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# Issue 483

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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## **MALI: Fuel Blockade Almost Certain to Intensify, Allowing Jihadists to Increase Control**

**Summary:** Al-Qaeda-aligned terrorist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) will almost certainly intensify its ongoing blockage of Bamako and other Malian cities. This will likely lead to the ruling junta's destabilization and expanded JNIM territorial and governmental control.

**Development:** On 10 November, some schools and gas stations in Bamako reopened after a supply convoy managed to enter the city, according to Africanews. JNIM began its blockade in September, focusing on major supply routes from the Ivory Coast and Senegal. It has intensified its efforts in recent weeks, leading to severe fuel shortages in Bamako and other parts of central and southern Mali, according to CNN. The group is also besieging six other Malian cities and towns, according to *Al Jazeera*. This follows a failed coup attempt against the ruling military junta by Malian armed forces personnel in August, according to Africanews. It also follows the end of French and European Union (EU) military and counterterrorism missions in Mali in September 2025 and May 2024, respectively.

**Analysis:** Despite the recent respite, the fuel shortage will almost certainly continue to intensify, making it likely that JNIM will successfully destabilize the junta and increase its control in Mali. Significant foreign intervention against the insurgents will almost certainly not occur; Moscow and the African Union very likely lack the capacity to do so, while Paris and the EU likely will not intervene due to their poor relations with the ruling junta. The fuel blockage will almost certainly steadily increase the economic and military pressure on the already-fractured junta, likely leading to another coup attempt. This instability and economic downturn will likely allow JNIM to make direct moves against Bamako and the other cities, increasing its territorial control. There is a roughly even chance that JNIM will directly seize control over the Malian government. If that occurred, it would likely happen within the next six to 12 months, as JNIM will likely not directly assault Bamako until its blockade has significantly weakened the city.

[Christina Muchow]

## CHINA: Political, Economic, and Military Activity Likely Aims to Legitimize Image

**Summary:** Beijing's global investments and diplomacy, recent anti-corruption purges, and increased aggression in the South China Sea likely indicate an attempt to legitimize China as a primary world superpower going forward. Moreover, Beijing almost certainly intends to continue responding to international events to further develop its global image.

**Background:** Since the election of President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2013, China has made rapid advancements in many categories, working toward becoming a global power. Primarily, Beijing has expanded the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to compete with other major military powers. Since Xi's election, the PRC has roughly doubled its annual defense expenditure, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Since 2012, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has more than doubled as the nation has modernized its economy to support its growing interests, according to the World Bank Group. Furthermore, Xi has increased his control over China after his election as president by becoming the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and appointing himself as chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), according to the National Committee on U.S.-China Affairs. This gives him near total control over China and allows him to dictate the nation's future actions.

**Beijing's Investments Worldwide:** Beijing likely invests a significant portion of its funds each year in global development and diplomatic projects in part to cultivate its image as a nation committed to the well-being of the world. In 2018, Beijing allocated 7 percent of its budget to foreign aid. In 2019, Beijing claimed a diplomatic network of 276 embassies, consulates, and missions, surpassing the United States to become the country with the largest network, according to the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. Furthermore, Beijing is undertaking a global infrastructure project called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to fund international infrastructure, including roads, airports, and ports, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. Currently, over 150 countries have signed agreements with Beijing to participate in the BRI, according to the World Economic Forum. These investments almost certainly indicate Beijing's interest in playing a major role in global economics.



Figure 1: The BRI likely aims to improve Beijing's international image and expand its influence, particularly in less-developed parts of the world. (Source: Statista).

**Chinese Anti-Corruption Purges:** Xi's recent purge of high-level military and CCP officials likely indicates his desire to solidify his control over the PLA while projecting the image internationally that China stands for justice. On 17 October, the CCP expelled Beijing's second-highest general and eight other officials on accusations of corruption, according to AP News. Based on historical precedent, this almost certainly indicates that Xi perceived these officials as a threat to his authority. In Xi's first five years in office, he had 1.34 million officials of all levels charged with corruption, according to the BBC. Through all these purges, Xi can almost certainly staff essential military positions with individuals under his control, thereby unifying the PLA under his rule. Furthermore, these purges will likely serve as a warning to those looking to challenge Xi, further solidifying Xi's control.



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Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission



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Communist Party Secretary of Chongqing



**Xu Caihou**

Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission



**Guo Boxiong**

Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission



**Ling Jihua**

Director of the General Office of the CPC (under President Hu)

Source: Getty



Figure 2. High-profile Chinese officials who fell victim to Xi's anti-corruption purges after his election in 2012. (Source: BBC)

**Military Aggression in the South China Sea:** The increased PLA presence within the South China Sea likely represents Beijing's attempt to convey a message of dominance in the region. Several military incidents convey the level of military confrontation in the region:

- On 18 February, a PLA helicopter flew within 10 feet of a Filipino patrol plane in an attempt to force it out of airspace claimed by Beijing, according to AP News.
- On 16 September, a PLA Coast Guard ship collided with a Philippine Navy vessel in the disputed waters of Scarborough Shoal after both vessels refused to concede and turn away, according to *Al Jazeera*.
- On 6 November, Taipei detected 12 PLA aircraft and 10 PLA naval vessels operating within its territorial waters, according to ANI News.

These examples represent a small number of confrontations between Beijing and other regional nations, likely representing Beijing's attempts at regional power plays. These may also represent Beijing's attempt at conveying its military might to the world.

**Outlook and Implications:** Beijing's investments in infrastructure worldwide, purges of political figures, and demonstrations of military might likely indicate an attempt to shape its image as a world superpower going forward. In the future, Beijing will likely continue expanding its diplomatic footprint internationally and increasing its investments worldwide. Beijing will likely continue to demonstrate internal unity and external strength in its efforts to establish its status as a global superpower. In the future, Beijing will almost certainly continue to cultivate an image as a just, philanthropic, and powerful nation, presenting itself as a global superpower. Furthermore, Beijing will almost certainly seek to position itself as an international actor by responding to shifting demands worldwide, reinforcing its image as a far-reaching superpower.

[Cade Cunningham]

## NICARAGUA: Tax Pressure Likely Facilitates Beijing's Industrial Expansion

**Summary:** Managua's recent wave of high-value tax "reparos" against private firms likely reflects a deliberate economic pressure campaign aimed at clearing market space for Beijing's industrial projects.

**Development:** On 29 October, *Confidencial* reported that the Managua regime proposed a draft law to create "Belt and Road" Special Economic Zones (SEZs), offering 100% exemptions on income taxes, customs duties, and import fees for firms operating within them. Additionally, Managua would grant full tax exemptions, covering income, dividends, import duties, and customs fees—to Beijing companies investing under the SEZ framework, according to the *Havana Times*. The Beijing ambassador stated the bilateral partnership with Nicaragua would prioritize industrial modernization, signaling Beijing's long-term ambitions for Nicaragua's manufacturing and infrastructure sectors, according to Radio Rebelde.

**Analysis:** The tax pressure campaign likely aims to clear economic space for incoming Beijing-aligned industrial projects. Managua almost certainly views fiscal coercion as an effective tool for weakening independent firms. If targeted companies face liquidity crises, the regime will likely redirect strategic assets to politically aligned or Chinese investors. Reduced domestic competition will highly likely give Chinese-owned firms favorable entry conditions in key industrial sectors. These shifts will almost certainly shrink Western commercial influence and reduce U.S. economic visibility. As Beijing-backed projects expand, Managua will likely deepen its reliance on Beijing for capital and industrial capacity. The regime's control over fiscal levers will likely limit transparency and complicate future intelligence collection on Nicaragua's economic environment. These dynamics will likely accelerate Managua's long-term shift toward Beijing-influenced economic governance.

[Gavin Packard]

## 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 Junior 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 483, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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