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This newsletter has a Spanish version.

## Editorial

The situation in Afghanistan is fairly fluid, although, by all evidence, it is hopelessly heading for a Taliban victory. In this issue, we once again dedicate space to the analysis of this crisis.

In a first article, Guadi Calvo tells us about the details of the current situation, masterfully mixing the local with the regional, the tactical with the strategic, the political with the geopolitical, the secular with the religious, and the sacred with the profane. Leaving us wanting to know more about the subject. In the second article dedicated to that country, we review the political and military situation, in which the Taliban "have the upper hand" when it comes to negotiating with the weak Afghan government.

In this issue we are also going to learn a little more about the drama experienced by migrants who try to reach Europe from the African coast, and how the European Union device operates to prevent them. These illegal migrants are refugees who seek to protect their lives, escaping from conflict regions, by the way, conflicts that have largely been generated, sustained and aggravated by European countries that now refuse to bear the consequences of their own Actions.

Know to win!

*Douglas Hernández*

Editor



# TRIARY 097

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## TRIARIUS

How to establish a country project in such heterogeneous and conflictive societies? Given the lack of voluntary consensus, an effective option may be its imposition by means of an authoritarian government. That is to say, we recognize that authoritarian governments have an important advantage over "democratic" ones, when it comes to steering everything in the same direction. For a system change and implant a new doctrine in society, it is necessary to train several generations under the new ideas. Considering that, in an ideal situation, a child enters first grade at 7 years old and graduates from university at 23, the authoritarian government must remain in power for at least 16 years, in order to form the first litter of new professionals, under the new doctrine. Obviously, crushing the opposition for 16 years will generate resistance and political turbulence, and possibly violence. That would be the price of the change.

On the cover, ***Ivory Coast Troops*** on urban patrol. In this edition, the guest is the Ivory Coast Army. See more information at the end of the magazine.

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Very special thanks to the international analysts who freely and disinterestedly have sent us their articles for this issue.

# Taliban, towards an irrepressible victory

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*Taliban warrior, armed with an Ak rifle and an RPG grenade launcher, both of Russian origin.*

Twenty years of US occupation of Afghanistan have only served to confirm the legend that Afghan warriors are invincible when it comes to defending their rugged territory. What they can attest to from the British Empire, the Soviet Union and the United States. To mention the last ones who have dared such audacity.

Although this time, those warriors have become religious fanatics who have put their particular interpretation of the Koran before any other reason. Mounted on that indomitable spirit, the Taliban are about to return to power and drag the 37 million Afghans back to the Middle Ages, as they did from 1994 to 2001. Preventing the development of society and fundamentally of women. By way of example, let us remember that,

during his interregnum, men were imposed from the length of their beards, which were mandatory, to prohibit anything like flying kites, raising birds or listening to music, not to mention political activity outside the aulic circle of the Taliban. Although all the atavism of the Mullah was concentrated with particular brutality on women, those who had absolutely everything forbidden. Turning them into objects without any rights, subject to the strict ordinances of the purdah (curtain) that regimented the life of women in public. Depending on the mahram, the close kinship with any man, husband, father, brother and even children, on whom she depended absolutely for everything and without whom she could not leave her house, under penalty of being imprisoned and in the worst

case stoned. . The woman was prohibited from laughing in public to being seen by a doctor and having the possibility of accessing any level of education especially curtailed.

So it is women, who fear the Taliban's forthcoming and undisputed victory the most, which legitimizes them, since the mujahideen not only managed to resist the occupation of the United States and their NATO partners, but they have achieved the support of the great Afghan majorities, given the high levels of corruption of the political class that was formed under the protection of Washington and the innumerable arbitrary acts of the invading troops, which have produced hundreds of thousands of deaths, tortured and disappeared in addition to of cultural and material

losses in a society strongly tied to its traditions.

Perhaps the most symbolic aspect of the withdrawal of the Americans, who can no longer hide their defeat, is the abandonment on July 2nd, almost in secret, of the most important military base and area they have had in that country: Bagram, about 72 kilometers north of Kabul, with a 3,500-meter runway, from which most of the air operations against the insurgents departed. In addition to being the headquarters of the United States Special Operations troops. Where more than 100,000 soldiers were housed, which, not to be surprised by the customs of their country, had swimming pools, cinemas, stores of the Burger King and Pizza Hut chains, a hangar used to interrogate and torture prisoners known as a point of collection of Bagram and a prison for 5 thousand inmates.

After the Afghan troops entered Bagram, they found that all the material abandoned by the Americans, including transport and communication units, had been vandalized, due to a certain fear that, sooner rather than later, it would fall into the hands of the Taliban.

The American army is expected to complete its withdrawal, of which it has already completed ninety percent, in a few more days, although some sources mention the end of August. No matter when, the US withdrawal sets the point at which the end of the government of President Ashraf Ghani will begin to run and the entire political structure of Kabul and most of the 34 provinces, which can collapse when the Taliban sees fit. So, the Casablanca has ordered the evacuation of a large part of its embassy staff, and the assignment of 650 troops to protect it.

The mujahideen offensive that began on May 1 is not only unstoppable, but is increasing every

moment. Given not only by the abandonment of their positions by the Afghan National Army (ENA), but also by the constant seizure of weapons and other materials with which they have replenished their warriors in the last year.

On July 6, the Taliban exhibited containers full of weapons and military equipment and about twenty trucks, taken from the Afghan army at the Sultan Khil military base in Wardak province, just over 120 kilometers west of Kabul. Many of the weapons seized were unused and still in their packing cases.

In recent weeks they have taken over 80 of the country's 421 wuleswali (districts), particularly in the north, where the greatest progress has been made. Including the siege of four provincial capitals: Badakhs-han, Takhar, Khunduz and Qala-i-Naw, capital of Badghis province, which they occupied for several hours, during which they stormed the prison, freed 200 "brothers" and looted the offices of the governor, the police, and the headquarters of the National Directorate of Security. In addition to forcing massive surrender of high-ranking police officers and the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

### **The ink stains**

Like an ink stain on paper, the Taliban continues to extend its territorial control, now free of its greatest enemy: the bombing of US aircraft. The reports are reiterated like a litany. More and more departments continue to fall under the control of the fundamentalists. According to the latest reports, the insurgents already control 188 wuleswali and dispute another 135 of the 421 that the country has.

Perhaps what is happening in the province of Badakhshan, where the insurgents control 23 of the 28 wuleswali and many of those

districts have surrendered without a fight, has a strong symbolic meaning, since Badakhshan was one of the main centers of resistance to the Taliban. , until September 2001 and where the Northern Alliance, the last local force that tried to prevent access to power by Mullah Omar, the founder of the Taliban, had its headquarters. Ahmad Shah Massoud, leader of the alliance, was assassinated in a suicide attack two days before the fall of the towers.

The loss of the provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar, where the fundamentalists control 14 of the 17 districts, the remaining three including Taloqun, where the provincial capital is located, would end the hopes of Ahmad Massoud, the Shah's son, who in recent weeks he had received significant material support from President Ghani. While last Saturday the third, television images showed politicians and officials from Badakhshan, boarding planes to flee to Kabul.

Meanwhile, massive defections continue to be reported, such as the one that occurred with more than a thousand men from the security forces responding to Kabul and hundreds of government officials who have fled to Tajikistan. Even the Taliban, which has taken over the main border crossings with that country, abandoned by Afghan forces, taking control and managing those steps whose operations represent millions of dollars a year. This has forced Russia to mobilize attack helicopters from its base in Tajikistan.

The Taliban's achievements have not been unique to the North. In the south, they have taken control of several key districts, such as Gereshk in Helmand and Shah Wali Khot and Panjwayi in Kandahar.

The Panjwayi district, where the Taliban movement was born, along with Shah Wali Kot, has already

come under the control of the insurgents, which puts the city of Kandahar, capital of the province of the same name, in check, where they also lie in wait for Spin Boldak, head of a major border crossing with Pakistan.

All experts agree that the Kabul government has only a few weeks to reverse the situation and prevent its fall. While the highest authority of the US Army in the Central Asian country, General Austin S. Miller stated that: "The withdrawal occurs amid fears that it could put

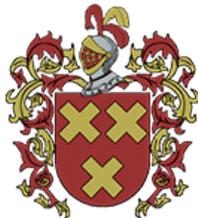
Afghanistan on the path to civil war." As if Washington, during these last twenty years, had been a mere observer of the crisis, which will continue to consume Afghan lives and announce the irrepressible victory of the Taliban.

Image Source:

<https://www.cxo-community.com/2017/08/the-taliban-quo-vadis.html>

**Guadi Bald**

(Argentina) Argentine writer and journalist. International Analyst specialized in Africa, Middle East and Central Asia.



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# Refugees, only with the right to die

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*Offices of the European Agency for the Coast Guard and Borders.*

As if it were a natural accident, the world has become accustomed to tolerating the deaths of soulless people trying to reach Europe. You read, as you read the weather, the soccer result, or some scandal that will disappear at lightning speed. The figures continue to climb vertiginously while thousands of human beings find their long-awaited well-being at the bottom of the sea.

Since last year after the outbreak of the pandemic, the European Union (EU) has further tightened its border controls and has denied access to more than 40,000 asylum seekers, including the elderly and children, mostly from areas of war.

Thus, during 2020, some 100,000 "illegals" have managed to access its coasts, despite the strong custody of the European Border and

Coast Guard Agency or FRONTEX, for its acronym in English. This office, which has received numerous accusations of illegal operations (persecution, harassment, mistreatment in general) to prevent asylum seekers from arriving on EU shores, has managed to reduce arrivals. That during the past year has been significant, when compared to the 130 thousand of 2019 or the almost 200 thousand of 2017.

This decrease is not due to the fact that the situation of the irradiating countries has improved, but to the "good" results of the EU policies, with respect to the pressure exerted on the nations of the southern Mediterranean, which is causing the increase of shipwrecks.

From January to June the "official" number of drowned,

according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of the United Nations (NU) is 1,146 people. The death toll revealed by IOM exceeds double that recorded during the same period in 2020.

With the spirit of a simple commentator, the IOM explains that at least 741 people died on the central Mediterranean route, 149 in the western Mediterranean, another six died in the eastern Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece and 250 drowned trying to reach the Canary Islands (Spain), crossing the Atlantic from West Africa. This past Monday, July 12, the death of 16 people who were trying to reach the Spanish island, who had departed from Cape Bojador (Western Sahara), was known.

Although these numbers in themselves are terrifying enough to

move anyone, different NGOs report hundreds of shipwrecks that they classify as "invisible shipwrecks", not registered in official statistics, which would significantly increase the number of deaths on sea routes to Europe.

Citing the example of Sohail al-Sagheer, a 22-year-old Algerian musician, who along with nine friends had left on March 24 from a beach in the city of Oran (Algeria), would have disappeared off Almería (Spain). After the search carried out by his family, who on April 5 found their bodies in the vicinity of Aïn Témouchent (Algeria) about 70 kilometers southwest of the starting point.

According to official data, it is read that the migratory crisis is far from being solved. In the first half of this year, almost 32,000 people were intercepted or rescued by the authorities, while in the same period last year there were 23,000. Rescue operations off Tunisia increased compared to 2020 by 90 percent. 15,300 people were forcibly returned to Libya in the first six months of 2021, three times more than in the same period the previous year.

The IOM points out that the increase in deaths is connected to the increase in surveillance and interceptions of illegal boats, by the authorities of the countries of North Africa, financed by the European Union, (EU) in pursuit to block the arrival of the thousands of victims of the European and North American policies themselves to their countries of origin.

It is known that the European policies of "hiring" non-EU countries to prevent the arrival of refugees, even financing private vessels to intercept illegal vessels and make them return to their ports of origin, where passengers are detained, although there are also cases in which these Operations end after assaulting boats, hitting, stealing

and stripping travelers of everything, including their clothes and life jackets, abandoning them at sea.

Migrants caught on dry land do not have a much better time. As in the case of Croatia, the longest external border in the EU, where during 2020, police patrols increased violence against refugees. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has recorded that approximately 18,000 migrants have been rejected by Croatia since the start of the pandemic. Those who have suffered physical punishment, have been robbed, raped, and even had red crosses painted on their heads so that they are easily recognizable if necessary.

In Greece, the almost 7 thousand refugees who have been rejected during 2020, did not have a much better time, beyond physical punishment, robbery and rigorous rape, many of them were forced to board boats, which, after being towed to Turkish waters, were abandoned, in the sea without food, water, life jackets, or any means to ask for help.

### **Better drowned than rescued**

Better drowned than rescued, is the reasoning of many of those who, at the risk of everything, risk their lives by boarding any of those ships that promise to take them to European shores. The refugees, on many occasions, not only have to face the persecution of the maritime patrols, the weather, the state of the sea and the security of the boats that, at the price of luxury cruises, are filled with passengers well above any record of security, but they are also left to the whims of the owners of these ships, who, as has been known, often abandon them adrift along with their "load" and escape in previously enlisted boats.

With the intention that the problem of the displaced, migrants or refugees, as they are preferred to be called, remains on the African coasts, the European Union has intervened especially in the Libyan Coast Guard, the harshest when it comes to punishing the "rescued". Funded, trained and equipped, to prevent the traffickers from doing their business, by the Europeans, they also have an Italian navy ship anchored in the port of Tripoli that provides them with technical assistance, despite the many accusations that weigh on the Libyan prefecture, such as arbitrary arrests, extortion, disappearances, rapes and torture to which it subjects those rescued

International maritime law specifies that people rescued at sea must disembark in a safe port and that the United Nations does not consider Libya a safe port, the European Union allows the Libyan guard to continue with its "task".

Last April, an accusation was made against Italy and Libya, for ignoring a call for help in the middle of a storm, where the waves reached six meters. Hours later, an NGO discovered the bodies of 130 people floating in the sea. Other evidence about the responsibility of the EU in the deaths of refugees on the high seas is that its navies have stopped sailing through the central Mediterranean, to avoid having to rescue shipwrecked people.

Due to the increase in violence against inmates in refugee detention centers in Tripoli, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported last June that they were forced to suspend their operations in two of those centers, Abu Salim and Mabani, which are financed by the EU. The Amnesty International (AI) report details beatings, sexual violence, extortion and forced labor. The AI denounced that since the end of last year the Libyan Directorate for the Fight against

Illegal Migration (DCIM) centers, which further increased the refugees, the only thing they have to "legitimized" the human rights violence by the guards. So, for the keep is their right to die. violations of the internees in these

Image Source:

<https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/06/GettyImages-1159904972-1320x880.jpg>





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# Taliban, negotiating from victory

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*Representatives from the United States and the Afghan Taliban meet on February 26, 2019 in Doha for a round of peace negotiations. (STRINGER/AFP). Today the situation is different and the Taliban have "the upper hand".*

The Taliban, after the US withdrawal, have decided to unblock the negotiating table in Doha (Qatar), which, although they were never formally interrupted, did remain stalled for months. Undoubtedly, the resumption of negotiations is linked to the successful military offensive that began last May 1, which has allowed them to demonstrate their military superiority, with which they have brought the government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to the brink of collapse and forced the Afghan National Army (ENA) to abandon innumerable positions, prior to the delivery of weapons and vehicles, which allowed the fundamentalists to besiege most of the provincial capitals, beyond the fact that they have announced that they do not intend to have combats inside the cities, including Kabul,

which they have a stone's throw away, and their latest strategy is to take control of important border points, where they will begin to collect tariffs and taxes, as they did in the late 1990s, for the war financing.

On the weekend of the 17th and 18th, the insurgent delegation, led by Mullah Abdul Baradar, met with several Afghan officials, including Abdullah - Abdullah, president of the "High National Reconciliation Council", a simple rubber stamp that It is useless without the permission of the fundamentalists.

The parties, after some controversies, agreed to speed up the talks, without giving details on the points to be discussed. After Sunday's meeting, the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, declared that "the Islamic emirate (the Taliban)

strongly favors a political settlement." Although some versions from Doha indicate that during the two days, only the way to avoid "civilian casualties" was discussed, although a ceasefire would have been confirmed until next week's meetings. Although many observers are pessimistic about the possibility that the Taliban's mid-level commanders, who are leading the operations on the ground, agree to stop their advances, when everything indicates that the final victory is within reach. Rumors of cracks inside the Taliban have always spread, which would not be confirmed with reality, although since the North American invasion of 2001, the rigorists had not been so close to victory either, as to test the solidity of the structure of the organization, founded by Mullah

Omar in 1994. In recent years, the Taliban have unilaterally decreed brief truces during Islamic holidays, which have always been respected by their commanders, although it is also known that they have been used, fundamentally, to fight back, reinforce their positions and launch themselves with more force against the regular forces, which has allowed them to carry out devastating attacks immediately after the ceasefire ended.

This Monday the 18th began one of the most sacred festivities of Islam, the celebration of Eid al-Adha, (Celebration of the Sacrifice) together with the completion of the hajj or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, so the fighting could be reduced, while that would give the Doha table time to intensify the dialogue.

Meanwhile, several countries are withdrawing fellow citizens and Afghan helpers, who have collaborated with them during the occupation. Last Saturday the 17th, France withdrew about a hundred people, including nationals and Afghans, who worked at its embassy in Kabul. In addition, the same operation in recent days has been carried out by Germany, Canada, India and China, a week ago Australia also did it. The critical situation of the Afghan collaborators has been an intense discussion within all the countries that have participated with the United States in the invasion of Afghanistan, to the point of taking that discussion to their parliaments, to examine the immigration laws. Since, in the case of Washington, for example, the collaborators together with their families could represent some 350,000 people, the vast majority of them receiving death threats.

Meanwhile, intense fighting continues throughout the Afghan geography, the relationship between Kabul and Islamabad has begun to overheat, after

Afghanistan has accused the Pakistani army of providing air cover to the Taliban. What was denied by the authorities in Islamabad, beyond the protection measures for the civilian population and its military.

One of the greatest points of tension that is being generated is over the presence of Turkish troops that are stationed at the Kabul airport, which the Taliban obviously rejects, an issue to which Turkish President Recep Erdogan, clinging to his policies of becoming the great arbiter of the Muslim world, has decided to remain there beyond the threats of the fundamentalists.

### **Expand before peace**

The idea of achieving the maximum territorial expansion has been the formula that the Taliban have found before sitting down again to negotiate with Kabul, and present their peace plan to the world, while rejecting all the proposals presented by the government men of Ghani, until new elections can be held.

A plan that does not close the fundamentalists, being exposed to participate in an election act and having to tolerate some type of opposition, much more when they have verified that, without foreign interference, nothing separates them from victory.

US sources, citing the analyzes of their different intelligence agencies, agree that Kabul does not have the military capacity to resist the Taliban for more than six months. Even if Ghani finally launches his announced counteroffensive, together with the armies made up of warlords, they could only postpone the fall for a few more weeks, at the cost of a notable increase in both military and civilian deaths.

While inside Kabul, Ghani tries to articulate military, political and

diplomatic defenses, in the face of harassment by the mujahideen. The mullahs have generated a series of actions to prevent the arrival of supplies by land to the capital. Carrying out important actions at the most important border crossings, freezing the entry of merchandise from abroad. In addition to having taken control of the busiest trade routes. These routes link the provinces of Herat, Farha, Kandahar, Khunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan with Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. At the same time as Kabul, it controls some border crossings with Pakistan and Iran and some minor routes. Right now regular and insurgent forces are fighting for border controls with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Some analysts believe that the Taliban's tactic for the coming months will be to obstruct free transit on all routes to and from the capital, to prevent access to food, which could force Ghani to face acute food shortages and energy, which would undoubtedly end up rendering the city.

Although the future of Afghanistan has almost no unknowns and it will either be governed directly by the Taliban or some person that represents them, the problems of the Afghan people are far from being resolved: insecurity will last for a long time, the sources of resistance to the mujahideen, by some armies under the control of warlords and Daesh Khorasan, which has kept well under cover during these last months, but crouched waiting for the moment to hit its "brothers" so hard like any infidel force; added to the high rates of poverty; tribal and ethnic divisions, the issue of women, so this time the international community will not be able to look the other way; the health issue, since in addition to Covid, Afghanistan, is one of the

few countries in the world where a problem that will not be resolved  
polio has not been eradicated, with five daily prayers.  
reaching epidemic rates, constitute

Image Source:

<https://www.nacion.com/el-mundo/conflictos/estados-unidos-annuncia-avances-en-negociaciones/VO5AHJLVJZELDPP3ZPYCN62Q2I/story/>



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# Smerch rocket launchers in the Venezuelan Army

By Douglas Hernandez (Colombia)



*Smerch system launch vehicle in service with the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela. Photo from [www.militaryforces.org](http://www.militaryforces.org)*

In 1976, the Soviet government issued a requirement for the development of a new artillery system, of the multiple rocket launcher (MLRS) type, which would be far superior to anything existing at the time. The new system, called Smerch (Tornado), successfully completed its tests in 1982, being adopted by the Soviet Army in 1987. Needless to say, by the time it entered service, it was the most widely used multiple rocket launcher artillery system. mighty in the world. Today, more than 30 years after its debut, it remains one of the most powerful and deadliest MLRS in the world.

The Russian Army, heir to the Soviet Army, currently operates at least 100 Smerch systems. Weapons that saw combat during the two Russian wars in Chechnya, also saw combat in Ukraine and in Syria. In 2020, Azerbaijan used these heavy artillery rocket systems against Armenian forces.

The Russian designation for the entire artillery system is 9K58, while the launch vehicle is designated 9A52 or BM-30. The Smerch has 12 tubes for 300 mm artillery rockets. A standard rocket is 7.6 m long and weighs 800 kg. The Smerch Multiple Launch Rocket System originally had a range of 70 km. But it has increased in improved versions of the system.

The launch vehicle is capable of firing individual salvos or rockets. Several warheads were developed for the Smerch's rockets, including HE-FRAG, fuel-air explosive, incendiary, cluster with anti-personnel and anti-tank submunitions or homing anti-tank munitions. Which gives it great tactical flexibility.

The Smerch launch vehicle can stop and be ready to open fire in 3 minutes, taking the same time to leave the position once the shot has been fired, offering a significant level of protection against counter-battery fire. Launching can be done directly from the cockpit, or remotely via a portable console.

A full salvo takes 38 seconds. The barrage of 12 rockets from a single launcher covers an area of up to 67 hectares. The Smerch has proven effective against concentrations of vehicles, armor, or personnel, artillery and air defense batteries, as well as runways, air bases, and other area targets.

The Smerch's launch vehicle is based on a MAZ-543M High Mobility Heavy Chassis in 8x8 configuration. The vehicle is powered by the 38.9-liter D12A-525A diesel engine, which can develop 525 horsepower. It is equipped with a central system that inflates the tires, to improve mobility on difficult terrain, such as sand, mud and snow.



Submunition that is incorporated into the rockets of the Smerch system of Russian origin. Photo from [www.militaryforces.org](http://www.militaryforces.org)

The Smerch is reloaded by a 9T234-2 reloading vehicle that accompanies the launch vehicles. It is based on a heavy high mobility chassis MAZ-543A, similar to the previous one, with 8x8 configuration. The refueling vehicle is equipped with a hydraulic crane and carries a full load of 12 rockets. Recharging, carried out by well-trained personnel, can take a little over half an hour. Reloading is usually done once the vehicles have moved away from the firing position, to avoid counter-battery fire.

A Smerch unit is normally made up of 6 launch vehicles and 6 reload vehicles. The Smerch's fire control system, the Vivari, can work automatically or with manual control. The Vivari is installed on a command vehicle and controls 6 launchers, calculates ballistic and targeting data for each launcher.

#### variants

- Smerch-M, improved version of the Smerch with new navigation and orientation systems and capable of launching long-range rockets. This system is known as 9A52-2. It is compatible with the new extended-range rockets, which can reach up to 90 km. It was recently reported that Russia has developed improved 300mm rockets with a maximum range of 120km.
- 9A52-2T Smerch, variant based on the Tatra 10x10 chassis. It was designed in Russia for the Indian Defense Ministry. This rocket system is in service with the Indian Army.
- 9A52-4 Tornado is a lighter variant of the Smerch, based on the KamAZ 8x8 truck. It has a six-pack launch capsule for 300mm rockets. So the 9A52-4 has half the firepower of the Smerch. The entire launch capsule is replaced after all rockets are fired. This system is compatible with 90 km rockets.
- Uragan-1M is a new Russian artillery rocket system, which could become a replacement for the old Uragan and Smerch systems. It was first publicly revealed in 2016. The Uragan-1M carries two launch pods for 300mm or 220mm rockets. These rocket pods are interchangeable with those of the Tornado 9A52-4 system. The launch vehicle is based on a MZKT-7930 high mobility chassis in 8x8 configuration.
- PHL 03 is a Chinese copy of the Smerch. It was adopted by the Chinese military in 2004-2005. It incorporates newer technologies as well as indigenous Chinese rockets with a maximum range of 130 km. China developed a number of indigenous versions of this artillery rocket system.
- Oliha is a Ukrainian version of the Smerch, using recently developed missiles, possibly with extended range. The Oliha uses the same launch vehicle as the Smerch. Testing of this system was planned to be completed in 2018 and production will begin.

## The Smerch in Venezuela

The Smerch multiple rocket launchers were acquired by Venezuela during the government of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, together with a package of Russian weapons, to re-equip the Venezuelan Armed Forces, in the process of doctrinal transformation.

The purchase took place in September 2009, and the equipment arrived in Venezuela in January 2013. Being presented to the public on June 24 of that year, in the parade commemorating the Battle of Carabobo and the day of the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela, where a battery of the brand new MLRS participated.



*Smerch system launch vehicle in service with the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela. Photo from [www.militaryforces.org](http://www.militaryforces.org)*

Venezuela's Smerch multiple rocket launchers were assigned to the 435 Field Artillery Group "Coronel Juan Vicente Bolívar y Ponte", a tactical unit of the Bolivarian Army based at Fort Conopoima, in San Juan de Los Morros, Guárico state. This location is geographically in the center-north of the country, at an equivalent distance from different points of importance on the international borders, so that its mobilization would be more efficient. In addition, it can quickly mobilize to the central-northern coastal area, in defense of Caracas, Valencia, Maracay or Puerto Cabello, cities near the Caribbean Sea that could be the object of an attack from the sea, including amphibious landings by a foreign power. .

The 435th Field Artillery Group "Coronel Juan Vicente Bolívar y Ponte" is part of the 35th Field Artillery Brigade of the IV Armored Division.

On Monday, May 12, 2014, the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela tested the Smerch system with live fire and maximum range. Being very significant that the place chosen for the live fire maneuvers was the Apure State, adjacent to the Republic of Colombia, and probable axis of advance of a hypothetical military

force that would invade Venezuela from Colombian territory.

The existence of Smerch systems in the hands of the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela is an important deterrent at the regional level. Only Brazil could oppose something equivalent with its Astros II system. But, in addition, Venezuela has the MLRS Grad, and 152 mm self-propelled howitzers. 2S19 Msta with Mashina-M fire control systems, which, as a whole, provide the Venezuelan National Armed Force with a very important volume and firepower.

Colombia has nothing to oppose these artillery systems. Although the Colombian Army has numerical superiority in terms of the number of men in arms, any concentration of personnel, vehicles or equipment, once detected, can be beaten by the Venezuelan artillery weapons that are within its reach, or failing that, by the Venezuelan military aviation, which, as in the case of the artillery, is also technically and numerically superior to the Colombian.

In the event of a conflict, the Colombian Military Forces must consider the multiple rocket launcher systems of the Bolivarian Army of Venezuela to be

strategic objectives, and attempt to destroy them in the first hours of the confrontation. To this end, military intelligence must locate the enemy units, and the commandos must be able to be mobilized to infiltrate to their location to capture/destroy the vehicles and parts. If this is not done, the adversary's advantage in firepower will condemn any subsequent major operation that the Colombian Army wants to undertake to failure.

From the Venezuelan point of view, the Smerch systems are the most powerful artillery weapon at its disposal, and will obviously be the target of the first attacks in the event that, for example, the United States or a multinational force invades Venezuela to remove the power to Chavismo and impose in

Venezuela a government that is friendlier to imperialism and that does not put obstacles to the exploitation of the infinite natural resources available to that South American country. For this reason, dispersion, camouflage, counterintelligence and electronic concealment measures must be put into practice so that the system is not neutralized without having entered into combat.

Venezuela maintains a close relationship with Russia, and has several active cooperation agreements, including several in the military field. Hence, the presence of Russian soldiers, engineers and technicians on Venezuelan soil is permanent. One of the systems that receives the most attention to guarantee its operability is precisely the Smerch.

### **Douglas Hernandez**

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# World Anti-Terrorist Forces

*Audentes Fortuna iuvat*



Ivory Coast

## Army

The Ivory Coast military traces its roots to the colonial armed forces of French West Africa, which were headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, but had bases in several different military regions. Most of the Ivorian conscripts who joined the colonial army were assigned to Senegalese units during this period. They served with distinction during both world wars, with 20,000 Ivorian soldiers fighting for the French during World War I and another 30,000 during World War II. In 1950, the French government began the process of creating a specific defense force for the colony, consisting of four infantry companies and a light armored unit.

Côte d'Ivoire became independent on August 7, 1960. In April 1961, the new government signed the Franco-Ivorian Military Technical Assistance Agreement with France, which obliged the latter to assist in the formation of a new national army. It also authorized the continued presence of French troops based at Port-Bouët and allowed the government to request French military assistance in the event of external aggression or major internal disturbances.

By the end of 1962, Côte d'Ivoire's fledgling armed forces had rapidly expanded to 5,000 soldiers spread over four battalions. Most of the initial recruits came from the defunct colonial military establishment and had served in various French units, particularly the marine regiments. They were armed with vintage equipment donated by France, including two Max Holste Broussard monoplanes, a single Douglas DC-3 cargo plane, fifteen M8 Greyhound armored personnel carriers, and even an SC-497-class submarine chaser. Conscription was instituted, although the large number of volunteers and low manpower requirements ensured that it was only applied selectively. For a time, some of the top positions in the officer corps and the Ministry of Defense continued to be held by French nationals.

Since Côte d'Ivoire could not afford to divert funds from its economic development programs to the armed forces, and was already dependent on France for its external defense, the military establishment remained fairly modest between 1961 and 1974. Defense spending spiraled between 1974 and 1987, and the number of troops serving in the armed forces increased to 14,920 men. During this period, the air force and navy embarked on a major modernization campaign. An international merchant marine training academy was built in Abidjan and personnel from various governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were trained.



In 1997, a breakdown in civil-military relations became apparent when President Henri Konan Bédié ousted the popular General Robert Guéï on suspicion of disloyalty. Two years later, an army mutiny led by disgruntled recruits and junior officers turned into a major coup that ousted Bédié and installed Guéï in his place. Guéï subsequently ran for office during a subsequent presidential election, although he attempted to overturn the election results when Laurent Gbagbo won the popular vote. This triggered a civil uprising in Abidjan and two days of street battles between Gbagbo's supporters and soldiers loyal to Guéï. Most of the armed forces remained neutral until the third day, when elite units of the army and the gendarmerie announced that they would recognize Gbagbo as president of the republic. Guéï admitted defeat and went into exile on October 29, 2000.

In September 2002, Côte d'Ivoire suffered a second army mutiny, this time by 750 Muslim soldiers who took over Bouaké, claiming religious discrimination and grievances against the predominantly Christian government. The mutineers later took control of most of the northern administrative regions, carrying out a brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing and plunging the country into civil war. For several years, troops sent by France, ECOWAS, and an effort by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) imposed a buffer zone between the south and the rebel-controlled north.

President Gbagbo repeatedly demanded that France help him crush rebel forces. France maintained that it would not take sides in the civil war, but allowed Ivorian military planes to cross the buffer zone and attack rebel positions. In November 2004, an Ivorian pilot attacked a French base during an air raid in Bouaké, killing nine French soldiers. The French retaliated by launching a follow-up operation to destroy the Ivory Coast Air Force.

In March 2011, a rebel coalition, the Forces Nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire, launched a new offensive in the south with French support, sparking a second civil war. The Ivorian army was quickly overwhelmed and Gbagbo deposed by the rebels. The Forces Nouvelles established a new national army, known as the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI).

Integration problems continue to persist as a result of the incorporation of various rebel factions into the FRCI, as well as former loyalists to Gbagbo. In 2014, some army units launched an unsuccessful mutiny over pay disputes. The crisis ended when the political leaders of Côte d'Ivoire agreed to a new financial agreement with the FRCI. A second riot occurred on January 7, 2017, with troops in Bouaké demanding higher wages and better living conditions; this resulted in a second financial settlement.

The effective strength of the army was about 3,000 soldiers during the first ten years of Côte d'Ivoire's independence, rising to over 8,000 in the mid-1980s before steadily declining to around 5,500. It has always

been the largest branch of the military. In 1993, the Côte d'Ivoire Army had three infantry battalions, one armored battalion, one artillery battery, and seven specialized companies.



In 1987, the army was responsible for the five military regions of the country, each of which was supervised by a colonel. The First Military Region controlled the concentration of forces in and around Abidjan, its main units being a rapid intervention (airborne) battalion, an infantry battalion, an armored battalion, and an air defense artillery battalion. The Second Military Region was located in Daloa and comprised an infantry battalion. The Third Military Region was based in Bouaké and housed an artillery unit, an infantry unit, and an engineer battalion. The Fourth Military Region maintained only one Territorial Defense Company based in Korhogo. The Fifth Military Region was previously known as the Western Operational Zone, a temporary command created to respond to the security threat caused by the First Liberian Civil War. By 2010, the system of military regions had been abolished.

Special forces units include:

- Special Forces Group (GFS)
- Fusiliers Commandos d Air (FUSCOA)
- Detachment d'Intervention Rapide
- Fusiliers Marins Commandos (FUMACO / Naval Commandos)

### Current army equipment

The Ivorian army has traditionally been equipped with French weapons, most of which were delivered in the 1980s thanks to generous military subsidies from Paris. During Laurent Ghagbo's administration, large quantities of second-hand Soviet weapons were purchased from Angola, Ukraine, and Belarus.

### Armored fighting vehicles

10 T-55	Soviet Union Main Battle Tank
05 AMX-13	France Light Tank
03 BMP-2	Soviet Union infantry fighting vehicle
13 BMP-1	Soviet Union Armored personnel carrier
05 BTR-80	Soviet Union Armored personnel carrier

12 VAB	France Armored Personnel Carrier
16 Panhard M3	France Armored Personnel Carrier
10 Mamba	South Africa MRAP
02 RG-31 Nyala	South Africa MRAP
13 BRDM-2	Soviet Union Armored Vehicle
20 Panhard AML	France Armored Vehicle
xx Eland Mk7	South Africa Armored Vehicle
07 ERC 90	France Armored Vehicle
08 BRDM	Belarus Armored Vehicle

### Artillery

04 M1950 / M101	United States Howitzer
03 120-PM-43	Soviet Union Mortar
06 BM-21	Soviet Union MLRS
04 Bofors L/60	Sweden Anti-aircraft
10 ZU-23-2	Soviet Union Anti-aircraft



### International forces

A mutual defense agreement signed with France in April 1961 provides for the stationing of French Armed Forces troops in the Ivory Coast. The French Army's 43rd Marine Infantry Battalion of the Troupes de Marine (43e bataillon d'infanterie de marine [fr]) had been based in Port Bouet, adjacent to Abidjan airport since 1979 and had more than 500 soldiers assigned until 2011, when it seems to have been dissolved. The French Army also maintains a force as part of Operation Licorne.

Since the summer of 2011, Operation Licorne, the French force, previously more than 5,000 strong, is approximately 700 strong and consists of Licorne Headquarters, Licorne Battalion (BATLIC), ostensibly made up of elements of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of Navy and the Régiment d'infanteriechars de marine, and a helicopter detachment.

The United Nations maintains the UNOCI peacekeeping mission in the country since 2004. On February 28, 2011, UNOCI was made up of 7,568 troops, 177 military observers, and numerous civilians and international police officers; the mission had received UNMIL infantry and helicopter reinforcements during the fighting since the late 2010 elections won by Alassane Ouattara.

Currently in the Sahel region, a French force operates in the framework of the anti-terrorist operation called Barkhane.

## National Gendarmerie

Since independence, Côte d'Ivoire has maintained a paramilitary gendarmerie force mandated to assist the police with law enforcement tasks in the country's rural districts. However, it can also be deployed alongside the military to quell internal unrest. For several decades, the size of the Ivory Coast National Gendarmerie remained constant at between 4,000 and 5,000 personnel, supervised by a commander. It underwent massive expansion following the outbreak of the First Ivorian Civil War, increasing to about 12,000 troops commanded by a Major General. Gendarmes are trained as cadets at a National Gendarmerie Academy. The National Gendarmerie maintains an investigative branch, the Brigades de Recherches, which has been accused of various human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions and illegal detentions.





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