

George Answers Your Questions: Russia's Vast Borders, US Intelligence on Drug Smuggling

by George Friedman - November 14, 2025

Russia's Issues Beyond Ukraine

Nov. 11, 2025

Question: Why do you conclude with the statement that Russia has neither the ability nor interest to act on both borders at the same time. I understand why it may not have the ability, but certainly it must have an interest, even if the capacity or bandwidth is lacking?

Response: The borders are very long and very far apart. In Napoleon's and Hitler's attacks, the Russians defeated them by falling far back, trading space for time, while creating a massive force to block and counterattack. They survived because all available force was massed on one front. Were Russia attacked simultaneously on widely dispersed fronts – Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, China – building massive forces on all fronts while falling back, regrouping and counterattacking would be impossible in terms of raising the force, deploying them and logistically supporting them. Of course, the chances of these borders being simultaneously attacked is as near zero as it can be. At the same time, Russia, because of its size, would have to have raised forces to deter any military aggression on all of these fronts, in the event that any one of the fronts became active. While simultaneous aggression against Russia is unlikely in the extreme, all fronts would have to be manned to contain an attack on one front.

Certainly, offensive operations on all fronts would be simultaneously impossible. So the standing Russian army, which has had the luxury of focusing primarily on the western, European front, would have to be vastly enlarged for multiple fronts. Put another way, Russia has been a vast country with significant threats from only one direction. Having threats on four long borders would be difficult. At this time there are hostilities only on the western front, and the likelihood of an attack on any of these other fronts is low due to other countries' lack of interest or capability to attack. But what is inconceivable today sometimes becomes obvious in the future. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union poses profound theoretical challenges in the long run on many fronts.

Question: You probably do not mean to say Sevastopol is in eastern Russia. It is in Crimea. Did you mean Vladivostok, which was historically part of Outer Mongolia until the latter half of the 19th century when it was seized by Russia?

Response: Obviously, I made a mistake and apologize. I remember I was actually planning to write Vladivostok while writing Sevastopol. When the comments started pouring in, I took an important step: trying to figure out who else to blame. Sadly, there was no one. My apologies.

George Answers Your Questions: The Legality of Boat Strikes

Nov. 8, 2025

Question: Some have claimed there was no evidence these were drug-transporting boats from Venezuela, but the reason they've not seen the evidence is because they can't be trusted with the evidence. These boats and these people have been tracked for months, via a lot of sources. They "knew" they were carrying drugs. Intelligence is about following trails. And if the American intelligence community wants to know something, don't you think they'll find it?

Response: Where there is intelligence, there is also counterintelligence. From local criminals to nations, there is always the possibility of evading or feeding false intelligence into the system. Given the significant financial resources of the cartels, and the great value involved, it is unlikely that they are unable to bring on board from various countries both experts in counterintelligence and technologists who are capable of misleading technical intelligence. So while U.S. intelligence is extremely capable, the financial resources of the cartels may give them the capability to blind intelligence or, even worse, feed false intelligence into the system in order to cause the United States to engage in dangerous and foolish activities. It must be assumed that the cartels, operating on their own terrain, could trigger serious missteps. I always think of Nicaragua and the way things evolved as an example. We can add into this that there are some major countries in the world with excellent intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities that would be delighted to lead the U.S. into actions that would in some way hurt the United States. So while I have no doubt of our intelligence capabilities, I also have no doubt that the cartels, operating on their home turf, have the resources to field counterintelligence operations. Nor do I doubt that there are major powers that would welcome a disastrous or at least embarrassing misstep by the United States in Venezuela. This is not a prediction, but simply recalling precedents.

Responses to Other Questions

Question: What are Israel's stated and unstated reasons for opposing the participation of Turkish troops in the international stabilization force being established in Gaza?

Response: Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country with substantial military power. Israel has had mixed relations with it and has at times charged it with having relations with and supporting organizations hostile to Israel and posing threats. Given this view, Israel does not see Turkey as a neutral force but one that will not control hostile forces. I would add that Palestine was under the Ottoman Empire, which was based on Turkish power. Turkey is an evolving power where some look back on the Ottoman period as in some ways the future of Turkey, and hence it might develop an interest in a Palestine that it could dominate. This second element is far less important to the Israeli calculus than the first, but it is in the back of Israeli minds. Essentially, they do not see Turkey as able to be a neutral force in Gaza.

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