

10 April 2026

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

Issue 496

Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

Authors

Riley Callan
Carter Gelling
Logan Chan
Chris Tran
Catalina Kokenge



10 April 2026

Issue 496

Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

In This Issue

IRAN: Likely Retains Ability to Project Power Over Strait of Hormuz	1
GERMANY: Ukrainian Man's Arrest Likely Reflects Shift in Russian Espionage Tactics	2
SOLOMON ISLANDS: Beijing Will Likely Increase Influence through Control of Media	3
CHINA: Strategy on Taiwan Likely to Escalate Because of Evolving Politics	5
ARGENTINA: Economic Recovery Likely to Continue Despite Political Opposition	8

IRAN: Likely Retains Ability to Project Power Over Strait of Hormuz

Summary: Tehran likely retains the ability to disrupt shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, despite significant degradation of its ballistic missile capabilities, and could renew its disruptions in the event of renewed fighting.

Development: On 30 March, Iranian forces conducted a strike on a Kuwaiti oil tanker near Dubai, igniting a fire and raising the risk of a significant oil spill, according to *The Washington Post*. A combined US-Israeli campaign has struck multiple Iranian ballistic missile production facilities and launch sites, significantly degrading Tehran's missile production capabilities and reducing launch rates by approximately 86%, according to *The Washington Post*. Analysts assess this decline has plateaued in recent weeks, indicating Tehran retains a limited but consistent strike capability. Iran's geographic position along the strait allows it to threaten shipping from multiple points, reducing the resources required to achieve localized disruption. Despite damage to military infrastructure, key indicators of regime stability remain, including continued state media broadcasts and the availability of basic goods.

Analysis: Tehran likely retains the ability to selectively disrupt maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz despite degraded conventional strike capabilities. Even limited strike capacity will likely enable Tehran to intermittently target vessels, complicating efforts to maintain secure transit through the waterway. Additionally, Tehran's emphasis on asymmetric warfare and decentralized operations likely enables continued disruption even under significant military pressure. Degradation of centralized command structures would likely not eliminate Tehran's ability to threaten the strait, as affiliated forces and local commanders could continue limited operations independently. As a result, Tehran will likely remain a persistent threat to maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz despite sustained military pressure in the event of renewed fighting.

[Riley Callan]

GERMANY: Ukrainian Man's Arrest Likely Reflects Shift in Russian Espionage Tactics

Summary: German authorities arrested a Ukrainian national suspected of gathering intelligence for Russian intelligence services, likely reflecting a shift in Russian espionage tactics amid intensified European counterintelligence efforts.

Development: On 30 March 2026, German federal prosecutors announced the arrest of a Ukrainian national identified as Vitalii M. on suspicion of collecting information in Germany for a Russian intelligence service. Investigators believe the suspect had been gathering intelligence since at least November 2025. According to prosecutors, the suspect collected information about a man living in Germany who had previously fought for the Ukrainian armed forces. The arrest was carried out under a federal arrest warrant as part of an ongoing investigation conducted by the Federal Public Prosecutor General into suspected foreign intelligence activity in Germany.

Analysis: The arrest likely reflects intensified European counterintelligence efforts aimed at identifying and disrupting Russian intelligence networks operating across the continent since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war. The use of a Ukrainian national as a suspected intelligence collector may indicate an attempt by Russian intelligence services to rely on proxy actors or third-country nationals to avoid detection by European security services while conducting intelligence collection and influence operations. This case also likely highlights the broader security environment within Europe, as intelligence services increasingly focus on protecting Ukrainian personnel and supporters living abroad. Arrests such as this may signal stronger cooperation between European law enforcement and intelligence agencies to monitor and counter foreign intelligence activities linked to the war. Continued espionage cases across Europe suggest that Russian intelligence services will likely maintain efforts to gather information on Ukrainian military personnel, political networks, and Western support infrastructure despite heightened counterintelligence pressure.

[Carter Gelling]

SOLOMON ISLANDS: Beijing Will Likely Increase Influence through Control of Media

Summary: Beijing will likely deepen its influence over Solomon Islands media as local outlets remain financially dependent on external support. Beijing's use of conditional funding and content-sharing arrangements will likely shape reporting and public perspectives on sensitive issues such as Taiwan and foreign policy.

Background: On 23 March, the Pacific Island News Association (PINA) reported that Beijing has discreetly interfered with media reporting throughout the Solomon Islands. Specifically, Beijing pressured outlets to not recognize Taiwan as legitimate and include favorable coverage of Chinese affairs. Since early 2024, Beijing has begun funding, granting editorial partnerships, and influence programs with local media outlets, according to Radio Free. Solomon Islands' limited advertising market and economic hardship make local media networks extremely susceptible to external funding offers.

Partnership with Beijing often came with conditions such as supporting Beijing's viewpoint of global events, according to PINA. Popular local media outlets such as *Island Sun*, *In-depth Solomon*, and *Solomon Star* have reportedly signed agreements with Beijing, according to Reporters Without Borders.

Arrangements such as these limit free press, control policy, and create hostility between local and foreign reporters, according to PINA.



Figure 1: Pro-Chinese newspaper published by the Solomon Star despite claiming independence (Source: ABC News)

Exploitation of Vulnerable Economy: Beijing will likely continue to have influence in Solomon Island media and may reach to have greater control due to economic reliance. Economic vulnerabilities due to a low population force the Solomon Island economy to rely on external funding, including local media, according to Radio Free. With no sign of upcoming economic independence, Beijing will likely continue to influence Solomon Island media through conditional funding. On 12 February, Solomon Island Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele

announced future partnership and cooperation with Beijing, according to *Asia&Pacific*. Continuous economic reliance and partnership with Beijing will likely allow it to have growing direct influence in the nation's media. Desperate media outlets could soon only have the option to accept conditional Beijing funding, which allow for a potential complete Chinese control of media. Ultimately, with Beijing making itself the only source of funding for Solomon Island media outlets, its narrative will likely persist and grow in local media.

Increased Censorship: Beijing's growing influence in Solomon Island media will likely deepen censorship and reporting restrictions, especially on topics sensitive to Beijing. Solomon Island news outlet, *Solomon Star*, received Chinese funding with conditions surrounding the portrayal of China and the reporting of Beijing aligned narratives, according to ABC News. Control of popular local media outlets could potentially allow Beijing to control the populations' public opinion and enable the spread of propaganda. Normalization of selective reporting will almost certainly influence the public's opinion on selected topics in the long term. Heightened depth of Chinese influence in media serves as a threshold for Beijing to have influence in matters such as politics and foreign perspective, according to *The Strategist*. Based on recent trends, Beijing's censorship in media will likely increase with reporting on topics such as Taiwan.

Outlook and Implications: Beijing's interference in media and influence of public opinion will likely grow as Honiara continues to rely on Chinese funding. Beijing will likely continue offering conditional funding to desperate local media outlets while providing partnered outlets with specific narratives and perspectives to report. If this pattern continues, Beijing could gradually shape the Solomon Island public opinion on issues such as politics, foreign partnerships, and policy. Beijing will likely attempt similar strategies in other Pacific Island nations with struggling economies, which could intensify competition for influence over the region.

[Logan Chan]

CHINA: Strategy on Taiwan Likely to Escalate Because of Evolving Politics

Summary: Beijing recently implemented multi-domain integrated approaches towards exerting authority over Taiwan, differing from its previous simpler tactics, because of international and domestic events. Chinese President Xi Jinping's escalatory approaches to coerce Taiwan may push the region towards military conflict sooner than expected.

Background: On 15 March, Taiwan's Defense Ministry witnessed "more than [26] Chinese military aircraft and several [military] naval vessels" approaching the island, according to the United Press International. Taiwan's Defense Ministry claims that 16 of China's military aircraft penetrated Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), according to *The Independent*. In cohesion with these military exercises, Beijing deployed "roughly 1,400 [to] 2,000 fishing vessels" in the East China Sea, according to AOL Media. Analysts have described the activity as a grey zone exercise because the vessels remained legally ambiguous, according to AOL Media. The fishing vessels forced ships to circumnavigate around the formation and demonstrated Beijing's ability to rapidly deploy naval assets. Additionally, Beijing recently used more assertive language in its official statements to expedite Taiwan's capitulation. On 8 March, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced, "[Beijing] will never allow any individual or force to separate Taiwan from China", as reported by *Global Time*. Yi's statements differ on 10 March 2025 where he claimed Beijing would exercise every effort to ensure peaceful reunification, as reported by *Reuters*. And on 18 March, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office Chen Binhua outlined Beijing's willingness to support Taiwan's energy infrastructure if Taiwan accepted the one country, two systems structure, according to *Reuters*.

Recent Purges to Catalyze Taiwan Approach: Xi's recent purges of military generals may likely expedite military action on Taiwan. On 25 January 2025, the Chinese Military Committee (CMC) announced the investigation of Vice Chairman Zhang Youxia and Chief of Staff Liu Zhenli. Official Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sources indicate the investigation relates to Xi's anti-corruption campaign, but Jamestown Foundation analysts believe Xi punished Youxia and Zhenli for undermining his authority. Xi has consolidated more control over the CMC, but he has narrowed China's ability to effectively plan on invading Taiwan because only Youxia and Zhenli had combat-experience in the committee. It's possible that Xi became impatient with the methodical and meticulous approach from Youxia and Zhenli's combat experiences that

motivated Xi to enable an investigation on the two officials. But the removal of Beijing’s two remaining combat-experienced officers will most likely enable Beijing to act recklessly in the events leading up to an invasion of Taiwan.



Figure 2: Military officials removed, under investigation, and currently serving. (Source: Institute for the Study of War)

Beijing and Taiwan’s Loss of Oil Supply: Beijing’s loss of oil supply from Caracas and Tehran will most likely expedite its military conquest of Taiwan. On 5 January, China’s Mission to the United Nations released a statement criticizing the “seizure” of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, consistent with Beijing’s historic condemnation of foreign intervention in any domestic disputes of sovereign nations (to include China and Taiwan). On 6 March, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning criticized the war on Iran and supported Tehran's defense. Statements by Chinese officials indicate Beijing’s concerns with its trading partners, most notably those whom Beijing relies on for oil imports. However, Tehran’s conflict also impacts Taiwanese oil supply. Xi will most likely exploit Taipei’s lack of oil and trading partners before it formalizes any trading deals with other nations. Beijing’s increasingly aggressive behavior combined with Xi’s willingness to exploit Taipei’s lack of trading partners for oil could indicate a guise for Beijing to conceal its own vulnerable lack of oil supply.

17 percent of China's oil came from Venezuela and Iran last year

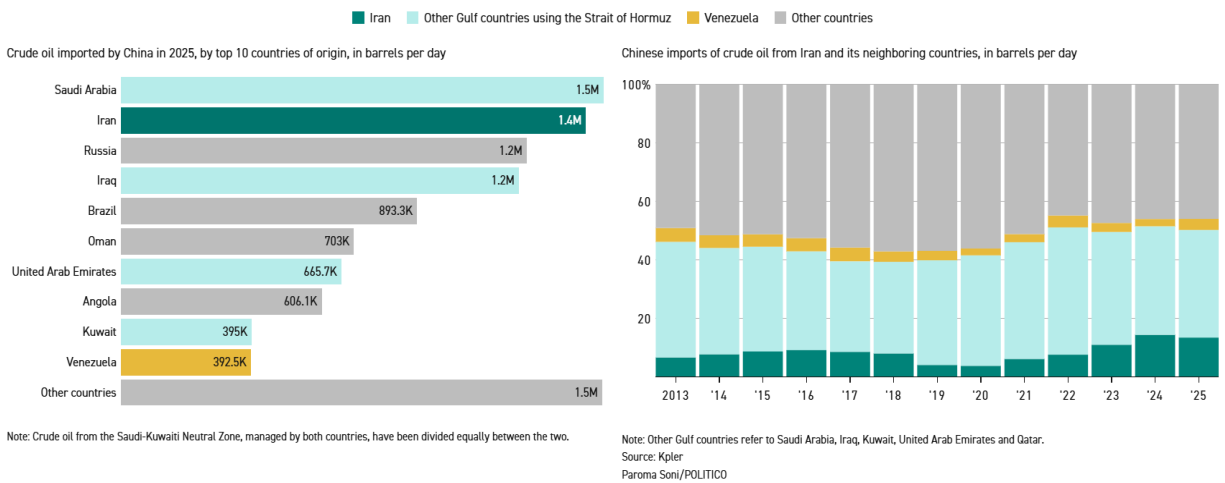


Figure 3: Graphic of China's reliance on Iranian and Venezuelan oil imports. (Source: Politico News)

Outlook and Implications: Beijing's military purges, loss of oil supplies, and an ongoing war in Iran could likely motivate Xi to exploit Taiwan's vulnerabilities soon. A publication by the Institute of National Security Studies detailing Beijing's perspectives from several Chinese military thinktanks suggests Beijing will most likely launch a direct assault approach. Beijing will likely expedite its direct assault approach to "seize the moment" during international chaos with Tehran. Beijing's increasingly sophisticated tactics, including integration of military assets, civilian militia (fishing vessels), economic leveraging, and political pressuring, to pressure Taipei further suggest Beijing is preparing for a direct assault approach. And an impatient Xi will likely continue pushing towards military conflict, regardless of Beijing's readiness, because of rapidly evolving politics.

[Chris Tran]

ARGENTINA: Economic Recovery Likely to Continue Despite Political Opposition

Summary: Buenos Aires will likely continue experiencing economic improvement under President Javier Milei as inflation drops and the economy stabilizes. Milei's spending cuts have helped reduce inflation and improve government finances. Despite this, many Argentines are struggling with unemployment, poverty, and the high cost of living. Labor reforms will likely continue, causing protests and opposition from unions and workers. If living conditions do not improve quickly, public frustration and opposition will likely grow.

Background: Buenos Aires entered 2024 facing a large crisis involving high inflation, poverty, debt, and low investor confidence. While running for office, Milei's popularity quickly grew because he promised strict austerity measures to reduce spending, stabilize the economy, and end systemic corruption, according to AP News. When Milei took office in December 2023, the country's monthly inflation rate reached 25.5%, according to the *Michigan Journal of Economics*. His government "slashed energy prices, transportation subsidies, laid off tens of thousands of government workers, freezing public infrastructure projects and imposing wage and pension freezes below inflation," according to AP News. The while unemployment rose and overall economic activity slowed, the monthly inflation rate dropped and the peso has become stronger and more stable, increasing foreign investors' confidence. Although many citizens are still struggling, Milei's supporters argue that things will get worse before they get better.

Economic Recovery to Strengthen Milei's Position: The economy will likely continue to strengthen support for Milei and his political standing. During 2025, Buenos Aires' economy expanded by 4.40%, slightly below the estimated 4.45% by the National Institute of Statistics and Census. In the final three months of 2025, the economy grew by 2.1%, compared to the last three months of 2024, lower than the 2.6% growth recorded a year prior, and below what analysts estimated. Quarter-on-quarter GDP reached 0.6%, marking the second consecutive quarter of quarter-on-quarter growth and the fifth of year-on-year expansion, according to Reuters. Economic analysts expect Buenos Aires GDP to continue to grow in 2026 by 3.4%. Growth was driven by agriculture, farming, mining, quarrying, and financial services, while public administration, healthcare, domestic services, and fishing declined. These developments have increased investor confidence and boosted political support for Milei.

Increased Opposition: Labor reforms will likely increase political opposition because many workers believe the reforms put businesses and investors first instead of employees. The labor reform bill makes it easier for businesses to fire employees and reduce severance pay, while also changing the workday from 8 hours to 12. Milei's administration argued that the reform will lead



Figure 4: Image of protests in the streets of Buenos Aires. (Source: Al Jazeera)

to more foreign investment. While more foreign investment is likely to happen, labor unions believe the reform will undermine employee protections. Strikes in Buenos Aires have disrupted public transport and hospitals. With the bill being passed in the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies' protests will likely continue and worsen. The public opposition to the reform and the worker outrage will probably reduce Milei's public approval ratings.

Outlook and Implications: Buenos Aires will likely continue experiencing economic growth if inflation remains low and investor confidence continues to improve. Lower inflation rates and government spending cuts may help stabilize the economy further over the next year. However, many people will likely continue to struggle with high living costs, unemployment, and reduced purchasing power, which would limit support for reforms. If living conditions improve and wages begin to recover, Milei will likely garner more support for his reforms, such as the labor reform. However, if unemployment and poverty rise, labor unions and opposition groups will probably organize larger protests and strikes. Continued protests could disrupt transportation, healthcare, and other public services. Foreign investment will likely increase if Milei can maintain economic stability and avoid major unrest, but investors may become cautious if protests continue and workers go on strike.

[Catalina Kokenge]

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.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Business, Security, and Intelligence.

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



© 2020 by Eagle Eye Intelligence. All rights reserved.

Eagle Eye Intelligence
3700 Willow Creek Rd.
Prescott, AZ 86301 eagleeyeintel.com