

The weekly briefing | 19 May 2014

Political and security risk updates

Africa: African leaders declare war on Boko Haram after security summit in Paris.

Americas: Colombian president seals last-minute deal with FARC ahead of presidential election.

Asia and Pacific: Anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam descend into riots.

Europe: Turkish government faces backlash after the country's worst mining accident.

Middle East: End of winter in Afghanistan marks beginning of Taliban's spring offensive.

Polar regions: Western sanctions threaten Russian Arctic development.

Africa

African leaders declare war on Boko Haram after security summit in Paris

On 17 May, African and Western leaders gathered at a security summit in Paris to discuss the threat posed by the terrorist group Boko Haram. French President François Hollande and Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan were joined by their counterparts from Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, as well as representatives from the United Kingdom and the United States, in an attempt to develop a cohesive strategy to combat the growing threat of Boko Haram to the security and stability of the West African region. All eight countries, who are already sharing intelligence information in order to locate the 200 missing school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in April, have agreed on a 'global and regional action plan' that will see the introduction of a number of new security measures to the region. The focus will be on the potential for multilateral military and intelligence operations. The adopted plan will incorporate a coordinated regional strategy with a number of specific objectives, aimed at boosting intelligence sharing in the region, creating joint border controls and surveillance bodies, and committing to an increased military presence around Lake Chad. President Paul Biya of Cameroon stated after the summit that his country was to launch a 'total war' on Boko Haram, while Hollande called the militant group a 'global threat' that requires a 'global response'.



open briefing
the civil society intelligence agency

Open Briefing
27 Old Gloucester Street
Bloomsbury
London WC1N 3AX

t 020 7193 9805
info@openbriefing.org
www.openbriefing.org

The need to confront and deal with the threat posed by Boko Haram is urgent; the morning before the summit in Paris took place another attack was carried out on the village of Dalwa-Masuba in the Nigerian state of Borno in which 49 people were killed. Although over the past year most of their attacks have been in Nigeria, Boko Haram are operational throughout West Africa. UN figures suggest that Boko Haram's guerrilla campaign has killed over 12,000 people in the region since 2009. The systemic problems that come with policing a large geographical region have been highlighted in the failed attempts by Nigerian security forces to locate the 200 missing school girls abducted last month., Securing and monitoring borders between countries such as Nigeria and Cameroon will help to prevent the freedom of movement that thus far has allowed Boko Haram to evade the Nigerian authorities. Border patrols will also help to quell the illegal trade in weapons and military equipment that has armed groups like Boko Haram.

Although West Africa has so far borne the brunt of Boko Haram's attacks, Western governments are right to be concerned about threat that the group poses to their national security. The murder in London of the British soldier Lee Rigby by Michael Adebolajo, who was radicalised by associates of al-Shabaab during a trip to Somalia, has encouraged the UK government to re-examine its approach to terrorist groups operating in Africa. Although the multilateral efforts to combat Boko Haram are encouraging, it is important that the root causes of much of the violence in Nigeria and the wider region are not forgotten. Although Boko Haram is a phenomenon fed by Wahhabi-jihadist fanaticism, it is born out of the longstanding ethno-religious violence that has always overshadowed Nigerian politics. These entrenched cultural dissimilarities coupled with growing levels of economic inequality and wide-spread corruption born out of uncontrolled oil exploration and extraction in the northern territories has created a fertile breeding ground for radicalism. The region will have to address its social and economic problems if it is to truly rid itself of violence and extremism.

Other developments

Armed rebels in northern Mali have kidnapped dozens of government officials amid deadly clashes during Prime Minister Moussa Mara's visit to the region. Thirty six people were killed during the clashes that began on 16 May and intensified after Mara's departure the next evening. The rebels are reportedly part of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a pro-independence Tuareg movement. A spokesman of the MNLA claimed that the attacks were retaliation for operations by the Malian army in response to pro-independence demonstrations in Kidal. According to early reports, 40 hostages were taken, including high-ranking military officers and civil servants.

Ten people have been killed and at least 70 injured in Kenya after two bombs were detonated in Nairobi's Gikomba market. The attacks happened within minutes of each other at approximately 14.30 local time on 16 May, and are presumed to have been conducted by the al-Qaeda-affiliated militant group al-Shabaab. The bombings, which came two days after Britain, the United States and France warned of a high risk of terrorist attack in Kenya, have prompted President Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta to promise to accelerate the government's efforts to combat terrorism. The Kenyan public are becoming increasingly concerned and frustrated by the poor state of security in the country, which was exposed in September of last year when al-Shabaab fighters killed 67 people after seizing the upmarket Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi.

Troops loyal to rogue Libyan general Khalifa Haftar stormed the parliament building in Tripoli on 18 May. The attack came hours after the recently-appointed Prime Minister Ahmed Maiteeq announced the formation of a new government. Haftar's soldiers detained Islamist lawmakers and officials, his spokesman Mohammed al-Hegazi told Libya's al-Ahrar television station shortly after the attack took place. Meanwhile fierce fighting continues in the city of Benghazi, where troops loyal to Haftar have been fighting Islamist militia groups since 16 May. Libya's health ministry said that at least 70 people have been killed in Benghazi since the fighting broke out.

On the radar:

- **The third annual IFLR Africa Forum will take place in London on 20 May.** The forum will focus on the laws, regulations and transactions surrounding the continent's natural resources.
- **The third Libya Oil & Gas Forum will take place in London on 29-30 May.** The event will focus on reviewing current exploration activities in Libya and associated discoveries.
- **Presidential elections to be held in Guinea** on 26-27 May.
- **Presidential elections to be held in Mauritania** on 21 June.

Americas

Colombian president seals last-minute deal with FARC ahead of presidential election

On 16 May, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos reached a milestone agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on the matter of the illegal drugs trade. Since November 2012, the government has been negotiating with the left-wing guerrilla group in an attempt to put an end to the 50-year-long conflict. The peace talks revolve around a five-point agenda. The two first points, land reform and political participation, were agreed upon over the course of the past year. However, the negotiations on the issue of the illegal drugs trade, the third point of the peace agenda, have proven much more troublesome. The recent settlement covers three broad themes: the substitution of illicit cultivations, the prevention of drug consumption, and a solution to the problem of drug trafficking. Many external commentators have praised this ambitious arrangement. Moreover, the agreement promotes an all-encompassing solution to the problem of drug trade with the inclusion of socio-economic measures to deter marginal farmers from illicit cultivations. However, the opposition has quickly criticised the announcement as a public relations campaign, as Santos will be standing for re-election on 25 May.

In spite of the country's impressive economic record under the Santos administration, his re-election remains uncertain. This year national output is expected to increase by over 4%, with Colombia poised to overtake Argentina as the third largest economy of Latin America. Nevertheless, Santos' technocratic style of governance has cost him the support of the masses. This is most prominently reflected in his clumsy mismanagement of the continuing small-scale farmers' strike, which protests against free-market reforms. As such, he faces a tight election race against Óscar Iván Zuluaga, the handpicked successor and protégé of former president Álvaro Uribe. Zuluaga's presidential campaign is predominantly founded upon the rejection of the ongoing peace talks with FARC. If elected, he proposes to impose an ultimatum upon the guerrilla group, which will not include the controversial amnesty for their criminal offenses. Furthermore, the recent fiasco regarding Santos's failed attempt to remove a left-wing figure from the mayorship of the capital, Bogotá, has further damaged his public image.

Given the non-consensual approach to the FARC issue adopted by Santos's rival, it is in the armed group's interest to facilitate a Santos re-election. To such an end, both FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN), a distinct guerrilla group, have agreed upon an eight-day unilateral ceasefire, starting on 20 May. Furthermore, it is expected that the recent settlement on the matter of the illegal drugs trade will boost Santos's public support, and consequently the latest polls have forecast a Santos victory in a run-off election against Zuluaga on 15 June. With regard to the FARC peace talks, the negotiations are due to resume in Cuba's capital, Havana, on 2 June. The two remaining points of the agenda are among the most problematic, and aim to address the issues of a potential amnesty for FARC's criminal activities, and the disarmament of the guerrilla group.

Other developments

A string of protests across Brazil's largest cities was staged against the dramatic cost of the World Cup. Disparate groups have taken advantage of the international coverage of the sporting event to voice their demands. The anti-World Cup marches on 15 May were followed by workers' strikes and protests by other social movements, such as the homeless workers' movement, causing havoc in a number of towns. In response, the government has deployed the armed forces in Recife, one of the World Cup host cities, in order to restore order amid violent clashes with the authorities. Further marches are expected ahead of the official World Cup kick-off in June.

Supporters of former President Manuel Zelaya have clashed with security forces in Honduras. On 13 May, Zelaya, the figurehead of the left-wing Liberty and Refoundation Party (Libre), organised a strike against the government for failing to 'provide security to the Honduran people'. Since its defeat in the last presidential election on 24 November 2013, the Libre party has constantly condemned the right-wing administration of Xiomara Castro, and it appears that the Libre party is attempting to generate civil instability so as to delegitimise Castro's authority.

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet has capitulated to a hunger strike by indigenous prisoners. For almost 40 days, a group of Mapuche prisoners, from an indigenous community in southern Chile, engaged in a hunger strike to demand a review of their judicial cases on the grounds of a latent discrimination suffered by the indigenous community. The prisoners received broad support from the Mapuche community and Chilean civil society at large. The hunger strike eventually came to an end after Bachelet capitulated, agreeing to revise their sanctions. In recent years, Chilean indigenous communities have benefited from increasing public attention.

On the radar

- **Protests likely to intensify in Venezuela's main cities** amid the ongoing political crisis.
- **27 May marks the anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).**
- **Education workers to protests in Oaxaca city, Mexico,** on 21 May.

Asia and Pacific

Anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam descend into riots

Following a standoff in the South China Sea over Chinese oil drilling activities, anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam descended into violent riots on 15 May. Thousands of Vietnamese protestors ransacked Chinese industrial facilities and businesses, specifically targeting Chinese workers and business owners. The majority of the violence took place in several of Vietnam's busiest industrial parks, which account for roughly a third of the country's exports. Official reports indicate that only one person was killed in the incident; however, doctors at nearby hospitals have reported more than 20 deaths and over 100 people injured. The violence was largely contained by late that evening and did not resurge the next day. Local reports indicate that hundreds of Chinese nationals have fled Vietnam to nearby Cambodia in order to avoid future eruptions of violence.

This week's incident is the most violent in Sino-Vietnamese relations since the two countries fought a short border war in 1979, resulting in thousands of battle deaths. Even though China and Vietnam are both communist countries and enjoy strong economic ties, historic enmities form powerful undercurrents in bilateral relations, both at governmental and civilian levels. Most recently, China has positioned a massive oil rig in disputed waters near the Paracel Islands, which are administered by China but claimed by Vietnam and fought over in 1974. The start of operations at the oil rig generated a standoff between Chinese and Vietnamese vessels.

Vietnamese officials have called for an end to anti-Chinese violence following the riots, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi strongly condemned the violence. In a telephone call to Vietnamese Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh, Wang asserted Vietnam's responsibility for protecting Chinese nationals and for the actions of the 'lawless elements' that incited the violence. This incident represents a dangerous escalation of tensions surrounding China's territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. US officials responded to the standoff in the South China Sea by admonishing Chinese military officials, indicating that such actions are provocative and dangerous. As China deals with the fallout of violence in Vietnam, it continues to move towards developing oil and gas deposits near a reef claimed by both China and the Philippines. Similar escalation in the Philippines, who maintain the backing of the US Navy, may have even greater geopolitical consequences.

Other developments

India's general election came to a close with victory for Narendra Modi. The weeks-long elections concluded last week with the defeat of the incumbent Congress Party, which has typically maintained control of the Indian parliament. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed a decisive victory by winning 282 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament). The BJP is widely known as a Hindu-nationalist party, and seeks to implement a variety of changes, setting a vastly different agenda to the technocratic administration of Manmohan Singh of the Congress Party. Among proposed changes are amendments to land-acquisition laws and labour regulations. Modi is also a strong proponent of large-scale infrastructure development. As the chief minister of Gujarat state, Modi received praise for the region's rapid economic growth. Nevertheless, concerns have also been raised regarding Modi's ineffectiveness in moderating anti-Muslim riots in 2002, following which the United States rejected Modi's request for a visa.

On 14 May, an explosion and shooting left three dead and injured more than 22 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The attack was launched against anti-government protesters near Democracy Monument, an area which has served as the base camp for protesters. Since protests began in November 2013, more than 27 people have been killed and over 800 injured. Following the most recent attacks, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, the head of Thailand's armed forces, issued a statement indicating that if violence continues, the army will be forced to intervene and disband all protest activity in order to maintain domestic 'peace and order'. That morning, anti-government protesters forced their way into an air force base, resulting in the evacuation of the interim prime minister, who was meeting with election officials in another section of the compound. Continue violence remains likely as the interim government continues election preparations.

On 15 May, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe began a push to reinterpret Article 9 of the country's constitution. This article prohibits Japan from engaging in war as a means to solve international disputes, though Japan maintains *de facto* armed forces, the Japan Self-Defence Forces. Effectively, the reinterpretation would allow Japan to participate in armed conflicts overseas, in a collective defence capacity. This reinterpretation will require the support of the junior coalition partner, the New Komeito Party. The New Komeito is largely pacifist and maintains the backing of Japan's Buddhist population. Abe hopes to pass the measure by the end of the present Diet session on 22 June. The announcement comes shortly after a visit from US President Barack Obama, who pledged continued military support for Japan in the region. Proponents of the change argue that this measure would allow Japan to intercept North Korean missiles, rescue Japanese aid workers abroad, and even engage in UN-authorized military operations overseas. Opponents largely fear an escalation of tensions in the region, particularly surrounding territorial disputes in the East China Sea.

On the radar

- **Malaysian King Alhaj Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah Al-Marhum Sultan Badlishah will begin an official state visit to Singapore on 19 May** to discuss bilateral relations and measures to enhance intercultural ties.
- **On 20-21 May, the UN Secretary-General will attend this year's Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)** held in Shanghai, China, amid mounting inter-state tensions in the region.

Europe

Turkish government faces backlash after the country's worst mining accident

The Turkish government has faced heavy criticism in the aftermath of a serious mining accident on 13 May in Soma, western Turkey. On 17 May, rescue workers retrieved the last two missing miners after a total of 301 people were killed following an explosion in the mine. Demonstrations have since targeted the mine owners, as protesters have accused the mine's administrators of ignoring safety standards. They also accuse Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government of being too close to business and insensitive to the calamity. Local media reported that Ramazan Dogru, the general manager of the mine operator Soma Komur, is married to a member of Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Soma Holding defended the mine's safety record, while senior Turkish officials denied allegations of poor government oversight. However, comments by Erdoğan rejecting claims of government culpability were labelled insensitive after the prime minister was quoted saying that 'such accidents happen'.

The authorities initially suggested a power distribution unit caused the explosion and subsequent fire in the mine, creating the worst mining disaster in the country's history. A preliminary report has suggested that smouldering coal may have caused the roof of the mine to collapse. The Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security reported that the Soma mine had been inspected eight times in the last four years, most recently on 17 March, and had been found to comply with all safety regulations. On 16 May, the government attempted to demonstrate accountability, with the incumbent AKP party calling for a formal inquest into the accident; however, discontent towards the government continues to rise with a growing number of protesters calling for the government's resignation. Police have clashed with protesters in Turkey's three largest cities, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, with additional protests experienced nationwide. The protests appears to have been catalysed by strikes arranged by Turkey's four largest workers' unions, who claim that safety and work conditions are being jeopardised in order to cut costs and have called for those who were responsible for the mining accident to be held to account.

The mining disaster, which occurred two weeks before the first anniversary of mass anti-government protests in Istanbul, is exacerbating the existing antipathy towards Erdoğan and his government. The prime minister is already experiencing significant political pressure following a corruption scandal involving family members and key allies in December 2013. The notable political mismanagement of the mining disaster, and ardent rejection of responsibility by the government, will likely serve to deepen political tensions throughout the Turkish political arena. The AKP risk losing crucial popular support in the run up to the Turkish presidential elections on 10 August 2014.

Other developments

The Ukrainian armed forces continue military operations in eastern Ukraine despite pro-independence votes in the contentious Donetsk and Lugansk referenda. On 15 May, Ukrainian security forces destroyed two separatist strongholds in eastern Ukraine – one near the town of Kramatorsk in Donetsk region, and another near the town of Slavyansk, where the armed forces also retook control of the regional television station. Following the referendum, local media in Donetsk reported that the leadership had demanded that Ukrainian forces withdraw from the region and on 16 May the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic announced a new constitution that proclaims the region a legal and democratic parliamentary state.

On 15 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin reported a \$3.5 billion Ukrainian gas debt and criticised the European Union for failing to propose a viable solution to Ukraine's gas debts. In an open letter to the European Union, Putin also announced that Russia would start demanding payment in advance for Ukrainian gas supplies from 1 June. The announcement consolidates a declaration on 12 May by the head of Gazprom, Alexey Miller, stating that the supplier will cut off gas supplies to Ukraine should the newly formed government fail to agree to the conditions. Oleksandr Shlapak, Ukraine's finance minister, rebutted that Kiev is willing to pay its outstanding debt, but will not pay for gas at the recently revised rate (increased from \$268 to \$485.50 per 1,000 cubic metres). The new rate is currently the highest that Gazprom charges its European clients.

The provincial council leader of the Popular Party (PP), Isabel Carrasco, was killed on 12 May near her home in Leon in northern Spain. A mother and her daughter were arrested by Spanish police shortly after the incident and have been charged with her murder. According to local media, the suspects shot Carrasco in revenge for the recent dismissal of the daughter from her job at the provincial government. The interior ministry dismissed claims that the killing was politically motivated, instead arguing that the motive for the murder was 'personal vengeance'. Following Carrasco's death, politicians around the country halted their campaigns for the European Union elections for one day as a mark of respect.

On the radar

- **European Parliament elections will be held** on 22 May.
- **Local elections will be held in the United Kingdom** on 22 May.
- **The Ukrainian presidential election will be held** on 25 May.
- **Ukraine's acting foreign minister, Andriy Deschytzia, will visit Germany** on 19-20 May.
- **Vladimir Putin will visit China on 20 May** to discuss a natural gas agreement with the Chinese government.

Middle East

End of winter in Afghanistan marks beginning of Taliban's spring offensive

The Taliban announced that annual spring operations would begin soon after midnight on 12 May following the end of the poppy season. In the early hours of 12 May, rockets struck the main NATO base at Bagram and Kabul's international airport, both attacks caused little damage but symbolise the Taliban's intentions to target both Afghan and foreign forces. On the same day, an attack on a justice ministry building in the eastern city of Jalabad left two policemen and five civilian workers dead and 11 others were taken hostage. Gunmen attacked a police outpost in southern Helmand province, killing three policemen and wounding four others, and insurgents also targeted a checkpoint in Ghanzi province, killing two women and a policeman. A rocket attack on a market in Parwan province killed two civilians.

The annual spring offensive in Afghanistan creates an escalation in violence following an end to the unpredictable winter conditions that make movement difficult. Receding snow in the mountains opens up passages and trails that allow fighters to move between Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan. The Taliban announced that the targets of this year's Jihadi would be foreign military forces and contractors, the Afghan government and its civilian supporters, as well as foreign embassies and vehicle convoys. This year's offensive comes as US and NATO troops are set to drawdown in December, bringing an end to the 13 year combat mission against the Taliban. It will be the first year that Afghan security forces face the annual insurgency offensive without active support from US and NATO troops, who now provide a training capacity. It is still unclear whether a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the United States will be signed. The BSA would ensure that several thousand US troops stay in Afghanistan beyond the end of 2014. Afghan President Hamid Karzai delayed signing the agreement and, with a runoff vote announced on 15 May, a new government is not likely to be formed until August.

A second round of voting in the presidential election is scheduled to take place in June, following the announcement that no candidate claimed a majority in the first round. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani are the two candidates competing for the presidency. However, Afghan voters are at greater risk than they were during the first round of polling in April, and it is very likely that the Taliban will target polling stations in the run up to the second round of voting. There is also the likely risk of coordinated attacks on government and foreign targets.

Other developments

Islamist militants associated with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Ansar al-Sharia attacked Yemeni military outposts in the Azzan and Gol al-Rayda districts of Shabwa province on 14 May. At least 30 AQAP fighters and eight soldiers were killed in the assault that lasted several hours. The military recently regained control of some areas in the south of the country, forcing militants to flee into the mountains. The United States has increased aid and military support for the government, as it struggles to contain the unrest in Yemen. Government and military targets will continue to be subject to militant operations in the coming weeks.

On 15 May, the main route out of Syria into Turkey was struck by a car bomb that killed at least 43 people. The bomb exploded near the Bab al-Salam crossing in the northern province of Aleppo. It is thought that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) carried out the attack. The ISIL has been involved in several clashes with other rebel groups in Syria, and Bab al-Salam is under the control of the Tawhid Brigade. Further clashes between the ISIL and the Tawhid Brigade are likely in the region.

Two Palestinian protestors were shot dead by Israeli soldiers on 15 May in the West Bank. Police were trying to disperse a crowd of 200 protestors outside Israel's Ofer prison near Ramallah; some of the crowd were throwing stones. Protestors had gathered to mark the sixty sixth anniversary of Israel's war of foundation, when many Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. Ofer prison has often been targeted by demonstrations in opposition to Israel's detention and occupation policies. The recent breakdown of peace talks is likely to bring about further unrest.

On the radar

- **The Egyptian presidential election will be held on 26-27 May.** Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is widely expected to claim victory. Protests and incidents of violence can be expected.
- **An Egyptian court is expected to deliver a ruling on a lawsuit calling on the Egyptian government to label Qatar a 'state sponsor of terrorism'.** The announcement on 21 May stems from the conflict with Doha's al-Jazeera news network.
- **Lebanese lawmakers will meet again on 22 May to select a new president.** It will be the fourth attempt in less than a month following boycotted voting sessions.
- **The International Atomic Energy Agency will release its quarterly report on Iran's nuclear programme this week.**
- **Results from Iraq's parliamentary election will be announced on 19 May.**

Polar Regions

Western sanctions threaten Russian Arctic development

The governments of the United States, Britain, Germany and France have threatened to initiate a third round of sanctions against Russia if evidence emerges of any attempts by Moscow to interfere or disrupt Ukraine's 25 May presidential elections. According to the *Financial Times*, one of the potential sanctions being discussed is a ban on the export of high-end energy technologies to Russian companies. Such a move would threaten the Arctic joint ventures of Russian oil majors Gazprom and Rosneft, in particular offshore projects, as the cooperation of foreign partners, such as Exxonmobil, Statoil, Eni and Shell, is essential for providing the technology and experience to complete these difficult projects. These partners may soon be banned from selling or installing the advanced technology that Gazprom and Rosneft need.

The plan has been developed in lieu of a ban on the import of Russian energy, an option that had garnered reasonable criticism given Europe's significant reliance on Russian gas. Banning exports of vital technology would be a focused way to exert pressure on Moscow. While the plan would not cause any short-term disruption in the energy markets, it would threaten the development of new fields that Russia needs if it is to guarantee the kind of considerable energy commitments it has with China, commitments which it is eager to expand. While existing Arctic projects, such as Gazprom's Prirazlomnaya rig, are protected, in the US version of the plan new programmes involving advanced technology would either be subject to special control or blocked.

It is highly likely that environmental NGOs would welcome such a ban; Greenpeace has actively and with great visibility campaigned for existing Arctic projects to be frozen and no new projects to be undertaken. The plans may face tough opposition from Italy, however, another G7 member, which has previously exhibited unwillingness to implement sanctions against Russia, and whose oil major Eni is involved in a number of Arctic joint ventures with Rosneft. Nevertheless, if the other G7 members decide to undertake these sanctions, and succeed in persuading Italy to overcome its concerns, the ban on technology export could represent a major blow for the feasibility of Russia's Arctic energy projects.

Other developments

Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil has announced that exploratory wells will be drilled at two potential prospects in the Johan Castberg field this winter. In 2011, Statoil found an estimated 540 million barrels of high-quality oil in the field and has since tried to find additional windfalls. However, since 2011 Statoil has had little success, with a number of exploratory drills in recent months yielding little economic viability. Despite this, the recent announcement envisages two more exploratory wells to be drilled at the Pingvin and Isfjell prospects. The announcement comes as the company is under increasing pressure from the central government in Oslo and from regional administrations to invest in land-based facilities to bring the Castberg oil to shore, an investment Statoil is reluctant to engage in until more oil is found in the field.

Sweden and Finland are undertaking a joint defence exercise this week, with the scenario of an attack from the east. Swedish commander, Lasse Jansson, reports that around 3,300 servicemen are taking part in the exercise. While the exercise is directed at an imaginary 'country x', the supreme commander of the Swedish armed forces, Sverker Goranson, was less ambiguous when he said recently that the events in Ukraine show how the security situation in Europe has become increasingly unpredictable. The main purpose of the exercise is to practice a defence operation of Sweden's long and vulnerable east coast.

Russian Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology Sergey Donskoi announced that Russia's application for the extension of the coastal shelf will be presented to the UN Commission on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in November. The announcement came during a press conference for an annual festival of Days of the Arctic that was held in Moscow. The minister warned that UNCLOS would most likely take a few years to reach a decision, but that he was confident that the material gathered by Russian scientists and geologists would satisfy their requirements.

On the radar

- **The second annual Arctic Patrol and Reconnaissance event** will be held at the Royal Danish Defence College in Copenhagen on 19-20 May.

Published with intelligence support from
Bradburys Global Risk Partners | www.bradburys.co.uk

Bradburys
Global risk partners

Open Briefing is the world's first civil society intelligence agency.

We produce actionable and predictive intelligence on defence, security and foreign policy matters. We tell you what has happened and what is likely to happen next. Most importantly, we tell you why.

We do this so that better informed citizens can more effectively engage in peace and security debates and civil society organisations can make the right advocacy choices. Together, we can influence positive policy decisions by our governments.

Open Briefing is a bold and ambitious not-for-profit social enterprise. We are a unique collaboration of intelligence, military, law enforcement and government professionals from around the world.

Challenge the status quo. Take intelligence into your own hands.

www.openbriefing.org

Analysts: Chris Abbott, Derek Crystal, Liam McVeigh, Tancredè Feuillade, Matthew Couillard, Claudia Wagner, Daniel Taylor and Patrick Sewell.