



Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia Dispatches 28 April 2023

The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia provides a forum for the study, promotion and debate of defence, security and safety issues.

Dispatches is a weekly collection of news of interest, including posts to social media by the Institute. Links to articles are checked at the time they are put into *Dispatches* but may be unavailable at a later date or in some countries other than Canada.

Everyone is encouraged to submit links and other content to be included in *Dispatches*. Submissions and feedback are welcome anytime. Email to RUSINSDispatches@gmail.com. Comments to articles can be from members or non-members of RUSI(NS). Any comment in *Dispatches* is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia, the Department of National Defence or other government department, the Canadian Armed Forces, or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or other agency.

If you wish to receive *Dispatches* at a different address (i.e., not your work address), please inform RUSI(NS). Past editions of *Dispatches* may be requested by contacting RUSI(NS).

Dispatches Editor, Social Media Volunteers

We may have a volunteer each to edit and publish the *Dispatches* 12 and 26 May editions whilst the current (temporary) editor is away, but we **still need someone for 19 May**. If you can help out in any way, please email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. You can also help by emailing content, preferably with one or more value-added comments, to RUSINSDispatches@gmail.com.

Further and as importantly, volunteers are needed to post to our Twitter and Facebook accounts, which posts are then included in *Dispatches*. Again, if you can help out in any way, please email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

Defence Policy Review

The Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces have opened public consultations to all Canadians on the defence policy review. The review (a.k.a. Defence Policy Update – DPU) has been a topic of discussion in the RUSI(NS) Security Affairs Committee (SAC) for many months. It appears that comments from individuals rather than organizations is the approach being taken for the review, though there is an opportunity to list the organization of choice in a submission. Members of RUSI(NS) and other readers of *Dispatches* are encouraged to make a submission. See the text box at the beginning of the Other section to the 10 March edition of *Dispatches*. Note the **closing date of 30 April 2023**.

It is easier to write answers to the review's questions on a separate document rather than filling in the boxes on the review webpage (<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy/we-want-to-hear-from-you.html>). The SAC has copied the questions onto a document and can provide that to anyone to assist with their submission. Email RUSI(NS) for a copy.

RUSI(NS) Security Affairs Committee

The SAC meets every second Friday at Celtic Corner Pub, Dartmouth, for a working lunch (1100-1230), followed by a Zoom session (1400-1500) for those who can't make the lunch. Anyone interested in discussing defence, security and safety affairs is welcome to participate, you don't have to be a member of the SAC, not even of RUSI(NS) participate. For more info, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

Events:

To list an event in *Dispatches*, email RUSI(NS) by noon Thursday. RUSI(NS) events are by invitation. If you are interested in attending and have not been invited, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. RUSI(NS) events may be cancelled at short notice. Email RUSI(NS) if there is a question of an event occurring.

RUSI(NS) Distinguished Speaker May 2023

There have been some recent changes to availability of the planned speaker and Royal Artillery Park Officers' Mess for May. What with those plus lack of availability of a planner, our May event has been cancelled. **Note our 22 June Distinguished Speaker.**

2 May, Tuesday - Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Outreach Canadian Leaders at Sea Alumni Virtual Speaker Event for the Battle of the Atlantic 78th Commemoration. 1900-2100 EST (2000-2200 AST). On MS Teams. RSVP LCdr Chris Elliott, RCN Strategic Outreach Officer chris.elliott@forces.gc.ca.

5 May, Friday - presentation "The Battle of the Atlantic: Gauntlet to Victory." 1330-1530. Naval Museum of Halifax, Stadacona, CFB Halifax. RSVP to navalmuseumhalifax@forces.gc.ca.

6 May, Saturday - presentation "The Battle of the Atlantic: Gauntlet to Victory." 1330-1530. Cambridge Military Library, Royal Artillery Park, CFB Halifax. RSVP to wgard@eastlink.ca.

6 May, Saturday - Maritimes Division of the Master Mariners of Canada Battle of the Atlantic Ceremony. 1100. Small Craft Gallery, Maritime Museum of The Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water St, Halifax, NS.

9 May, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Scenario Design, or How I ruined my perfect wargame with a sloppy scenario." 1900-2100 ADT. Via Zoom. To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/scenario-design-or-how-i-ruined-my-perfect-wargame-with-a-sloppy-scenario-tickets-581291246767>

16 May, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "The Politics of Play: Wargaming with the US Military." Noon-1400 EST. Online. To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-politics-of-play-wargaming-with-the-us-military-tickets-415461174557>

13 June, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Influence Wargaming Handbook." 1200-1400 EDT. Online To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/influence-wargaming-handbook-tickets-524664865737>

22 June (moved from 24 May) - **RUSI(NS) Distinguished Speaker** Brigadier-General Masson, Commander 5th Canadian Division. 1300-1500. Royal Artillery Park Officers' Mess. MTF.

Publications:

Publications without links are available on request to RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

New: RUSI(NS) Information Note “MV *Asterix* and HADR Missions”, 26 April 2023
https://rusi-ns.ca/asterix_and_hadr_missions/

RUSI(NS) Comments “Mental Health of Police, Military and Security” by Jay Heisler, 4 April 2023
https://rusi-ns.ca/mental_health/

RUSI(NS) History & Heritage Note “Naming Tanks in the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps” by John Boileau, 13 March February 2023,
https://rusi-ns.ca/naming_tanks/

RUSI(NS) Presentation “Canadian Armed Forces/Department of National Defence Space” by BGen Mike Adamson, 15 February 2023,
<https://rusi-ns.ca/caf-dnd-space/>

New: Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association *On Watch*, 26 April 2023
<https://www.cmisa.ca/cpages/on-watch-current>

Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association Technical Information webpage
<https://www.cmisa.ca/cpages/technical-information>

Company of Master Mariners of Canada Maritimes Division *Foghorn*, March 2023

Edmonton United Services Institute President’s *Enews*, April 2023

Military Institute of Windsor *Communiqué*, Volume XLI, Number 4, April 2023

Royal Alberta United Services Institute *Dispatches*, April 2023
<https://www.rausi.ca/component/acym/archive/193-rausi-dispatches-april-2023>

New: Royal Alberta United Services Institute Natural Disaster Management and Mitigation Symposium 2023 videos <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLduad7W2y-yEVzf66l2dUAAtn3N44plwq>
Note: Current Canadian Armed Forces' Aid to the Civil Power
and Future Canadian Armed Forces' Aid to the Civil Power

Royal Canadian Naval Association Admiral Hose Branch *Scuttlebutt*, April 2023

Royal Canadian Navy *Your Navy Today* Volume 5 Issue 7
<https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/corporate/navy-news/your-navy-today/volume-5-issue-7.html>

Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – *Australia Journal*, Volume 74, Number 1, March 2023

Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island *Newsletter*, Volume 55, 2nd Quarter 2023.

New: Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Defence Update*, Volume 18, Issue 2, 24 April 2023




Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Quarterly Newsletter*, Volume 21, Issue 1, March 2023

Veterans Affairs Canada *Salute!* April 2023

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-vac/news-media/salute/2023-04>

@RUSI NS on Twitter:

RUSI(NS) tweets may also be viewed by clicking on the Twitter icon at <https://RUSI-NS.ca>. To have something tweeted or retweeted, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

<p>Timothy Choi @TimDocChoi 20 Apr tweeted and RUSI(NS) retweeted: BOOK RELEASE DAY! "Shipping in Inuit Nunangat: Governance Challenges and Approaches in Canadian #Arctic Waters" is now out. I have a chapter in it on...well, see screenshot. #Icebreakers It's even Open Access! Download: https://brill.com/edcollbook-0a/title/61767 Special TY @icenav57 for his 🙏&👉!</p>	
<p>Irving Shipbuilding @IrvingShipbuild 19 Apr tweeted: Today, Avondale Sky's Blanc de Noir (2013) was selected as the vintage to be used in the April 28th naming of the future HMCS William Hall, the fourth AOPS. These ships are named to honour prominent Navy heroes who served the country with the highest distinction. (Avondale Sky Winery Vintage Selected to Name the Future HMCS WILLIAM HALL https://shipsforcanada.ca/our-stories/avondale-sky-winery-vintage-selected-to-name-the-future-hmcs-william-hall) RUSI(NS) retweeted: Bravo, @AvondaleSky winery, whose Blanc de Noir was selected for use in naming ceremony of future #HMCSWilliamHall, 4th #Arctic&Offshore Patrol Vessel being built by @IrvingShipbuild for @RoyalCanNavy. RUSI(NS) Information Note "Warship Naming Ceremonies" https://rusi-ns.ca/warship-naming-ceremonies/</p>	
<p>Anita Anand @AnitaAnandMP 21 Apr tweeted (https://twitter.com/AnitaAnandMP/status/1649343222299205632): Canada is contributing \$34.6 million to the @NATO Ukraine Comprehensive Assistance Package Trust Fund. This will enable: ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the implementation of the NATO CAP Improved Ribbon Bridge project – which will provide Ukraine with modular floatation bridge assets to enable wet-gap crossing; and... <p>RUSI(NS) retweeted: "The NATO Ribbon Bridge Family ~ Part 1" https://www.joint-forces.com/features/21234-the-nato-ribbon-bridge-family-part-1</p> <p>"The NATO Improved Ribbon Bridge Family ~ Part 2" https://www.joint-forces.com/features/21267-the-nato-improved-ribbon-bridge-family-part-2</p>	

Mobility enhancement for offensive operations
 @thinkdefence #aDayWithoutAbridge...
 (Defence Minister Anita Anand announces approximately \$39 million military aid package for Ukraine
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/04/defence-minister-anita-anand-announces-approximately-39-million-military-aid-package-for-ukraine.html>)



CTV News Calgary @CTVCalgary 21 Apr tweeted: Amid violence in Sudan, Khartoum's airport is inaccessible and Canada's foreign affairs minister said Thursday that there are currently no means of evacuating Canadians from the country. ('Very difficult situation:' Canadians in Khartoum take shelter amid violence
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/very-difficult-situation-canadians-in-khartoum-take-shelter-amid-violence-1.6365850>)
 Gilles Couturier @hockeyadmiral Apr 21 retweeted: Container Ship, IMO 9348182 The current position of ASTERIX is at Red Sea reported 6 mins ago by AIS. The vessel is en route to MILITARY EXERCISE, sailing at a speed of 15.4 knots and expected to arrive there on May 17, 12:00.
 RUSI(NS) retweeted: Motor Vessel #ASTERIX, leased by @RoyalCanNavy as replenishment oiler, is in eastern Africa region; possible @NationalDefence resource for non-combatant evacuation #NEO of CAN🇨🇦 from #Sudan. #MVAsterix had been converted to oiler with such missions in mind #FlexibilityOfSeapower



Irving Shipbuilding @IrvingShipbuild 21 Apr tweeted: We are ONE week away from the official naming ceremony of the fourth Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship, the future HMCS William Hall. Named after the first Black Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross, AOPS #4 will be named during this historic ceremony on William Hall's birthday.
 RUSI(NS) retweeted: RUSI(NS) Information Note "Warship Naming Ceremonies" <https://rusi-ns.ca/warship-naming-ceremonies/> Explanations of terms used for @RoyalCanNavy modern naming ceremonies #HMCSWilliamHall



"Foreign affairs minister says evacuation from #Sudan 'impossible' now due to security risks"
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/government-warns-canadians-sudan-shelter-1.6816963> Non-combatant evacuations are difficult operations but @CanadianForces does plan & train for them
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/types/neo.html> #NEOSudan



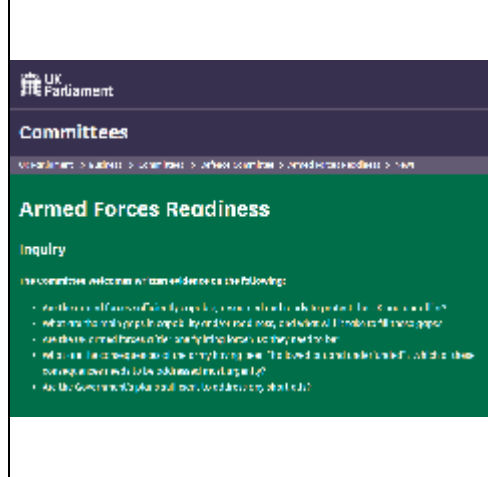
Defence Committee @CommonsDefence 24 Apr tweeted:
 📣 We've launched a new inquiry into the readiness of the UK Armed Forces. Read the terms of reference and submit your views by 5 June:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7654/armed-forces-readiness/news/>

RUSI(NS) retweeted: Much more focused review questions than general consultation undertaken by CAN 🇨🇦

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy/we-want-to-hear-from-you.html> Appropriate, too, that inquiry topic is readiness of forces @NationalDefence #DefencePolicyReview

(Ed: *Questions repeated below.*)



Canadian Armed Forces Operations @CFOperations 26 Apr tweeted and RUSI(NS) retweeted:
 1/3 Under #OpSAVANNE, the @CanadianForces' mission in support of @CanadaFP's evacuation of Canadian citizens from #Sudan, members of the #CAF departed 8 Wing Trenton for Djibouti, aboard an @RCAF_ARC CC-150 Polaris on 25 April, 2023.

Operation SAVANNE appears to be the name for the Canadian evacuation from Sudan.



Canadian Armed Forces Operations @CFOperations 26 Apr tweeted: Friends are always there to lend a helping hand 🇨🇦🤝
 🇺🇸 #MVAsterisk conducted a RAS with #USSTruxton yesterday as the ships were in the Red Sea, providing fuel to ensure our allies and partners in the region can remain on task as long as needed. #PartnerShips #StrongerTogether

RUSI(NS) retweeted: As #MVAsterix is in region & available to be retasked to support #OpSAVANNE, CAN 🇨🇦 evacuation #NEO from #Sudan, RUSI(NS) Info Note "MV Asterix and HADR Missions" https://rusi-ns.ca/asterix_and_hadr_missions/ @NationalDefence @CanadianForces @CFOperations #HADR



Anita Anand @AnitaAnandMP 27 Apr tweeted: 🇨🇦 Great news for our @CanadianForces, and for Canadian workers: @IMP_Aerospace here in Nova Scotia will upgrade thirteen CH-149 Cormorant helicopters. This will ensure that our Search and Rescue helicopters remain operational for decades to come.

RUSI(NS) retweeted: .@RCAF_ARC Cormorant search & rescue #SAR helicopters to be upgraded & fleet increased from 13 to 16 aircraft <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/04/cormorant-helicopter-upgrades-to-deliver-improved-search-and-rescue-capabilities-and-economic-opportunities-for-canadians.html> Initial delivery 2026, full operational capability 2030



Royal Canadian Navy @RoyalCanNavy 27 Apr tweeted:
 You're invited to join us ●LIVE on Facebook at Irving Shipyard on Friday, April 28th, at 4 PM (AST) 3 PM EST, 12PM PST for the naming of future HMCS William Hall. Naming ceremonies are a time-honoured naval tradition🔪👏 #HMCSWilliamHall
 CDNShipbuilders @CDNShipbuilders retweeted: Indeed, naming ceremonies are always a treat. Note that this is tomorrow... #cdnships #maritime #shipbuilding
 RUSI(NS) retweeted: RUSI(NS) Information Note "Warship Naming Ceremonies" <https://rusi-ns.ca/warship-naming-ceremonies/>



Further to the tweet above about an Avondale Sky wine being selected for the naming ceremony of William Hall, the wine would not be a champagne as was used for namings/christenings in the (getting more distant) past. That name is reserved for wines coming from Champagne, France; see: The Associated Press on Twitter 21 Apr 23: "Belgian customs have destroyed more than 2,000 cans of Miller High Life, advertised as the "Champagne of Beers," at the request of houses and growers of the bubbly beverage. <https://t.co/JtF6gmjoni>" / Twitter <https://twitter.com/AP/status/1649446674962567170> ('The Champagne of Beers' leaves French producers frothing)

Further to the tweet above about the UK public inquiry into armed forces readiness:
 UK Defence Committee Armed Forces Readiness Inquiry
 The Committee welcomes written evidence on the following:

- Are the armed forces sufficiently capable, resourced and ready to protect the UK and our allies?
- What are the main gaps in capability and/or readiness, and what will it take to fill these gaps?
- Are the UK armed forces a 'tier one fighting force'? Do they need to be?
- What are the consequences of the army having been "hollowed out and underfunded"? Which of these consequences needs to be addressed most urgently?
- Are the Government's plans sufficient to address any shortfalls?

Franken-Tractor

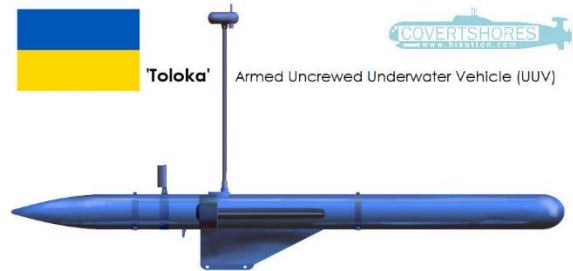
Malinda @TreasChest 22 Apr tweeted (video: <https://twitter.com/TreasChest/status/1649858400728088577>):
 In the Kharkiv region, they found a way to cultivate mined fields. Local inventors modernized the old tractor by adding armor and hydraulic valves. Remote control, via remote control and monitor. "Tuning" was worth ~1 million hryvnias. Cyberpunk in Ukrainian. Times of Ukraine



Actually, an innovative way to progress quickly post-conflict reconstruction. There is a need for a lot of thinking like this.

Underwater Drone

H I Sutton @CovertShores 26 Apr tweeted:
BREAKING Here-> <http://hisutton.com/New-Ukraine-Underwater-Maritime-Drone.html>
#Russia Faces New Threat: #Ukraine's 'Toloka'
Armed Underwater Maritime Drone
Being an underwater vehicle it is less prone to detection and harder to neutralize with gunfire



Semi-submersible, really, but a threat's a threat.

“Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia” on Facebook:

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How To Get Americans To Support A Bigger Navy

<https://www.19fortyfive.com/2023/04/how-to-get-americans-to-support-a-bigger-navy/>

"Commerce represents both the purpose and the engine of maritime strategy, and maritime strategy is the natural choice for a seafaring <state>. Commerce is the purpose because trading societies want to enrich themselves, and overseas trade charts a sure route to prosperity. That being the case, wise practitioners of statecraft enact laws and policies that nurture mercantile pursuits in important trading regions. The government harvests revenue from trade that it can invest in a navy to protect merchantmen hauling goods from port to port."

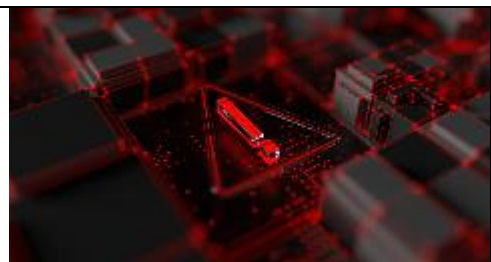


The messaging to Canadians about the utility and necessity of a strong navy has to be put in terms the general Canadian public appreciates. Talk economic prosperity at the everyperson level.

Pro-Russian hackers suspected in cyber attacks on Canadian ports

<https://www.porttechnology.org/news/pro-russian-hackers-suspected-in-cyber-attacks-on-canadian-ports/>

Attacks on ports, either kinetic (e.g., with nuclear torpedoes) or otherwise (cyber), are an excellent way to cut the 'lines of communications' (meaning logistics) of states that have to move their forces by sea to forward operating areas. Those states certainly include Canada. The Russians include port attacks in their doctrine, the way they intend to fight (see: "Reconsidering Russian Maritime Warfare" <https://cimsec.org/tag/russian-naval-doctrine/>). The term (translated) is 'strategic operations for the destruction of critically important targets (SODCIT).' Western planners including Canada need to consider, plan for and wargame for SODCIT against our ports, and not just for times of state-on-state conflict. Hack attacks may be pre-conflict reconnaissance by adversary states. Port authorities (those who haven't already been acquired by adversarial states) need to be included early in defence and security measures. Western states need to ensure important ports (sea ports of embarkation - SPOE) and disembarkation (SPOD) are/remain in friendly hands, a form of pre-conflict economic warfare.



Role of the Canadian Naval Reserve

The Naval Reserve (NAVRES) of the Royal Canadian Navy is celebrating the centennial since its establishment. Recently the RUSI(NS) Security Affairs Committee recently discussed the role (a.k.a. mission) or raison d'être of NAVRES. There was some questioning amongst committee member, maybe reflective of a lack of public communications, about how the NAVRES is employed/employable. Is it meant to be for force generation (recruiting and training people, individually and as specialized units) and augmentation of established units, with focus in peace and conflict on coastal operations (harbour defence, diving and coastal/regional patrol, maybe mine warfare)? It was decided to query the ChatGPT artificial intelligence (AI) and see what it came up with. Follows:



- - -

Direction: Write a succinct description of the role of the Royal Canadian Navy Naval Reserve, including its role and resources.

Response: The Royal Canadian Navy Naval Reserve is a component of the Canadian Armed Forces that provides part-time military service to supplement and support the full-time Navy. Its role is to provide trained personnel and specialized capabilities for domestic and international operations, as well as to promote and maintain naval traditions and knowledge in the local community. The Naval Reserve has access to a range of resources, including training facilities, ships, equipment, and experienced personnel who can assist in a variety of maritime missions.

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A NAVRES colleague noted that ChatGPT was not far off though the AI had not included community outreach amongst the significant functions of the NAVRES. A good description, provided by Navy Public Affairs, of what the NAVRES is can be found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/corporate/history-heritage/naval-reserve-centennial-2023.html>. Follow-up with Public Affairs is ongoing, with expectation they will be able to provide more links and supporting material.

Lawmakers war-game conflict with China, hoping to deter one

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2023/04/23/lawmakers-war-game-conflict-with-china-hoping-to-deter-one/>



How much have senior Canadian lawmakers wargamed serious/conflict international relations scenarios? Wargames are not to develop solutions but to allow people to learn and to consider applicable/possible factors. As useful at the grand strategic (between states) level as at the tactical (troops in the field) level.

Other Sources:

#China

#artillery

China's Secretive Quest for Heavier Artillery

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2023/04/chinas-secretive-quest-heavier-artillery/385709/>

"This suggests that such a future artillery system may be intended to destroy strategic underground or reinforced targets, a prominent feature of Taiwan's defenses."

#strategy

PRC Writings on Strategic Deterrence

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/prc-writings-on-strategic-deterrence>

and

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/PRC-Writings-on-Strategic-Deterrence.pdf>

#civil-military relations

The DoD Defense Coordinating Element and How It Is Certified

<https://www.domesticpreparedness.com/journals/april-2023/>

US; compare to the Canadian Provincial Liaison Officer/Regional Liaison Officer system.

#defence policy

With our outdated defence policy, Canada isn't prepared for today's threats

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-with-our-outdated-defence-policy-canada-isnt-prepared-for-todays/>

Michel Maisonneuve: Has neglect of our military become a trait of all Canadians — or just Trudeau?

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/has-neglect-of-our-military-become-a-trait-of-all-canadians-or-just-trudeau>

Australia's Defence Strategic Review: Lessons for Britain

[https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/britains-world/australias-defence-strategic-review-lessons-for-britain/Lessons for Canada?](https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/britains-world/australias-defence-strategic-review-lessons-for-britain/Lessons%20for%20Canada?)

#etymology

Operations (1821-1976)

<https://tacticalnotebook.substack.com/p/operations-1821-1976>

#Indo-Pacific

China's Plan For Taiwan Invasion Is Not A Secret

<https://gcaptain.com/chinas-plan-for-taiwan-invasion-is-not-a-secret/>

China-Taiwan Weekly Update

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-weekly-update-april-24-2023>

#information operations

New shadow home affairs minister James Paterson issues warning about China's attempts to 'shape Australia's information system'

<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/new-shadow-home-affairs-minister-james-paterson-issues-warning-about-chinas-attempts-to-shape-australias-information-system/news-story/1db2140e8b9a2d992bcc024b38d5fbd0>

Australia, but is Canada that much different?

Gaming Public Opinion - The CCP's increasingly sophisticated cyber-enabled influence operations

<https://www.aspi.org.au/report/gaming-public-opinion>

The Kremlin Attempts to Poison Minds Worldwide

<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-kremlin-attempts-to-poison-minds-worldwide/>

CCP's increasingly sophisticated cyber-enabled influence operation

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/ccps-increasingly-sophisticated-cyber-enabled-influence-operation/>

China's planned changes to espionage law alarm foreign businesses

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/China-s-planned-changes-to-espionage-law-alarm-foreign-businesses>

This could really put a strangle on information transfer, even if legitimate (media?). A form of lawfare.

#intelligence

The role of intelligence in Australian statecraft

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-role-of-intelligence-in-australian-statecraft/>

Interesting comment from an OSINTer:

"Publicly Available Information" PAI is an adjacent term to OSINT, because OSINT has become a bit of a medusa, meaning many things to many people. PAI cuts to the root of the issue, the information is public - still OSINT, just a more specific term for the kind of information to bypass any discussion about is it "open source" or something else.

Existential espionage: How intelligence gathering can protect humanity

<https://thebulletin.org/2023/04/existential-espionage-how-intelligence-gathering-can-protect-humanity/>

#land warfare

The Command Post Environment

Thoughtful: <https://www.thinkdefence.co.uk/2022/06/the-command-post-environment/>

Advance Rates in Combat

<http://www.dupuyinstitute.org/blog/2023/04/26/advance-rates-in-combat/>

#migration

Instrumentalized migration and the Belarus crisis: Strategies of legal coercion

<https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-paper-17-instrumentalized-migration-and-the-belarus-crisis-strategies-of-legal-coercion/>

#non-combatant evacuation

Why The FCDO Policy on Sudan Evacuation Options Makes Perfect Sense

<https://thinpinstripedline.blogspot.com/2023/04/why-fcdo-policy-on-sudan-evacuation.html>

A good analysis of the challenges of NEO, applicable to Canada, too.

Someone deeply involved in NEO commented after reading this article that it is continually interesting that the challenges facing the CAF can be applied in notable measure to every type of operation they undertake.

#Russia

#airpower

Russian Combat Air Strengths and Limitations - Lessons From Ukraine

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/russian-combat-air-strengths-and-limitations>

and <https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/Russian-Combat-Air-Strengths-and-Limitations.pdf>

#railpower

Russia's Railway Troops - The Backbone Sustaining Russian Military Force Posture

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/russias-railway-troops>

A vulnerability worth studying? Certainly anything supporting an adversary's logistics is worth considering.

#Russia-Ukraine War

'An extremely big threat': Russian glide bombs make their debut in the war

<https://wavellroom.com/2023/04/17/russian-glide-bombs/>

The Sivash: A Key Strategic Point in the Retaking of Crimea

<https://jamestown.org/program/the-sivash-a-key-strategic-point-in-the-retaking-of-crimea/>

How Ukraine Modernized Its Post-Soviet Military

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/01/how-ukraine-learned-to-fight/>

How Russia has fortified parts of Ukraine ahead of a possible counteroffensive

<https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ukraine-crisis/counteroffensive/mopakddwbpa/index.html/>

#artillery

Why the 155mm round is so critical to the war in Ukraine

<https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/ukraine/2023/04/23/why-the-155mm-round-is-so-critical-to-the-war-in-ukraine/>

It's about the numbers, there's still something about mass in modern warfare.

Rise of the Rocket Launcher 2: Lessons from Ukraine

<https://wavellroom.com/2023/04/26/rise-of-the-rocket-launcher-2/>

#warfare

Cognitive Warfare: Maneuvering in the Human Dimension

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/april/cognitive-warfare-maneuvering-human-dimension>

#wargaming

Pentagon Needs to Do Better Job of Tracking Wargames, Report Finds

<https://www.airandspaceforces.com/pentagon-tracking-wargames-gao/report>: Additional Actions Could Enhance DOD’s Wargaming Efforts
<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105351.pdf>

Other:

King Charles III Coronation

The Government of Canada announces details of Canadian celebrations for the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2023/04/the-government-of-canada-announces-details-of-canadian-celebrations-for-the-coronation-of-hismajesty-kingcharlesiii.html>

Canadian celebrations of His Majesty King Charles III’s Coronation

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/coronation-his-majesty-king-canada.html>

Coronation medal depicted.



Security Affairs Committee Synopsis

General

It is becoming very clear that NATO and principally the United States have to make some major decisions about Ukraine. There is absolutely no question that if Ukraine does not win a complete victory and remove all Russian forces from the pre-2014 boundaries of Ukraine, the conflict will continue by other means. Ukraine needs all the resources the West can provide. Latvia set the tone when they offered all of their Stinger missiles to Ukraine. Tanks, armour vehicles, jet fighters, tactical helicopters and wheeled and tracked logistics vehicles plus anything else they need, must be provided. The idea that properly equipping Ukraine is a provocative move is a level of illogical thinking that is truly mind boggling. Russia’s war crimes, attacks on civilian targets, torture chambers, murder of civilians, looting and destruction of Ukrainian cultural sites, kidnapping of children amongst other crimes, make decisive action vital.

Taiwan is another issue entirely. Previous negotiations have essentially handed a country potentially over to an authoritarian regime noted for its brutality and lack of a legal system based on rule of law. China is noted for their conduct of cultural genocide activities affecting Tibetans and Uyghurs as well as other minorities. Taiwan has grown from its days of military dictatorship into a liberal democracy.

As we have seen with Hong Kong, where Chinese authorities are now in the process of essentially rewriting the city's history, China cannot be trusted with the fate of a liberal democratic system. China is not a friend or even a partner, it is an authoritarian regime with delusions of grandeur.

We are also seeing increasingly authoritarian regimes in South America, Asia and Africa, with these efforts usually supported by Russia and/or China. These regimes do not like the idea of democracy and are consequently increasingly likely to accept the support of the authoritarian regimes. I suppose the best example of this trend is on display in Sudan where Wagner forces are present and Libyan rebel forces of General Haftar, supported by Russia, are supporting the Army forces. For major authoritarian regimes, some instability within client states is a benefit as they are able to exploit resources for their own purposes, such as taking gold from mines directly thus supporting the Russian war effort. The West is seen as the enemy of these authoritarian leaders. How the collective West deals with this, is a matter needing urgent discussion. Western soldiers are likely to be seen as hostile forces as opposed to being a source of stability and peace. It is something to consider.

O Canada

Once again our country is in a poor position, with the PM admitting that Canada will never meet the NATO agreed upon 2% of GDP target for defence. While I will give him credit for being honest, I have to say that his comments also show Canada is a poor partner and not to be trusted. Even as recent announcements of the North Warning System upgrade and the new fighter aircraft are espoused as how they are meeting defence goals, there is a failure to put necessary policy changes into effect or take action to speed up procurement. All three services and the Special Operations folks are grossly ill-equipped and manned. The armed forces have seen a consistent downgrade of capabilities and resources due to chronic underfunding and lack of effort.

When new equipment is purchased, usually it is in much smaller numbers such as with the Aurora replacement. At one point, there were eighteen Auroras and three Arcturus for a total of twenty-one aircraft. Prior to that Canada had thirty-three Argus long range aircraft doing the same job. Despite our adversaries having improved technology, Canada persists in buying fewer airframes each and every time. This is based on budget alone and not the actual requirements to safely and securely protect our sovereignty which we increasingly handover to other folks. The British within the past year offered to patrol our North with nuclear submarines as they knew Canada did not have the resources to do so. Canada is due for a rude awakening and our allies are well-aware of that. What are our national interests? The fallout from that exercise should lead to a new detailed security policy, foreign policy and defence policy. These vital pieces are absent.

Vice-Admiral Norman and LGen Maisonneuve have both spoken out on Canada's defence issues and more recently, 65 notable Canadians including former ambassadors, the Chief of the Supreme Court, multiple Chiefs of Defence Staff and business leaders have asked the government to take defence more seriously. Yet, they were dismissed as merely people that have a special interest. Disturbingly, LGen Maisonneuve also raised the question of whether Canadians as a whole are so used to the US carrying the load that they refuse to step up. I do not believe that to be true, but I do think they need reminding from time to time. Having well-equipped balanced armed forces is not a nice to have, it is essential.

We now have an excellent example in the current non-combatant evacuation operation in Sudan where 1700 Canadians are residing. By a fluke of timing, a naval task group headed for North Korean waters happened to be positioned nearby and are standing by off the coast of Sudan. Friendly countries have allowed Canadian personnel to stage through for any action necessary to safely retrieve our citizens. The government has done one thing right by arranging through negotiations at least 150 Canadians to move onboard other nations' aircraft or ships. The Canadian Armed Forces was able to put it together

because of the professionalism of our much maligned troops and leadership of the armed forces. It is increasingly certain that it is a close run thing as shown when we were unable to mount relief ops in Turkiye, our increasingly diminishing support to Ukraine and of course the failure to take on the leadership of a Haiti mission. Mind you Haiti is a nightmare without a realistic solution even in the long term. The Canadian Armed Forces are the country's insurance plan. It like insurance is a tough sell at times until one needs it. It also opens doors and provides the government with options that cannot be provided any other way. Proper care and maintenance is essential; it takes years to build and train and that means ongoing and consistent support, something sorely lacking.

Hopefully another reason for having the armed forces is the flood situation in the west but generally across Canada. Larger than normal snow packs in numerous locations are now melting fast. The flood situation will deteriorate fast with increasingly warm temperatures. It is likely Canadian Forces personnel will be called out in some form if this remains the case.

United States

US support for Ukraine continues unabated. The US has pledged to send more than 4m rounds of artillery ammunition or more than 10 k tons of ordnance. A truly amazing effort. Most liberal democracies are stepping up their capabilities. Unfortunately, not Canada.

Belarus

Belarus has sent out notices to its male citizens to update their information in case of a national conscription program being instituted. There are increasing concerns that Russia is increasing pressure on Belarus to participate in the war against Ukraine. Russia is continuing to increase the number of troops, equipment and resources within Belarus. Belarus military members completed training on the Iskander missiles in the past month and ten Belarus fighters have been modified for taking and using nuclear weapons. There was also an announcement of consideration of strategic weapons along with tactical nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately for Putin and Lukashenko, the population of Belarus is against the war. Belarus partisans have been active, their actions include destruction of infrastructure, cyber-attacks, and sabotage of military equipment. There is considerable reason to believe that if Belarus forces are mobilized and ordered to attack that elements may mutiny. The self-appointed president is not popular and actions such as an order to attack would be fatal to the regime unless actively supported by large numbers of Russian troops. Can Russia take on yet another problem? The answer is not likely.

Moldova

Russian instigators have not stopped their attempts to divide Moldova into pro-Russian and pro-Western views. Russia has developed a network of instigators based on the previous pro-Russian government leaders such as former President Ion Chicu and pro-Russian political leadership such as Ilan Shor of the Shor Party within the Moldovan Parliament. Russia also uses infiltrators from the self-proclaimed pro-Russian Transnistria. The European Union has realized that Moldova needs assistance and has authorised the creation of a civilian organization called the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova (EUPM Moldova) which will last for a two year period.

The EUPM will appoint the official head of mission shortly although Stefano Tomat is thought to be the lead candidate to head as the civilian operations commander. He is currently manager of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability organization within the EU Diplomacy Services organization.

Opposition parties are expected to call for mass demonstrations on 7 May 2023 to "take back our country." They have bought space on social media to advertise the date and location. Russian disinformation is likely to be seen in full swing during this event. One can expect to see increasing efforts to demonize the current government prior to the demonstrations. Opposition parties have managed to produce large crowds mainly because of Moldova's increasing economic woes according to the British *Express* newspaper on 24 April 2023.

France/China

President Macron of France made an announcement in reference to Taiwan that has antagonized most liberal democracies, stating that Taiwan was not an EU concern and that the EU should not react to US pressure or overreact to Chinese efforts. This was compounded within the last week by the Chinese Ambassador to France Lu Shaye (former Ambassador to Canada) that really "stirred the pot" when he questioned the legitimacy of the former Soviet Republics. This set off a fire storm which resulted in the Chinese foreign ministry retracting the comments, stating that China did recognize their sovereignty from the former Soviet Union. China also reiterated that it would not provide arms to Russia.

This week saw the next chapter as France and China will develop a peace proposal for the Russia-Ukraine war. President Zelensky and President Xi also spoke this week as well with China stating that they will send an envoy to Kyiv. France is playing an interesting game mainly for its own benefit one might suspect. Still, if Ukraine can gain by diplomacy all that it wants vice paying in blood, it is worth consideration no matter what the source. This being said, Ukrainian politicians have stated that France cannot give away parts of Ukraine under any circumstances; only Ukraine can decide such issues.

Australia

Australia has just conducted a large defence review which sees the army being the main loser. The Australian government has chosen to cut the number of armoured vehicles significantly but have increased the number of long range weapons systems available to the navy, army and airforce. The main idea is to ensure that the army won't have to defend Australia if the enemy can be hit at long range by sea, land and air-based systems. The army will be better configured for light operations and rapid deployment to troubled area on air and sea assets. More at: <https://defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>.

Russia-Ukraine War

The war continues unabated with Russia taking massive losses for small incremental gains, often measured in hundreds of metres rather than significant advances. Bakhmut continues to draw Russian forces into a cauldron with a significant portion of Russian forces pushing to take the small city. The city has little real strategic importance and taking the city will not provide Russia any stepping stone to larger targets. In the meantime Russian forces continue to suffer. Wagner forces this week took ground however they were replaced by another private military company. The result was not good as the new organization apparently withdrew and Wagner's hard won positions were taken over by a Ukrainian counter-attack. It highlighted the very real divisions within the Russian effort. It seems a deliberate attempt to sabotage other Russian organizations' efforts, not that this is bad from a Western point of view.

I have just read that Russian forces may have used chemical weapons, believed to be chlorine, against Ukrainian troops in Bakhmut on 25 April 2023. However, the article is a single source from a Ukraine

and therefore suspect. This being said, use of gas at any time by anyone is a major escalation and worthy of note and follow up to confirm such an event occurred. Will there be some form of investigation by neutral parties? Unlikely at present and a Russian denial is inevitable. Would they actually take short term gain for longer term pain, I would have said no, but after 24 February 2022 all bets are off. Further information and confirmation are required.

Wagner forces are now well down below 6k from a suspected high of 70k. A small number of Wagner troops have been discharged as having fulfilled their obligations, but most are dead, captured or wounded. Prigozhin has stated that Wagner troops will not take prisoners in fighting, but this seems hollow statement given the actual capability of the ever weakening Wagner forces around Bakhmut.

Russian parachute units are also well down in effective strength without effective replacements. They never really recovered from the initial attacks which failed near Kyiv. Wagner forces appear to be leaving the fight one way or another. Wagner continues its efforts in Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Syria, Sudan and the Central African Republic. They also provide several other authoritarians with personal protection details. Can Wagner survive, there is some doubt, but its international efforts continue. Will these international activities provide Prigozhin enough protection from his internal enemies in the Russian hierarchy? Time will tell.

The Ukrainians are getting closer to their long awaited offensive. Weather has been unseasonable and the ground is wet and generally impassable to most vehicles, tracked or otherwise. At the start of this week, Ukrainian forces are alleged to have crossed the Dnipro River to the east bank near the city of Kherson and the Antonovskiy bridge. They have been expanding their bridgehead each day. Ukraine has been carrying out raids across the Dnipro for several months, however this lodgment appears to be permanent. Numbers involved are unknown at this time. They apparently used boats supplied by the US to conduct the landing, therefore weapons are likely to be light including machine guns, hand held anti-armour weapons, grenade launchers and mortars along with small arms. This move has been confirmed, however the ground is not suitable for vehicles so a major offensive is not likely here but the Ukrainians have proven they can do things when others cannot.

Russia has apparently sent the T-14 Armata tank to Ukraine although not on front line service. They are reputed to have used the tank to fire on Ukrainian positions. The Armata is a technical nightmare and its use is suspected of being a public relations stunt. The total numbers of all variants of the Armata are suspected to be under 100.

There are many articles on the efficacy of the Russian targeted sanctions. Many claim they have been ineffective. Russia has done an admirable job of firming up the Russian economy but they have used foreign reserves, the sale of assets, sales of oil and gas to friendly countries, although at a discount. It has worked to a degree so far and the ruble has remained fairly solid until recently. Sanctions are a slow poison, it takes a while for the poison to flow throughout the system being attacked. Sanctions have economic, social, political and ultimately demographic effects. Economically, the Russian general domestic product has fallen by 2.1% in the last year. This loss is expected to increase as unemployment grows, as foreign investment leaves the country, and as key parts are no longer available, thus crippling Russian industrial output. Russia has actually gone into a deficit position, a highly unusual event as they normally have a surplus. Even key industries such as defence are unable to keep up as key components of fire control systems, etc., are no longer available. An increasingly difficult issue is the lack of ability to fill foreign orders thus entering into breach of contract. Russia has few friends and looks to China as its one major supporter. They have tried to retaliate but with mixed results. Most recently, they attempted to block any future agreement to allow Ukraine to export grain, however, that it a two-edged sword as many countries also depend on Ukraine's crops for food. In trying to stop the agreement they have antagonized friendly countries as well. Russia is

running out of time and friends and this is unlikely to change. Demographically many Russians with get up and go with key skill sets have chosen to leave the country for safety and work, most likely permanently. As many as two million have left the country so far including most of their tech people essential for a modern country. Russia already has more than ten million more women than men because of long term health issues including alcoholism, addiction and long term disease. The war just adds to the problem. Demographics show a rapidly declining Russia. Sanctions work but slowly.

Will this effect Putin? The answer is a qualified yes. The small circle of allies is dwindling, some are dying under mysterious circumstances, some have left the country and some maybe organizing some form of opposition within the inner circle. What this means is as yet unknown but there are increasing suspicions that all is not well. Putin is alleged to be isolating himself and using body doubles. He does not feel secure in public and it is suspected that his level of paranoia is increasing and this trajectory is not going to change in the near term. Russia's only ace in the hole is Russia's nuclear weapons. Russia currently has the largest nuclear weapons stock pile. It is the last capability available. Could he use them in his present state of mind? Maybe?

China

Just to keep climate change in the picture as per Canadian policy so to speak, everything climate all the time. Canada has used the carbon tax as a way of changing Canadians habits and it has achieved slightly over a 9% reduction as opposed to the US technical solutions of just over 20% with no extra taxes. Keep in mind this seems to be a wasted effort as China ramps up coal fired power production and coal mining. Without China in the picture and actually doing what it said it would do, our efforts are null and void, plus China's efforts with the environment have been spotty at best. Is it a waste of our time at present without China's full participation? Probably.

China has entered into talks with Ukraine and are sending an envoy to Kyiv shortly. As mentioned earlier, France and China are entering into discussions on the development of a peaceful solution of the Russia-Ukraine war. Kyiv politicians have stated there will be no solution without Kyiv's approval and full participation. If the Xi- Zelensky telephone call is correct, Kyiv maybe willing to participate. A peaceful solution that achieves the aim is in everyone's best interest. Can we live with a China solution if Kyiv agrees? Probably.

The bottom line is although China is an authoritarian state that is conducting cultural genocide, we cannot ignore it, and some things we can tolerate if necessary for big issues whether we like it or not. China's economy is a different matter entirely.

This week saw the province of Guizhou essentially enter into bankruptcy protection as it is bankrupt and other provinces are in similar shape. The debt of the lower level of government is huge and largely the numbers available seem to understate the actual level of debt mostly caused by the overbuilding of needless infrastructure. China has used the construction of major infrastructure projects to give the appearance of growth. Unfortunately, one can only do this for so long, then the infrastructure far exceeds the actual needs and becomes an actual liability as it has to be maintained. Provinces and autonomous regions are limited in their ability to raise funds. The main way was to sell property for development. This has become limited due to the meltdown in what can only be called a giant ponzi scheme at the provincial and national level. Lenders lend to lenders who lend to lenders and so on. Quite often the loan is from the original company or province, thus actually lending money to itself but paying interest on its own money. This has not been properly overseen by competent fiscal managers backed up by effective auditing. The bottom line is that China's debt is a mess, official figures are fictional at best and no one actually understands the actual debt at the province and autonomous regions level. China's financial structure needs radical reform to make it work, but it is doubtful that

the Communist Chinese Party is capable of such an action. This is another area where US and EU banking experience could be of great assistance to China. China will not achieve its goals without this help. It is another area for greater cooperation.

China needs overall reform to be ultimately successful. The US and EU and the liberal democracies do not mind the idea of a multi-polar world, just not one where authoritarian regimes bully their way to be one of the poles. Authoritarianism is a bankrupt idea and is an ultimate failure of leadership. Democracy is ugly and often is inefficient but ultimately it does work. As Churchill once allegedly said democracy is the worst form of government...except for all the rest.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- With soft ground conditions across most of Ukraine, severe mud is highly likely slowing operations for both sides in the conflict.
- However, Russian online outlets are likely exaggerating the overall impact of mud on Ukrainian forces as part of an information operation aimed at raising Russian morale, and undermining Ukraine's supporters, in light of an anticipated Ukrainian counter offensive.
- Surface conditions can be expected to improve in the coming weeks. The threat from mines probably continues to be a more important factor in limiting the combatants' off-road manoeuvre.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The Russian state is struggling to maintain consistency in a core narrative that it uses to justify the war in Ukraine: that the invasion is analogous to the Soviet experience in the Second World War.
- On 18 April 2023, Russian state media announced the cancellation of this year's Immortal Regiment 'Great Patriotic War' remembrance marches on 'safety' grounds. In reality, the authorities were highly likely concerned that participants would highlight the scope of recent Russian losses.
- This follows Wagner Group owner Yevgeny Prigozhin publicly questioning whether there are actually any 'Nazis' in Ukraine, going against Russia's justification for the war. The authorities have continued attempts to unify the Russian public around polarising myths about the 1940s.
- On 12 April 2023, state news agency RIA Novosti reported 'unique' documents from FSB archives, implicating the Nazis in the murder of 22,000 Polish nationals in the Katyn Massacre of 1940. In reality, FSB's predecessor agency, the NKVD, was responsible. Russia's State Duma officially condemned Joseph Stalin for ordering the killings in 2010.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The Russian MoD has launched a major new drive for volunteer recruits. A pervasive campaign has seen advertising appear on Russian social media sites, on billboards, and on TV.
- The new adverts appeal to potential recruits' masculine pride, appealing for 'real men', as well as highlighting the financial benefits of joining up.
- Since its access to prisoner recruitment was stopped, the Wagner Group private military company is also competing for the limited pool of Russian fighting-age men. It remains highly unlikely that the campaign will attract the MoD's reported target of 400,000 volunteers. The authorities are almost certainly seeking to delay any new, overt mandatory mobilisation for as long as possible to minimise domestic dissent.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The authorities in occupied areas of Ukraine are almost certainly coercing the population to accept Russian Federation passports. Residents in Kherson have been warned that those who have not accepted a Russian passport by 1 June 2023 will be 'deported' and their property seized.
- Russia is using passports as a tool in the 'Russification' of the occupied areas, as it did in Donetsk and Luhansk before the February 2022 invasion.
- Russia is likely expediting the integration of the occupied areas of Ukraine into the bureaucracy of the Russian Federation to help paint the invasion as a success, especially in the run-up to the 2024 presidential elections.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Over April 2023, Russia's average daily casualty rate has highly likely fallen by around 30 per cent. This follows exceptionally heavy Russian casualties over January-March 2023.
- Figures released by the Ukrainian General Staff suggest a reduction from a daily average of 776 Russian casualties in March, to an average of 568 so far in April. Defence Intelligence cannot verify Ukraine's exact methodology, but the general trend is likely accurate.
- Russia's losses have highly likely reduced as their attempted winter offensive has failed to achieve its objectives, and Russian forces are now focused on preparing for anticipated Ukrainian offensive operations.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Heavy, short-range combat continues in the western districts of the contested Donetsk Oblast town of Bakhmut. A key development over the last week has been fighting on the outskirts of the town, especially near the village of Khromove, as Ukraine seeks to maintain control of its O506 supply route.
- Ukraine's other resupply options into Bakhmut are likely complicated by muddy conditions on unsurfaced tracks.
- With the town having now been under attack for over 11 months, the Ukrainian defences of Bakhmut have now been integrated as one element of a much deeper defensive zone, which includes the town of Chasiv Yar to the west.

INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Imagery shows that by March 2023, Russian forces had established sandbag fighting positions on the roofs of several of the six reactor buildings at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).
- Russia has controlled ZNPP since March 2022. However, this is the first indication of the actual reactor buildings being integrated in tactical defence planning. Russia has likely constructed these positions because it is increasingly concerned about the prospects of a major Ukrainian offensive.
- The move highly likely increases the chances of damage to ZNPP safety systems if fighting takes place around ZNPP. However, direct catastrophic damage to the reactors is unlikely under most plausible scenarios involving infantry weapons because the structures are very heavily reinforced.