



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: April 22, 2026 - April 29, 2026

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Security Analysis Report: Mongolia (April 22, 2026 - April 29, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of April 22-29, 2026, Mongolia's security landscape was characterized by a heightened focus on cybersecurity threats and active diplomatic and military engagements. The nation continued to grapple with sophisticated cyber espionage campaigns, notably from Chinese and Russian state-sponsored actors, targeting government institutions. Concurrently, Mongolia engaged in significant military exercises with China and expanded defense cooperation with Russia, reflecting its complex geopolitical balancing act. Diplomatic efforts to strengthen ties with "third neighbors" like the European Union and the United States remained a priority, aiming to diversify partnerships and enhance economic resilience. While the threat of terrorism remained low, increasing domestic crime rates presented an internal security concern.

Key Security Developments

- **Persistent Cyber Espionage from China:** A newly identified Chinese Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) group, "GopherWhisper," has been actively targeting the Mongolian government since November 2023, utilizing various cloud tools such as Microsoft Outlook, Slack, Discord, and file.io for online espionage. This activity was publicly described on April 23, 2026. The group reportedly backdoored 12 systems within one Mongolian government institution, with evidence suggesting dozens more victims.
- **Russian State-Sponsored Cyber Activity:** In 2023 and 2024, the Russian threat actor APT29 (also known as Midnight Blizzard) exploited Mongolian government websites through "watering hole" attacks, infecting devices with surveillanceware. This malicious activity, which aimed to extract browser cookies, was reported on April 23, 2026, with Google notifying the Mongolian Cybersecurity Bureau.
- **National Cybersecurity Strategy Implementation:** Mongolia continues to implement its National Cyber Security Strategy, approved in January 2023, with phases extending through 2027. The strategy aims to improve the legal framework, protect critical information infrastructure, enhance human resource

capacities, and expand international and domestic cooperation to build resilience against cyberattacks. In 2024, Mongolia recorded 1.6 million cyberattacks and incidents, with 13,061 cybercrimes resulting in \$25.4 million in damages.

- **Joint Military Training with China ("Steppe Partner-2024"):** Chinese and Mongolian troops held an opening ceremony for the "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training in Mongolia's Dornogovi Province. The exercise, which commenced on a Sunday (likely late March or early April 2026) and is set to last until late May, focuses on combating illegal armed groups and involves joint planning, tactics research, and targeted training.
- **Upcoming Joint Military Exercises with China ("Steppe Partnership 2026"):** Mongolia and China are preparing for "Steppe Partnership 2026" joint military exercises, scheduled to take place on Chinese territory from May 26 to June 10, 2026. These exercises will include ground maneuvers with live fire.
- **Expanded Military Cooperation with Russia:** On April 15, 2026, Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, met with his Mongolian counterpart, Sunrev Ganbyamba, to announce a significant expansion of bilateral military cooperation. This includes increased military delegation exchanges, regular joint operational combat training, and deeper collaboration between military educational institutions, reflecting a "highest level" of relations under a comprehensive strategic partnership treaty.
- **Elevation of Military Standards:** On April 28, 2026, Prime Minister N. Uchral honored Mongolia's top military and law enforcement generals on Mongolian Generals' Day, stressing that modern defense leadership must integrate traditional military expertise with advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and innovation to meet future challenges.
- **Strengthening Ties with the European Union:** Prime Minister N. Uchral met with EU Ambassador Ina Marčiulionytė on April 28, 2026, to discuss bilateral cooperation, ongoing projects, and future investment opportunities. Mongolia reaffirmed its commitment to expanding ties with the European Union as a foreign policy priority. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Mongolia recently entered into force, consolidating and diversifying relations.
- **State Visit to Kazakhstan:** Mongolian President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa conducted a state visit to Kazakhstan from April 20-23, 2026. During the visit, Mongolia and Kazakhstan signed 18 cooperation documents across various fields, highlighting efforts to strengthen regional partnerships.
- **Rising Domestic Crime Rates:** According to the National Statistics Office, total recorded crimes in Mongolia increased by 6.3% in 2025, reaching 47,480 cases compared to 44,673 in 2024. Fraud was the most common crime, and street crime and violent crime saw an increase, particularly in larger cities.

- **Border Security and Residency Violations:** Mongolian authorities investigated 994 cases of administrative violations involving 2,340 foreign nationals from 34 different countries for residency violations during the first four months of 2026.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security posture during this period continues to be shaped by its unique landlocked position between two major powers, Russia and China, and its "third neighbor" foreign policy. The increased military cooperation and joint exercises with both China ("Steppe Partner-2024" and "Steppe Partnership 2026") and Russia (expanded combat training and delegation exchanges) underscore Mongolia's delicate balancing act. While these engagements enhance Mongolia's defense capabilities and interoperability, they also highlight its strategic dependence on its immediate neighbors. The ongoing discussions around the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, which would traverse Mongolian territory to transport Russian gas to China, present both potential economic benefits and significant geopolitical risks, including concerns about Russian extraterritorial influence and environmental impacts.

Simultaneously, Mongolia is actively diversifying its international partnerships to mitigate overreliance on Russia and China. The reaffirmation of expanding ties with the European Union and the entry into force of the EU-Mongolia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement are crucial steps in this "third neighbor" strategy. These diplomatic efforts aim to foster economic diversification, secure alternative supply chains, and strengthen democratic institutions. Similarly, the upcoming 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the United States in 2027 emphasizes the strategic partnership with the US, focusing on economic content and practical cooperation. Mongolia's state visit to Kazakhstan and the signing of 18 cooperation documents also demonstrate its commitment to strengthening regional stability and economic ties within Central Asia. These multi-vector diplomatic engagements are vital for Mongolia to maintain its sovereignty and navigate the complex geopolitical currents of the Indo-Pacific region.

Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense strategy during this period reflects a clear emphasis on modernization, interoperability, and the integration of advanced technologies. Prime Minister N. Uchral's call on April 28, 2026, for military leadership to combine traditional expertise with artificial intelligence and innovation signals a forward-looking approach to defense capability development. The expanded military cooperation with Russia, including regular joint operational combat training and

collaboration between military educational institutions, suggests a continued reliance on Russian military doctrine and equipment, while also enhancing the Mongolian Armed Forces' operational readiness.

The joint army training with China, "Steppe Partner-2024," in Dornogovi Province, focusing on combating illegal armed groups, indicates a practical approach to addressing immediate security threats and improving border defense capabilities. While specific defense spending trends for this precise period are not available, the ongoing nature of these exercises and the emphasis on modernization imply sustained investment in the defense sector. Mongolia's consistent participation in multinational peacekeeping operations, such as the upcoming Khaan Quest exercise (June 14-28, 2025, though the article is from 2025, it provides context for ongoing participation), also demonstrates its commitment to international security and provides valuable training and experience for its forces. The inclusion of cyber warfare aspects in exercises like Nomadic Elephant (May 29, 2025, for context) further highlights a growing awareness and effort to develop capabilities in this critical domain.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia is likely to continue its active engagement in military exercises, particularly with China ("Steppe Partnership 2026" from May 26 to June 10) and potentially with other "third neighbors" through multinational exercises like Khaan Quest. Diplomatic efforts to deepen economic and strategic partnerships with the EU and the US will intensify, especially as the EU-Mongolia PCA has recently entered into force. The focus on cybersecurity will remain paramount, with ongoing efforts to implement the National Cyber Security Strategy and address persistent threats from state-sponsored actors.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The primary risk area remains cybersecurity, given the documented sophisticated attacks from both Chinese and Russian APT groups. The potential for these attacks to disrupt critical infrastructure or compromise sensitive government data is high. Another flashpoint is the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline project. While economically driven, its development could increase Russia's leverage over Mongolia and potentially lead to security concerns regarding the protection of foreign assets on Mongolian soil. The delicate balance in relations with China and Russia, amidst their own geopolitical alignments, will require careful diplomatic navigation to avoid being drawn into larger power rivalries. Rising domestic crime rates, particularly in urban areas, also pose a persistent internal security challenge.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the frequency and sophistication of cyberattacks targeting Mongolian government and critical infrastructure, particularly from identified APT groups. Progress and any controversies surrounding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline project should be closely watched. The nature and scale of future military exercises with China and Russia, as well as with "third neighbors," will indicate shifts in Mongolia's defense alignment. Furthermore, the outcomes of ongoing diplomatic dialogues with the EU and the US, especially regarding economic cooperation and investment, will be crucial for assessing Mongolia's success in diversifying its partnerships. Domestic crime statistics and government responses to them will also be important for internal stability.

Strategic recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize strengthening its cyber defense capabilities through increased investment in technology, human resource training, and international collaboration on threat intelligence. Diversifying critical infrastructure away from over-reliance on single vendors or technologies could also enhance resilience. Regarding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline, Mongolia should negotiate robust agreements that safeguard its sovereignty, ensure environmental protection, and maximize economic benefits without compromising its strategic independence. Continued proactive engagement with "third neighbors" is essential to bolster economic resilience and provide diplomatic alternatives to its powerful immediate neighbors. Internally, the government should implement comprehensive strategies to address rising crime rates, focusing on law enforcement, judicial reforms, and socio-economic factors.

Structured Assessment

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