



ML Strategies Update

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Africa Update

Leading the News

West Africa Ebola Outbreak

On February 11th, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced additional nominees for awards in the Fighting Ebola: A Grand Challenge for Development. A collaborative expert review identified 12 innovations to reinforce the response to the current and future Ebola outbreaks. Building off the initial set of solutions for health care worker safety announced in December, this second wave of award nominees included solutions for a broader range of gaps from improved health care worker tools, more rapidly deployable care settings, and fresh community education approaches critical for the final stages of the outbreak response, and cutting edge health information technology solutions to enhance the current response and provide a bridge toward longer-term recovery. The awardees were listed [here](#).

On February 12th, the World Bank noted, as part of its effort to help revive agriculture and avert hunger in Ebola-hit countries, up to \$15 million in emergency financing has been mobilized to provide 10,500 tons of maize and rice seed to over 200,000 farmers in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in time for the April planting season. The World Bank warned that one million people could go hungry if they do not have reliable access to food and if emergency measures are not taken immediately to safeguard crop and livestock production. The World Bank's initiative to promote food security in the Ebola zone was described [here](#).

On February 12th, U.S. President Barack Obama issued a statement on the departure of Ron Klain as the Administration's Ebola Response Coordinator. President Obama said he picked Klain to serve as Coordinator because he viewed him as an effective, dedicated, and tireless manager and leader. President Obama praised Coordinator Klain for marshaling the whole-of-government approach for tackling Ebola at the source in West Africa and fortifying preparedness in the U.S. Thanks to Coordinator Klain's efforts, President Obama said the response has now shifted toward getting to zero Ebola cases in West Africa. The President's full statement can be read [here](#).

On February 13th, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported the newly established Catastrophe Containment and Relief (CCR) Trust will provide grants for debt relief totaling \$100 million for Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, which have been the countries hardest hit by Ebola. The grants come in

addition to the \$130 million of assistance provided in September 2014, and a second round of new concessional loans amounting to about \$160 million to soon be considered by the Executive Board. A press release was issued [here](#).

On February 13th, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller delivered remarks at the University of Virginia on “Biosecurity in the Time of Ebola.” Under Secretary Gottemoeller discussed the goals of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and how the Ebola outbreak in West Africa has led the U.S. to make new, concrete commitments to advance national, regional, and global capacity to prevent, detect, and rapidly respond to biological threats. She also observed that without these investments, Ebola’s toll on West Africa could undermine political stability and the progress that has been made after decades of civil war. Under Secretary Gottemoeller’s speech was transcribed [here](#).

On February 13th, the Red Cross reported that parents in Guinea have taken their children out of schools in Conakry, less than a month after schools reopened, because of conspiracy theories that the Red Cross is spreading the Ebola virus on educational campuses. Meanwhile, the Red Cross responded that it has never entered schools and is not seeking to vaccinate Guinean children. The Red Cross’s role in Conakry has been limited to disinfecting homes and other places where sick Ebola victims have been and only with the permission of families and the community. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 13th, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Fall 2015 showcased an advanced protective suit for health care workers who treated Ebola patients. Designed by wedding dress designer Jill Andrews, in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and global health nonprofit Jhpiego, the protective gear recently received funding from USAID’s Fighting Ebola: A Grand Challenge for Development for testing and mass producing the design and deploying it to the field. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 16th, the Governments of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone announced they had set a target of reducing the number of Ebola cases in West Africa to zero within 60 days. However, the announcement comes as the number of new Ebola cases increased for the second consecutive week, with 144 new cases confirmed within the most recent reporting period. The new target for zero Ebola cases was announced [here](#).

On February 16th, the Audit Service of Sierra Leone submitted a report to Sierra Leone’s parliament on an audit conduct to determine how millions of U.S. dollars meant for fighting the Ebola epidemic was managed by the Government. The audit found massive irregularities in awarding contracts and mismanagement of more than \$30 million allocated for the purchase of ambulances, building of treatment centers, and payment of frontline Ebola workers. Many believe the report confirms the existence of corruption within the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, which was tasked with handling the funds. The report also unveils confusion related to the payment of Ebola workers. The report’s findings were summarized [here](#).

On February 17th, Helen Clark, Administrator of the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), began the last part of her trip in West Africa. She said Ebola recovery efforts will not be completed until the region reaches zero cases and that international support must continue after the conclusion of the outbreak. Details on Administrator Clark’s trip can be read [here](#).

On February 18th, Dr. David Nabarro, U.N. Special Envoy on Ebola, told the U.N. General Assembly that getting the number of Ebola cases to zero will be the most difficult phase of aid efforts. To help achieve this goal, Dr. Nabarro called for strong surveillance capabilities on the ground in order to identify Ebola cases, confirm diagnoses, and quickly begin effective treatment of these cases. These directives are made more challenging by the fact that these tasks need to be coordinated through 63 different government structures. For details on Dr. Nabarro’s briefing, click [here](#).

On February 19th, as U.S. Operation United Assistance continued to draw down in West Africa, the 1st Area Medical Laboratory (AML) closed all four of their Ebola testing laboratories in Liberia. The 1st AML is designed as a deployable analytical laboratory with a diagnostic capability to detect and identify environment contaminations that could harm service members on the battlefield. As part of the U.S. response to Ebola in Liberia, the 1st AML analyzed and identified Ebola in human samples, as well as other endemic diseases. More information can be found [here](#).

Nigeria

On February 12th, Boko Haram fighters bombed a crowded market in Biu, Nigeria. This is the first Boko Haram bombing in the area, located south of Maiduguri, and came as a former governor was scheduled to visit. Witnesses reported that several were killed and many others injured, but the death toll was not clear as victims were still being evacuated. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 13th, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sounded the alarm for the tens of thousands of Nigerian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of urgent humanitarian assistance after fleeing Boko Haram. UNHCR noted it was working with local authorities in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger to securely deploy aid workers and prepare for rapid evaluation and response assessments. In December, UNHCR estimated at least 90,000 people had sought refuge in Niger's Diffa region, while some 200,000 others had fled Nigeria for Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. An update on the refugee situation was provided [here](#).

On February 13th, Nigerian officials reported that thousands of civilians had fled their homes in the Diffa region following waves of cross-border raids and suicide bombings by Nigerian militant group Boko Haram. The area, which is already struggling to feed and shelter approximately 150,000 refugees from Nigeria has seen an additional 7,000 people arrive this week from Zinder. An article on the situation can be read [here](#).

On February 13th, Nigerian security forces reported they had arrested Boko Haram captain Kaka Bounou, a trader who was based in Diffa, Niger. Bounou is believed to be the mastermind behind a number of Boko Haram attacks in the Diffa region. Meanwhile, security forces in Marine-Soroa, Niger, located to the west of Diffa, reported they had managed to stop a suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber who had been carrying explosives. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 13th, Boko Haram fighters attacked the village of Ngouboua, Chad, in the first known lethal attack in the country by the Nigerian militant group. At least five were reportedly killed, including a local security chief, when dozens of militants arrived by canoe on the shores of Lake Chad, setting houses ablaze and attacking a police station. According to Chadian military officials, the assailants scattered and were being pursued by the army. The attack was detailed [here](#).

On February 15th, a female suicide bomber in Nigeria killed at least ten people and wounded 30 others when she blew herself up outside a bus station in Damaturu, Yobe state. Witnesses reported that a girl had tried to elude security at a checkpoint before the blast and that many of the victims had been children selling goods at the bus station. Following the explosion, an angry mob prevented rescue workers from evacuating the remains of the bomber and set her body parts on fire. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, it occurred in a region where Boko Haram has increasingly been using young women to instigate violence. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 16th, Nigeria's Ministry of Defense reported that Cameroonian soldiers had killed 86 Boko Haram militants and detained 1,000 people suspected of links to the group. In addition, Nigerian officials reported that five Cameroonian soldiers were also killed in the clashes in Cameroon near the border with Nigeria. The news came as representatives from ten Central African nations met under the aegis of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to discuss providing more support in the fight against Boko Haram. An update was provided [here](#).

On February 16th, Nigerian police announced that more than 160 people thought to have links to Boko Haram were arrested in the Diffa region along Niger's border with Nigeria. According to a televised briefing by the national police, the suspects are now being questioned by anti-terror officers and face potential charges of terrorism and conspiracy in connection with a terrorist group. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 16th, Nigerian Boko Haram insurgents attacked a Cameroon military camp near the town of Waza. Several soldiers were reportedly wounded in the attack. According to the Cameroonian military, the wounded were in the process of being evacuated and the insurgents were ultimately stopped, with several Boko Haram fighters killed in the clashes. More information was posted [here](#).

On February 17th, Presidents from the 10-nation ECCAS pledged to create an \$87 million emergency fund to finance the fight against Nigerian militant group Boko Haram. The decision to create the fund was announced by Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba on Twitter. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 17th, at least three explosions struck a military checkpoint in Biu, Nigeria, a town that has been repeatedly attacked by Boko Haram. The attack in northeastern Nigeria came as tens of thousands of people marched in Niamey, Niger, in support of the Nigerian military, which recently repelled a series of Boko Haram attacks along the border between Niger and Nigeria. Nigerian soldiers also recaptured Monguno and Marte, two towns held by Boko Haram, as U.S. and regional troops began supporting a military campaign against Boko Haram in Chad. An updated can be seen [here](#).

On February 17th, five explosions and a burst of gunfire hit an opposition rally in Okrika in Nigeria's Rivers state. According to All Progressives Congress (APC) Governor Rotimi Amaechi, several people were wounded. Rivers state has seen a number of bomb blasts that many believe are tied to the March 28th presidential election. Governor Amaechi blamed the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) party for the attack. Governor Amaechi's reaction to the attack was recorded [here](#).

On February 17th, Chadian forces fought their way into the Nigerian town of Dikwa, which had been under Boko Haram control for the past five months. Dikwa is strategically located between the Borno state capital of Maidugri and the Nigerian border with Cameroon. While the Nigerian Army had no official comment on the Chadian advance, Chadian state television made note of the fighting, saying there had been heavy losses on the Boko Haram side and that two Chadian soldiers had been killed. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 17th, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo quit the ruling PDP and tore up his PDP membership card in public. With the presidential election approaching on March 28th, the move is widely perceived as a blow to incumbent candidate President Goodluck Jonathan. In a statement, the PDP described President Obasanjo as a revered leader of the party and said it was deeply saddened by his resignation. Despite his pledge not to defect to another political party, President Obasanjo has been vocal in his support for APC candidate Muhammadu Buhari. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 18th, the Nigerian military reported that Nigerian forces killed more than 300 Boko Haram fighters during an operation to recapture 11 towns and villages since the start of the week. In addition, a military spokesperson said that weapons and equipment were also captured and some destroyed. The counter offensive operation resulted in the deaths of two Nigerian soldiers. Ten others were wounded. Information from Nigerian military officials was highlighted [here](#).

On February 18th, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau released a new video threatening to disrupt Nigeria's presidential election, scheduled for March 28th. According to Shekau, even if violent clashes cost Boko Haram fighters their lives, the elections will not be allowed to proceed. Boko Haram has repeatedly warned Nigerians not to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections, which were originally scheduled for February 14th. The release of the new video was discussed [here](#).

On February 18th, the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon, officially announced the U.S. will help Cameroon's army secure equipment to fight Boko Haram. U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon Michael Hoza noted the U.S. Government is working on a logistics pipeline of material that will enhance Cameroon's defensive capabilities against Boko Haram. He did not elaborate on exactly what kind of equipment would be provided. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 18th, an estimated 30 civilians were killed when an unidentified aircraft dropped a bomb on the town of Boss, Niger, along the border with Nigeria. Allegedly, the victims were residents who were gathered for a ceremony, but were mistaken for Boko Haram terrorists. The bombing was noted [here](#).

On February 19th, three people were wounded and three were killed during an attack by Boko Haram in a Niger town. The attack in Tourba Guida of the Diffa region is the latest in a series of raids along the border. For details, click [here](#).

On February 19th, Colonel Mahamane Laminou Sani, Niger's Director of Documentation and Military Intelligence, announced that military leaders from Niger, Chad, and Cameroon will meet next week in

Chad to finalize the strategy for the region's joint military taskforce of 8,700. Before military operations begin at the end of March, the leaders hope to keep Boko Haram within Nigeria's borders. Details can be viewed [here](#).

Egypt

On February 13th, Egypt's Interior Ministry reported that a roadside bomb in Cairo had killed a police captain and wounded eight other people. The bombing followed an announcement that Egyptian airstrikes had killed eight suspected Islamist militants in the Sinai Peninsula. It was immediately unclear if the bombing and the airstrikes in Rafah were connected. For details, click [here](#).

On February 13th, following an announcement from an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-linked militant group in Libya that it had kidnapped 21 Egyptian Christians, Egypt's Foreign Ministry said there was no evidence the victims had been executed. Ministry Spokesman Badr Abdel-Ati reported that Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab would soon meet with the abductees' families to share the latest developments. The Ministry also noted it was working with Libya and other international partners to address the situation. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 13th, U.S. Department of State Spokesperson Jen Psaki condemned the kidnapping of 21 Egyptian Christians by terrorists in Libya. Spokesperson Psaki noted that Secretary of State John Kerry had spoken with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry to reiterate the U.S. condemnation of the abductions and its commitment to the strategic partnership with Egypt. Because the kidnappings occurred in Libya, Spokesperson Psaki noted the incident underscore the need for the international community to continue to support the U.N.-facilitated peace talks in Libya. Her comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 15th, ISIL released a video that it said showed fighters beheading the 21 Egyptian Christians recently kidnapped in Libya. In the video, men wearing black marched the captives to a beach where they were forced to their knees and beheaded. In response, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi declared a seven-day mourning period and called an emergency national security meeting to discuss a response. Additionally, the Government of Egypt instituted a ban on travel to Libya by Egyptian citizens. An article on Egypt's immediate reaction to the video can be read [here](#).

On February 15th, the White House issued a statement condemning the murder of 21 Egyptian citizens in Libya by ISIL-affiliated terrorists. The White House extended condolences to the families of the victims, as well as support to the Egyptian Government. While labeling the beheadings as evidence of ISIL's barbarity that calls for the international community to unite against ISIL, the White House said this heinous act also underscores the need for an urgent political solution to the conflict in Libya. The full statement was published [here](#).

On February 16th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the U.N. Security Council condemned the killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya by an affiliate of ISIL. Secretary-General Ban and the Security Council deplored the targeting of persons based on religious affiliation, while also urging Libyans to press ahead with their political dialogue. The U.N. called for the perpetrators of these acts of terrorism to be brought to justice and urged all States to cooperate with Libya, Egypt, and other relevant authorities. Feedback from the U.N. can be seen [here](#).

On February 16th, Egypt announced it had bombed ISIL targets in Libya just hours after the release of a video in which ISIL militants beheaded 21 Egyptian Christians. According to reports on state television, the strikes targeted militant-held camps in Derna, as well as sites believed to be used as training camps and for weapons storage. A second wave of airstrikes was reported a few hours later. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 16th, to coincide with a round of airstrikes against ISIL targets in Libya, Egypt called on the U.S. and Europe to join an international military intervention in Libya in response to the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians. The request comes as Egypt now faces a growing stronghold of radicals on its western border, as well as in the east in the Sinai Peninsula. Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi also spoke with French President Francois Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi as Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry departed for the U.S. to consult the U.N. before the opening of a terrorism conference in Washington. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 17th, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi called for a U.N. resolution mandating an international coalition to intervene in Libya, following a first round of Egyptian airstrikes against ISIL targets in Libya. In addition, President Sisi called on militias to hand in their arms, but urged that weapons be provided to Libya's Tobruk-based, internationally recognized government that could be helpful in assisting the official government in taking back control of the country. President Sisi's comments were recorded [here](#).

On February 17th, a U.S. defense official said that Egypt was conducting airstrikes on ISIL targets in Libya without coordinating with the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), the Egyptian Government had provided no advance notice of the airstrikes, nor did the U.S. provide any military assistance in carrying them out. As a result, U.S. officials indicated they possess little information about the targets of the Egyptian airstrikes and whether or not they were successful. For details, click [here](#).

On February 17th, U.S. Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-NJ) issued a statement on the targeted killing of 21 Egyptian Copts in Libya. Senator Menendez called the act beyond barbaric and argued the attack targeted all people who reject extreme ideologies that have no basis in religious doctrine. Noting that New Jersey is home to a vibrant and thriving Coptic community, he noted that his staff would be visiting Egypt this week to visit with Bishop Anba Ermia at the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Center in Cairo. Senator Menendez's full statement can be read [here](#).

On February 19th, Qatar recalled its Ambassador to Egypt over a diplomatic dispute related to the airstrikes launched this week by Egypt against ISIL targets in Libya. In a subsequent meeting of the Arab League, Qatar expressed reservations that Egypt had carried out unilateral military action in another member state in a way that could harm innocent civilians. Despite Qatar's concerns, the Arab League released a statement expressing understanding over Egypt's airstrikes and articulating support for lifting the arms embargo on the Libyan army. The tensions were discussed [here](#).

Libya

On February 16th, Libya's internationally recognized Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni called for the West to launch airstrikes against Islamist militants in Tripoli. In response to the launch of airstrikes in Libya by the Egyptian Government, Prime Minister Thinni reported the Libyan Government has confirmed information that Al Qaeda and ISIL are in Tripoli and near Ben Jawad. He warned that, if unchecked, the threat posed by these groups could extend beyond Libya to European countries, especially Italy. Prime Minister Thinni's comments were captured [here](#).

On February 16th, a Libyan air force commander said 40 to 50 militants were killed in Monday's Egyptian airstrikes against ISIL targets in Libya. In addition to acknowledging that it had coordinated with Egypt on the recent airstrikes, the Libyan Government also reported that ammunition and communications centers were also successfully targeted. More information can be seen [here](#).

On February 16th, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that political tensions and rival governments in Egypt have created a safe haven for ISIL, allowing the extremist group to grow stronger. The ISIL affiliate in Libya has been spreading for months after it was first established in Derna last fall. The group has more recently taken over parts of Sirte, where it has reportedly set up a radio station and begun sending Islamic morality patrols on the streets. Details on the situation in Libya were posted [here](#).

On February 17th, the Governments of France, Italy, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom (U.K.), and the U.S. issued a joint statement condemning all acts of terrorism in Libya, including the recent murder of 21 Egyptians in Libya by ISIL-affiliated terrorists. The international partners observed that terrorism affects all Libyans and no one faction can confront the challenges facing Libya alone. The group also expressed its belief that the U.N.-led process to establish a national unity government provides the best hope for Libyans to address the terrorist threat and to confront the violence and instability that impedes Libya's political transition and development. The full statement was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, Bernardino Leon, U.N. Special Representative for Libya and head of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), briefed the U.N. Security Council on the situation in the country and

condemned the 21 beheadings recently committed by ISIL in Libya. Given the rise of instability and extremist groups, Special Representative Leon urged warring parties in Libya to resolve their conflict and come to a swift agreement. More on Special Representative Leon's briefing to the Security Council can be read [here](#).

On February 18th, Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni called for urgent international action in Libya and indicated Italy would be ready to help monitor a ceasefire and train local forces. Foreign Minister Gentiloni, addressing the Italian parliament, said possible alliances between local Libyan militias and ISIL militants could potentially destabilize neighboring countries. His comments follow reports that 300 Libyan migrants died last week while attempting to flee to Italy. Prime Minister Gentiloni's call for action was noted [here](#).

On February 18th, a war plane carried out an airstrike on the airport in Zintan, a town that is allied with the internationally recognized Libyan Government in Tobruk. Airport officials reported limited damage to the runway and no casualties. Defense officials from the Tobruk-based government accused the rival government in Tripoli over carrying out the attack, which would represent a major escalation of tensions and the U.N. continues its efforts to broker a political solution. The airstrike was reported [here](#).

On February 19th, at a U.N. Security Council briefing, Libya and Egypt proposed to lift the arms embargo on Libya, carry out a naval blockade on areas not under government control, and help build the nation's army. In support of these measures, Jordan informed Security Council members that a draft resolution would be circulated. Details on the Security Council meeting on Libya can be read [here](#).

South Sudan

On February 17th, during a visit to Bor, South Sudan, U.N. Special Representative for South Sudan and Head of the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Ellen Margrethe Loj said U.N. peacekeepers must continue to provide protection for civilians in light of the ongoing political conflict in the country. Special Representative Loj commended the efforts of the Second Ethiopian Battalion and U.N. military and civilian staff in maintaining the UNMISS mandate. More than 1,200 Ethiopian peacekeepers are currently deployed to Malakal, Bentiu, and Juba. Special Representative Loj's comments were captured [here](#).

On February 18th, U.N. Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura said any peace deal signed in South Sudan must reflect promises made at the end of 2014 to guarantee accountability for sexual violence. In a press release, Representative Bangura encouraged all parties to turn commitments into actions that protect everyone in South Sudan from sexual violence. Her comments were captured [here](#).

On February 18th, Britain's Foreign Office confirmed that a British aid worker had been shot dead in Juba, South Sudan. The worker was reportedly killed outside of his home, but it was not immediately clear who was responsible and if there was a motive. The death of the British aid worker was announced [here](#).

United States – Africa Relations

White House

On February 18th, the White House hosted a Summit on Countering Violent Extremism to highlight domestic and international efforts to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from radicalizing, recruiting, or inspiring individuals or groups in the U.S. or abroad to commit acts of violence. The Summit included representatives from a number of partner nations focusing on the themes of community engagement, religious leader engagement, and the role of the private sector and tech community. In addition to addressing ISIL, the Summit was also anticipated to touch on efforts to combat Boko Haram. For details, click [here](#). A fact sheet on the Summit can be accessed [here](#).

State Department

On February 8th-14th, U.S. Science Envoy Dr. Peter Hoetz traveled to Morocco in support of President Barack Obama's initiative to strengthen U.S. science and education relationships overseas. Dr. Hoetz

met with representatives from the scientific, academic, and business communities to discuss ways to build and strengthen research collaboration networks between scientists and engineers in the U.S. and Morocco. Dr. Hoetz's visit to Morocco was outlined [here](#).

On February 13th, speaking at a meeting of the U.N. Security Council, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power criticized Sudan for obstructing a U.N. investigation of credible allegations of rape in the conflict region of Darfur. Based on a report released by Human Rights Watch, Sudanese soldiers may be guilty of raping at least 221 women and girls in the village of Tabit over the course of three days. According to Ambassador Power, the Sudanese Government has denied the access needed to conduct the investigation. Meanwhile, Sudanese Deputy Ambassador to the U.N. Hassan Hamid Hassan dismissed Ambassador Power's comments as an attempt to level accusations. For the full story, click [here](#).

On February 17th, U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth and members of the Administration hosted a press call to provide details on the Department of Treasury and Department of Commerce's amendment to U.S. Sudanese sanctions regulations pertaining to certain software, hardware, and services incident to personal communication. The press call was noted [here](#).

On February 18th, Secretary of State John Kerry delivered remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. In his comments, Secretary Kerry recognized the recent killing of 21 Coptic Christians from Egypt in Libya by ISIL. Secretary Kerry's full address was transcribed [here](#).

On February 18th, Secretary of State John Kerry issued a press statement welcoming the completion and launch of an 8.5 megawatt (MW) solar installation in Rwanda by Gigawatt Global. This is the first utility-scale solar project to come online under the U.S.-Africa Clean Energy Finance (ACEF) program, which is a part of the Power Africa initiative. The project also expands electricity generation capacity by more than six percent in a country where more than 80 percent of people live without access to electricity, and is providing enough grid-connected power to supply 15,000 homes. The press statement was posted [here](#).

On February 18th, Secretary of State John Kerry congratulated the people of The Gambia on their celebration of 50 years of independence. Secretary Kerry, on behalf of the U.S, wished the Gambia a festive Golden Jubilee and a prosperous year. Secretary Kerry's remarks were recorded [here](#).

On February 18th, the State Department welcomed the publishing of the global electoral calendar for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). The U.S. Government noted the importance of the presidential elections scheduled to take place on November 27, 2016, as an opportunity for the Congolese Government and its people to further the democratization of the country. In addition, the State Department renewed its call for dialogue among all stakeholders to ensure a consensual process and for the DRC Government to finalize its electoral budget. Feedback from the State Department was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, the State Department responded to the verdicts issued against the perpetrators of the attack against the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia, in September 2012. While acknowledging that the verdicts issued by the Appellate Court reflect a serious response to the September 2012 attack on the Embassy, the State Department said it remains disappointed that justice in this case has been delayed so long and remains incomplete with several key suspects still at large. The State Department called for all those responsible for the attack to be brought to justice without further delay. The Department's response was posted [here](#).

On February 19th, Secretary of State John Kerry, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and EU High Representative Federica Mogherini met at the Department of State. The meeting was noticed [here](#).

On February 19th, Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken met with Libyan Foreign Minister Mohamed Dayri. Deputy Secretary Blinken also met with Chadian Foreign Minister Moussa Faki, Cameroonian Foreign Minister Pierre Moukoko Mbongo, Nigerian Foreign Minister Aminu Wali, and Nigerien Foreign Minister Mohame Bazoum. Deputy Secretary Blinken's meetings were outlined [here](#).

U.S. Agency for International Development

On February 12th, USAID Assistant to the Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Learning Alex Thier published a blog post outlining an agenda for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this summer. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Thier argued for donors to consider creating a fairer accounting system, directing money to the most needy, and increasing transparency. The full blog post can be accessed [here](#).

Department of Defense

On February 11th, closing ceremonies commenced African Partnership Flight – Djibouti for more than 80 airmen from six nations at Djibouti Air Base. The five-day event, co-hosted by U.S. Air Forces Europe and Air Forces Africa and the Djibouti Air Force brought together air forces from Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and the U.S. to strengthen relationships and share best practices. The focus on cooperation and interoperability was intended to foster stability and security throughout the continent. The exercise was outlined [here](#).

On February 12th, the African Land Forces Summit concluded in Dakar, Senegal. The Summit brought together land force commanders from 36 nations to solidify relationships, exchange information on current topics of mutual interest and concern, and to seek cooperation in addressing common security threats. Speakers from the U.S. and Africa partner militaries addressed topics such as African security challenges, peace support operations, and institutional adaptation. The event was discussed [here](#).

On February 16th, U.S. Special Operations Forces kicked off three weeks of counterterrorism drills as part of Operation Flintlock 2015. The exercise, hosted primarily by Chad, but with stations in other countries such as Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon, which have recently come under attack from Boko Haram, is intended to help a range of African militaries bolster their counterterrorism skills. Details on how Operation Flintlock will help local militaries combat the regional threat of Boko Haram were shared [here](#).

On February 17th, Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) provided insights on three days of exercises focused on Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) procedures as part of Exercise Cutlass Express 2015. Held in the Gulf of Tadjoura, Djibouti, Exercise Cutlass Express is an eight-day exercise where U.S. Navy and Coast Guard leaders instructed the Djiboutian Navy and Coast Guard on tactics, techniques, and procedures to counter piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime threats in East Africa. The VBSS exercises were highlighted [here](#).

On February 17th, eight journalists from Africa concluded a weeklong visit to U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. The journalists, all accredited with the African Union (AU), represented a variety of news organizations in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda. In addition to interviewing Deputy to the Commander for Military Operations U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General Steven Hummer, the journalists also attended briefings on AFRICOM programs. The AU media delegation's visit to AFRICOM headquarters was summarized [here](#).

On February 18th, CJTF-HOA reported on the search and rescue capabilities provided by the 303rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERQS) at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. The team, comprised entirely of Air Force Reserve Command Airmen, is trained to take any lead during rescue operations in order to locate, generate, coordinate, and track isolated personnel. The 303rd ERQS also provides long range, adverse weather, and vertical lift capabilities in environments in Africa that cannot be accessed by fixed-wing aircraft. More information was posted [here](#).

On February 18th, AFRICOM detailed the AFRICOM Partners Health Engagement Forum, which recently concluded at AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. The Forum, which was intended to help build stability through health, brought together more than 35 medical practitioners and health specialists for three days of events hosted by the Command Surgeon's Office. An article on the Forum was published [here](#).

Congress

On February 13th, Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-TN), and former African Affairs Subcommittee Chairman Chris Coons (D-DE) introduced the Food for Peace Reform Act of 2015. The bipartisan legislation would reform U.S. global food assistance programs to free up as much as \$440 million annually through greater efficiencies in delivering aid and allow the U.S. to reach an estimated eight to 12 million more people, in a shorter time period. A press release was issued [here](#).

North Africa

On February 12th, the World Bank, in coordination with the IMF, launched a five-day policy seminar on the challenges of scaling up universal health coverage and containing non-communicable diseases in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The policy seminar brought together 37 senior level representatives from Ministries of Health, Finance, and Planning and health agencies in the MENA region, as well as representatives from academic and NGOs. Specific topics included health financing trends, country experiences, supply-side readiness for implementing universal health coverage, and regional trends in the burden of non-communicable diseases and injuries. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 12th, the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors approved a \$130 million project to support the Moroccan national goal of ensuring all municipal solid waste is disposed in sanitary landfills, along with 20 percent of all waste recycled, by 2022. The project will focus on boosting solid waste services in urban areas, while improving conditions and incomes for traditional jobs associated with solid waste management and developing new businesses and jobs based on recycling. The project was highlighted [here](#).

On February 12th, the World Bank highlighted a program at the Hassan II University at Ain Sebaa in Casablanca, Morocco, intended to help prepare students for the job market. While Morocco's public universities are often criticized for focusing too much on theory in learning, the Hassan II University is placing an emphasis on practical skills that has resulted in an impressive record of job placement for graduates. The World Bank has supported such reforms in Morocco with a \$200 million program focused on measures to ease the school-to-work transition. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 13th, a boat carrying approximately 100 African migrants face difficulty off the coast of Libya, as two other boats carrying migrants from Africa were receiving assistance from the Italian Coast Guard closer to Tripoli. In the past week, more than 300 African migrants have died attempting to reach Italy from North Africa. UNHCR reported that at least 218,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean by boat last year and 3,500 lives were lost. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 16th, two French reporters with the Premieres Lignes Agency were expelled by Moroccan authorities who claimed they were working without permission. The reporters were arrested while trying to carry out interviews at the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH) on Sunday. Meanwhile Premieres Lignes Agency said the French public television channel had requested permission for the journalists to operate, but never received a response from Morocco's Communication Ministry. The incident was detailed [here](#).

On February 17th, Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) seized copies of 14 daily newspapers. Sudanese Information Minister Ahmed Bilal Osman said the newspapers were seized in accordance with the law, but declined to provide further information. NISS often confiscates print runs of newspapers over stories it deems unsuitable, but it rarely seizes so many publications at once. In response, the government body overseeing the country's media held an emergency meeting, while 50 journalists held a sit-in outside the meeting in protest. The incident was reported [here](#).

On February 18th, approximately 30 Al Qaeda-linked militants attacked a checkpoint in Tunisia's central Kasserine region, killing four police officers and stealing their weapons. According to Tunisia's Interior Ministry, Okba Ibn Nafaa is thought to have been behind the attack. Meanwhile, a local radio reported that a separate group of militants had raided houses near Kef, holding residents at gunpoint to steal food and supplies before fleeing into the mountains. Both incidents were noted [here](#).

On February 18th, following media reports that deposed Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi had been referred to a military court, Egyptian prosecutor Haitham Gamal denied the claims. The case, involving 199 defendants, is focused on the deaths of more than 30 people and murder charges. While the case was referred to the military judiciary, President Morsi and Muslim Brotherhood official Khairat Shater were not among the defendants. More information can be seen [here](#).

On February 18th, *BBC News* reported on increasing rumors in Algeria that President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is very ill and close to death. In November, President Bouteflika, who was reelected to a fourth term in April 2014 after suffering a stroke less than a year earlier, was transported to France for medical treatment. President Bouteflika has rarely appeared in public and it is rumored he is now confined to a wheelchair and living on the outskirts of Algiers. The full story can be viewed [here](#).

On February 18th, The Brookings Institution hosted an event titled, "Yemen and Libya: The Middle East's Other Civil Wars." Speakers included Sama'a Hamdani of Yemeniaty Blog, Barbara Bodine of Georgetown University, Ibrahim Sharqieh of Brookings Doha Center, and Frederick Wehrey of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Event details were posted [here](#).

On February 19th, Morocco announced the arrest of three men suspected of seeking to join ISIL. According to Morocco's Interior Ministry, the men were arrested near the border with Algeria and all hailed from the town of Sidi Bennour. Officials noted those arrested had links with three others who were arrested in December and were also seeking to join ISIL in Libya. The arrests were announced [here](#).

East Africa

On February 16th, Kenyan police arrested four suspected separatists who they believe were planning an attack on Mombasa. As part of a house raid, police recovered machetes, daggers, separatist flags and headscarves, as well as sachets of heroin. The flags and headscarves recovered resembled those worn by the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), which attacked a military camp in Mombasa in November. The MRC, which is not an Islamist group, accuses Nairobi authorities of marginalizing the indigenous people living along Kenya's coast. The arrests were announced [here](#).

On February 17th, independent data, voice, and IP provided Liquid Telecom Group announced it has secured \$150 million in additional funding to finance the expansion of its fiber network to more locations in Africa. The fund was facilitated by Standard Chartered and provided by large global development banks. Over the next five years, the company will construct a cross-border fiber network spanning a total of 15 countries in East and Central Africa. The project was detailed [here](#).

West Africa

On February 12th, U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos appealed to the international community for nearly \$2 billion to provide vital humanitarian assistance to millions of people in nine countries across Africa's Sahel region. Coordinator Amos reported that assistance is needed to support families that are vulnerable to changes in climate, insecurity, and precarious economic conditions. The Sahel humanitarian appeal for 2015, which totals \$1.96 billion, is part of a regional, multi-year strategy to address chronic challenges by emphasizing early intervention and forging closer partnerships with governments and development actors. The appeal was summarized [here](#).

On February 13th, the U.N. appointed a high-level team to conduct an inquiry into the January 27th demonstration against the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) that resulted in the death and injury of protestors in Gao. The investigation was initially announced by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on January 29th. The three-person team of independent experts will soon travel to Mali to determine the facts surrounding the information. More information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 16th, gunmen killed two Malian soldiers in an attack on an army post outside of Bamako in Mali's Mopti region. The attackers fled, while leaving five bodies behind and carrying others. The attack on the army post follows an attack near Tabankort on Sunday that killed four U.N. peacekeepers with MINUSMA. It was immediately unclear who was behind both attacks. Accounts of both incidents were provided [here](#).

On February 18th, the U.N. Security Council announced it would extend the mandate of the U.N. Integrated Peace-Building Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) for another year. UNIOGBIS will continue to focus on political, security, and development challenges in the country. For details on the announcement, click [here](#).

On February 18th, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced it will provide \$500,000 in food crop seeds, animal feed and drip irrigation equipment to Cape Verde. The country is currently experiencing severe drought with 65 percent less rain in 2014 compared to 2013. More information on the arrangement can be found [here](#).

On February 18th, The Gambia celebrated its 50th independence day. In honor of the occasion, The Gambian *Daily Observer* highlighted the achievements of President Yahya Jammeh and his Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council government since President Jammeh led the 1994 coup against founding President Sir Dauda Jawara. While the ruling party highlighted its efforts to build an airport, hospitals, and schools, the opposition drew attention to the country's debt and the lack of political freedom. Views on The Gambia's independence day were articulated [here](#).

On February 18th, a lawyer for Karim Wade, the son of former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, said a prosecutor is seeking a seven-year prison sentence for Wade on charges of illicit enrichment. Wade headed several government ministries during his father's administration and is thought to have future political ambitions. While Wade denies any wrongdoing, the prosecutor is also seeking to deny his political rights. The full story is available [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

On February 12th, following the Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Ministerial Conference on Education, U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to education Kishore Singh warned African governments against privatizing basic education. Special Rapporteur Singh urged that the provision of basic education free of costs is a core obligation of States and that governments should be expanding public educational opportunities for marginalized groups, especially children from poor families. Special Rapporteur Singh's comments were recorded [here](#).

On February 13th, the U.N., in partnership with the wider humanitarian community, launched a \$30.1 million response and recovery project in Mozambique to help meet the needs of the more than 160,000 people affected by flooding in Zambezia Province. The initiative included immediate response efforts, as well as a three to four month recovery phase that encompasses lifesaving assistance to flood victims, such as shelter, water, sanitation, food, health, and education. An article on the response plan can be read [here](#).

On February 13th, during South African President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address to mark the opening of parliament, fighting broke out when lawmakers from the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party interrupted the speech by calling on President Zuma to address corruption allegations related to the use of public funding to finance security upgrades to his home. The EFF instigators were ultimately ordered to be removed, prompting a brawl in which several people were injured. The speech only continued after lawmakers from the main opposition, the Democratic Alliance (DA), walked out of the chamber in protest against armed security guards and police entering the chamber. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 16th, the European Union (EU) resumed direct aid to Zimbabwe with a signing ceremony to mark the transfer of \$267 million in assistance. The new funding represents the first financial aid from the EU for Zimbabwe since sanctions were imposed in 2001. While Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has called for a complete lifting of the sanctions regime, the EU has sought to more gradually ease sanctions. For example, an asset freeze and travel ban for President Mugabe and his wife remain in place, as does an arms embargo. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 16th, South Africa's main opposition party, the DA, called for an investigation into why mobile phone telephone reception was cut in parliament ahead of President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address last week. The DA has suggested that cell service was intentionally jammed in order to

censor the opposition and demanded that Speaker of the Parliament Baleka Mbete step down. The DA's demands for an investigation were noted [here](#).

On February 17th, upon concluding a seven-day visit to Central Africa, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-wha Kang called for greater international support for the protection of civilians affected by the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) and those fleeing attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram. In addition, Assistant Secretary-General Kang reported the situation in the region has been made worse by repeated cycles of droughts and floods, malnutrition, and recurring epidemics. Assistant-Secretary General Kang's visit to the CAR and Cameroon was detailed [here](#).

On February 17th, *Global Post* reported on preparations for Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's 91st birthday celebrations on February 21st. The occasion will be marked with a soccer tournament, a concert, and a lavish party to honor President Mugabe. The party is expected to feature wild game on the menu, including elephant meat, which conservationists in Zimbabwe have criticized as unethical and which local villagers worry will impact their income. Information on the upcoming celebrations was shared [here](#).

On February 18th, the U.N. Security Council urged the Government of Burundi to increase efforts in order to create an atmosphere of freedom and openness for the elections coming up later this year. Additionally, the Security Council welcomed the adoption of the Electoral Code by Burundi, which provides a code of conduct for political parties and actors with U.N. assistance. More details can be read [here](#).

On February 19th, President Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi fired his intelligence chief. Major General Godefroid Niyombare held the position for just three months. A statement providing the reason for Niyombare's dismissal has yet to be released by President Nkurunziza. The situation was noted [here](#).

On February 18th, speaker of the South African Parliament Baleka Mbete apologized for calling EEF leader Julius Malema a cockroach in the aftermath of the chaos surrounding South African President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address. Following Speaker Mbete throwing Malema out of parliament during the speech, she later told an ANC rally that she viewed the EEF as irritants. Meanwhile, opposition lawmakers continue to call for Speaker Mbete to step down. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 19th, the need for planned power outages in South Africa was diminished after emergency repairs to the Majuba power station were finished. Eskom, the state-run electricity company, reported that 1,800 megawatts were added to the grid as a result of the repairs. For more details, click [here](#).

General Africa News

On February 17th, Deputy Executive Director of the Joint U.N. Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Luiz Loures said the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa will explode again unless parents and teenagers start talking to teenagers about sex. Deputy Executive Director Loures also urged leaders to make it easier for under 18s to access HIV testing and treatment, ensure all children go to school, and protect girls from sexual exploitation. His comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 19th, the World Bank highlighted three projects awarded under the 2013 Harvesting Nutrition Contest that show how agriculture, nutrition, and food security goals can be achieved under a single development program. The Realigning Agriculture to Improve Nutrition (RAIN) project in Zambia has increased year-round availability of and access to high-quality foods at the household level, while Kenya's Shamba Shape Up project has used a reality television show to help disseminate nutrition messages. The N2Africa project, which spans the West, Central, and East Africa regions, has been effective in promoting new technologies to help improve productivity of women's crops. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 19th, speaking at an EU defense minister meeting in Riga, Latvia, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called on other EU members to increase their commitment to security efforts in Africa. The French Government believes the burden of fighting terrorism and instability in Africa has not been shared equally over the last few years. For details, click [here](#).

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