

THE GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE MONITORING CENTER



*AN ANALYTICAL INTELLIGENCE WIRE PREPARED BY THE STUDENTS OF EMBRY-RIDDLE AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY IN PRESCOTT, ARIZONA.*

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**NUMBER (286)**  
**15 September, 2017**

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## **SITUATION REPORTS**

### **GREAT BRITAIN: Lawmakers Approve Key Brexit Bill**

On 12 September, the British Parliament voted to pass the European Union (EU) Withdrawal Bill. The bill ends the enforcement of EU laws in Britain and turns critical laws from the EU into British law. Parliament voted 326-290 in favor of the bill, which proponents say is a key step in the Brexit process, while the opposition claims it will give Britain's Executive Branch too much power. The bill is expected to undergo amendment before its enactment.

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### **GERMANY: Merkel Supports North Korean Nuclear Talks**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated in a 11 September interview that if diplomatic talks with North Korea were proposed based on the model used in the Iranian nuclear deal, they would receive immediate support from the German government. Merkel went on to reaffirm her position that the North Korean crisis could only be solved through diplomatic solutions. The interview comes approximately two weeks before the 24 September German federal elections.

[Jake Delinger, jake.delinger.ee@gmail.com]

### **IRAN: Iran to Honor Nuclear Deal Even Without US**

Iranian Atomic Energy Organization head Ali Akbar Salehi stated in a 10 September interview that Iran will continue adhering to the obligations of the JCPOA nuclear deal even if the US withdraws from the agreement as long as the European signatories remain committed. However, Salehi went on to reiterate Iranian President Rouhani's statement the previous month, in which Rouhani stated that additional sanctions by the US against Iran could be seen as justification for resumption of the Iranian nuclear program.

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### **SOMALIA: Al-Shabaab Attacks Somali Military Base**

On 11 September, Al-Shabaab members stormed a Somali army base in Bula Hawo, a town along Somalia's border with Kenya. The attack began with a suicide car bomb inside the military base followed by militants entering the compound and engaging the Somali military. The Somali government regained control over the town after the militants fled, but at least 17 people died in the attack.

[Cassie Hettmansperger]

### [SYRIA: Agrees to Iran Rebuilding Power Grid](#)

Syria signed an agreement on 12 September with Iran stating that Iran will rebuild Syria's electrical grid. Syrian Electricity Minister Zuhair Kharboutli travelled to Tehran to sign the series of deals. Iran will provide Aleppo with five power plants to assist with the repairs of the power grid.

[Christian Allen]

### [TUNISIA: Moroccan Prince Expelled from Tunisia](#)

Moroccan Prince Moulay Hicham was expelled from Tunisia to Paris on 8 September on the day of a planned speech on the Arab Spring organized by Stanford University, according to a statement by Hicham. A spokesman for President Beji Caid Essebsi confirmed the prince was expelled as part of "administrative procedures" in a social media statement, but the exact reason was not expanded upon.

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### [UKRAINE: Exiled Leader Returns to Ukraine](#)

Mikheil Saakashvili, former president of Georgia and regional governor of Ukraine, attempted several times to reenter Ukraine on 10 September. Saakashvili acquired Ukrainian citizenship in 2015 but was stripped of it after a disagreement with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in July 2017. Now stateless, Saakashvili attempted to enter Ukraine first by train and then by bus before a successful entry on foot along with a crowd of supporters that forced themselves through the border at a frontier post with Poland. Saakashvili resurfaced on the evening of 10 September in Lviv, where he plans to continue appealing for Ukrainian citizenship.

[Gianna Geiger]

## [BRIEFS](#)

### [ARGENTINA: Israeli PM Makes Historic Visit to Latin America](#)

**Summary:** Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit to Argentina exhibits greater political cooperation between the two countries as Israel aims to monitor and combat terrorist financing.

**Development:** On 11 September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu landed in Buenos Aires for a 10 day visit to Latin America. The visit marks the first time an Israeli leader has visited Latin America since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. His visit includes stops at the sites of Hezbollah terrorist attacks on Jewish institutions in Argentina in the 1990s. Netanyahu will also discuss the expansion of Iranian terror networks to Latin America. The visit will culminate with deals to boost security ties and facilitate travel between Argentina and Israel.

**Analysis:** Netanyahu's visit to Latin America displays promise for a warming of relations between Argentina and Israel. Israel claims that Iranian terrorists have managed to elude the Argentinians in a region known as the Tri-Border Area, which is a lawless area where Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina meet and where drug trafficking and counterfeit operations run rampant. Occupied by Shia and Lebanese communities, Hezbollah can maintain a low profile while conducting money laundering and drug smuggling to fund terrorism. Netanyahu's visit is therefore a good first step toward building the international cooperation necessary to limit and apply pressure to Hezbollah and other groups' illegal operations. Cutting off terrorists' money supply is an admirable goal, but the Tri-Border Area will almost certainly continue to pose problems for Latin America for the foreseeable future.

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### **BURUNDI: Opposition Official Abducted**

**Summary:** President Nkurunziza may be responsible for the kidnapping of an opposition party official, suggesting Nkurunziza does not respect the UN and its accusations against him.

**Development:** On 12 September, four men abducted a Union for Peace and Development (UPD) official, Leopold Habaugira, in Burundi's capital of Bujumbura. According to a UPD leader the Burundian National Intelligence Service (NIS) employs a similar modus operandi for kidnapping opposition party leaders and blamed the NIS for the attack. This abduction comes a week after the UN urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open a case against Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza, the NIS, and other government officials regarding crimes against humanity.

**Analysis:** While the abduction of Leopold Habaugira could have no connection to President Nkurunziza and the NIS, there is a roughly even chance President Nkurunziza ordered the event in hopes of eliminating a threat to his rule. If President Nkurunziza did order the kidnapping, then the act illustrates his disregard toward UN investigations, possibly threatening the credibility of the UN and ICC in the eyes of other corrupt leaders. Should the ICC quickly begin a trial against Burundian officials, it will demonstrate its seriousness in handling matters such as abuse of power. Should the ICC delay in charging the government, other unlawful leaders may continue or increase violent crimes without fear of punishment by the international community. Until action is taken against President Nkurunziza, the NIS, and other Burundian officials, crimes against humanity will very likely continue in Burundi.

[Caitlyn Aaron, caitlyn.aaron.ee@gmail.com]

### **IRAQ: Government Recaptures 90 Percent of Land from Daesh**

**Summary:** Iraqi forces continue to reclaim land from Daesh fighters, but as the conflict wanes Baghdad will very likely face new challenges.

**Development:** Iraqi forces have recaptured over 90 percent of the land previously held by Daesh as of 11 September, according to a spokesman for the Iraqi Prime Minister (PM). Along with the

captured land, the Iraqi government is holding more than 1,300 foreign family members of suspected Daesh fighters. The refugee camps are awaiting orders from Baghdad on what to do with the non-combatants. Additionally, a 12 September referendum on Kurdish independence was delayed by the Iraqi National Assembly.

**Analysis:** Now that the Daesh has been mostly driven out of Iraq, the Iraqi government has started to refocus on stunting Kurdish calls for independence. The Kurds are prepared to draw borders and fight for their freedom if Baghdad does not recognize their independence vote. PM Haider al-Abadi has been approved to use force but has so far asked the Kurds to negotiate. Baghdad will likely have to react to this situation carefully because the Iraqi government will undoubtedly continue to need Kurdish help to expunge Daesh from Iraq. It is unlikely that a Kurdish attempt at an independent state will currently be met with force from the Iraqi government. The Iraqi government still has many other tasks to focus on before turning their full attention on the Kurds, including the repatriation of Daesh militants' families. It is more likely that PM Haider al-Abadi will bring the leaders of Iraqi Kurdistan to the negotiating table to work out a peaceful solution because an Iraqi-Kurdish conflict could give Daesh the opportunity to reassert itself in Iraq.

[Christian Allen]

### **MYANMAR: Ceasefire to Allow for Humanitarian Aid**

**Summary:** Despite a ceasefire between the ARSA and Myanmar government, the Rohingya crisis will likely continue until greater international pressure is placed on Myanmar.

**Development:** The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) declared a month-long ceasefire beginning 10 September in a statement released following reports of village burnings and widespread killings by Myanmar security forces and Rakhine Buddhists against the country's mostly Muslim Rohingya population. Myanmar government officials claimed Rohingya militants and villagers are behind the attacks. At the time of writing, approximately 300,000 Rohingya have crossed into neighboring Bangladesh seeking refuge and Bangladeshi officials have issued reports of Myanmar government forces planting landmines along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. The Myanmar government denies the reports.

**Analysis:** The Rohingya ceasefire is unlikely to have a significant effect on the ability of aid organizations to provide assistance to the remaining Rohingya in Myanmar; the Myanmar government remains the primary factor keeping aid organizations from assisting the Rohingya. Despite generous international aid, the number of Rohingya refugees will very likely make acquiring adequate humanitarian supplies and housing very difficult. However, the damage to the overwhelmingly Muslim Rohingya population has put significant international pressure on the Myanmar government. If public momentum in the international community continues to pressure officials to take action, particularly amongst Myanmar's Muslim Southeast Asian neighbors, the possibility of sanctions or cuts to foreign investment presents the possibility to restrain the Myanmar government. However, Southeast Asia has seen a rise in Muslim foreign fighters in recent years who previously declared the Rakhine region as a target for expansion. The Rakhine

region is likely to see a rise in extremist operations, both by ARSA, as well as by foreign fighters who see the crisis as propaganda for further expansion into Southeast Asia.  
[Jake Delinger, jake.delinger.ee@gmail.com]

### **RUSSIA: Confirms Weapons Deal with Turkey**

**Summary:** Russia will sell anti-aircraft missiles to Turkey, which indicates Russia and Turkey are moving past their foreign policy disagreements.

**Development:** Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation stated on 12 September that Turkey signed a contract with Russia to purchase S-400 missiles. President Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey confirmed later the same day that Ankara paid the deposit on the missiles. The S-400 is an anti-aircraft missile system capable of shooting down 80 simultaneous targets within a 250-mile radius. As part of the deal, Russia will supply two existing missile systems to Turkey and work with the Turkish military to build two more.

**Analysis:** The missile contract indicates a marked improvement in relations between Russia and Turkey, which reached a low in 2015 when Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet near its Syrian border. Turkey has been seeking other allies in the region to help fill the power vacuum left by the US, and the attempts to improve relations with Russia since the 2015 incident follow this pattern. Additionally, supplying and working with Turkey's military may allow Russia increased influence over Turkey's foreign policy, particularly if the relationship continues beyond the S-400 agreement. Turkey drifted away from US influence after disagreements with the US on several issues, most notably US support of Kurdish fighters in Syria whom Turkey considers terrorists. Continuing Russian support of the Turkish military coupled with a perceived lack of support from the US may cause Turkey to seek closer ties to Russia.  
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