute--siding with neither China (like Brunei) nor opposing claimants (like Vietnam) - -but continue to stress the importance of maintaining the peace and demilitarization of waterway.

Vietnam:

Another claimant of the contested Spratly islands, Vietnam, repeatedly expressed its concerns with China's developments in the SCS, and proactively pursues the establishment of a Code of Conduct (COC) there--which it called for years ago during the beginning of China's expansionism and expressed frustration with its slow progress despite years of negotiation. Then in August 2018, China and ASEAN countries agreed on a draft of the COC with hopes to finalize it by 2021. The content of the draft remains unreleased, but Vietnam pushed for tough provisions against China's actions, claiming they disrupt the "peace, stability and cooperation in the region." Vietnam wants the COC to outlaw Beijing's building of artificial islands and military activities such as missile deployments and blockades. Vietnam also wishes to ban China's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which demands all aircraft flying over the SCS identify

themselves to Chinese authorities. Vietnam's hardline provisions against Chinese actions indicates its firm and disciplinary stance on Chinese expansionism in contrast to other ASEAN nations, who appear to take on a more a neutral or China-friendly position on the issue. These countries are seemingly allowing China to continue its operations, only calling for demilitarization to reduce tensions in the region and maintain the peace--not to hinder China's growing power. Vietnam, however, appears to not tolerate China's actions altogether and works to outlaw them through the drafted COC. Ultimately, Vietnam almost certainly attempts to put a check on China in the region without completely antagonizing it--a move that other SCS claimants seem cautious to follow.

Indonesia:

Until 2017 Indonesia took the stance of a non-claimant and maintained its territorial islands including the Natuna Islands. Indonesia's SCS coastline on the island of Borneo is small in comparison to Malaysia, which only prompts the protection of the Natuna Islands. However, China recently claimed that the waters in the region were traditional fishing grounds, justifying why Chinese coastguards' ships escorted fishing boats. This action further pushed Indonesian President Joko Widodo to send warships to the Natuna Islands and demonstrate Indonesia's ability to protect its territory. Jakarta likely fears that Beijing will attempt to construct new islands Riau Archipelago, directly in the center of Indonesia.

The small maritime skirmishes in the region demonstrate future difficulty for Beijing to continue south in the SCS. With the construction of a new military base on the Natuna Islands, Beijing will almost certainly have a tougher time making claims. The Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces chief stated that the purpose of the base was to deter security threats in relation to border areas, a direct counter to Beijing's expansion. In the near future conflict in the SCS will likely center in the North Natuna Sea where China, Vietnam and Indonesia all share claims.

Japan:

Japan in recent years took sides with Vietnam, opposing Chinese expansion in the SCS and growing military presence. Japan greatly benefits from trade with ASEAN nations through the SCS; however, China's military presence poses a threat to free trade. Japan's intention is maintaining an open SCS, reiterating its wishes through constant high-ranking talks with China. On 18 October 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe traveled to China to meet Premier Li Keqiang, the first official visit by a Japanese leader in seven years. Abe understands the importance of trade with China which will likely lead to a compromise regarding the SCS. Prime Minister Abe and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyễn Xuân Phúc are working closely together to increase trade and allow for more Vietnamese workers in Japan. Through negotiations and ASEAN countries, Abe will likely push for diplomatic negotiations and free navigation of the SCS.

Taiwan:

Historically, the Nine Dash Line related to the Republic of China or Taiwan, however, both China and Taiwan do not share the same views. Taiwan's role in the SCS is largely to oppose Chinese expansion and continue to protect Itu Aba, an island in the Spratly Islands. Nevertheless, Taiwan wants to ensure that the SCS remains demilitarized and free of conflict. In May of 2018, Taipei solicited bids to build a hospital on Itu Aba, which signifies its willingness to engage in

humanitarian efforts in the SCS. Taiwanese claims in the SCS remain a far-reaching goal as they are over three hours from Taiwan.

Outlook:

The consensus among ASEAN nations shows their vision of the SCS as a region of peace, stability, and cooperation, thus calling for China's complete demilitarization within contested territories. They seem less concerned with China's ambition to fulfill its expansion in the SCS and more concerned with its militarization of the waters, which they believe would bring unnecessary tension to the region and potentially lead to conflict. While they still oppose Beijing's militarization, these other claimants almost certainly wish to maintain good relations with China and avoid any provocation that could lead to conflict, therefore they will almost certainly use diplomatic resolutions as opposed to military confrontation. Therefore, ASEAN nations will most likely rely on the proposed COC to act as a guideline for China to follow when conducting SCS operations instead of directly confronting the regional superpower.

Nevertheless, countries such as The Philippines and Malaysia are willing to give up territory to China if it means they keep some territory. However, countries that recently saw a change in government changed their stance towards allowing China to keep finished islands; however, cease to expand on declared Filipino and Malaysian Islands. Based off of current and past events, the opposition by each country is based off of current leadership. The Philippines serves as the best example where President Duterte changed his country's stance towards allowing Chinese expansion vs harshly opposing it as before. The actions taken by Indonesian President Widodo show that he was willing to take action against China in an election year rather than any previous years.

China will not likely halt its expansion through the SCS despite ASEAN nations' call for the demilitarization of the region. However, Beijing will likely conform to the provisions in the proposed COC, as it probably wishes to maintain favor among its SCS neighbors while still continuing its initiative. China stands to lose more in the event of conflict with ASEAN nations as it has close economic and cultural ties with all actors in the region. In recent years, Beijing sought to increase industrial projects in nations such as Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. Although many people in South East Asia appreciate Chinese investment in the region, there will likely be a pushback by Western nations as well as Japan to hinder China's influence in the region. Nevertheless, Beijing likely knows the consequences of conflict and will further their expansion more passively and within the boundaries of the COC to maintain its strong relations with ASEAN nations. China's shift towards a more active foreign policy is not unprecedented and will continue until it completes the BRI and gains more influence in African and Asian countries. Xi Jinping's ambition has caused destabilization in the SCS; however, he likely knows that his BRI initiative will succeed as more Asian and African countries become reliant on China. Nevertheless, as Beijing continues to expand further south and west on with the BRI, Central Asian Countries plus Australia will probably attempt to push back against Chinese expansion.

[Writers: Bea Francia, Tyler Wilkins

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CAMEROON: Unclaimed Hospital Attack May Prompt Further Unrest

Summary: Contrary accounts regarding the party behind an Anglophone hospital attack could drive separatists to larger acts of aggression or bolster greater support for separatists.

Development: On 11 February, armed men set fire to the Kumba District Hospital in the Anglophone region, killing four. Conflicting reports on the fire assign blame to either Anglophone separatists or government forces. The government and some witnesses claim 20 separatists engineered the attack in conjunction with the ten-day lockdown, a secessionist initiative from 5 to 14 February calling Anglophones to stay home in protest of Francophone rule. This fire falls on the anniversary of the 1961 referendum, a day that looms large for many Anglophones, as they consider it the day that the Francophones took their territory through referendum without an option for independence. Separatists denied involvement in the attack, instead blaming government forces for orchestrating the attack to tarnish the image of the secessionist movement. Others maintain the government orchestrated the attack, as it believe the military conducted previous attacks disguised in civilian clothing and that separatists would not attack a hospital they use, especially after curfew.

Analysis: Regardless of the gunmen's true affiliation, the attack will exacerbate the situation as each side places the blame on the opposing party, leading to further mistrust in Anglophones. If the public holds the separatists responsible, then Anglophone support for secessionists will likely decline. With decreasing support, separatists may conduct larger attacks with greater violence to incite fear and assert force superiority in the Anglophone regions. If the separatists did conduct this attack, they likely did so to target military officials in treatment and intimidate Anglophones who disregarded the lockdown initiative. Conversely, if the public holds the government responsible, then Anglophones and other Cameroonians may question the government and its desire to protect its citizens, eventually leading to more separatist movement sympathies. The government possibly coordinated the attack because it perceives growing separatist support as something that it cannot combat conventionally, so it must turn to covert means to undermine separatists. If citizens feel that the government is actively trying to garner support via violence on civilians and infrastructure, then they could begin to identify with separatist grievances.

[Caitlyn Aaron]

HUNGARY: Economic Relief Policy Proposed to Promote Higher Birth Rates

Summary: Prime Minister Viktor Orban announced an incentive-based plan to promote population growth during his annual state of the nation speech.

Development: On 10 February, Orban announced a plan to address Hungary's declining population and work force by creating incentives for childbirth. These incentives include a lifetime income tax exemption for women with four or more children, mortgage relief for families with multiple children, financial-aid for those buying seven-seat vehicles, and additional places created in nursery schools. The average fertility rate, 1.45 compared to the EU average of 1.58, contributes to Hungary's population problem. Orban also imposed a strict anti-immigration policy and stated that this new policy will solve Hungary's population decline as opposed to taking a more open stance on immigration. Due to the declining population, Hungary is experiencing a shortage of labor, especially as young people are moving elsewhere for new opportunities.

Analysis: The introduction of this policy will likely cause a short-term period of population growth, but sustained population growth remains unlikely. While more couples may take advantage of the new policy to either start or grow their families, it will likely not solve any of Hungary's core economic issues, especially if the population growth stalls again which it likely will. This policy may negatively impact the economy as the government will be paying potentially hundreds of families due to the tax exemptions during a period of minimal economic growth. These issues may force Orban to look elsewhere for solutions to the population problem. Although potentially a more viable mechanism for population growth, Orban will likely not loosen immigration policy because it goes against his more nationalist platform.

[Alli McIntyre]

RUSSIA: Government Reveals Intentions to Build Independent Internet Network

Summary: Russia announced its intentions to develop the capability to operate its internet network independently of foreign servers, indicating its commitment to pursuing cyber operations as a foreign policy tool.

Development: On 11 February, the Russian government announced a draft law requiring Russian internet service providers (ISPs) to ensure they can operate if other nations attempt to isolate Russian networks. Specifically, the law would require Russia to build its own DNS (a DNS translates user inputted URLs into IP addresses that a computer can locate on the internet). Russia currently relies only on DNS servers from other countries, meaning Russian citizens could not access most of the internet if a cyber-attack blocks Russia's access to these servers. The government also announced it is considering temporarily disconnecting from the global internet to test preparedness for a possible cyber-attack. The preparedness test will likely occur before 1 April, but the law does not specify a specific date. Experts also believe ISPs will test if they can filter data from government routing points, so data intended for computers in foreign locations stops before leaving Russia.

Analysis: Russia's commitment to strengthening its cyber security shows its commitment to using cyber tactics to expand its influence. Russia is likely preparing for the possibility that another country may attempt to block its access to the internet. Russia may fear eventual retaliation from other nations if it continues conducting cyber-attacks and influence campaigns in foreign countries. Though most nations likely do not feel emboldened enough to directly target Russia in this manner currently, Russia's preparation indicates its cyber campaigns will likely continue and possibly become so prevalent that target nations consider retaliatory cyber-attacks. If Russia can successfully demonstrate its internet can function under isolated conditions, it will represent a significant deterrence to other nations considering a cyber-attack against Russia. In addition, if ISPs can successfully control what internet content can leave Russia, this will almost certainly negatively affect the ability to conduct intelligence collection targeted at Russia.

[Zach Coffee]

SIERRA LEONE: President Declares National Emergency to Curb Sexual Violence

Summary: To address the rising number of rapes in the country, President Julius Maada Bio announced a national emergency, likely leading to several government initiatives targeting sexually-motivated crimes despite cultural norms deeming this taboo.

Development: On 9 February, Bio declared the escalating number of rapes in the country a national emergency. Sexual and gender-based violence in the country has grown by 10 percent annually since 2015. The recent push for government action occurred after a rape left a five-year-old girl paralyzed. Advocates approve of Bio's declaration and push for harsher sentencing and greater healthcare support for victims, however, many believe in the additional need to change societal customs to curb sexual violence. One human rights group reported that in only 1.2% of attacks with evidence result in convictions.

Analysis: Bio's declaration of a national emergency will most likely lead to the government formation of a committee and possibly an awareness campaign to change perceptions on sexual violence. The current government interference may cause a temporary decline in incidents, but violence levels could bounce back if Bio's initiatives do not also address lack of reporting and prosecution. Bio's current stance will likely not sufficiently address the systemic cultural issues in the country. To target lack of prosecution in cases including compelling evidence, the government may hold the judicial system more accountable, demanding higher importance placed on sexual violence cases and higher prosecution rates.

[Kaylee Coffman]

SOMALIA: Al-Shabaab Attacks May Signal Danger for Foreigners

Summary: Al-Shabaab laid claim to two separate terrorist incidents which may signal an increased threat to foreign travelers and non-native residents in Somalia and neighboring nations.

Development: On 4 February, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for two terrorist attacks in Somalia. The first, the fatal shooting of a senior dock manager for a Dubai-based company, occurred in Bossasso, Putland, a semi-autonomous region within Somalia. Hours later, a car bomb detonated at a shopping mall in Mogadishu, killing 11 people. Al-Shabaab stated during a radio broadcast that the assassinated dock manager resided in Somalia illegally and that the company he worked for drained Somali resources.

Analysis: As Al-Shabaab rarely targets private businesses in this manner, the deliberate attack on foreign commerce and people “in Somalia illegally” may signal a shift in Al-Shabaab targets. If true, Al-Shabaab will likely target foreigners in Somalia, such as workers for international companies and travelers, putting them at risk. Al-Shabaab may even intend to undermine the Somali government by damaging the environment for foreign investment by putting non-native residents of Somalia at a high risk.

[Thomas Perkins]

VENEZUELA: Control of State Functions Presents Challenges for Opposition

Summary: President Nicholas Maduro ordered all military forces to block the arrival of humanitarian aid packages from entering Venezuela. Guaidó's opposition campaign might continue to struggle against Maduro's regime until it gains direct control of the country's military.

Development: On 8 February, Maduro ordered his forces to block the arrival of a humanitarian aid convoy that arrived in the Colombian border city of Cúcuta. Forces used trucks and shipping containers to create a blockade on the Tienditas International Bridge to inhibit the transport of supplies. Maduro doubled down on his position, telling reporters, "We've never been nor are we a country of beggars." Juan Guaidó, the internationally-recognized interim-President, led a nation-wide anti-government demonstration on 12 February to commemorate Youth Day, a day acknowledging the youth's role in shaping the country's future and emphasizing the need to allow foreign aid into Venezuela. Protests are becoming more frequent and ultimately more violent as tensions build between the military currently loyal to Maduro and the citizens desperate for humanitarian aid supplies.

Analysis: Most humanitarian aid packages will likely not make it into the country until Maduro and his regime softens his stance for the wellbeing of his citizens. However, major international relief organizations might refrain from assisting the delivery of aid packages due to the politicization involved with supporting Guaidó's opposition. While Guaidó competes for ultimate presidential power, presidential command will likely remain under Maduro because he still has the support of his military, despite international resistance. Maduro likely holds the potential to shut down the National Assembly, which could oust Guaidó and leave the opposition without a clear leader. Military forces would likely not divide between Guaidó and Maduro, possibly to prevent the likelihood of a civil war scenario. For Guaidó's opposition forces to gain legitimacy, they would most likely need to obtain direct control over state functions first, such as the military, then gain access to necessary resources to begin taking steps towards Venezuela's recovery.

[Bryce Leech and Ashlee Boyle]

This is a global intelligence briefing prepared by the students of the Global Security and Intelligence Studies program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the students, not the university.

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