

## ENVIRONMENT SCAN – 22 FEB 2016

### EXTERNAL

#### CHINA

Col C Madhwal, VSM

**South China Sea Dispute: US Attacks China 'Militarisation':** US Secretary of State John Kerry says Washington is seriously concerned about increased Chinese militarisation in the contested South China Sea. He was responding to reports Beijing has deployed surface-to-air missiles on a disputed island in the region. A spokesman for Mr Kerry said satellite images appeared to confirm China had deployed anti-aircraft missiles on Woody or Yongxing Island in the Paracels.

China dismissed the reports as "hype", but said it had the right under international law to defend itself. He defended "the limited and necessary self-defence facilities" on islands inhabited by Chinese personnel as "consistent with the right for self-preservation and self-protection.... under the international law".

The island is claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam and the presence of missiles would significantly increase tensions. China has been carrying out extensive land reclamation work in the region, which it says is legal and for civilian purposes. But the work has angered other countries which also claim the territory, and there is growing concern about the implications of the area becoming militarised.

The South China Sea dispute has been a topic of debate at a meeting of South East Asian regional leaders in California. US President Barack Obama said the members had discussed the need for "tangible steps" to reduce tensions.

From listening posts to jet fighter deployments and now surface-to-air missiles, China's expanding facilities in the Paracel Islands are a signal of long-term plans to strengthen its military reach across the disputed South China Sea.

Diplomats and security experts in contact with Chinese military strategists say Beijing's moves to arm and expand its long-established holdings in the Paracels will likely be replicated on its man-made islands in the more contentious Spratly archipelago, some 500 kms (300 miles) further south.

Eventually, both disputed island groups are expected be used for jet fighter operations and constant surveillance, including anti-submarine patrols, while also housing significant civilian populations in a bid to buttress China's sovereign claims. Crucially, that would give Beijing the reach to try to enforce any effective air defense zone in the South China Sea, similar to the zone it created over the East China Sea in late 2013.

Ian Storey, a South China Sea expert at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, said he believed similar weapons could be deployed to China's holdings in the Spratlys within a year or two. "This would enable China to back up its warnings with real capabilities," he said.

Bonnie Glaser, a military analyst at the Centre for Security and International Studies in Washington, said the Paracels build-up was a likely precursor to similar military deployments on China's recent reclamations in the Spratlys.

While Chinese officials might use on-going U.S. operations in the South China Sea as justification, "there is a plan that has been in place for quite some time", Glaser said.

The HQ-9 missile batteries, guided by radar tracking systems, have a range of 200 km (125 miles) and are the most significant defensive weapon China has yet placed on the Paracels, regional military attaches say. The move could complicate surveillance patrols carried out routinely by U.S. and Japanese aircraft as well as flights by U.S. B-52 long-range bombers, operations China objected to last November. It could also challenge operations by Vietnam's expanding fleet of Russian-built SU-30 jet fighters. China's expansion of the Paracels, which it has occupied since forcing the navy of the then South Vietnam off the islands in 1974, pre-dates its moves to begin large-scale reclamations on seven reefs in the Spratlys three years ago.

It landed fully-armed jet fighters on an expanded airstrip on Woody Island in November, and reinforced hangars have been completed, regional diplomats said. Coast guard and fishing facilities have also been expanded, along with fuel storage tanks and housing for more than 1,000 civilians in what was declared "Sansha City" in 2012, Chinese analysts say.

Radar coverage and other electronic surveillance equipment has also been improved, and analysts expect the Paracels to play a key part in protecting China's nuclear armed submarine fleet on Hainan Island, 200 km to the north.

Speaking privately, Vietnamese officials say it is now far more difficult for their fishing fleets and coast guard to get close to the Paracels as they try to assert their own sovereign claims.

A similar build-up in the Spratlys would give China its first permanent military presence deep in the maritime heart of Southeast Asia, military attaches say. China claims most of the South China Sea and while Vietnam and Taiwan also claim both archipelagoes in their entirety, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei also claim part of the Spratlys. The waterway carries some \$5 trillion in seaborne trade each year.

Chinese officials have repeatedly stressed the civilian nature of the Spratlys expansion, including lighthouses, search and rescue bases and environment research stations. Three runways have recently been completed and China last month announced the first successful test landings of civilian airliners on the new 3,000-metre airstrip at Fiery Cross reef. Chinese analysts say the first military flights from the Spratlys could start within months.

Wu Shicun, the head of China's National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said lessons learnt from the Paracels expansion could be transferred to the Spratlys, particularly to manage water supplies and waste. "There is no real dispute in the Paracels...so the development on the Paracels has been much faster and governance has also been more complete," he said.

Yanmei Xie, a Beijing-based security analyst with the International Crisis Group think-tank, said China would seek to exploit dual-use facilities, such as radars and runways, on the Spratlys but would be cautious about openly deploying military assets. "The Spratly Islands are more complicated because they involve every claimant," she said. "It can be more costly to China diplomatically and geopolitically."

## **ASEAN**

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

### **ASEAN, EU Held Informal Talks on Aviation. SINGAPORE, 15 February 2016**

ASEAN Transport Ministers had an informal meeting with European Union (EU) Commissioner for Transport, Ms. Violeta Bulc, on 14 Feb in Singapore on the sidelines of the Singapore Airshow.

**Both sides exchanged views and updates on transport developments, including the European Commission's recently-adopted Aviation Strategy for Europe.**

The ASEAN Ministers noted that the **European Commission has proposed to negotiate EU-level comprehensive aviation agreements with key partners including ASEAN**, and reiterated ASEAN's unanimous interest in swiftly concluding such an agreement which would be **the first region-to-region agreement of its kind.**

### **ASEAN, UN Continue to Combat Violence Against Children. JAKARTA, 19**

February 2016 – The courtesy call of Ms. Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children with H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community was held on 18 Feb during the 12th Meeting of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) Meeting at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

The meeting acknowledged the achievements made by ACWC in the adoption of the **ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children (RPA on EVAC) and ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (RPA on EVAW).** The Meeting highlighted the two studies being prepared for the United Nations, namely protection of children from bullying and cyber-bullying; and a global study on children deprived of liberty. Both sides also discussed the launch of the publication to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the UN Study on Violence against Children scheduled for late 2016 in New York.

## **WEST ASIA**

Brig Ranjit Singh

### **IRAQ**

**Coalition Air Strikes Destroy ISIS Money Storage Facilities.** It is reported that coalition air strikes have destroyed ISIS money storage facilities in Iraq and Syria destroying of millions of dollars, earned through sale of oil, looting and extortion.

**Iraqi Forces Liberate Areas East of Ramadi from ISIS.** The Iraqi joint forces liberated Hamediyah area East of Ramadi from ISIS, killing dozens of their elements. The operation was supported by Iraqi Air Force causing large number of casualties. The security forces are further progressing operations towards Fallujah.

**Military Operations Continue in Fallujah against ISIS.** Iraqi security forces advanced in to Karmat east of Fallujah, killing dozens of ISIS elements.

**ISIS Begins Campaign of Mass Arrests in Fallujah.** ISIS is carrying out mass arrests in Fallujah on the back of mass uprising of the tribals against ISIS.

**32 ISIS Elements Killed in Coalition Air Strikes North-East of Nineveh Province destroying vital ISIS HQ and weapon facility.**

**ISIS Trades in Human Organs.** Residents in Mosul are forced to sell their organs mainly kidneys for \$ 3000 to feed their families.

**Comments.** Post Liberation of Ramadi, the Iraqi security forces are progressing operations to capture areas around Ramadi from ISIS, progressing operations towards Fallujah. The operation launched to liberate Fallujah continues to progress slowly.

The coalition air strikes have been able to destroy money storage facilities of ISIS in Iraq and Syria destroying millions of dollars, causing financial crunch to the organization.

## **SYRIA**

**Russian Backed Offensive to Besiege Aleppo.** Syrian Govt forces continue their offensive in Aleppo backed by Russian air strikes. The offensive has cut off supply lines linking the city to Turkey border. The offensive is also aimed to link their territory with Kurdish rebels held areas.

**FSA Sets New Terms for Ceasefire.** FSA has declared that they agree to the possibility of a temporary truce if Govt forces and allies respect several conditions viz respect ceasefire, sieges to several areas be lifted and UN aid delivery be permitted across the country. The talks were planned in Geneva on Saturday, however the Russian air strikes continued on the rebel positions in Aleppo. Russia has said it would continue to support the Govt forces and UN peace talks have been postponed.

**UN Resolution against Turkey.** Russia had moved a resolution in UNSC against immediate halt of cross border shelling by Turkish Army. Russian resolution stated to cease any action by Turkey that undermines the sovereignty of Syria. The resolution was rejected by the western powers.

**Comments.** The Govt forces supported by Russian air strikes are focusing on capturing the strategic town of Aleppo from FSA. The major offensive launched has cutting off supply routes to the city from Turkey. The offensive is also aimed at achieving connectivity to the areas held by Kurdish rebels to the east.

UN sponsored peace talks in Geneva scheduled on 20 Feb have failed, due to continuing offensive in Aleppo by the Govt forces and Russian air strikes. FSA has agreed to temporary ceasefire with the conditions that Govt forces respect the ceasefire, lift siege from various areas and permit delivery of UN aid across the country.

## **YEMEN**

**Al Qaeda Seize Control of Another Town in South.** Al Qaeda has seized control of southern town of Ahwar after taking control of Mukalla and Zinjibar towns earlier.

Govt forces seize control of town Al Misrakh overlooking besieged town of Taiz.

**Comments.** The influence of Al Qaeda and ISIS is steadily growing in Yemen. These groups have been taking advantage of the fighting between Govt forces and Houthi rebels.

## **RUSSIA**

Col Anadi Dhaundiyal

### **Syria**

**President Erdogan- Turkey has Right to Conduct Ops in Syria, Elsewhere to Protect itself from Terrorists.** Turkey has every right to conduct operations in Syria and the places where terror organizations are nested with regards to the struggle against the threats that Turkey faces.

**Syrian President Bashar Assad.** If Saudi Arabia and Turkey send their troops to Syria, the Damascus authorities will treat them as terrorists, Syrian President Bashar Assad has said. "If this happens, we shall treat them as terrorists. We defend our country. Nobody has the right to interfere in Syria – neither from a political, nor from a military point of view. This would be a violation of international law, and for us, as well as for citizens of Syria, the only possibility is to defend our motherland," Assad told El Pais newspaper.

**Comments.** Posturing by both the leaders is critical, as they have conflicting interests.

### **Syrian Peace Talks.**

- (a) 10-12 Feb 16. Saudi discuss with Turkey on deployment of troops in Syria. As Rebels Lose, Saudis Begin Talk of Invasion so does the USA.
- (b) Feb 13, 2016 - U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry says that more foreign troops could enter the conflict if the peace plan fails.
- (c) Russia: foreign ground troops would create 'long war' in Syria. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has, on 14 Feb 16, warned that sending more foreign ground troops into Syria will result in "a full-fledged, long war". He hit back at the US Secretary of State John Kerry, who has suggested more countries could enter the conflict if diplomatic efforts fail to reach a solution. The Russian PM has also said ongoing tensions between Russia and the West have plunged the world into "a new period of Cold War".
- (d) 17 Feb 16- Agreement in Minsk.
- (e) 21 Feb 16- Provisional agreement' reached on ceasefire in Syria.

**Comments.** Pressure tactics from Saudi on supposed invasion, which was difficult to believe.

**Russia - Syria.** Russia warns Assad on vow to retake all of Syria.

- (a) Russia's envoy to the UN on 19 Feb 16 has warned long-term ally President Bashar al-Assad over his vow to retake all of Syria, saying he faced dire consequences if he did not comply with Moscow over the peace process.

(b) Russia has invested very seriously in this crisis, politically, diplomatically and now also militarily," Vitaly Churkin told Kommersant daily, referring to an international agreement to cease hostilities sealed in Munich last week. Therefore we would like Assad also to respond to this," he said, adding that the Syrian leader's stance "is not in accord with the diplomatic efforts that Russia is making."

(c) At their meeting in Munich, the 17-nation group backing Syria's peace process agreed to work for a ceasefire, the lifting of starvation sieges and the resumption of talks, the ceasefire is now being worked out, discussed.

**Comments.** The Russians will ensure the Syrian toe their line.

**Agriculture.** Russian grain exports to Arab countries transiting through the United Arab Emirates (UAE) may go up from 500,000 metric tons to 2-3 million tons in the near future, Deputy Agriculture Minister Sergei Levin said Sunday.

**Comments.** Russia seeks to improve its exports, agriculture sector makes it possible with least lead time

## **JAPAN**

Col Anadi Dhaundiyal

**Radioactive Water Leak at Takahama Reactor.** A nuclear power station in Japan is leaking, this time the Takahama plant, about 380km west of Tokyo. The radioactive water leak comes amid a nationwide push to restart reactors after the catastrophic meltdown at Fukushima five years ago. The reactor would have been the fourth to come on after the shutdown. The push by the government and utility companies came amid protests across Japan against the continued reliance on nuclear energy, prompted by failures to get the Fukushima crisis under control. Kansai Electric Power says about 34 liters of radioactive water have escaped the plant's reactor No. 4.

**Comments.** Japanese reactors are not that reliable, even as Indian govt looks to operationalise the nuclear agreement.

**'Robot Farm'.** A Japanese company called Spread has been able to fully automate the growing of lettuce using hydroponics. The fully-automated farm in Japan can be used to grow vegetables anywhere on Earth with little human input, but it may not yet be a solution to solve hunger. Unlike other hydroponics operations, Spread's Vegetable Factory would only require human input for managing the operation and packaging the produce. It is possible to grow hydroponic tomatoes, strawberries, bell peppers, and many others."

**Comments.** Agriculture, worldwide, is becoming less labour intensive

## **UNITED STATES**

Gp Capt GD Sharma, VSM (Retd)

**Chinese Deployment of HQ- 9 Missiles on Woody Island and US Reaction.** Satellite imagery has confirmed deployment of two batteries of Surface to air missiles - HQ-9 missiles on the Woody Island. This island is apart of Paracel group of islands which are claimed by China as well as Taiwan and Vietnam. The missile has the reported range of 200nm and could impinge on freedom of navigation oflittoral and other states in South China Sea and airspace above it.

**US Response.** Like most nations, United States is against the militarization of the South China Sea. It is leading a campaign for maintaining the freedom of navigation and over flights in South China Sea. In past, to assert this point of view, U.S has been conducting air and naval operation in the vicinity of Islands claimed by China. China however, is not restrained and the current deployment of missile and aircraft on the woody island is a reaction to these missions and is meant to deter American foray in the area. But, despite the current development, it is expected that US would continue to demonstrate its freedom of Navigation and over flights in South China Sea. Considering the risk of escalation, China is not expected to respond with any offensive action but, the area has definitely become a conflict flash point.

Woody Islands are located north of South China Sea. International Air routes and sea lanes are not in its the vicinity of Paracel islands hence, no major change in general situation is expected in the area but, the environment could change when China deploys weapons on Spartley group of Islands as these lie astride the sea lanes and air routes in the South China Sea.

**Joint Patrols by US and Indian Navy in South China Sea.** A recent media report indicated that both United States and India have denied conduct of Joint naval patrols in South China Sea. The joint patrols seem to be a follow up to the Joint Vision Statement between PM Modi and President Barak Obama which called for safeguarding the maritime security and ensuring of freedom of Navigation. For India, the freedom of navigation in South China Sea is important but, it will draw negative reaction from China which has promised substantial investment in the Indian infrastructure sector. Moreover, unless India is restrained in any manner by China in the South China Sea, we should avoid joint patrols with the American Navy. In any case the Indian Ocean region should be our first priority for joint patrols.

## IRAN

Capt (IN) Ranjit Seth

**Syrian Peace Deal.** Syria agreed on Tuesday 19 Feb, to a ceasefire deal announced by the United States and Russia, but there were widespread doubts it could take effect by the weekend as hoped. The deal calls for a “cessation of hostilities” between forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and opposition groups that would take effect overnight Friday-Saturday in Damascus.

Iran was one of 17 countries invited to the first meeting of the task force the U.S. and Russia are leading, to forge a temporary truce in Syria’s civil war. The pursuit of peace in Syria may require the United States and Iran to break new ground in their increasingly comfortable diplomatic relationship, propelled by last year’s nuclear accord and their more recent prisoner swap.

The International Syria Support Group and its task force operate on the basis of consensus and all participants have an effective veto over the arrangements. The new task force discussed matters of great military importance: *where countries can and cannot strike in Syria, which groups they can and cannot target, and how they can identify and respond to transgressions.*

This is a move towards closer understanding though neither side wants to give it greater significance. It is well known that the US considers Iran the world’s leading state

sponsor of terrorism. And American officials have long insisted they will not cooperate militarily with an Iranian government.

***Russian Sale of Jets to Iran Violates Arms Ban.*** The US has stated that a proposed Russian sale of fighter jets to Iran would violate a UN arms embargo on Tehran. Officials stated that the signatories to the nuclear agreement with Iran "should be fully aware of these restrictions." Transferring the Sukhoi-30 jets, comparable to American F-15E fighter bombers, it is felt requires the UN Security Council's approval. The matter has come to the fore after reports emerged in Russia on Wednesday 17 Feb, that Iran is on the verge of signing a massive arms deal with Russia.

According to the reports the sale, which would exceed \$8 billion, would provide Iran with anti-ship missile systems, a fleet of new submarines, military helicopters, and advanced trainer aircraft for its air force. It is reported that a shipment of the Russian S-300 missile defence systems to Iran could be delivered this week.

The U.S. and its negotiating partners reached an understanding with Iran to phase out UN sanctions. However the nuclear deal kept the arms ban on Iran in place for up to another five years.

***Campaigning Begins for Iran's Parliamentary Elections.*** Iranians are preparing for crucial elections on February 26 for the national parliament, the Majlis. Over 6,200 candidates who have been approved to run, including 586 women, have began a one-week campaign for a seat in the country's 290-seat parliament. Over 12,000 hopefuls had initially registered for the election. The Guardian Council barred many prominent reformists from running in the election. By the time the Guardian Council had weeded out candidates, it had reduced 3000 "reformist" candidates to just 30, by one count; some electoral districts reportedly were left with just a single candidate standing. In the face of widespread complaints, the council reinstated some candidates, the outcome being that about 55 per cent of the original field are now eligible to run.

President Rouhani has urged Iranians to take part in the elections even though, "capable" and "deserving figures" have been disqualified from running. The exact numbers of candidates in the various camps is difficult to gauge, since they are spread out across hundreds of constituencies and many are relatively unknown politically. But many reformists are believed to have been disqualified from running during the candidate vetting process.

In the Iranian capital, Tehran, over 1000 candidates are competing for just 30 seats.

The parliamentary elections will be seen as a vote on Rouhani's moderate policies. It is reported that moderate and reformist parties and factions are negotiating deals not to run against each other, hoping that a single moderate or reformist has a better chance of winning in a two-way contest against any hardliner.

The president and his allies received a popularity boost following the July 14 landmark nuclear deal that curbs Iran's nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions. Analysts believe both political factions (reformists and conservatives) have learned that the nation's economy is the most significant issue. Both reformists and conservatives have focused on improving the economic situation of the country, which is still reeling

under the effects of years of international sanctions. According to government statistics, inflation stands at 13 percent and the unemployment rate in Iran is 10 percent.

On the same day as parliamentary elections, voting will also take place for Iran's 88-member clerical body known as the Assembly of Experts. The Assembly of Experts will one day pick a successor to 76-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Some 800 candidates registered for the assembly race – only 161 were approved.

## **AFRICA**

Brig Jai Singh Yadav, VSM

**Niger election: Voters choose president in tense polls. Voters in Niger are going to the polls under tight security in presidential and parliamentary elections.**

President Mahamadou Issoufou is hoping to secure a second term in the impoverished West African nation. His main rival, Hama Amadou, is [currently behind bars](#) accused of trafficking babies, a charge he strongly denies.

The run-up to the vote has been marred by accusations of repression and a row over identification documents.

The authorities have announced that roughly 1.5 million people without ID papers will be able to cast their ballots by having witnesses vouch for them, in a move that was condemned by opposition leaders.

Niger is rich in natural resources, including uranium and oil, but is one of the poorest countries on earth, **ranking last** in the [UN Human Development Index](#).

Security was tightened amid fears of jihadist attacks by groups based in neighbouring Nigeria, Mali and Libya.

Meanwhile, President Issoufou says his government foiled a coup plot in December.

A run-off will be held if no candidate secures an outright victory on Sunday.

**Niger is seen as an important ally of Western powers in the fight against militant Islamists in the fragile Sahara region.**

However, the country is far from stable. Corruption, food shortages and porous borders remain serious problems.

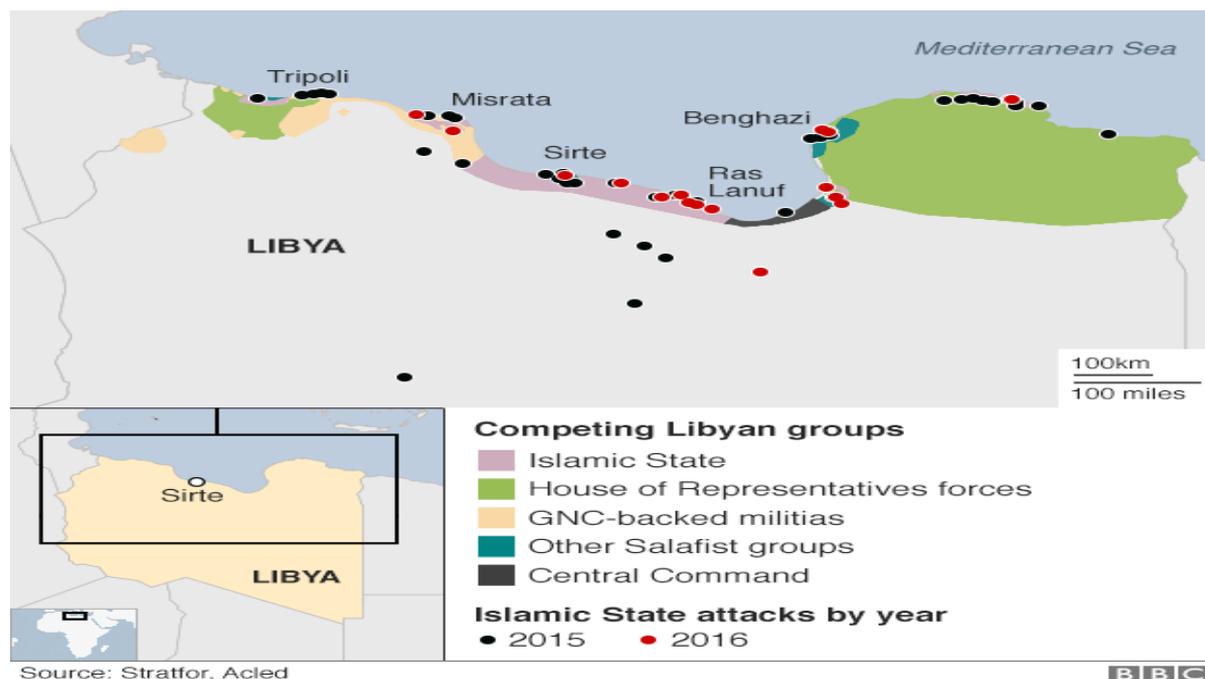
**Islamic State camp in Libya attacked by US planes.** US warplanes have carried out attacks on militants from the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Libya, killing at least 38 people.

The strikes hit an **IS camp in Sabratha, around 70km (43 miles) west of Tripoli**. US officials said it was "likely" that the strikes had killed **senior Tunisian** extremist, Nouredine Chouchane. Chouchane has been linked to two attacks that took place in Tunisia last year, including an attack that killed 30 Britons.

The group had been actively "planning attacks against US interests", Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said.

Mr Cook said the strikes were carried out "**with the knowledge of Libyan authorities**" but declined to confirm exactly who had been informed. Both manned and unmanned aircraft were involved in the raid, the Pentagon said.

**The IS group has been active in Libya for more than a year, and the US estimates it has up to 6,000 fighters there.**



## CYBER SECURITY

Air Cmde T Chand (Retd)

**US Cyber Attack Plan on Iran: Operation Nitro Zeus.** A few details of the US plan to carry out cyber attack on Iran if the nuclear negotiations failed have come to light. Messers Sanders and Mazzetti in The New York Times on 16 February, quoting an upcoming documentary film and interviews with military and intelligence officials involved in the effort have written that the plan had two parts. On a broader scale, the plan, code-named Nitro Zeus, was devised to disable Iran's air defenses, communications systems and crucial parts of its power grid. While the Pentagon was making those preparations, US intelligence agencies developed a separate, far more narrowly focused cyber plan to disable the Fordo nuclear enrichment site. The attack would have been a covert operation, which the president can authorize even in the absence of a continuing conflict. Proposed intelligence operation would have inserted a computer worm into the facility, effectively delaying or destroying the ability of Iranian centrifuges to enrich uranium at the site. It was intended as a follow-up to "Olympic Games," the code name of a cyber attack by the US and Israel that destroyed 1,000 centrifuges and temporarily disrupted production at Natanz enrichment site.

The US Cyber Command would have executed Nitro Zeus and the National Security Agency's Tailored Access Operations unit was responsible for penetrating Iranian networks. The Snowden documents have earlier revealed a series of technologies that can be used to insert programs remotely in a system disconnected from the Internet. The planned attack on Fordo appears to have been designed to be more blunt and obvious, a straightforward strike that would destroy the circuitry that powered the centrifuges and their controllers.

These revelations are likely to prompt security agencies of many countries to review their cyber security preparations. Countries such as US, Russia, China Israel and India are believed to have an offensive arm of cyber security too. India is in the process of setting up its Cyber command structure for operationalising its cyber security doctrine. This process needs hastening up.