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AFGHANISTAN: Increasing Bombings Likely Targeting Police and Military Forces

Summary: The increasing trend of unclaimed bombings in Kabul indicates the bombings will almost certainly happen again and will likely target police and military forces.

Development: On 21 February, unknown persons detonated two bombs in Kabul, killing three and wounding 20. A similar incident occurred on 20 February in Kabul where three bombs detonated, killing five and wounding two. One of the bombs killed two soldiers and a civilian, while the other targeted a police vehicle, killing both officers inside. The first two bombs exploded within 15 minutes of each other, with the third following two hours later. While the Islamic State's local affiliates claimed responsibility for some of the bombings, the government blames the Taliban for the remaining attacks.

Analysis: The recent increase in bombings in Kabul likely indicates more will occur. The two types of bombings, those focused on police and military and those focused on citizens in public places, indicate the likelihood of two separate motives. While the facts regarding the bombings remain unclear at this time, responsible parties likely meant to incite panic in citizens, the police, and the military. The attacks will almost certainly put pressure on Kabul to identify and stop the attackers. The longer Kabul goes without accomplishing this, fear and dissatisfaction with the handling of the attacks will likely rise among the public. Remaining anonymous will likely enable the attackers to continue to operate, and probably remains the reason the bombings stay unclaimed.

[Savannah Gallop]

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Death Unlikely to Incite Retaliation

Summary: An unknown rebel group attacked and killed Italy's ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) inside Virunga National Park. Rome will probably not retaliate.

Development: On 22 February, Italian Ambassador to the DRC Luca Attanasio died alongside members of a United Nations convoy in-route to a World Food Program in Goma. Local authorities previously cleared the convoy's route in the park as safe to travel without a security escort. Virunga National Park continues to face regular violent attacks by rebel groups hiding in the park. In January, an unknown rebel group killed six park rangers, adding to the nearly 200 rangers have lost their lives in rebel attacks while working in the park.

Analysis: Rome will probably not retaliate against Kinshasa, as it likely recognizes the crisis plaguing the region. Rome may feel that any attempts to retaliate will only serve to worsen the issue, potentially resulting in more deaths. Despite the likely absence of retaliation, the international attention may encourage Kinshasa to dedicate more resources to expel rebel groups from the park.

[Tim Fergus]

MYANMAR: Strike Could Spark Violent Suppression Efforts

Summary: Following the killings of three unarmed demonstrators, protesters organized a boycott strike, resulting in the halt of many businesses' operations. The protests will likely prompt violent retaliation from the military, increasing tensions in Myanmar.

Development: On 22 February, thousands flooded the streets of Myanmar to protest against the military state of emergency in place. On 20 February, police shot three unarmed protestors, including a 16-year-old boy. Following the shootings, widespread protests broke out, including a wide range of employees from a variety of industries. In solidarity with the protesters, many business owners temporarily shut their shops, halting Myanmar's internal economic flow. The military retaliated with barricades, armored vehicles, tanks, and snipers on rooftops to stop protestors from marching into city centers. While the military increased crackdowns, police arrested more than 600 surrounding the protests against the coup.

Analysis: Considering the magnitude of the nationwide protests, it remains unlikely that the protests will stop without violence. Due to the economic shock of protesting businesses, military funds will likely decrease. The deaths of the protestors will almost certainly incite protests, increasing tensions with the military and prompting harsher suppression measures. The use of large, armored vehicles and weapons to disperse the protestors will most likely result in more casualties.

[Damon Reyes]

SOUTH SUDAN: Localized Fighting Likely to Spread throughout Country

Summary: The increase in localized fighting will almost certainly spread throughout South Sudan, likely leading to more atrocities, deaths, and displacements.

Development: On 19 February, a United Nations Commission on Human Rights report warned of worsening violence following the country's five-year civil war. The 2013 – 2019 civil war killed an estimated 400,000 people. Both the government and opposition carried out attacks, killing hundreds and displacing thousands. Violence continues to occur despite the peace agreement meant to bring an end to the conflict. The report indicated the use of improved weapons in recent conflicts, escalating the violence. Some attacks specifically targeted women and girls for abduction, enslavement, and forced marriage.

Analysis: As localized fighting continues, increasing violence will likely lock South Sudan in a dangerous cycle as local groups compete for power and resources. The use of improved weapons and well-coordinated attacks within various areas of the country likely will lead to more deaths and displacements. As displacement continues, strain on existing food shortages may trigger a famine. Localized fighting will almost certainly continue to expand throughout the country, potentially exceeding the violence of the previous civil war.

[August Kather]

SAUDI ARABIA: Change on Human Rights Stance Likely Attempt to Improve Reputation

Summary: Riyadh's release of women's rights activist, Loujain al-Hathloul, likely constitutes an effort to repair ties with Western allies following a human rights crackdown.

Development: On 10 February, Riyadh released women's rights activist al-Hathloul from prison. In December 2020, Riyadh sentenced al-Hathloul to almost six years in prison, under the charges of terrorism by colluding with Iran and Qatar and attempting to destabilize the Saudi regime. Riyadh later reduced al-Hathloul's sentence, leading to her early release. Riyadh continues to soften its policy and image regarding human rights, including the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty for drug-related offenses and a recent proclamation allowing women to join the Saudi military in certain positions.

Analysis: Riyadh's release of al-Hathloul and steps to reshape human rights policy will most likely attract attention and improve its reputation among Western allies. With the recent cancellation of arms sales with Western allies and criticism of human rights abuses and dissident harassment, Riyadh almost certainly feels pressure to reform to avert deteriorating Western relations. Riyadh may also release more political prisoners and cave to international pressure to acquit them, further backtracking on its notoriously tough stance on dissent.

[Meg Pfaff]

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 at the Central Intelligence Agency and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 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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Alli McIntyre, 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 or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708.

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