

1 October 2021

An Analytic Intelligence
Wire Prepared by The
Students of Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical University

Issue 386

Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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Source: Reuters



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In This Issue

RUSSIA: Support for Belarus Likely to Result in Alliance with Minsk	1
LEBANON: Suspension of Blast Probe Judge Likely to Further Isolate.....	2
Government	
NIGERIA: Attack Linked to Terrorist Group Will Almost Certainly Continue to.....	3
Increase	
GERMANY: Likely Conflict During Formation of Coalition Government.....	4

RUSSIA: Support for Belarus Likely to Result in Alliance with Minsk

Summary: Moscow likely lifted restrictions on flights between Belarus and Russia following the economic integration agreement to court favor from Minsk and gain military support.

Development: On 21 September, Moscow lifted all restrictions on flights to and from Belarus to honor an agreement that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko made to bring the two countries closer together. The 28 items included in the agreement regularize economic and military policies, common tax and customs measures, as well as other financial controls across the two countries. Previously, Moscow pressured Minsk to form a strong union between the two countries, although Minsk wanted independence. Recently, Minsk recognized its weakening economy and started to seek help from Moscow which agreed to help Minsk following active military movements in the West. Within the past year and half, Western powers moved large amounts of military equipment, weapons, and personnel to the Polish border.

Analysis: In honoring its side of the agreement and lifting the flight restrictions, Moscow most likely wants to show Minsk that it is willing to work towards bilateral relations. Moscow probably entered the agreement because Belarus can help protect Russia's western border with its highly trained and equipped military. Moscow may feel threatened by recent Western military buildup near Russia. By working with Minsk, Moscow may gain an ally that can potentially support Moscow in the event of an international issue. Moscow probably hopes to secure its borders and gain another ally in its political war with the West by providing Minsk with economic and military support.

[Kiara Bean]

LEBANON: Suspension of Blast Probe Judge Likely to Further Isolate Government

Summary: The suspension of the judge investigating Beirut's deadly 2020 explosion will likely severely alienate the government from an untrusting public and a skeptical international community.

Development: On 27 September, Lebanese officials accused Judge Tarek Bitar of bias and politicizing his investigation to uncover those responsible for the port explosion in Beirut on 4 August 2020 that killed 200 people and injured over 6,000. The suspension comes after Bitar issued an arrest warrant for former public works minister Youssef Fenianos for dodging a court hearing, according to Aljazeera. While the official investigation of the explosion has yet to make any determinations, public sentiment holds that government officials bear responsibility due to mismanagement of the port and systemic corruption. Prior to the suspension, the EU Parliament urged sanctions on Lebanese officials for disrupting the blast probe and mismanaging the economy.

Analysis: Bitar's suspicious suspension will likely alienate the government from the Lebanese people and the international community. The suspension will almost certainly cause public demonstrations across Lebanon to voice frustrations with the government's crisis management. Despite mounting domestic and international pressure, continued political corruption suggests the government will probably do little to correct the situation. The international community will likely struggle to provide meaningful aid as government inaction continues to victimize the Lebanese people.

[Tim Fergus]

NIGERIA: Attacks Linked to Terrorist Group Will Almost Certainly Continue to Increase

Summary: Three attacks in separate locations almost certainly indicates the involvement of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) as it likely tries using terror to gain power in smaller areas in preparation for larger targets.

Development: On 26 September, three terrorist attacks occurred in sperate locations across Nigeria. In the Madamai village, assailants killed 34 people and injured seven. Nigerian troops fired on the assailants causing them to withdraw. Abuja believes that the attackers hold ties to ISWAP, a Salafi jihadist militant group. Nigerian troops detained two of the attackers from the first attack for questioning. In Kaduna, bandits attacked a church, killing one and injuring others. The third attack occurred in Sokoto State, where assailants killed 22 Nigerian security agents. ISWAP linked attacks continue to increase since the group's inception in 2016.

Analysis: The attacks in Nigeria will almost certainly continue to escalate in frequency and casualties as ISWAP attempts to gain control in the region. The attacks on villages and churches indicates a likely motive to incite terror rather than claim resources. However, taking control of smaller areas might act as an attempt to slowly increase its strength before going after larger targets. The high casualties will likely influence Abuja to increase troops within the areas that may pose strategic value for ISWAP. While the attacks could indicate the involvement of a different group, the timing, and organization of specific areas point towards ISWAP's involvement.

[Savannah Gallop]

GERMANY: Likely Conflict During Formation of Coalition Government

Summary: Close election results and the inability of any party to gain a parliamentary majority may signal imminent conflict over efforts to form a coalition government.

Development: On 26 September, German election results indicated a narrow victory for the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) party, winning 206 of the 735 total seats. Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), suffered its worst-ever electoral performance winning only 196 seats. Other right-leaning parties, including the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), experienced significant losses. However, no party won enough to form a majority government in the Bundestag, meaning a coalition government must form to elect a chancellor. Historically, the SPD partnered with the CDU and other conservative parties. However, SPD leader Olaf Scholz stated that his party would seek to form a coalition with the Green party and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) instead. CDU leader Armin Laschet stated that he would also attempt to form a coalition with the Green party and FDP.

Analysis: Winning over the Green party and the FDP to form a coalition government will almost certainly remain a top priority for both Scholz and Laschet. In breaking away from traditional partners, the SPD is likely attempting to heed public sentiment indicated by the performance of conservative parties. The leader of the coalition government stands a good chance of becoming the next chancellor, likely further motivating both Scholz and Laschet. The SPD will almost certainly try to capitalize on the losses of conservative parties in negotiations with the Green party and FDP. To form a coalition, the CDU may try to appeal to the ideals of precedence and maintaining stability in parliament while Merkel transitions out of office. Both the SPD and CDU will likely try to build public support while working to form a coalition government.

[Alli McIntyre]

About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Security and Intelligence.

Alli McIntyre, a senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at editorsee@gmail.com or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708.

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