



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: May 22, 2026 - May 29, 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.

Executive Summary

During the period of May 22-29, 2026, Mongolia actively engaged in a multi-vector foreign policy, balancing relations with its immediate neighbors and expanding partnerships with "third neighbors" such as the European Union, Japan, and the United States. Key security developments included participation in several international military exercises, notably "Steppe Partner 2026" with China and "Road-2026" with Japan, underscoring its commitment to regional stability and UN peacekeeping. Cybersecurity remained a critical concern, highlighted by recent reports of a China-aligned advanced persistent threat (APT) group targeting a Mongolian government entity. Diplomatic efforts focused on economic diversification and strengthening bilateral ties, with significant engagements with Kazakhstan and the EU. Overall, Mongolia's security posture is characterized by active international cooperation and a proactive approach to managing geopolitical influences, while addressing internal challenges like cybersecurity vulnerabilities and crime rates.

Key Security Developments

- Military Activities and Exercises with China

Mongolia and China are scheduled to conduct the "Steppe Partner 2026" joint military exercises in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of northern China from late May to early June 2026. These exercises, announced by Senior Colonel Jiang Bin of China's Ministry of National Defense, will focus on practicing joint operations to combat illegal armed formations. This marks the second iteration of these exercises, aiming to deepen friendship, mutual trust, and practical cooperation for regional peace and stability.

- Joint Engineering Exercises with Japan

The "Road-2026" joint exercises between the Armed Forces of Mongolia and the engineering unit of the Japan Self-Defense Forces commenced on May 18, 2026, in Hitachinaka, Ibaraki prefecture, Japan. This twelfth year of joint training involves 15 Mongolian soldiers focusing on enhancing engineering skills crucial for UN peacekeeping operations, including base construction and utility systems. Theoretical training will continue in Japan until June 19, with practical exercises planned for Mongolia in August.

- Participation in Turkish-led EFES-2026 Exercises

Mongolian servicemen participated in the multinational EFES-2026 exercises, which included live fire drills at the Doganbey training ground in Seferihisar, Turkey, from April 20 to May 21, 2026. Mongolia was among 50 countries involved in these significant military exercises, which showcased modern equipment and advanced operational management systems. The Commander of the Mongolian Ground Forces, Major General Tsogtjargal Chimeddorj, met with his Turkish counterpart to discuss bilateral cooperation.

- Mongolian Team Achieves Second Place in USARPAC Competition

Mongolian military personnel participated in the international USARPAC 2026 competitions, the Pacific Land Forces Team Readiness Challenge, held on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, which concluded on May 7, 2026. The Mongolian team demonstrated high levels of training and skills, securing second place in the challenge, which involved various physical and mental tests, including a 14-mile jungle march.

- Diplomatic Engagement with the European Union

Ambassadors and representatives from 21 EU Member States conducted an intensive program of high-level meetings in Ulaanbaatar on May 25 and 26, 2026. Discussions with Mongolian parliamentary and ministerial officials focused on deepening cooperation in democratic governance, green transition, sustainable development, and economic partnership. The "EU-Mongolia Trade Day 2026" was also held on May 26 to promote trade, export, and investment opportunities.

- Strengthening Ties with Kazakhstan

On May 28, 2026, Mongolian Deputy Prime Minister Nyamtaishiryn Nomtoibayar affirmed the practical execution of agreements with Kazakhstan during the 5th Eurasian Economic Forum in Astana. These agreements, initially signed on April 21, align with Mongolia's foreign policy goals of diversifying international trade and expanding export markets.

- Cybersecurity Attack on Government Entity

A report published on April 23, 2026, revealed that a previously undocumented China-aligned threat actor, named "GopherWhisper" by ESET researchers, targeted a Mongolian government entity. The group utilized popular communication platforms like Discord, Slack, and Microsoft 365 Outlook for covert command and control and data exfiltration, deploying custom malware dubbed "LaxGopher" on approximately a dozen systems. This cyber espionage activity has been ongoing since at least November 2023.

- Cybersecurity Capacity Gaps Identified

Despite a solid legal and regulatory framework for cybersecurity, including a new cybersecurity law approved in 2021 and a National Cyber Security Strategy (2022-2025 and 2026-2027 phases), Mongolia faces critically low compliance rates

and a shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals. The "Cybersecurity Capacity Review Mongolia 2024," released in February 2025, highlighted these challenges, indicating that translating the framework into practice remains a work in progress.

- Immigration and Border Cooperation with South Korea and China

On May 26, 2026, Mongolia and South Korea held discussions in Seoul regarding visa reforms and immigration cooperation, aiming to protect citizens' rights, improve travel conditions, and combat crimes like drug trafficking and cyber fraud. Separately, Mongolia and China strengthened border control and migration cooperation, including plans for joint training projects for border personnel, as discussed by Deputy Minister of Justice and Home Affairs D. Munkh-Erdene and China's Deputy Head of National Immigration Administration Qiu Baoli.

- UN Human Rights High Commissioner's Visit and Concerns

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk visited Mongolia on May 10, 2026, praising the country's progress, particularly its law protecting human rights defenders. However, he also highlighted persistent concerns over corruption, which a civil society representative identified as the "biggest bottleneck to the development of the country," urging stronger anti-corruption measures.

- Defense Technology Transfer Agreement with Japan

An agreement on the transfer of defense equipment and technologies between Japan and Mongolia, signed in December 2024, continues to be a significant aspect of their defense cooperation. This agreement facilitates joint projects aimed at promoting peace and stability and ensures strict control over technology transfer to third parties, bolstering Japan's defense industrial base and regional security.

- Rising Crime Rates

According to the National Statistics Office, overall recorded crimes in Mongolia increased by 6.3% in 2025 compared to 2024, reaching 47,480 crimes. Fraud accounted for a significant portion (16,906 cases), while street crime and violent crime have also seen an increase, particularly in larger cities and towns.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security developments during this period underscore its strategic "Third Neighbor" policy, aimed at diversifying its international partnerships and reducing over-reliance on its two powerful neighbors, Russia and China. The joint military exercises "Steppe Partner 2026" with China demonstrate a pragmatic engagement with Beijing on security matters, particularly in combating illegal armed groups, which aligns with shared border security interests. Simultaneously, the "Road-2026" exercises with Japan and participation in the Turkish-led EFES-2026 and USARPAC

competitions highlight Mongolia's commitment to multilateralism and UN peacekeeping operations, strengthening ties with democratic partners and enhancing its international standing.

The high-level diplomatic engagements with the European Union and Kazakhstan further illustrate Mongolia's efforts to broaden its economic and political horizons. The EU's focus on democratic governance, green transition, and sustainable development aligns with Mongolia's internal reform agenda and its desire for diversified investment. Similarly, the practical execution of agreements with Kazakhstan supports Mongolia's foreign policy of expanding trade and export markets beyond its immediate neighbors. These diplomatic overtures are crucial for Mongolia to maintain its sovereignty and economic independence in a region dominated by major powers.

However, the reported cybersecurity attack by a China-aligned APT group on a Mongolian government entity introduces a layer of complexity to its regional dynamics. While Mongolia seeks cooperation with China, this incident highlights the persistent threat of state-sponsored cyber espionage, potentially undermining trust and exposing sensitive information. This necessitates a robust cybersecurity defense, which Mongolia is actively trying to build despite identified capacity gaps. The ongoing "Third Neighbor" strategy, including strengthening relations with the United States, as evidenced by discussions in March 2026 on economic content and critical minerals cooperation, remains vital for balancing these intricate geopolitical pressures and ensuring Mongolia's strategic autonomy.

Military and Defense Analysis

Mongolia's military and defense posture during this period is characterized by a strong emphasis on international cooperation and capacity building, particularly for peacekeeping operations. The participation in "Steppe Partner 2026" with China indicates a focus on conventional and asymmetric threats, specifically combating illegal armed formations, which is a practical concern for border security. This exercise, being the second of its kind, suggests a developing interoperability and strategic trust with the Chinese People's Liberation Army in specific operational areas.

Concurrently, the "Road-2026" joint exercises with Japan, focusing on engineering and sapper forces for UN peacekeeping, demonstrate Mongolia's commitment to its role as a contributor to global stability. The twelfth year of this program highlights a sustained effort to develop specialized military engineering skills, which are crucial for modern peacekeeping missions. Mongolia's involvement in large-scale multinational exercises like EFES-2026 in Turkey and the USARPAC competitions in Hawaii further underscores its dedication to enhancing its forces' capabilities through exposure to diverse military doctrines, technologies, and operational environments. These

engagements contribute to improving the Mongolian Armed Forces' readiness, interoperability with international partners, and overall professionalization.

While specific details on defense spending trends or major defense acquisitions within this narrow reporting period are not explicitly available, the December 2024 defense technology transfer agreement with Japan signifies a strategic move towards modernizing its defense capabilities through partnerships. This agreement is likely to facilitate access to advanced defense equipment and technologies, contributing to the long-term modernization programs of the Mongolian Armed Forces. The consistent participation in international training and the pursuit of defense technology cooperation suggest a strategic approach to force posture development, focusing on specialized skills and interoperability rather than large-scale conventional arms buildup, aligning with its non-aligned, "Third Neighbor" foreign policy.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia is expected to continue its active engagement in multilateral military exercises, with the practical phase of "Road-2026" with Japan scheduled for August in Mongolia. The "Steppe Partner 2026" exercises with China will conclude in early June, and their outcomes will likely be assessed for future bilateral defense cooperation. Diplomatic efforts to diversify economic partnerships, particularly with the EU and Kazakhstan, will likely continue to yield further agreements and implementation plans. Mongolia's focus on improving its cybersecurity posture will remain a priority, especially in light of recent APT attacks, potentially leading to increased investment in training and infrastructure.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: A critical flashpoint remains the persistent vulnerability in Mongolia's cybersecurity infrastructure, as evidenced by the "GopherWhisper" APT attack. The low compliance rates with existing cybersecurity laws and the shortage of skilled professionals present a significant risk for further state-sponsored espionage or disruptive cyberattacks. While internal political stability was a concern in early 2026 due to a constitutional crisis, any resurgence of such issues could divert attention and resources from external security priorities. The rising crime rates, particularly in urban areas, also pose a domestic security challenge that requires ongoing attention.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress of Mongolia's National Cyber Security Strategy implementation, particularly improvements in compliance rates and the development of human resource capacity. Any new reports of cyber incidents targeting government or critical infrastructure would be a significant concern. Further diplomatic engagements and economic agreements with "third neighbors" will indicate the success of Mongolia's diversification strategy. The

nature and scale of future joint military exercises, especially with China and Russia, will provide insights into its evolving defense alignments. Domestically, monitoring crime statistics and any signs of political unrest or significant public dissatisfaction will be crucial.

Strategic recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize accelerating the implementation of its National Cyber Security Strategy, focusing on enhancing compliance, developing a skilled cybersecurity workforce, and investing in advanced threat detection and response capabilities. Strengthening international cooperation in cybersecurity, particularly with trusted "third neighbors," could provide valuable expertise and resources. Diplomatically, Mongolia should continue to leverage its "Third Neighbor" policy to secure economic diversification and technological assistance, thereby bolstering its strategic autonomy. Militarily, maintaining a balanced approach to defense cooperation, participating in both regional and international peacekeeping exercises, will be essential for enhancing capabilities and interoperability while avoiding over-reliance on any single power. Addressing internal governance issues, particularly corruption, as highlighted by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner, is also vital for long-term stability and national resilience.

Structured Assessment

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