



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Changes to the Global Strategic Environment

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Related Categories: Energy Security; Europe Military; Resource Security; India; Pakistan; Russia; South Africa

WATER SCARCITY WORSENS CONDITIONS IN KASHMIR

India's Kashmir region is experiencing an unusually long dry season, causing health concerns and crop failure. The region faced an 80% decline in precipitation in December, and no precipitation was recorded for 2024 as of mid-January. Farmers and the local population depend on regular snowfall to replenish nearby glaciers, which contribute to their water supply. The shortened winter period due to changing climate conditions has adversely affected multiple sectors, including hydroelectric power generation, tourism, and agriculture.

The deepening hydrological deficit exacerbates an already tense political *status quo*. Both India and Pakistan assert territorial claims over the region, while local populations – lacking a reliable central government upon which to depend – have tended to seek political support and security from a variety of extremist groups active in the region. (Associated Press, January 13, 2024)

TARGETING RUSSIA'S REVENUE GENERATOR

Last month, a bombing campaign by Ukraine targeted an oil depot in the Russian border region of Bryansk with the aim of undermining the military capabilities and revenue streams that the Kremlin has used to finance its war. Over the past two years, Russia has made billions of dollars from oil exports, despite heavy international sanctions – and funneled those revenues into perpetuating its war of aggression against its western neighbor. The Ukrainian attack caused an extensive fire covering approximately 10,700 square feet and producing massive clouds of black smoke. That, in turn, has caused environmental considerations of its own. Large-scale fires of this kind generate extreme air pollution and oil from spills associated with such strikes can seep into critical water supply, exacerbating conditions for populations located close to the line of contact in the current war between the two countries. (*New York Times*, January 19, 2024)

A NEW SOURCE FOR CRITICAL MINERALS

Billions of dollars-worth of critical rare earth minerals, essential elements for crafting permanent magnets to power things like wind turbines and electric vehicles, were discovered in two above-ground gypsum waste piles in South Africa. The fact that these piles are above ground makes mining costs exceptionally low and economically advantageous. The piles, which are controlled by UK-based firm "Rainbow Rare Earths," are also strategic, since the People's Republic of China currently maintains a *de facto* monopoly on the extraction and refining processes of rare earth minerals. As such, developments such as this are vital to establishing a new source for rare earths, and to challenging China's present day dominance over the critical mineral supply chain. (*Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 2024)

RISING SEA LEVELS THREATEN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS... AND U.S. BASING

Last month, a U.S. military base on Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands was forced to evacuate as a result of an unusual swell of waves, which severely damaged housing and left much of the facility entirely underwater. Roi-Namur houses a U.S. military missile range and testing facility, and 80 of the 120 military personnel resident there had to be evacuated due to the flooding.

The dislocation that took place at Roi-Namur is a portent of things to come. As storms push water inland, rising sea levels pose a significant threat to low-lying areas like the Marshall Islands, located just a few feet above sea level on average. During the recent COP28 Climate Summit, a representative from the Marshall Islands criticized the gathering's final communique, which focused on the need to shift away from the use of fossil fuels, underscoring the urgency of developing more viable solutions to the current crisis facing countries that are vulnerable to rising sea levels. (*New York Times*, January 24, 2024)