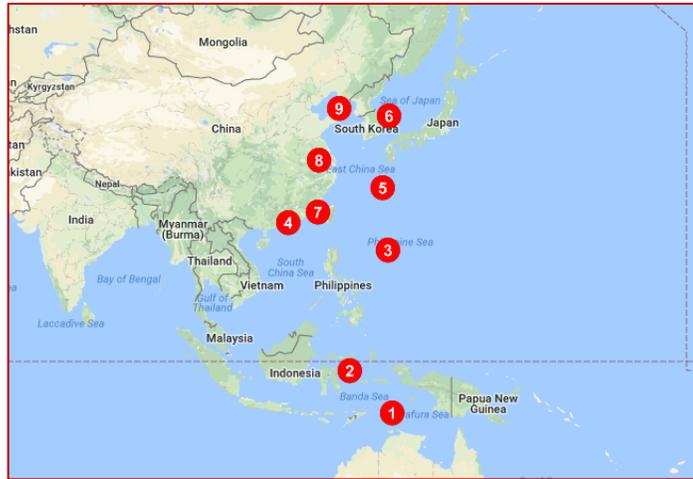




Asia Pacific CRISIS WATCH

(26 MAR-1 APR 18)



- The US is Sending Marines to Australia in a Direct Threat to China** 29 MAR. The Australian Defense Minister announced that the U.S. will deploy over 1,587 Marines to Australia—a record number—in a move likely to annoy regional naval power China. China has recently strengthened its foothold in the South China Sea, against the wishes of several Southeast Asian neighbours. (newsweek)
- USNS MERCY, Pacific Partnership Mission Arrive in Indonesia:** 29 MAR. U.S. and partner nation service members participating in Pacific Partnership 2018 arrived in Bengkulu, Indonesia aboard the U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). The mission in Bengkulu will continue through April 12 and will feature mission personnel working side-by-side with Indonesian medical professionals, participating in civil engineering projects, conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) readiness drills, and partnering in community outreach engagements in the local Bengkulu community. (c7f.navy)
- Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group (TRCSG) Returns to 7th Fleet:** 26 MAR. The TRCSG returned to 7th Fleet after successfully completing more than four months in the Arabian Gulf and U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations supporting maritime security, theater security cooperation, and Operations Inherent Resolve and Freedom’s Sentinel against ISIS. At the direction of U.S. 7th Fleet, TRCSG will conduct a variety of operations, enhancing interoperability and communication with partners and allies throughout the AOO. (c7f.navy)
- USS Sterett Visits Hong Kong** 27 MAR. The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104) arrived in Hong Kong for a port visit after a stretch of operations in the Indo-Pacific. (c7f.navy)
- Key Resolve & Foal Eagle Exercises Between South Korea and the United States** 1 APR. According to the South Korean military and US Pentagon, the postponed (due to PyeongChang Olympics) joint military exercises has started on April 1. Korean authorities said Foal Eagle exercise that is to be halved in length from two months to one but US authorities stressed that the exercises would be held at the same scale and duration as previous iterations. (koreaherald)

Assessment:

It is assessed that the increase in the number of marines deployment to Australia may be considered a sign of cooperation and collaboration between Australia and the US against China. It is also expected Australia may send a military ship to South China Sea to support FONOPs.

The mission of Pacific Partnership is to contribute working collectively with host and partner nations' assets to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities while increasing stability and security in the region.

After 6 months deployment, The TRCSG's most probably transit to home port San Diego by way of Pacific Ocean and supporting 7th Fleet Operations during the transit to homeport San Diego The presence of ships like Sterett in the Indo-Pacific help preserve peace / security, conduct FONOPs and further ties with partners and allies in Foal Eagle joint exercise.

The differences in the statements by the two countries' militaries on Key Resolve Exercises appear to suggest the S. Korean military wants to keep the exercise as low-key as possible, as Seoul awaits a diplomatic breakthrough with N. Korea in an inter-Korean summit in April and a US- Korea summit in May. It is possible that THAAD ballistic missile defence system will be a part of the exercise, as well.

China's military objected to a recent "freedom of navigation" patrol by a US warship within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef, a Chinese artificial island in the South China Sea. It is assessed China want to give a message with its enhanced military presence in the South China Sea in accord with the level of military threat posed by US patrols in the area. It is possible China will have more of such training activities in the region near future.

As a first foreign trip of North Korean leader to China to show China's effect on North Korea just earlier than an inter-Korean summit between North and South Korea in April and a US-North Korea summit in May, the meeting is remarkable.

It is possible that the Type 001A carrier may have its first sea trial on 23 April which is Navy Day in China depending on sea and weather condition. So, the first domestically built aircraft carrier will be an important message to the region countries and particularly to the US as a symbol to announce China determination and ability.

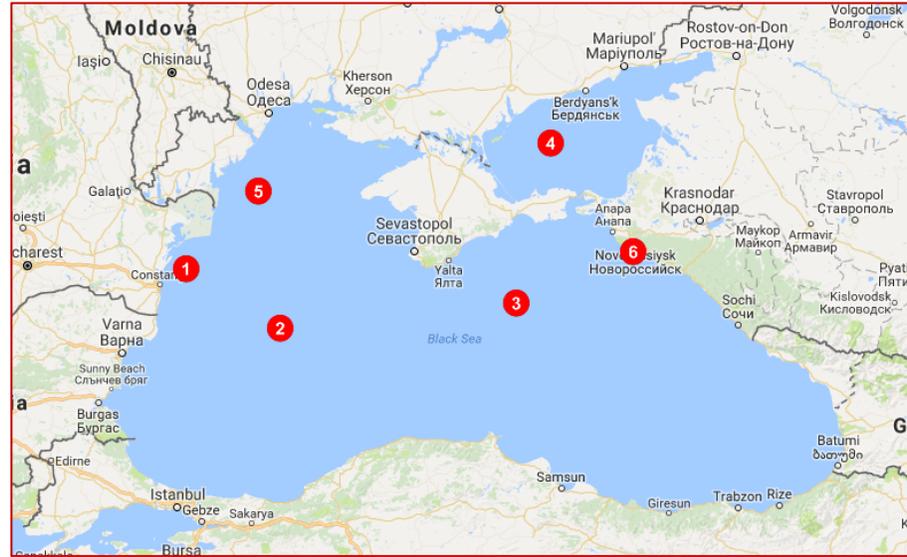
There is obviously no trust between S. Korea and Japan from historical perspective even they are on same (U.S.) side against N. Korea threat. The only security issue about North Korea makes together South Korea and Japan with the understanding of "My enemy's enemy is my ally". It possibly means S. Korea and Japan relations may be damaged if N. Korea normalizes in future.

- Seoul Protests over Disputed Island Claims in Japan's Textbooks:** 31 MAR. Tokyo approved guidelines requiring high school textbooks and teachers to tell pupils that the islands are Japan's, mirroring measures applied last year in elementary and middle schools. S.Korea summoned Tokyo's ambassador to protest over new educational guidelines requiring high school students to be taught that disputed islands belong to Japan. (japantoday)
- Chinese Warships Conducted Live-Fire Exercises in Contested Waters** 29 MAR. An aircraft carrier, dozens of warships and some submarines in the region conducted live-fire exercises. A spokesman for China's defence ministry said the Chinese military aimed to enhance its "war-fighting capabilities" without departing from a policy of peaceful development with its recent large-scale naval drills in the contested South China Sea. He also stressed it was one of the "routine" exercises in line with China's "defensive" military policy and that its South China Sea activities posed no threat to other countries. (scmp)
- North Korea's President Kim, Jong-Un Visited China** 27 MAR. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has made his first foreign trip to China since assuming power in 2011. Both leaders exchanged their views on important matters, including the development of North Korea-China friendly relations and the issue of handling the situation of the Korean Peninsula. But, there was no mention of Kim telling Chinese president Xi Jinping that he was committed to denuclearisation. N. Korea Central News Agency said that Kim wanted to further deepen the countries' relationships. (cnn)
- China Prepares Aircraft Carrier for Sea Trial:** 28 MAR. China's first domestically built carrier, known as the Type 001A, is undergoing preparations for its first sea trial. According to the latest online photos from the Dalian Shipbuilding Industry Company (DSIC) construction site in Liaoning Province, where the carrier was launched and outfitted, the scaffolds on the carrier have been completely removed, and a phased array radar has been installed. (globaltimes.cn)



Black Sea CRISIS WATCH

(26 MAR-1 APR 18)



Assessment:

- Military Schengen Zone Plan, for the Black Sea region, would serve to bolster the defences of Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine. However, negative effects on Euro-Atlantic bloc's cohesion are observed due to some recent developments such as Brexit, internal problems of the U.S. and its strategic priority shift to Pacific to balance China, cumbersome decision making mechanisms and years-of-decline in defence expenditures of the EU. Without dealing with those issues, the defence of the pact would not be comprehensive at all.
- Two completely opposite comments came about Rosneft and Eni's drill in the Black Sea recently. One of them says the well is dry, while the other claims it's prolific. Suspicion keeps going on the subject.
- In addition to Turkish Stream, ongoing uncertainty over Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the Baltics might force Russia find new gas markets and EU find new supplies. In this complexity, Russia is highly likely to block Central Asian gas to go to Europe as much as she could to preserve its energy dominance over the EU. In return, EU appears to substitute to LPG instead.
- According to Biden & Carpenter (Foreign Affairs, Jan-Feb '18), "Russia has sought to weaken and subvert Western democracies from the inside by weaponizing information, cyberspace, energy, and corruption." the news titled 'Russia Accuses Ukraine of Hijacking Crimean Fishing Vessel in Violation of International Law' is an example of weaponizing information. Even if it's a factual story or not, the flow of the news imply that innocent Russian fishermen were detained by Ukrainian officials unlawfully. However the world aware that Russia annexed that region of Ukraine 'in violation of international law' let alone 10 fishermen's abuse by Ukraine.
- As the defence minister stated Romania seems to have taken the most active role among Black Sea littoral NATO members and partners for deterrence and protection (if needed) against Russian aggression.
- While almost all the NATO and EU countries expelled Russian diplomats as a response to Salisbury nerve agent attack; Turkey, as a NATO member and EU nominee, continues its warming relations with Russia uninterrupted.

1. EU Outlines Plans for 'Military Schengen Zone': 28 Mar. The EU wants to streamline military movements across the bloc and make infrastructure more suitable for military use. Unveiled plans are to lower barriers for moving military equipment and troops across Europe amid rising concern of Russian aggression. The ultimate vision is to create a European Defense Union by 2025 and meet NATO priorities for swift military movements. (DW)

2. Russia's Rosneft Claims to Wrap Up Black Sea Appraisal Drilling: 28 Mar. Russian state oil giant Rosneft said the company has completed the drilling of the first super deep exploration and appraisal well, Maria-1, on the Zapadno-Chernomorskaya license area offshore the Black Sea together with Italy's ENI, Rosneft's strategic partner. According to Rosneft, the drilling of the well led to the discovery of a unique carbonate structure, with 300 meters gross interval. The structure constitutes a fractured reservoir that is highly likely to contain hydrocarbons. The results have instilled confidence in the possibility that large oil and gas fields in Russia's Black Sea waters can be discovered. (NewEurope)

However, last week, on March 21, Reuters reported citing a source close to the operations that Rosneft (ROSN.MM) and Eni (ENI.MI) did not make a commercial oil discovery in the Black Sea as the well they were drilling proved to be dry.

3. Gazprom to Start Dismantling Its South Gas Corridor Pipelines: 29 Mar. Russia's Gazprom has lost hope of turning the Turkish Stream project into a gas pipeline for large-scale export to Europe. The company is preparing to begin dismantling its South Gas Corridor pipelines, which were initially built with the expectation of South Stream, and then redirected to Turkey as Turk Stream. This was, according to the plan, supposed to supply 63 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Turkey and the EU. However, the framework agreement with Ankara could be concluded with just two threads of "flow" instead of four. Because of the twofold reduction in the capacity of the Turkish flow, Gazprom did not need 506 kilometres of pipes laid over the southern part of the country. At the moment, Gazprom continues to lay its two threads of the Turkish Stream on the bottom of the Black Sea with a total capacity of 31.5 billion cubic meters. (Georgia Today)

4. Russia Accuses Ukraine of Hijacking Crimean Fishing Vessel in 'Violation of International Law': 29 Mar. Ukrainian border guards detained the Russian-flagged fishing vessel and its crew of 10 in the Sea of Azov on March 25, on charges of illegally crossing the border. According to TASS news agency, The Crimea Office of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has charged the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine with hijacking over the incident. The vessel's owner has appealed for Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to ensure the safety of its crew of Russian nationals, Interfax reported. (The Moscow Times)

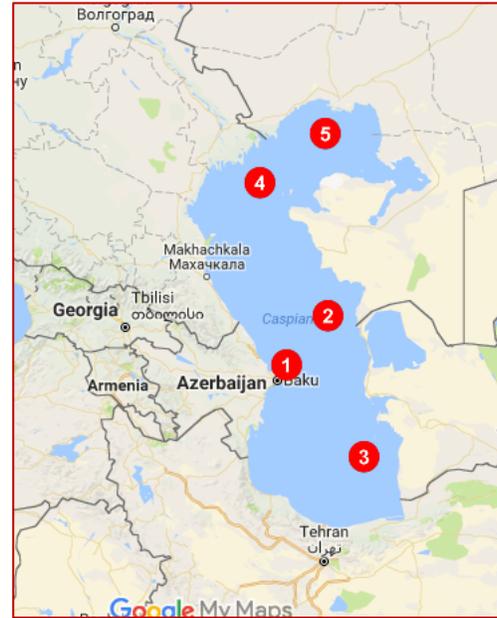
5. Romania Pays Close Attention to Black Sea Developments, Wants Subject on NATO Summit Agenda: 29 Mar. Minister of National Defence Mihai Fifor said that Romania is paying close attention to developments in the Black Sea region after Crimea's illegal annexation by the Russian Federation and wants the subject to be entered on the agenda of the NATO Summit this summer. "It's no secret to anyone that after the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 the Russian Federation has continuously strengthened [its forces] in this area. We are very attentive to all these developments because, through the capacities it develops, Romania has in this point the most important deterrence and protection role in case of need," Fifor mentioned.

6. Turkish Naval Exercise in the Black Sea: 27 Mar. Turkish Navy conducts an annual exercise named Sea Star in the Black Sea on 27 March – 7 April. The ships would pay scheduled visits to ports of all the five littorals in the Black Sea, including Russian port Novorossiysk. (TurkishNavy.Net)



Caspian Sea CRISIS WATCH

(26MAR-1 APR 18)



Assessment:

The upcoming Astana summit; Azerbaijan-Iran MoU on the Caspian blocks can be seen as the predecessor of the agreement between Azerbaijan and Iran on the delimitation of their adjacent sectors in the Caspian Sea. Off-shore Alov-Araz-Sharg fields are undoubtedly in Azeri sector according to median line principle which can be seen as customary delimitation principle on the base of equity and proportionality. We don't know what at stake was between Azerbaijan and Iran, but agreement on the joint development of Alov-Araz-Sharg fields is apparently in the expense of Azerbaijan's sovereign rights. On the other hand, the railway deal complements the recent tri-lateral partnership among Russia, Iran, and Azerbaijan and marks the axis shift of Azerbaijan from the West towards the Eurasia and SCO.

The deep economic crisis in Turkmen economy might mislead the government to accept short-term economic gains in the expense of their legal rights for the Caspian Sea (e.g. to lay pipelines on its own section of the sea) which would provide a lot more in mid/long-term.

Iran-Turkmenistan summit; the most important topic on the agenda was agreements on hydrocarbons production and transportation; however, we witnessed no deal on hydrocarbons. This might be the sign of lack of agreement on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea and lack of Iran's consent on Trans-Caspian Pipeline between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

[North Caspian Operating Company, might influence the ongoing negotiations over the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.](#) The company is comprised of energy giants: Eni, ExxonMobile, KazMunayGas, Shell, Total (each holding 16.81% share), CNPC (8.4%) and Inpex (7.56%). Since those companies' common policy is, normally, profit maximization they might support oil transport via pipelines, which is cheaper, rather than tankers.

Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC)'s recent expansion plan is probably for the Kashagan's excess production. CPC, in line with Russia's Central Asian energy policy, wants the energy flow go through Russia for economic, political and strategic purposes.

- Tehran-Ashgabat sign 13 pacts, MoUs:** 27 Mar. Iran and Turkmenistan signed 13 cooperation documents and memoranda of understanding in Ashgabat. The inked documents were in cultural, artistic, scientific, educational, customs, agriculture, aviation and youth&sports fields. (Mehr News)
- Kashagan Field's Promising Role in the Trans-Caspian Trade:** Kazakhstan's offshore Kashagan oilfield, the biggest single oilfield discovered in the world since 1968, is steadily pumping 300,000bbl/d. The next step is the achievement of full design capacity, 370,000bbl/d, in the context of Kashagan's first development phase. As for Phase 2, the aim is to take production of the field's notably sulphurous oil up to 450,000bbl/d. For the time being, westbound oil export from Kashagan is carried via pipeline to Novorossiysk/Russia and then by the sea. As soon as Phase 2 is launched, the territory of Azerbaijan will emerge as an additional export corridor for Kashagan's oil via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. Oil is planned to be transferred to Kuryk port by an on-shore pipeline and then via tankers to Baku. However, other options are also being reviewed. (Caspian Policy Center)
- Caspian Pipeline Consortium to Expand Its Capacity:** 27 Mar. Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), comprised of Russian, Western, and Kazakh oil companies, which carries petroleum from Northern Caspian to Novorossiysk port on the Black Sea, will expand its capacity from 35 million metric tons annually (MMTA) to 67 MMTA. Incremental volumes of crude oil production and supply from Kazakhstan and Russia will use the expanded capacity. (CPC)

1. Azerbaijan-Iran Signed Ground-Breaking Agreements: 28 Mar. Memorandum of Understanding on the Joint Development of Relevant Blocks in the Caspian Sea was signed. Note that between Baku and Tehran there were serious disagreements regarding the delimitation of the Caspian seabed and joint energy cooperation at sea. In July 2001, Iranian warships attacked the Azerbaijani research vessel Caspian Geophysical, which was exploring the block of offshore Alov-Araz-Sharg fields. Since then, the work there has been discontinued. Among the signed agreements, the financing of the construction of the Astar-Rasht railway section in the territory of Iran attracts attention. Azerbaijan will provide Iran with a \$ 500 million loan for the construction of this railway, which is part of the North-South transport corridor. (Azvision, Azertag, Contact.az)

2. Uncertainty over Caspian Sea Legal Status: The conflict between Ashgabat and Tehran has been growing. The parties cannot come to agreement on how Iran will be paying its debt for the supplied Turkmen natural gas, this is accompanied by controversial issues of the Caspian Sea. Delaying the problem could lead to a breakdown in signing the Caspian Sea status agreement at the Caspian summit to be held this year in Astana. Ilgar Velizade, the head of the «South Caucasus» Club of Political Experts, said «having solved the problems with the Caspian Sea, the parties can start implementing their projects. Turkmenistan hopes to deliver its gas in a western direction, and the unresolved legal issues on the Caspian are hampering this. There are difficulties between Baku and Ashgabat over the Serdar/Kapaz gas field in the Caspian Sea. The dispute has not been settled, but Baku managed to withdraw this dispute even beyond the framework of bilateral relations. It is as if by itself. And Ashgabat was once going to appeal to international arbitration to resolve the dispute.» According to Velizade, much will be decided depending on how Turkmenistan can settle problems with other Caspian countries. And in this light, the decision of the Turkmen-Iranian dispute is important for the entire Caspian region. (EADaily)



Horn of Africa CRISIS WATCH

(26 MAR-1 APR 18)



1. Theodore Roosevelt Supports U.S. 5th Fleet's Operations
 26 MAR. The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) and the ships of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 9 have performed operations within the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations since December 2017. They conducted Operations Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) against ISIS. They have launched more than 1,000 sorties in support of OIR and OFS. Primary tasking includes close air support for coalition forces on the ground and defensive counter air patrols in addition to flying sorties in support of the strike group. (cusnc.navy)

2. FS Jean De Vienne in Support of CTF-150 Seizes over 530 kg of Heroin in Arabian Sea
 27 MAR. The French Marine Nationale destroyer Jean de Vienne secured ITS second drug seizure this year in support of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150. A total of 530 kilograms (kgs) of heroin was seized during an operation in the international waters of the Arabian Sea. Jean de Vienne's seizure is the tenth for CTF150 since January this year; which together with Her Majesty's Australian Ship Warramunga and Pakistani Naval Ship Aslat totals in excess of 22 tonnes of narcotics seized. The Jean de Vienne tracked a dhow to investigate further and determined the vessel was suspicious. Boarding teams from Jean de Vienne then conducted a non-destructive search of the vessel and found 20 bags of heroin weighing a total of 530 kgs, value of over \$120 million USD. After a thorough search, the illegal narcotics were recorded and transferred to Jean de Vienne for safe destruction at sea. In 2018, multinational assets in support of CTF150 have seized over 22 tonnes of hashish and over 2 tonnes of heroin, valued street value in excess of \$1.6 billion USD. (combinedmaritimeforces)

3. EU NAVFOR Welcomes Back the German MPRA: 26 MAR. The German P-3C Orion Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) has returned to Djibouti to rejoin the fight against piracy being conducted by EU NAVFOR on Operation Atalanta. The P-3C, using its inherent flexibility, speed, reach and response time, has been used to assist vessels under pirate attack, working either alone or in coordination with other assets such as EU NAVFOR helicopters and warships. Spain and Germany have both deployed MPRA's to the area since the very start of Operation Atalanta.(eunavfor)

4. CCTF 151 Visits Djibouti to Develop Positive Strategies in Counter-Piracy 26 MAR. Commander Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151), Rear Admiral Daisuke Kajimoto, Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), has just returned from 3 days in Djibouti where he met with ministers and key members of the Djibouti Armed Forces in order to develop counter piracy strategies in the region. During his visit, Rear Admiral Kajimoto met with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence, heads of the Djibouti Navy and the Coast Guard whom they confirmed the requirement for cooperation and communication in the fight against piracy. (combinedmaritimeforces)

5. Strategic Pact Between India and France: 23 MAR. India and France recently signed a strategic pact opening up their naval bases to each other's warships across the Indian Ocean. This comes two years after a similar deal with the United States and India. In recent years, Beijing has signed agreements with Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Pakistan. India's deal with France is therefore an escalation of New Delhi's capacity to project power. It grants the Indian navy access to strategically important French ports – including one in Djibouti where China has single overseas military base. New Delhi has long feared being encircled by China in Indian Ocean. China's relationship with Djibouti's president shows that Beijing is looking to kick out France, Japan, Italy and the US who pay top dollar for access to the port in Djibouti. In early March, India got a taste of what an advanced Chinese navy presence means for its ability to operate in its usual proving grounds. After the pro-Chinese president of the Maldives declared a state of emergency, India sent aircraft and ships to its southern bases but called off any strong action after China dispatched its own naval combat force there. (m-scmp)

Assessment:

The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) was deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the region. It is assessed that the deployment and operations against ISIS was completed and transit the Arabian Gulf alongside the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins (DDG 76). The aircraft carrier's homeport is San Diego, so they most probably leave the operation of area by way of Pacific Ocean and supporting 7th Fleet Operations during the transit to homeport San Diego.

It is assessed that French Ship's remarkable success is a result of unique coordination and cooperation among partner nations within the task force 150, however; the amount of narcotics caught since January 2018 is worrisome.

The German aircraft will enhance the support that the Spanish MPRA already provides to Op Atalanta, with imagery intelligence, radar surface searches and surveillance.

In order to meet the demands of the region, civil and military actors need to work together. Reaching the population and acquiring their support is often vital to mission success. Key Leader Engagement (KLE) is an important element of Command and Control, and the commander of Task Forces still uses this method to achieve their missions. The Task Forces commanders have been meeting with important local officials, especially during their port visits.

While China extends its naval dominance in the Indian Ocean, France shows that they will not give up Djibouti and India also shows they will extend cooperation with other states in the region.



Mediterranean Sea CRISIS WATCH (26 MAR-1 APR 18)



Assessment:

US and EU have long supported Cyprus's EEZ and taken stance near Cyprus and Greece on the subject of recent emerged tension in the EMED. As it was expected ,the EU's seeking for a solution at EU-Turkey leaders' meeting in Varna/Bulgaria ended fruitlessly. Greece has had more initiative than Cyprus for reaching political support of regional countries and world-size powers. Contrary to popular belief the dispute on declared EEZ by Cyprus is not the biggest problem in the EMED. The main problem will be brought to light with the declaration of Greek EEZ on which Turkey and Greece have a difference of opinion on a large scale. It makes Greece find political and military support of big powers and regional countries.

The solution of Cyprus EEZ conflict will determine the fate of Greece's EEZ claim as well. When running an eye over the late political and military development, all countries which are either coastal countries or owner of the energy companies who have a license in the Cyprus EEZ are very active in the region. Military activities in a very short period give a signal of deep solidarity of coastal (except Turkey) and EU and USA upon the EMED dispute. As a new role player in EMED, the Russian position seems to matter for a solution. In the last NOBLE DINA serious exercise took place more units from each country than ever and it was the first time Cyprus took part in the EMED phase of the exercise.

The big size and longtime and overlapping or successive exercises in which USA, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel are standing countries point out the future configuration of the powers in the region. Not having being reached a political solution to the EMED conflict, EU seeks for options to invest in the transportation of Cyprus Gas into Europe markets as soon as possible to find alternative energy for Russian Gas and meet energy needs. Not in the short run but well in the unforeseeable future deployment of EU MARFOR in the EMED could be one of the modus operandi for EU who adopted "the European Union Maritime Security Strategy" on 24 June 2014.

Not only in the EMED but also in the Aegean Sea tension between Greece and Turkey seems to be increased because of Imia/Kardak islets dispute, which had brought two countries to the brink of war in 1996. But the problem also has potential to trigger each other.

The failed EU-Turkey leaders' meeting in Varna and The European Council's strong condemnation of Turkey over her actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea" is a show of EU stance in the case that also underlines its full solidarity with Cyprus and Greece. The verbal accusations will continue towards Turkey but active precautions against Turkey will not be implemented in the short run.

Nevertheless putting Imia/Kardak in Natura 2000 program is a conscious decision of Greece regarding timing and this action will uncover the big sleeping problem in the Aegean Sea. Greece most probably aimed to use already existing EU support to execute pressure on Turkey. Aegean sea is now in the most fragile terms of last 30 years.

- EU Council expresses over Actions by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea:** 22 MAR. The European Council strongly condemns Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea and underlines its full solidarity with Cyprus and Greece. (european council)
- Alternate Defence Minister Fotis Kouvelis' interview on ERA:** 27 MAR. Greek Alternate Mini. of National Def. Fotis Kouvelis, in an interview on ERA 1st Program (National Broadcaster) to journalist Thanos Siafakas, stated among other things: - Regarding EU-Turkey leaders' meeting in Varna: No result was reached, if you have in mind a committing decision, there could not exist any at this time. I consider it important that Europe was clear towards Erdogan and Turkey regarding the EEZ of Cyprus and the Aegean Sea. I also find it interesting that the EU sent a clear message to Turkey according to which no progress can be achieved in Europe-Turkey relations without a progress in its relations with Greece and Cyprus.(mod greece)
- Contact the Greek Prime Minister with the President of the Russian Federation:** 22 MAR. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras had a telephone call this morning with Russian President Vladimir Putin to congratulate him on his recent reelection. They, in addition to Greek-Russian co-operation, to discuss crucial issues concerning Euro-Russian relations as well as developments in the Eastern Mediterranean with particular emphasis on Turkey's attitude. (primeminister.gr)
- An International ASW Exercise Demonstrated the Unique Capabilities of Elbit Systems' USV:** 28 MAR. Elbit Systems Unmanned Surface Vessel, the Seagull,™ participated in a joint Anti-Submarine Warfare exercise of the Israeli and the French navies held recently in the Mediterranean off shore of Haifa, Israel. Under the Israeli Navy command, an ASW force that included two Israeli ASW vessels, a frigate and an ASW helicopter of the Marine National (French Navy) and the Seagull, performed ASW missions against an Israeli Navy submarine. (elbitsystems)
- Participation of the Navy in the Exercise "NOBLE DINA 2018":** 30 MAR. The Navy General Staff announces that in the context of multilateral partnerships with the Eastern Mediterranean countries and the United States, in order to strengthen regional stability and security in the region. (hellenicnavy)

- Greece-US Navies' Drilling in the Mediterranean Sea** 30 MAR. From the Hellenic Navy General Staff announced that between 07-19 March 2018, a collaboration between the Navy and the US Navy (Administration 6 th Fleet), in the eastern Mediterranean region. In particular, the PAPANIKOLIS submarine has collaborated with USS IWO JIMA, the US Navy, as part of the Navy's contribution to the operation of a High Value Unit escort in cooperation with other escorts US Navy. (Hellenic navy)
- "PYRPOLITIS" unprepared (in short notice) Exercise:** 28 MAR. In the early morning hours of Wednesday, , at the request of the Minister of National Defense, a Chief of Staff of the National Defense General Staff was instructed to conduct a "Pyrrpolititis" readiness exercise. The exercise is conducted in the Dodecanese region with the participation of units from all three forces of the Armed Forces. (Geetha)
- Completion of Exercise "INIOCHOS 2018":** 26 MAR., On Friday, March 23, 2018, the "Iniochos 2018" Multinational Air Exercise was completed, which took place from 12 to 23 MAR, at the Andravida Air Base. During the exercise, complex air missions (land surface attacks, surface targets, enemy Air Defense, and Survival and Rescue in a Battle Environment) were performed across the entire day, night of the FIR of Athens, aiming at enhancing collaborate participants in a meaningful, effective and secure manner at a pace of battle. A large number of air forces from **the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, the State of Israel and Cyprus**, as well as the forces of the Land Force and the Navy participated. (haf.gr)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs announcement regarding Imia:** 31 MAR. Their announcement is as: "The legal status of Imia is firmly established. Greek sovereignty over Imia is a given and beyond doubt. Turkey is mistaken if it thinks it can violate international law in the Aegean without consequences, as it does in other places in its environs. We would advise Turkey to measure its words." (mfa)
- Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, over Kardak** 31 MAR. In fact, our country has no objection to general aims and content of the EU's environmental programs such as Natura 2000, Corine Bird Directive, etc We take this opportunity to call upon that there is no doubt about the sovereignty of Turkey over the Kardak rocks. Moreover, we will not accept any possible fait accompli to be presented by Greece towards the geographical formations in the Aegean Sea, legal status of which are disputed. (mfa)