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In This Issue:

**ARTICLES**

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Militants Attack UN Peacekeepers**

**SITUATION REPORTS**

**CZECH REPUBLIC: Frontrunner for PM Charged with Fraud**

**GERMANY: Climate Protections Required for Parliamentary Coalition**

**INDIA: Fuel Dealers Hold Strike**

**IRAQ: Hundreds of IS Fighters Surrender**

**KENYA: Government Reacts Violently to Protestors**

**TURKMENISTAN: Reorganizes Legislative Bodies**

**BRIEFS**

**CHINA: Anti-Corruption Statistics Released**

**LIBERIA: Holds First Elections in a Decade**

**NETHERLANDS: Forms Coalition Government**

**RUSSIA: Hackers Target NATO Soldiers' Smartphones**

**TURKEY: Discusses Cooperative Action with Iran to Stifle Kurds**

## ARTICLES

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Militants Attack UN Peacekeepers

**Summary:** An ADF attack on UN forces could provoke the UN to resume use of the Force Intervention Brigade despite UN objectives to encourage peace and avoid using force.

**Development:** On 9 October, Allied Defense Forces (ADF) militants attacked a UN base in the Beni territory of the North Kivu province in the northeastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The attack killed one peacekeeper and wounded a dozen more. In the past week alone, the ADF has waged several attacks on UN peacekeepers and civilians. The ADF is an Islamic militant group that formed in Uganda in 1995, but began a campaign in the North Kivu province of the DRC in October 2014, capturing multiple towns in the process. Since the emergence of the ADF, UN efforts in the DRC have shifted focus to North Kivu, but many other threats still exist, such as militias, ethnic groups, and rebels.

To minimize the threats posed by the many violent groups and conflicts in the DRC, the UN developed the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in 2010. Prior to MONUSCO, the UN created the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in 1999 in response to the Second Congo War, the deadliest conflict since World War II. The UN shifted to MONUSCO as the focus transitioned from the Second Congo War to addressing violent conflicts and groups in the DRC. One of the major threats at the time was the 23 March Rebellion (M23), which began in 2012. Despite the UN's continued objective to avoid use of force, in 2013 it approved and deployed a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) to use offensive measures to end the conflict. With the FIB, the UN effectively ended the M23 threat, and focused their efforts on the ADF in 2014.

**Analysis:** Despite the UN's objective to minimize the use of force, the increasing threat of the ADF could elicit a vigorous UN offensive operation, such as deploying the FIB. As evident in most other African ethnic and religious conflicts, the conditions in the DRC will likely grow worse without sufficient opposition to the ADF. The surge of ADF attacks on civilians and UN workers in the past week indicates that the ADF does not intend to slow down its campaign. With such unchallenged momentum, the ADF might even further increase the volume of attacks. UN officials likely will consider that peacekeepers and civilians are suffering at the hands of the ADF and will continue to unless some preventive action is taken.

The UN has already employed a vast amount of its resources to the DRC, and will continue to do so unless it can adequately mitigate the violent conditions. With the MONUC and MONUSCO efforts representing one of the longest running UN interventions in its history, the UN has dedicated ample time and resources to the cause. Additionally, the massive budget used to deploy peacekeepers and allocate supplies for them has continued to grow as the crisis in the DRC persists. The use and loss of some of the peacekeepers and supplies remains critical to the UN's considerations of allowing the FIB to step in. Should the FIB intercede, some of its forces will likely be killed, but in the process, they will likely stop the deaths of other UN workers and civilians at the hands of the ADF. Furthermore, if the UN does implement force and eliminate

the threat that the ADF poses, it will set an example of how the UN and Congo will not tolerate violent groups disrupting the peace of the nation. Such an example could discourage other groups from acting out in the DRC, sparing the UN of resources that would have otherwise been needed to counter those groups. Lastly, the UN would also take into consideration that it has implemented the FIB in the Congo before, quickly meeting its goals of ending the threat of M23.

Although the worsening conditions, continued exhaustion of resources, and past use of force all encourage the UN to again deploy the FIB in full force against the ADF, several reasons also exist to deter the UN from such force. With the UN deployment of the FIB just four years ago against M23 in 2013, the UN may fear that it has strayed away from its peacekeeping mission and begun to rely on a peace-making mission that uses force. Should other countries fear that such uses of force could become a habit, the UN could lose much of its credibility in the international community. Furthermore, like what happened after M23 fell, another violent group may emerge and fill the void that the elimination of the ADF would leave behind. While such a scenario should not completely discourage UN force, all factors should be considered because inaction would very likely allow threats to peace in the DRC to continue.

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## **SITUATION REPORTS**

### **CZECH REPUBLIC: Frontrunner for PM Charged with Fraud**

Czech Police charged Andrej Babis, the frontrunner to become the Czech Prime Minister (PM), with fraud on 9 October. In September, parliament voted to strip Babis of parliamentary immunity, which allowed him to be formally charged. Babis is accused of misusing funds from the European Union (EU) intended for small businesses. Investigators claim that in 2014 Babis established a company that was eligible to receive funds, then transferred ownership of the company to a holding company that he owns. Babis' party still leads the polls by about 12 percent, and it is unclear how the charges against Babis will affect the electoral result.

[Zach Coffee, zach.coffee.ee@gmail.com]

### **GERMANY: Climate Protections Required for Parliamentary Coalition**

Green Party officials stated in an interview with Clean Energy Wire on 9 October that planned negotiations with the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Free Democratic Party (FDP) will require several major concessions on climate protection. These will include plans for transitioning to a low carbon energy system and the establishment of a carbon price floor which are two particularly important terms for forming a coalition. Green Party Vice Chairman Oliver Krischer went on to state that while compromises will likely be required in all policy areas, the Greens will not agree to a coalition without substantial climate protection policies.

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

### **INDIA: Fuel Dealers Hold Strike**

A nationwide fuel dealer strike planned for 13 October was announced on 7 October by representatives from the United Petroleum Front (UPF). The upcoming strike is part of demands for better margins and the addition of petroleum products to the Goods and Services Tax regime (GST). The UPF warned that failure to meet demands by 27 October would result in an indefinite ceasing of operations. UPF officials say that the strike is in response to an alleged dismissal of these demands by the state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) following an agreement signed between the UPF and OMCs in November 2016.

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

### **IRAQ: Hundreds of IS Fighters Surrender**

More than one thousand suspected Islamic State (IS) fighters surrendered to Kurdish Peshmerga forces on 8 October after Iraqi forces retook Hawija. Most IS fighters in Hawija fled to Dibis, where they surrendered to the Kurdish Peshmerga. Many of the fighters claimed their leaders had ordered the surrender. This mass surrender coincides with rapid territory loss for the IS. An estimated 3,000 IS militants remain, a sharp decline from the movement's peak manpower.

[Blake Kaufman]

### **KENYA: Government Reacts Violently to Protestors**

On 9 October, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights reported that at least 37 people had been killed and 126 injured in unrest since presidential election results were released on 8 August. The Kenyan Supreme Court found the election that renewed the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta to be invalid and scheduled another election for 26 October. The opposition has protested and called for the firing of electoral officials. Police have been attempting to suppress the protests through violent means, using clubs, live bullets, and tear gas, which has caused most of the reported deaths and injuries.

[Cassie Hettmansperger]

### **TURKMENISTAN: Reorganizes Legislative Bodies**

On 9 September, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov of Turkmenistan announced that a newly reinstated People's Council would replace parliament as the highest representative body in the country. The existing Council of Elders, which is composed of largely non-elected members and meets at least once a year, will be transformed into the new People's Council, which will likely keep a similar meeting schedule. The People's Council had previously been created in 1992 by Berdymukhammedov's predecessor, but was dissolved in 2008 and its powers were given to parliament and the president. The move to re-create the council comes shortly after Berdymukhammedov ended subsidies that provided free gas, water, and electricity to Turkmen households. [Kylin Andreotti, kylin.andreotti.ee@gmail.com]

## BRIEFS

### CHINA: Anti-Corruption Statistics Released

**Summary:** The release of figures detailing the success of President Xi's anti-corruption campaign, less than two weeks before the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCP, is a move to bolster Xi's position before the all-important meeting that almost certainly will hand him a second five-year term.

**Development:** On 8 October, the Chinese Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) released the number of officials punished on charges of corruption since 2013. The official number released was 1.34 million, however the CCDI clarified that 648,000 of the punished officials were village-level officials and another 13,000 include members of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), making up just less than half of those served punishments. This is part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's core "tigers and flies" doctrine, which includes targeting corruption on all levels of the party. Sun Zhengcai, the former administrator of Chongqing, and former general Guo Boxiong, are some of the high-level officials who have been punished under the anti-corruption efforts.

**Analysis:** The release of the numbers on the anti-graft campaign come strikingly close to the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress, an important convention held twice-a-decade for upper-level Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members. The upcoming event is almost certain to bolster President Xi's ambitions to continue for a second term as General Secretary. As the anti-graft campaign is one of Xi's primary initiatives, the calculated release of the results will likely favor Xi's outcome in the upcoming National Congress seeing as the campaign has been met with grand support over the last five years as the CCP seeks to change its public image. Xi will almost certainly cite the CCDI's report as proving the effectiveness of his efforts. Releasing the CCDI figures may show other aspiring party members that Xi plans to consolidate support before the National Congress. [Ben Robinson]

### LIBERIA: Holds First Elections in a Decade

**Summary:** Despite the many candidates and shift from UN led security forces to those led by Liberia, the presidential election will likely result in a smooth transition of power.

**Development:** On 10 October, Liberia's presidential election process began, with 20 candidates vying to win the simple majority. The first round of voting on 10 October will be followed by a second round if no candidate has a clear majority. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been president since 2005, but is willingly stepping down from office, as prescribed by the Constitution. Many of the candidates have promised to concentrate on infrastructure because President Sirleaf has been criticized for focusing too much on her international image rather than on conditions in Liberia. After leading security operations since 2003, the UN has given Liberian security forces full responsibility over the election and the smooth transition of power.

**Analysis:** With Liberian forces taking over security for the elections, the shift of power from President Sirleaf to the newly-elected leader may cause some turmoil but is likely to remain relatively peaceful. Although supporters of the candidates who lose the election may challenge the results and protest, the likelihood of such protests threatening the transition of power is minimal. Liberian security forces have received ample guidance from the UN and will likely follow the UN's precedent for peaceful elections. This guidance should establish strong security forces that can keep serious challenges to power and safety at a minimum even in the event of violent protests. With such strength, security forces will most likely be able to maintain peace through the transition, supplying the newly-elected president with a suitable environment to lead the country.

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### [NETHERLANDS: Forms Coalition Government](#)

**Summary:** The formation of a coalition of moderate parties to run the country will keep the far-right Freedom Party, which has the second largest number of seats in Parliament, well away from power.

**Development:** On 9 October, four Dutch political parties agreed to form a majority coalition in the Dutch parliament. The agreement took 209 days to reach and gives the coalition a one seat majority. The VVD party, of which Prime Minister (PM) Mark Rutte is a member, originally attempted to ally with the Green Left party, but was unable to agree on immigration. Forming a coalition proved to be difficult due to the relative success of the anti-Islam and far-right Freedom Party, led by Geert Wilders. The Freedom Party will have the second most seats among individual parties in the new parliament. Although PM Rutte has said he is satisfied with the coalition, some experts are concerned the one seat majority will be vulnerable.

**Analysis:** The Dutch coalition follows a similar pattern of nationalist parties disrupting governments across Europe. The Dutch election is reminiscent of the recent German election, in which the nationalist AfD party did not gain enough seats to earn executive power, but markedly and unprecedentedly increased the number of its seats in the Bundestag. However, in both cases, the right-wing parties gained enough seats to force more moderate parties into undesirable coalitions. The Dutch majority is likely vulnerable with its one seat majority which could lead to instability within the Dutch government. PM Rutte will likely maintain his position among the new coalition as it forms its platform over the next few weeks.

[Zach Coffee, zach.coffee.ee@gmail.com]

### [RUSSIA: Hackers Target NATO Soldiers' Smartphones](#)

**Summary:** Russian hackers are targeting NATO soldiers' smartphones in an effort to combine cyber and psychological warfare to undermine NATO's eastern European presence.

**Development:** On 4 October, the Wall Street Journal released a report detailing several recent cyber-attacks by Russia, among which have been attempts to hack personal smartphones

belonging to NATO soldiers. The soldiers in question were deployed in Poland and the Baltic states as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) program to deter Russian aggression in the region following the annexation of Crimea. The compromised devices have been used to gather geolocation data on soldiers, personal information, and, US officials suspect, information on numbers and composition of NATO troops in the region. Soldiers have also reported deletion of information from their devices and music being downloaded and played without their knowledge.

**Analysis:** These smartphone hacks are the latest in a series of information operations used by Russia against the US and NATO. The use of the devices not only to gather information but also to cause confusion and possibly fear among NATO troops indicates an effort to combine the gathering of cyber intelligence with psychological warfare. The Russian intrusions gathered personal information that was then used to intimidate soldiers in in-person conversations. Use of such tactics only further reinforces the idea that Russia continues to view NATO as an aggressive force that may be used for an invasion if given the chance, rather than an anti-aggression force. Russia feels the NATO presence in the region puts it at a disadvantage on its home turf, and aims to undermine it by less direct means rather than engaging in direct conflict with the alliance. Similar combinations of cyber and psychological attacks are likely to continue now that Russia has been able to gauge the effectiveness of such tactics. The US military and NATO forces will almost certainly need to reevaluate policies regarding the use of personal smart devices in order to ensure operational security in the future.

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### **TURKEY: Discusses Cooperative Action with Iran to Stifle Kurds**

**Summary:** Turkish and Iranian Presidents met in Tehran to discuss means of cracking down on the Iraqi Kurdistan independence movement.

**Development:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani held talks in Tehran on 4 October to discuss possible measures to take against Iraqi Kurdistan in response to a Kurdish independence referendum held on 1 October. The meeting comes after threats issued by both countries to impose economic sanctions on the Kurds. It also follows a series of joint military exercises between Iraq, Turkey and Iran which were held on their borders with Iraqi Kurdistan. On 3 October, Kurdistan officials called for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held on 1 November, a move that was met with threats by the Iraqi government to suspend Kurdistan's parliament.

**Analysis:** The pace of the Kurdistan independence movement and the importance of suppressing it in Iran and Turkey's view presents the possibility of a change in the strained relations between the two countries. It also presents the possibility of, if not full cooperation, an easing of Turkish antagonism towards the Iran-Syria-Russia triad. While direct disagreements between the two countries have largely revolved around issues such as Turkey's 2011 agreement to allow NATO to deploy antimissile radar in its country, Iran and Turkey have also backed opposing forces in several regional conflicts, particularly those in Syria and Yemen. However, Turkey has seen a resurgence in Kurdish insurgency from the Kurdistan's Workers' Party (PKK) in its southeastern

regions following the collapse of peace negotiations in July 2015. The renewed insurgency makes Turkey more likely to cooperate with Iran and Syria if it needs to crack down on the Kurdish independence movement. While the Iraqi central government will most likely attempt to solve the matter internally, if these actions fail to curb the Iraqi Kurdistan independence movement, further cooperation between the Turkish government and the Iran-Syria-Russia triad will likely be pursued.

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