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POLAND: Suspension of Disciplinary Chamber Likely to Increase Tensions

Summary: The suspension of the disciplinary chamber designed to monitor Poland's judicial system by the European Union (EU) will likely increase tensions, despite the low probability of strong action.

Development: On 8 April, the European Commission ruled to suspend Poland's disciplinary chamber, originally intended to regulate the judicial system. The ruling came amid concerns of the erosion of the independence of Warsaw's judges and the court system. The disciplinary chamber has the power to investigate judges and punish those seen to criticize the majority party, Law and Justice (PiS). EU law takes precedence over national law, but supporters of the disciplinary chamber call the EU's ruling an encroachment on Poland's sovereignty. The PiS has long drawn criticism for its euro-skeptic views and policies, especially on previous judicial reform campaigns.

Analysis: Unless the EU strongly enforces its ruling, Warsaw probably will not disband the disciplinary chamber. Previous criticism, even from the EU, has had little effect and appears unlikely to this time. The increased control that the disciplinary chamber has given the PiS over the judicial system signals that the PiS will likely not give up this power unless necessary. PiS officials may continue to reform and legislate with a focus on the judicial system in retaliation to the ruling. Increased tensions between Warsaw and the EU likely stem from this conflict. The EU may take stronger measures to enforce its law within Poland, potentially causing a divide between citizens that support the PiS and those in opposition, further escalating the situation.

[Alli McIntyre]

[IRAN: Rouhani Requests IMF Loan Amid Outbreak Likely to Offset Western Pressure](#)

Summary: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani requested a \$5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help stimulate the country's resistance to the COVID-19 outbreak. The request may signal an effort to obtain support in a time of economic contraction.

Development: On 8 April, Rouhani petitioned the IMF for a \$5 billion loan to aid the country's fight against the COVID-19 outbreak. Tehran demands the loan as it continuously pays dues to the IMF on time, and this marks the first time it will receive aid since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran remains the hardest hit Middle Eastern country by the pandemic as its economy continues to deteriorate. The outbreak doubled as tough Western sanctions put Iran in a difficult situation to fight the outbreak, with many businesses forced to close to slow the spread. While Rouhani announced plans to begin reopening businesses on 11 April, his stance shifted to a slower, more methodical reopening of the economy to avoid complete stalemate and further contamination.

Analysis: Rouhani's request to the IMF during this time of crisis likely signals Iran is struggling more than what official reports show. Tehran coming forward for the first time in decades likely results more from Western economic sanctions than the virus. The sanctions leave Iran in a difficult position to fight against COVID-19, and Iran probably does not have the means necessary to continue the fight without a loan from the IMF. The support the loan would provide will allow Iran some relief and time to strategize its current approach to sustaining its fragile economy. While it is unclear whether Iran would receive the full amount it requested, there will likely be panic among officials hoping to prevent an economic shutdown if no outside aid comes.

[Timothy Fergus]

UKRAINE: New Amendments May Delay Bill Ratification and IMF Aid Package

Summary: Legislators in Ukraine's parliament included over 13,000 new amendments in a banking bill passing through parliament crucial to accessing an International Monetary Fund (IMF) aid package, likely stalling the ratification and causing further economic stagnation.

Development: On 7 April, Ukrainian legislators proposed over 13,000 amendments to a banking bill proposed in parliament. This legislation is necessary for Ukraine to qualify to receive an \$8 billion IMF aid package to combat COVID-19 economic instability brought on in part by almost-complete border closures and the shutdown of all non-essential stores. This follows the IMF committing to a three-year stabilization agreement with Ukraine in December 2019, on the condition that Ukraine passes the banking law and the farmland market reform. Lawmakers already passed legislation to allow the sale of farmland, leaving the banking bill as the last step for approval. Kyiv continues to plan to provide payouts to citizens and businesses in an attempt to ease individual financial burdens.

Analysis: The inclusion of thousands of amendments will likely stall the bill's approval in the Ukrainian parliament for weeks, preventing Ukraine from receiving needed IMF financing. Tough measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 across Ukraine will fuel economic backsliding, especially if the Ukrainian government boosts spending packages to help citizens and industries during the pandemic. Government payouts will likely widen Ukraine's budget deficit along with planned national debt repayments, creating more government debt while gross domestic product shrinks due to COVID-19 shutdowns and lessening demand for Ukrainian exports. IMF financing would help Ukraine mitigate the economic fallout if approved, but a late approval and disbursement of funds may not prevent or lessen the impact of short-term economic stagnation.

[Gianna Geiger]

RUSSIA: Moscow Most Likely Hoping for Italy to Block Vote in Exchange for Help

Summary: The help Moscow continues to provide Italy for its influx of COVID-19 cases likely stems from a want to influence Italy to block the vote for continued sanctions against Russia at the upcoming European Union (EU) summit in June.

Development: On 2 April, Moscow sent medical supplies to Italy to combat the spread of COVID-19 cases. Russian President Vladimir Putin personally spoke with the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte before sending planes labeled “From Russia with Love” filled with medical supplies to Italy. This comes just two months before the scheduled EU summit in June to vote on the continuation of sanctions against Russia. The EU originally put sanctions on Russia in 2014 during the Ukrainian crisis, prompting an economic downturn.

Analysis: Moscow most likely sent the medical supplies to Italy, despite its own needs, to develop its relations with the Italian government. It probably hopes that with this medical help, it will influence the Italian delegates at the EU summit to block the vote on continuing sanctions against Russia. The Kremlin may also gain the favor of other EU members by showing that they are helping an Italy, thereby gaining their support at the EU summit. Moscow likely views this vote as critical because it could mean the end of the financial crisis.

[Kiara Bean]

ISRAEL: Man Charged with Espionage Probably Gave Sensitive Information to Iran

Summary: An Israeli court indicted a man for spying on Iran's behalf, signaling Tehran's continued efforts to undermine Israeli security. Israel's security agency Shin Bet will probably bolster efforts to investigate and prevent Iran's terrorism recruiting due to the threat to Israel's security.

Development: On 7 April, a Central District court charged an Israeli man with spying for Iran. Shin Bet arrested the man on 16 March in a joint operation with local police. At the time of his arrest, authorities found the man with an encryption device and a USB drive that he tried to destroy. According to the investigation, the man traveled abroad to meet his handlers who included an operative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which Shin Bet said works as an Iranian proxy. The man received funds, training, and secret encryption tools while abroad. According to Shin Bet, the man's handlers asked him to provide information on issues including Israeli defense and strategic sites, ways to sow discord in Israeli society, recruiting Israeli Arabs, and carry out terror attacks in the name of liberating Palestine.

Analysis: The indicted Israeli man most likely passed on critical security information to his handlers before his arrest. Shin Bet will most likely examine the devices it took from the man and determine what information he provided to the PFLP and most likely Iran. Shin Bet may also inspect the technology for a better understanding of PFLP and Iranian intelligence capabilities. Shin Bet will probably continue to look out for more of Iran's recruiting efforts of Israeli nationals, which the investigation revealed have not slowed despite the global COVID-19 pandemic. Shin Bet will most likely keep a closer watch on people with access to security information who travel abroad, especially to places linked to the PFLP or Iran.

[Sarah Reiter]

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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