

Weekly Intelligence Brief

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Nuclear Threat Increases from the United States' Adversaries

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The People's Republic of China (PRC), the Russian Federation, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have been increasing their nuclear capabilities, according to various intelligence sources.

On 13 FEB, the Norwegian Intelligence Service reported that Russia had deployed a fleet of warships containing tactical nuclear weapons. This is the first time Russia has deployed ships with nuclear weapons since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian defense budget is expected to increase by 34% in 2023, and Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, has stated, "defeat of a nuclear power in

a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war."

The United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) announced plans for joint military exercises set to take place on 22 FEB 2023. The North Korean Foreign Ministry responded to this by stating that both countries will face "unprecedentedly persistent and strong consequences." The DPRK has used these and previous exercises to accuse the United States and the ROK of intentionally increasing tensions in the area, referring to them as "the arch-criminal deliberately disrupting" regional peace and stability, and experts believe that this could lead to more nuclear testing by the DPRK.

Additionally, the PRC has plans to increase its nuclear arsenal to 900 by the

year 2035, which is the second interval the PRC have set after their 'Made in China 2025' initiative. This initiative is the first step of China's plan to greatly strengthen its industrial and military sectors by 2049.

We can assess with high confidence that it is highly likely that nuclear tensions will continue to increase between the United States and the PRC, Russian Federation, and the DPRK. We can also assess with moderate confidence that it is likely that as tensions increase, more Americans will be paying attention to this issue, which could lead to public misconception and misinformation.

Russia Announces the Full Production of Stealth Bomber After 30 Years

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Russia has announced the Tu-160 stealth bomber, also commonly known as the “Blackjack,” will resume production.

The Tu-160 Blackjack is a nuclear capable supersonic bomber that can carry a payload of over 20 tons. The Tu-160 Blackjack can carry a total of 12 KH-55MS cruise missiles, with 6 per bay. The re-established production of the Tu-160 Blackjack suggests Russia is attempting to find a solution to the current weakened Russian stealth bomber capabilities until the Russian next-generation PAK-DA bomber finishes its development cycle. The PAK-DA bomber is expected to begin test flights around 2025 – 2026 and is estimated to enter serial production

around 2028 – 2029.

Moreover, the United States has recently unveiled its next-generation stealth bomber, the B-21 Raider. The B-21 Raider is expected to begin test flights around middle-to-late 2023. The B-21 Raider would provide the United States an advantage in the production of stealth bombers over Russia, especially with the expected high volume of bombers planned for production by the United States.

Therefore, it is with high confidence we can state that it is likely that the production of the Russian Tu-160 Blackjack is set to temporarily counter the United States’ B-21 Raider until the next-generation Russian PAK-DA bomber is ready for service.



Al-Qaeda Identifies a New Leader

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On 13 FEB the United Nations (UN) Security Council released a report about the status of Al-Qaeda leadership. The report named Saif al-Adel as the new uncontested leader of Al-Qaeda.

Saif al-Adel is wanted by the United States in connection with the 1998 bombings of United States embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has offered a \$10 million reward for information leading to al-Adel's apprehension.

On 15 FEB, Ned Price, the United States’ Department of State spokesperson, gave a briefing to reporters. Mr. Price said that the assessment of the United States “aligns with that of the UN” that Saif

al-Adel is based in Iran. Mr. Price then called out Iran, stating that “offering safe haven to Al-Qaeda is just another example of Iran’s wide-ranging support for terrorism.”

On 15 FEB, Ned Price, the United States’ Department of State spokesperson, provided a briefing to reporters on al-Qaeda and al-Adel's whereabouts. Mr. Price said that the United States’ assessment “aligns with that of the UN” stating that Saif al-Adel is currently based in Iran. Mr. Price then called out Iran, stating that “offering safe haven to al-Qaeda is just another example of Iran’s wide-ranging support for terrorism.”

Saif al-Adel's presence in Iran raises questions about the surprising potential cooperation between Iran and al-Qaeda, as Iran is a majority Shia Muslim nation

and Al-Qaeda is a Sunni Muslim group.

At this time, we can state with high confidence that it is unlikely that we will see a significant change in al-Qaeda operations as a result of this announcement.



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