

Prodigy Intelligence Threat Centre

14 Sept 2020

Prepared for: Paladin Security

INTSUM 002/2020

Executive Summary

- COVID-19 Update.
- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Anti-Fascist (Antifa) movements enter their 15th week of unrest in US cities since the murder of George Floyd on 25 May. BLM and related social activist groups plan a "siege" of the Whitehouse and federal buildings in Washington DC on 17 Sept.
- Microsoft states that Russia, China and Iran are attempting to hack both US presidential campaigns.
- Tensions between India and China remain high due to the border dispute in Ladakh.
- Iran conducted a military exercise called "Zolfaghar-99" in the Straits of Hormuz.

Analysis

COVID-19 - Global Overview

Reports: COVID-19 has reportedly infected over 28 million people in 188 countries and killed over 916,000 people. While many countries have slowed infection rates, a few, notably the United States, Brazil, India, and Russia, struggle to contain new clusters from spreading. A lack of testing, contact tracing, uniform social policies, and contradictory government messaging appear to hinder efforts to control the virus in these countries. Among the four worst-hit countries, India is seeing an alarming rise of infections being reported.

Assessment: These countries will likely continue to see uncontrolled outbreaks in new regions without a strong reversal in one or more of these factors, even as infections in early hit regions begin to decline. If India does not control the outbreak, it will likely surpass the United States in total infected by the end of October.

Reports: In the United States, COVID-19 has infected over 6 million and killed over 193,000 people. After a recent spike in cases throughout the South and Midwest in early September, North Dakota remains the only State fighting to control an outbreak while most States remain at risk of an epidemic. Some schools across the US that reopened in September are now reporting campus-wide quarantines after multiple students and faculty tested positive. Dr. Anthony Fauci now predicts that the US's situation will not normalize

until late 2021 despite his earlier prediction of a proven vaccine candidate by the end of the year.

Assessment: Dr. Fauci's predictions for the near term will likely prove right as a successful vaccine will still require billions of units to be manufactured and a priority-based methodology for distribution, likely taking months to inoculate the US population completely.

COVID-19 - Canada's Case Update

For national figures, you can find COVID-19 case updates [here](#).

For Alberta, you can find the COVID-19 case updates [here](#). On this page, scroll down to the data table for Alberta and information by health zone.

For British Columbia, you can find the COVID-19 case updates [here](#).

Reports: In Canada, COVID-19 has infected over 136,000 and killed over 9,100 people. Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia see a significant increase in cases in the past week. Provincial governments are moving to reclose specific venues in an attempt to slow the spread. With schools reopened in most provinces, small numbers of children are testing positive for COVID-19. According to CDC reports, early data shows approximately 1.4% of infected children require hospitalization compared with 2.5% for patients between the ages 18-49. Most health professionals remain in support of opening schools despite the public's concerns. Another week remains before the impact of Labour Day weekend is fully realized.

Assessment: Despite official precautions heading into the Labour Day weekend, a related increase in infections will likely be seen after the 14-day incubation window. While children appear to handle COVID-19 symptoms better than adults, it is very likely a small percentage of students will suffer severe infections as long as schools remain open.

COVID-19- Global Vaccine Development Tracker

For Global figures, you can find COVID-19 Vaccine Development updates [here](#).

Reports: More than 100 teams of scientists worldwide are developing and testing a vaccine against the virus SARS-CoV-2 as quickly as possible. Many groups are working on a COVID-19 vaccine using technologies that have been in development for decades but have never yet been approved for wide-scale human use, such as DNA, RNA, and viral-vector vaccines. Many of those candidates are considered very promising, garnering vast amounts of funding and billions of pre-orders from some countries.

Assessment: An effective vaccine against COVID-19 is everyone's hope for a real return to everyday life. Even in countries with a devastating number of deaths from COVID-19, there is nowhere close to a level of "herd immunity" within the population, preventing the

disease from spreading exponentially if the world returns to normal social interaction levels. Most vaccine candidates who make it to preclinical testing never make it to market (about 94 percent fail, 2013). But in this case, with so many different vaccines under development, there may still end up being multiple vaccines for the coronavirus, possibly using different strategies. The "best" vaccine, in the end, may not be best for everybody. But the "second best" might be, for those that don't respond. Therefore, have multiple backup vaccines or vaccines that can be used in parallel worldwide is a prudent approach.

COVID-19 Operations Sitrep

Chicago: University of Illinois Hospital Nurses have started a 7-day strike as their 3-year contract expired 7 Sept The hospital and union could not agree on the nurses' demands for more staffing and safety measures.

Houston: Seven schools report confirmed COVID-19 cases after just one week of reopening. The city is allowing some public events to resume at 25% capacity and mandatory masks for attendees.

Pittsburgh: The state is relaxing requirements on childcare providers to relieve pressure on parents returning to work. All providers must register with the government and have background checks before opening.

Salt Lake City: CDC reports 12 x children from 3 x separate child-care facilities were infected with COVID-19 and spread it to their families.

Seattle: The city has announced they will keep 4 x COVID-19 testing sites open as long as air quality does not decrease further. They will also open a Healthy Air Center south of downtown for the homeless.

St Petersburg: Florida bars will be allowed to reopen at 50% capacity this Monday. Pinellas County school district is implementing a "surgical quarantine," isolating a single class at a local high school after a student who tested positive likely exposed several students.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Reports: The Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Anti-Fascist (Antifa) movements enter their 15th week of unrest in US cities since the murder of George Floyd on 25 May. Last week, the federal government responded to local governments' inadequate response to contain the violence by deputizing state police, thereby forcing anyone they arrest to bypass local and state district attorneys and face federal prosecution. This strategy, along with targeted arrests, is already showing signs of diminishing violence at protests by removing the more radical elements at these demonstrations.

BLM and related social activist groups are organizing a "siege" of the Whitehouse and federal buildings in Washington DC on 17 Sept Organizers are calling for non-violent civil disobedience "occupation" and is significant as it begins on the 9th anniversary of the Occupy Wall Street movement. They plan to protest for fifty days till the election on 3 Nov. In response, the Whitehouse has erected fortifications and increased security. BLM has decided to move forward with this initiative at a time when polling suggests they've lost potentially all their public support gains since shortly after the death of George Floyd.

Assessment: BLM's siege of the Whitehouse will likely attract the largest gathering of supporters and demonstrators from around the country since the beginning of the movement. Tensions on both sides of the siege will be high, and both police and BLM organizers will likely be keeping a close watch to ensure signs of violence are quickly dealt with as the public's support can quickly turn against which side is seen as the instigators.

Operations BLM Sitrep

Chicago: Last week, a BLM protest in front of the Ridge Mall to abolish police, prisons, and ICE drew out only 4 x protestors. Authorities were prepared for a much larger turnout. A handful of counter-protesters in support of the law turned out in slightly larger numbers. The protest ended without incident.

Houston: An audible number of boos from the crowd at the NFL Kansas vs Houston season opener game in Kansas City during a moment of silence for unity has invited condemnation from several officials. It appears that using professional sports as an activist platform does not resonate with a growing number of fans.

Las Vegas: A vigil for a Las Vegas man shot by police 1 Jun was held on Wednesday 9 Sept His family and about fifty supporters came out peaceably and sang songs and spoke on police violence. BLM marches were held without incident in the prior week.

Phoenix: The city council has denied separate proposals for both BLM and pro-police murals to be painted on city streets.

Pittsburgh: A viral video of BLM activists harassing diners at a downtown restaurant has garnered much attention. The activists are seen mocking diners while stealing food and drinks from their tables. President Trump has condemned their actions, calling them "anarchists, not protestors," and "thugs." He also blamed democrats.

Seattle: Federal prosecutors have charged a 24-year old Everett man with the possession of a stolen police rifle, allegedly taken during a riot downtown on 30 Mar. Seattle police are seeking five other men connected to police gun thefts during the riot.

St. Petersburg: A Pizza Hut delivery driver was videotaped, pushing his car through protesters blocking his way. The police say there isn't much they can do without a formal complaint, and Pizza Hut has yet to comment.

China

Reports: Reports indicate that China, among other countries, is attempting to interfere in the November US elections via a dual hacking and subversive social media campaign. Microsoft reported that state actors attempted to hack both the Trump and Biden campaigns this week and that these attempts had been ongoing for over a year.

Assessment: Though reports indicate that the Russian Military Intelligence unit "Fancy Bear" is the primary state actor in the attempted hacking of the Trump and Biden campaigns, China has likely committed numerous resources to this action. They have done so in a likely attempt to understand which geopolitical direction the US will head after the November elections. Doing so could also potentially obtain compromising information on the next US president.

Reports: China and India have agreed to de-escalate the situation along the "green line" in Ladakh. Chinese and Indian Foreign ministers met this week in Moscow to discuss the situation. They stated that troops along the border must cease provocative actions such as firing weapons and moving away from the border. The meeting took place after reports of soldiers firing their guns into the air. China and India have different views of where the border is located, escalating the issue. Additionally, recent reports indicate that Chinese elite military forces conducted a "parachute training exercise" in the region.

Assessment: Tensions are likely to remain high along the "green line" in Ladakh in the following weeks as soldiers stay in close proximity to each other. Despite this, it is unlikely that either country currently wishes to have an open conflict as the Indian economy has suffered dramatically from COVID-19. The Indian government cannot provide sufficient military resources to the Ladakh border should an open conflict break out. China's economy is currently beginning to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the strong military presence in the COVID-19 vaccine research and development has shifted significant resources of the Chinese military. However, China continues to deploy military assets to the region, causing an increased level of concern with the Indian government.

Reports: China continues to develop and test its COVID-19 vaccine. It is also making pledges to countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America to provide loans for the purchase of its vaccine. With four vaccine candidates in the final stage of testing, China is leading the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. China has approved two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use to date for use by soldiers and state-owned companies.

Assessment: A Chinese developed and mass-produced COVID-19 vaccine is likely 4 to 8 months away. This, though, has not stopped China from using the vaccine's prospect to strengthen ties with countries and areas that it views with vital interest. China is likely

utilizing the pandemic to increase support for its strategic goals around the globe. The adverse effects of the two emergency use vaccines will likely be noted in China, delaying their mass production and distribution.

Reports: Following reports of Chinese spying at US universities, approximately 1000 Chinese graduate students and researchers have had their US Visas revoked and most returned to China. The US State Department stated that this was only a "small subset" of the US's Chinese student population (approximately 0.27% of Chinese students in the US). China called the revocation of the visas "Political persecution and racial discrimination" and stated that they have the right to "further respond."

Assessment: China will likely respond by revoking the visas of a similar number of Americans in China. This will likely only further increase tensions between China and the US at a time of rising tensions and global military building between the two superpowers.

Iran

Reports: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Iran's enriched uranium stockpile had reached 2,105kg (4,640lb). It comes after Iran gave IAEA inspectors access to one of two suspected former nuclear sites. This represents a stockpile that is ten times the allowed size under the 2015 Nuclear deal. Further, this comes a month after an Iranian nuclear facility in Natanz's city had a localized explosion that Iran stated was due to "sabotage."

Assessment: The Iranian stockpile of enriched uranium is likely far more significant than what has been reported, given that the IAEA has not been able to assess all requested locations. After the US withdrew from the Iran Nuclear Deal, Iran likely began the re-development of its Nuclear Weapons Program. This increase in enriched uranium is a direct result of that.

Reports: An Iranian naval exercise was conducted this week beginning on 10 Sept and running until 12 Sept in the Straits of Hormuz to prepare Iranian forces to counter any "foreign threats and any possible invasion," the commander of the maneuver, Admiral Habibollah Sardari, stated. The exercise is called "Zolfaghar-99". Iranian reports indicated that the US Military had removed drones from the area to allow for the exercise. Iran and its military forces conduct regular training exercises in the Straits of Hormuz and the Arabian Gulf with little to no notice to US and western militaries.

Assessment: It is unlikely that the US military has removed drones from the area, which is an area of significant importance to US interests in the area. Further, this exercise is likely being conducted in part to test the response of the new US 5th Fleet Commander.

Reports: Polls closed on 11 Sept 2020 for a delayed run-off parliamentary election. The election is being held after a February run-off election for ten seats. The February election led to the election of numerous conservatives to the Majlis or Iranian parliament.

Assessment: The election will not change the Majlis' political structure, given the limited number of seats in the run-off election. The run-off election outcome will show which way voters are likely to vote in the upcoming 2021 Presidential election and could be worrisome for incumbent Rouhani a reformist, given the large number of seats held by conservatives. Low election turnout will also be troubling for reformists.

Reports: Reports indicate that Iran, among other countries, is attempting to interfere in the November US elections via a dual hacking and subversive social media campaign. Microsoft reported that state actors had tried to hack both the Trump and Biden campaigns this week. These attempts had also been ongoing for over a year.

Assessment: The involvement of Iranian hackers within the context of hacking political accounts for the November elections is likely done in a support role to Russian "Fancy Bear" hackers as well as Chinese hackers. This is due to the numerous resources that China and Russia can commit to this operation compared to Iran. Further, it is unlikely that Iran will be able to garner the intelligence they seek from this operation.

Approved for Release by:

Eric West
Senior VP of Strategic Analysis, Prodigy Intelligence

Distribution:

Paladin Executive Management Group
Paladin Employee List
Prodigy Employee List
Client List