

IN THE NEWS

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World News

China continues to integrate advanced technology into its military. For example, one report indicates China is equipping its forces with blinding laser weapons [1]. Although such weapons appear to violate the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons treaty, we should expect their use. Consequently, the injuries in future conflicts will be much different from past encounters. This news comes after Chinese research developed a suitcase sized high energy laser generator [2]. Moreover, China continues to expand its nuclear capabilities. Case in point, China tested a rail based ejection canister for its ballistic missile forces; the missile is capable of hitting targets throughout the US [3]. While China continues to enhance its military, it's also testing other countries. For the first time, China sent an armed warship into territory claimed by Japan; prompting a Japanese protest [4]. Perhaps China is seeking a military conflict to draw attention away from its pollution problem.

It appears that the People's Liberation Army military expansion in the South China Sea is a model for Russian expansion. For instance, as part of Russia's expanding military, new bases are being added to the Arctic [5]. The Arctic buildup includes advanced S-400 air defense missiles, constructing 13 airfields, and 10 radar posts [6].

In Yemen, the war between different religious terrorists continues to test the Saudi border. For instance, Saudi Arabia reported it shot down a scud ballistic missile launched from Yemen that was heading toward the city of Najran [7]. Moreover, future conflict appears to be the new norm. Case in point, in spite of a cease fire, fighting left at least 31 dead in SW Yemen [8].

1. Gertz, Bill, Washington Free Beacon, *Chinese Military Using Blinding Laser Weapons*, December 22, 2015.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Terrorism	3
Economy	4

Special points of interest:

- Chinese warship enters Japanese waters

Security

Software development companies, that market security products, are continuing challenged. Case in point, three commercial anti-virus products were discovered to be vulnerable to code injection attacks [1]. Typically, once vulnerabilities are discovered, the next remedial step is the software patch. This is becoming a significant effort for software companies. Case in point, during one week, four companies

(Apple, Adobe, Microsoft, and Google) released patches to fix 273 vulnerabilities [2].

Another challenge is in securing private cryptographic keys. For devices such as Personal Identity Verification cards, the private signing key never leaves the cryptographic module. However, some commercial products are using weaker security approaches. For instance, one piece indicates Microsoft

inadvertently leaked the private keys associated with the xboxlive.com domain [3].

Meanwhile, a 3-year old backdoor was discovered in Juniper software; prompting the FBI and DHS to investigate a state sponsored hack [4]. This illustrates how exploits can go undetected for a long time..

1. Metzger, Max, SC Magazine, *Vulnerability*

(Continued on page 2)

Security

(Continued from page 1)

- found in McAfee, Kaspersky and AVG anti-virus softwares, December 11, 2015.
2. Winder, Davey, SC Magazine, *Patch madness! 273 vulnerabilities from four vendors in one week*, December 14, 2015.
3. Metzger, Max, SC Magazine, *Cyber-criminals could launch man-in-the-*

middle attack on Xbox Live users, December 11, 2015.

4. Network World, *FBI, DHS investigating Juniper hack, secret backdoor dates back 3 years*, December 20, 2015.

The new year stands before

us, like a chapter in a

book, waiting to be

written. We can help write

that story by setting goals—

Melody Beattie

(Continued from page 1)

2. Winsor, Morgan, International Business Times, *Chinese Military Developing Portable Lasers? Enemy Missiles, Satellites Could Be Disabled By Sophisticated Device*, September 22, 2015.
3. Gertz, Bill, Washington Free Beacon, *China Tests New ICBM from Railroad Car*, December 21, 2015
4. Mayger, James , and Nakamura, Yuji, Bloomberg, *Japan Protests Intrusion of Armed Chinese Vessel Into its Waters*, Decem-

ber 25, 2015.

5. Einhorn, Catrin, et. al., New York Times, *Russia Rearms for a New Era*, December 24, 2015.
6. Calderwood, Imogen, Daily Mail (UK), *The new Cold War? Russia sends troops and missiles to the Arctic as Putin stakes a claim for the region's oil and gas reserves*, December 26, 2015.
7. Ghobari, Mohammed, and Browning, Noah, Reuters, *Saudi Arabia intercepts ballistic missile from Yemen: state news*,

December 27, 2015.

8. Al-Haj, Ahmed, AP, *Battles overnight in SW Yemen kill 31, including civilians, despite truce, say officials*, December 26, 2015.

*Be at war with your vices,
at peace with your
neighbors, and let every
new year find you a better
man—Benjamin Franklin*

In Afghanistan, the Taliban are returning to power. Case in point, the Taliban are nearly in control of a key district of the Helmand province [1]. Additionally, a suicide bombing killed six American soldiers [2]. One troubling report indicates Russia is sharing intelligence with the Taliban to help in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) [3]. This just grows one terrorist group at the expense of another.

Meanwhile, the IS terrorist continues to present a risk to Western countries. For instance, they have acquired equipment to make false Syrian and probably Iraqi passports [4].

The IS continues to steal valuables from those conquered. One report indicates a religious decree (fatwa) allows harvesting organs from non-religious followers; even if the donor dies [5].

Some have suggested terrorism is like a cancer [6]. This is perhaps a good analogy; the longer left untreated, the more expensive the cure.

1. Chalfant, Morgan, Washington Free Beacon, *Sangin, Fierce Battlefield for US Marines, on Verge of Falling to Taliban*, December 21, 2015.
2. Latifi, Ali, and Hennigan,

Terrorism

W, Los Angeles Times, 6 NATO soldiers killed in Afghanistan suicide attack were Americans, December 12, 2015

3. Todd, Brian, and Almas, Steve, CNN, *Russia, Taliban share intelligence in fight against ISIS*, December 25, 2015.
4. Dalton, Matthew, Wall Street Journal, *Islamic State's Authentic-Looking Fake Passports Pose Threat*, December 23, 2015.
5. Steinbuch, Yaron, New York Post, *ISIS sanctioned harvesting organs from live captives*, December 25, 2015.
6. Robinson, Eugene, Washington Post, *Obama's brave admission about terrorism*, December 7, 2015.

Economy

According to the Labor Department, the number of first time unemployment claims for the week ending December 12 was 271,000 [1]. Then for the following week, the number was 267,000 [2]. Nevertheless, in spite of warnings of the weak economy; the Fed raised the interbank lending rate 0.25 percent [3].

In contrast to increasing the cost of credit; China relies on weak environmental controls to expand its industrial base. For example, staggering air pollution in China has effectively blanketed 30 cities in the northern part of the coun-

try [4]. The pollution was so bad in Beijing that on Christmas day, 220 flights were cancelled due to poor visibility [5].

1. Mutikani, Lucia, Reuters, *U.S. labor market strengthening, factories struggling*, December 17, 2015.
2. Mutikani, Lucia, Reuters, *U.S. jobless claims near 42-year low as labor market tightens*, December 24, 2015.
3. Leong, Richard, Reuters, *The Fed's rate hike 'was very, very stupid'*, December 24, 2015.
4. Pandey, Avaneesh, Inter-

national Business Times, *China Air Pollution: Smog Red Alert Spurs Factory Closures In Beijing*, December 21, 2015.

5. CNBC, *Pollution cancels more than 220 Beijing flights*: Xinhua, December 25, 2015.

*Christmas is not a time
nor a season, but a state of
mind. To cherish peace
and goodwill, to be
plenteous in mercy, is to
have the real spirit of
Christmas—Calvin
Coolidge*
