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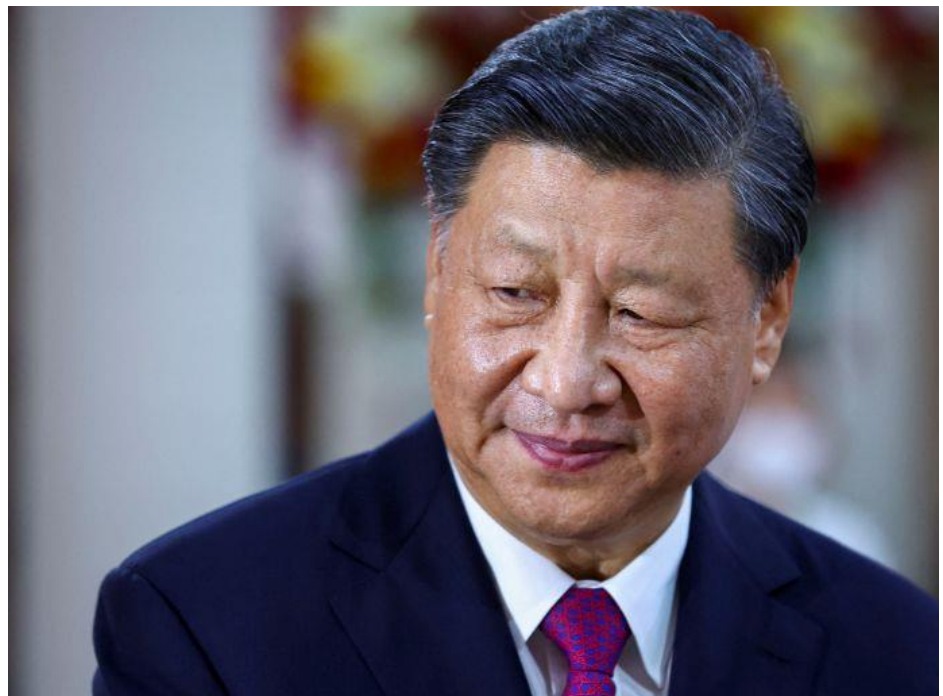
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# Issue 425

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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*Aljazeera*



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## CHINA: President's "Peace Plan" May Create a Distraction from Uyghur Crisis

**Summary:** Chinese President Xi Jinping's planned meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin regarding the Ukraine conflict may act as a media stunt to distract from the ongoing human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims in China.

**Development:** On 17 February, Beijing publicly called for peace talks and a cease-fire between Kyiv and Moscow. In January, officials had announced that Xi would visit Moscow in the upcoming weeks to discuss a plan to bring the war to an end. Many countries suspected this plan meant Beijing would supply arms to Moscow to help them forcibly win the war. Despite this new development of Beijing advocating for a peaceful resolution, many are becoming wary of the motivations behind the visit. This all comes at a time when global governments are criticizing Beijing's crimes against the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

**Analysis:** Beijing will likely put on its best face for the press during Xi's visits with Putin to discuss peace efforts. This will likely divert media attention from their oppression of Uyghurs. By advising for a cease-fire and containment of nuclear weapons, Beijing may try to position itself as a humanitarian advocate. The peace talks and concern for Ukraine likely reflects an attempt at a distraction from the continuous oppression and genocide of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

[Julia Rieth]

## **RUSSIA: Killnet Cyber Attack on Germany Likely to Increase Current Relation Tensions**

**Summary:** The Moscow-linked hacker group Killnet claimed to have launched a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks against German airports. These resulting disruptions will likely cause an increase in tensions between Berlin and Moscow.

**Development:** On 17 February, the Moscow-connected hacker group Killnet claimed responsibility for the DDoS attack on seven German airports, according to *The Register*. The Killnet succeeded in rendering the airports' websites temporarily unavailable. Airports affected by the disruption include Düsseldorf, Nuremberg, Erfurt-Weimar, and Dortmund, according to *The Record*. For a few hours, the airports' websites temporarily shut down due to the overwhelming demand, causing disruptions and unavailability. The DDoS attack targeted airport, financial, and federal operations; however, within 24 hours, Berlin worked to restore operations to all sites affected.

**Analysis:** Killnet likely attacked Berlin's airports due to the increased tension from Berlin's support of Kyiv during the current Russia and Ukraine war. Berlin's support of Kyiv and its influence conflicts with Moscow's views and will likely further deteriorate the current standing views of Moscow and affiliated organizations like Killnet. These attacks threaten Berlin's security and may worsen relations between Berlin and Moscow. The hacker group may plan to conduct more attacks within organizations connected or assumed to support Berlin's operations. With this possibility, the officials within Berlin will likely amp up security and minimize the threat of possible conflict.

[Isabella Whalen]

## CHINA: Strengthening Research Likely to Decrease Dependence on Foreign Technologies

**Summary:** President Xi Jinping announced Beijing will strengthen research in science and technology, which may result in less reliance on foreign technologies and a shift in the supply chain.

**Development:** On 21 February, Xi called for the strengthening of basic research in science and technology when chairing the third group study session of the Political Bureau of the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party of China Central Committee. The announcement encompassed the importance of funding, international collaboration, talent training, and technological integration as crucial for Beijing's self-reliance in science and technology. Xi emphasized the importance of accelerating fundamental scientific research so China can become self-reliant in critical technologies. Xi stated that financial investments in basic research will expand and encourage universities and enterprises to work together through joint research to enlarge the scale of their applications, according to *China Daily*. Xi mentioned establishing a national laboratory system with Chinese characteristics and introducing a new platform for information technology research to form a strong basic research network. Xi also said prioritizing science subjects in middle school and college will allow for a large, advanced talent force. according to *South China Morning Post*.

**Analysis:** Xi's announcement regarding strengthening science and technology research will probably result in less dependence on foreign technologies and a shift in the supply chain. The increase in research funding will likely result in more scientific discoveries and advancements from universities and research institutions across the region. Officials will probably implement these advancements in many key sectors, such as information technology, aerospace equipment, and ocean engineering equipment. The emphasis on science in schooling will likely benefit Beijing's goal to create a talented workforce in the future and to continue technological and scientific discoveries.

[Rebekah Sokoloski]

## **RUSSIA: Ransomware Group Layoffs May Signify Cyber Resilience**

**Summary:** Russian ransomware group Wizard Spider reportedly laid off 45 employees after an unprofitable ransomware operation. These layoffs may indicate that at-risk organizations are improving their cybersecurity practices over time.

**Development:** On 21 February, an executive at cyber intelligence company Red Sense reported that Wizard Spider has laid off 45 employees. Believed to have good relationships with Moscow, it claimed responsibility for several high-profile attacks in recent years. In May 2021, the group carried out a ransomware attack on various Irish hospital systems, causing significant disruption to healthcare services in the country. However, news outlets reported the group's recent ransomware operations are producing fewer profits for the group, leading to the layoffs of call center employees.

**Analysis:** Layoffs at Wizard Spider may indicate that cybersecurity practices are improving among potential targets while stronger security measures, including comprehensive backups and regular implementation of security audits. Law enforcement agencies may become more effective in disrupting ransomware operations and apprehending the individuals behind them. A nation-state-backed group like Wizard Spider facing trouble with its attacks likely displays the effectiveness of recent cybersecurity developments. While the threat of ransomware attacks remains significant, recent developments may suggest a positive trend toward improving cybersecurity practices.

[Jeffrey Jensen]

## TURKEY: Military Operation in Syria May Stress Relationship Regarding Refugees

**Summary:** A recent Turkish military operation in Syria will likely cause tensions to rise between Ankara and Damascus regarding Syrian refugees.

**Development:** On 24 February, a Turkish military air operation took place in Syria to kill an alleged terrorist who had led a deadly Istanbul street-bombing, according to *Middle East Eye*. The airstrike killed a civilian and wounded a local Kurdish police commander, along with the targeted terrorist, according to *AP News*. A previous bombing occurred on 13 November 2022 in Istanbul, killing six people and injured 81 others, according to NPR. Turkey believes the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) conducted the street-bombing in Istanbul. Ankara holds pre-existing conflicts with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a terrorist group, and views the Syrian Kurdish YPG as an extension of the PKK, according to *Middle East Eye*. The recent earthquake affected approximately 1.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. Refugees remain under temporary protection status that confines them to their registered Turkish provinces, according to *Aljazeera*.

**Analysis:** The military operation conducted in Syria may result in rising tensions between Ankara and Damascus due to Ankara's sheltering of millions of Syrian refugees. The killing of a Syrian civilian and the wounding of a Kurdish police commander may cause Damascus to hold Ankara responsible and resent its operations abroad. Since the recent earthquake affected both Turkey and Syria, they potentially could find unity in assisting affected citizens. However, the possibility of unity remains unlikely due to the surge in tensions between the two nations. Since Turkish officials believe the Syrian Kurdish YPG and PKK conducted the street bombing in Istanbul, and given previous conflicts with the PKK, Ankara's relationship with Damascus may move towards more hostilities. If Ankara chooses to move against Damascus, it may use the sheltering of Syrian refugees in Turkey as leverage towards the PKK.

[Hailey Thatcher]

## JAMAICA: Delayed Local Elections Likely to Decrease Voter Turnout

**Summary:** Delays in local government elections could discourage opposition groups from running and dissuade voters from showing up at the polls.

**Development:** On 24 February, the Upper House introduced a bill to push back local government elections an entire year. The bill stated the elevated level of economic uncertainty as the reason for the delay. Opposition groups claim the delay represents the government officials' shift away from democracy. The People's National Party currently holds power in Jamaica, and the opposition Jamaican Labour Party demands that elections continue as scheduled. Between 2001 and 2004, officials postponed government elections three times, according to *Jamaica Observer*. There are 15 divisions within the local government without any sitting representatives, and the Jamaican Labour Party sponsored candidates to run for these positions. With the elections delayed another year, the People's National Party still holds most of the power.

**Analysis:** When the elections for local government happen next year, voter turnout will likely stay low. The consequence of delayed government elections means that the divisions that need representation will not likely get elected representatives for a year. This likely decreases faith in the current government and causes some to drop out of running for office. The trend of postponed elections could indicate government apathy towards democracy.

[Isabella Ponce]



## 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.

EE does not cite sources in the final publication; however, we log every source we use in our research and are happy to share them upon request. The official EE Source Database is available on our website's resources page for a general overview of our sourcing methods.

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Savannah Gallop, 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 425, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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