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# Issue 497

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

### *Authors*

Zachary Tull  
Lola McEwen  
Mackenzie Koliba  
Nathaniel Rewinkel  
Ava Bailey



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### *In This Issue*

UGANDA: Kampala Pipeline Project Likely Faces Growing Regional Delays .....	1
COLOMBIA: Drug Trafficking Will Likely Remain Large Factor for Upcoming .....	3
Elections	
SOUTH KOREA: Pyongyang Hostile Shift Will Likely Increase Instability on .....	5
Peninsula	
CHINA: Expanding Naval Activity Likely to Heighten Indo-Pacific Tensions .....	8
SUDAN: Employment of Drones Likely Indicates External Support or Adaptation .	9

## UGANDA: Kampala Pipeline Project Likely Faces Growing Regional Delays

**Summary:** The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project will likely face significant timeline extensions due to mounting international financial pressure and environmental opposition. While project officials reported 82 percent completion as of April 2026, the withdrawal of over 40 global lenders and persistent litigation in both regional and international courts will likely stall the final commissioning phase. If delays persist beyond the July 2026 target completion time, the project will likely fail to meet the production and revenue targets required for the Lake Albert region's economic development.

**Background:** In early 2022, TotalEnergies, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, and the governments of Uganda and Tanzania signed the final investment decision for the Lake Albert Development project. The center of this project involves the construction of the EACOP, a 897-mile heated pipeline designed to transport crude oil from Hoima to the port of Tanga in Tanzania. According

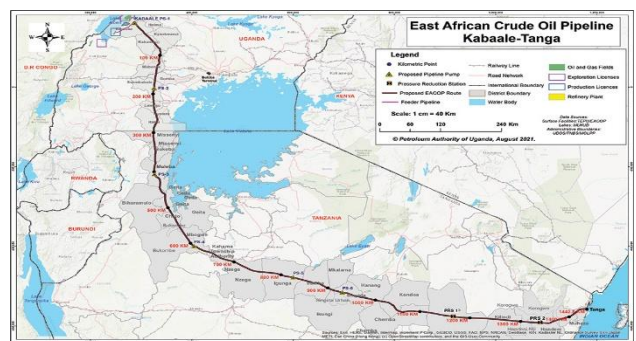


Figure 1: Proposed 1,443km pipeline route designed to transport crude oil from the Lake Albert Rift in Uganda to the Tanga Port in Tanzania. Source: Petroleum Authority of Uganda.

to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline Company (April 2026), the project has reached 82 percent completion, with all line pipes delivered. However, the route requires the displacement of approximately 19,000 stakeholders and crosses sensitive ecosystems. While the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) dismissed an appeal from activists in late 2025, a new lawsuit filed by Ugandan farmers in British courts in March 2026 continues to challenge the project's human rights and environmental record.

**Financial Instability and Lender Withdrawal:** The departure of major international financiers will likely force Kampala to seek more expensive, alternative funding sources to cover the remaining costs of the \$5.6 billion project. As of early 2026, 43 banks and 30 insurance companies have officially ruled out direct support, according to the StopEACOP coalition. This shift creates a significant funding gap, compelling Kampala to rely on a narrowing pool of investors, primarily the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Standard Bank. This reliance on high-interest debt will likely increase the long-term interest burden on the Ugandan

state, almost certainly delaying the project's break-even point and straining the national budget through 2027.

**Environmental Opposition and Legal Hurdles:** Persistent legal challenges and civil unrest regarding land compensation almost certainly increase the risk of operational delays.

Communities in the Hoima district frequently report dissatisfaction with compensation rates, according to *Climate Home News* (March 2026). These grievances fueled a pattern of protests, resulting in multiple activist arrests in early 2026. The strategy of moving litigation to British courts will likely create an atmosphere of uncertainty that complicates final commissioning. This friction will likely necessitate increased security expenditures along the corridor, further inflating the total project cost through late 2026.

**Technological and Logistic Complexity:** The specialized nature of the EACOP as the world's longest heated pipeline will likely introduce technical setbacks as construction nears completion. Because the crude oil remains waxy at room temperature, the entire 897-mile span requires constant heating above 120°F to maintain flow, according to EACOP technical specifications. Any failure in the electrical trace heating system during the 2026 testing phase would almost certainly result in significant repair timelines. Furthermore, logistical bottlenecks in transporting heavy equipment through protected reserves will likely push the "first oil" date into 2027, as current equipment transit times lag behind the July 2026 milestone.

**Outlook and Implications:** The combination of financial hurdles, legal opposition, and technical complexity will likely prevent the EACOP from reaching full operational status by its July 2026 deadline. Kampala probably underestimates the long-term impact of losing Western financial backing, which may lead to a heavier reliance on high-interest loans that strain the national budget. A delayed pipeline almost certainly means the Ugandan economy will not see the expected revenue surge in the near term. If the project fails to reach its 216,000 barrel-per-day capacity, the infrastructure may become a stranded asset that fails to deliver the intended regional economic integration for East Africa.

[Zachary Tull]

## COLOMBIA: Drug Trafficking Will Likely Remain Large Factor for Upcoming Elections

**Summary:** Closely following recent congressional elections, Colombia will hold the presidential election on 31 May, which will likely elect a candidate based on the peoples' standpoints on drug production. Coca crop farmers will most likely lead the argument towards eliminating the coca eradication program with the next president elected.

**Background:** President Gustavo Petro's party won more seats than any other party in the recent congressional elections, with almost a quarter of the 103 members, according to The Hill. Colombia has increased its national minimum wage by 23.7%, decreased gas prices, and reformed the labor laws since Petro's election, according to *The City Paper Bogotá*. The Petro Administration has also pushed for negotiations with Colombia's rebel groups until earlier this year. Petro also pushed for a nationalized health care system and changes to the pension system, leading to the administration of a greater portion of pensions, according to The Hill. As Petro cannot run for re-election, Iván Cepeda will run as Petro's party's candidate, who currently leads in the polls.

**Farmers Voting to Protect Coca Crop:** Petro, the country's first left-wing president, initially campaigned on moving away from forced eradication to support farmers, likely gaining more trust and many more of the farmers' votes. Colombia produces a majority of the world's cocaine, with many previous administrations pushing for aggressive military-led strategies to eradicate the coca crop, including spraying dangerous glyphosate, according to ColombiaOne. Petro has encouraged crop replacement while pursuing drug traffickers, a much slower solution to a larger problem. Petro most likely lost many farmers' votes later in his career by still wanting to reduce coca crops even though Colombia's citizens have continued to express the importance of the crop to their economy and culture. Coca only grows in specific areas due to climate, soil, and elevation, likely encouraging Colombians to take advantage of their land to grow this crop, according to *Al-Jazeera*.

**Political Violence by Rebel Groups:** On 23 February, the National Liberation Army (ELN) declared a ceasefire ahead of the congressional elections to ensure voter safety and reduce worry of political violence, likely encouraging farmers to vote in favor of Petro's party that took less harsh actions against coca crop production. On 24 March, Colombia's Attorney General Luz Adriana Camargo announced that her office had obtained arrest warrants for seven members of

a rebel group Segunda Marquetalia for the killing of Miguel Uribe Turbay, a conservative presidential hopeful for the upcoming election in May, on 7 June 2025 at a rally, according to WRAL News. Segunda Marquetalia likely hired someone to kill Uribe to maintain leftist control of the presidency with Petro unable to run again. Two of its major leaders, Luciano Marín, more commonly known as Iván Márquez, and Zarco Aldinever, have a long history with Petro. Márquez was the number two in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which engaged in peace talks with Bogotá in 2016. Petro blamed his predecessor, right-wing President Iván Duque, for guerrilla leaders' forced return to aggression, according to WRAL News. Simeon Perez, also known as El Viejo, admitted that he coordinated the assassination of Uribe following the orders of Aldinever as part of a plea agreement in court, according to Colombia Reports.

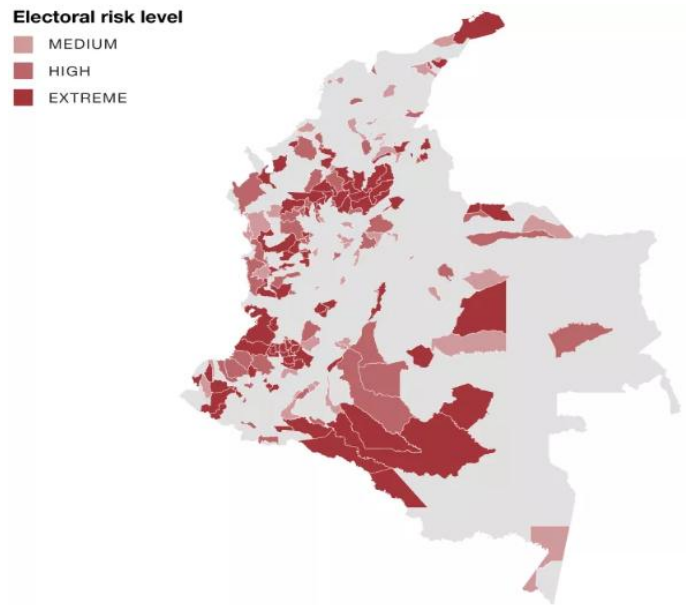


Figure 2: Levels of political violence expected ahead of the Colombian presidential election (Source: International Crisis Group).

**Outlook and Implications:** The May 2026 presidential election will likely play a decisive role in shaping the future of drug trafficking groups in Colombia and the extent of their influence over the Colombian economy. Farmers will almost certainly shape the presidential election this year to protect their crop production rights. Although Petro's party is likely to win the upcoming election, in line with recent congressional results, the leftist leadership in Colombia may struggle to contain escalating political violence and the expanding drug trade which will likely erode public support and ultimately lead to electoral losses in the future. Farmers likely see rebel groups as their allies with the ELN declaring their ceasefire for the recent congressional elections, which will likely occur again for the May presidential elections. Colombia's attorney general more than likely obtained the arrest warrants for the death of right-winged presidential hopeful Uribe two months before voters go to the polls to influence voters' beliefs that the left-winged party continues to fight against political violence to boost votes.

[Lola McEwen]

## **SOUTH KOREA: Pyongyang Hostile Shift Will Likely Increase Instability on Peninsula**

**Summary:** As Pyongyang shifts away from reunification long-term instability will likely escalate on the peninsula. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un likely shifted from reunification since it could threaten his control. Ongoing missile tests show Pyongyang's growing priority of deterrence over diplomatic discussions. Seoul's efforts to de-escalate have shown no success as Pyongyang maintains a hostile stance. If continued, the division will likely reduce any hope of reunification in the future.

**Background:** On 24 March, Kim proclaimed South Korea as the most hostile state and main adversary. Kim announced that Pyongyang will reject and dismiss the South fully through its words and actions. Pyongyang discussed revisions on its constitution, but it is not confirmed whether officials specified South Korea in it, according to *The Korea Times*. In 2024, Kim declared Pyongyang would abandon its goal of peaceful reunification with Seoul and declared a change in its constitution to define South Korea as a hostile state. This indicated an end to the provisional special relationship framework created by the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement in 1991, which remained to help reduce tension and hopefully seek reunification between the two. Nevertheless, the Korean peninsula has remained legally separate since 1948 when the two created distinct governments. Through the years, Pyongyang has increased its missile tests and military activities, while Seoul has strengthened its defense and alliances, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

**Persevering Leadership:** Kim likely shifted from reunification to remain in power and maintain control. Since 1948, Seoul has operated as the Republic of Korea and a presidential republic, while Pyongyang remains a dictatorship called Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). If North and South did reunify, it would introduce a democratic system that likely threaten Kim's leadership. Additionally, Seoul has a stronger economy and high standard of living compared to Pyongyang, according to CFR Education. When Kim and the elite live in luxury, most of the population faces malnourishment and could bring pressure for change and drive instability. By confirming the separation Pyongyang will likely ensure its control and have less risk to its leadership.

**Shift Toward Military Deterrence:** Pyongyang's recent missile tests most likely reinforce its shift toward the permanent division of the peninsula by focusing on military deterrence over

reunification with Seoul. In 2026 alone, Pyongyang launched missiles on 4 January, 27 January, 6 February, 4 March, and 11 March and then 10 missiles on 14 March. The 10 missiles launched on 14 March happened because Pyongyang wanted to test and understand the destructive power of nuclear weapons, according to *USNI News*. Most of the missiles land east of the Korean Peninsula in the Sea of Japan. The frequent missile launches most likely show Pyongyang's priorities of military deterrence and power over policy initiatives. By proceeding to advance in nuclear and missile power it likely indicates the need to not cooperate with Seoul and fully dismiss its actions. This approach will likely solidify the framework division and increase instability between North and South.



Figure 3: 14 March missile launch over the Sea of Japan (Source: U.S. Naval Institute News).

**Seoul's De-Escalation Efforts Fail:** Seoul's attempts at de-escalation will likely fail as Pyongyang adopts a hostile stance towards them. Seoul has attempted to reduce tensions by seeking new diplomatic channels to restart discussions with Pyongyang and bring taekwondo, a Korean martial art, as a shared Intangible Cultural Heritage back, according to Deutsche Welle. If both sides agree to restart taekwondo as a cultural initiative, it will likely indicate a step towards reducing diplomacy tension and bring unity. Though Pyongyang has dismissed and ignored all Seoul's efforts of restoring taekwondo and have shown no interest in engagement with Seoul. Despite Seoul's attempts, Pyongyang continues to build its military capabilities and weapons and will likely continue to prepare for any repercussion. This shows Seoul efforts will most likely remain ineffective and continue to grow the instability between the two sides.

**Outlook and Implications:** Pyongyang's shift away from reunification will likely increase long-term instability on the peninsula. While Pyongyang maintains priority of government stability and military deterrence tension will likely continue or worsen. As Kim continues to strengthen its military over diplomatic discussion, Seoul will most likely proceed to encounter challenges as it tries to de-escalate through diplomat channels. The tension between the two sides will almost certainly increase risk of confrontation and cut communication. If this behavior continues, the

division will likely become irreversible in the future and reduce the idea of reunification in the future for the peninsula. All in all, the peninsula will likely continue to experience instability by a shift to a permanent division.

[McKenzie Koliba]

## CHINA: Expanding Naval Activity Likely to Heighten Indo-Pacific Tensions

**Summary:** Expanding Chinese naval activity across the Indo-Pacific likely reflects an effort by Beijing to assert maritime control, challenge competing territorial claims, and expand its operational reach. Increased deployments near Taiwan, Japan, and Australia, combined with more frequent patrols in contested waters, will likely heighten regional tensions and prompt stronger security cooperation among neighboring states.

**Background:** Over the past year, Beijing has increased the scale and frequency of its naval operations throughout the Indo-Pacific. Chinese naval forces conducted large-scale exercises around Taiwan, including drills that simulate encirclement and blockade operations, according to Reuters. These activities have included live-fire exercises and coordinated naval and air maneuvers to demonstrate military capability and readiness, according to Reuters. Beijing has also expanded its presence in the South China Sea and beyond the First Island Chain, reflecting a broader effort to sustain operations farther from its coastline, according to CSIS. In early 2025, Chinese warships operated near the Tasman Sea close to Australia’s Exclusive Economic Zone, signaling an expansion of China’s naval reach into the southern Pacific, according to ABC News. Chinese naval movements have also increased near Japan’s southwestern islands, raising regional concern over the frequency and proximity of these operations, according to Reuters.

### **Expanded Operational Reach:** Beijing will

likely continue to extend the geographic scope of its naval operations to demonstrate blue-water naval capabilities and strategic reach. Increased activity beyond the First Island Chain and into the wider Pacific may suggest that Beijing is developing the ability to sustain long-distance deployments, according to CSIS. Operations near Australia and across the Indo-Pacific likely aim to normalize a persistent Chinese naval presence in areas historically outside its core operating zones, reinforcing its ability to project power across the region.

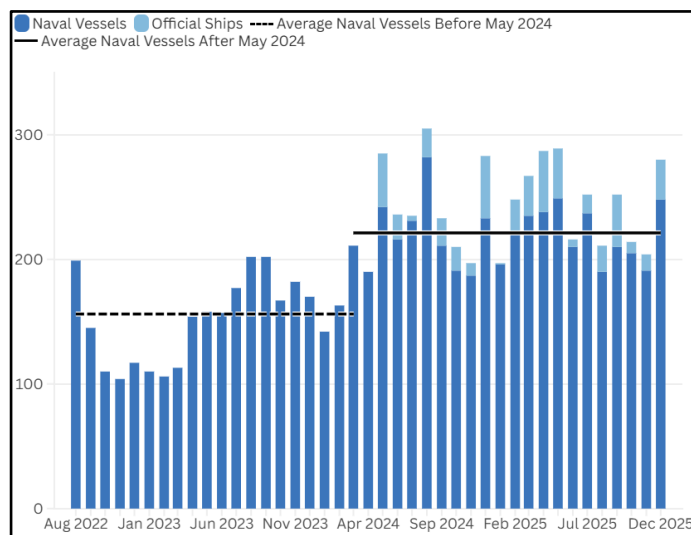


Figure 4: Number of Chinese ships reported around Taiwan. (Source: CSIS China Power Project)

**Pressure on Regional Flashpoints:** Chinese naval activity near Taiwan and in the South China Sea will likely continue to serve as a tool for pressuring rival claimants and reinforcing territorial claims. Large-scale exercises around Taiwan may aim to deter moves toward independence and probably will demonstrate Beijing's capacity to isolate the island during a potential conflict, according to Reuters. Continued deployments and maritime patrols in contested waters likely reinforce Beijing's claims while challenging other regional actors, increasing the likelihood of confrontation in key maritime areas, according to CSIS.

**Regional Responses and Security Cooperation:** Beijing's increased naval presence will likely drive neighboring countries to strengthen defense and maritime cooperation and coordination. Increased concern among regional actors such as Tokyo and Taipei highlights the growing impact of Chinese naval operations on regional security, according to Reuters. These developments, alongside expanded Chinese operations across the Indo-Pacific, suggest a broader trend toward enhanced regional coordination and security partnerships that probably will address maritime challenges.

**Outlook and Implications:** Beijing's expanding naval activity will likely continue to reshape security dynamics across the Indo-Pacific by increasing the frequency of encounters between regional forces, including close naval and air interactions in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea, and raising the risk of miscalculation. Sustained operations in contested and distant waters will likely reinforce Beijing's strategic objectives while prompting neighboring states to deepen security cooperation, including expanded joint exercises, coordinated maritime patrols, and increased intelligence sharing. If current trends continue, the region will likely experience heightened competition and a more complex maritime security environment, marked by more frequent large-scale Chinese exercises near Taiwan and a more persistent naval presence in the southern Pacific and near Australia.

[Nathaniel Rewinkel]

## SUDAN: Employment of Drones Likely Indicates External Support or Adaptation

**Summary:** Sudan has seen an advanced scale, precision, and frequency of drone strikes within the last year. Recent reporting suggests that the increased use of drones in Sudan likely reflects both external support to conflict actors and rapid battlefield adaptation. This trend likely signals growing technological diffusion into the conflict, which may prolong fighting and increase civilian harm.

**Background:** Sudan has experienced warfare since April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). However, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) surged in 2025 and 2026. The drone strikes transformed aerial tactics and expanded the battlefield. “The fighting has recently centered in Darfur and the Kordofan region where deadly attacks, mostly by drones, have been reported daily. More than 500 civilians were killed in drone strikes this year as of mid-March,” according to AP News. RSF drone strikes primarily target humanitarian buildings such as schools, markets, hospitals, and shelters. On 20 March, an air strike hit El Daein Teaching Hospital in East Darfur state, killing at least 64 people, including seven women and 13 children, and further constraining healthcare access according to *United Nations News*. RSF’s airfare is now significantly more powerful as Chinese models of delta-wing drones and launching gear appear in satellite images of the battlefield in Sudan, according to Reuters.

### The drones being used in Sudan's war

While not exhaustive, this list shows the types of drones being used by the RSF and the SAF in Sudan.



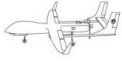





Drone	Munitions	Range	Payload capacity	Country of origin
<b>RAPID SUPPORT FORCES (RSF)</b>				
 Wing Loong II	Laser-guided missiles; laser-guided bombs; antipersonnel bombs	4,000km (2,485m)	400kg (881lbs)	China; operated by the UAE
 Sunflower 200 Kamikaze Drone	Loitering munitions (suicide/kamikaze drone)	2,000km (1,242m)	40kg (88lbs)	China
 FH-95 (Feihong)	Laser-guided bombs and anti-radiation missiles	250km (155m)	250kg (551lbs)	China; likely deployed by the UAE based on location
 Unknown Quadcopter Drone	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown, possibly Russia
<b>SUDANESE ARMED FORCES (SAF)</b>				
 Bayraktar TB2	Four laser-guided munitions	4,000km (2,485m)	150kg (330lbs)	Turkiye; deployed by Egypt
 Mohajer-6	Precision-guided bombs; guided antitank missiles	2,000km (1,242m)	40kg (88lbs)	Iran
 Zajil-3 (locally manufactured)	Precision-guided bombs; guided antitank missiles	250km (155m)	45kg (99lbs)	Iranian design (locally manufactured)
 DJI MAVIC 3	One to two grenades	30km (18m)	Unknown	China; reportedly deployed by Ukraine

Figure 5: Drone models currently used in Sudan (Source: Al Jazeera)

**External Enablers of Drone Capability:** External state or non-state actors will likely continue to assist both the SAF and RSF in expanding their drone capabilities through material transfers, technical training, and logistical support. Reports indicating the presence of Chinese model delta-wing UAVs and related launch systems suggest that at least one conflict actor has access to advanced platforms that are not typically produced locally. The appearance of these systems in satellite imagery, along with increased strike accuracy and frequency, shows that external supply chains are active despite international scrutiny. Furthermore, the intricacy of coordinating sustained UAV operations implies training support from other countries.

**Battlefield and Tactical Adaptation:** Both SAF and RSF will likely continue to adapt rapidly by integrating UAVs into their intensifying operations. The surge in drone strikes across Sudan demonstrates a shift from conventional stand-off tactics to targeting civilian infrastructure to maximize disruption. This suggests a deliberate strategy to degrade opponent-controlled support networks and undermine governance capacity. According to *United Nations News*, “continued patterns of such attacks striking civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure raise serious concerns about compliance with international humanitarian law’s fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and may amount to war crimes.”

**Humanitarian Crises Breaking Point:** The rise of UAV technology in Sudan will likely lower barriers to entry for sustained aerial warfare, prolonging the conflict, and increasing civilian vulnerability. Both SAF and RSF now heavily rely on drones as a tool of war, evidenced by near-daily strike reporting, indicating that UAVs are becoming an embedded feature of the conflict rather than a temporary capability spike. This cycle risks trapping Sudan in prolonged fighting marked by persistent threats to civilian life and services. “These strikes are used to disrupt supply lines, damage civilian infrastructure, and create siege-like conditions in contested areas,” according to *Médecins Sans Frontières*.

**Outlook and Implications:** The enhancement of drone warfare in Sudan will likely reinforce the fierce uprising phase of the conflict. Throughout the past few years, Sudan has fallen into a battlefield hotspot, and the number of attacks will probably not decrease. The high violence has forced Sudanese civilians out of their country, and there is likely no near end in sight. The intensifying war tactics are likely the reason for seeking outside support as the drones continue to

advance for both the SAF and RSF. The trending targeting of civilian infrastructure could easily lead to a humanitarian crisis breaking point as the RSF adapts to more violent strategies.

[Ava Bailey]

## 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](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 497, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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3700 Willow Creek Rd.  
Prescott, AZ 86301 [eagleeyeintel.com](http://eagleeyeintel.com)