

Weekly Intelligence Brief

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Assassination Attempt on Russian GRU General

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On 06 FEB, Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseev, Deputy Director of Russia's military intelligence agency (GRU), was shot four times in the stairwell of his apartment building in Moscow, Russia. He was hospitalized and later regained consciousness. Russia's Investigative Committee reported that two suspects were arrested. The shooter, Lyubomyr Korba, was allegedly working for the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU). His accomplice, Viktor Vasin, was employed by a Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) affiliated company.

Lieutenant General Alekseev had a central role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has been providing intelligence briefings to the Kremlin, the seat of the Russian government, since the start of the war. He also took part in previous negotiations with Ukraine. Officials immediately framed this attack as externally directed, and the FSB stated that the arrested suspects admitted that they were carrying out orders from Ukraine. The SSU has been responsible for similar attacks on Russian intelligence officials in the past; however, they did not provide any comments regarding this attack. Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov claimed that it was a Ukrainian terrorist act to sabotage peace efforts, following the

negotiations in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Ukraine and Russia had their first deal in five months to exchange war prisoners, but the discussions ended without a breakthrough, and the United States set a deadline for an agreement to end the war by June. In the approaching parliamentary elections in the Duma, the Russian Parliament, four occupied Ukrainian territories will participate for the first time. This marks a full integration of the regions.

We assess with high confidence that it is likely authorities will expand protective measures for senior officials and intensify coordination between military intelligence institutions, as seen following similar attacks.

European Union (EU) Passes New Immigration Legislation

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On 10 FEB, European Union (EU) officials passed legislation centered around allowing member-states to deny entry to incoming immigrants in addition to deporting existing ones. This legislation, proposed in DEC, ratified a list of 'safe countries' deemed capable of the relocation of rejected migrants. EU member-states have also gained the ability to deport people and reject asylum claims. Following this, on 11 FEB, Italian Prime Minister (PM) Giorgia Meloni proposed similar legislation.

The legislation aims to restrict illegal immigration as Europe has seen a

significant increase in migrants from Africa and the Middle East. Alongside illegal immigration, citizen rejection of tourism across the European continent has led to destabilization in many countries. Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain have been the epicenter of recent issues. The recognized 'safe countries' include Kosovo, Colombia, Bangladesh, India, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia. Individuals who get deported or rejected may be sent to their country of origin, or to any of the designated 'safe countries'.

Considering the EU legislation, PM Meloni has proposed a bill allowing Italian forces to block migrant ships. Italy would implement stricter border surveillance and, under certain

conditions, employ its navy to bar migrant ships crossing Italian waters for 30 days in an attempt to combat serious threats to public order, national security, and the risk of terrorist activity. Naval blockades could be extended to a maximum of six months.

We can assess with moderate confidence that it is likely the EU could pursue further legislation to combat destabilization caused by immigration. We can also assess with high confidence it is likely that other EU nations may establish stricter immigration laws.

Russian President Putin Calls Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

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On 03 FEB, the Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, had a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Russia reached out with the goal of furthering Russian/Saudi bilateral relations to find areas that will promote cooperation and benefit both nations.

The phone call highlighted the political, economic, humanitarian, and trade spheres. It was reported that the two leaders also discussed recent regional and international developments, as well

as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+), as the next meeting approaches on 10 MAR.

In a statement released by the Kremlin, Putin said he was highly satisfied with the call and that both parties will continue to stay in touch. The two nations have a long-standing history of diplomatic ties, and 19 FEB will mark the 100th anniversary of Russia becoming one of the first nations to recognize Saudi Arabia's sovereignty. Saudi Arabia has also been a key player in assisting Russia regarding energy issues, as Russian infrastructure has been targeted by Ukraine as the war continues. They have supported high

oil prices, refused Western sanctions, and been one of the largest buyers of Russian oil.

We can assess with moderate confidence that it is highly likely that Russian and Saudi diplomatic relations will increase moving forward. We will likely see increases in oil trade, as Saudi Arabia has already established a pattern of helping to make up what is being lost in the war. If Ukraine continues to successfully target energy infrastructure, we can also assess with high confidence that it is likely that Russia and Saudi Arabia will expand energy trade with other OPEC+ members as well.

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