



MONGOLIA SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: June 24, 2026 - July 01, 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 June 24 to July 01, 2026, Mongolia actively strengthened its international security and diplomatic ties, particularly through multilateral military exercises and new defense cooperation agreements. The nation hosted the significant Khaan Quest 2026 peacekeeping exercise, involving 18 countries, and formalized new defense partnerships with South Korea and Turkey, focusing on military training and modernization. Concurrently, Mongolia engaged in high-level diplomatic dialogues with the European Union, reaffirming its "Third Neighbor Policy" and commitment to shared values. Persistent cybersecurity threats, notably from China-linked and Russian state-backed advanced persistent threat (APT) groups, remain a critical concern, prompting new cooperation with the United States on telecommunications security. These developments underscore Mongolia's strategic balancing act between its immediate powerful neighbors and its broader international partnerships, aiming to enhance its defense capabilities and digital infrastructure while navigating a complex geopolitical landscape.

Key Security Developments

- Military Activities and Exercises: Khaan Quest 2026

The 23rd edition of the multilateral joint military exercise Khaan Quest 2026 is currently underway at the Five Hills Training Area in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from June 20 to July 3, 2026. Over 1,100 troops from 18 countries, including India, South Korea, Germany, and the United States, are participating in this significant peacekeeping operations training. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, communication, and coordinated responses in complex operational scenarios under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, with Indian Army troops rehearsing tactical drills such as checkpoint procedures, patrolling, cordon and search, and combat first aid. This exercise highlights Mongolia's commitment to international peace and security and its role as a host for multinational defense cooperation.

- Defense Policy and Strategic Shifts: South Korea Defense Cooperation

On June 24, 2026, the Cabinet of Mongolia formally reviewed and supported a draft "Agreement between the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the Republic of Korea on Defence Cooperation." This agreement, which will now proceed to parliamentary consultations, is designed to significantly expand the strategic defense partnership between the two nations. The framework will facilitate mutual

military visits, defense consultations at all command levels, specialized training for military personnel, and collaborative relations between military academies and research institutions, paving the way for regular joint military training exercises.

- Defense Policy and Strategic Shifts: Turkey Defense Agreements

Mongolia's Minister of Defense, Batlut Damba, held official talks with Turkish National Defense Minister Yaşar Güler during a visit to Turkey, culminating in the signing of three intergovernmental documents on June 24, 2026. These include a Protocol on Military Training Cooperation, an Agreement on Financial Cooperation in the Military Sector, and a Protocol on the Implementation of Financial Assistance. These agreements aim to elevate bilateral defense cooperation by expanding joint military education and training, personnel exchanges, capacity building, and equipment modernization, strengthening long-term defense ties and cooperation on regional and international security issues.

- Diplomatic Relations: Mongolia-EU Joint Committee Meeting

The 24th meeting of the Mongolia-European Union Joint Committee on Cooperation was held in Brussels on June 29, 2026. The meeting reaffirmed a partnership grounded in shared values such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and multilateralism. The EU reiterated its support for Mongolia's "Third Neighbor Policy" and commended its role in multilateral cooperation. Discussions covered expanding collaboration in infrastructure, renewable energy, trade, investment, education, and agriculture, with Mongolia also set to host the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) in Ulaanbaatar in 2026.

- Diplomatic Relations: Mongolia-EU Human Rights Dialogue

As part of the broader Mongolia-EU cooperation, a regular Human Rights Dialogue was conducted on June 24, 2026, in Brussels. Both sides exchanged views on recent developments related to human rights in their respective countries, underscoring the ongoing commitment to these shared values within their partnership.

- Cybersecurity: Mongolia-USA Telecommunications and Network Security Cooperation

A significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on June 24, 2026, in Washington D.C. between the Communications Regulatory Commission of Mongolia and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of the USA. This agreement marks a new stage in telecommunications cooperation, focusing on the exchange of experience in radio frequency spectrum management and regulation, development of broadband and digital infrastructure in remote areas, implementation of 5G and 6G technologies, and strengthening trust in suppliers to ensure network security.

- Diplomatic Relations: Continued Engagement with China

Mongolia maintained strong diplomatic and economic engagement with China. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Mongolia from June 13-15, 2026, and Mongolian Prime Minister Nyam-Osor Uchral met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on June 23, 2026, during the Summer Davos Forum in Dalian. Both sides reiterated their commitment to deepening economic ties, with bilateral trade expected to reach \$20 billion this year, and discussed cooperation in infrastructure, energy, and mineral resources. Mongolia reaffirmed its adherence to the "one-China principle".

- Diplomatic Relations: Engagement with Russia

On June 4, 2026, Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk met with a Mongolian delegation at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF 2026). Discussions focused on deepening trade and economic ties, including projects in energy, industry, agriculture, and customs regulation. Bilateral trade increased by 28.3% in the first quarter of 2026, highlighting sustained positive trends in Russian-Mongolian relations.

- Defense Policy and Strategic Shifts: Kyrgyzstan Military Cooperation

Mongolian Defense Minister Batlut Damba led a delegation on an official visit to Kyrgyzstan on June 25, 2026. During meetings with the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry's leadership, discussions centered on the current state and prospects of Kyrgyz-Mongolian military cooperation, including the exchange of experience between the armed forces of the two countries.

- Cybersecurity: Persistent APT Threats

Mongolia continues to face significant cybersecurity challenges. A previously undocumented China-aligned threat actor, named GopherWhisper, targeted a Mongolian government entity using popular communication platforms like Discord, Slack, and Microsoft 365 Outlook for covert communications and data theft. This group has been active since at least November 2023. Additionally, Russian state-backed hackers (APT29, also known as Midnight Blizzard) were found to have compromised Mongolian government websites between November 2023 and July 2024 to conduct "watering hole" attacks, infecting visitors' devices. These incidents highlight the ongoing cyber espionage targeting Mongolia's government infrastructure.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Mongolia's security developments during this period underscore its active pursuit of a "Third Neighbor Policy" to balance the influence of its powerful immediate neighbors, China and Russia, while strengthening ties with democratic partners. The hosting of Khaan Quest 2026 in Ulaanbaatar, involving 18 nations including the US and India,

demonstrates Mongolia's commitment to multilateralism and its role in regional peacekeeping operations. This exercise enhances interoperability with a diverse set of international partners, projecting Mongolia's soft power and strategic independence in the Indo-Pacific region.

The new defense cooperation agreements with South Korea and Turkey, signed on June 24, 2026, further diversify Mongolia's security partnerships beyond its traditional sphere of influence. These agreements, focusing on military training, capacity building, and potential equipment modernization, are crucial for enhancing the Mongolian Armed Forces' capabilities and reducing over-reliance on any single external power. Such engagements are vital for a landlocked country seeking to maintain sovereignty and strategic autonomy.

Simultaneously, Mongolia continues to navigate its complex relationships with China and Russia. High-level diplomatic exchanges in June 2026 with both Beijing and Moscow reaffirmed strong economic and political ties. Mongolia's commitment to the "one-China principle" and its deepening economic integration with China, including ambitious trade targets and infrastructure projects, highlight the economic realities of its geography. Similarly, growing trade and discussions on energy and transport with Russia, despite the broader international context of the Ukraine war, demonstrate the enduring importance of this relationship for Mongolia's energy security and transit routes. The persistent cybersecurity threats from both China-linked and Russian APT groups, however, introduce a layer of vulnerability, underscoring the delicate balance Mongolia must maintain in its digital and physical security posture.

Military and Defense Analysis

The Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) maintain a relatively modest active force of approximately 9,700 personnel, supported by a substantial reserve of 137,000. The defense budget for 2026 is estimated at around \$167 million. Despite these figures, Mongolia actively participates in international peacekeeping efforts, as evidenced by its hosting of Khaan Quest 2026, a multilateral exercise focused on UN Chapter VII mandates. This consistent engagement in peacekeeping operations demonstrates a strategic focus on specialized training and interoperability with international partners.

Recent defense policy shifts indicate a concerted effort towards modernization and capability development through diversified international cooperation. The draft defense cooperation agreement with South Korea, supported by the Cabinet on June 24, 2026, aims to enhance military visits, consultations, and joint training exercises, fostering closer ties between military academies and research institutions. Similarly, the agreements signed with Turkey on the same day, covering military training, financial cooperation, and financial assistance, are expected to bolster the MAF's

capabilities, support equipment modernization, and strengthen training and preparedness. These partnerships are crucial for upgrading the MAF's largely Soviet-legacy equipment and integrating modern defense practices.

While no specific defense acquisitions or arms deals were announced within this reporting period, the financial and training cooperation agreements with Turkey and South Korea lay the groundwork for future procurements and technological transfers. The emphasis on specialized training, such as Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) during Khaan Quest 2026, indicates a focus on practical skills essential for modern conflict and peacekeeping scenarios. Overall, Mongolia's defense strategy appears to prioritize enhancing its professional capabilities and diversifying its defense partnerships to maintain its strategic independence and contribute to regional stability.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Mongolia is expected to continue its robust diplomatic outreach, particularly within the framework of its "Third Neighbor Policy." The successful conclusion of Khaan Quest 2026 on July 3 will likely be followed by assessments and planning for future multinational exercises, reinforcing Mongolia's role in regional security cooperation. The newly initiated defense cooperation agreements with South Korea and Turkey will move into implementation phases, potentially involving initial military exchanges, expert consultations, and detailed planning for joint training programs. Further diplomatic engagements with the EU, following the June 29 Joint Committee meeting, may see progress on trade and investment initiatives, as well as preparations for the UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar. The cybersecurity cooperation with the US on 5G/6G technologies will likely lead to initial technical discussions and framework development.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The primary risk area for Mongolia remains its delicate geopolitical balancing act between China and Russia, especially given the ongoing cyber espionage activities attributed to both China-linked and Russian state-backed APT groups targeting Mongolian government entities. While diplomatic relations appear stable, any significant shifts in the broader Sino-Russian relationship or increased pressure from either power could strain Mongolia's foreign policy. Economically, Mongolia's reliance on Russia for petroleum imports and its transit routes through both Russia and China expose it to external vulnerabilities, as highlighted by past disruptions. Internally, the low compliance rates in cybersecurity and the shortage of skilled professionals represent a persistent vulnerability that could be exploited by malicious actors.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress of defense modernization programs stemming from the agreements with South Korea and Turkey, particularly any announcements of specific equipment acquisitions or joint ventures. Developments in Mongolia's digital infrastructure, especially the implementation of 5G/6G technologies and efforts to enhance network security through US cooperation, will be crucial. The frequency and nature of high-level diplomatic visits and economic agreements with "third neighbors" (US, EU, Japan, South Korea) versus its immediate neighbors (China, Russia) will indicate the success of its balancing strategy. Furthermore, monitoring reports on cybersecurity incidents and the effectiveness of Mongolia's national cybersecurity strategy will be vital to assess its resilience against persistent threats.

Strategic recommendations: Mongolia should prioritize accelerating the implementation of its cybersecurity strategy, focusing on improving compliance rates across government institutions and investing heavily in training and developing a skilled cybersecurity workforce. Diversifying its digital infrastructure, potentially exploring alternative fiber optic routes or satellite internet solutions beyond its single terrestrial cable, is critical to reduce vulnerability to disruptions and espionage. From a defense perspective, Mongolia should leverage its new cooperation agreements to rapidly modernize its military capabilities and enhance its capacity for independent defense, while continuing its active participation in UN peacekeeping missions to maintain its international standing and interoperability. Diplomatically, maintaining open and balanced dialogues with all major powers, while strategically deepening economic and security ties with "third neighbors," will be essential to safeguard its sovereignty and promote sustainable development.

Structured Assessment

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