



BEARING WITNESS

The Next Great War is Here and We Are Fighting it Now

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In his April address three months ago, Irwin Cotler, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs described the government's goals for "stability in an unstable era." It was the formalization of a policy to minimize western engagement in foreign crises, and emphasized Canada's domestic security above all else. Given the current state of affairs it is a publicly palatable position. It also mirrors our southern neighbors' approach laid out by the Jindal administration and Secretary of State John Bolton. Canadian politics have traditionally dovetailed with the United States, but this time things are different.

We at the Globe and Mail are forced to disagree with these head-in-the-sand proclamations, and urge both our readership and leadership to face the reality of our situation: we are already in the throes of the next global conflict.

This week's events, particularly in the last 12 hours, indicate a new era of war. Fringe blogs and conspiracy theorists have spent years saying World War III is just around the corner. I personally find the phrase WWII to be excessively dramatic, but it is clear that a current geo-political struggle is happening around us. The 21st century has been defined by burbling small-scale wars, but the last 12 hours indicate a new and troubling dimension that threatens the West directly.

The two events that prompted this editorial were our analysis of the Hangingstone papers and the recently released images of the Coastal Drone Swarm.

The leaked images appeared 2 hours ago from an anonymous account on Reddit, and have spread like wildfire to every major news outlet. The photo shows soldiers on a coastline observing a swarm of drones, with the single caption "Just got buzzed by numerous hostile UAVs." As of writing there has been no comment by the White House, or any other official body. Current theory indicates that the poster is likely a deployed member of the Special Operations community from the US, Australia or New Zealand. Despite initial reports that the image was of the United States Pacific Northwest, it now seems that the photograph was almost certainly taken on the Southern coast of New Zealand, between Dusky Sound and Coal Island.

"Just got buzzed by numerous hostile UAVs"

Already we are receiving unconfirmed reports that the Coastal Drone Swarm has attacked military and possibly civilian vessels in the area. For up to the minute information, follow our Christchurch correspondent [Will Green \(@williamgreen\)](#).

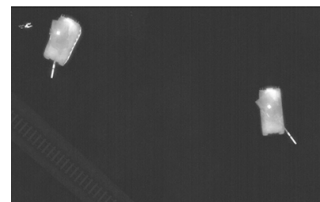
Theories abound over how the drone swarm entered New Zealand airspace, but defense experts seem to favor the possibility that they were either launched from an as-yet-undetected submarine, or that each individual drone traveled while submerged in a low-power hibernation state. No official markings can be seen in the images, and the silhouette does not match any existing records of drones in service. The origin of the swarm will be difficult to identify without a hands-on inspection. Although China, Japan, Israel, and the United States all have publicly disclosed United UAV Programs (drone swarms), it is entirely possible for other countries to have assembled a similar covert program.

While the Coastal Drone Swarm is only beginning to unfold on the other side of the world, we at the Globe are obligated to release the Hangingstone papers. The editorial board of this paper has come into possession of a series of emails,

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messages, and block-chain records between an unknown party and the Union of Natural Authority, the splinter group of the Northern Justice Movement responsible for the Hangingstone massacre on June 12th.

These emails discuss the funding and function of at least four militant cells that have attacked the northern oil sands and pipeline projects in both Alberta and British Columbia. The equivalent of \$1,400,000 CAD was transferred over the course of two months in late 2016 using a virtual currency that appears to derive from the Q-coin. The backer's money is cited as a "key resource" but "continued discretion" is also emphasized.

The Union of Natural Authority would later claim responsibility for the events at Hangingstone, but there is no mention of the Athabasca Oil Company project or the UNA's plans in the emails. However we can determine the backer's time zone from the block-chain records and confirmations. The funder of the UNA transmits from UTC+3, which could place them in Russia, Saudi Arabia, or within the former states of Iraq and Syria. You can read the full transcript of those emails and transactions in our [Document Library](#).

The Canadian petro-insurgency seems to be funded anonymously through a foreign bitcoin derivative. While the initial terrorist and protest actions that would lead to the current state of disarray in the Northern regions of BC and Alberta were cited as aboriginal and ecological efforts, a new class of fighter has emerged. The now daily statements from Redd Alert and the Northern Justice Movement cite "the rampant disregard for environmental and community stability" as justification for their sabotage and kidnappings, but the recent catastrophes at Bear Lake and Hangingstone point to a newly militarized and much more aggressive force. At the beginning of this week Athabasca Oil Corporation released the first security camera captures from after the Hangingstone attack, showing on of the attackers. Unlike the masked protesters of 2016, the man photographed is more in line with the military advisors and private contractors prevalent in the middle-eastern wars of the last decade.

Coastal Drone Swarm: What We Know



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In Case You Missed it: Excerpt from Sheldon Smith at Hangingstone

I had already been at Hangingstone for 5 days before the attack happened. Afterwards there would be discussion and debate over whether my presence at the site had



The release of the Hangingstone papers confirms that there is far more than eco-terrorism and land-rights motivating these insurgent groups. A foreign backer indicates a concerted effort to disrupt Canada's oil sector

At the risk of sounding biblical: these two events are the harbingers of war. New Zealand has found its territory violated and suddenly drawn into conflict with an as-yet-unknown enemy, and Canada's "home-grown insurgency" is taking on an unsettling foreign dimension.

Is this a targeted attack on the Commonwealth? What involvement can we expect from the United States? Is it even the same aggressor at work? It is entirely plausible that these events were engineered indirectly target the United States. We don't know, but the intelligence community seems to have their work cut out.

Beyond these most recent developments, the events of this week and the escalation in conflict across the globe should alert any news savvy adult to the current situation.

The European theater stole the show in both World War I and World War II, and the modern era is proving no exception. The simmering Russian aggression of the past decade has been described as "manageable" and "a sad fact of life" by EU and NATO leaders. With rhetoric like that, why would Russia back down and return to the post-USSR state of things? Their ambitious land-grabs, fluid economic restructuring, and skilled use of "soft invasion" tactics has led to an expanded presence across the Baltic and the Caucasus.

One of the few successful efforts to resist the re-Russofication of Eastern Europe has been Finnish program "Every Soldier a Citizen, Every Citizen a Soldier." Widely considered to be the first successful implementation of the foreign fighters concept by a western democracy, the Finns stand alone.

The perpetually in-crisis EU has watched a re-surgng Russia lay claim or influence over the North Pole, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Georgia, and of

prompted the insurgents to make a show of things. This may be true, we cannot say for sure. At the end of the day 35 people were dead, and I would never be the same again.

The petro-insurgents are a far cry from the Iraqi and Afghan fighters I have previously experienced. While Islamists have favored IED's and suicide bombers, the fighters of the UNA embrace drones, snipers, and on occasion: full fledged raids similar to western special forces.

For me, the attack began when a security officer on the edge of the facility was shot in the throat. I heard the shot, heard the reactions from workers around him, and went for cover. For Phil Henderson, the on-site engineer and project manager it began three minutes earlier when his communications coordinator informed him that their lines had gone down. Troublesome connections are not unheard of in Northern Alberta, but when the hardline access went out alarm bells went off.

"At first I thought we must have had an accident along the line." Henderson said, "Like a severed cable while laying in new lines, or possibly an accident bringing down a pole somewhere north of us. But we also had a conditional connection to Calgary via sat-phone, and when that didn't work I knew something was wrong."

The primary Hangingstone facility had five security officers, a hundred and thirty-four workers, and an advanced

course Ukraine. The barely functioning Ukrainian government-in-exile issued a statement this week calling for "all native Ukrainians to reclaim their freedom."

Despite NATO's ongoing support for the loyalists, we are no closer to seeing them take a seat at the table and become a formal ally. And who can blame NATO? It would force an all out confrontation with the multitude of Russian-backed special forces and insurgent groups currently carving up the country, plus risk further direct conflict inside the Arctic circle.

The solution to the Russian problem requires an expanded alliance, either a reinvigorated NATO, or an entirely new entity. But we are unlikely to see either while our politicians seek to segregate themselves from the world.

I would also point to the Indian border incursion through Kashmir, that has progressively escalated this week. While Indian operations might have begun in March as an effort to "stabilize the North," Monday's incursion at the Wagah border crossing into Lahore marked a turning point.

An "Advanced Security and Interdiction Force" made up of elements from the Para-Commandos and the 6th Armoured Regiment specifically targeted Hafez Saeed and members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba group. Public statements from Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar this week indicate that this Interdiction Force intends to "bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai and Hyderabad attacks to justice, either at the end of a rope or the end of a gun barrel."

Unlike a conventional US special-forces raid to kill or capture suspected terrorists, the Indians rolled across the border with T-90 tanks, conducted at least one air or drone strike on Pakistani soil, and detained upwards of fifty people before returning to a holding formation back on the Indian side of the border. The last 72 hours have seen exchanges of gunfire and shelling across the now closed border, and a renewed flare up of fighting all along what was once Kashmir's Line of Control.

Social media reports describe Pakistani military units streaming out of Rawalpindi, likely moving towards Kashmir. The fate of Hafez Saeed, who retreated from public view after an assassination attempt last September, remains unclear.

When he took office, Mr Jindal promised to crush the mutating caliphate that first seized headlines as the Islamic State and currently lives on inside the former states of Iraq and Syria as the "True Islamic Caliphate." But the sadly familiar story is that the region is no closer to stability. The long range bombings by Israel against the Iranian facilities may have put the nuclear question to rest for now, but Iran's growing influence inside the Jordanian refugee camps means Israel could be facing yet another civilian-entrenched militia.

The rise of the Kurdish state, which formally claimed control of Turkish and Iranian territory in late 2015 to form Unified Kurdistan, presents a nationalistic force reminiscent of 20th century decolonization. The fact that branches of the Kurdish

perimeter security system. It was that security system that first alerted Henderson to the UNA presence.

"I could see hot spots on the monitors in the forest around us. But when we switched to the visible cameras, they were being dazzled." An unknown number of simple civilian drones had been outfitted with lasers, and were being used to blind the security system. "It was impossible for our inside security coordinator to relay specifics to the guys outside."

Within ten minutes of the initial communications block, eight people were dead, four more were injured, and the security team at Hangingstone had initiated the oil-patch equivalent of a "shelter in place" command. I huddled in a portable trailer along with fifteen other workers, sweating and listening to the sharp steady crack of gunfire from outside.

All four of the Athabasca security officers outside carried handguns, and two were able to retrieve their SA15.7 rifles. These rifles are the civilian equivalent of the C8 assault rifle issued to Canadian Forces, and notably used by the JTF2 anti-terror teams.

Ken Kowalski was one of the officers who was able to retrieve his weapon and came face to face with the UNA when they entered the facility. A security contractor from Edmonton, Kowalski had previously served in the Canadian Forces and completed two tours in Afghanistan. He described the experience at Hangingstone as "more up close and personal than anything I ever saw overseas."

"I was nearby when the first shots came in, picked up on what was going on, and went straight for the lockup." Kowalski says, "I was able to get my rifle, get a plate carrier on, and take up a defensive position behind one of the big earth movers that was on site. I had a pretty limited area of over-watch, but some solid cover. Meanwhile we've got guys flipping out on the radio, and anyone with a cellphone trying to dial out to get us some help."

Peshmerga carry US armaments, had US support, and even have US citizens serving in their ranks, has enraged Turkey. This is the result they feared when the West first began backing the Peshmerga. While some foreign observers feel rewarded by a secular rather than sectarian pseudo-state, the Kurds will present a long term problem for the region.

Less than half an hour after the initial events, the UNA entered the facility... [READ MORE](#)

Reducing foreign engagement to address our domestic issues translates into a fundamental misunderstanding of those domestic issues and the forces behind them. A policy of "stability in an unstable era" carries all the risks of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement strategy at the onset of World War II. But the modern world has no sharply defined alliance and detestable strong-man to target. Our scenario is not so clear cut, and so our leaders resist action.

While our forefathers had the convenience of official declarations of war issued by national governments around the globe, even they were unable to realize the path they were on until it was too late. Today we must take an honest evaluation of our position, re-engage our allies around the globe, commit our forces where they will be most effective, and strive to see those commitments through. The alternative is to forsake our friends and isolate ourselves at the most connected period in human history: a grave mistake.

An editorial call to acknowledge the current state of global conflict.

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