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In This Issue

LEBANON: Gulf State Retaliation Likely an Attempt to Uproot Iranian 1	1
Influence	
POLAND: Migrant Border Conflict Likely to Result in Armed Confrontations3	3
CHINA: Record Exports Likely to Continue4	4
IRAN: Israel Blamed for Massive Cyberattack Likely Signaling Future 5	5
Cyber Warfare	
INDONESIA: Government Website Defacing Likely the Start of 6	6
a Hacker War	

LEBANON: Gulf State Retaliation Likely an Attempt to Uproot Iranian Influence

Summary: Prime Minister Najib Mikati placed pressure on Information Minister George Kordahi after Kordahi's comments on the Saudi-led war in Yemen prompted severe backlash from several Gulf states. The retaliation from several Gulf states, especially Riyadh, likely represents a move to force Beirut to distance itself from Hezbollah and Tehran. However, the grip Hezbollah has over Lebanon's government may prove too strong and will probably not loosen in the turmoil, further alienating the nation from its crucial Gulf state relations.

Background: Pressure has mounted on Beirut to condemn Kordahi's remarks on the Saudi war in Yemen after a video of him began circulating in which he claimed the Iranian-backed Houthis "are defending themselves... against an external aggression," according to Aljazeera. In response, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City, and Manama all recalled their ambassadors to Beirut and gave Beirut 48 hours to recall their own, while the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also condemned the remarks. Abu Dhabi banned imports from Lebanon which, according to Aljazeera, make up about 6 percent of Lebanon's GDP. This financial blow comes as Beirut faces severe economic hardship with over three-quarters of the population living in poverty, a fuel crisis looming over the country, and serious political and civil turmoil because of several scandals. The anti-Hezbollah sentiment expressed by the angered Gulf states' conflicts with the deep-rooted hold Hezbollah continues to maintain over Lebanon's Muslim population and government.

GCC Tension with Iran: The alienation of Beirut from the Gulf states likely affirms the strong opposition felt among member countries toward Tehran's strong influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah. Lately, members of the GCC expressed growing concerns about the expanding influence of Hezbollah and its Iranian backing. As Tehran grows closer to obtaining nuclear weapons, the region has taken a cautious approach and adopted diplomatic initiatives with efforts toward de-escalation taking priority. However, GCC member countries' clear animosity towards Hezbollah and Tehran still shows the distinct divides within the region that will likely remain unchanged in the near future.

Hezbollah's Influence: The public support of Hezbollah by many Lebanese and its widespread hold on power within the country will likely prove too strong for the government to distance itself from and appease the angered Gulf states. Relief provided to the public by Hezbollah throughout the compounding crises has further cemented the role of the Iranian proxy-group in the everyday lives of the people. This public support coupled with a respectable representation in Beirut's parliament means Mikati may struggle to secure the condemnation needed to appease the Gulf states. The dire state of the economy places increased pressure on the government to resolve this issue in a timely manner, though Hezbollah's influence will almost certainly act as an immovable obstacle in Lebanon's economic recovery.

Outlook and Implications: The retaliation from members of the GCC against Beirut in response to Kordahi's remarks most likely acts as an effort to uproot Iranian influence in the region. Despite Beirut's efforts to explain that Kordahi's comments do not represent the government's

position on the issue, Riyadh and other Gulf states will likely not lift the restrictions unless the government formally condemns Kordahi and those who share his view. However, the deep-rooted influence of Hezbollah within Beirut's parliament and among the public likely means Mikati will face severe backlash should he officially condemn the comments. The economic impact of restricting Lebanese exports will almost certainly halt any chance of economic recovery or much needed assistance from the neighboring Gulf states.

Mikati remains unlikely to outright call for the resignation of Kordahi because of the rift in the government such an act would create in such a fragile time in the nation's history. This will likely result in the complete alienation of Beirut from neighboring Gulf states, solidifying Tehran's grasp on the desperate country. This may act as the final straw in a series of declining relations between Beirut and GCC member countries, pushing Beirut toward greater dependence on Tehran.

[Tim Fergus]

POLAND: Migrant Border Conflict Likely to Result in Armed Confrontations

Summary: Minsk's increasing preparations for additional mass-waves of migrants at the Belarus border into Poland for political gain almost certainly indicates a rapid increase in tensions, likely leading to armed conflict.

Development: On 8 November, Warsaw blocked the first mass-wave of migrants seeking asylum at the Belarus border. Minsk continues to encourage migrants to gather at the border for political purposes while claiming that Warsaw's actions violate human rights. The 3,000-4,000 migrants in the area continue to try to push through despite the presence of 12,000 troops. Warsaw spokesperson Piotr Muller predicts imminent armed conflict as tensions continue to rise. Latvia and Lithuania also increased troop presence at their borders to dissuade additional mass-crossings. The unfolding of these events prompted the European Union (EU) to call for more sanctions against Minsk.

Analysis: The tensions at the Belarus border will almost certainly continue to increase in severity and may escalate to an armed conflict. Lithuania and Latvia may also experience armed conflict due to escalating tensions. Minsk's lack of response to EU sanctions indicates that it will not likely change course now and will probably continue to strongly encourage the push of migrants to the Belarus border. Furthermore, the EU will almost certainly continue to call for increased sanctions to quell additional conflict.

[Savannah Gallop]

CHINA: Record Exports Likely to Continue

Summary: Despite the global economic slowdown due to the pandemic, China's exports reached a record high of \$75.4 billion during October. This trend will likely continue due to the continued demand for health-care products.

Development: On 7 November, Beijing released data showing China's record \$75.4 billion monthly exports. Since January, China's trade value totals about \$268 billion. The increase in exports resulted from global demand for medical and healthcare products during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing spends a lot of its GDP importing commodities from wealthy nations across the globe, but the pressing need for healthcare products and equipment led China to instead export millions of these goods to other nations hit hard by COVID-19 death and infection rates. China also continues to grow economically due to its place as the world's center for cheap labor production and low-wage income.

Analysis: The Chinese economy will likely continue to experience record levels of exports because of its strategic plans for production and trade. Beijing's cheap labor will likely contribute to its ability to grow economically and continue to meet the demand for health-care products. The demand for health-care products will almost certainly continue, allowing for continued high levels of Chinese exports to meet this demand.

[Dyanna Henriquez]

IRAN: Israel Blamed for Massive Cyberattack Likely Signaling Future Cyber Warfare

Summary: Following Tehran's accusation against Jerusalem for the cyberattack that took several gas stations offline, Tehran will likely justify a future retaliatory cyberattack on Israel, which would continue a long history of back-and-forth between the two countries.

Development: On 31 October, Tehran accused Israel of conducting the massive cyberattack on its gas stations. On 19 October, Jerusalem approved a \$1.5 billion budget for a potential strike on Iran. On 24 October, the Iranian Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani warned, in response to this budget, that Tehran would suffer "tens of thousands of billion dollars" in damages if Jerusalem attacked. On 26 October, a massive cyberattack by an unknown country on Iran disrupted the refueling system for gas stations causing long queues and almost all gas stations to go offline for two days following the tweet. Tehran and Jerusalem have a long history of exchanging cyber-attacks. For example, on 13 October, Jerusalem blamed Tehran for a ransomware attack on hospitals; on 12 April, Tehran blamed Jerusalem for a cyberattack on Natanz nuclear facility; and, in April 2020, Jerusalem blamed Tehran for cyberattacks on its water utilities.

Analysis: The trend of cyberattacks between Jerusalem and Tehran indicates the type of cyberattack that disrupted Iranian gas stations on 26 October will likely continue. Jerusalem likely carried out the cyberattack on Iranian gas stations as evidenced by threatening public statements by Iranian officials and Jerusalem's new budget. Even if Jerusalem did not carry out the attack, Tehran pinning the attack on Jerusalem will probably justify a cyberattack of its own against Jerusalem. With high tensions between Jerusalem and Tehran and no attempts to try and calm relations down, these alternating cyberattacks will likely continue for the next few years with the increasing distrust and hostility between the governments.

[Justin La Zare]

INDONESIA: Government Website Defacing Likely the Start of a Hacker War

Summary: Brazilian hacker group theMx0nday's defacing of the Indonesian National Cyber and Crypto Agency's website, in response to cyberattacks by Indonesian hackers, may lead to future attacks between the Brazilian and Indonesian hacker groups.

Development: On 21 October, Brazilian hacker group theMx0nday launched a cyberattack as an act of vengeance against Indonesian hackers and defaced the website for Indonesia's National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN). While the BSSN's website suffered minimal damage, Indonesians expressed concerns over cyberattacks, according to both Nusantarapol and DetikINET. The Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) for BSSN handled the recovery of the attack resolving the issue in a matter of days, according to Nusantarapol and CNN Indonesia. The hackers relabeled the text above the BSSN's logo to "Hacked by theMx0nday" and altered text below the agency's logo to address Indonesian hackers "who they claimed to have hacked Brazilian websites," according to The Finery Report. After the attack, one of the group's members tweeted with the handle @son1x777, "...See how easy it is to mess up your chaotic country." Software damages also extended to the temporary inaccessibility of Indonesia's malware repository, a webpage on the BSSN site used for managing and researching purposes, according to several news sources.

Analysis: Conflicts between Indonesian and Brazilian hacker groups may rise after theMx0nday defaced the BSSN's website to send a message to Indonesian hackers, who supposedly targeted Brazilian websites. theMx0nday likely saw the BSSN as a prime target for the attack because of the high possibility of massive amounts of press coverage as well as for the ability to flaunt their success of infiltrating a government agency that specializes in cyber security. They also likely blocked access to the webpage repository on malware to hinder the CSIRTs response time. The more people that hear about the attack and become concerned, the more likely their target audience would receive the message. The tweets by theMx0nday may aggravate Indonesian hackers into retaliating against Brazilian websites. Given theMx0nday's attitude, they likely will strike again if the Indonesian hackers retaliate against them.

[Gabrielle Canez]

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, 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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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. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 392, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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