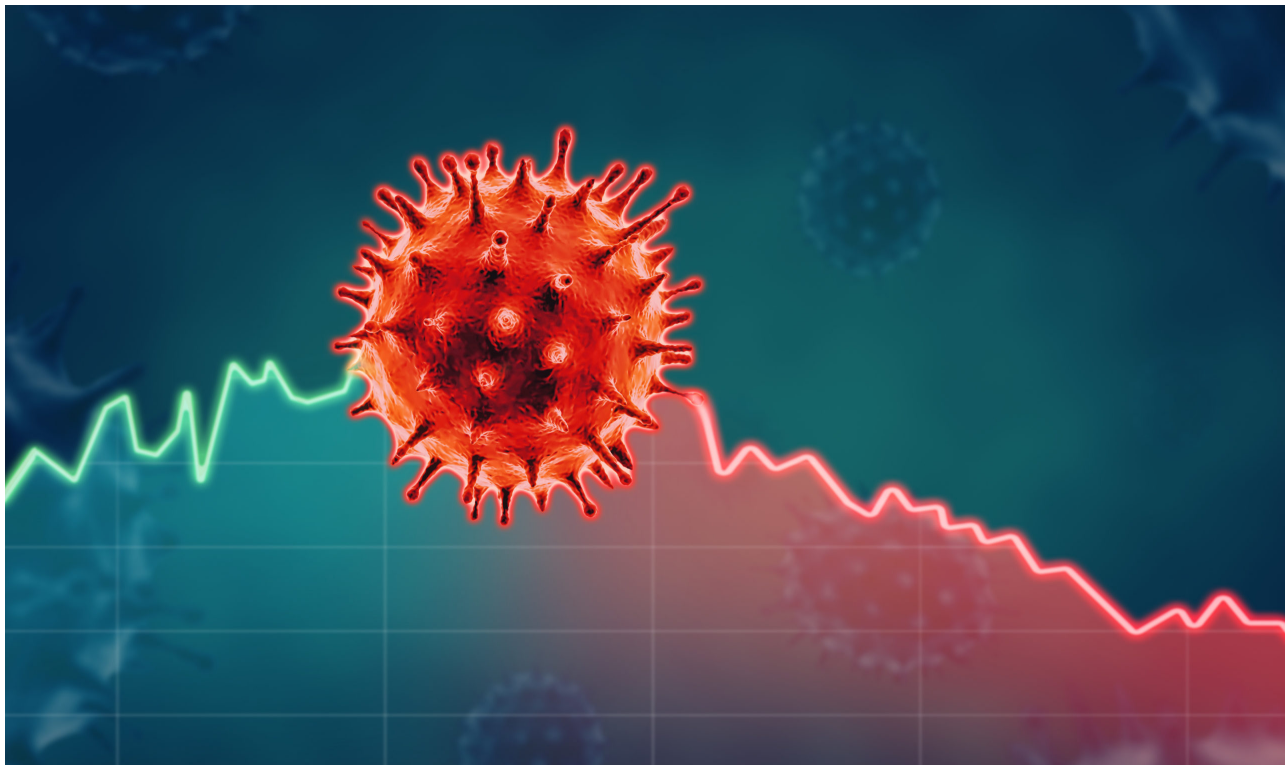




DEFENSE.info

**The Coronavirus
Crisis: Perspectives
and Shaping a Way
Ahead**



April 16, 2020

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The View from the Hill: The UK in the COVID-19 Pandemic

03/24/2020

By Kenneth Maxwell

I am quarantined on my hill in Devon.

The British Media had been celebrating the “Dunkirk” spirit.

The British Prime Minister, the old Etonian, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, better known as “Boris” or “BoJo” is the author of a book on Winston Churchill. He likes to think of himself as a Churchill Resurrected.

He has always wanted to be the prime minister.

Over the past fortnight he has been holding reassuring daily briefings in 10 Downing Street often flanked by the chief medical and the chief scientist officer, on the unfolding coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis over a lectern emblazoned with the slogan “Save the NHS.”

Yet as Italy became the coronavirus global hot spot and Spain followed and France enacted draconian measures to contain the coronavirus, Britain remained an outlier, safe it seemed in a BREXIT inspired off-shore island, splendidly isolated from Europe and from the World.

In Shakespeare’s words: “This fortress built by Nature for herself Against infection and the hand of war.” But on Monday 23 March “Britain Alone” was not enough. Boris Johnson has belatedly decreed a national “stay at home” policy and introduced tough new restrictions on daily life.

It is some irony in a British conservative prime minister is acting now to save the NHS and with it begin a desperate and belated attempt to contain the coronavirus epidemic.

The British National Health Service (NHS) was established after WW2 by the post-war Labour government. Winston Churchill and the Conservative Party had been roundly rejected by the British electorate in the general election of 1945. Churchill had called the election when opinion polls had showed him receiving strong approval. He was basking in the euphoria of victory in Europe. But in the general election in July 1945 the Labour Party under Clement Attlee won an overwhelming victory which was based in large part on their social policy proposals, and in particular on their policies on their proposals for public health.

As the leader of “His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition” (King George VI was then the British Monarch) Winston Churchill and the Conservative party opposed the legislation establishing the the NHS (the Tories voted against it 21 times). The British Medical Association was also ferociously hostile. Churchill, always a man with the ability to mobilize words had called the Labour Party “some form of gestapo.”

Boris Johnson is better known for his florid hair than for his rhetorical skills though he is not far behind Churchill (or Trump) in his capacity to invent and hurl rhetorical insults.

The diligence, persistence, and the passion of the Labour party's Health Minister, Aneurin Bevan, got a universal free at the point of service national health care system funded by general taxation established throughout the United Kingdom between 1946 and 1948. The NHS has long since become a much beloved and totemic British national institution (though it was scandalously underfunded by conservative led governments over the past decade).

Yet one thing is now absolutely certain. Boris Johnson and the NHS is about to be tested as never before by the Coronavirus epidemic which is about to hit Britain with the force of a hurricane.

And on the scale which has already hit Italy and Spain.

Hence my preemptive quarantine on my hill in Devon.

The Dunkirk "spirit" saw hundred of small boats put out to sea to pluck 340,000 allied soldiers from the sandy beaches of northern France close to the border with Belgium. In 2020 the British are showing a much less than doughty spirit. They are impatiently waiting congregated in huge lines to strip the supermarket shelves of toilet rolls and pasta.

Although pubs and restaurants were closed down on Friday night, City parks, rural tourist beauty spots and beaches, from Cornwall to Snowdonia, were packed with visitors over the warm spring weekend.

And on Monday the London underground was crowded with jam packed commuters. Few it seems we're taking any notice of Boris Johnson's confusing advise to "stay at home" and to "social distance."

In the face of the impending plague we were for too long much less in the "Age of Dunkirk" than in the epoch of "Phoney War" the eight month period from October 1939 until March 1940 at the start of WW2 when following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, only limited military action took place.

People went on then as they did now behaving as if nothing was happening.

But national health staff were and are still crying out in desperation for wider coronavirus testing and above all for protective equipment (PPE) for the professionals tending to coronavirus victims, and for the desperately needed increased supply of ventilators in the face of chronic shortages.

Eventually and belatedly Boris Johnson got the message and decreed a national shut down on Monday evening 23 March.

"You must stay at home" he said in a national televised address. We are clearly in for difficult days ahead. Many war time restrictions are likely to reappear. We are told that food supplies are not under threat though the impatient and angry crowds outside supermarkets in recent days clearly do not believe it.

Boris Johnson much like President Donald Trump has a mighty deficit of trust to overcome.

His “stay at home” decree brought back memories of the age rationing which persisted in Britain until 1954. I remember going to the “tuck shop” at my boarding school as a ten-year old with my ration coupon a slip I got up once a week for the dry surgery mixture we could buy (sugar was rationed until 1954) as a substitute for “sweets.”

And the mad rush at the British supermarkets to buy toilet paper reminded me of the neatly cut and sting suspended small rectangular cut wads of old newspapers in the school “bogs” (our term for the school’s outside toilets) which we used to wipe our bottoms.

At least this will not be store for the bottoms of today since the Internet has virtually wiped out the age of newsprint.

But be prepared.

From my hilltop in Devon I am anticipating dark days ahead.

Will the Coronavirus Crisis be Wasted?

03/27/2020

By Robbin Laird

We have raised for some time the question of whether the liberal democracies can effectively crisis manage. And our colleague John Blackburn set up a new Institute in Australia a couple of years ago to focus attention on how Australia could become a more resilient society in facing significant global transitions.

With the Coronavirus pandemic we certainly are facing a global crisis. Governments are hunkering down nationally to deal with the crisis and generating their own solutions to get through the most immediate aspects of the crisis.

But which nations will rise to the task of leveraging the crisis to become more resilient in the future and to shape crisis management capabilities?

The current crisis certainly has exposed both unrealistic social expectations and political leadership shortfalls in the liberal democracies in coming to grips with crisis, as opposed to managing prosperity.

Divergent responses to the crisis across the board in the global liberal democracies will challenge the ability to shape common solutions going forward.

The underlying conflict between the 21st century authoritarian powers and the liberal democracies has been accentuated and highlighted as well. With Putin having tossed out most NGOs from Russia as part of his consolidation of power, the absence of credible information within Russia makes trust in Russia’s ability to contribute to a global management of a pandemic virtually non-existent.

The Chinese government has elevated information obfuscation an art form during the current crisis. This situation raises fundamental questions about trust with regard to China which are rooted in their

domestic system going forward. And certainly, the over reliance on Chinese supply chains, a subject to which we have dedicated many articles in the past few years, is highlighted as well.

But will the liberal democracies shape lessons learned and establish more reliable supply chains?

Will the liberal democracies shape more realistic working relationships with one another to have more resilient national capabilities shared across a shared sovereign space?

During my recent visit to Australia and upon my return, I have talked at length with Blackburn and Anne Borzycki, a director of The Institute for Integrated Economic Research-Australia about shaping a way ahead.

Or put a different way, will we waste the experience of the Coronavirus crisis or can we shape lessons learned and carve a more effective way ahead to deal with future crises?

We started the conversation by noting that Australia has had a tough time of over the past few months.

Blackburn: “From an Australian perspective, we’ve been through some of the worst bushfires we’ve experienced. We’ve had floods, hailstorms, dust storms, and now a pandemic. I think that the quote I made yesterday in the post that, “Who could have ever predicted this,” as an excuse for being unprepared actually summarizes the problem we have.

“I’ve been involved myself in pandemic exercises within the military, both as a military officer and a consultant; none of this is that new. However, we didn’t take sufficient notice of a lot of that analysis, because implementing the recommendations would have been difficult politically, and we tend to defer decisions until we are in the crisis itself. We are in a situation, in my view, largely of our own creation, and our lack of preparedness and the scale of panic we see, is alarming.

Laird: The core focus is too often on the following the soccer ball rather than putting an event in context. The Coronavirus crisis is the current soccer ball, with perhaps a few soccer games, but after the season ends, the hope will be to return to the way it was.

“The challenge is whether the crisis is simply treated as a bump on the road or whether it is recognized as a turning point.

Blackburn: When you’re in the crisis it is too late to prepare for the crisis you’re in. So, how do we prepare for the next crisis? It will come for sure. How do we adapt? How do we shape a way to prevent the worst effects of a future crisis?

“The key three focus areas for moving ahead are to ‘Prepare,’ to ‘Adapt,’ and to ‘Prevent’ where possible the worst impacts of a future crisis.

“We’ve been following this free market religion that the market can actually fix everything, let’s go for the lowest cost regardless of what the end price is. Just in time supply chains result in less resilience. One of the very first things we have to do is accept that that our current model of business and global supply chains is dead. It not going to work for us, so we have to think of a new model.”

Laird: One analyst has suggested that we are going to need to shift from just in time to just in case supply chains. And as our colleague Rosemary Gibson has noted that lowest cost approach to supply can end up being the most expensive option from the standpoint of social resiliency and national security ... “there is a very high price to cheap.”

Blackburn: When we redesign our supply chains, we need to pursue a “Smart Sovereignty” model. The scale or degree of sovereign capability you have in a country, will vary significantly country by country. A country the size of U.S., with its population and manufacturing capacity, will have a greater degree of sovereign capability.

“A country like Australia, with much smaller population and a different economic base will have a smaller degree of sovereignty, but we need a lot more than we have right now where we’re 90% import dependent for our fuels and we’re 90% import for our medicines.

“We also depend primarily on foreign owned shipping to move our trade; this is a major source of economic and supply chain vulnerability in times of crisis. Australia has one of the smallest nationally flagged shipping fleets in the developed world with only 14 ships of 2000 Tons or greater on the Australian register.

“What must go with Smart Sovereignty is Trusted Supply Chains. You have to have diverse supply chains, and you have to have assured yourself that you can trust them. What is evident here is the massive outsourcing and dependence upon China as the sole source of pharmaceutical ingredients and other essential supplies, cannot be ‘trusted.’ We’ve seen it fail in the current crisis.

“We need to test our supply chains. We need to verify them. Smart Sovereignty with Trusted Supply Chains is a part of addressing the problem in terms of ‘prepare, adapt and prevent.’

“We need a much more proactive approach to assuring our own sovereignty, and that’s part of the ‘prepare’ challenge. With regard to ‘adapt,’ we need to look at our supply chains and how they work. With regard to ‘prevent,’ we may need in time to exclude/replace those countries, or supply chain elements that we cannot verify and ensure they meet the required degree of trusted capability.

Laird: We are talking first of about a national strategy, but given we are all in a semi-sovereign state with regard to our economies, our security or are defense capability when considering the liberal democracies dealing with the 21st century authorization powers, we need to focus on how the liberal democracies can reset how they work together.

“And the question of trusted supply chains need also to be specific. Each nation needs to take a hard look at its priorities and seek out trusted partners with whom it shares common standards and can be certain that the information available is trustworthy.

“This puts an onus on the authoritarian societies which are clearly built on lack of transparency. This means that your focus requires a serious relook at how specific areas of cooperation can happen with particular countries rather than giving blank checks to the global marketplace or particular allies.

Blackburn: There has been an unwillingness at the political level in Australia to consider the risks of blind reliance on the market or how authoritarian capitalist regimes like China can impact our safety and security. We need to understand that the current crisis is yet another wakeup call and not just one to go back to sleep again after it is over.

Borzycki: In Australia, this is certainly a bipartisan problem, of being blind to the situation we have put ourselves into with regard to an inability to address our vulnerabilities as a core political task to be worked with the private sector. This crisis gives us an opportunity to rework the relationship between government and the private sector to build a resilient capability.

Laird: And this is clearly not simply a political problem; it is about unrealistic social expectations that we just get on with enjoying life and not having to face the inevitability of crises and that we are no likely to face an unchallenged road ahead with regard to international trade, commerce or military conflict.

Blackburn: We're in the midst of a crisis that we're trying to manage. But we also need to lay down the foundation for enhanced resilience in the future. We also need to shape more realistic expectations that crisis management is becoming a way of life and not just a "once in 50 year event."

Borzycki: There is a unique aspect of the challenge facing Australia today. We have had basically 30 years of prosperity and economic growth. We didn't take a hit during the GFC, so we have a generation of people, now in their forties and in leadership roles across Government and the private sector, whose entire generation's DNA has an expectation of market growth and prosperity. The prosperity that we have experienced as a nation has become a critical cultural weakness for us as we to try survive and move forward.

Blackburn: Meeting the challenge is not simply a government responsibility. It's a shared responsibility for governments of all levels, with industry, with the workforce, and with us as individuals.

"When I said 'prepare, adapt, or prevent', the 'adapt' is what we're going to have a hard conversation with our whole society saying, "we're going to have to change our expectations. This is not going to be sustainable." We will also have to take a degree of individual responsibility for our personal and community resilience – it is not an issue that the Government can address by itself.

"We have to change our expectations, our behavior. We're not clients of the government. We don't have human rights for absolutely everything to be provided to us. We are citizens with a shared responsibility. We've got to face these facts, face reality, and change."

The Coronavirus Crisis and Information War

03/27/2020

Clearly, the liberal democracies are being tested not just in terms of dealing with the physical aspects of the Coronavirus crisis but in terms of shaping an effective way ahead for the liberal democracies.

And part of that challenge is the information war which the 21st century authoritarian states are engaging in while the liberal democracies shape a way ahead.

As Jim Carafano has put it in a recent piece: "Beijing has launched a PR blitz to deflect attention from its fatally flawed handling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“But no amount of spin can alter the reality that the Chinese Communist Party’s brand—as well as the Chinese economy—has taken another body blow. The latest round of propaganda is so ludicrous, it smacks of desperation born of weakness.”

Guy Taylor in a recent Washington Times piece highlighted how the authoritarian powers are working the information war in the current crisis.

China, Russia and Iran are flooding the global information space with false claims about the new coronavirus, according to U.S. officials, who say one of the biggest lies — that the virus that causes COVID-19 is a U.S. bioweapon and was brought to China by U.S. Army personnel — is just the latest in a “surge of propaganda” aimed at undermining America’s image on the world stage.

Beijing, Moscow and Tehran are using a vast web of social media accounts, fake news outlets and state-controlled global satellite media to promote false claims by academics and, at times, government officials to blame Washington for the crisis now gripping most of humanity.

The head of a key State Department counterdisinformation office said U.S. officials are ramping up their own efforts to counter lies about the new coronavirus that were first seeded by Russia in January and that China is now pushing in a bid to make Beijing appear as a superior global power to the United States.

With regard to Russia, Putin’s clearing NGOs out of Russia during his rule has prepared him well for information war for there is no credible information coming out from Russia on the real state of its own crisis.

With a country the size of Russia having cases on the scale of Luxembourg does challenge credibility.

And the lock down of Chinese society with both new and old means used by the Chinese Communist Party and claiming the superiority of their system underscores that reliable information is not a major Chinese export but viruses clearly are.

Taylor quoted a U.S. State Department official with regard to what the Administration seeks to do in response.

“We are going to make a concerted and public effort to counter disinformation by any regime on this because there are lasting consequences.

“The Chinese and Russians and Iranians are putting out these conspiracy theories and false narratives.

“It is deeply irresponsible, not just for America, but for the world. We’re in the middle of a global pandemic that is unprecedented. The fact that these regimes are taking the time to deflect blame from their own actions is deeply irresponsible.”

Our recent story of how the disinformation campaign is proceeding in Africa suggests that the conflict is global, not simply directed at the liberal democracies themselves.

Taylor quoted an Administration official with regard to a way ahead.

Exposing previous examples of disinformation by questionable sources, she said, is part of the effort to “flood the space” with accurate information. That, she said, can involve “engaging third-party credible voices, for example, non-U.S. government voices to be able to get the truth out there.”

Third-party voices can include fact-checking organizations, nongovernment organizations, investigative journalists, other governments, local community leaders or social media influencers, she said. “We work with organizations worldwide to do that long-term approach of increasing resiliency, decreasing vulnerability and then inoculating audiences to disinformation.”

And an article written by Chuck Ross and published on March 25, 2020 highlights another aspect of the challenge – the use by Western media of Chinese “information” inputs.

The Daily Mail, the popular British tabloid widely read in the United States, has published dozens of articles in recent months about coronavirus that were based on stories originating from People’s Daily, the communist party’s official newspaper, and other Chinese propaganda mills.

A Daily Caller News Foundation investigation found that the Daily Mail has published thousands of articles in recent years as part of a content-sharing agreement with People’s Daily.

Whether that agreement is explicitly in place now is unclear, but the tabloid has nonetheless cited Chinese government news outlets extensively in its coverage of coronavirus. The Daily Mail did not return multiple requests for comment

On Monday, the Daily Mail published [a story](#) with the headline: “Beijing’s leading doctor warns of a NEW coronavirus outbreak in China after the country reported its first case of someone ‘catching the illness from a person returning from abroad.’”

The story, which had a massive 1.1 million shares on social media, cited comments that Li Lanjuan, a top Chinese government doctor, gave to People’s Daily and China News, another government-controlled outlet. ([RELATED: Media Rhetoric On ‘Wuhan Virus’ Echoes Chinese Propaganda](#))

“One of China’s top coronavirus experts has warned that the nation is facing a second outbreak due to the increasing number of infections detected among new arrivals from abroad,” reads the Daily Mail piece, written by Tracy You.

In short the Coronavirus crisis is clearly not just about dealing with a virus; but an information war being conducted to try to position the 21st century authoritarian powers in a more favorable position after the crisis and to protect China’s position in the global economy.

Coronavirus: Geopolitical Stakes and Disinformation

03/23/2020

By Murielle Delaporte

The confinement generated by the Coronavirus pandemic has been at the origin of a light-spirited byproduct called “corona Vlogs” and the use of whatsapp to exchange jokes in order to kill boredom and diffuse potential anxiety (very similar to the underground humor characteristic of the Eastern bloc during the Cold war).

But in another sense, the response has been similar to the Cold War in another way as well.

The pandemic is also unfortunately providing the perfect environment for social anxiety which spawns rumor mills and fake news.

From advice such as drinking water every ten minutes to kill the virus to accusing the U.S. military of having brought the virus to China in the first place, global disinformation is rampant.

But we are better prepared to fight such disinformation than we used to just a few years ago.

We need to fight disinformation spun from the global pandemic.

And serious broadcasting and press agencies, as well as publications, have over the past years developed a fact-checking expertise which provide key tools to deal with disinformation.

The fight against Daech recruiting techniques as well as Russian interference in various electoral processes have been among the incentives and wake-up calls behind such initiatives.

Now another recent example is at hand.

A rumor currently is being spread in Ivory Coast by social networks about the “fact” that French soldiers have been contaminating Abidjan and are being taken care of at a French military base.

To illustrate such claim, a picture has been lifted from the French website www.operationnels.com showing French military medical staff attending patients.

Yet this photo was in actual fact taken years ago in Kabul International Airport during the Pamir operation, i.e. the French participation to ISAF in Afghanistan.

One should therefore be grateful for journalists, such as AFP “fact checker” Sadia Mandjo, who are seeking the truth against those who are trying to discredit French armed forces deployed in Africa for peace-keeping missions (such as in Ivory Coast) as well as in the fight against terrorism (like in Mali).

Editor’s note : Murielle Delaporte is the editor of the French magazine Operationnels.

The then French Ministry of defense photo was illustrating an article initially published in Soutien Logistique Defense # 10, Winter 2013 (see PDF below page 20 / in French).

Mandjo reached out to Delaporte to inform her of this case of disinformation in the Ivory Coast.

Coronavirus Propaganda and The French Press: A Case Study

03/27/2020

By Ed Timperlake

The very important second half of Chanel Rion's question, representing One America News (OAN), to President Trump about Chicom propaganda, and other bad actors was ignored by many of the White House press corps.

It was painfully obvious that they intentionally channeled their inner "Mean Girls" attitude to mock her brilliant set up; Is Chinese Food racist?

But she proved to be smarter than the lot by her mention of the international scope of the very significant Information War threat to America by many beyond China:

"Is it alarming that major media players, just to oppose you, are siding with foreign state propaganda, Islamic radicals, and Latin gangs and cartels and they work right here out of the White House with direct access to you and your team?"

While the WH press was mocking the OAN reporter for throwing a penalty flag at propaganda, the oldest news agency in the world was reacting to false attempts to blame the French military for the Coronavirus pandemic.

Agence France –Presse (AFP) is the world oldest news agency and when their editors and reporters recognized fake news trying to discredit their French military fighting and medical teams in combat they moved quickly.

The unity of purpose with AFP protecting the honor of France troops who were putting their lives on the line in helping Africans was commendable.

I am sure the very capable French intelligence services can vector in using cyber/Information war forensics to determine who libeled the French Army.

In the U.S. case, the Peoples Republic of China made it easy by having no qualms in slandering the United States Army as conducting germ warfare.

In Africa, it can be many bad actors that have an incentive to go after the French who are a significant force for stability and good.

In a social media disinformation campaign against French troops, it could be China, Russia or even home grown anti-government forces.

The point about Information war having many potential players makes Chanel Rion's statement/question even more prescient than her just looking at China.

She named many bad sources of propagandists trying to influence America unchecked by any honest diligent media skepticism.

Right now there is a global disinformation campaign trying to muddy up the real source of COVID-19 in the African Nation of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

This nasty propaganda effort of blaming the French military was seen by AFP, regardless of the source, and in recognizing that a photograph covering French military combat medicine in Afghanistan was being used to claim the French were spreading COVID-19 in Côte d'Ivoire, AFP acted professionally by reaching out to Murielle Delaporte.

Murielle Delaporte is an international reporter and editor who published the picture after being embedded with the French armed forces in Afghanistan in 2012.

This is no small matter because nations can become very unstable relying on fake news during a pandemic, especially as a third wave of epidemics is now expected on a Continent, where confinement will be even more difficult to implement than what we all experience right now.

AFP deserves great credit for remarkable heads-up situational awareness in spiking such a blatant propaganda effort because FAUX means FAKE in English and as we say in American military jargon good on em!

A rumor currently is being spread in Ivory Coast by social networks about the "fact" that French soldiers have been contaminating Abidjan and are being taken care of at a French military base.

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One should therefore be grateful for journalists, such as AFP "fact checker" Sadia Mandjo, who are seeking the truth against those who are trying to discredit French armed forces deployed in Africa for peace-keeping missions (such as in Ivory Coast) as well as in the fight against terrorism (like in Mali).

Murielle Delaporte is the editor of the French magazine Operationnels.

*The photo was lifted from an article published in 2014 in her related website (<https://operationnels.com/2014/05/11/au-coeur-du-metier-de-militaire-au-coeur-du-metier-de-medecin-la-chaine-soutien-sante-pamir-du-sc1-au-role-3-de-kaia/>) as a follow up of a reporting published in *Soutien Logistique Defense* # 10, Winter 2013.*

Mandjo reached out to Delaporte to inform her of this case of disinformation in the Ivory Coast.

Many in the American mainstream press have now surrendered any pride in being fair and accurate.

It is tragic for America that President Trump is actually 100% correct when he calls out fake news.

American's respect for the formerly honorable practice of accurate timely fact-based journalism is rapidly drifting away.

Many who should know better are squandering all American's sacred First Amendment protections by becoming ideologically driven hacks and the jury is out on whether this broken trust can be repaired.

China and the Global Medical Supply Chain: The Evolving Coronavirus Virus Case Study

02/11/2020

By Robbin Laird and Ed Timperlake

The Coronavirus Virus and its proliferation globally is clearly a key threat and challenge.

And it brings into clear view, how the Chinese handle their public crises and with global consequences.

The government is now cracking down on reportage on the epidemic in their own country.

According to a story by Raymond Zhong in The New York Times published on February 5, 2020: In recent days, both state-run news media and more commercially minded outlets have been told to focus on positive stories about virus relief efforts, according to three people at Chinese news organizations who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal directives.

Internet platforms have removed a range of articles that suggest shortcomings in the Chinese government's response or are otherwise negative about the outbreak.

Local officials have also cracked down on what they call online "rumors" about the virus.

China's public security ministry this week lauded such efforts, which have continued even after one person who was reprimanded for spreading rumors turned out to be a doctor sounding the alarm about early cases of the illness.

This is hardly unusual as this is how the authoritarian government works its information policies.

But it also highlights its consequence for globalization itself – transparency is required for the global community to prepare for and deal with the spread of the virus.

And the global community needs to ramp up its ability to deal with the crisis itself and turn to its medical suppliers to provide for the tools needed to deal with this crisis.

But one small problem: The West has outsourced its medical supply production to China.

Even if the Chinese government was an even-handed one, it will prioritize its own needs.

Rosemary Gibson has been a key analyst who has highlighted concerns about the reliance on China on our global supplies.

We earlier highlighted her work in both a [book review](#) of her important book on our dependence on Chinese medical supplies as well as conducting [an interview](#) with her.

We noted: “While there has been much focus on the potential threat of bioterrorism there has been virtually no focus on the US and the West putting into the hands of the Chinese, the means to cripple Western militaries in terms of medical supplies.”

The evolving coronavirus virus case study will clearly impact the global supply chain and the availability of “normal” drugs but could also affect how we will manage the spread of the disease.

We had a chance recently to talk with Gibson about the crisis as a case study.

According to Gibson: “The reality is when you have 80-85 percent of the core components in so many medicines being concentrated in a single country, if there are events, which I talked about in China Rx like a pandemic, then that will compromise the global supply of medicines.

“The coronavirus virus impact is certainly a warning, a shot across the bow, that we have to diversify our medicine supply chain away from China.”

“This situation underscores the importance of having some level of manufacturing of essential drugs here in the United States, any country. Certainly, China could say tomorrow that we are ceasing exports of essential products whether it’s antibiotics, medicines used in hospitals, protective gear, masks, gowns, and gloves, we’re ceasing exports because we need them here. Not an unreasonable request given the magnitude of the crisis.”

And the lack of transparency in China also exacerbates “market assessments” of what will happen as the supply chain is disrupted or redirected by the Chinese government.

Gibson added: “We have to look at what we’re getting, and where it’s coming from, and what it’s supposed to be, and certainly pertains to our medicine. We have to start production of essential medicines back here in the United States.

“The first thing China can do is say, ‘I’m sorry. We can’t export anymore. We have to keep it here in China.’

“The second thing is with shutdowns in China, people are not going to work. The production of essential medicinal products is clearly impacted. There will be shortages. Even when they do whenever come back online, who’s going to be looking at the quality and testing the quality of those products. Manufacturers are supposed to do that, but will they?

“FDA inspectors are supposed to inspect plants in China. Well, it looks like the next couple of months there won’t be FDA inspectors going to China to do that. It’s a voluntary assignment. Will federal government employees who work for the FDA even want to go to China to do those inspections?”

In effect, we have outsourced our medical wellbeing to another country. And simply a deep medical crisis in that country can shut down the supplies essential to our well being. And this country happens to be a major rival with the United States, and we have put in their hands a simple way to strangle us.

This makes no sense to us.

And we need to launch a proper response.

According to Gibson: “We’d have to see how much capability there is organizationally there is in the United States to ensure essential medical supply production and otherwise to actually do the work because we’re talking about thousands of medicines and many different kinds of active ingredients. It’s not going to happen overnight.

“That’s why we should start with those essential medicines that are core to any national health security and national security.”

She concluded: “We need a system just like we do for energy supplies and good commodities.

“We need an entity within the Federal government that does this tracking and projection of those vulnerabilities of global supply and demand current production levels for certain medicinal products so we can be prepared and know if this is shutting down what’s our alternative?”

Operation Resilience: France Offers More Military Aid Against Virus

03/26/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – France will deliver military assistance to the fight against coronavirus in an integrated manner under the newly announced Operation Resilience, armed forces minister Florence Parly said March 26.

The French services are also temporarily pulling troops out of Iraq as of today, as the training of local forces has been suspended due to social isolation, she said on RTL radio.

The proximity of Iran also prompts a withdrawal, as the neighbouring country has been heavily hit by the deadly Covid-19 infection.

President Emmanuel Macron announced last night the launch of Operation Resilience while on a visit to the hospital in Mulhouse, eastern France, where the army has set up a field hospital to back up the overloaded medical staff and facilities.

“This operation Resilience will be wholly dedicated to the help and support of the public as well as support for the public services in tackling the Covid-19 epidemic at home and abroad, particularly in health, logistics and protection,” he said.

Resilience will be separate from the Sentinel mission, which sees up to 7,000 troops in street patrols as a means to deter attacks by Islamist militants.

As part of operation Resilience, the navy will immediately sail the Mistral helicopter carrier to the southern part of the Indian ocean, and the sister ship, Dixmude, will at the end of April sail to the French Caribbean, to provide support and hospital facilities to the overseas territories, he said.

The two warships are presently sailing respectively in the Indian ocean and western Mediterranean. The third Mistral class vessel, Thunder, last weekend sailed 12 patients severely hit by the virus to Marseille from Corsica.

It was not immediately clear from the statement issued last night by the ministry the details of Operation Resilience.

The services were engaged, providing logistical support, health and protection missions, Parly said, pointing to medical evacuation by an air force A330 MRTT jet, naval helicopter carrier and setting up the army field hospital at Mulhouse.

“Resilience is the capability to overcome shocks and move beyond them,” Parly said. The services will provide support in an “integrated” manner.

The forces could help by guarding medical stores, escorting transport of medical gear such as masks, and supporting firefighters, she said. Such “protection” would lessen the call on the police.

The services would be in a support role and would not have the power of arrest, as that is for the police, she said.

Hundreds, and later thousands, of military personnel would be helping the civil authorities, depending on the requests.

French Arms Firms Grapple With Virus Lock Down

03/25/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – French arms companies have taken major steps following a national lock down ordered last week against the coronavirus, with some factories closed or cutting back, staff working from home, and shipyards working at a slower pace.

[The government has declared a state of emergency in the health domain, with the Official Journal publishing March 24 a law granting two months of greater state power in the combat against Covid-19.](#)

The lock down went into effect midday March 17, limiting the right for people to leave home and requiring an official document with boxes to tick for reasons of travel.

The government has since tightened those restrictions, including cutting the distance for personal exercise walks to one kilometer from home and a maximum of one hour to be out of doors. Hefty fines will be imposed for breaches of restrictions.

There are wide expectations the two-week lock down will be extended, as the pandemic continues to take lives.

Trade show cancelled

A spread of the virus has led to cancellation of the Eurosatory trade show for land weapons, a source close to the exhibition said.

The show organizers had decided it was “impossible” to postpone the exhibition, given the complexity for French and foreign exhibitors, and official delegations from around the world.

There were logistical concerns for the show, which takes 1-1/2 years to organize, the source said. A formal decision to cancel was expected March 26.

A cancellation follows the cancellation of the Berlin ILA and Farnborough air shows.

Eurosatory had been due to be held June 8-12 just outside the capital.

The Royal International Air Tattoo air show, a prominent UK military event, has also been axed.

A launch of a program for a European medium-altitude, long-endurance drone has been pushed back, with a deal expected in October or November, a source close to the deal said. Governments were ready to accept a budget of some €7.2 billion (\$7.8 billion), while industry seeks €7.4 billion. France had previously expected an agreement by mid year.

Fighter Jet Factory Locked Down

Dassault Aviation has closed factories and offices, including the key Merignac plant, southwest France, which builds the Rafale fighter jet.

“We are going through an exceptionally serious crisis with consequences on public health, with its breadth and impact on the medical care system, and also its effects on the economy and our company,” executive chairman Eric Trappier said in a March 22 note to staff posted on the company website. Factories were closed since the lock down started last Tuesday.

For office workers who could not work from home, the offices and open work spaces were cleaned every day, hand sanitizer provided and guidance given on distancing, he said.

A return to work would take place once factories and offices had been cleaned, he said in a March 23 note. The company was due to hold March 26 a special meeting of the works council to give an update, with information to be passed on to councils in each plant.

Production remained suspended until the health measures were implemented.

Dassault is prime contractor on the European project for a future combat air system and the Rafale, a key export product factored into the French defense budget. The company also planned to announce the launch of a new Falcon business jet this year. That was before the virus attack.

French Missiles Shuttered

MBDA, the missile maker, last Tuesday shut down its three sites in France, the only country of the four-nation consortium to do so. The plants in Britain, Germany and Italy are open.

In France, there are some 5,100 workers in three MBDA sites, with the head office at Plessy Robinson, just outside the capital, and plants at Bourges and Selles-Saint Denis, central France.

There are plans to return gradually to work, reflecting priorities assigned to certain programs. Staff will be given protection kit and there will be two work shifts – morning and afternoon – with a cut in the number at work.

The priorities could be delivery of spares and service for the Mica air-to-air missile, ASMP-A airborne nuclear-tipped missile, and MMP anti-tank weapon.

Those in France cleared to work on classified information must work in the office, otherwise staff will work from home.

Shipyards Slow Ahead

Pierre Eric Pommellet takes the top job at shipbuilder Naval Group in these troubled times, succeeding Hervé Guillou, who hit retirement age on March 24.

Among the management issues Pommellet must grapple with is slower work at the Cherbourg and Lorient shipyards, with the former building Barracuda nuclear attack submarines, and the latter building the air defense frigate and frigate for defense and intervention.

The Toulon yard handles service for the Rubis class of nuclear attack submarine and Fremm multimission frigate, while Brest handles service of the Triomphant class of nuclear ballistic missile boats.

Toulon is handling the last complete overhaul of the Perle, the most recent of the Rubis boats, website Mer et Marine reported. That service will last some 18 months.

Naval Group employs around 16,000 staff, of which some 4,000 are working from home, plugged into secure computer networks.

Small and medium yards, such as Piriou and Couach, have closed, as they are too small to install the health protective measures.

So far, the plan is to hold the Euronaval trade show October 20-23, a spokesman for Gican a naval trade association said.

Brakes on Military Vehicles

Arquus, a subsidiary of truck maker Volvo, has slowed production of military vehicles at its four sites around France – Fourchambault, Marolles en Hurepoix, Saint Nazaire and Limoges.

There are small teams at the plants sending spares to the French army, a company spokesman. Service support is a vital issue.

There is the prospect of further deliveries of the Griffon multirole troop carrier, one of the armored vehicles in the €10 billion Scorpion Army modernization program. Arquus supplies drivelines and remote controlled machine guns on the Griffon, and is partnered with Nexter and Thales on the Scorpion program.

The joint venture last year delivered 92 Griffon and is due to ship 128 units this year. Some 936 units are due to be delivered by 2025, in a total order of 1,872.

The industrial partners were also due to deliver this year the first Jaguar, a combat and reconnaissance armored vehicle.

A400M Back in Production

Airbus restarted March 24 final assembly of the A400M military airlifter in Seville, southern Spain, after a four-day shut down for a vast cleaning operation.

Airbus flew March 23 an A400M from Toulouse, southern France, to Getafe airbase at Madrid, delivering face masks to the Spanish defense ministry.

Airbus delivered the eighth A400M to the Spanish air force two weeks ago, and is due to hand over the first unit to Luxembourg in a week or so. That Luxembourg aircraft will be flown by the Belgian air force, which will operate its own seven-strong fleet.

Over last weekend Airbus flew an A330-800 airliner to bring some two million masks from China to Europe. That was a test aircraft.

Thales, an electronics company, said on its website, “To minimise the spread of the virus, the group is following the directives of the governments of its countries of operation, adapting its working practices in line with the recommendations of the health authorities, and instructing employees to work from home whenever possible.”

In France, the virus had by March 24 killed 1,100 people, with 240 dying in the previous 24 hours, afternoon daily Le Monde reported. That accounted only for those who dying in hospital, with grave concern for the elderly living in retirement homes.

Five doctors were among those who had lost their lives.

Worldwide, coronavirus deaths approach 20,000, *The Guardian* daily reported.

The Direction Générale de l'Armement procurement office declined comment on the impact of the lock down on the defense industry.

France Sails Helicopter Carrier on Medical Mission

03/23/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – The French navy sailed a helicopter carrier to the Mediterranean island of Corsica to pick up patients hit by the coronavirus infection, the armed forces ministry said March 22.

Florence Parly tweeted the arrival today of Thunder, a Mistral class helicopter carrier, at the port of Ajaccio, on the west coast of Corsica, known as the island of beauty.

“Solidarity with our medical staff,” she said.

“The services are there to protect the French.”

Parly thanked the sailors and the medical wing of the armed forces who conducted the evacuation.

Two ambulances drove on board the helicopter carrier, which had sailed from Toulon, the key naval base on the southern coast, the armed forces ministry said.

A medical team of military and civilian specialists sailed to receive the patients, who were placed in strict confinement.

The patients will be transferred to hospitals in the south of France.

The maritime mission was called to lighten the hospitals on Corsica, which had registered 164 cases and seven fatalities due to coronavirus by March 19, said the local health authority, BFM TV reported.

The Mistral class is equipped with an onboard hospital, with two operating theaters and 69 beds, which can be extended. A 200-strong crew sails the warship.

The navy sailed Thunder on a humanitarian mission to the French Caribbean in 2017, when the islands of Saint Martin and Saint Bartholomew were hit by hurricane Irma. Last year, the helicopter ship diverted from the annual Joan of Arc naval mission to sail to Mozambique, after cyclone Idai hit southern Africa.

The two other Mistral class ships, Mistral and Dixmude, are sailing in the Indian Ocean and western Mediterranean.

Meanwhile, on March 21st, the French Air Force flew a second flight of the A330 MRTT equipped with the Morpheus flying hospital unit, flying six patients to Bordeaux from Mulhouse.

The first medical flight of the A330 MRTT took place two days before, flying six patients from Mulhouse to Istres airbase, south of France.

The French air force has added a second Falcon jet to its medical evacuation flight, which now comprises six pilots and two cabin teams, a Falcon 2000LX and Falcon 900, the service said. The transport squadron flies that emergency service.

The airborne medical squadron has been stood up in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Those flight crews are trained to fly in conditions of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and radioactive warfare, with the staff wearing protective gear and the aircraft disinfected. The pilots can fly with protective masks and gloves.

A crew from that squadron flew March 18 the A330 MRTT which brought six patients from Mulhouse, eastern France, to the south of the country

Parly visited March 18 Villacoublay airbase, just outside the capital, and met crews of the two specialist units. Parly said the services would support the national effort, especially the air force and its medical evacuation capability.

The army is setting up tents for its field hospital in the car park of the public hospital in Mulhouse.

That field hospital, equipped with 30 beds for intensive care, is intended to take some of the pressure off the staff in the general hospital, which is struggling to cope with the intake of stricken patients.

Specialists in the Direction Générale de l'Armement procurement office are testing safety masks proposed by companies, with some 700 samples received for tests. Results of tests are expected in the next few days, the ministry said.

The defense innovation agency has set a €10 million budget for a tender for projects to fight the pandemic, looking for ways to protect and test the population, track the course of illness in a patient, or how to limit the constraints during the health crisis, the ministry said.

The ministry has stood up five of the eight military hospitals around the country, with some 100 beds in each hospital set aside for patients with coronavirus, of which 40 are for severe cases. The ministry closed the noted Val de Grâce hospital in the capital in 2016.

The number of fatalities in France rose almost 20 percent to 562 over Friday and Saturday, with 6,172 in hospital, of which 1,525 are in intensive care, Le Monde afternoon daily reported March 22.

The first hospital doctor in France has died while treating coronavirus.

“This is a war, it will last,” president Emmanuel Macron said in *Journal de Dimanche*, a Sunday paper.

There was need to protect the most vulnerable and the health system, as well as control the stress on society, he said.

There was also need to tackle an unprecedented financial crisis and crisis in the underlying economy.

French Air Force Flies Medical Airlift in France for First Time

03/19/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – On March 18, 2020, the French air force flew six civilian patients severely hit by the deadly coronavirus in an A330 MRTT military transport jet fitted out with an onboard medical evacuation unit, the armed forces ministry said.

That was the first time the service flew its airborne hospital unit, dubbed Morpheus, in a domestic flight as the module was used to fly wounded personnel to France from distant overseas deployments.

The modular units, previously fitted on the C-135, can be equipped for intensive care as well as lighter medical conditions.

The A330 multirole tanker transport aircraft flew from Mulhouse, eastern France, and landed at Istres airbase in the south, allowing the patients to be transferred to military hospitals in Marseille and Toulon, the ministry said.

The military flight was ordered to lighten the load on hospitals in eastern France, one of the hardest hit regions, with the public health authority registering March 17 1,820 cases of coronavirus in that part of the country.

In other medical moves, armed forces minister Florence Parly told *Le Parisien* daily the ministry found it had five million surgical masks and was delivering them to the ministry of health and social affairs.

There has been widespread concern in the medical profession over the lack of masks, leaving the staff vulnerable to the superbug.

The ministry has also arranged for a mobile military hospital to be set up in the Alsace northeastern region.

Those limited military operations were in stark contrast to a rush of rumors and fake news stories on social media which fuelled talk of army deployment to enforce a national curfew.

A curfew has not been ordered.

Photos circulated on social media of armored vehicles on the motorway and in suburbs, with talk these would be used in the curfew.

Those photos dated from earlier times or were on routine movement.

Such was the spread of falsehoods, the armed forces junior minister, Genevieve Darrieussecq, tweeted “Stop Fake News,” saying the services would not intervene in the lock down and they were playing their part in a national effort against the epidemic.

The ministry’s website denied point by point the talk of the military taking on a greater role in the lock down.

French president Emmanuel Macron said March 16 in a live speech broadcast to the nation there would be a national lock down as of midday the next day. That restrictive measure required people to stay indoors unless going to work, had emergency needs or carried an obligatory travel document.

Some 100,000 police were mobilized to enforce the lock down, and would accept press cards in place of the travel document, the interior minister said March 16. The document can be downloaded from the internet or written out by hand.

Those breaching the lock down must pay hefty fines.

French hospitals had admitted March 18 3,626 patients, of which 931 were in intensive care, afternoon daily Le Monde reported.

The virus had claimed 264 lives, an increase of 89 deaths within 24 hours.

About half the patients with serious cases were under 60.

Toilet Paper and Total War

03/16/2020

By David Beaumont

The lessons that prepare defence forces and government institutions for crisis responses need not come from history books.

Lessons can come from extrapolating what we witness every day; from events that capture tangible and intangible aspects of sustaining normal life.

From natural disasters to global pandemics, Australia has had a tumultuous beginning of the year.

This time has been socially, economically and politically testing. The impact of this turbulence on essentially fragile national logistics, commerce and industry capability is starkly evident and has forced the nation to consider its national resilience.

The difficulty experienced in obtaining basic household products – toilet paper for example – as consumers buy in preparation for a state of quarantine that may never come, as trite an issue as it may be, starkly demonstrates how critical human behaviour is in the calculus.

It is a perfect analogy with which to consider military preparedness and strategic resilience.

People naturally gravitate towards the idea that strategic resilience is about maintaining a buffer for emergencies. Inevitably, and for sensible reasons, the topic of national reserves or stocks (or, in the military's case, 'war stocks') is raised.

Enough stockholdings of strategically significant commodities is critically important for national resilience, just as they are for military operations.

The absence of stock is, however, only the 'front-end' of the problem in a major crisis.

In some cases, the maintenance of unnecessary stock levels may actually detract from preparedness and resilience; vast quantities of inappropriate strategic reserves consume money and other resources that can be used in other critical areas.

Buffers, insurance and assurance (through planning and governance) are important for resilience, but there are intangible factors that need to be understood.

In military logistics, the greatest behaviour-based harm to logistics performance relates to trust that the logistics system will deliver, and from the impact of 'psychological effects induced by the [original] deficiency.'¹

Even if the situation improves commanders will 'certainly place pressure on their planners and on their own superiors to insure future adequacy of support.'²

Commanders and logisticians at all levels will arbitrarily increase their demands, and others will do their best to meet the new requirement. Hoarding will occur. The military organisation – perhaps even government and industry – will rapidly try to respond to rapidly growing military requirements.

This sounds like a good problem to have; while having surplus production and availability certainly beats dealing with systemic shortages, logistics 'scaling' rarely occurs without problems. This 'under-planning / over-planning' sequence generally results in oversupply; wasting transport, clogging warehouses, limiting strategic mobility and costing resources that the force can't spare.³

It was a problem recently seen in the initial operations of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was one reason for the 'iron mountains' of Operation Desert Storm over a decade earlier. If production or availability cannot increase, an inefficient transfer of resources from one area of the battlefield to the other can upend strategy. In these circumstances it becomes difficult for planners to direct resources to the right place, and what can be termed 'brute force logistics' – get as much as you can to the place what you believe is of the greatest need – comes.

The parallel with what is going on now with COVID-19 (coronavirus), or what was seen in the shortages of air purifiers and face masks during the Australian bushfire crisis this year, is clear. Australian consumers are fearful.

A normally stable balance of supply and demand is upset by events, with consumer behaviour in panic-buying magnifying the problem.

The 'world' is only at the beginning of its industrial and supply-chain response to the virus. Given that it is likely to have a pandemic on its hands, the production, transfer and management of resources globally is, quite obviously, going to be chaotic.

We're waiting to find out what happens next. Some economists are predicting the global production output loss to enter the trillions of dollars, with global economic conditions likely to become recessionary. It is also possible that a huge multi-lateral economic response will lead to a version of the 'under-planning / over-planning sequence.' Governments may launch economic stimulus packages to deploy funding and offset a precipitous decline in trade.

While I won't pretend to know the answer as to what might happen in a pandemic situation, the ideas of military logistics can offer a window through which to observe the situation. We can, however, use the events before us as a window of our own to consider military preparedness.

What if the scenario was a military crisis rather than a response to natural disaster or pandemic? Imagine we were talking about spare-parts or precision weapons rather than face-masks or toilet paper.

The simultaneous draw upon shared industrial resources by coalition partners might create 'runs' on necessary resources and stocks, for without these stocks military forces will be little more than a short-term buffer against the encountered strategic shock.

Preparedness systems fail, logistics processes collapse, and command struggles to regain control. The purpose of Martin Van Creveld's *Supplying War* seems to be found in displaying militaries in disarray, and Richard Betts writes of the 'unreadiness' of the US military as its first tradition in the book *Military Readiness: concepts, choices, consequences*⁴

The ADF has experienced this 'tradition' in the past.

Two examples in recent Australian military history spring to mind.

The first was during the deployment of International Forces East Timor in 1999 when a massing coalition force drained the city of Darwin of hardware and deployable consumables, necessitating an ad hoc and inefficient procurement plan to be developed.

The second was during the deployment of the US-led coalition to Iraq in 2003 where because Australia lacked the competitive buying power to procure commercial airlift to support the deployment, it arranged with the US that its Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) would facilitate airlift.

What if the scenario was severe still, and a level of national mobilisation required? Naturally we would see proportionally severe exacerbation of the problems above. Histories of the First and Second World war attest to the problem of over-mobilisation; where the rush to put personnel in the field, on the ocean and in the air outpaces the capacity of industry to provide them with the materiel of war.

The increasing sophistication of modern weaponry, the high standard of materiel modern militaries expect themselves to operate with, the presence of an increasingly specialist workforce, and with lean force structures characteristic of periods of structural demobilisation, will make an incredibly difficult resilience challenge for a modern Western military.

The first losses of battle make the demand for materiel much more critical than the demand for manpower. It takes years to establish production runs capable of supporting the largest forces, especially as the manpower draw to the military draw is the same as to industry. But when industry starts to fulfil the need, it tends to do so in such excess that it is wasteful and a needless draw on limited national resources. The wrong things are produced at the wrong time and delivered to the wrong place.²

The systems of prioritisation and allocation fail, and in the rush to do something good, the best intentions create unforeseen and unwanted problems.

Logistics and preparedness are defined by ‘tangibles’ and ‘intangibles’. These two factors conspire to create complex systems that are difficult to control, especially when the impact of human decisions and behaviours is taken to account.

Until we have quantum computers and artificial intelligence to do the thinking for us, the best we may be able to do is research, study and observe the events before us.

What we may witness in consumer behaviour in highly unusual situations is like what might be witnessed with respect to ‘military behaviour’ in a war or a military crisis.

As ultimately innocuous as a consumer run on toilet paper might be to us now, the situation does tell a story as to how we might see our military logistics systems act in a time of strategic shock.

Understanding how they may act ultimately underwrites military preparedness and, in the case of strategy and national power, creates the national resilience that ultimately determines success in war.

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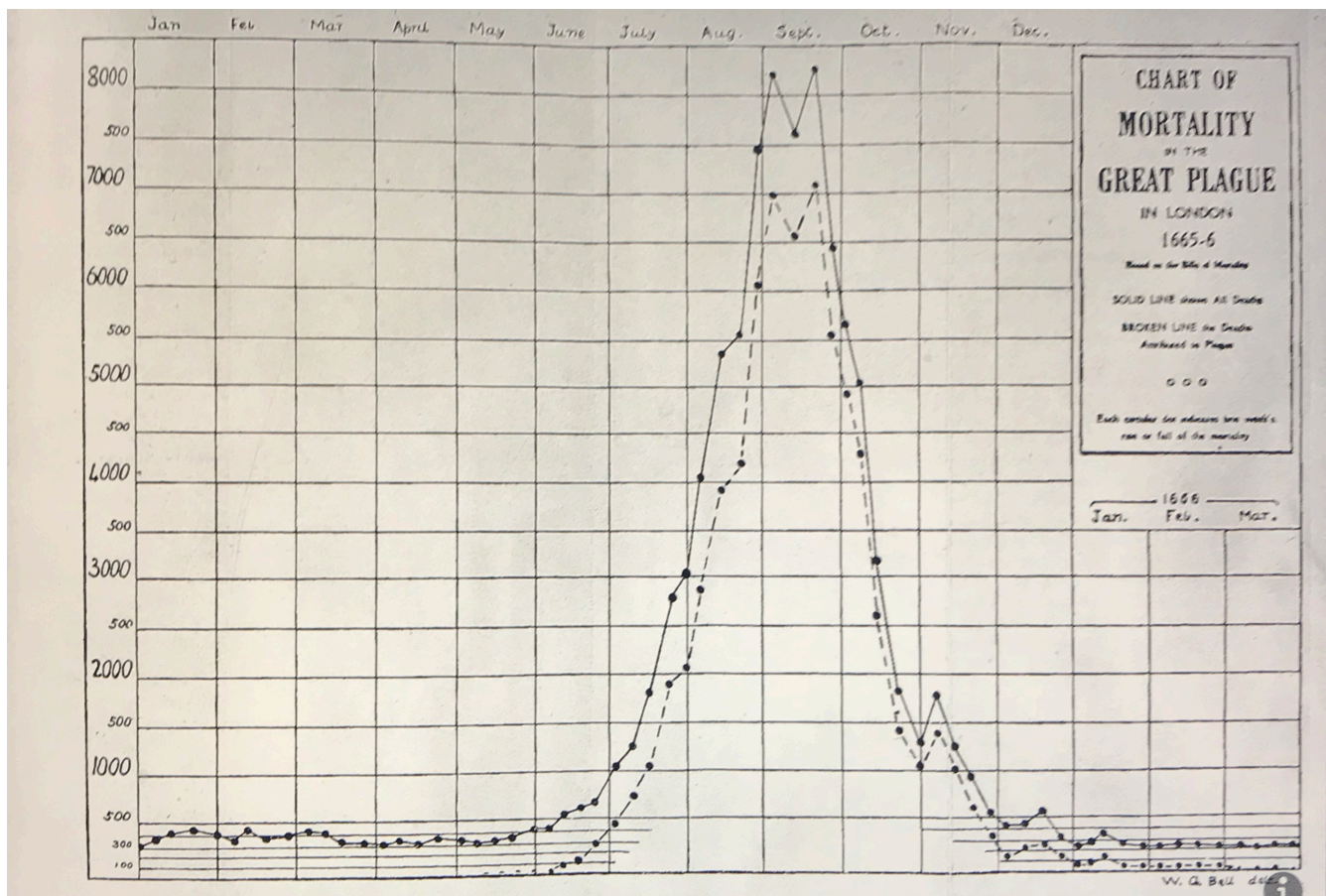
Footnotes

1. Eccles, H., *Logistics in the national defense*, The Stackpole Company, USA, 1959, p 109
2. *Ibid.*, p 109
3. *Ibid.*, p 109
4. See Van Creveld, M., *Supplying War*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 2004 (4th edition); Betts, R., *Military readiness: concepts, choices, consequences*, Brookings, USA, 1995
5. It was these observations of the Second World War that led Eccles to develop his theory of the *logistics snowball*, often caused by the under-planning, over-planning sequence.

Navigating the Spike: The Case of the London Plague, 1665-1666

04/09/2020

By Kenneth Maxwell



Managing, or navigating the spike(s) in the Coronavirus crisis is a focus of attention for the world's governments and their populations. But navigating pandemic spikes is nothing new.

The great plague of London killed and estimated 100,000 out of a total population of some 460,000 which was almost a quarter of the population. It was the last pandemic of the bubonic plague to occur in England.

The "Black Death" had originated in China in 1331. The plague was caused by the yersinia pestis bacterium which is usually transmitted through the bite of an infected rat. The 1665-66 plague in London and more broadly across England was last widespread outbreak of plague in England during the 400 year pandemic.

The poorer parts of the city suffered most. here hygiene was rudimentary and overcrowding common. It was not until 1894 that Alexandre Yersin identified the causal agent and the transmission of the bacterium by rat fleas was discovered and this was confirmed by DNA analysis in 2016. The reported figures of deaths were used to compile bills of mortality which listed the total deaths in each parish and whether caused by the plague.

As the plague spread a system of quarantine was introduced. This involved locking the house were anyone had died for 40 days. Travel was restricted. The rich left the city and King Charles II and his court moved first to Salisbury and then to Oxford. The population of London was required to obtain a certificate of good health to leave the city. Trade and business ceased. By February 1666 the King and his court returned to London.

The great fire of London occurred in September of 1666 which gutted the medieval city but did not reach Westminster or Charles II's Palace of Whitehall. The rebuilding took place largely on old street plan despite grand baroque plans for a redesigned city of piazzas and avenues. But new public buildings were created on the previous sites. The most famous of which was St Paul's Cathedral and Christopher Wren's 50 new churches.

The War Against Coronavirus or Is It?

04/08/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Heads of state, politicians and the press have adopted war as the word to use in a struggle against coronavirus, prompting debate whether the metaphor is misleading.

The deadly impact of Covid-19 has sparked the second world war and military terms as key cultural and historical references, helping to grab headlines and soundbites.

There have variously been references to the Blitz, Dunkirk, Pearl Harbor and a war against coronavirus, which has taken more than 70,000 lives around the world by April 6.

In reply, there are those who argue the use of a war analogy sets up misconceptions of a health crisis, which calls for debate and consensus on medical treatment.

World at War

“We are at war, surely in a war for health: we are fighting not an army, or another country,” president Emmanuel Macron said March 16 in an address to the nation.

“But the enemy is there, invisible, elusive, but spreading. And that calls for a general mobilization.”

Macron used the phrase “We are war” six times in that speech.

Queen Elizabeth, in a rare April 5 address in Windsor castle, recalled her first radio broadcast to the British public in 1940, when she, aged 14, and her sister Princess Margaret reached out to children evacuated from cities hit by Nazi night bombers.

In closing her April 5 broadcast, the British head of state referred to Vera Lynn's “We'll Meet Again,” a song which helped prop up morale in the dark days of the second world war.

That four-minute royal broadcast thanked the “frontline” of the National Health Service, a government-backed medical system struggling to cope with the viral infection.

Aspiring to Talk Like Churchill

A March 23 speech by Boris Johnson was seen as carrying the prime minister's hope of evoking Winston Churchill, the British leader who came to power in 1940 and stood up to Hitler. Johnson's biography of Churchill was published in 2014.

Johnson was admitted April 5 into hospital, after going into self isolation for coronavirus some 10 days previously.

On BBC Radio 4, Paul Nurse, Nobel laureate and head of the Francis Crick Institute, said, "A metaphor here is Dunkirk – we are a lot of little boats, we can be effective. The government has put in bigger boats – destroyers..."

Nurse, who also worked at Sussex university, was referring to testing for the viral infection.

The Telegraph, a daily paper, refers to the Blitz bombing of Britain in its virus coverage.

In the US, on April 5, Surgeon general Jerome Adams drew on events of combat and mass attack as he predicted a tough week ahead for America.

"The next week is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment," he said on NBC News' Meet the Press.

"It's going to be our 9/11 moment.

"It's going to be the hardest moment for many Americans in their entire lives."

"This is war time," New York governor Andrew Cuomo said April 5, referring to Covid-19, the Guardian daily reported.

Does the War Metaphor Mislead?

Macron's speech grabbed the public attention.

"The use of 'war' was striking," said Michael Heurtevant, an architect.

"He made a pretty good speech."

To some, those references to war may not have been the best way to tackle the disease.

"To my mind, this is not about war, because there is not an enemy," Claire Marin, writer and associate member of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, an élite academic institution, said March 14 in afternoon daily *Le Monde*.

"To think of illnesses in terms of war, which is commonplace, is to misunderstand the essence of life," she said. "I am not sure that helps present the situation or understand the way it works."

What was important was not how to hit but to duck like an agile boxer, dodging punches, she said.

There was, for now, no way of destroying the virus, nor treating with vaccine, merely trying to contain the spread of the infection.

“That is very different,” she said.

Mélanie Challe, a photographer, said there has been debate over use of the war term.

“We are not at war,” she said. There is no bombing, no invasion force. We have food.”

An emergency room doctor, Sophie Mainguy, wrote a March 19 article titled, “We Are Not at War.”

The measures Macron unveiled made sense, she said, but his presentation was less than satisfactory: viewing events through the “lens of defense and domination.”

Life forms which do not serve our interest are not our enemies, she said. People are not the only life on earth and sometimes people have to make room for others.

A more effective way would be to look at the illness for what it is and compare it with previous infections.

“Why can’t we compare a pandemic to other, historical, pandemics? said Laura Spinney, a science reporter.

“Why always reach for the war analogy?”

“Yes, there are some similarities with war – the need to mobilize the population and the need to ensure supplies – but why is it that, in order to convey seriousness, we feel obliged to stop comparing a pandemic to other pandemics, and start comparing it to a war?”

Spinney is author of *Pale Rider*, an account of the Spanish Flu in 1918.

That pandemic killed an estimated 50 million people, and perhaps as many as twice that.

A war is troops in uniforms, armed with weapons, fighting an enemy, while a virus is something else, said Stephen Heiner, writer and blogger, and former U.S. marine.

“In a war, there isn’t really public debate about how to respond.

“There is a clear enemy, with a fairly clear marker of what victory means to everyone,” he said.

“What’s happening here?” he said. “People do not know. What is victory? Fewer sick? Vaccines for everybody?”

“Medical crisis is more apt,” he said.

One difference with a war is that such a conflict comes to an end, whereas the virus may change and come back in another form.

Some struggles go on.

There was the war on terror, he said. “It’s an unwinnable conflict.”

President Donald Trump said April 5 there was light at the end of the tunnel.

In the Vietnam war in the 1960s, that optimistic phrase prompted the rejoinder that the light was an oncoming train.

Autocracy, Europe and Dealing with the Coronavirus Crisis

04/02/2020

In a side comment included in his assessment of the implications of the Coronavirus crisis for Australia, Stephen Kuper characterized the European Union response to the crisis in this way:

“Many nations throughout the ‘developed’ world have found themselves similarly isolated and exposed, despite the promise of cheap, ‘reliable’ access to trade as a result of the post-Cold War global supply chains, which have seen industries and economies hollowed out and sensitive, nationally critical manufacturing sent offshore.

“Nowhere is this more evident than in the cannibalism emerging among the European Union member states, as larger nations like Germany and France ‘requisition’ resources and key supplies including masks, respirators and medical supplies, while also providing limited, hands-off approach to providing direct support to the likes of pandemic ravaged Italy and Spain.”

Disaggregation is one concern, but the way the crisis is handled will clearly have a significant impact on the evolution of European democracies.

In an article by Eszter Zalan of the EUObserver published on March 26, 2020, the author posed the question: How much will coronavirus hurt European democracy?

“As public life is pushed back all over Europe to slow the spread of the virus, worries are on the rise over what extent the measures, if not proportionate and time-limited, can infringe fundamental rights and the rule of law.

“Michal Simecka, a Slovak MEP from the liberal Renew group told EUobserver it is “legitimate, proportionate and understandable that governments are invoking emergency measures, when every hour counts”.

“But Simecka warned of two possible threats in the longer term.

“It is a perfect pretext for a politicians to centralise power,” he said.”

And right on cue the leader of Hungary did not waste the crisis to make his move.

“Hungary passed on Monday (30 March) a law that gives sweeping new powers to prime minister Viktor Orban to rule by decree – for an unlimited period of time.

“This makes Hungary the first EU country to be put under the exclusive command of the government for as long as the prime minister sees it fit....

“Orban, who came to power 10 years ago, has had several run-ins with the EU over breaking the bloc’s rules, and his government is currently under scrutiny in the Article 7 sanctions procedure for breaching EU rules and values.

“Orban has already shrugged off criticism of the new law, claiming that those who criticise it are endangering Hungary’s battle against the pandemic.”

And adding the process, the Russians have inserted their ongoing interpretations of reality to shape European judgements as well.

Andrew Rettman of EUObserver noted in an article published on April 1, 2020 that Russian disinformation efforts were ramping up in the crisis.

The EU has urged media not to publish April Fool’s ‘fake news’ this year to help combat Russian propaganda.

“Protecting our democratic processes and institutions from Russian disinformation has become a major challenge in the modern era,” the European Commission said on Tuesday (31 March).

“To help tackle this, the commission proposes to suspend, for the time being, the common tradition of April Fool’s ‘fake news’ in European media,” it said.

The move came after the EU recently accused Russia of “polluting” Europe’s media ecosystem with deceptions which had “real-world consequences”.

Russian news agencies have falsely claimed the US was using ants as biological weapons, for instance, that Western countries practiced gay cannibalism, and that Swedish feminists advocated mass-castration of white men.

But the Russians have added to their information dissemination effort by deploying forces to Italy to “help” in the crisis as well. We have been reassured by the Russian commander that this deployment will not undercut the troops combat capacity, which is very reassuring for the West as well.

“The fact that Russia has sent to Italy its nuclear, biological and chemical protection troops to assist the fight against the coronavirus will not affect the combat capacities, the Russian Armed Forces’ Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops chief, Lt. Gen. Igor Klimov, said.”

In addition to its own information war efforts in the West, the Chinese have played an aid card, of providing masks to the West. The only small problem is that there is no evident Western quality control with regard to these masks, so that Europe has Chinese masks which might or might not work, and this has to be worked out on the ground as they are to be used.

“The Netherlands recently discovered that 600,000 face masks imported from China were defective, Belgian media reported on Tuesday that 100,000 masks coming from Colombia were useless and even contain “animal faeces””.

Thus, in addition to exporting the virus and blocking any information about the breakout of the virus and certainly not providing information transparency, the Chinese are exporting defective masks.

But this did not stop the head of the European Commission from providing a thanks for the memories moment.

Perhaps she might learn from an Indian colleague who highlighted lessons which the West needs to learn about China.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the costs of Xi’s increasing authoritarianism. It should be a wake-up call for political and business leaders who have accepted China’s lengthening shadow over global supply chains for far too long. Only by loosening China’s grip on global supply networks—beginning with the pharmaceutical sector—can the world be kept safe from the country’s political pathologies

Information War and Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories

04/01/2020

By Elise Thoma

Against the backdrop of an escalating war of words between Washington and Beijing, and the Chinese Communist Party’s broader campaign to rewrite the history of the Covid-19 outbreak, the attempts by multiple Chinese diplomats to promote conspiracy theories that the virus originated in the US, not China have received widespread attention.

What has been less discussed, however, is how Western fringe and conspiracy media have been supporting these efforts and what the growing nexus between pro-CCP propaganda and conspiracy narratives may tell us about the role China is coming to play in the Western information ecosystem.

There has long been a symbiotic relationship between Russian state propaganda outlets like Sputnik and RT and certain elements of the fringe and conspiracy media in the West.

They frequently echo, borrow or seed narratives from one another. In most cases, it’s probably not deliberate collusion (at least, not on a large scale), but rather the result of opportunism and mutual benefits in singing from the same hymn sheet. And now, it appears, China may be joining the chorus.

In perhaps the most notable example of this, on 13 March a spokesperson for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Lijian, used his Twitter account to promote an article from the website globalresearch.ca, titled ‘COVID-19: Further evidence that the virus originated in the US’. The article outlines a conspiracy which claims that the novel coronavirus originated in the US, and that ‘it

may therefore be true that the original source of the COVID-19 virus was the US military bio-warfare lab at Fort Detrick’.

To be clear: there is no evidence to support this claim, or to suggest that the virus originated anywhere outside China. Nonetheless, Zhao’s tweets have not only remained up but have been re-tweeted by numerous other Chinese diplomatic accounts. At the time of writing, Zhao’s tweet had received over 20,000 likes and been shared 12,700 times.

Among the many interesting issues this raises, one is the choice to promote that particular article from that particular site. There’s no shortage of conspiracy theories on the internet—so why that one?

The Centre for Research on Globalization, also known as Global Research, is a website run by Canadian economist and conspiracy theorist Michel Chossudovsky that has repeatedly been accused of being a pro-Kremlin mouthpiece. It’s not clear how deep the links between the site and Russian state-linked media run, but according to the independent Russian newspaper Meduza:

What makes GlobalResearch.ca different from other similar websites is the disproportional weight it enjoys in news coverage by the Russian state media.

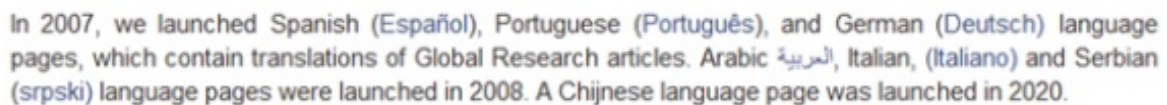
Global Research is prominently featured as the only source in numerous stories by Russia’s leading newswire RIA Novosti, where it’s referred to as a ‘think tank’ or ‘publication’ whose ‘experts’ or ‘journalists’ regularly reveal or uncover some fact that fits into the Kremlin’s current foreign policy agenda ...

[I]t is less a news outlet and more an amateur conspiracy website whose founder has subscribed to the Kremlin’s narrative simply because it opposes the one promoted by the ‘deep state’ and its subservient ‘mainstream media’.

Sites like Global Research are valuable to state-linked actors because they put a Western, pseudo-academic face on conspiracy theories and disinformation narratives. They are useful tinder to spark entire narrative cycles, as this example clearly highlights.

In the early days of the Covid-19 crisis, Global Research seems to have sensed an opportunity to reach out to new audiences. Indeed, the pivot to a Chinese audience appears to have been so hasty that no one has yet fixed the typo in ‘Chinese’ on the site’s About page (figure 1).

Figure 1: Screenshot of Global Research’s ‘About’ page, 24 March 2020



In 2007, we launched Spanish (Español), Portuguese (Português), and German (Deutsch) language pages, which contain translations of Global Research articles. Arabic (العربية), Italian, (Italiano) and Serbian (srpski) language pages were launched in 2008. A Chijnese language page was launched in 2020.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Global Research’s ‘About’ page, 24 March 2020

Only two articles had actually been translated into Chinese before Zhao picked up Global Research’s English-language piece promoting the US-origin conspiracy theory.

Zhao’s tweet was used as the basis for news stories in Chinese state media, including the Global Times and People’s Daily Online.

It also appears to have driven a huge surge in searches for ‘globalresearch.ca’ on 13 March, the day Zhao’s tweet went out (figure 2).

What this demonstrates is that the quid pro quo—the benefit (or at least one of the benefits)—for sites like Global Research in aligning themselves with state-linked conspiracies is the enormous amplification which state-linked voices can give to pieces like this that would otherwise receive very little traffic.

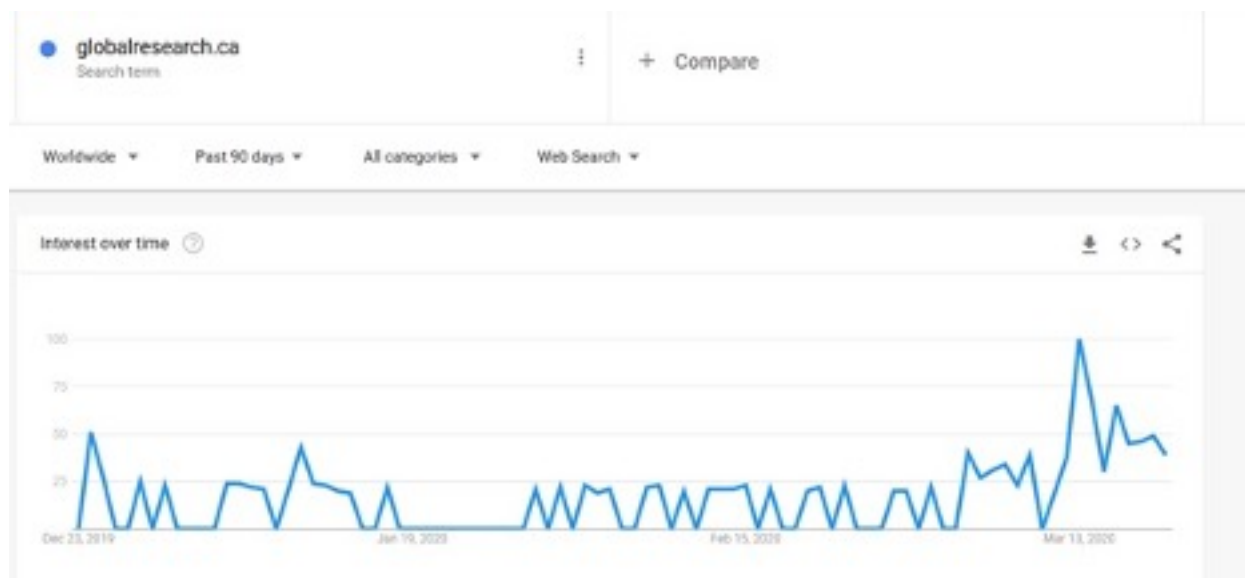


Figure 2: Google search trends for ‘globalresearch.ca’

Zhao’s amplification is likely to have been multiplied many times over by the widespread media coverage of his tweets, which in turn will have driven still more traffic to the Global Research site.

Not only does this help to propagate the conspiracy theory, it also provides Global Research with an incentive to lean in to the narrative.

In the 10 days since Zhao’s tweet, the site has published multiple additional articles (including republishing one from CGTN) on the US-origin conspiracy theory, some citing Zhao’s tweets.

This mutually beneficial ouroboros of conspiracy narratives passing back and forth between state-linked and fringe media already exists in the context of Kremlin-backed outlets.

If this example is anything to go by, we may well see Beijing’s state-linked information efforts follow a similar path, as China becomes a more active and aggressive player in the Western information ecosystem.

Elise Thomas is a researcher at ASPI’s International Cyber Policy Centre.

This article was published by ASPI on March 24, 2020.

France And Germany Cooperate in Coronavirus Crisis

03/29/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – The French army has flown coronavirus patients to Germany in an NH90 Caïman helicopter, while a German A400M military transport plane flew patients out of France, signalling close bilateral ties, the armed forces ministry said March 29.

“The French and German armed forces are working together to fight against Covid-19,” the ministry said in a statement. “This cooperation shows the solidarity of the Franco-German friendship.”

Armed forces minister Florence Parly spoke March 27 to her German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, on the virus crisis and the two ministers agreed on measures to help hospitals in northeastern France, the ministry said.

The French army flew March 28 an NH90 military transport helicopter carrying two patients out of Metz, northeastern France, to a hospital in Essen, western Germany, the ministry said. French civil emergency services helped that flight.

That flight was part of Operation Resilience, a broad military mission seeking to lighten the load on civil authorities across France, heavily hit by the pandemic.

The army light air wing rapidly adapted the NH90 for the medical mission, which allowed evacuation of patients under intensive care, the ministry said. The NH90 also flew March 28 patients to Geneva, as Switzerland has offered assistance.

The army has adapted the NH90 to carry virus patients under intensive care. The helicopter will carry two patients under oxygen, and a crew of seven or eight. There will be a pilot and a flight commander, a flight engineer, a flight specialist in the hold, one or two doctors, and two nurses.

The army 1st combat helicopter regiment, based in Phalsbourg, northeast France, flies the NH90.

The German air force sent an A400M airlifter to Strasbourg, northeast France, to fly French patients to a German hospital, Parly said over social media.

“Just one word: thanks,” she said.

That was the first German military flight of French patients, regional paper L’Alsace reported. The operation took just under two hours to embark the patients before flying to Stuttgart. The patients were then taken to the military hospital in Ulm, southwest Germany, AFP news agency reported, the paper said.

The German A400M flying hospital also took virus patients from Bergamo, northern Italy, to help medical staff in the Lombardy region, suffering heavily from the virus. The patients were flown to Cologne, western Germany.

Germany made its A400M airlifter available through European Air Transport Command, which comprises seven member nations: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and the Netherlands.

“France thanks Germany and Switzerland and expresses its deepest gratitude,” the

ministry said. “As our countries are confronted by a major crisis, these medical evacuations embody European solidarity.”

Meanwhile, the Dixmude helicopter carrier returned March 27 to Toulon naval base, southern France, and was fitted out and crew prepared for sailing to the French Caribbean, to help civil authorities against the virus.

The warship had been in the western Mediterranean, but allied nations had cancelled cooperative exercises due to the medical crisis. The navy, however, managed to conduct a joint exercise with the Lebanese forces in a beach operation.

The latest figures show there were 35,575 virus cases in France, with 2,314 who had died in hospital, daily Le Figaro reported March 29. Those figures exclude deaths in retirement homes.

France has extended the national lock down to April 15, after the initial 15 days ordered March 17.

Germany has a relatively low mortality rate compared to other European nations, daily The Guardian has reported. That may be related to its methodology for gathering data, or may reflect high testing rates which give a more accurate assessment of the virus threat.

There were 22,364 virus cases in Germany, with only 84 reported to have died, according to John Hopkins University, The Guardian reported March 22. That gave Germany the lowest mortality rate of the 10 countries most badly hit by the pandemic.

Made In China: The Lessons Which the Liberal Democracies Should Learn from the Coronavirus

03/29/2020

By Brahma Chellaney

The new coronavirus, Covid-19, has spread to more than 130 countries—bringing social disruption, economic damage, sickness and death—largely because authorities in China, where it emerged, initially suppressed information about it. And yet China is now acting as if its decision not to limit

exports of active pharmaceutical ingredients and medical supplies—of which it is the dominant global supplier—was a principled and generous act worthy of the world’s gratitude.

When the first clinical evidence of a deadly new virus emerged in Wuhan, Chinese authorities failed to warn the public for weeks and harassed, reprimanded and detained those who did. This approach is no surprise: China has a long history of shooting the messenger. Its leaders covered up severe acute respiratory syndrome, another coronavirus, for over a month after it emerged in 2002, and held the doctor who blew the whistle in military custody for 45 days. SARS ultimately affected more than 8,000 people in 26 countries.

This time around, the Chinese Communist Party’s proclivity for secrecy was reinforced by President Xi Jinping’s eagerness to be perceived as an in-control strongman, backed by a fortified CCP. But, as with the SARS epidemic, China’s leaders could keep it under wraps for only so long. Once Wuhan-linked Covid-19 cases were detected in Thailand and South Korea, they had little choice but to acknowledge the epidemic.

About two weeks after Xi rejected scientists’ recommendation to declare a state of emergency, the government announced heavy-handed containment measures, including putting millions in lockdown. But it was too late. Many thousands of Chinese were already infected with Covid-19, and the virus was rapidly spreading internationally. US National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien has said that China’s initial cover-up ‘probably cost the world community two months to respond’, exacerbating the global outbreak.

Beyond the escalating global health emergency, which has already killed thousands, the pandemic has disrupted normal trade and travel, forced many school closures, roiled the international financial system and sunk global stock markets. With oil prices plunging, a global recession appears imminent.

None of this would have happened China had responded quickly to evidence of the deadly new virus by warning the public and implementing containment measures. Indeed, Taiwan and Vietnam have shown the difference a proactive response can make.

Taiwan, learning from its experience with SARS, instituted preventive measures, including flight inspections, before China’s leaders had even acknowledged the outbreak. Likewise, Vietnam quickly halted flights from China and closed all schools. Both responses recognised the need for transparency, including updates on the number and location of infections, and public advisories on how to guard against Covid-19.

Thanks to their governments’ policies, both Taiwan and Vietnam—which normally receive huge numbers of travellers from China daily—have kept total cases to fewer than 60. Neighbours that were slower to implement similar measures, such as Japan and South Korea, have been hit much harder.

If any other country had triggered such a far-reaching, deadly, and above all preventable crisis, it would now be a global pariah. But China, with its tremendous economic clout, has largely escaped censure. Nonetheless, it will take considerable effort for Xi’s regime to restore its standing at home and abroad.

Perhaps that’s why China’s leaders are publicly congratulating themselves for not limiting exports of medical supplies and active ingredients used to make medicines, vitamins and vaccines. If China decided to ban such exports to the United States, the state-run news agency Xinhua recently noted, the US would be ‘plunged into a mighty sea of coronavirus’. China, the article implies, would be justified

in taking such a step. It would simply be retaliating against ‘unkind’ US measures taken after Covid-19’s emergence, such as restricting entry to the US by Chinese and foreigners who had visited China. Isn’t the world lucky that China is not that petty?

Maybe so. But that is no reason to trust that China won’t be petty in the future. After all, China’s leaders have a record of halting other strategic exports (such as rare-earth minerals) to punish countries that have defied them.

Moreover, this is not the first time China has considered weaponising its dominance in global medical supplies and ingredients. Last year, Li Daokui, a prominent Chinese economist, suggested curtailing Chinese exports of active pharmaceutical ingredients to the US as a countermeasure in the trade war. ‘Once the export is reduced’, Li noted, ‘the medical systems of some developed countries will not work’.

That is no exaggeration. A US Department of Commerce study found that 97% of all antibiotics sold in the US come from China. ‘If you’re the Chinese and you want to really just destroy us’, Gary Cohn, former chief economic adviser to US President Donald Trump, observed last year, ‘just stop sending us antibiotics’.

If the spectre of China exploiting its pharmaceutical clout for strategic ends were not enough to make the world rethink its cost-cutting outsourcing decisions, the unintended disruption of global supply chains by Covid-19 should be. In fact, China has had no choice but to fall behind in producing and exporting pharmaceutical ingredients since the outbreak—a development that has constrained global supply and driven up the prices of vital medicines.

That has already forced India, the world’s leading supplier of generic drugs, to restrict its own exports of some commonly used medicines. Almost 70% of the active ingredients for medicines made in India come from China. If China’s pharmaceutical plants don’t return to full capacity soon, severe global medicine shortages will become likely.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the costs of Xi’s increasing authoritarianism. It should be a wake-up call for political and business leaders who have accepted China’s lengthening shadow over global supply chains for far too long. Only by loosening China’s grip on global supply networks—beginning with the pharmaceutical sector—can the world be kept safe from the country’s political pathologies.

Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research and fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin, is the author of nine books, including Asian juggernaut, Water: Asia’s new battleground and Water, peace, and war: confronting the global water crisis.

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The European Union and the Strategic Stockpiling Issue: The Coronavirus Crisis Exposes a Key Capability Gap

03/28/2020

We have focused for some time on the importance for liberal democracies being much more cognizant of their supply chain dependencies and their need to have a smart resilience strategy.

The coronavirus crisis has certainly exposed the absence of such a strategy but at the same time highlights the need for such a strategy.

As we argue in our forthcoming book on the return of direct defense in Europe, there is a clear need for the European Union to focus its attention and resources in its role for the defense and security of the member states on infrastructure defense and supply chain resilience.

To date, the European Union has clearly failed to do this.

Perhaps in this crisis, it will leverage what it has been FORCED to do as the beginning of a policy process to, in fact, deal with this as a key task which the European states both individually and collectively can focus upon.

Certainly, the Finns have led and continue to lead the way in thinking about resilience and crisis management.

Perhaps one of the smallest states in Europe can be looked to for the intellectual leadership which larger states have abrogated.

An article by Eszter Zalan of the EUObserver published on March 20, 2020 highlighted EU actions during the current crisis.

The EU commission on Thursday (19 March) said it will set up a stockpile of face masks, intensive care equipment and other essential medical gear to tackle shortages in member states.

The move comes after EU countries at the centre of the coronavirus outbreak have faced shortages of crucial medical equipment.

“The world was very much caught by surprise by the force and speed of this virus,” EU commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarcic told reporters.

From the new reserve the commission would direct supplies where they are most needed based on an “objective criteria”.

It is complimentary to another tool, the civil protection mechanism, where a member states in trouble can ask for help from other member states. Italy and recently Spain have called for help within this mechanism.

“We are all in this together, we have to work constructively and work on solutions,” Lenarcic said.

Under the new reserve plans, a member state has to volunteer to undertake a procurement, and purchase specific equipment.

That will be financed almost entirely by the EU (up to 90 percent), and then the member states are expected to host that bit of equipment, which will likely end up going to another member state.

The planned stockpile will include intensive care medical equipment such as ventilators, personal protective equipment such as reusable masks, vaccines and therapeutics, and laboratory supplies.

Lenarcic said “half a dozen” member states have expressed interest in participating in the scheme.

An EU official said the reserve could be operational already next week.

The initial EU budget of the stockpile is €50m, of which €40m will have to be approved by EU governments.

The commissioner said that there is “objective situation” globally, that there is a “prevailing scarcity of personal protection gear in EU and all over the world”.

The biggest producers are in China and Asia.....

To help Europe cope, China has offered to send 2.2 million masks and 50,000 testing kits to the EU, commission president Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday....

It will be interesting to see whether the European states can see beyond this Chinese manipulation of a crisis which it indeed launched and get on with European production or shape a supply chain with other liberal democracies to shape a trusted supply chain.

As we noted recently:

Divergent responses to the crisis across the board in the global liberal democracies will challenge the ability to shape common solutions going forward.

The underlying conflict between the 21st century authoritarian powers and the liberal democracies has been accentuated and highlighted as well. With Putin having tossed out most NGOs from Russia as part of his consolidation of power, the absence of credible information within Russia makes trust in Russia’s ability to contribute to a global management of a pandemic virtually non-existent.

The Chinese government has elevated information obfuscation an art form during the current crisis. This situation raises fundamental questions about trust with regard to China which are rooted in their domestic system going forward. And certainly, the over reliance on Chinese supply chains, a subject to which we have dedicated many articles in the past few years, is highlighted as well.

But will the liberal democracies shape lessons learned and establish more reliable supply chains?

Will the liberal democracies shape more realistic working relationships with one another to have more resilient national capabilities shared across a shared sovereign space?

European States Respond to the Coronavirus Crisis: Implications for the Future of Liberal Democracy?

03/28/2020

By Eszter Zalan

Democracy has also been infected by the coronavirus.

All normal, everyday features of a healthy democracy are suffering from the pandemic, as checks on governments weaken due to the all-out fightback.....

As public life is pushed back all over Europe to slow the spread of the virus, worries are on the rise over what extent the measures, if not proportionate and time-limited, can infringe fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Michal Simecka, a Slovak MEP from the liberal Renew group told EUobserver it is “legitimate, proportionate and understandable that governments are invoking emergency measures, when every hour counts”.

But Simecka warned of two possible threats in the longer term.

“It is a perfect pretext for a politicians to centralise power,” he said.

The other threat is whether the measures will be rolled back in time as the outbreak lets up.

“These kind of extraordinary powers tend to be sticky. When politicians have these powers they might be reluctant to go back to the messy, longer democratic processes. We must be vigilant,” Simecka said – in a call from Bratislava.....

But the nervousness about the potential of the new measures is rife.

“We are seeing a number of measures dismantling the checks and balances that guarantee the continuity of democracy,” Sergio Carrera of the Centre for European Policy Studies told EUobserver.

Carrera said the current crisis touches upon so many aspects of citizens’ rights – freedom of assembly, privacy, right to move within the country and the EU, a right to family life – that the policy responses’ effects on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights need to be closely followed, so that they don’t go too far.

Crises, whether regarding terrorism, migration or health, don’t mean that “everything goes,” he warned.

“One can agree that it is a very difficult issue for governments to deal with, but I believe it is also a question of legitimacy not to panic, and just work with what we have and the checks and balances we have,” he said.....

For the rest of the article, see EUObserver:

https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147884?utm_source=euobs&utm_medium=email

The Coronavirus Crisis and Information War

03/27/2020

Clearly, the liberal democracies are being tested not just in terms of dealing with the physical aspects of the Coronavirus crisis but in terms of shaping an effective way ahead for the liberal democracies.

And part of that challenge is the information war which the 21st century authoritarian states are engaging in while the liberal democracies shape a way ahead.

As Jim Carafano has put it in a recent piece: “Beijing has launched a PR blitz to deflect attention from its fatally flawed handling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“But no amount of spin can alter the reality that the Chinese Communist Party’s brand—as well as the Chinese economy—has taken another body blow. The latest round of propaganda is so ludicrous, it smacks of desperation born of weakness.”

Guy Taylor in a recent Washington Times piece highlighted how the authoritarian powers are working the information war in the current crisis.

[China](#), [Russia](#) and Iran are flooding the global information space with false claims about the new coronavirus, according to U.S. officials, who say one of the biggest lies — that the virus that causes COVID-19 is a U.S. bioweapon and was brought to [China by U.S. Army](#) personnel — is just the latest in a “surge of propaganda” aimed at undermining America’s image on the world stage.

[Beijing](#), Moscow and Tehran are using a vast web of social media accounts, fake news outlets and state-controlled global satellite media to promote false claims by academics and, at times, government officials to blame Washington for the crisis now gripping most of humanity.

The head of a key [State Department](#) counterdisinformation office said U.S. officials are ramping up their own efforts to counter lies about the new coronavirus that were first seeded by [Russia](#) in January and that [China](#) is now pushing in a bid to make [Beijing](#) appear as a superior global power to the United States.

With regard to Russia, Putin’s clearing NGOs out of Russia during his rule has prepared him well for information war for there is no credible information coming out from Russia on the real state of its own crisis.

With a country the size of Russia having cases on the scale of Luxembourg does challenge credibility.

And the lock down of Chinese society with both new and old means used by the Chinese Communist Party and claiming the superiority of their system underscores that reliable information is not a major Chinese export but viruses clearly are.

Taylor quoted a U.S. State Department official with regard to what the Administration seeks to do in response.

“We are going to make a concerted and public effort to counter disinformation by any regime on this because there are lasting consequences.

“The Chinese and Russians and Iranians are putting out these conspiracy theories and false narratives.

“It is deeply irresponsible, not just for America, but for the world. We’re in the middle of a global pandemic that is unprecedented. The fact that these regimes are taking the time to deflect blame from their own actions is deeply irresponsible.”

Our recent story of how the disinformation campaign is proceeding in Africa suggests that the conflict is global, not simply directed at the liberal democracies themselves.

Taylor quoted an Administration official with regard to a way ahead.

Exposing previous examples of disinformation by questionable sources, she said, is part of the effort to “flood the space” with accurate information. That, she said, can involve “engaging third-party credible voices, for example, non-U.S. government voices to be able to get the truth out there.”

Third-party voices can include fact-checking organizations, nongovernment organizations, investigative journalists, other governments, local community leaders or social media influencers, she said. “We work with organizations worldwide to do that long-term approach of increasing resiliency, decreasing vulnerability and then inoculating audiences to disinformation.”

And an article written by Chuck Ross and published on March 25, 2020 highlights another aspect of the challenge – the use by Western media of Chinese “information” inputs.

The Daily Mail, the popular British tabloid widely read in the United States, has published dozens of articles in recent months about coronavirus that were based on stories originating from People’s Daily, the communist party’s official newspaper, and other Chinese propaganda mills.

A Daily Caller News Foundation investigation found that the Daily Mail has published thousands of articles in recent years as part of a content-sharing agreement with People’s Daily.

Whether that agreement is explicitly in place now is unclear, but the tabloid has nonetheless cited Chinese government news outlets extensively in its coverage of coronavirus. The Daily Mail did not return multiple requests for comment

On Monday, the Daily Mail published [a story](#) with the headline: “Beijing’s leading doctor warns of a NEW coronavirus outbreak in China after the country reported its first case of someone ‘catching the illness from a person returning from abroad.’”

The story, which had a massive 1.1 million shares on social media, cited comments that Li Lanjuan, a top Chinese government doctor, gave to People’s Daily and China News, another government-controlled outlet. ([RELATED: Media Rhetoric On ‘Wuhan Virus’ Echoes Chinese Propaganda](#))

“One of China’s top coronavirus experts has warned that the nation is facing a second outbreak due to the increasing number of infections detected among new arrivals from abroad,” reads the Daily Mail piece, written by Tracy You.

In short the Coronavirus crisis is clearly not just about dealing with a virus; but an information war being conducted to try to position the 21st century authoritarian powers in a more favorable position after the crisis and to protect China’s position in the global economy.

The Coronavirus Crisis: The Charles de Gaulle Aircraft Carrier Returns to Port

04/09/2020

Paris – Some 40 sailors on board the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier show signs resembling the coronavirus infection, prompting an early return of the capital ship to Toulon naval base, the armed forces ministry said April 8.

“On board the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier presently deployed in the Atlantic in the Foch mission, around 40 sailors are today under close medical observation,” the ministry said in a statement.

“They show symptoms compatible with a possible infection by Covid-19. These first symptoms recently appeared,” the ministry said. The aircraft carrier had been to arrive April 23 at the naval base in southern France.

The carrier is the nuclear-powered flagship of a task force capable of projecting force around the world.

In the US, acting navy secretary Thomas Modly resigned on Tuesday, following controversy over his criticism of the commander of the Theodore Roosevelt carrier. The former commander, captain Brett Crozier, had sought closer attention for his crew, some of whom were ill with the virus.

“It is not just missiles that can take us down, words can do it too, if we aren’t careful with how and when we use them,” said Modly, Reuters reported.

“It’s my fault. I own it.”

In France, a team was being sent today to the Charles de Gaulle carrier to test the suspected cases and limit the spread of the virus on board, the ministry said. The patients were in isolation confinement and under increased medical supervision. Steps have been taken to protect the rest of the crew.

There is a medical team of some 20 on board the carrier, equipped with facilities including a confinement unit of some 100 beds, ventilators, and scanner. Helicopters could fly patients to a higher level hospital in case the complaint worsened, the ministry said.

Steps had been taken to protect the crew, seeking to allow the carrier's operations to continue. Sailors clean the common work areas twice a day, disinfect rails, door handles and taps. Workstations, telephones and shared computers are also disinfected after use.

Crews are reminded on a daily basis of the need for care and preventive measures. The number of meetings has been cut down and gathering in the mess has been limited.

Face masks have been distributed on a preventive basis to crew members showing possible symptoms, such as coughs. These sailors are checked twice a day by medical staff.

The warship sailed out April 21 on the three month Foch mission, which included support for operations in Iraq and Syria. The capital ship was already on its way back to Toulon.

In France, armed forces minister Florence Parly signalled the need for the military and industry to deliver maintenance service to the forces, while observing strict measures in the coronavirus crisis.

Parly visited April 6 the head office of Nexter, a land systems company, and the SIMMT joint maintenance unit for ground weapons, the ministry said. Those visits followed a March 31 visit to the headquarters of Naval Group, a builder of warships and submarines.

“In the Covid-19 crisis, the armed forces minister kept up visits to these organizations to highlight the absolute necessity to maintain industrial activity, both state-backed and private sector, as it is indispensable to allow our armed forces conduct their most essential missions and activities,” the ministry said.

“Overseas and domestic deployments, nuclear deterrent, defense of national airspace and maritime approaches are at the heart of national sovereignty, and the armed forces ministry and industry must not miss the mark,” the ministry said.

In addition to equipment service, Parly also expressed her “gratitude” to work on programs for new equipment.

Arquus, builder of light and medium vehicles, said April 6 work was gradually restarting in four factories, including production for the Griffon multi-role troop carrier in the army's Scorpion modernization program.

MBDA, a missile maker, gradually reopened April 6 its three French sites, a company spokesman said. Some 300 research and development staff went back to work at the Plessiy Robinson head office, just outside the capital, some 50 production workers and R&D staff at Bourges, and 40 workers at Selles-Saint Denis, central France, he said. A further 100 administrative staff were now working in offices of the three sites, while the rest of the workforce was working from home.

For the French arms manufacturers, there will be talks with clients on the contracts, with attention to the force majeure clause covering events which release the supplier from penalties, an industrial source said.

On the Foch naval mission, France sought to show its military presence in regions seen to be strategically important, namely the North Sea, eastern Mediterranean, and the European side of the Atlantic.

The Charles de Gaulle carried 18 Rafale fighter jets, two Hawkeye spy aircraft, one Caïman anti-submarine and anti-surface helicopter, and two Dauphin Pedro search and recovery helicopters. There was a crew of 1,200, and an 80-strong command of the task force 473.

The carrier sailed out of Toulon January 21, escorted by the Auvergne multi-mission frigate, Chevalier Paul air defense frigate, Var fleet auxiliary ship, and a nuclear-powered attack submarine.

The task force sailed at various times with warships from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain in a bid to boost interoperability.

Living through the Global Coronavirus Crisis: The Centrality of Connectivity

04/05/2020

Certainly, one key impact of the Coronavirus crisis has highlighted in the crucial role of connectivity to allow 21st century societies to function even under duress.

Stay at home orders would not even be feasible without those “at home” being able to connect over their phone lines and internet connections, which are frequently the same thing.

But high demand and uneven ability to deliver the connections required have highlighted the importance of enhancing those connections going forward.

And with an upsurge in demand, cybercriminals are thriving as well.

The classic case of the challenge has been highlighted by Zoom. Here a niche product has gone mainstream due to the demand side generated by the crisis.

Yet that heavy demand has exposed the dark side of communications in the digital age.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* article published on [April 4, 2020](#):

But the platform's surging popularity has attracted trolls and hackers, as well as scrutiny from privacy advocates. The practice of "Zoom bombing"—where people gain unauthorized access to a meeting and share hate-speech or pornographic images—entered the popular vernacular almost overnight. Security experts found publicly highlighted problems with Zoom's technology could leave user data vulnerable to outsiders' exploitation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a warning Monday about videoconference hijacking, spurred in part by Zoom bombing incidents. In the U.S., 27 attorney general's offices have raised questions about privacy issues, Zoom said, adding it is cooperating with authorities.

And, of course, the skill sets using distance services can change forever how medicine and education or the balance between working out of the office are enhanced,

All of this underscores the importance of the coming of 5G and getting it right from a security point of view, and ensuring that it serves the interests of the liberal democracies and is not simply a trojan horse for the 21st century authoritarian powers.,

Last month, the Trump Administration published its overview to 5G strategy in which they highlighted its importance.

Post pandemic, this is a key policy area which is about redoing the economy as well as defense and security.

Coronavirus Impact: France Pulls Out from African West Coast Maritime Security Mission

04/03/2020

by defenceWeb

The French Navy has suspended its Mission Corymbe off West Africa due to the COVID-19 coronavirus, and withdrawn a vessel from the area.

The patrol vessel Lieutenant de Vaisseau Le Henaff, which departed Brest on 3 March for West Africa, returned to France at the end of the month. During its return voyage it stopped in Conakry and Dakar.

France established Mission Corymbe in 1990 to protect French economic interests in the Gulf of Guinea and coast of West Africa, particularly with regard to oil exploration. It has had a naval vessel on station ever since.

Vessels taking part in the mission have also carried out anti-piracy patrols and combated other maritime crimes such as illicit trafficking.

The French Navy has meanwhile sent two of its Mistral class landing helicopter docks to Reunion and Mayotte to provide medical assistance as well as the Antilles/Guyana area. It also has a carrier strike group operating in northern Europe.

Published by defenceWeb [March 31, 2020](#).

US Navy Destroyer Visit to Cape Town Curtailed: A Coronavirus Concern Impact

03/17/2020

by Dean Wingrin

The US Navy's Arleigh Burke class destroyer USS Carney (DDG64) arrived in Cape Town for a planned port visit on Sunday 15 March, but all activities have been curtailed to minimize the spread of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus).

Planned as the US Naval Forces Africa's effort to build global maritime partnerships with African nations in order to improve maritime safety and security in the region, its arrival was ahead of the ship's participation in Exercise Obangame Express off Africa's West coast later this week.

However, as a result of global efforts to minimize the spread of COVID-19, Spokesperson for US Navy Sixth Fleet, Commander Kyle Raines, told defenceWeb that all public tours and crew outreach events that were previously planned for the port call had been cancelled.

"The health and safety of our crew and host nation is our top priority," he explained. "No one on the ship has visited any high-risk areas or has shown any symptoms to indicate that they should be tested for COVID-19.

"Medical personnel aboard the ship are monitoring all crew members and visitors daily for any COVID-19 symptoms and are prepared to take appropriate actions as necessary."

Before leaving port on Tuesday 17 March, the ship was still able to refuel and replenish ship stores. Whilst most planned activities whilst in port were halted, the crew did experience "the local culture in vicinity of the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront." The ship also had the opportunity to host US Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, Lana Marks.

Whilst USS Carney was in port, the US military's Africa Command (Africom) announced that Exercise Obangame Express 2020 had been cancelled in response to the global effort to contain the spread of the COVID-19.

Obangame Express is designed to improve regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness, information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise to enhance the collective capabilities of participating nations to counter sea-based illicit activity.

With no further requirement to participate in Obangame Express, USS Carney will continue on its seventh patrol in the European and African theatre in support of US national security interests.

The USS Carney, operating in the US 5th Fleet Area of Operations, recently supported maritime security operations and ensured freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce while assigned to the USS Harry S Truman Carrier Strike Group and the USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group before conducting a port visit in Port Victoria, Seychelles.

Following Carney's patrol, the ship will return to its homeport in Rota, Spain where it will make preparations to homeport shift back to Mayport, Florida later this year.

Published by *defenceWeb* on [March 17, 2020](#).

NATO Highlights Role of 3D Printing as Part of COVID 19 Response

04/06/2020

NATO Allies have joined efforts with private companies and academic institutions in the fight against the global pandemic of the Coronavirus. These efforts include making 3D printing available to produce ventilator masks, which represent a crucial component of the medical equipment required to treat patients hit by the Coronavirus.

In Italy, a team of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) located in Taranto has established a cooperation with an Italian start-up called ISINNOVA that will result in the production of 25 3D-printed connectors – on a weekly basis – converting snorkelling masks into emergency ventilator masks. These will be donated to the Italian Civil Protection Department for further distribution in the most needed hospitals.

The Czech Republic has also distributed samples of newly developed hi-tech respirators printable on 3D printers to Italy, together with 10,000 pieces of protective suits. This has been made possible by the cooperation amongst different entities, including the Polytechnic Institutes of Milan and Prague.

This article was published by NATO on [April 2, 2020](#).

An Update on French Defense Industry in the Lockdown: Furloughs and Dividends

04/03/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Dassault Aviation has suspended its €212 million (\$232 million) dividend on financial year 2019, withdrawn its business forecast for 2020, and placed some staff on furlough in response to disruption caused by coronavirus.

“To support Dassault Aviation in this unprecedented crisis, the board decided today that no dividend should be paid to shareholders for financial year 2019,” the company said April 1 in a note to staff posted on its website.

That cancellation of dividend is the latest in a drive by French companies to conserve cash to fund wage bills, maintain idle factories and finance a gradual industrial restart.

Dassault follows airliner builder Airbus and engine maker Safran, which have respectively suspended dividends of some €1.4 billion and around €1 billion.

Electronics company Thales declined comment.

The economy minister, Bruno Le Maire, called March 30 on companies to suspend dividends if those firms benefited from the state-backed furlough system.

“Set an example,” Le Maire said on BFM TV. “If you are using the furlough, do not pay dividends...”

France holds some 11 percent of Safran and 25.68 percent of Thales.

Under the French furlough, the government partly funds the reduced salary paid to staff temporarily laid off in the lock down against Covid-19. Companies pay part of the salary.

“Companies need to hold on to the maximum amount of cash to finance the recovery,” said Hervé Guillou, chairman of Gican, a trade association for naval companies and former executive chairman of Naval Group. Companies also need to pay executives, who are not covered by the furlough system.

Talks are under way to decide payment while on furlough and a new work schedule, Dassault said in the staff note. Staff who are not working from home or not returning to the factory from April 3 will be on furlough.

Work on the production line will gradually start April 3, with work teams assigned to high priority programs.

Dassault withdrew its business forecast for this year, which had already expected lower sales compared to a buoyant 2019. The company had planned to pay a dividend of €25.4 per share.

The company had expected to deliver 13 Rafale and 40 Falcon business jets this year, down from 26 fighter jets shipped last year. The forecast sale of Falcon jets for 2020 had been unchanged at 40 units.

Safran withdrew March 26 its 2020 forecast and cancelled a dividend of €2.38 per share.

“In a spirit of responsibility vis-à-vis Safran’s stakeholders, this decision preserves the group’s resources in order to protect employees, maintain continuity of its operations, notably for its suppliers, support its customers and ensure liquidity in uncertain times,” the company said in a statement.

Safran also set up a new €3 billion credit line with banks.

Airbus cancelled its dividend of €1.8 per share and set up a new credit line of €15 billion, giving access to €30 billion of liquidity. The company also suspended voluntary top up payments to pension.

The Dassault family, which receives significant income from the dividends, thanked the top managers, executive chairman Eric Trappier and chief operating officer Loic Segalen, for the steps taken in the lock down.

The family gave “full and complete support,” the April 1 staff note said.

The family holds 62.3 percent of Dassault Aviation, and voting rights of 76.9 percent.

Payment of dividends, furloughs and high pay have sparked controversy in the UK. The founder of easyJet, Stelios Haji-Ioannou, last month received £60 million in dividends, as the low-cost airline placed 4,000 staff on furlough and grounded the entire aircraft fleet.

In the Premier football league, Newcastle United stopped paying its non-playing staff, leaving them to apply for the government-backed furlough scheme. Meanwhile, while soccer players stayed on full pay, reported to be an average £40,120 per week, the BBC reported.

The furlough scheme meant taxpayers would fund 80 percent of wages of the non-playing staff, who would remain on the Newcastle’s payroll.

In France, almost 400,000 companies and four million workers have registered for furlough, which pays 70 percent of salary, afternoon daily Le Monde reported.

Some 4,032 people have died in hospital from the virus, with more than 9,600 patients in the Ile de France region around the capital, straining the medical facilities, the report said.

An Update on French Defense Industry During the Lockdown: April 1, 2020

04/01/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Arquus last week delivered 13 VAB armored troop carriers to support the French army in the African Barkhane operation, and an initial batch of 100 VT4 light vehicles for national security, the vehicle manufacturer said March 31.

Meanwhile, Nexter partially restarted production March 30 after a week's shut down, the company said on its LinkedIn website.

Arquus shipped its vehicles in the second week of the national lock down, which has been extended to April 15 in a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Arquus was able to deliver the vehicles which were already built and fitted out under an accelerated program. Production has been closed since the quarantine came into effect, while service and spares have been provided under a reduced workforce.

“Arquus last week conducted a complete inventory of the assets which could be quickly made available to the services,” the company said in a statement.

That review led to identification of a park of almost 300 vehicles, both armored and unarmored, with some new units and some reconditioned, the company said.

Talks with the Direction Générale de l'Armement procurement office and army's SIMMT maintenance arm led to DGA inspection and certification of 13 VAB troop carriers at the Garchizy plant, central France.

Those vehicles, delivered early in the week of March 23, had been adapted to give greater protection, based on lessons learnt in the field. That shipment completed a batch of 40 units and will “strengthen the capability made available to services deployed in Barkhane,” the company said.

The Barkhane mission is the French army's operation in sub-Saharan Africa against Islamist fundamentalist fighters. President Emmanuel Macron has committed to send 600 more French troops to reinforce the 4,500 already deployed.

In addition to the troop carriers, Arquus is also delivering 200 light vehicles under the lock down.

Arquus delivered late last week an initial batch of 100 VT4 vehicles from its Saint Nazaire plant, northern France. A second batch of 100 VT4 will be delivered next week, to boost the services's operations on national territory, the company said.

A further batch of 73 VT4 vehicles is due to be shipped.

The army deploys up to 10,000 troops in the Sentinel operation, with armed foot patrols and light vehicles deployed nationwide.

Some 35 percent of staff at the Garchizy plant were working under tight health rules, handling the dispatch of spares to the forces.

The VT4, based on the Ford Explorer, replaces an aging fleet of P4 jeeps. Arquus is the subsidiary of Volvo, a Swedish truck maker.

Nexter, builder of medium and heavy armored vehicles, partially returned to work March 30 after closing down for a week, the company said on its LinkedIn website.

The company cleaned equipment in factories and made sanitizing gel available to workers. Managers have been drawing up plans for gradually restarting production for those designated as priority programs. That return to production required talks with the large supply chain.

Workers on maintenance service continued to work, the company said.

Nexter is prime contractor on the Griffon multirole troop carrier and Jaguar combat and reconnaissance vehicle, two key elements in the army's Scorpion modernization program. The company handles design of the Jaguar.

Thales, an electronics company, is industrial partner on these Scorpion programs.

Texelis, a supplier of drivelines and axles, is partner with Nexter for a light armored vehicle for intelligence and reconnaissance missions.

Re-Thinking Military Supply Chain Security in the Post-Pandemic World

03/30/2020

By David Beaumont

Supply chain security is the concept which encompasses the programs, systems, procedures, technologies and solutions applied to address threats to the supply chain and the consequent threats to economic, social and physical well-being of citizens and organised society. – [World Bank](#), 2009

Deborah Cowen's book, *The deadly life of logistics*, describes the intertwined relationship between commercial logistics and security.

“With logistics comes new kinds of crises, new paradigms of security,” Cowen opines, describing how the global logistics enterprise developed from Second World War experience has been employed by government and business to define the modern world.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to end the fragile order of international supply and industrial production for the short term at least.

This event has direct existential and strategic consequences for Western militaries, but also requires them to be part of national economic responses.

This article is an attempt to consider a few aspects of this ‘new world’.

What are its implications for national security as it pertains to supply and industry?

Supply chain security came upon us in the last decades of the twentieth century.

A confluence of factors started the way the new world did its business. Globalisation was well in train, but economies adjusted to the opening of borders.

During the 1980’s, a wave of deregulation washed over the Western world and national economies were exposed to global forces.

Production shifted to those regions of the world where costs were low, and global supply chains became the veins of a system of wealth generation that stretched across the planet.

A ‘revolution in logistics’, one shared by business but also the military as deployments moved rapidly across the global commons, was accelerated by ‘just in time’ view of supply. More stuff was moving, more quickly and to more destinations.

It was a time of tremendous economic opportunity for those countries that could take advantage.

Supply chain security was not an idea developed by militaries to chart threats; it was an economic concept conceived to describe emerging vulnerabilities to normal patterns of human (Western human, mind you) existence.

It has become militarised over time, a consequence of expeditionary wars in the Middle-east, the blurring of civil and military industry in a number of critical industries resident in certain countries, and in consideration of new challenges to the existing global order. There were numerous ways in which militaries have experienced this problem and concept, two of which I will describe here.

Firstly, like everyone else, governments and their militaries became wedded to lower-cost procurement options which became possible with componentry sourced and products manufactured where labour costs were low.

In classical military parlance, the supply lines of most Western militaries moved from the ‘interior’ to the ‘exterior’; where parts were moved directly through geographic regions that had only years before (and now) been considered potential ‘battlezones’ versus the depots and production facilities within the national support base.

Secondly, and maybe even unwittingly, internationalised production and logistics caused national strategic interests to expand outwards. This was not just a concern for military logisticians who were interested in where sources of ammunition and parts may originate, but for those interested in protecting domestic prosperity.

It is now naïve to think that geoeconomics and commerce is not a national security issue.

It probably is the national security issue of our time, the driving force behind a veneer of ‘hard power’ concerns and other military-strategic problems.

Prosperity is what nations ultimately strive to protect.

While military strategists haven’t been particularly fixed on global economics, the problem of supply chain security has certainly been fixed on them.

Problems crept up on a new generation of Western national security and military planners slowly.

Operations off the ‘horn’ of Africa to protect traffic from Somali pirates gave way to concerns about ‘anti-access, area-denial’ weaponry on significant maritime choke-points, which in turn gave way to the implications of man-made island building in the South China Sea, and cyber-attacks on defence industry. People understood the strategic implications of trade, but now its importance was re-emerging, almost subliminally, in often unrelated discussions.

Sources of production were also becoming a critical part of the conversation. Volcanic eruptions in Iceland in 2010 and the Fukushima nuclear accident created shudders throughout the global economy, and all soon learned how vulnerable the connective tissue of the World truly was. Localised disruption to manufacturing now had global effects.

The economic cataclysm wrought by purposeful government decisions to slow the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new blend of the economic and military.

An alarming lack of resilience in the commercial systems society has created for itself has been revealed.

Military logisticians were already becoming increasingly concerned with the implications of limited sources of supply for the purposes of the armies, navies and air forces they belonged to.

Now this problem has moved beyond a challenge to military supply and into challenges to ‘normal’ human patterns of existence. Although admittedly a guess, it seems a certainty to me that the strategic calculus about supply-chains, along with concerns for national resilience, will change.

This will have considerable implications for what militaries must do for their nations, if not how they create capability in the first place.

Furthermore, the nature of military and industrial / economic relationships in Western countries will necessarily evolve. Militaries receive sizable budgets for the purpose of preparedness for war, and it is evident that governments will turn to the military to deliver some return during a time of national crisis.

Militaries around the world are performing tasks they were patently not expecting to be performing; from supplementing hospitals to producing medical supplies. However, militaries are being seen to offer governments a point of leverage into the national economy. Defence activities such as procurement and capability development can be rushed ahead – albeit inefficiently and with excessive costs – of timelines to stimulate some form of local economic activity.

At one end of the spectrum planned expenses will simply be brought forward. At the other end, it is possible that future capability decisions will be seen to renew, even re-establish, national industries that have withered since globalisation accelerated.

As we are seeing with the recent declaration of the US President Trump to invoke the Defence Production Act (DPA), governments are willing to co-opt existing military systems and processes to deliver economic outcomes.

This is an opportunity that must be taken if the situation demands it.

In the [case of the DPA](#), an Act conceived to support mobilisation, industry is being directed to produce commercial products for national security purposes.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, and as nations recover, it will be critical that defence planners consider ways in which seemingly natural links between the military and national support base can be appropriately leveraged for highly unusual crisis as is being witnessed right now.

Defence industry policy and other Acts of government can be the bedrock upon which national security responses can be formed.

It may be that at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the economic recovery erases our memory of the cost of seizing international trade, behaviours and the interests of military and other national security organisations will return to normal.

Now, amid a pandemic, it seems incredulous to suggest life will be so kind. National security is fundamentally about the preservation of normality, and militaries will have an important role in assisting their society assure it.

It is an unwritten rule of military logistics start preparing for the time in which forces will return home just as they arrive on a military operation.

Perhaps it is time to start planning now for ‘what comes next’, and to reconsider the national security implications of the globalised international economy.

Speaking of Western military forces, they will look out on a world that faces great uncertainty as nations strive to quickly regenerate their wealth and ensure prosperity.

They will be viewed as institutions of order and support, and their people as a symbol of assurance.

But they must also start thinking about the next threats to prosperity.

In this environment we shouldn't forget commerce and military practice in war has always been entangled.

Alternatively, and as this article has sought to do, we shouldn't forget that this rule applies outside of the fighting as well.

This article was first published March 12, 2020 by David Beaumont on [his website](#).

European Military Airlift in the Coronavirus Crisis

04/11/2020

With passenger traffic ramped down significantly, civilian airlines are providing enhanced freighter support during the current phase of the Coronavirus crisis.

In addition, in Europe, notably in France, military airlift has provided targeted capabilities to support emergency airlift as well.

Pierre Tran has highlighted this development in his coverage from Paris.

In a [March 26, 2020](#) story he highlighted the French government and how it is using the military to provide support in the crisis.

“France will deliver military assistance to the fight against coronavirus in an integrated manner under the newly announced Operation Resilience, armed forces minister Florence Parly said March 26.”

In a [March 19, 2020](#) story, he noted the first French Air Force flight providing lift to support the government's efforts in the crisis.

On March 18, 2020, the French air force flew six civilian patients severely hit by the deadly coronavirus in an A330 MRTT military transport jet fitted out with an onboard medical evacuation unit, the armed forces ministry said.

That was the first time the service flew its airborne hospital unit, dubbed Morpheus, in a domestic flight as the module was used to fly wounded personnel to France from distant overseas deployments.

The modular units, previously fitted on the C-135, can be equipped for intensive care as well as lighter medical conditions.

The A330 multirole tanker transport aircraft flew from Mulhouse, eastern France, and landed at Istres airbase in the south, allowing the patients to be transferred to military hospitals in Marseille and Toulon, the ministry said.

The military flight was ordered to lighten the load on hospitals in eastern France, one of the hardest hit regions, with the public health authority registering March 17 1,820 cases of coronavirus in that part of the country.

In a March 23, 2020 story he highlighted the role of the A330MRTT.

On March 21st, the French Air Force flew a second flight of the A330 MRTT equipped with the Morpheus flying hospital unit, flying six patients to Bordeaux from Mulhouse.

The first medical flight of the A330 MRTT took place two days before, flying six patients from Mulhouse to Istres airbase, south of France.

The French air force has added a second Falcon jet to its medical evacuation flight, which now comprises six pilots and two cabin teams, a Falcon 2000LX and Falcon 900, the service said. The transport squadron flies that emergency service.

The airborne medical squadron has been stood up in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Those flight crews are trained to fly in conditions of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and radioactive warfare, with the staff wearing protective gear and the aircraft disinfected. The pilots can fly with protective masks and gloves.

A crew from that squadron flew March 18 the A330 MRTT which brought six patients from Mulhouse, eastern France, to the south of the country.

In a story published on March 29, 2020, he highlighted Franco-German cooperation during the crisis.

The French army has flown coronavirus patients to Germany in an NH90 Caïman helicopter, while a German A400M military transport plane flew patients out of France, signalling close bilateral ties, the armed forces ministry said March 29.

“The French and German armed forces are working together to fight against Covid-19,” the ministry said in a statement. “This cooperation shows the solidarity of the Franco-German friendship.”

Armed forces minister Florence Parly spoke March 27 to her German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, on the virus crisis and the two ministers agreed on measures to help hospitals in northeastern France, the ministry said.

The French army flew March 28 an NH90 military transport helicopter carrying two patients out of Metz, northeastern France, to a hospital in Essen, western Germany, the ministry said. French civil emergency services helped that flight.

That flight was part of Operation Resilience, a broad military mission seeking to lighten the load on civil authorities across France, heavily hit by the pandemic.

The army light air wing rapidly adapted the NH90 for the medical mission, which allowed evacuation of patients under intensive care, the ministry said. The NH90 also flew March 28 patients to Geneva, as Switzerland has offered assistance.

The army has adapted the NH90 to carry virus patients under intensive care. The helicopter will carry two patients under oxygen, and a crew of seven or eight. There will be a pilot and a flight commander, a flight engineer, a flight specialist in the hold, one or two doctors, and two nurses.

The army 1st combat helicopter regiment, based in Phalsbourg, northeast France, flies the NH90.

The German air force sent an A400M airlifter to Strasbourg, northeast France, to fly French patients to a German hospital, Parly said over social media.

“Just one word: thanks,” she said.

That was the first German military flight of French patients, regional paper L’Alsace reported. The operation took just under two hours to embark the patients before flying to Stuttgart. The patients were then taken to the military hospital in Ulm, southwest Germany, AFP news agency reported, the paper said.

The German A400M flying hospital also took virus patients from Bergamo, northern Italy, to help medical staff in the Lombardy region, suffering heavily from the virus. The patients were flown to Cologne, western Germany.

Germany made its A400M airlifter available through European Air Transport Command, which comprises seven member nations: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and the Netherlands.

And the French ALAT — Aviation Légère de l’Armée de Terre — has provided support as well.

In an article by Fred Vergnères on Helicopter Industry on March 31, 2020, the ALAT’s role was highlighted.

On March 28th, three transfers were administered at the benefit of six patients suffering from Covid-19. The transfers were carried out by two aircrafts from the 1st Regiment of Helicopter Combat (1st RHC) in Phalsbourg, in order to relieve hospitals in the East of France. Flights were carried out in the morning hours from Metz to Essen (Germany), and from Mulhouse to Geneva (Switzerland) in the afternoon. On Sunday the 29th, the same aircrafts were also used to evacuate 6 other patients from Besançon to Grenoble and Clermont-Ferrand; and from Metz to Essen in Germany. At the end of the daily missions, the two aircrafts left for Phalsbourg to undergo a complete decontamination phase.

And more generally, their readiness was highlighted to meet the demands of the French state.

For the General Staff, “these missions, and the air assets committed to them are used to meet the needs of the health services, and are carried out on the orders of the President of the Republic and the

Ministry of Solidarity and Health“. The fact remains however, in the event of a crisis escalation the helicopter system could without problem be reinforced on other sites in the hexagon, from the Caymansbase at the CFIA – Centre de Formation Inter Armées – in Le Cannet des Maures and those of the 5th Regiment of Helicopter Combat (5e RHC) in Pau.

In an April 2, 2020 story published on *Helicopter Industry*, the role of the French Air Force and its helicopters was highlighted.

After the ALAT – Aviation Légère de l’Armée de Terre -, it is the French Air Force’s turn to use its heliborne assets. As of April 1st, the French Air Force set up a plot of three Caracals and six crews of the EH 1/67 Pyrénées at the Villacoublay Air Base 107, south of Paris. Operations began just a few hours after the arrival of the machines, as two EC725s each transferred two Covid-19 patients from the Ile-de-France region from orly to Caen and Angers.

To keep up with the pace of the missions, the squadron will also operate the EC225, rented from RTE, for logistical purposes between the Cazaux base and the Villacoublay site. Two SA330 Puma from the EH 1/44 Solenzara should also reinforce the Paris operation in the coming days.

And finally, the website Helicopter Industry highlighted the French Navy’s helicopter role.

After ALAT (Aviation Légère de l’Armée de Terre) and the French Air Force, the French Navy (Marine nationale) is now joining the helicopters borne ressources deployed in the Ile-de-France region as part of Operation Résilience. A Caïman from Flotille 33F, initially based at Lanvéoc-Poulmic in Finistère, has been stationed at Villacoublay Air Force Base #107 since Monday, April 7.

The helicopter, which comes as a reinforcement of the Parisian device, could be used for logistical missions to transport equipment and personnel or even the medical evacuation of two Covid-19 patients.....

In short, military airlift can provide a compliment to civilian assets in moving patients or supplies to critical points in the response chain during the crisis.

French Defense Industrial Re-Set as France Prepares to Re-Emerge from the Coronavirus Crisis

04/15/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Dassault Aviation has resumed training flights for Indian pilots on the Rafale fighter jet, as the aircraft builder seeks to meet contract requirements despite the deadly spread of coronavirus.

“At Merignac, the (conversion training center) activities started on Monday with a daily mission for two Indian Rafales, in order to meet our contractual obligations for delivery,” executive chairman Eric Trappier said April 8 in a note to staff on the company website.

Merignac is the main Dassault factory, a suburb of Bordeaux, southwest France.

Flights have also restarted with the ATL2 maritime patrol aircraft and Falcon 900 light jet, both flying from Istres, southern France, he said.

The national quarantine will be extended a further four weeks to May 11, president Emmanuel Macron said in an April 13 broadcast to the nation, as he called for continued strict observation of the lock down.

On the training flights, the Merignac authorities had posted a schedule to address local noise concerns, with Indian pilots due to fly from October 2019 to March 2021, with take-off and landing from Bordeaux airport, Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 6 pm (local time).

Qatari pilots had flown their Rafale training missions from April 8 to June 7 2019, with three to four flights per week, the Merignac website said.

France was due to deliver the next Rafale to India in May and it remained to be seen whether that hand over will go ahead as scheduled, in view of uncertainty sparked by the pandemic, an industry source said.

That government-to-government Rafale deal led to the Oct. 8 formal delivery of the first aircraft in the Indian order for 36 units, worth some €7.9 billion (\$8.7 billion).

Clients normally pay the last instalment on a deal when delivery has taken place. That payment will be welcome in view of strain stemming from a shut down of production.

Industrial re-set

Dassault's industrial re-set follows requirements of the defense ministry and Direction Générale de l'Armement procurement office, Trappier said in a video to staff.

The return to production reflected priorities agreed with clients, he said. The top priority was to support the French forces, flying Rafale and Mirage 2000 fighter jets, and ATL2 aircraft. Development for certain programs would also be pursued.

Export clients are also important, particularly India, which is seeing serious effects of the pandemic, he said.

The company has adopted SMS texts to keep personnel up to date.

Dassault has gradually re-opened its nine factories and offices around the country.

The ATL2 flights relate to a program to upgrade the combat system to standard 6. That modernization covers 18 units, with Dassault upgrading the first seven, and the SIAé aircraft maintenance center working on the remaining 11 units.

The upgrade included Thales Search Master radar with active antenna, acoustic subsystem for sonar buoys for anti-submarine warfare, and a Dassault navigation console. There are also new consoles developed by SIAé and software for information processing from Naval Group.

The first two upgraded ATL2s were delivered last October, with the last upgrade due in 2023.

Conserve cash

In the financial disruption, Thales said April 7 it was cancelling a planned final 2019 dividend of €430 million to conserve cash, and signed a €2 billion bank loan to boost access to funds. That bank credit was available for 12 months, with an option to extend for six months.

Those funds were in addition to €2.9 billion in cash and cash equivalent, and a €1.5 billion credit facility.

In France, there were 14,967 deaths due to Covid-19, with 137,779 confirmed cases, according to John Hopkins university.

Of those fatalities, 5,379 were in rest homes, and 9,588 in hospitals, afternoon daily Le Monde reported April 14. The health ministry said April 13 there had been 335 deaths over the last 24 hours, compared to 310 on Sunday.

Among the measures Macron announced in his broadcast were distribution of face masks to the general public, and schools and colleges to re-open from May 11. Museums, restaurants and cinemas will remain closed under the lock down.

Macron sought to inspire hope in his speech and his delivery was seen as an attempt to show a gentler, more human face than his previous broadcast, which invoked a martial spirit with six references to war.

“The results are there,” he said. “Several regions have been spared. In the last few days, the number under intensive care has fallen.

“Hope is reborn.”

Featured Photo: GUILLAUME HORCAJUELO/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

In an article by Eszter Zalan published in the *EUObserver* on [April 15, 2020](#), the general challenge of the Europeans returning to some form of normalcy in terms of work was highlighted.

The EU commission on Wednesday (April 15, 2020) is set to roll out a set of recommendations for EU countries to better coordinate easing lockdown measures to avoid spillovers between member states.

While the EU executive cannot force member states to act in unison, it wants to make sure countries take into account the situations of neighbouring countries, according to a spokesperson.

The recommendations call for member states to notify each other and the commission before measures are loosened.

It warns that “any level of gradual relaxation” of measures will “unavoidably” mean increase in new coronavirus cases.

It argues for a gradual easing, starting small and local, with opening schools and universities, while restaurants and mass events should only be allowed at a later stage. The EU’s internal borders should open first before its external borders are accessible again.

The EU executive argues that three conditions should be met to ease restrictions: “the spread of the disease has significantly decreased for a sustained period of time”, the health care system has sufficient capacity and there is effective monitoring including large-scale testing.

The commission also recommends contact tracing by the use of mobile apps, which should respect data privacy and should be voluntary.

German foreign minister Heiko Maas on Tuesday called for a single smartphone app to be used across the EU.

Countries should also be ready to revise their approach if more data comes in, or there is a risk of another wave in the spread of the virus, the commission says.

“We will have to live with the virus until a vaccine or treatment is found,” the commission’s document warns.

The Charles De Gaulle Returns Home Early: Managing the Coronavirus Impact

04/13/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – The Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier and its frigate escort were due to arrive at Toulon on April 12, a return to base earlier than expected due to the coronavirus hitting 50 sailors on the capital warship.

“The Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier and its escort will arrive at their home base in the afternoon of Sunday April 12, at the end of almost three months tour of operations in the eastern Mediterranean and the North Sea,” the ministry said in an April 11 statement.

“The first concern of the ministry and the navy is the health of the sailors, their families and our citizens,” the ministry said.

The Charles de Gaulle had been due back at Toulon April 23, before the break out of coronavirus on board the flagship of task force 473.

An April 8 emergency medical test of 66 sailors on the carrier showed 50 had fallen ill with Covid-19, the ministry said April 10. The test led three sailors with the virus being flown April 9 on an NH90 Caiman naval helicopter to Lisbon airport, where they were transferred to a Falcon 900 jet for flight to Toulon military hospital.

The Falcon was adapted for medical flight, with two doctors and a nurse on board.

Three specialist doctors flown out to the carrier attempted to track the infection and limit the spread of the disease.

The carrier sailed from Toulon January 21 on its three-month operation Foch and had stopped over March 13-15 at Brest naval base, northwestern France.

A sailor on a Belgian frigate, Leopard 1, was confirmed March 24 to have contracted Covid-19, while the warship was sailing with the Charles de Gaulle task force, reported B2, a Brussels defense blog. The Belgian vessel, which also docked at Brest at the same time, left the task force and sailed home to arrive March 27. The Belgian crew went into quarantine.

The crew and fleet air arm unit on the French flagship carrier, and the crew of the Chevalier Paul frigate will go into a two week quarantine in military bases, the ministry said. Health and logistics specialists will take steps to deliver the “best conditions for health and accommodations.”

Further tests will be made during the quarantine and before the sailors return home.

A 1,200-strong crew sailed the Charles de Gaulle, with a further 560 personnel to command the task force, and fly and support the 18 Rafale fighter jets, two Hawkeye spy planes and three helicopters.

Some 195 sailors sailed the Chevalier Paul, a Horizon class air defense frigate.

Other ships in the naval task force – the Somme fleet auxiliary tanker and La Motte-Picquet anti-submarine frigate – will sail to Brest after a health check on board.

The fleet air arm will send the aircraft and their crew to their bases, with helicopters to Hyères, southern France, Hawkeyes to Lann Bihoué and Rafales to Landivisiau. The latter two airbases are in northwestern France.

In response to Covid-19, the troops deployed in February to the Barkhane operation in sub-Saharan Africa will continue their tour for a further one or two months, the defense and foreign affairs committee of the French senate said April 10, following appearance of armed forces minister Florence Parly by video.

There are an estimated 3,800 “probable or possible” virus cases among the services, with 369 confirmed by health tests, the senate committee said.

The deadly pandemic has claimed the lives of at least 13,832 in France, of which 4,889 were in retirement homes, afternoon daily Le Monde reported April 12. There were fewer deaths on a daily basis, with 353 deaths on Saturday compared to 554 on Friday.

The number of patients in intensive care was declining for the third day in a row, with 6,883 patients, 121 fewer than the previous day.

President Emmanuelle Macron was due to give a nationwide address on April 13 on the pandemic.

The lock down, which started March 17, is expected to be extended beyond April 15. The question is only how long, with debate on how the tight restrictions will eventually be dismantled.