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RUSSIA: Statement on Azerbaijan Jet Crash Likely Caused by Need for Strong Relations

Summary: President Vladimir Putin's admission of involvement in the Azerbaijani jet crash last year likely reveals Moscow's growing need for stronger relations with the few countries in its grasp. This acknowledgement will probably result in renewed relations between the two former Soviet nations, an accomplishment on Putin's part amidst Moscow's dwindling strength.

Development: On 9 October, Putin admitted Moscow's responsibility for the downing of the Azerbaijani jet on Christmas day last year, which resulted in 38 casualties, according to *The New York Times*. This acknowledgement after almost a year of Putin's denial came with a full apology for the tragic accident and promises for full compensation after legal investigations take place, according to *Al Jazeera*. This admission occurred at a summit between former Soviet nations in Tajikistan and marks the first meeting with Putin and Azerbaijan's president Ilham Aliyev since the crash, according to the *Guardian*. Putin admitted that Russian aerial defense aircrafts mistakenly shot the jet as they attempted to destroy Ukrainian drones that entered Russian airspace. Since the incident, the previously strong ties between Moscow and Baku suffer, according to the *Irish Independent*.

Analysis: Putin's rare acknowledgment of responsibility in the Azerbaijani jet crash will likely benefit Moscow, probably an intended consequence. This almost certainly demonstrates Putin's motives for admitting Moscow's involvement: Moscow's strength is diminishing, and it almost certainly needs to maintain as many relations as possible. Putin often denies any charges against Moscow being involved in any military incidents, so this instance of admission most likely reveals underlying motivations beyond genuine apologies.

[Lauren Phillips]

RUSSIA: Civilian Industry Decline Likely to Cause Increased Strain on Economy

Summary: Major Russian industrial firms across sectors are likely changing employment strategies to cut labor costs without triggering mass unemployment. However, this will likely still lead to some decline in civilian industries and intensified economic strain.

Development: On 9 October, Russian companies across various sectors, including railways, automobiles, metals, minerals, and cement, began placing employees on furlough or cutting staff as the war economy slows, domestic demand stalls, and exports decline. Many companies in the mining and transport sectors have cut their working week to reduce wage bills without raising unemployment, according to Reuters. Unemployment remains at or below 2.1% of the workforce, according to Russian state statistics. In 2022, Moscow told car factories to furlough, not fire staff. Russian Railways, which has 700,000 employees, have asked staff in its central office to take three additional days off per month at their own cost, according to Reuters. The trade union at Avtovaz, Russia's largest carmaker with around 40,000 employees, confirmed to Reuters that it started a 4-day-week from 29 September. Alrosa, the world's largest producer of rough diamonds, has cut its payroll for all staff levels not directly involved in mining by 10%, partly by shortening the working week. It also paused operations at less profitable deposits in spring and summer. Alrosa had sought to minimize layoffs but did not specify how many employees it let go, according to Reuters.

Analysis: The decline of civilian industry will likely intensify economic strains, as Russia's industry giants restructure their labor forces to absorb mounting pressure. Moscow likely aims to shield major firms from war-induced economic shocks. Due to these measures, the government maintains a low unemployment rate, signaling tight labor conditions but likely masking deeper economic and structural strain. These quiet contractions likely reveal how Moscow's industrial backbone struggles to balance economic survival with political optics, as the Kremlin likely prioritizes stability over transparency.

[Sam Hurley]

CHINA: Regional Cooperation Likely Reveals Increasing Aggression Toward Taiwan

Summary: Leaked documents disclosing military negotiations between Beijing and Moscow likely indicate an escalation in Beijing's aggression toward Taiwan and an acceleration of invasion plans.

Development: On 26 September, leaked documents obtained by the Black Moon hacktivist group indicate Moscow is equipping and training Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops. Moscow provided Beijing with amphibious assault vehicles, anti-tank systems, troop carriers, and reconnaissance vehicles designed for airborne operations, according to the Associated Press. Moscow will train PLA drivers on the equipment before testing begins in China with PLA paratroopers under the direction of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (AFRF) instructors, according to The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI). This training and equipment negotiation will speed up the PLA's airborne program and provide it with new capabilities, allowing PLA special forces to insert behind combat lines undetected, according to *Defense News* and RUSI. Currently, Beijing views Taiwan as a renegade province and maintains that it will reunify the island with mainland China by force if necessary, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

Analysis: Documents leaking military cooperation between Moscow and Beijing likely indicate an increase in aggression toward Taiwan and the advancement of invasion plans for the island. The deal's provisions regarding airborne equipment and training likely reflect that Beijing highly prioritizes increasing the PLA's proficiency in airborne operations using the AFRF's practical experience from the Russo-Ukrainian war. The desire to increase airborne proficiency and obtain equipment likely indicates that Beijing intends to develop plans to capture Taiwan through a specialized airborne operation. Furthermore, this likely reveals that Beijing is becoming more aggressive towards Taiwan due to its potentially active preparation of airborne operations.

[Cade Cunningham]

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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Christina Muchow, 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 479, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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