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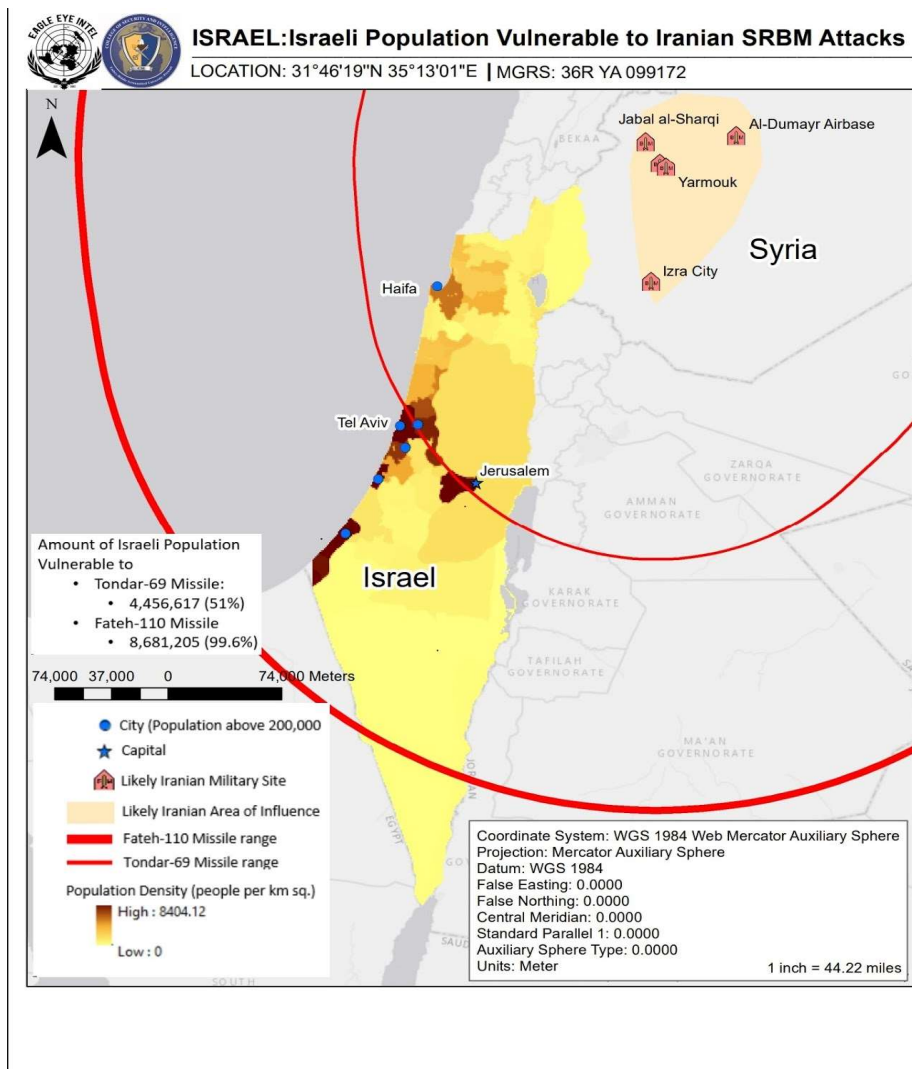
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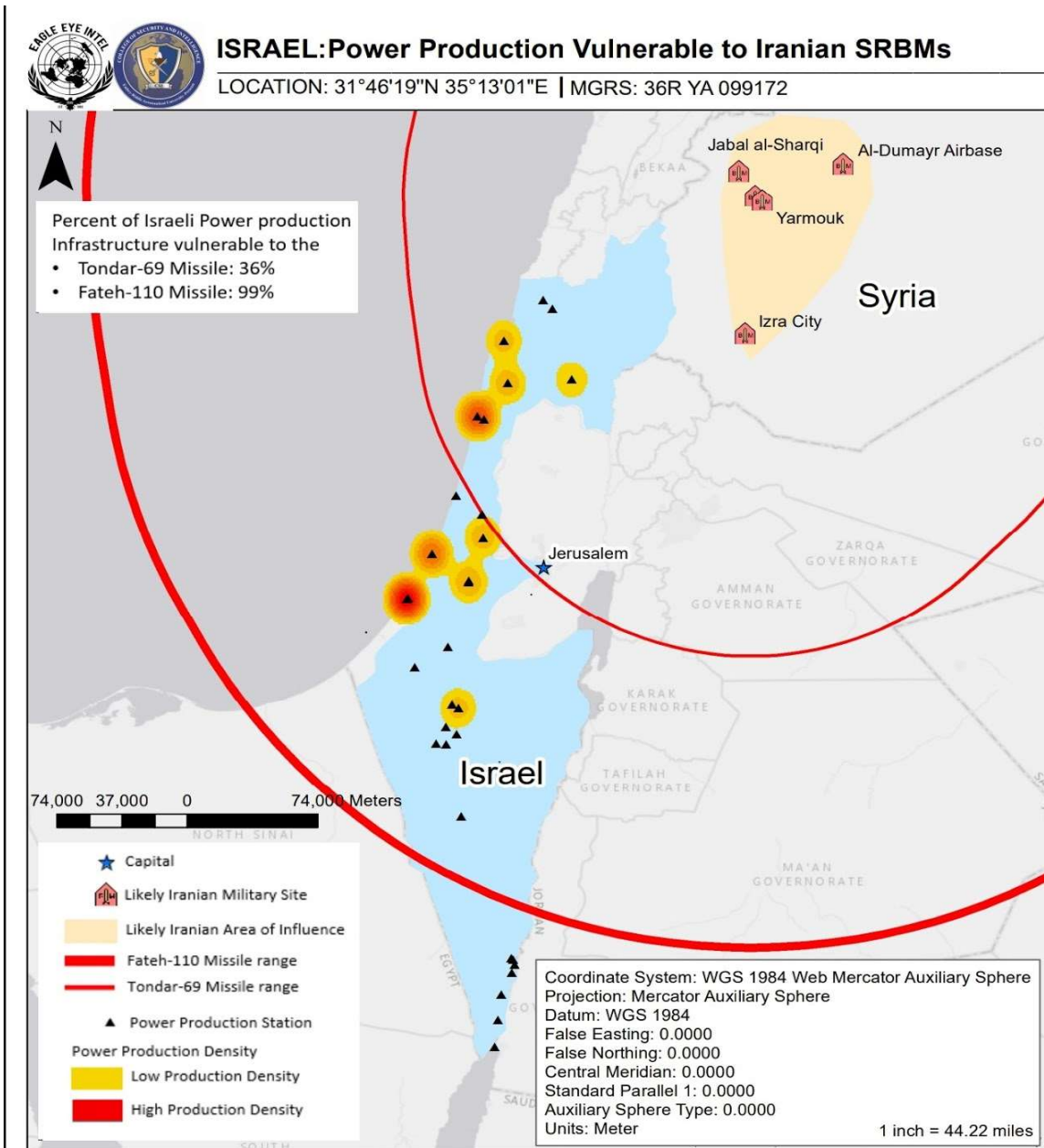
ISRAEL: Vulnerability to Iranian Ballistic Missiles Likely to Spark Aggressive Posture

Summary: Iran’s short-range ballistic missile capabilities, combined with the ability to launch from sites within Syria, pose a considerable threat to the Israeli population and energy production infrastructure. Israel’s vulnerability to the Tondar-69 and Fateh-100 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) will likely stimulate the expansion of mobile air defense systems and will certainly prompt the continuation of Israeli Air Force (IAF) bombing raids in Syria targeting Iranian launch sites. Estimates reveal that Iran likely possesses 200 Tondar-69s, which can strike up to 150 kilometers, and upwards of 300 Fateh-100s, which may hit up to 300 kilometers. Israel likely remains vulnerable to a successful attack despite advanced mobile air defense systems due to areas without overlapping coverage.

Vulnerability of Israel’s Population: The proximity of Israel’s major population centers to the Syrian border would facilitate Iran’s ability to effectively target and maximize the impact of a ballistic missile strike. In total, nearly 8.8 million people live in Israel, with approximately 99% within range of the Fateh SRBMs.

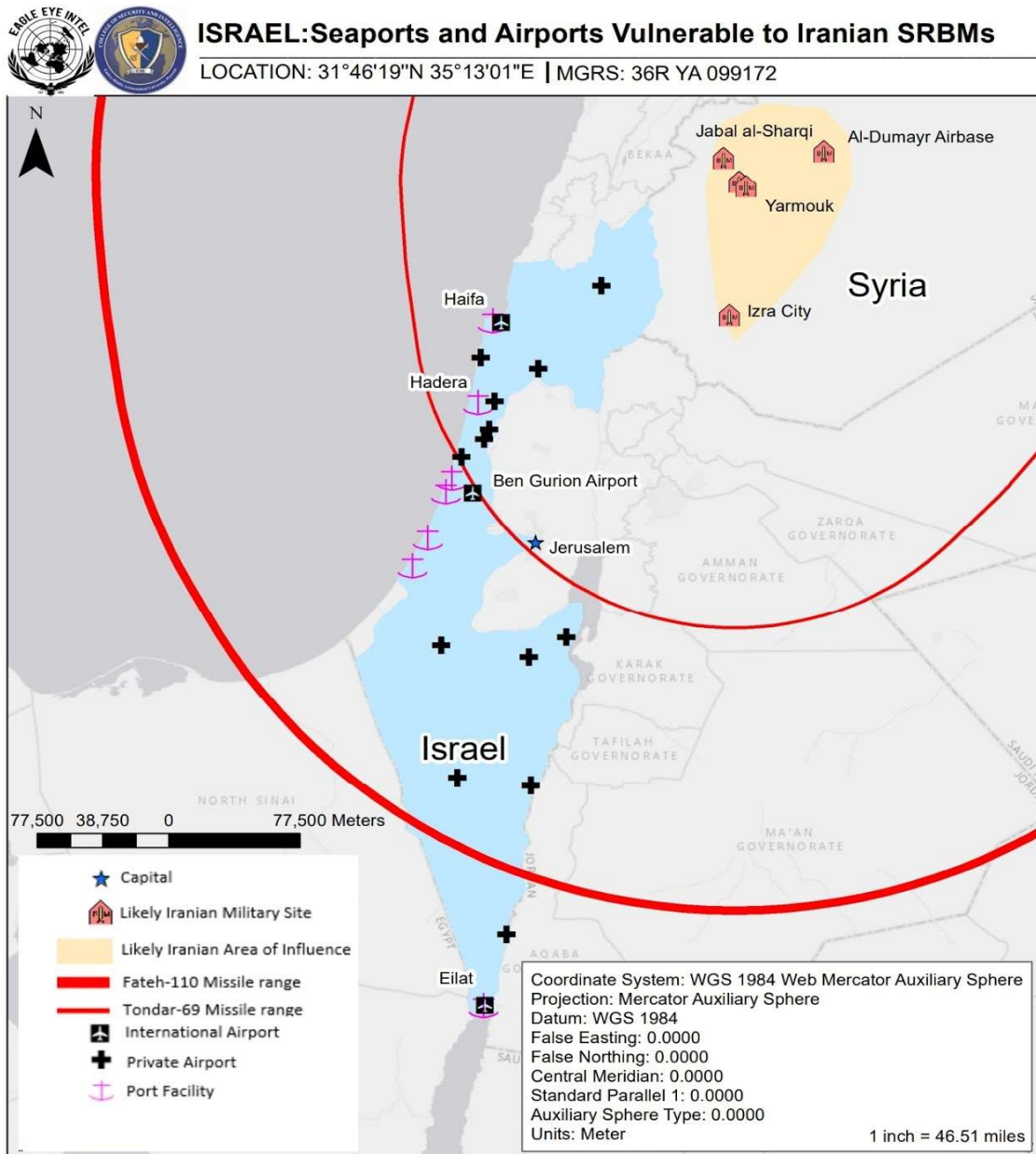


Vulnerability of Israel’s Critical Infrastructure: Israel has an installed electricity-generating capacity of over 18,000 megawatts, roughly 99% of it within range of Fateh SRBMs. According to distribution analysis of Israel’s energy production infrastructure, most of its production capabilities derive from facilities run by the Israeli Electric Company centered in the northwest along the coastline. Recent efforts to increase the energy supply through solar power furthered the development of production facilities in Southern Israel, which fall outside the range of the Tondar-69, but still largely within range of Fateh SRBMs.



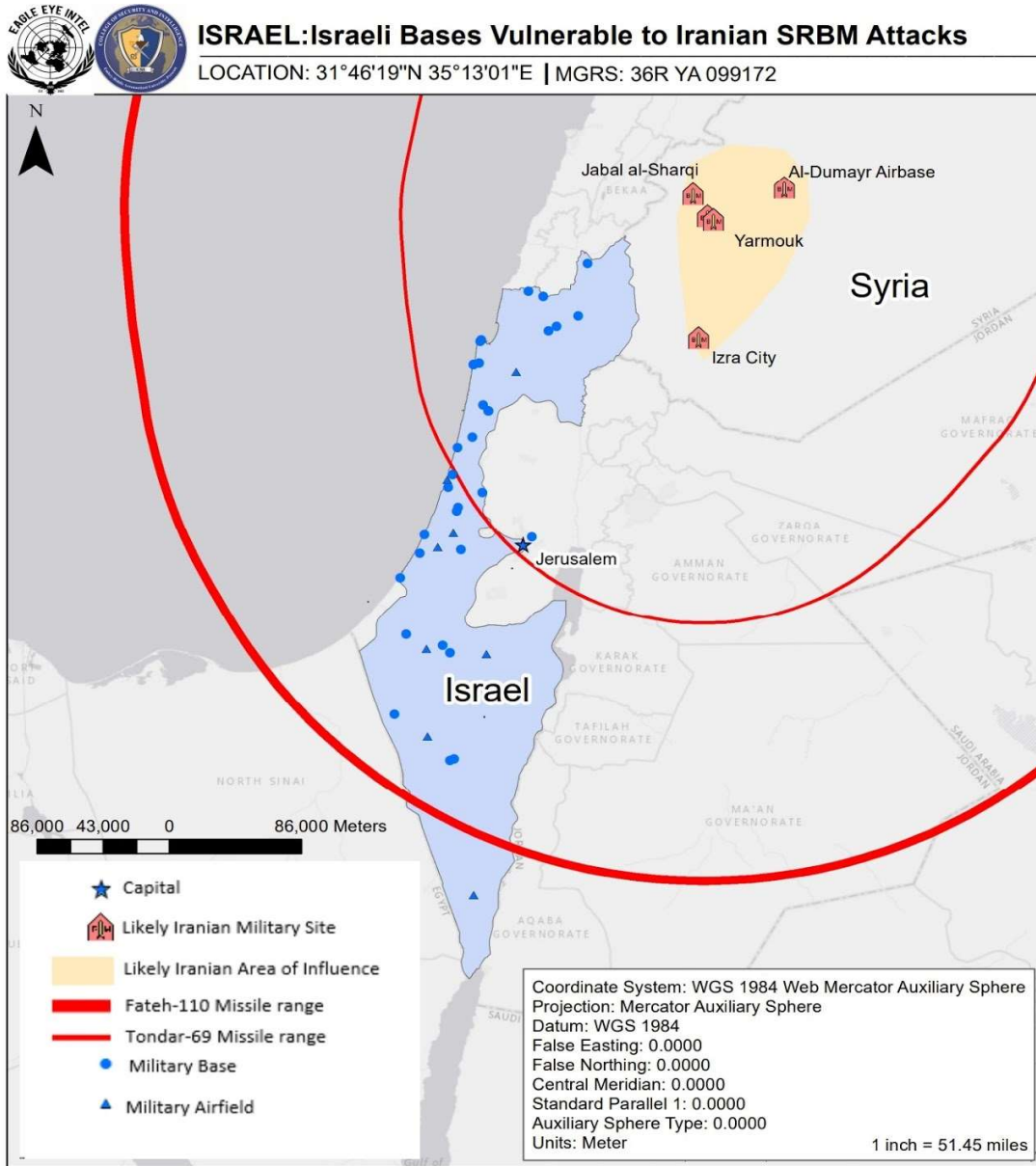
Iran’s ability to hit the most capable ports and airports in Israel also presents a considerable threat. The most traveled airport in Israel, Ben Gurion International Airport, lies within range of

the Fateh-100, but just outside of the Tondar SRBM's capabilities. Iran could also strike the Port of Haifa, which accounts for most of the country's sea-based traffic, with the Tondar SRBM as well the Port of Ashdod with the Fateh SRBM. However, the Port of Eilat remains out of range of both SRBMs, preserving Israel's access to the Red Sea in the event of a successful attack.



Defensive Capabilities of Israel's Mobile Air Defense Systems: Israel's Iron Dome established an effective air defense system with a 90% success rate, but with 70 failed interceptions, Iran may still successfully strike. The Israeli mobile air defense system provides Israel with coverage and protection from short-range rockets and artillery threats with a range of up to 110 miles from

each launch site. The Tamir interceptor missiles utilized by Iron Dome can destroy nearly any target in the air and operate with multiple detection systems. Although Iron Dome operates with overlapping coverage from multiple air defense sites to mitigate the possibility of a successful attack, areas without multiple layers of protection remain susceptible to SRBM strikes.



Implications and Outlook: Although Israel holds a strategic advantage over Iran in conventional conflicts, it remains susceptible to a preemptive strike by Iranian SRBMs. Due to Israeli bombing raids and Iran's diminishing first-strike advantage, Iran will likely intensify hostilities in Syria to retain leverage in the region. The current imbalance of power caused by Iran's proximity and the fallibility of Iron Dome threatens the security of Israel. Consequently, Israel will likely continue bombing raids targeting Iranian forces in Syria to establish a buffer

between the two nations. In particular, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) will likely focus efforts against weapons caches and launch sites around Damascus, where Iranian operations prevail with backing from the Syrian government.

Israel's sustained development of air defense systems and its continuation of bombing raids, combined with Iran's presence in Syria, may lead to an arms race between the two nations, inducing continued instability in the Middle East. Israel will likely diversify its energy production infrastructure out of the range of Iranian SRBMs through its growing solar grid in the South. Iran's SRBM capabilities from launch sites in Syria will also certainly prompt Israel to expand its mobile air defense systems, further straining diplomatic efforts in the region.

[Riley Coder, Nicholas Cifolelli, Tom Perkins, Grace Hulbert, Kaylee Coffman, Hunter Binkley]

EUROPEAN UNION: Russian Hacking Group Influencing Elections to Create Instability

Summary: Russia-linked advanced persistent threat (APT) groups are targeting democratic organizations, journalists, and think-tanks ahead of European Union Parliament elections. Moscow likely hopes to create fear and a sense of distrust in electoral integrity.

Development: On 19 February, Microsoft's Threat center (MSTIC) reported a pattern of increased cyber-attacks on European elections. The MSTIC discovered these cyber-attacks targeting employees of the German Council of Foreign Relations, The Aspen Institutes in Europe, and The German Marshall Fund as well as other organizations in Belgium, France, and Poland. The attacks create malicious URLs and email address that give attackers access to employee credentials and deliver malware as well as spread misinformation. The report claims Strontium, also known as Fancy Bear, carried out the attacks. Fancy Bear previously attacked the Democratic National Committee in 2016, the French and German presidential elections in 2017, and Republican think-tanks during the midterm elections in 2018.

Analysis: Russia's increased cyber activities likely stems from the relative success of previous attacks and the high volume of attacks will likely continue. As with these other attacks, Russia most likely seeks to weaken EU nations by sowing dissent through misinformation and by supporting governments with relatively more loyalty to Russia. Previous attacks by Fancy Bear, though attributed to Russia by multiple sources including Microsoft, went largely unpunished by the EU, and therefore these attacks will likely continue. Specifically, these attacks will likely attempt to insert misinformation into controversial political issues to further divide political opinion and support the pro-Russia side of those debates.

[Greg Stephens]

IRAN: Admiral Threatens to Close the Strait of Hormuz, Endangering World Oil Trade

Summary: An Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) admiral threatened closure of the Strait of Hormuz, probably as part of Tehran's efforts to bring the US to the negotiating table.

Development: On 25 February, IRGC Navy Admiral Alireza Tangsiri threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz if the US attempted to block Iranian oil exports. The Strait of Hormuz provides a vital waterway through which nearly 20% of the world's oil passes. US sanctions on Iranian oil will come into full effect in May when waivers to major Iranian oil markets in Asia expire. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani made similar threats late last year.

Analysis: Threats to close the Strait of Hormuz likely indicate Iran's strategy to hold gulf-based oil hostage to force the US into negotiating the release of sanctions. Tehran initiated several actions that contribute to this strategy. The Iranian Navy conducted drills in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz from 21-24 February, demonstrating its capabilities in the Strait and likely trying to convince the US that the Iranian Navy could close the Strait for a substantial period.

[Nicholas Cifolelli]

ISRAEL: Military Advancements Likely to Prepare for Possible Conflict with Russia

Summary: Tel Aviv announced an upgraded radar system on its new warships, likely in preparation for potential military conflict with Russia.

Development: On 26 February, the Israeli announced it will equip its new SA'AR 6 corvettes, small German-made warships, with the ELM-2248 MF-STAR Multi-Functional Digital Radars System, which provides a faster threat alert response, greater accuracy, and can track multiple targets simultaneously. The ELM-2248 system has a range of several hundred kilometers and can show threats including missiles, enemy ships, and drones, as well as their speed and heading. While Tel Aviv plans on installing the system on the new SA'AR 6 corvette, the first of which will enter service in late 2019, the navy already installed it on the SA'AR 5 corvette.

Analysis: These military improvements likely indicate Israel's preparation for conflict with Russia as increasing tensions with Moscow since Tel Aviv began claiming its air strikes against Russian allies Syria and Iran. Considering Russia's presence in Syria, the likelihood of Israel accidentally striking Russian troops increases. Tel Aviv's prioritization of its naval-based early warning radar suggests changes in defense posture considering the majority of its missile threats come from the northeast. The threat of Russian air strikes constitutes one of the few threats to Israel. Israel further increased its naval defensive stance by conducting naval exercises off the coast of Haifa, a main avenue of approach for Russian air and naval power coming from Tarsus.

[Alexander Marrone]

ISRAEL: Indictment of Prime Minister Will Likely Disrupt April Election

Summary: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's impending indictment for corruption will likely impact the April elections and damage Israel's image.

Development: On 28 February, Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit announced his intention to indict Netanyahu with corruption charges following a two-year investigation. Israeli police recommended charges of bribery and fraud for allegedly receiving gifts from Hollywood producers Arnon Milchan and James Packer in exchange for political favors. Investigators found that Netanyahu likely exploited connections to telecommunications firm Bezeq to gain media coverage promoting Netanyahu in return for favorable regulations as early as 2012.

Analysis: The likely indictment of Netanyahu will almost certainly tarnish Israel's image on the world stage, further straining relations in the Middle East. The indictment will also likely promote his primary competitor, Benny Gantz, hurting Netanyahu's chances of a re-election despite his attempts to deflect the charges, forcing the establishment of a coalition government.

[Riley Coder, RJ Scruggs, Brian La Fetra, Ryan Mahoney, Ian Kirk]

MARSHALL ISLANDS: Alliance Aims to Dissuade Chinese Interference

Summary: A Marshall Islands resolution to support Taiwan in the face of Chinese aggression will likely help to increase Taiwanese security against a growing Chinese threat.

Development: On 4 March, the Marshall Islands passed a resolution endorsing its support for Taiwan. It passed the resolution the same day Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu announced Beijing's plans to ramp up its campaign to "poach" Taiwan's allies and further isolate it from the international community. The resolution praised Taiwan for its democratic achievements and affirmed Taiwan's suitability as a partner for peace and prosperity in the region. Marshall Islands' Parliamentary Speaker Kenneth Kedi stated that his country would always support Taiwan based on the two nations' shared values of democracy and freedom. Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen expressed Taiwan's appreciation for the resolution and expects advancements in education, culture, and medicine between the two countries.

Analysis: The pledged support from the Marshall Islands will likely increase bilateral cooperation with Taiwan to counteract Beijing's endeavor to isolate Taiwan from the international community. The Marshall Islands' strategic timing of the proposition likely came with the intention to persuade other countries to pledge Taiwanese support, as Taipei will almost certainly continue to search for support from regional democracies to bolster its security against a growing Chinese threat to the sovereign island's foreign affairs. Additionally, the resolution will probably increase cooperation between the two democratic island countries outside the realm of China, focusing on Tsai's desires to advance both nations' education, culture, and medicine. However, their attempt to build a strong reliance will almost certainly receive backlash from China and could possibly even provoke the prospect of reunification.

[Tyler Smith]

NIGERIA: IPOB Announcement Unlikely to Prompt Change

Summary: Although the IPOB again asserted its mission to achieve a sovereign Biafran state in the face of President Buhari's re-election, the peaceful tension between the IPOB and Nigerian government will likely remain as it currently stands.

Development: On 3 March, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) released a statement warning that it would soon actualize the sovereign state of Biafra without negotiation despite the current political disposition. In its statement, the IPOB claims the recent election vindicated the group as it maintains the government and military largely rigged the results in favor of President Buhari. This statement follows the 23 February re-election of President Muhammadu Buhari, who has not supported Biafran sovereignty and focused his efforts on combatting Boko Haram and corruption. While Nigeria witnessed a rather peaceful transition of power when President Buhari won the 2015 election, it faced significantly violent protests and accusations of election-rigging in the 2011 election of former President Goodluck Jonathan.

Discussion: Despite IPOB statements reaffirming calls for sovereignty, the current state of mainly peaceful tension between the IPOB and the Nigerian government will likely continue. This state will likely continue because the IPOB has not often aggressed the Nigerian government and has primarily held nonviolent protests and boycotts, so it will want to continue the status quo rather than risk violence with the possibility of no reward of political gains. While some radicals supporting Biafra may call for violence, they represent a small minority within the separatist movement and will likely not incite large-scale violence in this existing peaceful tension. The IPOB's recent statements, however, do likely indicate its attempts to bring additional attention to the cause, as President Buhari has not expended much effort in reaching a permanent Biafran solution. President Buhari's focus on Boko Haram and corruption as opposed to IPOB calls for a referendum has led to the stagnation in the Biafran conflict. While the IPOB seeks greater government focus on Biafran sovereignty, it is likely very hesitant to resort to violence to do so. Both the Nigerian government and the IPOB will likely maintain the current state, avoiding a large-scale, violent conflict. The most likely, though still generally unlikely to occur, condition that would alter this state of peaceful tension is if the Nigerian government issues a series of miscalculated statements regarding IPOB accusations of election-rigging. Such statements beyond a simple denial of the accusations, such as efforts to delegitimize the IPOB cause, could drive the IPOB to take more action than statements to legitimize the group and its goals.

[Caitlyn Aaron]

[VENEZUELA: Kremlin Continues Support in Exchange for PDVSA Leverage](#)

Summary: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro ordered the relocation of state-owned oil agency PDVSA's regional office of from Lisbon to Moscow, expanding Russia's influence over Venezuela's economy.

Development: On 1 March, Maduro ordered PDVSA's Lisbon office to relocate to Moscow following a meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez. The same day, Lavrov announced the Kremlin's intent to send Venezuela shipments of wheat. Both announcements came a week after confirmation of the Maduro regime's receipt of 300 tons of medical supplies from Russia and opposition leader Juan Guaido's failed attempt to bring foreign aid into Venezuela

Analysis: Maduro and the Kremlin are exploiting this failure and the stagnation of the opposition's morale by strengthening their economic relations. Maduro's order to relocate PDVSA's Lisbon office to Moscow indicates his intent to repay the Kremlin for its aid by strengthening cooperation between Russia's state-owned oil company Rosneft and PDVSA. Caracas may feel more willing to reimburse Russia for the loan because the funds (designated specifically for use by the Cuban military) likely support pro-Maduro Cuban soldiers and intelligence officers deployed inside Venezuela. This indicates Maduro's unwillingness to rely on Venezuela's military and signals corrosion of pro-regime sentiments in the armed forces. Russia may attempt to keep Maduro in power at all costs, as it is unwilling to lose its planned military base in Venezuela and seeks further economic growth by expanding its ownership of the country's oil resources.

[William Restivo]

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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