



# MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

## AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: April 23, 2026 - April 30, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

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## Executive Summary

During the period of April 23-30, 2026, Mongolia's security landscape was primarily marked by significant cybersecurity threats and continued diplomatic engagement with its "third neighbors" and regional partners. A China-aligned threat actor, "GopherWhisper," was identified on April 23, 2026, for targeting a Mongolian government entity, highlighting persistent cyber espionage risks. Concurrently, Mongolia actively pursued its multi-vector foreign policy, reaffirming comprehensive partnerships with Vietnam and engaging in high-level dialogues with the United Kingdom and the United States. Military cooperation remained a key aspect, with reports of Indian Army participation in the upcoming Khaan Quest exercise and the ongoing China-Mongolia joint training. These developments underscore Mongolia's strategic balancing act amidst regional geopolitical complexities and its efforts to enhance national security through both defensive capabilities and diversified international relations.

## Key Security Developments

- Cybersecurity Incident Targeting Government Entity

On April 23, 2026, a previously undocumented China-aligned threat actor, identified as "GopherWhisper" by ESET researchers, was reported to have targeted a Mongolian government entity. This group utilized popular communication platforms such as Discord, Slack, and Microsoft 365 Outlook for covert command-and-control operations and data exfiltration. The campaign has been active since at least November 2023 and was discovered in January 2025, with malware dubbed "LaxGopher" deployed on approximately a dozen systems. This incident highlights the ongoing and sophisticated cyber espionage threats faced by Mongolia, particularly from state-aligned actors, underscoring vulnerabilities in government networks.

- Reaffirmation of Mongolia-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership

On April 28, 2026, Mongolia's outgoing Ambassador to Vietnam, Jigjee Sereejav, met with Vietnam's Party General Secretary and State President Tô Lâm in Hanoi. The meeting reaffirmed the strong and effective comprehensive partnership between the two nations, which was officially established in 2024. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the progress in bilateral ties across various sectors, including trade, investment, defense, security, and cultural exchanges, emphasizing the importance of continued high-level contacts and people-to-people exchanges. This diplomatic

engagement reinforces Mongolia's strategy of diversifying its international partnerships, particularly within Southeast Asia.

- Indian Army Participation in Multinational Exercise Khaan Quest

On April 29, 2026, it was reported that a 40-member Indian Army contingent arrived in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to participate in the 22nd edition of the multinational military exercise Khaan Quest. While the article reporting this event was published in April 2026, it refers to the exercise taking place from June 14 to 28, 2025. This exercise, hosted annually by the Mongolian Defence Force, focuses on enhancing the participating countries' ability to jointly conduct military operations to support peace operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. The Indian Army's consistent participation underscores growing defense cooperation between India and Mongolia, aimed at improving interoperability in combat and counter-insurgency scenarios.

- China-Mongolia Joint Military Training "Steppe Partner-2024" Underway

An opening ceremony for a joint army training between Chinese and Mongolian troops, named "Steppe Partner-2024," was held on March 30, 2026, in Mongolia's Dornogovi Province. This first-ever battalion-sized joint training aims to deepen strategic mutual trust and pragmatic cooperation between the two militaries, focusing on exercises to combat illegal armed groups. The exercise is scheduled to last until late May 2026, involving Chinese armored forces and various specialized units. This collaboration signifies a strengthening of military ties with its immediate neighbor, China, addressing shared security concerns related to border stability and non-traditional threats.

- Second Annual UK-Mongolia Political Dialogue

On March 23, 2026, the second annual Political Dialogue under the Mongolia-UK Joint Co-operation Roadmap towards a Comprehensive Partnership took place in Ulaanbaatar. Deputy Foreign Minister Gombosuren Amartuvshin welcomed the UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Minister for the Indo-Pacific, Seema Malhotra MP. Both sides reaffirmed their strong partnership based on shared democratic values, respect for international law, and close economic relations, committing to upholding UN Charter principles and refraining from the use of force. The dialogue also explored increased cooperation in critical minerals and educational opportunities, reinforcing Mongolia's "third neighbor" policy.

- US-Mongolia 17th Annual Bilateral Consultations

The 17th Annual Bilateral Consultations between the United States and Mongolia were held on March 17, 2026, in Ulaanbaatar. The discussions reaffirmed the U.S.-Mongolia Strategic Third Neighbor Partnership, emphasizing shared interests in global peace, freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity. The dialogue also covered preparations for the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2027, with a focus on

enriching the partnership with economic content and promoting cooperation in areas like civil aviation, renewable energy, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence. This engagement highlights Mongolia's continued efforts to balance its geopolitical position by strengthening ties with Western partners.

- Defense Technology Transfer Agreement with Japan

An agreement on the transfer of defense equipment and technologies between Japan and Mongolia was signed on December 12, 2024, and was discussed and supported during a Mongolian government meeting on September 18 of the past year. This agreement is a significant step towards strengthening defense cooperation, facilitating the transfer of modern defense technology and equipment, and enhancing the capacity of the Mongolian Armed Forces. While signed outside the reporting period, its ongoing implementation and implications for Mongolia's defense modernization remain relevant.

- Ongoing Cybersecurity Challenges and Policy Initiatives

Mongolia continues to face persistent cyber intrusions, with approximately 60,000 to 90,000 cyberattacks occurring weekly. In 2024, the country recorded 1.6 million cyberattacks and incidents, resulting in \$25.4 million in damages. Notably, 70% of these attacks target government and affiliated agencies. While a National Cyber Security Strategy was approved in January 2023, and a dedicated national cybersecurity budget began on January 1, 2026, the severe shortage of skilled cybersecurity specialists remains a critical challenge.

- Russia's Pledge for Uninterrupted Fuel Supplies

On January 23, 2026, Russia pledged uninterrupted fuel supplies to Mongolia for the entirety of 2026. This commitment followed a high-level meeting in Moscow between Mongolia's Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, G. Damdinnyam, and Russian energy officials. The discussions aimed to resolve recent supply fluctuations and ensure a consistent flow of petroleum products, which is crucial for Mongolia's energy security and economic stability. This highlights Mongolia's continued reliance on Russia for energy resources and the importance of maintaining stable relations with its northern neighbor.

- Counter-terrorism Legal and Operational Framework

Mongolia has a detailed legal framework for counter-terrorism, including the 2019 Law on Counter-Terrorism and Proliferation. The country is a State Party to all main United Nations treaties on terrorism and joined the UN Counter-Terrorism Travel Program in 2021, establishing a Passenger Information Unit in 2023. While Mongolia has not experienced a direct terrorist attack, its counter-terrorism architecture is geared towards fostering inter-agency cooperation and facilitating foreign partnerships, including with organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and NATO.

- Military-Sports Partnership to Enhance National Capacity

On March 23, 2026, the Mongolian Weightlifting Association (MWA) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Border Military Special Branch 0208 and the Border Sports Committee in Ulaanbaatar. This partnership aims to elevate the sport of weightlifting through elite training, talent identification from military and civilian sectors, infrastructure modernization, and knowledge exchange. While primarily sports-focused, this initiative indirectly contributes to national capacity building and discipline within military-affiliated personnel.

## Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security developments during this period underscore its delicate and active "third neighbor" foreign policy, aimed at balancing the influence of its two powerful neighbors, China and Russia, while cultivating strategic partnerships with democratic nations like the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The reported cyberattack by a China-aligned group on a Mongolian government entity on April 23, 2026, highlights the persistent digital vulnerabilities and the complex security challenges arising from its proximity to major powers. This incident, alongside previous reports of Russian-supported cyber espionage, demonstrates that Mongolia is a significant target in the ongoing geopolitical cyber landscape.

The China-Mongolia joint military training in Dornogovi Province, which commenced with an opening ceremony on March 30, 2026, signifies a deepening of defense cooperation with Beijing. This exercise, focused on combating illegal armed groups, reflects shared security interests, particularly in border stability. Simultaneously, Mongolia's continued engagement with the United States through the 17th Annual Bilateral Consultations on March 17, 2026, and preparations for the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2027, reinforces its strategic "third neighbor" partnership. These discussions aim to enhance economic content and cooperation in critical sectors, providing a counterbalance to the influence of its immediate neighbors.

Furthermore, the UK-Mongolia Political Dialogue on March 23, 2026, and the reaffirmation of a comprehensive partnership with Vietnam on April 28, 2026, illustrate Mongolia's commitment to diversifying its diplomatic and security ties beyond its immediate region. The defense technology transfer agreement with Japan, though signed in late 2024, continues to be a crucial element in Mongolia's strategy to modernize its armed forces and strengthen military trust in the region. These multilateral engagements contribute to regional stability by promoting a more balanced power dynamic and fostering cooperation on shared values such as democracy and international law.

## Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense posture during this period reflects a strategy of selective modernization and enhanced interoperability through international cooperation, rather than significant unilateral force build-up. The China-Mongolia "Steppe Partner-2024" joint training in Dornogovi Province, which began on March 30, 2026, is a notable development. This battalion-sized exercise with China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) focuses on joint command, coordination, and support capabilities in combating illegal armed groups, indicating a practical approach to addressing non-traditional security threats and strengthening border security.

Concurrently, Mongolia continues to engage with its "third neighbors" in military exercises. The reported arrival of the Indian Army contingent for the Khaan Quest exercise (though the exercise itself was in June 2025) highlights Mongolia's commitment to multinational peacekeeping operations and improving interoperability with diverse forces. These exercises are crucial for sharing expertise in tactics, techniques, and procedures for joint operations, including cordon and search, patrolling, and counter-IED drills. The defense technology transfer agreement with Japan, signed in December 2024, is poised to significantly enhance the capabilities of the Mongolian Armed Forces by providing access to modern defense technology and equipment. This aligns with Mongolia's broader goal of modernizing its military without over-reliance on a single supplier.

While specific defense spending trends for the reporting week are not available, the ongoing efforts in international military cooperation and defense acquisitions suggest a sustained focus on improving the professionalism and technical capacity of the Mongolian Armed Forces. Mongolia's active participation in UN peacekeeping operations is a testament to its commitment to international security and provides valuable experience and training for its forces. The emphasis on practical, scenario-based training with both China and India, alongside technological upgrades from Japan, indicates a pragmatic approach to defense development, tailored to its geopolitical context and resource constraints.

## Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia will likely continue its active diplomatic engagements, particularly with its "third neighbors." The ongoing China-Mongolia "Steppe Partner-2024" joint training in Dornogovi Province is expected to conclude by late May 2026, potentially leading to further announcements on bilateral defense cooperation. The focus on cybersecurity will intensify following the reported "GopherWhisper" incident, with increased efforts to bolster government

network defenses and potentially new public-private partnerships in cybersecurity. Mongolia's energy security will remain stable due to Russia's pledge for uninterrupted fuel supplies for 2026.

**Critical flashpoints and risk areas:** The primary risk area remains cybersecurity, with state-sponsored attacks from China and Russia posing a continuous threat to government institutions and critical infrastructure. The shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals in Mongolia exacerbates this vulnerability. Geopolitically, while Mongolia successfully balances its relations, any significant escalation of tensions between China and Russia, or between either of them and Mongolia's "third neighbors," could place Ulaanbaatar in a precarious position. Border security, particularly concerning illegal armed groups, remains a consistent focus, as evidenced by the joint training with China.

**Indicators to monitor:** Key indicators to monitor include further reports on cyberattacks or breaches, particularly those targeting critical infrastructure or government data. Any new defense agreements or military exercises with major powers, beyond those already announced, would be significant. Diplomatic statements or visits related to Mongolia's "third neighbor" policy, especially concerning economic and security cooperation with the US, Japan, and the EU, will indicate the strength of these relationships. Domestically, progress in implementing the National Cyber Security Strategy and addressing the cybersecurity skills gap will be crucial.

**Strategic recommendations:** Mongolia should prioritize investing heavily in cybersecurity infrastructure and human capital development, potentially through international training programs and partnerships with advanced nations. Strengthening intelligence sharing mechanisms with trusted partners regarding cyber threats is also vital. Continuing to diversify diplomatic and economic ties through the "third neighbor" policy will enhance Mongolia's strategic autonomy and resilience against external pressures. Furthermore, maintaining transparent communication about its defense cooperation activities, particularly with China and Russia, can help manage regional perceptions and avoid misinterpretations.

## Structured Assessment

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