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# Issue 394 Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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## TAIWAN: Upgraded Fighter Jets Will Probably Not Deter Airspace Incursions

**Summary:** Taipei's newly renovated F-16V (Viper) fighter jets probably result in minimal advancements to Taipei's air defense capabilities and will likely not repel Beijing's incursions into the Taiwanese Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

**Development:** On 18 November, Taipei unveiled its newly renovated F-16 Viper fighter jets, converted from the F-16A/B models. Upgrades included new radar systems and mission computers with the purpose of advancing maneuverability and precision targeting. No reports indicated upgraded weapons systems. China's Peoples' Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) historically deployed many J-16 fighter jets during incursions into the Taiwanese ADIZ, an airframe that utilizes similar weapons systems as the F-16V. On 6 October, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen implied that Taipei would only act in self-defense against Beijing.

**Analysis:** Taipei's upgraded F-16V fighter jets will probably not deter PLAAF intrusions into the Taiwanese ADIZ. The upgraded jets may provide a marginal air-to-air combat advantage against the PLAAF's J-16s, however the PLAAF's fleet volume and highly similar weapons systems make it unlikely that this upgrade will provide a significantly increased threat to PLAAF aircraft. This renovation's marginal strategic gain combined with Taipei's strict stance on acting only in self-defense likely indicates that the PLAAF will probably continue incursions into the Taiwanese ADIZ unchecked.

[Brendan Martin]

## **RUSSIA: New Regiment Likely to Ensure Encirclement of Ukraine in a Conflict**

**Summary:** A new Russian air assault regiment is forming in Crimea, probably to provide Moscow with a new angle to attack Ukraine in the event of military conflict.

**Development:** On 17 November, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced a new air assault regiment that will finish forming in Crimea by 1 December. This announcement came five days after two Russian paratroopers died in Belarus during sudden “snap drills,” revealing the presence of Russian air assault forces. The new regiment will serve as the fourth Russian unit currently stationed in Crimea. Recently, the troops and analysts at the Ukrainian border have observed an influx of Russian weapons, especially tanks. These tanks went to Voronezh, a Russian city with two rail lines directly into Ukraine. Additionally, tanks from the Russian 41st Army remained near the Ukrainian border after the Zapad-2021 military exercises. Moscow has also increased naval activity in the Black Sea.

**Analysis:** The placement of the new regiment suggests Moscow probably intends to encircle Ukrainian forces if a conflict arises between the two nations. Russian forces in Belarus and Crimea likely possess the capabilities to strike from the north and south of Ukraine, respectively. This would probably make an invasion easier for Moscow because Ukrainian forces would have reduced supply with fighting happening on multiple sides. The positioning of Russian air assault forces could likely cause Kyiv to split its air defenses, making it easier for Moscow to secure air superiority or deploy airborne forces behind Ukrainian defenses. An attack from multiple directions would probably overwhelm Ukraine faster than an offensive purely from the Russian border.

[Edward Micklos]

## CHINA: Recent Meeting Indicates Future Conflict with Taiwan

**Summary:** Recent conversations with Washington revealed Beijing's plans to handle Taipei's continued efforts at succession from mainland China. This news coupled with Taiwan's firm stance against becoming a part of China almost certainly indicates future conflict.

**Development:** On 15 November, Beijing and Washington held a video meeting in attempts to dial down tensions that raised the appearance of specter conflict. During the three-and-a-half-hour discussion, Beijing emphasized that while it desires a patient, peaceful, and sincere reunification with Taiwan, if Taiwan secessionists provoke or cross Beijing's red lines, it will have to take decisive measures.

**Analysis:** Beijing's most recent conversation with Washington where it affirmed its plans to take decisive measures if Taipei crosses its red lines, coupled with the growing number and caliber of Taipei's independence-leaning initiatives indicates imminent hostile actions should Taipei engage in behavior not in line with Beijing's standards. While the exact behavior that would cause Beijing to take decisive measures remains unclear, Beijing's remarks display its intolerance for Taipei's actions will almost certainly continue. With Taiwan's independence initiatives continuing to expand, more conflict will likely arise very soon.

[Ngozi Eke]

## IRAN: State-Sponsored Cyber Attacks Could Increase Cyber Espionage

**Summary:** A string of cyber-attacks conducted by Tehran-sponsored hackers could indicate a rise in Tehran cyber intelligence gathering and cyber espionage against foreign nations, specifically against its rivals and their critical infrastructure.

**Development:** On 9 November, a Tehran-sponsored hacker group known as Lyceum conducted a series of cyber-attacks against telecommunication and internet service providers in various countries in the Middle East and Africa. Tehran-sponsored hackers target telecommunication networks and internet service due to the potential to gain intelligence on foreign nations. Lyceum acts as one of many Tehran-sponsored hackers conducting cyber-attacks against foreign nations, specifically against Jerusalem and Riyadh. According to a Lyceum report from Secureworks, Lyceum and other Tehran-sponsored hacking groups utilize simple and common hacking tactics like password spraying, and brute-force attacks against their target with great success. However, Tehran-sponsored hackers have begun to upgrade their toolkit to include more sophisticated attacks. These hackers use brute-force attacks to gain initial entry into an organization, then employ sophisticated post-exploitation tools to spy and survey an organization for information.

**Analysis:** A series of cyber-attacks conducted by state-sponsored Tehran hackers could indicate a rise in Tehran cyber espionage and intelligence gathering against its rivals. Lyceum and other Tehran-sponsored hacking groups probably do not want to disrupt organizations' regular operations as it could reveal their cyber plots. Instead, Tehran probably wants to infiltrate an organization, ideally a facility with great importance to its rivals, and install programs and backdoors that allow Tehran to gather highly sensitive information without detection. In addition, with the increased sophistication of Tehran's cyber-attacks, Tehran hackers will likely expand their sights to include more government agencies and more high importance critical infrastructure such as oil, information technology, and telecommunications.

[Michael Doolan]

## CHINA: Anti-Democracy Comments Likely to Slow Progress with the West

**Summary:** Director of policy research in Beijing Jiang Jinqun criticized Western democracy, potentially inhibiting a positive liaison with Western actors.

**Development:** On 12 November, high ranking official Jiang Jinqun criticized the West's use of democracy and its attempt to impose ideals on Beijing and denounce other governments. Beijing declared people should choose democracy for its country, but if such governments criticize other countries, it lacks true characteristics of a democracy. Beijing officials claimed a true democratic system will only happen to address the nation's imperative needs. During the conference, Jiang specifically called out Washington in a rare occasion, saying its own people do not believe in its current state of democracy, while 90% of the Chinese find its government successful. Jiang also stated wealthy elites rule democracy in the West, not the people themselves.

**Analysis:** With increased negative verbal remarks against democratic ideals, relations between Beijing and the West may decline. Beijing will likely continue its negative rhetoric regarding democratic systems in place elsewhere in the world, and Jiang will likely not back down on the comments. If the rhetoric continues, it will likely indicate Beijing's potential lack of desire to work towards improving relations with the West.

[Tatum Leyvas]

## 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](mailto:editorsee@gmail.com) or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 394, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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