



GRYPHON GROWL

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The Gryphon Growl is a collection of news reporting produced by the 21st Intelligence Squadron and is designed to make acquisition professionals and leaders more fully threat informed. Articles are chosen because they impact AFLCMC programs or address larger national security issues in line with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, National Defense Strategy, Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition, and AFMC/AFLCMC priorities. The Gryphon Growl is designed to generate discussions in your respective workspace on current events. If any topic drives interest at higher classifications, please contact your PEO's Director of Intel or the ICE, using the phone number listed above or at <https://usaf.dps.mil/sites/21IS>. The articles in this product are gathered from unclassified, open sources and are not evaluated intelligence products. The included articles do not reflect the official position of the 21 IS, AFLCMC, or DoD.

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SIPR

go.intelink.sgov.gov/CPI6RmN
 Current Intelligence Brief (Monthly)

JWICS

go.intelink.ic.gov/3vKnmH3
 AFLCMC CC Intel Brief (Monthly)
 Winged Warrior (Bi-Weekly)
 CyREN (Bi-Weekly)

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Gryphon Growl Feedback Form: <https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/WhpBtWbWYi>

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INDOPACOM

ISW: CHINA-TAIWAN UPDATE

China:

People's Republic of China (PRC) military officers have visited Russian-held territory in Ukraine and toured the frontlines, according to a former Western official speaking to Reuters. These visits highlight PRC efforts to learn from the Russia-Ukraine war in preparation for modern warfare. PRC military thinkers have previously noted the cost effectiveness of using drones to destroy high-value targets, such as air defense systems, based on their observations from the war. The lessons that the PRC draws from the war will likely inform its doctrine, training, and development of capabilities moving forward.

The PRC has likely already used some of these lessons to develop new counter-drone systems. PRC weapons manufacturer Norinco claimed in its monthly publication that it has built the world's first close-in, anti-drone barrage system, which it named the Bullet Curtain. The chief engineer of the system claimed that it uses a 4 x 4 array of 35-milimeter barrels to fire a "curtain" to intercept projectiles, such as aircraft, drones, and missiles. The system appears designed to counter swarm attacks. It uses rapid volleys of overlapping fire and reloads quickly, according to Norinco.

China-Taiwan:

Taiwan charged a PRC ship captain for intentionally damaging undersea internet cables for the first time, highlighting Taiwanese efforts to protect critical infrastructure against PRC sabotage. Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration (CGA) intercepted the Togo-registered vessel *Hong Tai 58* in February 2025 after it severed an undersea cable connecting Taiwan to its outlying Penghu islands. It detained the captain—identified as "Wang"—alongside seven other crew members, who were all PRC nationals. Wang allegedly ordered his crew to release the ship anchor and drag it along the seabed to sever the cable. The Tainan District Prosecutors' Office charged Wang with violating the Telecommunications Management Act but deported the other seven crew members, citing insufficient evidence to charge them. Wang, who previously used fake documents to enter Taiwan's Keelung Port, has refused to reveal the ship owner or the identity of the individual who directed him to cut the cable.

TWZ: CHINA'S GIANT LAND-BASED CARRIER MOCKUP GROWS IN SIZE, NOW RESEMBLES FORD CLASS

China's full-size, land-based aircraft carrier test facility, a key part of the country's path toward establishing a carrier fleet and associated air wings, is being modified once again, and this time in a massive way. The extensive reworking and expansion of the unique facility suggests that the aircraft carrier mockup is now intended to represent a layout similar to the U.S. Navy's Ford class. This likely coincides with the configuration of China's next, more advanced, homegrown carrier design.

A satellite photo of the land-based aircraft carrier mockup in Wuhan, taken on 6 April, shows the changes that have taken place, including a much greater overall flight-deck width, and the island superstructure redesigned and moved further aft, as on the Ford class. So significant is the extra width, meanwhile, that the edges of the deck now extend out to or even over the adjacent road.

The primary role of the aircraft carrier mockup is to evaluate different aircraft designs for potential use at sea, including how they will fit and be moved around on the carrier's deck. It should also be noted that the structure sits atop a building, something not immediately obvious from satellite imagery.



On the deck in the latest image are mockups of various aircraft, covered with tarpaulins or other material, making it hard to identify them definitively. At least one of the mockups is a J-15 Flanker series carrier-based fighter, while another looks to be a J-35 carrier-based stealth fighter, and another a KJ-600 carrier-based airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft. Mockups of this kind are frequently used in carrier development work in China, both on land and at sea.

1945: CHINA'S NEW CH-7 STEALTH DRONE

China's CH-7 drone, developed by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, is a stealthy, long-range unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) designed to rival the U.S. Navy's X-47B and Air Force's RQ-180. Known as Caihong-7 or Rainbow-7, this flying-wing drone prioritizes stealth, long-range surveillance, and strike capabilities, ideally suited for contested Indo-Pacific environments. It can monitor combat zones, jam enemy signals, and guide precision strikes from friendly bombers or fighters. The CH-7's ability to operate in high-tech warfare scenarios gives China a significant strategic tool, capable of threatening enemy naval and air assets across the vast Pacific theater.

China's CH-7, a low-observable and long-range navy drone, is, at first blush, rather like a comparable platform in the U.S. Navy: the X-47B. Both aircraft are single-engine, flying-wing designs.



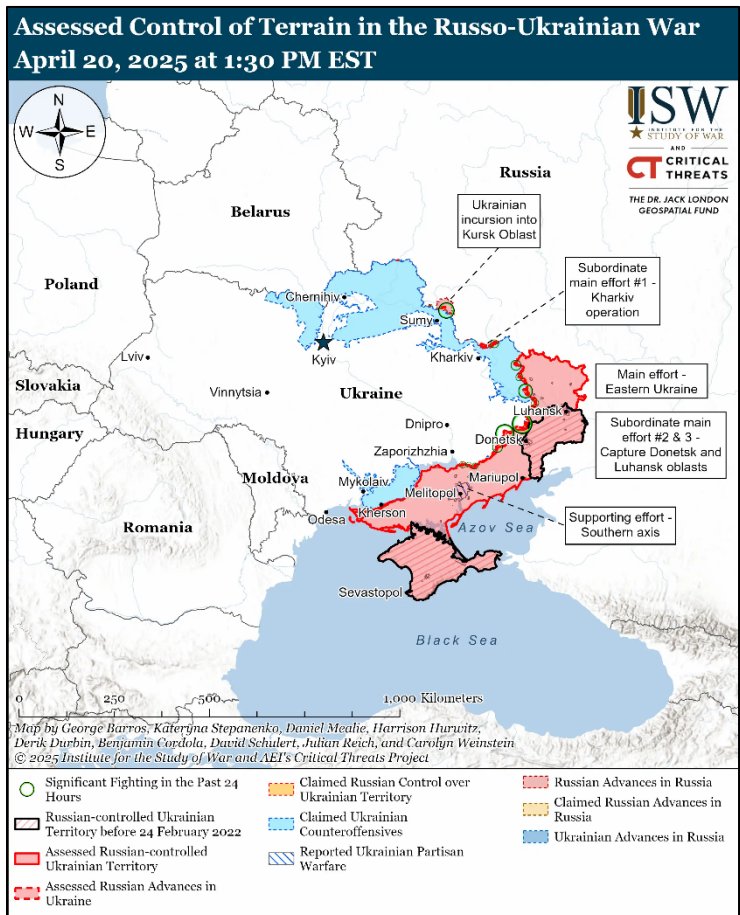
The China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, a state-owned firm, developed the UAV. The CH-7 stands for Caihong-7 or Rainbow-7. Although many of the exact details about the CH-7 are unknown thanks to a lack of publicly available information, a few details can be surmised from the existent information—most notably what the Chinese have said themselves about the CH-7.

EUCOM

ISW: RUSSIA-UKRAINE UPDATE

Zelensky reported that Russian forces did not conduct long-range strikes against Ukraine on the night of April 19 and during the day on April 20 and proposed a temporary moratorium on long-range strikes against civilian infrastructure. Zelensky stated that Ukraine and Russia achieved a long-range strikes ceasefire between April 19-20, further stating that such a ceasefire is the easiest to extend. Zelensky proposed a temporary ceasefire on long-range missiles and drone strikes against civilian infrastructure for a minimum of 30 days, with the opportunity to extend the ceasefire beyond 30 days. Russia and Ukraine have repeatedly accused each other of violating the temporary energy infrastructure strikes ceasefire, but Putin and other senior Russian officials have constantly rejected the March 13 joint U.S.-Ukrainian 30-day full ceasefire proposal over the last five weeks.

Ukrainian officials continue to highlight Russia's systematic persecution of religious communities throughout occupied Ukraine, including against Christians. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported on April 20 that Russian forces have killed or tortured 67 Ukrainian priests, pastors, and monks and destroyed 640 religious sites, most of which are Christian sites, since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.



THEDEFENSEPOST: UKRAINE SAYS BALLISTIC, CRUISE MISSILE PRODUCTION INCREASED 'EIGHTFOLD'

Ukraine has announced a dramatic eightfold increase in its domestic production of cruise and ballistic missiles — an expansion that significantly bolsters its ability to confront Russian aggression. While no specific figures were disclosed, Minister of Strategic Industries Herman Smetanin revealed that “many new models” were introduced in 2023, marking a major leap in Ukraine’s defense manufacturing capabilities.

He also pointed out how far the country has come since 2022, when it could only produce a single type of cruise missile — the R-360 Neptune. The groundwork for this rapid expansion was officially laid in late 2024, when Ukraine reported manufacturing over 100 Neptunes already with a month remaining in the year. President Volodymyr Zelensky has since set an ambitious target to produce 3,000 cruise missiles in 2025 to replenish stockpiles and strengthen deterrence.



Ukraine’s push to scale up its domestic arms production comes amid shifting geopolitical dynamics — notably a change in U.S. foreign policy. As Kyiv’s primary defense backer, Washington has played a critical role in sustaining the war effort. However, this support showed signs of strain earlier this year when U.S. President Donald Trump briefly suspended military aid and intelligence sharing.

CENTCOM

ISW: CENTCOM UPDATE

Anti-regime Iranian media reported that Iran proposed a three-stage nuclear deal proposal that capped Iranian uranium enrichment but preserved Iranian nuclear infrastructure, such as advanced centrifuges. The reported plan does not include a timeline for the phases of the deal. This proposal would likely preserve Iran’s ability to rapidly rebuild its nuclear program. Former UN weapons inspector David Albright warned on April 18 that Iran could make enough weapons-grade uranium in 25 days, even with a small low-enriched uranium (LEU) stock, if it maintains all its current centrifuges.

An unspecified senior Iranian official told Reuters on April 18 that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei will refuse any deal that requires Iran to dismantle centrifuges, halt uranium enrichment, and reduce its stockpile below Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) levels.

U.S. CENTCOM has conducted at least 112 airstrikes in at least 33 sorties targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled Hudaydah Governorate on the Red Sea coast, since the start of its airstrike campaign on March 15. Hudaydah Governorate is significant because it hosts Hudaydah Port, Yemen’s largest port, as well as Ras Issa and al Salif ports. The coastal radar systems in Hudaydah allow the Houthis to track maritime traffic through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, facilitating their drone and missile attacks on international shipping. CENTCOM airstrikes in Hudaydah have reportedly targeted and killed mid-level commanders who coordinate logistics in Houthi-controlled areas and Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Reported Iranian Proposal for Three-Stage Iran-US Nuclear Agreement

As Reported by Iran International on April 17, 2025



	Reported Iranian Commitments	Reported American Commitments
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halt uranium enrichment to levels above 3.67% temporarily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give Iran access to frozen assets Allow Iran to sell its oil
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End high-level uranium enrichment Restore all International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections Implement the Additional Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent Europe from triggering snapback of UN sanctions on Iran Lift some Iran sanctions
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move highly-enriched uranium stockpile to a third country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US Congress must approve the Comprehensive Iran-US Agreement Lift all primary and secondary sanctions on Iran

APNEWS: ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER SAYS TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN GAZA, LEBANON, AND SYRIA INDEFINITELY

Israel's defense minister said on 16 April, that troops will remain in so-called security zones in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Syria indefinitely, remarks that could further complicate talks with HAMAS over a ceasefire and hostage release.

Israeli forces have taken over more than half of Gaza in a renewed campaign to pressure HAMAS militants to release hostages after Israel ended their ceasefire last month. Israel has also refused to withdraw from some areas in Lebanon following a ceasefire with the Hezbollah militant group last year, and it seized a buffer zone in southern Syria after rebels overthrew Syrian President Bashar Assad in December.

"Unlike in the past, the (Israeli military) is not evacuating areas that have been cleared and seized," Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. The military "will remain in the security zones as a buffer between the enemy and (Israeli) communities in any temporary or permanent situation in Gaza — as in Lebanon and Syria."



FINANCIALTIMES: U.S. SAYS CHINESE FIRM IS HELPING HOUTHIS TARGET AMERICAN WARSHIPS

A Chinese satellite company linked to the country's military is supplying Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen with imagery to target U.S. warships and international vessels in the Red Sea, according to American officials.

The Trump administration has repeatedly warned Beijing that Chang Guang Satellite Technology Co Ltd, a commercial group with ties to the People's Liberation Army, is providing the Houthis with the intelligence, according to the U.S. officials.

"The United States has raised our concerns privately numerous times to the Chinese government on Chang Guang Satellite Technology Co Ltd's role in supporting the Houthis in order to get Beijing to take action," said a senior state department official.



The official added that China had "ignored" the concerns. He also told the Financial Times that CGSTL's actions and "Beijing's tacit support" despite Washington's warnings was "yet another example of China's empty claims to support peace."

AFRICOM

AFRICANEWS: AT LEAST 300 PEOPLE KILLED DURING THE POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE



Mozambique's security forces carried out a brutal, three-month crackdown on protesters after the country's election last year, a leading international rights group said on 16 April, citing local activists who alleged that more than 300 people were killed and more than 3,000 were injured in the unrest.

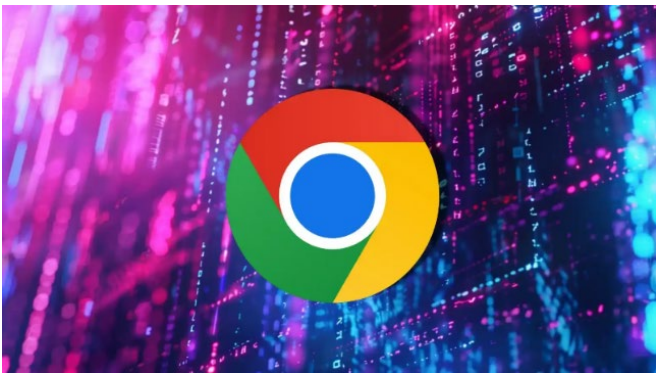
In its new report, Amnesty International called on Mozambican authorities to investigate the killings and all rights violations in the wake of the election, and to bring law enforcement officials responsible to justice.

Thousands of Mozambicans took part in waves of protests in the weeks after the Oct. 9 presidential and parliamentary election, where Daniel Chapo of the ruling Frelimo party was declared the winner amid allegations of rigging and election fraud raised by his challengers and international observers.

The protests were in support of Venancio Mondlane, who ran as an independent candidate but was supported by the opposition Podemos party.

CYBERCOM

BLEEPINGCOMPUTER: HELLCAT RANSOMWARE UPDATED IT'S ARSENAL TO ATTACK GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION, AND ENERGY SECTORS



contains callbacks to an API for sending information collected from the browser.

A set of 57 Chrome extensions with 6,000,000 users have been discovered with very risky capabilities, such as monitoring browsing behavior, accessing cookies for domains, and potentially executing remote scripts. These extensions are 'hidden,' meaning they don't show up on Chrome Web Store searches, nor do search engines index them, and can only be installed if the user has the direct URL. Typically, such extensions are private software like internal company tools or add-ons still under development. Still, threat actors might be using them to evade detection while aggressively pushing them through ads and malicious sites. The extensions were discovered by Secure Annex researcher John Tuckner, who uncovered the first 35 after examining what he claims is a suspicious extension named 'Fire Shield Extension Protection.' The extension is heavily obfuscated and

CYBERSECURITYNEWS: MICROSOFT VULNERABILITIES HIT RECORD HIGH WITH 1,300+ REPORTED IN 2024

Microsoft's security landscape faced unprecedented challenges in 2024, with vulnerability reports soaring to an all-time high of 1,360 identified security flaws across the company's product ecosystem. This alarming figure represents the highest number recorded since systematic tracking began, highlighting the expanding attack surface that continues to challenge even the most well-resourced technology providers.



The dramatic increase reflects both the growing complexity of Microsoft's product offerings and the increasingly sophisticated methods employed by threat actors seeking to exploit potential security gaps. BeyondTrust researchers identified particularly concerning trends across multiple Microsoft products, with Windows Server bearing the heaviest burden at 684 documented vulnerabilities, 43 of which were classified as critical. These severe flaws potentially enable remote code execution with minimal user interaction, creating prime conditions for widespread system compromise.

Meanwhile, standard Windows systems weren't far behind, accumulating 587 vulnerabilities with 33 reaching critical status. Perhaps most alarming was Microsoft Edge's security posture, which deteriorated significantly with a 17% increase in vulnerabilities totaling 292, including a startling 800% jump in critical flaws. The security implications extend far beyond statistics, as each vulnerability represents a potential entry point for sophisticated cyber campaigns targeting both enterprise and government infrastructure.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



AFMCA A2: World Threat Brief CAO: 16 April 2024

<https://usaf.dps.mil/sites/22244/SitePages/Command-Intel-Threat-Brief.aspx>



China Aerospace Studies Institute: CASI supports the Secretary of the Air Force, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior leaders of the Air and Space Forces. CASI provides expert research and analysis supporting decision and policy makers in the Department of Defense and across the U.S. government.

<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/CASI/>



Research and Development Corporation (RAND): RAND is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that provides leaders with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions.

<https://www.rand.org/>



Institute for the Study of War: The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) is a non-partisan, non-profit, public policy research organization. ISW advances an informed understanding of military affairs through reliable research, trusted analysis, and innovative education.

<https://www.understandingwar.org/>



Stockholm International Peace Research Institute: SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

<https://www.sipri.org/>



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<https://worldview.stratfor.com/>



Defense Intelligence Agency Military Power Publications: an intelligence agency and combat support agency of the United States Department of Defense, specializing in defense and military intelligence.

<https://www.dia.mil/Military-Power-Publications/>



Perun: An Australian covering the military industrial complex and national military investment strategy.

<https://www.youtube.com/@PerunAU>



Task & Purpose: Chris Cappy is a former US Army infantryman and Iraq Veteran. I cover geopolitics, history, weapon systems and all things military related — I do this from a veteran's perspective.

<https://www.youtube.com/@Taskandpurpose>



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<https://www.csis.org/>



FRONTLINE examines the rise of Xi Jinping, his vision for China and the global implications. Correspondent Martin Smith traces the defining moments for President Xi, how he's exercising power and his impact on China, and relations with the U.S. and the world.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/china-the-u-s-the-rise-of-xi-jinping/>