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Authors

Riley Callan
Armaan Needles
Christina Muchow



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In This Issue

CHINA: Coast Guard Operations Likely An Effort to Expand Territorial Control 1

SAUDI ARABIA: Houthi Strikes Likely to Expand Foreign Military Deployments 2

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: New Group Very Likely to Escalate 3

War

CHINA: Coast Guard Operations Likely An Effort to Expand Territorial Control

Summary: China will likely continue using the China Coast Guard (CCG) to assert control over disputed territory following multiple involvements with Manila and operations near Taiwan.

Development: On 8 October, a CCG vessel 5306 fired a water cannon while shadowing the Philippine Coast Guard's BRP Cabra about 9 nautical miles north of Second Thomas Shoal as the ship moved to evacuate a sick Philippine Navy serviceman from the BRP Sierra Madre, delaying the evacuation nearly 10 hours, according to the Philippine Coast Guard. A CCG spokesperson said China allowed the transfer on humanitarian grounds, according to Global Times. On 11 October, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called the obstruction a new phase of escalation, rejected a Chinese demand to seek permission to operate in the area, and said Manila would raise the incident in talks on its 2024 provisional understanding with Beijing. The Philippines grounded the Sierra Madre on the shoal in 1999 as a permanent outpost in response to China's 1995 occupation of Mischief Reef, according to Manila. Beijing said in 2024 that resupply proceeds only after advance notification and on-site verification, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, while Manila's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) says the deal requires neither permission nor inspection. The incident follows a surge in Chinese activity. On 18 September, CCG cutter 21585 rammed the Philippine fisheries vessel Magat Salamat. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) counted 101 Chinese navy and coast guard vessels around four disputed areas in September, up from 56 in August and 48 in July, including 39 at Scarborough Shoal. CCG vessels have operated east of Taiwan almost continuously since 1 June, according to the Institute for the Study of War and Starboard Maritime Intelligence.

Analysis: China will likely keep using the CCG to assert oversight of contested territory. The 8 October obstruction suggests Beijing is likely pressing a permission-based reading of the 2024 understanding in an attempt use an interpretation that most supports their claim to the territory. The increase in Chinese naval and coast guard vessels from 56 in August to 101 in September, alongside sustained CCG operations east of Taiwan, very likely reflects Beijing's broader effort to normalize its coast guard presence in contested territory. Additionally, using CCG vessels in this role would likely free PLA Navy assets to conduct other operations in the Pacific.

[Riley Callan]

SAUDI ARABIA: Houthi Strikes Likely to Expand Foreign Military Deployments

Summary: Houthi missile strikes on Saudi airports will likely expand foreign military deployments to the kingdom within 90 days as Islamabad scales its presence, Ankara seeks parliamentary approval, and Cairo weighs authorization.

Development: On 10 October, a Houthi missile struck King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, killing 13 people and injuring 309, according to The National and Reuters. On 5 October, Riyadh, Ankara, and Islamabad activated the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement, and Pakistan's military said on 8 October that it had forces in Saudi Arabia already, according to *Al Jazeera* and *Arab News*. On 15 October, the Turkish Defense Ministry said that parliament must approve the agreement before any deployment, *Hürriyet Daily News* reported. On 17 October, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi asked parliament to approve air defense and logistical support for Saudi Arabia, and lawmakers postponed the vote to 26 October, according to Reuters.

Analysis: Foreign military deployments to Saudi Arabia will likely expand within the next 90 days because continued Houthi strikes on civilian airports penetrate Saudi air defenses. Islamabad will likely expand its role first because Pakistani forces already operate in the kingdom, indicating the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement functions as a deployment mechanism rather than a declaratory pact. Ankara's parliamentary requirement suggests Turkish forces will likely arrive later. The postponed Egyptian vote indicates Egyptian forces will likely deploy, if at all, after 26 October and in air defense and logistics roles. Riyadh could instead rely on forces already in the kingdom, but strikes that continued after Islamabad confirmed its presence make that less likely.

[Armaan Needles]

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: New Group Very Likely to Escalate War

Summary: The formation of a new militia alliance, led by a former president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), will very likely escalate ongoing conflict in the Eastern DRC by providing the rebels with increased political legitimacy, popular support, and logistical capacity.

Background: On 12 October, former President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Joseph Kaliba announced the formation of the Front for the Refoundation of the Nation (FRN), according to *Al Jazeera*. The FRN, which calls for the deposition of DRC President Felix Tshisekedi, will incorporate the already-allied March 23 Movement (M23) and Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC). M23, one of the largest and most influential of the armed groups in the conflict in the Eastern DRC, has intensified its operations and expanded its area of control in the North and South Kivu provinces, according to the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect. The AFC included local ethnic militias, the anti-government Article 64 Alliance, components of the Common Resistance Front, and several other militia groups, with strong influence from M23 since its inception, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. United Nations experts assess that both the AFC and M23 receive significant support from Kigali, according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect.

Analysis: The FRN's formation, with Kaliba's leadership, will very likely intensify the conflict. Kaliba's leadership will likely increase the FRN's perceived legitimacy as a genuinely Congolese movement, rather than simply a Rwandan proxy force. Kaliba's residual popularity among some elements of Congolese society, as an eighteen-year former president who left office due to term limits, will likely also strengthen the FRN's popular support compared to its predecessors. In addition, the more unified movement, with significant and almost certainly continuing support from Kigali, will likely possess a greater capacity for violence compared to isolated components. Taken together, these three forces will very likely result in the conflict intensifying.

[Christina Muchow]

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.

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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 pregleye@erau.edu or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 505, 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