

24 March 2023

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

Issue 427

Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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RUSSIA: Enforced Symbiotic Relationship Will Likely Protect Against Global Retribution

Summary: Informal meetings between Moscow and Beijing deepened country relations, likely sending a message to other countries of increased support in response to war crime accusations.

Development: On 20 March, Russian President Vladimir Putin played host to Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Kremlin. The visit establishes Xi's first international trip after his reelection earlier this month and occurs days after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Putin over war crimes. The two met for informal one-on-one talks for approximately four hours to deepen their no-limits friendship, according to *US News*. Xi proposed a Chinese settlement in Ukraine, which Putin responded to positively. The two world leaders have meetings scheduled for 28 March to deepen their discussions.

Analysis: Putin and Xi likely are meeting to send a message to the international community that Beijing will continue to support and possibly defend Moscow's actions after the ICC issued the arrest warrant for Putin. The display of the "no-limits friendship" between the two leaders almost certainly implies that Moscow and Beijing continue to align themselves against Western powers. The partnership likely benefits Putin since he gains Xi's support against the ICC warrant, likely thwarting any actions it planned to take against Putin for fear of Beijing's backlash. Beijing will most likely further support Moscow's war efforts in Ukraine to secure a Chinese settlement in the country should Moscow encounter victory over Kyiv.

[Savannah Gallop]

CHINA: Espionage Groups Likely to Utilize Techniques to Exploit High-Level Targets

Summary: Cyber espionage groups are increasing their ability to execute zero-day exploitations discretely. Advanced zero-day exploitations will likely increase targets on high-level networks and operating system hosts.

Development: On 18 March, reports indicated the presence of a Chinese hacking group identified as UNC3886. Recent reports further indicated the connection between UNC3886 and a recent zero-day exploitation in the Fortinet operating system (FortiOS), according to *The Hacker News*. Zero-day exploitations are flaws in a system designed to gather data and target software vulnerabilities. Chinese state-linked hackers like UNC3886 continue to manipulate cybersecurity tools to attempt a discrete entrance in government and company networks, according to *The Hill*. UNC3886 continues to practice irregular patterns of undetectable techniques compared to previous methods connected to Chinese hacking groups. Strategies are shifting from infiltrating systems behind the firewall to compromising devices on the targeted network.

Analysis: Advanced cyber espionage groups in China will likely increase their ability to execute undetectable zero-day exploitations on high-level targets. Since zero-day exploitations target software vulnerabilities, the exploits will almost certainly assist in future attacks, similar to the attack on FortiOS. If reports continue to find connections between cyberattacks and UNC3886, the group will likely increase the utilization of irregular techniques to continue executing undetectable attacks. Since UNC3886 continues to practice abnormal techniques, it remains probable that the group plans an infiltration on a high-level target. The opportunities in zero-day exploitations will likely increase predictions that UNC3886 could target vulnerable devices on a government network.

[Lauren Estrada]

CHINA: Companies Exporting Lethal Aid to Russia Likely to Receive Sanctions

Summary: Chinese companies that sent lethal aid, such as rifles and body armor to Russia will most likely receive sanctions from Berlin due to a previous warning about sending lethal aid.

Development: On 16 March, a new report revealed that several Chinese companies shipped rifles, drone parts, and body armor to Russian companies last year, according to POLITICO. From June to December 2022, China North Industries Group Corporation Limited (NORINCO) and others sent equipment through Turkey to the Russian company Tekhkrim. NORINCO, a state-owned defense contractor, sent 1,000 CQ-A rifles registered as civilian hunting rifles, which classifies the rifles as dual-purpose equipment. Dual-purpose equipment possesses both civilian and military purposes. Chinese companies previously sent non-lethal dual-purpose equipment such as navigational equipment, satellite imagery, and drone parts, according to *National Review*. On 5 March, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned Beijing of unspecified consequences if Beijing sent lethal aid to Moscow. At the time, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had no evidence of Beijing sending arms to Moscow.

Analysis: Berlin and its European allies will most likely sanction the Chinese companies responsible for exporting weapons to Moscow. NORINCO will almost certainly receive sanctions for its role in sending rifles to Moscow despite registering the weapons as civilian rifles. The 1,000 exported rifles, due to the small number of rifles sent, will most likely not have a significant impact on the conflict. Beijing will almost certainly continue to send non-lethal dual-purpose equipment to Moscow instead of lethal aid. Beijing may stop sending aid through Turkey and use its large, shared border with Russia to send non-lethal support instead.

[Sebastien Bragg]

[TAIWAN: Arrest of Suspected Chinese Spies May Lead to an Attempt at Misinformation](#)

Summary: The arrest of two former state officials convicted of espionage for Beijing may lead to an opportunity for Taipei to plant informants in order to spread false information.

Development: On 16 March, Taipei charged former legislator Lo Chih-ming and former Navy officer Hsia Fu-hsiang with acting against anti-espionage laws under the National Security Act, according to *Taiwan News*. From 2013-2018, the men arranged 48 meetings between ex-Military Police (MP) officials and Chinese intelligence personnel, also according to *Taiwan News*. The former MP members came from all branches and a variety of positions, according to *Liberty Times Net*, which also reported that the Kaohsiung District Prosecutors Office listed all 48 of those members as only witnesses, but indicted Chih-ming and Fu-hsiang. The prosecution pointed out that both men had been part of Chinese organizations that advocate for reunification for over a decade, according to the *BBC*, which worried Taipei officials amidst recent comments concerning China's invasion of Taiwan.

Analysis: With the urgent issue of Beijing's threats to invade Taiwan at play, Taipei may use this incident to enact counterespionage tactics, such as planting fake military officers so that individuals can recruit them as informants and thus give misinformation to the Chinese intelligence network. In order to defend its country against a much larger power, Taipei will likely use every opportunity it can to employ defense mechanisms. This event has shown one of the weaknesses in Taipei's security protocols, but the government will likely learn from this shortcoming and even use it to the country's advantage in the near future.

[Julia Rieth]

[MALI: Aircraft Acquisition Will Likely Tighten Alliance to Moscow in Insurgency Conflict](#)

Summary: Bamako received several trainer and drone aircraft from Moscow in the latest installment of weapons procurement. This will likely tighten Bamako's dependence on Moscow against the insurgency in Mali.

Development: On 16 March, transition leader Colonel Assimi Goïta delivered as many as 20 aircraft to Bamako's air force in a military reception ceremony, according to *The Defense Post*. Defense Minister Colonel Sadio Camara reported several Bayraktar TB2 drones and L-39 Albatros fighter jets included in the package, according to *The North Africa Post*. Four L-39 jets and three TB2 drones stood on the tarmac during the ceremony, according to *Janes*. Air Force Chief of Staff Brigadier General Aliou Boï Diarra stated that the TB2 drones significantly increased intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The drones join the score of aircraft procured last year as Bamako fights a campaign against insurgents, according to *DefenseWeb*. A week prior to the ceremony, Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop explained that Bamako turned to Moscow because of the "red tape and despicable standards" in attempting to acquire military equipment from Western countries, according to an interview by *Mayadeen TV*.

Analysis: Bamako will likely continue receiving aircraft, especially as he continues to accept Moscow's support throughout the course of the campaign against the insurgents. The Bayraktar drones will likely deploy the most often against the insurgents because of the tactical advantage afforded by their ISR systems, while the L-39 fighter jets will likely require trained personnel from Moscow. Continued procurement from last year will likely mean Bamako holds a sufficient budget for long-term acquisition. Bamako's negative experiences buying from Western countries will likely sway preference to defense contractors in Moscow.

[Markus Weinzinger]

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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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 or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 427, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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