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In This Issue

CHINA: Expansion of Blue Water Fleet Presence Almost Certain After Bering Sea Patrol

Summary: The Chinese Coast Guard has entered the Bering Sea for the first time while patrolling with Russian Border Guard vessels. Beijing is almost certainly attempting to expand its reach beyond Chinese waters by expanding the presence of its blue-water fleet.

Development: On 1 October, two Chinese Coast Guard vessels entered the Bering Sea with two Russian Border Guard vessels, traveling farther north than any Chinese vessel had previously. In 2018, Beijing expressed its desire to develop infrastructure and shipping lanes in the Arctic to shorten travel times between Asia and Europe as a part of the Polar Silk Road initiative. In June, Beijing delivered four research icebreaker vessels to Russia to help with an unknown project in the Arctic. Beijing expressed interest in different natural resources in the Arctic region, especially minerals and metals. “For more than a decade China has claimed the status as a near arctic power” and demanded more governance over it, according to the United States Naval Institute. In July, China flew fighters into the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone. Beijing stated that this event significantly expanded its operation range in the Arctic. (or cite source)

Analysis: Beijing almost certainly will continue to conduct military operations in the Arctic as it moves towards expanding the operations its blue-water fleet beyond Chinese waters. Beijing will most likely continue strengthening relations with Moscow to obtain needed experience and resources for their fleets. Beijing will probably ramp up naval operations outside of its sea beyond this first joint patrol in the Bering Sea.

[Brooks Yarlott]

CHINA: Missile Test Likely to Result in an Increase of Aggression Regarding Deterrence

Summary: Beijing's recent intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test will likely pose new challenges for international security by underscoring its growing strategic capabilities, particularly concerning Beijing's relationship with the West.

Development: On 25 September, Beijing launched a DF-31AG ICBM and released a photo a few days later. The missile can reach most of the continental United States, with a range of 6,959 miles. Beijing conducted the launch from a transporter erector launcher, emphasizing the mobility and versatility of China's nuclear arsenal. Beijing launched the missile from Hainan Island, and the mock warhead landed as intended in the Pacific north of Tahiti, according to *Newsweek*. Beijing previously launched its ICBM in 1980, according to the BBC. Beijing provided some advance notification of the test, which many experts viewed as a positive measure for preventing miscalculations, according to the Department of Defense. This event coincides with heightened military activity in the region, with the relocation of Chinese warships to the Philippine Sea.

Analysis: This ICBM test signifies a significant advancement in China's strategic capabilities, likely intended to reinforce its deterrent posture against perceived threats from the West. The increased transparency surrounding the launch likely serves as a strategic move for Beijing to assert its military prowess while maintaining stability through prior notifications. As Beijing continuously boasts its newer technology, it will likely test more missiles of similar caliber and make more aggressive moves of deterrence in the near future.

[Matthew Keller]

CHINA: Naval Use of New Waterway Route Likely Indicates Rising Tensions with Japan

Summary: Beijing sent the *Liaoning* Carrier Strike Group (CSG) through a waterway inside Japan's contiguous zone for the first time. This increase in assertiveness could indicate Beijing's intentions of testing Japan's military capabilities and potentially increasing access to Taiwan in preparation for an invasion.

Development: On 27 September, the Chinese *Liaoning* CSG, an aircraft carrier accompanied by two destroyers, passed through an area in Japan's contiguous zone between the Yonaguni and Iriomote Islands. This instance marks Beijing's first time entering Japan's contiguous zone 100 miles away from Taiwan's eastern coastline. Japan's Joint Staff Office (JSO) indicates that Beijing transited the vast majority of its ships to the Western Pacific Ocean through the Miyako Strait between Okinawa and Miyako starting from 2018 to 2023. They now show a decrease down to 43 percent of ships using the Miyako Strait in 2024, according to the Institute for the Study of War. The JSO claimed that the *Liaoning*, starting on 20 September, carried out 250 sorties of fighter aircraft and 160 sorties of helicopters within a week, according to the U.S. Naval Institute.

Analysis: The sending of an aircraft carrier and two destroyers through a Japanese contiguous zone area almost certainly aimed to threaten Tokyo. Beijing likely chose that specific transit path through the contiguous zone to test Tokyo's military reaction time. Beijing also likely chose to take the passage to solidify its access to Taiwan. Having access to those waterways and, therefore, the Taiwanese east coast will probably help disrupt the supply lines going to Western countries in a time of war.

[Lex Broadway]

ISRAEL: Iranian Missile Attack Likely to Result in Directly Engaging Iranian Combatants

Summary: After the recent Iranian missile strikes against Israel, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Iranian proxies in the Middle East will likely evolve into a direct war between the two states.

Development: On 1 October, the Iranian Armed Forces launched over 180 missiles towards Israeli military targets, including the Nevatim airbase and Mossad headquarters. Abbas Araghchi, Iranian foreign minister, said in a press release, "If Israel takes any step or measure against us, our retaliation will be stronger than previous." Daniel Hagari, an Israeli Defense Force spokesman, stated that Israel would respond to the attack "whenever, wherever, and however we choose, in accordance with the directive of the government of Israel."

Analysis: Now that Tehran has openly attacked Israel, Jerusalem will likely conduct more aggressive military operations and adopt more direct Rules of Engagement against IRGC combatants. Tehran has claimed full responsibility for this attack and has reinforced their policy of retaliation if Jerusalem's campaign against Lebanon continues, a statement highly likely to augment tension between the two nations. With this admission of aggression from Tehran, it is unlikely that Tel Aviv will suffer poor international optics for escalating attacks against IRGC combatants. Escalating attacks against Tehran will likely result in an evolution of this conflict to the scale of conventional warfare.

[Lindsey]

INDIA: New Cybersecurity Program Likely to Struggle with Escalating Cyberattacks

Summary: India faces a sharp rise in cyberattacks, targeting key sectors such as government, healthcare, banking, and manufacturing. Despite the creation of the Cyber Commandos, New Delhi may struggle to keep pace with increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks.

Development: On 3 October, New Delhi created the Cyber Commandos program because of recent cyber-attacks within the country. On 28 February 2021, Beijing-sponsored hackers, RedEcho, penetrated multiple power grid hubs throughout India. These breaches caused small-scale disruptions and outages. Beijing reportedly accessed data from the Ministry of Home Affairs during this attack and exfiltrated 95.2 gigabytes of immigration data, according to *India Today* and *Cloudsek*. RedEcho infiltrated Air New Delhi by hacking the Société Internationale de Télécommunications Aéronautiques (SITA), the company responsible for processing passenger information, leading to a data breach of 4.5 million customers' personal information released onto the dark web, according to *Business Today*. Throughout the years, New Delhi developed relationships with foreign superpowers to strengthen their cyber defense capacities as part of a long-term strategy to respond to small and large-scale cyberattacks.

Analysis: New Delhi's national cybersecurity program will likely improve its defenses, but it may struggle to counter increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks. The creation of the Cyber Commandos program demonstrates a likely commitment to enhancing defense, but the ongoing evolution of state-sponsored threats like RedEcho could potentially outpace these efforts. Despite efforts to protect critical infrastructure and sensitive data, along with increased international collaboration, the country could remain vulnerable to future large-scale attacks. Without better global cybersecurity coordination, New Delhi will likely face continued challenges in mitigating these risks.

[Brett Theuerkauf]

AFGHANISTAN: Greater Regional Acceptance of Taliban Likely

Summary: During the meeting of the Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan, representatives of nine countries in the region signaled a willingness to accept the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and re-integrate them into the international community.

Development: On 4 October, Moscow held the sixth meeting of the Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan. Representatives from Tehran, Beijing, New Delhi, Astana, Bishkek, Islamabad, Dushanbe, and Tashkent attended, with Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi invited as a guest for the first time. A joint press release issued after the meeting called for greater economic, counterterrorism, and humanitarian cooperation with the Taliban authorities. This follows decisions by Astana, Bishkek, and Moscow to remove the Taliban from their lists of banned terrorist groups, as well as public statements against Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), an ISIS affiliate centered in Afghanistan that has committed several large-scale attacks in Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan since January 2024. While none of the meeting's attendees officially recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, all allow the Taliban to control Afghan embassies and consulates in their country.

Analysis: Inviting Taliban officials to the summit, in conjunction with the generally positive tone taken towards the regime in their press release, likely indicates a further detente with the Taliban in the near future. Moscow, Tehran, and Beijing likely seek deeper relations to increase their influence over and trade opportunities in the region, especially given Moscow and Tehran's limited pool of available partners. All the involved states, especially the smaller, less influential states directly bordering Afghanistan, likely fear ISIS-K's influence and demonstrated ability to operate out of Afghanistan. These states likely see cooperation with the Taliban necessary to achieve greater goals, notably countering ISIS-K. These governments will likely proceed slowly. They will begin with low-level cooperative efforts alongside information campaigns designed to make cooperation more palatable to their citizens and more defensible to other states. Within the next several years, some will extend formal recognition to the Taliban.

[Christina Muchow]

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.

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Sebastien Bragg, 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 458, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.

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