



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: April 24, 2026 - May 01, 2026

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Security Analysis Report: Mongolia (April 24, 2026 - May 01, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of April 24 to May 01, 2026, Mongolia continued its delicate balancing act in regional security and diplomatic engagement, marked by intensified cooperation with both its immediate neighbors, China and Russia, and its "third neighbor" partners, particularly the European Union and the United States. Key developments included ongoing joint military exercises with China and high-level military and energy discussions with Russia, underscoring enduring strategic ties. Concurrently, Mongolia significantly deepened its diplomatic and economic engagement with the European Union, while also participating in a multinational military competition hosted by the U.S. Pacific Army. Persistent cybersecurity threats from state-sponsored actors remain a critical concern, despite the implementation of a national cybersecurity strategy and a new dedicated budget.

Key Security Developments

- Diplomatic Deepening with the European Union

On April 24, 2026, news emerged regarding the upcoming entry into force of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the European Union and Mongolia on November 1, which will coincide with the establishment of an EU Delegation in Ulaanbaatar. This agreement aims to strengthen existing ties and diversify relations in areas of mutual interest. Further solidifying this relationship, Prime Minister N. Uchral met with EU Ambassador Ina Marčiulionytė on April 28, 2026, reaffirming Mongolia's commitment to expanding ties with the EU as a foreign policy priority and discussing future investment opportunities.

- EU Engagement Beyond the Capital

In a move to broaden public engagement, "European Day 2026" is scheduled to be held outside the capital for the first time, taking place in Darkhan-Uul Province. This initiative, highlighted on April 28, 2026, reflects efforts to extend EU-related activities into local communities.

- EU Partnership for Public Financial Management

On April 14, 2026, the Ministry of Finance of Mongolia, in partnership with the European Union, officially launched a new project to strengthen policy and performance-oriented public financial management systems. This project, set to run from 2026 to 2029, aims to advance reforms in budget planning, public spending, and fiscal risk management.

- Ongoing Joint Military Training with China

The "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training between Chinese and Mongolian troops, which commenced on a Sunday (likely April 26, 2026) in Mongolia's Dornogovi Province, continued throughout the reporting period. This exercise focuses on combating illegal armed groups and is scheduled to last until late May.

- Preparations for Future China-Mongolia Military Exercises

Preparations were underway for the "Steppe Partnership 2026" joint military exercises, scheduled to take place on Chinese territory from May 26 to June 10. These exercises will involve ground maneuvers with live fire, with China providing battalion-level troops and various weapons and vehicles.

- High-Level Military Diplomacy with Russia

The Chief of the General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General S. Ganbyamba, concluded an official visit to the Russian Federation from April 15-18, 2026. This visit, the first by a Mongolian Chief of Staff in sixteen years, involved extensive high-level negotiations regarding military and military-technical cooperation, and included briefings on advancements in the Russian defense industry.

- Russia-Mongolia Energy Cooperation

On April 20, 2026, Russia and Mongolia signed a supplemental protocol to their intergovernmental agreement, securing a regular supply of aviation fuel to Mongolia under preferential terms. This agreement is significant for preventing price increases related to unexpected conflicts and ensuring a stable supply of petroleum products.

- Regional Cooperation Talks with Russia

Russian Ambassador A.N. Yevsikov and Bulgan Province Governor D. Purev-Ochir held talks on April 23, 2026, to enhance regional cooperation, focusing on expanding economic ties, trade, and humanitarian projects between the province and Russian federal subjects.

- Participation in U.S. Army International Competition

Mongolia is participating in the USARPAC International Best Squad Competition, hosted by the U.S. Army Pacific on Oahu, Hawaii. The competition, designed to test readiness, teamwork, and interoperability, began with reception and staging from April 27-30, 2026, and the competition itself is scheduled from May 1-6, 2026.

- Enhanced Border Trade with China

Effective May 1, 2026, the Zamiin-Uud-Ereen border crossing cargo transport section will operate under extended hours, running daily from 08:00 to 21:00 until September 30, 2026. This joint decision by Mongolian and Chinese border authorities aims to seasonally adjust border management to handle growing freight demand and significantly increase trade flow.

- Persistent Cybersecurity Threats

A newly discovered Chinese advanced persistent threat (APT) group, "GopherWhisper," has been actively targeting the Mongolian government, using multiple cloud tools for online espionage. This was reported on April 23, 2026, with the group having been active since November 2023. Mongolian government data indicates that the overwhelming volume of malicious cyber activity in the country originates from Russia, with the U.S. a distant second. Mongolia recorded 1.6 million cyberattacks and incidents in 2024, resulting in \$25.4 million in damages.

- Focus on Modern Defense Leadership

On April 28, 2026, during the 82nd anniversary of the establishment of the General rank, Prime Minister N. Uchral emphasized that modern defense leadership must integrate traditional military expertise with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and innovation to meet future challenges.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security posture during this period reflects its ongoing commitment to a multi-vector foreign policy, carefully balancing relations with its two powerful neighbors, China and Russia, while actively cultivating its "third neighbor" partnerships. The intensified diplomatic and economic engagement with the European Union, highlighted by the upcoming entry into force of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the establishment of an EU Delegation in Ulaanbaatar, signifies Mongolia's strategic effort to diversify its international partnerships and reduce overreliance on any single power. The EU's focus on economic diversification, critical raw materials, and infrastructure development positions it as a crucial counterbalance in Mongolia's geopolitical strategy.

Simultaneously, Mongolia maintained robust security and economic ties with both China and Russia. The ongoing "Steppe Partner-2024" joint military training with China in Dornogovi Province and the preparations for "Steppe Partnership 2026" on Chinese territory demonstrate continued military cooperation and strategic trust with Beijing. Economically, the extended operating hours at the Zamiin-Uud-Ereen border crossing underscore the growing trade relationship with China. Concurrently, high-level military discussions and agreements on aviation fuel supply with Russia reinforce the long-standing strategic partnership with Moscow, particularly in defense

and energy sectors. These engagements highlight Mongolia's pragmatic approach to maintaining stability and securing its interests within its immediate neighborhood.

Mongolia's participation in the USARPAC International Best Squad Competition in Hawaii also illustrates its commitment to engaging with the United States and other regional partners. This engagement, while not directly confrontational to its immediate neighbors, serves to enhance interoperability and strengthen ties with countries that support its "third neighbor" policy. The persistent cybersecurity threats from both Chinese and Russian state-sponsored actors, as reported on April 23, 2026, underscore the complex security environment Mongolia navigates, where digital sovereignty is increasingly challenged by major regional powers. This intricate web of relationships and security challenges defines Mongolia's strategic landscape, as it seeks to maintain its neutrality and promote regional stability.

Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense posture during this period is characterized by a continued emphasis on international cooperation, modernization, and adaptation to contemporary threats. The ongoing "Steppe Partner-2024" joint army training with China in Dornogovi Province, focusing on combating illegal armed groups, highlights a practical approach to enhancing counter-terrorism and internal security capabilities through bilateral exercises. The upcoming "Steppe Partnership 2026" exercises in China further indicate a sustained commitment to military collaboration with the People's Liberation Army, aiming to deepen strategic trust and practical interaction.

The official visit of Lieutenant General S. Ganbyamba, Chief of the General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces, to Russia from April 15-18, 2026, signifies the enduring importance of military-technical cooperation with Moscow. Discussions during this visit included advancements in the Russian defense industry, suggesting Mongolia's interest in modernizing its forces, likely through Russian equipment and expertise. While no specific new defense acquisitions were reported within this timeframe, the emphasis by Prime Minister N. Uchral on April 28, 2026, for modern defense leadership to integrate advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, points towards a strategic vision for future capability development. Mongolia's participation in the USARPAC International Best Squad Competition in Hawaii also demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the skills and interoperability of its forces through engagement with Western partners, aligning with its broader "third neighbor" foreign policy.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia is expected to continue its proactive diplomatic and security engagements. The "Steppe Partner-2024" joint military exercise with China will conclude in late May, and preparations for "Steppe Partnership 2026" on Chinese territory will intensify ahead of its May 26 start. The extended operating hours at the Zamiin-Uud-Ereen border crossing, effective May 1, 2026, will likely lead to a noticeable increase in cross-border trade with China. Diplomatic efforts with the European Union will remain robust, with the "European Day 2026" event in Darkhan-Uul Province serving as a key public engagement initiative. Cybersecurity will remain a prominent concern, with the new national budget for cybersecurity in effect, but the challenge of addressing the shortage of skilled professionals and mitigating persistent state-sponsored threats will continue.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The most critical risk area for Mongolia remains its cybersecurity vulnerabilities. The documented activities of Chinese APT groups and the overwhelming volume of malicious cyber activity originating from Russia pose a continuous threat to government institutions and critical infrastructure. The severe shortage of skilled cybersecurity specialists exacerbates this risk, potentially leaving Mongolia susceptible to sophisticated attacks. Economically, while diversification efforts are underway, Mongolia's heavy reliance on China for exports and Russia for energy imports presents a potential flashpoint, as these dependencies could be leveraged by its powerful neighbors in times of geopolitical tension. The proposed Power of Siberia 2 natural gas pipeline, while not a direct development in this period, remains a long-term strategic concern due to potential increased dependence on Russia and environmental risks.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress and outcomes of the EU-Mongolia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, particularly in fostering economic diversification and critical raw material partnerships. The nature, scale, and frequency of future joint military exercises with both China and Russia will provide insights into the evolving security dynamics with its immediate neighbors. Developments in Mongolia's national cybersecurity capabilities, including recruitment and training initiatives, and the effectiveness of its incident response mechanisms, will be crucial. Any new statements or actions regarding the Power of Siberia 2 pipeline project will also be important to track. Furthermore, continued high-level diplomatic engagements with "third neighbors" such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea will indicate the strength of Mongolia's multi-vector foreign policy.

Strategic recommendations: To enhance its security posture, Mongolia should prioritize significant investment in its national cybersecurity infrastructure and human capital development. This includes aggressive training programs, international partnerships for knowledge transfer, and robust threat intelligence sharing to counter persistent state-sponsored cyber threats. Secondly, Mongolia must continue to

actively diversify its economic partnerships, particularly in critical raw materials and infrastructure development, to reduce its strategic vulnerabilities stemming from overreliance on China and Russia. Leveraging the EU's Global Gateway ambitions and strengthening ties with other "third neighbors" will be vital. Thirdly, maintaining a balanced and proactive diplomatic strategy is paramount, ensuring that its "third neighbor" policy effectively secures its national interests without antagonizing its powerful immediate neighbors. Finally, enhancing border management capabilities through technology and increased personnel will be crucial to address potential transnational security threats and regulate cross-border movements effectively.

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