



## Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia Dispatches 1 December 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](mailto: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).

### **Home Dispatches December 2023**

Submissions for the December 2023 edition of our internal quarterly are now being taken. If you have something for *Home Dispatches*, please email to RUSI(NS).

#### **Events:**

**New: 8 December**, Friday - Centre for International Governance Innovation panel discussion "Navigating the Future of National Security." 10:00-11:30 am EST. Via Zoom. To register:

<https://www.cigionline.org/events/navigating-the-future-of-national-security-jody-thomas/>

**12 December**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "The Tyranny of Binaries: how wargame rules build narratives." 7-9 pm AST. Online. For more info and to register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-tyranny-of-binaries-how-wargame-rules-build-narratives-tickets-633057882167>.

**17 January**, Wednesday – RUSI(NS) Distinguished Speaker Dr Jonathan Fowler, Saint Mary's University, "The Historical Archaeology of Halifax's Earliest Defences." 1300-1430. In-person. Royal Artillery Park Officers' Mess.

Pre-event reading: Cemetery that tells of Halifax's naval history hides in plain sight

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cemetery-naval-history-halifax-1.6901190>

**23 January**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Wargaming's Influence on U.S. Navy Tactical Doctrine, 1906-1941." 7-9 pm AST. Online. To register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wargamings-influence-on-us-navy-tactical-doctrine-1906-1941-tickets-6397270999>

**New:** 30 January, Tuesday - King's College London School of Security Studies presentation "Space power and Irregular Warfare in Space." 5:00-6:30 pm GMT. Online. To register: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/space-power-and-irregular-warfare-in-space>

**21 February**, Wednesday - Distinguished Speaker MGen S.Y. Ménard, RCAF Chief Fighter and NORAD Capability (CFNC), speaking about the Future Fighter Capability Project (F-35 procurement) and about the RCAF Centennial. 1300-1500 Atlantic time. Via Zoom. Details to follow.

**22 February**, Thursday - Royal Alberta United Services Institute presentation "Beyond Greed: How Corruption Threatens Global Security" with journalist and political advisor Sarah Chayes. 6-7 pm MST (9-10 pm AST). Online. For more info and to register: <https://rausi.ca/info-events/rmcscd/622-beyond-greed-how-corruption-threatens-global-security>

### **Publications:**

Publications without links are available on request to [RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com](mailto:RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com).

**New:** RUSI(NS) Paper "Is another Cyclone about to form for the RCAF?" by Murray Lee and John McLearn, 26 November 2023, <https://rusi-ns.ca/p8-poseidon/>

**New:** RUSI(NS) Comments "White Hat Hackers" by David Swan, 25 November 2023, [https://rusi-ns.ca/white\\_hat\\_hackers](https://rusi-ns.ca/white_hat_hackers)

**New:** King's College London Wargaming Network presentation "Naval Wargaming Beyond the Classroom."

video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOemWKst2g0>

**New:** Canadian Gunner News 30 Nov 2023

Notable: Howitzer Statement of Capability Deficiency for 20 self-propelled howitzers.

Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association *On Watch*, 22 November 2023

<https://www.cmisa.ca/cpages/on-watch-current>

**New:** Edmonton United Services Institute President's *Enews*, December 2023

**New:** Military Institute of Windsor *Communiqué*, Volume XLI, Number 11, December 2023

Royal Alberta United Services Institute *Dispatches*, November 2023

<https://www.rausi.ca/component/acym/archive/225-rausi-dispatches-november-2023>

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

**New:** Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Defence Update*, Volume 22, Issue 1, 27 November 2023

**New:** Vancouver Artillery Association and Royal United Services Institute Vancouver *Members News* 28 Nov 2023

**@RUSI\_NS on X:**

@RUSI\_NS posts may also be viewed by clicking on the icon at <https://RUSI-NS.ca>. To have something posted or reposted, email RUSI(NS).

David Pugliese @davidpugliese 24 Nov posted: Canada delays \$3.6 billion Reaper buy until drones can work in Arctic <https://www.c4isrnet.com/unmanned/2023/11/23/canada-delays-36-billion-reaper-buy-until-drones-can-work-in-arctic/>  
RUSI(NS) reposted: RUSI(NS) Presentations "Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles – Canadian and US Programs" <https://rusi-ns.ca/rpas/> Remotely piloted aircraft systems #RPAS #drones can be challenged by demands of operating in CAN 🇨🇦 #Arctic/North



Warships IFR @WarshipsIFR 26 Nov posted: Impressive overhead shot of the Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Toowoomba (top) conducting a Replenishment-at-Sea with the Canadian support vessel MV Asterix. Both vessels working with units of their own fleets and also allies in Indo-Pacific. Photo: LSA Cillie Duplooy/RAN.  
RUSI(NS) quoted: Impressive, yes, shows versatility of replenishment oiler ASTERIX as well as importance of having supply ships as contribution by CAN to our naval operations & exercises, at home and abroad, as well as those of our allies #ExcellenceAtSea #SeaPower @RoyalCanNavy @CFOperations



Seaspan @Seaspan Nov 23 posted: Delivering long-term value to 🇨🇦. According to a new study by Deloitte, Seaspan Shipyards has contributed \$5.7+ Billion to Canada's GDP through our shipbuilding and repair, refit, and maintenance activities. See how else Seaspan is contributing to the Canadian economy 🍁 📺 (video: <https://twitter.com/Seaspan/status/1727737937003979082>)



RUSI(NS) quoted: An (the?) aim of CAN 🇨🇦 National Shipbuilding Strategy is social & eco benefits <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/amd-dp/mer-sea/sncn-nss/apropos-about-eng.html> Seaspan study provides numbers, great to have indications of progress/success to CAN economy. Now need reports of progress towards re-capitalizing @RoyalCanNavy & @CoastGuardCan

*Press release:* Delivering long-term value to Canada: Seaspan Shipyards Contributes More Than \$5.7 Billion to Canada's GDP

<https://www.seaspan.com/press-release/delivering-long-term-value-to-canada-seaspan-shipyards-contributes-more-than-5-7-billion-to-canadas-gdp/>

*Dedicated webpage:* Our Economic Impact

<https://www.seaspan.com/economic-impact/>

*Report:* Socio-economic Contribution Study of Seaspan Shipyards Shipbuilding Activities and Repair, Refit and Maintenance Activities

<http://www.seaspan.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Seaspan-Shipyards-Economic-Contribution-Study-Final-August-Condensed.pdf>

CAN🇨🇦 to construct @CoastGuardCan's first-ever hybrid vessel <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/news/2023/10/government-of-canada-announces-construction-of-the-canadian-coast-guards-first-ever-hybrid-vessel-in-gaspe.html> Contract for new Near-Shore Fishery Research Vessel NSFRV. RUSI(NS) Info Note "Inshore to Offshore: Coastal Zones and Canadian Coast Guard Vessel Capabilities" <https://rusi-ns.ca/coastal-zones-and-ccg-vessel-capabilities/>



Defence Blog @Defence\_blog Nov 24 posted: Canadian defense giants unite to create new patrol aircraft (Canadian defense giants unite to create new patrol aircraft <https://defence-blog.com/canadian-defense-multi-mission-aircraft-export-giants-unite/>) RUSI(NS) quoted: .@Bombardier, @CanComCorp & @GDMS\_C collaborate "to bolster export prospects" for CAN🇨🇦 Multi-Mission Aircraft project advanced long-range patrol aircraft solution



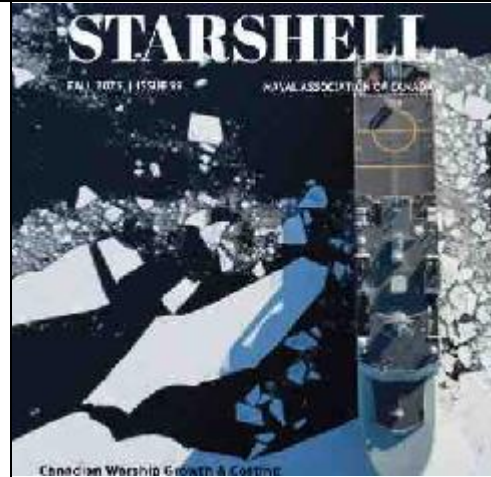
<https://defence-blog.com/canadian-defense-multi-mission-aircraft-export-giants-unite/> Addressing a weakness in Global 6500 case - lack of foreign use as military a/c See also: Aerospace firms push back against Bombardier, tout upsides of a Boeing military deal <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/aerospace-firms-push-back-against-bombardier-tout-upsides-of-a-boeing-military-deal-1.6659218> and: Canadian government organization to market Bombardier surveillance plane for export despite rejection by Canadian military <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/can>

TrevorMacLean @trevormaclean22 27 Nov posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: A great and important message from our Admiral. We got this. #GoNavy (The CRITICAL state of the Royal Canadian Navy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuD6Q1HXsKw&t=1s>)

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Follow-on interview: A "generational challenge" in naval readiness <https://paulwells.substack.com/p/a-generational-challenge-in-naval>

BOSN	83%	77%	75%	74%	99%
NCI OP	92%	74%	72%	60%	126%
NES OP	84%	65%	68%	54%	105%
STWD	93%	74%	61%	73%	58%
NAV COMM	82%	64%	68%	60%	87%
SONAR OP	97%	76%	76%	70%	106%
CL DVR	88%	72%	97%	82%	62%
W ENG TECH	78%	66%	71%	70%	78%
MAR TECH	61%	60%	60%	67%	83%
	Capl(H)	Cdr	LGdr	LINO / S	
NWO	100%	82%	78%	69%	
NCS ENG	N/A	N/A	85%	79%	
MS ENG	N/A	N/A	87%	65%	
NAV ENG	88%	100%	N/A	N/A	

The Naval Association of Canada @navalassn 28 Nov posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: The Fall 2023 Edition of Starshell Magazine is now available. We review Warship Growth and Costing, Arctic Defence and take a new look at National Security Policy and Strategy. <https://www.navalassoc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Starshell-Winter-LR.pdf>



Veterans Ombudsman @VetsOmbudsman 28 Nov posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: Today we released our 2022-2023 Annual Report. This report highlights the work our office has done over the last year. Learn about our office and how we help Veterans and their families have fair and timely access to treatment and benefits here: <https://ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca/sites/default/files/2023-10/vo-2023-annual-report-eng-pdf.pdf>



National Defence @NationalDefence 30 Nov posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: Today, we announced that Canada selected the P-8A Poseidon as its new Multi-Mission Aircraft. Canada is acquiring up to 16 Poseidon aircraft, a proven capability operated by our Allies. @RCAF\_ARC #WellEquipped <https://canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/11/canada-purchasing-up-to-16-p-8a-poseidon-multi-mission-aircraft-for-the-royal-canadian-air-force.html> (Canada purchasing up to 16 P-8A Poseidon Multi Mission Aircraft for the Royal Canadian Air Force)

## Canada's next Multi-Mission Aircraft

**Payload**

- 5 anti-submarine torpedoes
- 4 anti-ship missiles
- 129 A-size sonobuoys
- 5 air-droppable survival kits

**Current operators**  
United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand (all Five Eyes allies) and other defence partners.

**Basing**  
14 Wing Greenwood, N.S.  
19 Wing Comox, B.C.

*Canada will replace its legacy CP-140 Aurora fleet with the P-8A Poseidon.*

<b>First Delivery</b>	2026
<b>Fleet size</b>	Up to 16
<b>Crew</b>	8
<b>Ferry Range</b>	7,242 km
<b>Air-to-Air Refuellable</b>	Boom
<b>Max Gross Take-off Weight</b>	85,820 kg
<b>Max Speed</b>	907 km/h
<b>Ceiling</b>	12,496 m
<b>Wingspan</b>	37.7 m
<b>Height</b>	12.83 m
<b>Length</b>	39.5 m

Canada.ca/Defence

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

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**Secret cybersecurity briefing aimed at energy sector executives: memo**

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/feds-aimed-secret-cybersecurity-briefing-at-energy-sector-executives-memo-1.6660602>



"Federal security officials have been briefing leaders of major energy and utility firms on cyberthreats, one element of a concerted government effort to underscore the serious risks to the sector."

SOME of this announcement is good news. Some is the same old BS.

"A newly disclosed Public Safety Canada memo reveals a secret-level June meeting was part of a strategy to raise awareness among company executives about the dangers from malicious cyberactivity -- reaching beyond the technical experts who already know about the risks. ... was almost certainly the main cyberthreat facing the Canadian oil and gas sector."

Nice to hear but it is late and one briefing is not nearly enough.

It is NOT necessary for the briefings to be held in 'secure locations'. These are briefings for executives NOT technical briefings for cyber-security personnel.

"Cybersecurity legislation now before Parliament would introduce the Critical Cyber Systems Protection Act, establishing a regulatory framework to strengthen security in federally regulated sectors including energy."

Again, not bad but a day late and a dollar short. The legislation requiring critical industries to protect themselves is necessary. I would rather see effort put into creating industry based security groups such as the American style Intelligence Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISAC). Government data is fed to the groups which in turn support their industries. This has proven to be both an excellent source of information on attackers and an effective way of pushing protective information to industry.

Cyber attacks on critical industries are NOT secret. They can't be because of the visibility of critical industries. Holding secret meetings with a few executives but not warning the general population means those executives don't face consequences if they decide not to cooperate with the government. I have heard executives argue passionately that cybersecurity is NOT worth its cost. The secret meeting approach does little to address those who refuse to admit that cyber security is now part of the cost of doing business.

**As major Pacific summit wraps, Canada is sidelined on a new U.S.-led trade initiative**

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/apec-summit-canada-ipecc-us-1.7032888>

Canadian military need to understand our country's trade and trade expansion efforts. It may no longer be a case of "the flag follows trade" (an international relations concept worth studying), but the potential for military engagement increases with our closer trading partners, especially when they are threatened. And when we are seen as lacking military heft, maybe our ability to form trading relations is more difficult.



**Smoking on the Beach**

China's Peoples' Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) landing platform dock (LPD) #980 LONGHUSHAN (Hull 5 of Type 071) exercises with smoke canisters attached to its guardrails near an unnamed beach in China. PLAN vessels use black smoke (as opposed to the white more commonly seen in Western navies) to obscure ship position and manoeuvres.



Numerous social media commentators continue to suggest the video (<https://youtu.be/KLUQSIV2Nsc>) of stem-to-stern smoke is proof of an out of control shipboard fire (à la USS BONHOMME RICHARD) despite a lack of rescue vessels or helicopters in the video and the apparent cavalier response of spectators.

Naval smokescreen usage has made a comeback with efforts to defend against autonomous vehicles (drones) which are heavily reliant upon electro-optical/infra-red signature recognition for target identification and engagement. See: "Fog of War: The Navy Should Reconsider Smokescreen Tactics" (<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2022/january/fog-war-navy-should-reconsider-smokescreen-tactics>).

**Too Few People for Too Many Ships? Should the RN shrink its escort fleet?**

<https://thinpinstripedline.blogspot.com/2023/11/too-few-people-for-too-many-ships.html>

"Perhaps the time has come to take a very hard look at medical standards and open them up considerably."



The blog is an interesting reflection about the Royal Navy (RN), but as far as recruiting goes, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has already reduced oversight of medical standards for recruits. Rather than run new recruits through CAF medical assessments, new recruits are asked to provide medical records from their own doctor which is then reviewed by the CAF prior to enrollment. There is a belief that in the recruiting stream people trying to join will be 'honest' in bringing in their medical files from their own doctor. Unfortunately and anecdotally there are those that slip through the system, make it into uniform and then it is discovered that they have medical conditions not previously disclosed for which the CAF is now on the hook to treat. Indeed, there have even been reports of folks claiming post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) post-basic training! (Yes, it's true.) The result is overburdening of what is already a challenged CAF medical system.

With respect to the blog's comments about a reduced personnel pool, Canadian naval staff have lamented this very condition, and for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) it's getting worse. Recruiting numbers continue to reduce and more uniformed folks are simply leaving – not just retiring. Unlike the RN, this is compounded by the fact that the RCN has ships that are now 30 years old and maintenance is now roughly six days for every one day at sea. Ships entering docking (extended maintenance) are now requiring even longer periods to get back into the tiered readiness programme, returning from industry docking periods yet still requiring a year for more maintenance work. The current operations tempo is unsustainable, not only for deployments but even simply trying to meet homeland requirements – coastal patrols surveilling the longest coastline in the world. Age and maintenance of ships is in fact reducing ship availability and readiness, compounded by a lack of healthy sailors.

The training system is backlogged, with naval officers awaiting training, numbering in the hundreds waiting for time at sea to progress their careers. Additionally, new platforms are adding to the strain as the RCN is faced with not only sustaining current platforms but is now faced with new cadres of qualifications required for the Joint Support Ship (JSS) and Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPV) project ships adding strain to an already stressed training regime.

There is no doubt as the ships continue to age more issues will arise that will preclude ships getting to sea, even for the most mundane of tasks. Compounded with poor recruiting numbers and high attrition rates, the RCN is in a crisis. At this point the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) project is not a panacea, simply due to delivery times – seven to ten years hence. The question in Canada's case is not to reduce numbers of ships, indeed it should be re-focussing efforts on balancing a fleet that can meet operational demands and training demands by way of platform mix – small and large, the focus should be on more numbers of small fast patrol platforms. "Strong, Secure, Engaged", the Canadian defence policy requirements, the most basic of maritime requirements, defence of Canada's maritime estate cannot currently be met.

As an example describing the RCN's condition (and their openness about it), see: "The CRITICAL state of the Royal Canadian Navy" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuD6Q1HXsKw>).

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And then an article (official policy in the marking?):

Senior Royal Navy officer calls for review of 'outdated' medical standards to help recruitment  
<https://www.forces.net/services/navy/navys-top-female-officer-calls-review-outdated-medical-standards-help-recruitment>

### Statement by Joint Expeditionary Force Ministers

<https://www.joint-forces.com/world-news/69275-statement-by-joint-expeditionary-force-ministers>

Ministers of Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) countries have agreed to activate a 'JEF Response option.' "This includes maritime and air capabilities which will deploy across the JEF's core region (northern Europe) as a military contribution to the protection of critical undersea infrastructure."

For us of the general public, should we wonder why a 'response option' for the first time is being activated, and to protect 'critical undersea infrastructure'? What intelligence indications have changed? Are the changes relevant to Canada and other North America continental countries? How would Canada and the other countries respond to an increased threat?





**‘Critical state’: Top Royal Canadian Navy officer sounds alarm on fleet’s readiness**

<https://breakingdefense.com/2023/11/critical-state-top-royal-canadian-navy-officer-sounds-alarm-on-fleets-readiness/>

"The head of the Royal Canadian Navy issued a remarkably blunt and public assessment of his own fleet, citing numerous shipbuilding and recruiting issues that threaten the service’s ability to meet its obligations in the near- and long-term."



The statement that "we aim to replace the Victoria class by the mid-2030s" is stunning given that there is no replacement program approved by government. The Norwegians officially approved their replacement program in 2014 and are aiming to have their first boat by 2029 (i.e., in 15 years). VAdm Topshee is suggesting that the RCN will somehow beat that timeline when government hasn't even signed off on the idea.

If this is representative of wishful thinking in the rest of the piece, then I would say that it is unlikely that all Halifax-class ships can be retained in service (and remain functional) until 2040. The UK is experiencing considerable challenges in running their Type 23 frigates (of similar age to the Halifax-class) just to the end of this decade and some into the early 2030s. Those ships are undergoing extensive additional life extensions and that is just to get another 10 years out of some of them.

I suspect that inflation will hit everything in the next few years, including service pay/personnel which is the main part of the budget. I don't see significantly more (or any) money coming in the next couple of years.

A Marine Technician leaves us every two days ... All in all, quite grim ...

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*Interesting to view the video in the context of the recent blog:*

Too Few People for Too Many Ships? Should the RN shrink its escort fleet?

<https://thinpinstripedline.blogspot.com/2023/11/too-few-people-for-too-many-ships.html>

*and article:*

Senior Royal Navy officer calls for review of 'outdated' medical standards to help recruitment

<https://www.forces.net/services/navy/navys-top-female-officer-calls-review-outdated-medical-standards-help-recruitment>

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*Video: The critical state of the Royal Canadian Navy*

<https://youtu.be/FuD6Q1HXsKw?si=51cZLPdLUcq1xOcB>

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*Follow-on interview: A "generational challenge" in naval readiness*

<https://paulwells.substack.com/p/a-generational-challenge-in-naval>

**Other Sources:**

**#A2R (attraction, recruitment and retention) Navy #United Kingdom #Royal Canadian Navy**

Too Few People for Too Many Ships? Should the RN shrink its escort fleet?

<https://thinpinstripedline.blogspot.com/2023/11/too-few-people-for-too-many-ships.html>

The same could probably be said (written) for the RCN.

## **#Arctic**

Our friends in the North: UK strategy towards the Arctic

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/360/international-relations-and-defence-committee/news/198697/our-friends-in-the-north-uk-strategy-towards-the-arctic/>

A report from the UK House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee. A comparison?

## **#artificial intelligence #Russia**

Struggling, Not Crumbling: Russian Defence AI in a Time of War

<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/struggling-not-crumbling-russian-defence-ai-time-war>

## **#Canadian Coast Guard**

Government of Canada announces construction of the Canadian Coast Guard's first-ever hybrid vessel in Gaspé

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-coast-guard/news/2023/10/government-of-canada-announces-construction-of-the-canadian-coast-guards-first-ever-hybrid-vessel-in-gaspe.html>

Diesel-electric hybrid vessel with a battery energy storage system.

## **#command**

What Military Commanders do and how they do it: Executive Decision-Making in the Context of Standardised Planning Processes and Doctrine

<https://sjms.nu/articles/10.31374/sjms.146>

War, PowerPoint and hypnotised chickens

<https://tidsskrift.dk/encounters/article/view/139807/183837>

## **#Department of National Defence**

Dedicated funding to commemorate the legacy of No. 2 Construction Battalion

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/11/dedicated-funding-to-commemorate-the-legacy-of-no-2-construction-battalion.html>

## **#drones**

Embracing automation and robotics in the modern ADF

<https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/land-power-forum/embracing-automation-and-robotics-modern-adf>

## **#information operations**

How disinformation shapes the Israeli-Hamas conflict—and millions of minds

<https://thebulletin.org/2023/11/narrative-warfare-how-disinformation-shapes-the-israeli-hamas-conflict-and-millions-of-minds/>

## **#land warfare**

The Pincer Effect

<https://tacticalnotebook.substack.com/p/the-pincer-effect-part-i>

<https://tacticalnotebook.substack.com/p/the-pincer-effect-part-ii>

<https://tacticalnotebook.substack.com/p/the-pincer-effect-part-iii>

<https://tacticalnotebook.substack.com/p/the-pincer-effect-part-iv>

## **#legal #Arctic**

Alaska senator makes new push to get Law of the Sea ratified

<https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2023/11/20/alaska-senator-makes-new-push-to-get-law-of-the-sea-ratified/>

## **#maritime security**

Ghost Ships Already wreak Havoc

<https://centerformaritimestrategy.org/publications/ghost-ships-are-already-wreaking-havoc/>

## **#policing**

Cartel Narco Tank With Cope Cage Anti-Drone Armor Emerges

<https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/cartel-narco-tank-with-cope-cage-anti-drone-armor-emerges>

The exchange of technology between the military and civil sectors (e.g., "narco-submarines") is at times interesting. Hmm, are police service going to now need anti-tank guided missiles?...

## **#reading**

Thinking about the Present by Reading from the Past

<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/war-books-thinking-about-the-present-by-reading-from-the-past/>

The Best Military Books We Read in 2023

<https://www.military.com/off-duty/books/2023/11/28/best-military-books-we-read-2023.html>

War Books: Comics Edition

<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/war-books-comics-edition/>

## **#Royal Canadian Air Force #defence procurement**

Date for CP-140 Aurora retirement quietly changed

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/as-dnd-pushed-for-boeing-p-8-aircraft-government-officials-quietly-fast-tracked-removal-of-aurora-planes>

## **#Russia-Ukraine War**

Ukrainian sabotage of Crimea bridge 'overturns' naval operations -intelligence head

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-sabotage-crimea-bridge-overturns-naval-operations-intelligence-head-2023-11-24/>

SODCIT = Strategic Operation for the Destruction of Critically Important Targets. Was Russian doctrine, no reason the Ukrainians dropped it.

Russia's Powerful Invisible Defenses Around Sevastopol Rendered Visible

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/11/russias-powerful-invisible-defenses-around-sevastopol-rendered-visible/>

Manpower becomes Ukraine's latest challenge as it digs in for a long war

<https://www.ft.com/content/25711074-5e1a-494a-9d7c-ccb535f671d5>

Again, as so (too) often, the demand is for more and capable infantry ("the poor bloody infantry"). A lesson for when designing force structure.

Another lesson: employ people per their abilities.

## **#drones**

Ukraine's Counter-Hybrid Campaigns in Cyberspace

<https://hcss.nl/report/ukraines-counter-hybrid-campaigns-in-cyberspace/>

Drones have boots: Learning from Russia's war in Ukraine

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2023.2262792>

American AI piloting pint-sized surveillance drones in Ukraine for war against Russia

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/us-news/american-ai-piloting-pint-sized-31530336>

## **#economic warfare**

Russia Bans Wheat Export Due To The Increasing Domestic Demand

<https://eurasiamedianetwork.com/russia-bans-wheat-export-due-to-the-increasing-domestic-demand/>

How much of it is stolen Ukrainian grain anyways? Hmm, are sanctions biting?

## **#information operations**

The deep winter freeze that wasn't

<https://euvsdisinfo.eu/the-deep-winter-freeze-that-wasnt/>

## **#strategy #China**

We have China's 'anti-access' challenge exactly backward

<https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2023/11/we-have-chinas-anti-access-challenge-exactly-backward/392346/>

A2AD should be a contra-China strategy and not seen as a Chinese strategy.

## **#submarines #Australia #Royal Canadian Navy**

Australian Nuclear-Powered Submarines: Addressing the Why? with RADM Buckley

podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/saltwater-strategists/2023-goldrick-seminar-australian-nuclear-powered-submarines-addressing-the-why-with-radm-buckley>

Normally this would be of minor interest only to RUSI(NS) (the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project is for a conventionally-powered boat) but of note, Matt Buckley was the last RAN exchange officer aboard a RCN Oberon-class sub. His successor, the first aboard the Victoria-class, is also a flag officer. Hmm, service aboard Canadian submarines appears to have its advantages!

## **#warfare**

The First (and Only) Law of Robotic Warfare

<https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2021/11/17/the-first-and-only-law-of-robotic-warfare>

"The law of robotic warfare can be stated as: the more precise the war machines, the more devastating one's own losses in a peer conflict."

## **#wargaming**

NATO Armies' Approaches to Wargaming 1949-2020

[https://coldwargoeshot.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/7/12075290/public\\_version.pdf](https://coldwargoeshot.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/7/12075290/public_version.pdf)

A Tale of Two Wargames: An Entirely Fictitious Tale of Wargaming Woe and Tragedy  
<https://warontherocks.com/2022/09/a-tale-of-two-wargames-an-entirely-fictitious-tale-of-wargaming-woe-and-tragedy/>

New Research into the History, Theory and Practice of Naval Wargaming  
[https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/143109168/New\\_Research\\_into\\_the\\_History\\_Theory\\_and\\_Practice\\_of\\_Naval\\_Wargaming\\_mariners\\_mirror.pdf](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/143109168/New_Research_into_the_History_Theory_and_Practice_of_Naval_Wargaming_mariners_mirror.pdf)

**Other:**

**Training**

With an ace up its sleeve – the US Army designs a deck of cards to help tell friends from foes  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_220573.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_220573.htm)

Whether army, navy or air, there will be times when one see the target. Best to have identification sorted out at that point (maybe not down to differentiating as detailed as some OSINTers can do - how many T-72 variants are there?). Flash cards are one of several techniques for that. Besides, flash cards and the like are a good way to learn platform capabilities.



**Drones**

*This has gotta change land warfare.*

🇺🇦 Ukrainian Front @front\_ukrainian 26 Nov posted  
[https://twitter.com/front\\_ukrainian/status/1728698508582990192](https://twitter.com/front_ukrainian/status/1728698508582990192): ⚡🇷🇺 Russian sources write that the Armed Forces of 🇺🇦 Ukraine, in addition to kamikaze aerial drones, are beginning to use remote-controlled ground drones. Mobile drones are maneuverable and silent. According to Russian soldiers, these drones have a heat sensor, as soon as they get close, the drone detonates



**Security Affairs Committee Synopsis**

**O Canada**

As RUSI(NS) we have been concerned about the lack of realistic policies in regard to security, foreign and defence all soundly based on understanding what Canada's national interests are. The idea that Canada operates in a post-national world is simplistic at best and has led to an inability to adjust to changing circumstances in a timely fashion. The world has become more nationalist in character and our country continues to pay a price for this action or inaction depending on one's point of view. Any

decisions in these areas have to have all-party agreement on the basics; details can be worked out separately and subject to disagreement.

One has also seen this week actions that are not in Canada's interests such as attaching new climate requirements on a nation in a state of war followed by a party that doesn't hold its nose and votes for supporting a country at war to get the job done. All sides seem to have taken a juvenile point of view on this issue. Ukraine needs support now in all its forms. The role of our politicians is to get the job done and support a friendly nation attacked in a monstrous manner in 2014.

Recently RUSI(NS) had the pleasure of hearing presentations from the Navy and Army Commanders. More recently, VAdm Topshee has publicly stated that the Navy will be unable to carry out the basic missions assigned to it due to severe manpower considerations. LGen Paul also stated the same concerns in regard to manpower and as VAdm Topshee stated in his presentation, the air force is likely in the same shape. Yet there seems to be little or no urgency in our political leaders despite the deteriorating world situation. It seems they have failed the most important job, that of the security of the country. This is whether border services improve their screening capacity at entry points, whether the RCMP has the necessary trained manpower to deal with foreign agents and foreign interference including the necessary legislation to back it up, whether the armed forces have the necessary manpower, resources and equipment to meet their tasks, whether the Coast Guard is properly equipped with ships and aircraft to meet their assigned tasks. Other departments also have a huge part to play as well in securing our future but there is no plan in place. Canadian governments have chosen a reactionary series of policies that continue to hamper efforts to re-equip in order to survive in a safe and secure future in a deteriorating world. It is better late than never to conduct a comprehensive series of interlocking national policies agreed to by all parties in Parliament.

Internal security usually seems to have a bad name but we have seen lately groups of people espousing anti-semitic language in large street demonstrations in Canadian cities which essentially call for the death to the Jews not only on behalf of Palestinians but use slogans from the outlawed terrorist organization, Hamas. CBC and other media outlets have also used Hamas-provided casualty numbers on numerous occasions without these numbers being verified by independent resources. Even stating a caveat that this includes a Hamas fighter but rather our media uses the basic figure without commenting how many are Hamas or Islamic Jihad fighters. If there was an indiscriminate attack by Israel, the casualty figures would be vastly higher. Keep in mind that Hamas itself has forcibly kept Palestinians in place despite Israeli warnings. Canada has displayed little understanding of the real situation and the current government seems to have swallowed a considerable amount of misinformation thus misinforming our own public. Truth is far away from this conflict.

Foreign interference action has not taken place as yet and the dates for the Parliamentary investigation has not been set as yet. Security is an after-thought apparently.

On the plus side the contract for the P-8 Poseidon should be signed next month thus hopefully ending the Bombardier last minute "hail Mary" attempt to acquire more money to produce an inadequate product used only by us. If they were truly interested in the project they should have had a real product to sell and not vaporware. Procurement of military equipment has been a political gravy train instead of looking out for the real needs of the country. RUSI(NS) produced a paper on this subject which is available through the RUSI(NS) website.

### **United States**

Despite having the most powerful military in the world, the US, particularly the US Navy, is stretched to meet the current international situation. The Navy has four carrier strike groups plus amphibious

groups at sea in key theatres including the Far East, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Although assisted by the UK which has deployed both its carriers in the Atlantic and Mediterranean to augment and off Japan in the Far East. Other countries such as Italy and France have also contributed. It does point out that the US is the global leader when effectively led. Only the United States can provide the overarching architecture to make multi-nation efforts possible. Although the US can act alone, it is not alone and can call in other sources from its international friends. It is not alone in its tasks. The BRICS and the China, Russia, Iran and North Korea cannot compete if the pro-Western group of countries are pressed.

### **Israel-Hamas**

As of mid-week, 50 Israelis and 150 Palestinians have been exchanged. Israel said it will extend the truce for a day for every ten hostages released in exchange for three times the number of Palestinians! Thais, one Filipino and one Russian-Israeli were also released under separate agreements.

Israel stated it will continue combat action once the truce is complete. Israel has struck targets in Lebanon and Syria related to Hamas, Hizbollah and Iran's IRGC.

Hamas has been giving an excellent example of how to provide massive disinformation to the world. It has been interesting to find how Western and other media have almost blindly accepted the Hamas story. It seems society in general is more than happy to support the concept of "bad Israelis" as the only Jewish state in the world but unwilling to accept that the Assad regime killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims in his attempt to remain in power. It is said anti-Semitism has no part in world demonstrations but anti-Israel demonstrations only take a slight scraping of the surface to find that it is anti-Semitic based. Hamas is a criminal terrorist organization. Their goal is the eradication of the Jewish people of Israel who are there legally. The word of Hamas should never be taken as truth.

### **Moldova**

Moldova is a small country wedged between Romania and Ukraine with a population of only 2.6m people. It was part of the Soviet Union and been subject to considerable political interference by the Russian Federation including the breakaway sub-state of Transnistria. Moldova is currently in line for ascension to the EU although it is one of the poorest countries in Europe. This week Moldova voted to support the EU's increased sanction regime against Russia. Moldova is considered next in line for a Russian attack if Ukraine falls. Moldova has stated its strong support for Ukraine and has supported relatively large numbers of Ukrainian refugees.

Moldova has a security program with the EU which also supports military modernization. Russia is expected to carry out further destabilizing attacks against Moldova.

### **Belarus**

Over the past week Belarus started a nationwide crackdown on dissidents in Belarus. More than a dozen have been arrested. Opposition leadership have said this is an ongoing response to throw opposition into turmoil before they can effectively organize. The randomness and unpredictability of these crackdowns destabilize opposition organizing efforts inside the country.

The exact number of Russian troops inside Belarus is unknown at present but well under peak numbers. Most are involved in aspects of training, logistics and security. At present there are no known Russian combat forces capable of action present in the country.

## Russia-Ukraine War

The war continues despite the deteriorating weather. Trench warfare is alive and well in the 21st century as is the concept of a war of attrition. President Putin has suggested that the war is a tragedy and that he has never been opposed to a negotiated settlement. Unfortunately, his idea of a settlement involves Ukraine being forced to give up four oblasts and the Crimea to Russia in favour of a Russian peace with guarantees. Both Putin and Defence Minister Shoigu have blamed the West for the war and that "realistic terms" have to be considered. Ukraine has stated Russia's position is unacceptable especially as Ukraine has taken back more than half the territory occupied and made most of the remaining territory dangerous for the occupiers. The bottom line is that this war will continue to consume men, equipment and resources of both sides. Russian actual losses are difficult to really calculate but budget requests within the defence for service estates and casualties is for over one million soldiers killed or wounded so far this war. This would be in line with some aspects of Ukrainian estimates as well.

The war is mainly static in the north although this week imagery has shown a gradual buildup of Russian troops in the north despite allocating many formations further south to Bakhmut and Avdiivka. Russian troops have continued low-level platoon to company-sized attacks in this area making only minor gains of little consequence at this time. The Bakhmut area is at a virtual stalemate although there has been some success near the north end of Klischchiivka, a town just to the south of Bakhmut, but again of little tactical value at this point. The town of Avdiivka has well-developed Ukrainian defence positions with concrete bunkers as well-developed trenches. Daily current losses in this campaign exceed 900 troops per day, an all-time high casualty rate. Further south near Robotyne, although there is nearly constant fighting, there is little change on the ground. Further south, near Krynky, Ukrainians have placed a battalion-sized force across the Dnipro which has pushed several kms south to provide fire on the Russian main supply route for the area. If cut completely, this would make most forward positions untenable. Ukraine has as many as two pontoon bridges in operation plus ferries. Other areas south of Krynky have also had Ukrainian crossings which established bridgeheads. Russia's problem is that this area's defences were denuded to place greater number of troops at Avdiivka and Bakhmut at the expense of the south. There is a potential for major Ukrainian exploitation if they can get sufficient resources across the river.

What should cause Russian concern is the steady drip of sabotage of key industries which appears to be rising across Russia. This includes mysterious explosions and fires far away from the front, derailed trains, damaged infrastructure and the continuing downward spiral of Russian aviation industry due to Western sanctions. Ukraine and Russia have also stepped up missile and drone attacks on each other with the largest Russian attack occurring on the commemoration of Holodomor on 10 November when they launched 75 drones and one missile at Kyiv. 74 were destroyed by Ukrainian air defences of the city. The next day Kyiv launched 35 drones with some success if Russian civilian video can be believed. Several power facilities were hit as well. Russia has been forced to spread out its air defences and there are large holes. They have removed air defences from Kaliningrad this past week to compensate. It seems Ukraine is now better equipped to deal with this problem than Russia but time will tell.

Another Russian innovation this week is the large scale poisoning with heavy metals of Ukrainians including the wife of LGen Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukrainian military intelligence. This was not a wise decision and are the actions of a dishonourable person. One suspects that the Ukrainian response will be cold and premeditated and it will likely hurt.

The last point is the rise of the Mothers of Serving Soldiers is now getting some notice. This again is not a good sign as it was the mothers of Soviet troops in Afghanistan that led to the withdrawal from



that benighted country. The National Guard has been deployed to areas affected by increasing meetings of mothers and their supporters although the numbers involved are unknown at this point. It does mean they are not available for military service as a result. Will history repeat itself? Security forces have mothers as well; shooting and arresting mothers is not bound to make a post-Soviet soldier or policeman happy so all bets are off. Time obviously will tell. Recent commentary on the Russian streets across the country show most Russians are not entirely happy with the war with 70% happy if things are left in a frozen condition. It drops considerably if Russia is forced to return to the 1991 borders. No matter what the outcome, Vladimir Putin is no longer fire proof.

Russia has just changed criteria for service thus making a pool of up to 11m from 9m available for military service. Ukraine has done something similar but they do not have access to the numbers that Russia has. A long war is not in Ukraine's best interests. Nor are brutal meat wave attacks used by the Russians. The Russians seem willing to afford these losses, the Ukrainians not so much. Russia does have the manpower resources but this manpower is not well trained and the motivation of these troops is not good either by most accounts including Russian. Strikingly, Russian men of military age are still leaving the country although restrictions have ramped up more recently.

The Russian economy continues a steady but slow descent with estimates of a drop in 2% in the economy this year. Inflation is nearly 6% but actually may be quite a bit higher and this is likely to continue to be an ongoing problem. The ruble is expected to lose more value; it is presently worth about 100 rubles to the USD although at its lowest it reached 135 rubles to the USD. Russian foreign currency reserves are now at an all-time low and most is now in currencies that are of limited value such as the Chinese yuan and the Indian rupee, neither of which can be used in most international trade situations thus Russia's continued ability to fight the inevitable collapse is running low. Sanctions on Russia continue to bite and are being reinforced by most Western allies of Ukraine. It prevents Russia from getting the necessary technology to build new weapons systems and ammunition especially sophisticated aircraft, missiles and drones. Will China and perhaps some of the other BRICS help out? The answer is generally no due to the ramifications of being caught circumventing allied sanctions and so there is a coming problem whether Putin likes it or not.

### **North Korea**

North Korea launched a reconnaissance satellite now nicknamed "golden eye." It has been a victory of sorts for North Korea, and Kim Jong Un has been photographed gleefully examining the product delivered by this system including a picture of the White House. There have been consequences, as South Korea has partially withdrawn from a 2018 agreement which provided guidance for future peace discussions. North Korea responded by cancelling the agreement outright. They also have been pouring troops into the area of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This includes reconstruction of eleven former guard posts along the DMZ. Seoul has also responded by increasing surveillance and reconnaissance units in the area.

North Korea has much larger military forces which also include ballistic missiles, and nuclear weapons. The armed forces is approximately 1.7m personnel mainly in ground forces. They have an extensive supply of weapons and ammunition some of which is finding its way into Russia. The troops themselves are poorly trained and unable to do any more than the most rudimentary maintenance on its equipment therefore their ability to fight will likely be short lived due to poor to non-existent logistics. They are an armed forces of the 1960s. This being said most of its conventional equipment for all three major services are obsolete although in vast numbers. The main enemy of the North is its own dysfunction caused by corruption, poor planning, sanctions by most countries, agricultural failure, malnutrition, poor training, few if any industrial standards and an inability to feed itself. North Korea is as dangerous to its own people as their alleged enemy and probably more so at this point in time

## **Myanmar**

The civil war is becoming less civil as rebel forces have now gained a good sized portion of the land. Generally the junta does not have the support of the people and it is likely to fall fairly shortly. China has activated border units and are conducting live-fire exercises next to the border. China has made a point of stating that it supports neither side in the conflict but will protect its interests. Myanmar border guards are notoriously corrupt and are alleged to be running various scams aimed at Chinese citizens along the mutual border. China is not likely to be too disturbed if the military junta collapses.

## **China**

China's economy continues to deteriorate especially in the property management sector. The central government seems to want to throw more money to stabilize the property development sector. Their plans are now encompassing the shadow banking system by forcing them to provide easier loans to the selected list of property management companies. Some might suggest these potential loans might be untenable in the long term and puts the banks, both the visible and the shadow system, at risk. At present the local government debt is approximately 9t yuan. These lower governments are nearly totally dependent on ensuring the success of the property development sector which constitutes about 35% of the total Chinese gross national product and absolutely essential at the regional government level for income. This forced loan program will delay a much needed but painful transition to a new method of operation. The real trouble is whether the party is willing to undergo the transition to a more market driven system. Many observers including those in China are now concerned that more dogmatic members of the CCP will stop such a transition as they have become very comfortable with the current system which allows the party elite to skim riches off the top to support their life style. Western firms and some Chinese firms have now voted with their feet as they leave China. The situation is such that more money is leaving China rather than being invested in the country. This pessimism is likely to continue.

This week saw the start of the China International Supply Chain Exposition . The star speaker on 28 November 2023 was China's Premier Li Qiang. His key talk discussed the need for sustainment of the global supply system and that China was a key part of that system, providing the skill, technology and manpower to make the current global system a success. He attacked the notion of de-risking stating that it was a bad idea by blocking access to China's factories and excludes China from the necessary technology to help improve their systems. Protectionism was the real enemy for global economic success as reported in the Chinese media.

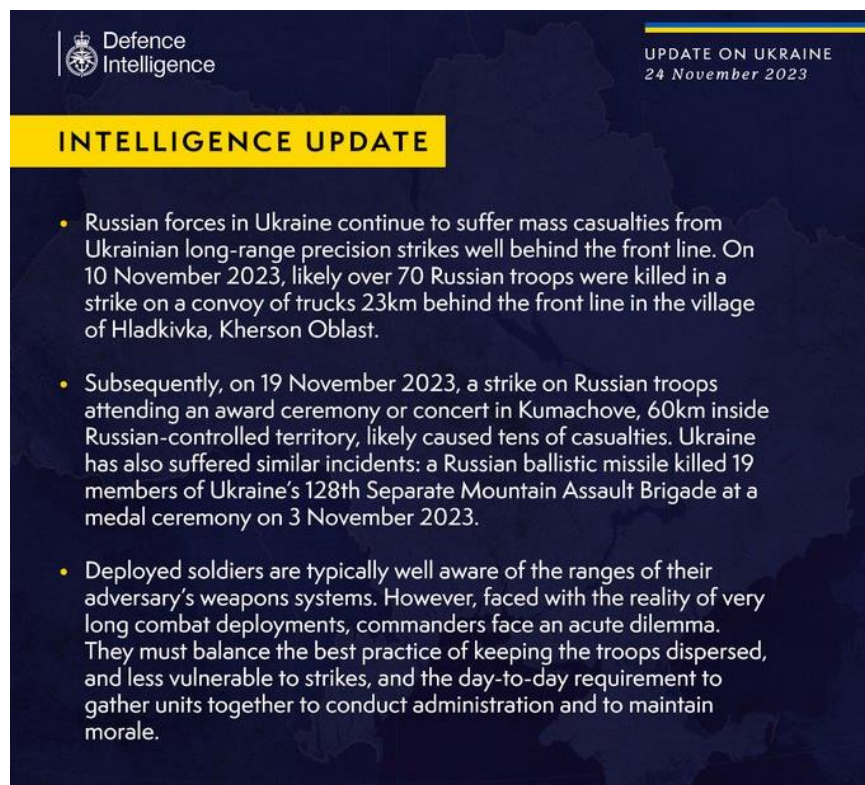
One of the more disturbing ideas being floated within China is the grid system. It is a system by which each grid square would have a senior official to oversee the grid to support him. He or she would have a citizens volunteer force of untrained informers that would be able to call out people who flaunt the rules or conduct themselves in a manner that is "unhelpful." It appears to be a throwback to a degree to Mao's Cultural Revolution Days and is likely to be equally a bad idea as literally millions died in that era.

The real reason appears to be to prevent people from rising where Mao's effort was to use the people to maintain stability by empowering the people. Xi appears to want it to be able to control the people by a system of local informer/enforcers in each area. This would prevent demonstrations on say a banking failure as but one example. Police would help support these teams but the police themselves would now become a national force vice under the control of the provincial leadership. This allows greater central control over security forces overall. This is a system that is used in Xinjiang Province as an example to quell Uyghur unrest. One must remember the primary goal underlying everything is the survival of the

party, therefore social stability is absolutely necessary for success in the primary goal. Until now, party success in the economy has been largely successful, but the recent economic headwinds have potentially changed this equation.

Why this change? The answer may be because the armed forces are under the control of persons that may or may not be loyal to Xi. Xi has purged whole services of the armed forces such as the Navy and Strategic Rocket Forces amongst the most recent. It does cause one to wonder whether Xi actually views the armed forces as loyal to Xi. He had replaced some leadership earlier with Xi faction faithful, unfortunately, they have proven less than honest and an embarrassment to Xi's anti-corruption efforts. Although leadership has changed, most of the middle management has been brought up under previous party factions. Can the PLA be trusted? The answer is questionable.

China is not a good place to invest or conduct business.



The slide features a dark blue background with a faint map of Ukraine. In the top left corner is the Defence Intelligence logo, which includes a crown and a shield. In the top right corner, the text reads 'UPDATE ON UKRAINE' and '24 November 2023'. A yellow horizontal bar with the text 'INTELLIGENCE UPDATE' is positioned below the header. The main content consists of three bullet points.

Defence Intelligence

UPDATE ON UKRAINE  
24 November 2023

**INTELLIGENCE UPDATE**

- Russian forces in Ukraine continue to suffer mass casualties from Ukrainian long-range precision strikes well behind the front line. On 10 November 2023, likely over 70 Russian troops were killed in a strike on a convoy of trucks 23km behind the front line in the village of Hladkivka, Kherson Oblast.
- Subsequently, on 19 November 2023, a strike on Russian troops attending an award ceremony or concert in Kumachove, 60km inside Russian-controlled territory, likely caused tens of casualties. Ukraine has also suffered similar incidents: a Russian ballistic missile killed 19 members of Ukraine's 128th Separate Mountain Assault Brigade at a medal ceremony on 3 November 2023.
- Deployed soldiers are typically well aware of the ranges of their adversary's weapons systems. However, faced with the reality of very long combat deployments, commanders face an acute dilemma. They must balance the best practice of keeping the troops dispersed, and less vulnerable to strikes, and the day-to-day requirement to gather units together to conduct administration and to maintain morale.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Russia's Black Sea Fleet's (BSF) ability to use its Novorossiysk base to reload vessels with cruise missiles is likely to become a significant factor in the fleet's operational effectiveness.
- Traditionally, BSF has reloaded cruise missiles at Sevastopol in Crimea. With that facility increasingly held at risk by Ukrainian long range strikes, Russia will highly likely see Novorossiysk as the best alternative site. However, relocating and reloading the missiles would require new delivery, storage, handling and loading processes.
- On 13 November 2023, the Ukrainian military claimed that Russia has paused firing maritime cruise missiles because of 'logistical problems' at Novorossiysk. Russia will likely seek to expedite overcoming such issues in time for maritime cruise missiles to be included in any winter campaign of strikes against Ukraine.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Exceptional Russian air transport movements through November 2023 suggest that Russia has likely moved strategic air defence systems from its Baltic coast enclave of Kaliningrad, to backfill recent losses on the Ukraine front.
- This follows an uptick in losses of SA-21 air defence systems in Russian-occupied Ukraine in late October 2023.
- As its most westerly outpost and bordered on three sides by NATO member states, Russia sees Kaliningrad as one of its most strategically sensitive regions. The fact that the Russian MoD appears willing to accept additional risk here highlights the overstretch the war has caused for some of Russia's key, modern capabilities.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Throughout November 2023, Russian casualties, as reported by the Ukrainian General Staff, are running at a daily average of 931 per day.
- Previously, the deadliest reported month for Russia was March 2023 with an average of 776 losses per day, at the height of Russia's assault on Bakhmut.
- Although Defence Intelligence cannot verify the methodology, taken as a total including both killed and wounded, the figures are plausible.
- The last six weeks have likely seen some of the highest Russian casualty rates of the war so far. The heavy losses have largely been caused by Russia's offensive against the Donbas town of Avdiivka.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- In recent days, Russian forces have made further small advances on the northern axis of a pincer movement as part of their attempt to surround the Donbas town of Avdiivka.
- Since the start of October 2023, Russian forces have moved the front line forwards up to 2km in this area. Although modest, this advance likely represents one of the greatest Russian gains since spring 2023. It has cost the units involved thousands of casualties.
- This operation is gradually bringing Russian troops closer to the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical plant, where Ukrainian forces maintain one of their main defensive positions. Although Avdiivka has become a salient or bulge in the Ukrainian front line, Ukraine remains in control of a corridor of territory approximately 7km wide, through which it continues to supply the town.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Through November 2023, the Russian air force has likely started to more frequently employ the RBK-500 500kg cluster munition bomb. Depending on the variant, each RBK-500 ejects between approximately 100 and 350 sub-munitions. In turn, each sub-munition typically detonates with either hundreds of high-velocity fragments, or a single, larger anti-tank charge.
- RBK-500 are reported to have been deployed against Ukrainian forces on the Vuhledar axis and near Avdiivka, both in Donetsk Oblast. There is a realistic possibility that, as with other air-dropped bombs, Russia has likely recently integrated a UMPC guided stand-off glide kit with RBK-500. This allows the carrying aircraft to release the munition many kilometres away from the target.
- Russia's glide bomb kits have generally achieved poor accuracy. However, with its large number of sub-munitions, a single RBK-500 can cause effects over an area of several hundred metres, increasing the chance of inflicting at least some damage on the intended target.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Russia's airborne forces, the VDV, has likely started deploying the newly formed 104th Guards Airborne Division (104 GAD) in Ukraine for the first time. The division is probably assembling in Kherson Oblast.
- In August 2023, Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu announced plans to re-establish 104 GAD, which was previously downsized to a smaller, brigade-sized formation in 1998. Its subordinate units likely include the 337th regiment, an additional manoeuvre regiment, and the 52nd Artillery Brigade.
- With the addition of the 104 GAD, the number of divisions in the VDV's order of battle will increase to five. The division will likely be poorly trained and is unlikely to meet the erstwhile elite standards of the VDV. It will almost certainly receive close scrutiny from the Russian General responsible for Kherson, General Colonel Mikhail Teplinsky; his routine role is overall commander of the VDV.