



## ML Strategies Update

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## Africa Update

### Leading the News

#### ***Burundi***

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, three people were killed in gun and grenade attacks in Burundi, just hours before the planned arrival of United Nations (U.N.) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for talks focused on ending the political crisis in the country. Two people were killed when an unidentified gunman opened fire inside a bar, while one person died and another was wounded in a grenade attack outside of a market in Bujumbura. Both incidents were reported [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, following a visit to Nairobi, Kenya, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Bujumbura for an official visit to meet with President Pierre Nkurunziza and other actors in support of ongoing U.N. efforts aimed at resolving Burundi's political crisis. Upon his arrival, Secretary-General Ban was greeted by First Vice President Gaston Sindimwo and Foreign Minister Alain Nyamitwe, as well as U.N. Special Envoy to Burundi Jamal Benomar and Resident U.N. Coordinator Paolo Lembo. Following his visit to Burundi, Secretary-General Ban is expected to visit the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Secretary-General Ban's arrival in Burundi was highlighted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to withdraw some media bans, cancel arrest warrants, and release roughly 1,200 detainees as goodwill gestures to try to end months of violence in the country. The decision came as a result of a meeting of representatives of the ruling and opposition political parties convened by Secretary-General Ban. President Nkurunziza also agreed to move forward with an inclusive political dialogue. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma, Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, Senegalese President Macky Sall, Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba, and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn arrived in Burundi to hold talks with President Pierre Nkurunziza and civil society groups aimed at ending the country's political crisis. On behalf of the African Union (AU), the leaders will spend two days in Burundi to push for a mediation process to end the tensions sparked by President Nkurunziza's third term. Their arrival was noted [here](#).

#### ***Libya***

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the U.S. welcomed the Libyan Presidency Council's February 14<sup>th</sup> announcement of a Government of National Accord Cabinet. The global leaders expressed that finalizing the Government of National Accord is an essential step toward providing the Libyan people the opportunity to rebuild their country and counter

the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). They also urged the House of Representatives (HOR) to endorse the list of Cabinet members in its entirety. A joint statement was issued [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook announced the U.S. military had conducted an airstrike in Libya targeting an ISIL training camp near Sabratha and Nouredine Chouchane, a Tunisian national who was an ISIL senior facilitator in Libya associated with the training camp. Chouchane was one of the suspects named in the deadly March attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunisia and is also thought to have facilitated the movement of potential ISIL-affiliated foreign fighters from Tunisia to Libya and onward to other countries. Press Secretary Cook said the destruction of the camp and Chouchane's removal is expected to have an immediate impact on ISIL's ability to facilitate its activities in Libya. A press statement was released [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, *The New York Times* provided an update on the growing threat posed by ISIL in Libya. According to American intelligence agencies, while the number of ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria has dropped as a result of U.S. airstrikes, the group has doubled its ranks in Libya to about 6,500 fighters. Additionally, speculation is on the rise that ISIL leaders are telling recruits from West African nations, such as Senegal and Chad, to travel through Sudan to Libya for training. An article on ISIL's presence in Libya was published [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Libyan army reported that troops loyal to the country's internationally recognized government had made major advances against ISIL extremists in Benghazi. Led by General Khalifa Hiftar, Libyan forces, supported by local fighters, cleared the strategic port of Marisa and a main hospital, and also killed 30 militants in the fighting. According to military officials, the offensive was launched after General Hiftar's troops received weapons and ammunition from Egypt. The operations were detailed [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the head of the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) Mustafa Sanalla reported ISIL militants had once again attacked Libya's oil infrastructure, setting fire to one production tank and damaging another at the Fida oil field late last week. Fida is located to the southwest of the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf oil terminals, which were both targeted by ISIL last month. Additionally, Sanalla expressed concern further attacks against oil infrastructure are likely. His comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Libyans took to the streets of Benghazi to celebrate news that the army, backed by civilian fighters, had liberated parts of the city from ISIL fighters. The celebrations began just hours after troops entered the district of al-Laithi, pushing militants out of the area and allowing those who had been displaced to return to their homes in the district. The street celebrations took place around large containers and sandbags that ISIL fighters had been using for defense, as well as their personal belongings that were discarded as they fled. The scene was described [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, *The Wall Street Journal* reported the Italian Government has started allowing armed U.S. drones to fly out of U.S. Naval Air Station Sigonella as part of military operations against ISIL targets in Libya and across North Africa. U.S. drones have been based in Sigonella since 2011, but until last month they were used exclusively on surveillance missions. The permissions granted by Italian authorities allow for drones to be used defensively to protect U.S. Special Operations forces in Libya and beyond. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Libyan ISIL affiliates briefly took control of security headquarters in Sabratha, beheading 12 security officers before being driven out of the city. According to local security officials, the militants used the headless bodies of the officers they killed to block the roads leading to security headquarters, which they occupied for roughly three hours. The gunmen are thought to have exploited a security vacuum by deploying in the city center as the military was occupied conducting raids elsewhere. The incident was reported [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Special Representative to Libya and head of the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Martin Kobler welcomed the statement by the majority of the members of the Libyan HOR declaring the approval of the Government of National Accord proposed by the Presidency Council after months of U.N.-facilitated peace talks. Special Representative Kobler called on the leadership of the HOR to take immediate steps to formalize the endorsement, and also expressed concern for reported intimidation and threats against HOR members. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State welcomed the February 23<sup>rd</sup> endorsement for the Cabinet of the Government of National Accord, signed by a majority of Libyan HOR members, reiterating support for the leaders

as they move ahead with forming the new government. However, the State Department also expressed concern for reports that a small hardline minority used physical intimidation and threats to disrupt the HOR session in order to prevent a vote on the cabinet, and condemned all attempts to obstruct the Libyan political process. A press statement was released [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, French media reported French special forces and intelligence commandos are engaged in covert operations against ISIL militants in Libya in partnership with the U.S. and the U.K. While the French Ministry of Defense at first declined to detail French operations in Libya, it was reported that President Francois Hollande had authorized unofficial military action by an elite armed forces unit, as well as the covert action service of the French intelligence agency. An article on French involvement in Libya can be read [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the Special Deterrent Force (SDF), a Libyan militia loyal to the Islamist-backed Libyan government in Tripoli, said it had arrested ISIL leader Mohammed Saad al-Tajouri, the leader of ISIL's branch in Sabratha. According to SDF, al-Tajouri was dispatched by ISIL leaders in Sirte to take charge of Sabratha, which was briefly under ISIL control earlier this week. SDF indicated it planned to release videos of the arrest. Al-Tajouri's detention was reported [here](#).

### **South Sudan**

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the violence that broke out overnight and continued at the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) civilian protection site in Malakal, claiming the lives of at least seven internally displaced persons (IDPs) and injuring at least 40 others. Acknowledging the rising inter-communal tensions between the Dinka and Shilluk that precipitated the incident, Secretary-General Ban warned all parties against stoking ethnic disputes and called for restraint from any actions or statements that could further escalate tensions. Secretary-General Ban's response was recorded [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth participated in a meeting of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) Partners Group, held in Nairobi, Kenya. The partners reaffirmed their support for the people of South Sudan and the implementation of the peace agreement, and commended President Festus Mogae for his leadership. The high-level meeting reiterated the JMEC Partners Group's concern over delays in the formation of the transitional government of national unity and called for additional progress towards the agreed security arrangements in Juba. Participants also underscored the need for increased commitment to a permanent ceasefire and to an enabling environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection. The meeting was summarized [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, in response to reports of escalating inter-communal violence in South Sudan, the U.N. Security Council condemned all attacks and provocations against civilians and the U.N. by armed actors and called for calm on all sides. The Security Council condemned the recent violence committed by elements of the Shilluk and Dinka communities in Malakal and expressed alarm at reports that armed men with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had entered the camp, firing on civilians and looting and burning tents. The Security Council called for an investigation into the tensions and called for all sides to refrain from additional fighting. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice condemned the violence at a UNMISS compound in Malakal that led to the killing of IDPs and the burning and looting of a facility that provides refuge and aid to over 40,000 victims of the conflict in the country. Ambassador Rice expressed concern regarding credible reports that a large group of South Sudanese soldiers entered the compound and opened fire on civilians at the camp and called for a thorough investigation. She also observed the lack of progress by both parties in South Sudan in implementing the August 2015 peace agreement and called on South Sudanese President Salva Kiir to lift his decree establishing 28 states. Ambassador Rice's full statement can be read [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY) released a statement regarding the attacks on civilians at the UNMISS camp in Malakal. Congressman Engel said the attack is an egregious human rights violation and expressed reports that elements of the SPLA may have taken part are deeply troubling and undermine the work the international community has put into a negotiated settlement of the conflict in South Sudan. He said he remains concerned about the safety of vulnerable populations in the country, including those who have been forced to seek refuge in camps across the country for over two years. Congressman Engel's statement was posted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, world leaders ramped up pressure on warring parties in South Sudan to choose peace over politics as both South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar blamed each other for delays in forming a transitional government. U.N. Secretary-General Ban spoke with both leaders, urging them to focus on compromising and forming a unity government without delay. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry threatened President Kiir and Machar would face individual sanctions if they did not deliver on the August peace deal. The full story is available [here](#).

### **Central African Republic**

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, voters in the Central African Republic (CAR) marched and cheered in the streets after the results of the presidential election were announced on public radio. According to electoral officers, former Prime Minister Faustin Archange Touadera won the runoff election with 63 percent of the vote, defeating former Prime Minister Anicet Georges Dologuele, who earned the support of 37 percent of the electorate. In his acceptance speech, President-elect Touadera said he would strive to bring the country together as a united, solidified, and affluent nation. The election results were announced [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the peaceful holding of elections in the CAR, calling for the timely holding of the second round of legislative elections to complete the political transition process. Acknowledging the provisional results of the election, Secretary-General Ban congratulated President-elect Faustin Archange Touadera and extended his appreciate to former Prime Minister Anicet Georges Dologuele for the statesmanship demonstrated through his concession. He also called on all political leaders and national stakeholders to maintain the constructive atmosphere that existed around the elections. Secretary-General Ban's feedback can be viewed [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY) congratulated the people of the CAR for overcoming serious roadblocks and moving forward with the second round of presidential elections in a relatively free, fair, and credible manner. He also congratulated President-elect Faustin Archange Touadera for his victory and urged him to lead the way toward reconciliation of the Muslim-Christian divide unleashed by the last three years of conflict. Congressman Engel also commended Anicet Georges Dologuele for conceding with grace and humility. His response to the election was shared [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, U.S. Department of State Deputy Spokesperson Mark Toner commended the people of the CAR for their peaceful and enthusiastic participation in both rounds of recent presidential elections. Acknowledging the announcement of the provisional results on Saturday, Deputy Spokesperson Toner noted the U.S. was encouraged by the statesmanship shown by the victor, Faustin Archange Touadera and his competitor, Anicet Georges Dologuele, who both showed a commitment to inclusivity, democracy, and nonviolence. His remarks were recorded [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, CAR President-elect Faustin Archange Touadera's campaign manager Simplice Sarandji said the newly elected president plans to focus on peace and disarmament as part of his plan to move the country towards reconciliation after years of civil war. According to Sarandji, President-elect Touadera's initial focus will be on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation, then on restructuring of the armed forces. Sarandji's comments were captured [here](#).

### **Uganda**

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Department of State Spokesperson John Kirby acknowledged the presidential elections in Uganda. He condemned the detention of opposition candidate Kizza Besigye while voting and tallying is ongoing. Spokesperson Kirby argued such an action calls into question Uganda's commitment to a transparent and free election process, free from intimidation. He also expressed concern for the late opening of many polling stations, as well as the Government of Uganda's decision to block several popular social media and mobile money sites on election day. Spokesperson Kirby urged government authorities and political parties and their supporters to refrain from further acts or rhetoric that may lead to more unrest or claim any more lives. His comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, in response to criticism of the government's decision to shut down social media sites in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni, who was seeking reelection on the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party ticket, justified the move as a temporary security measure, claiming that social media was being used to spread lies related to the presidential election. According to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the sites were shut down due to an unspecified national security threat. President Museveni's response was highlighted [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry spoke with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to underscore that Uganda's progress depends on adherence to democratic principles in the ongoing election process and that the U.S. stands by the Ugandan people as they undertake elections. Secretary Kerry also expressed concern about the detentions of opposition candidate Kizza Besigye and harassment of opposition party members during voting and tallying, and he urged President Museveni to rein in the police and security forces, noting that such action calls into question Uganda's commitment to a transparent and credible electoral environment free from intimidation. Secretary Kerry urged President Museveni to end the blockage of social media and mobile money sites, and also encouraged the electoral commission to proceed with steps to extend polling in certain areas where voting was delayed. Their conversation was summarized [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY) made a statement on the ongoing electoral process in Uganda. Since the people of Uganda went to the polls, Congressman Engel said he has been concerned by the government's decision to block social media sites and by reports of pre-marked ballots and inflated tallies in some of the voting stations. He said he was also dismayed by reports that presidential candidate Kizza Besigye was arrested and that the home of another candidate, former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi was surrounded by security forces. Congressman Engel called on incumbent President Yoweri Museveni and the opposition to refrain from violence in order to mitigate tensions during the electoral process. His feedback can be seen [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, EU elections observers criticized Uganda's elections. While elections monitors reported that voting was conducted in a calm and peaceful environment in the vast majority of the country, they raised concerns about a lack of transparency and independence in the Electoral Commission. Observers also accused the Ugandan police of using brutal tactics to detain opposition candidate Kizza Besigye. Logistical problems were also reported, as voting had to be extended into Friday in 36 places following delays. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State commended the Ugandan people for participating actively and peacefully in the February 18<sup>th</sup> elections. While acknowledging the vote occurred without any major unrest, the State Department acknowledged numerous reports of irregularities and official conduct inconsistent with international standards and expectations for any democratic process. As a result, the State Department encouraged those who wish to contest the election results to do so peacefully and in accordance with Uganda's laws and judicial processes. The State Department's position was articulated [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, in response to criticism of the Ugandan polls by the EU and the U.S., President Yoweri Museveni dismissed the idea the elections had been conducted in an intimidating environment, as well as speculation that the electoral commission had favored his candidacy and the ruling NRM. President Museveni said he did not need lectures from global leaders, as opposition candidates continued to claim the vote was fundamentally flawed. An update was provided [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ugandan opposition presidential candidate Kizza Besigye was once again taken into police custody after vowing to lead a protest march against incumbent President Yoweri Museveni's victory in the February 18<sup>th</sup> presidential contest. Besigye was captured and thrown into a police van while trying to leave his home, where he had been placed under house arrest. While electoral authorities reported that President Museveni had won the election by a landslide, Besigye argued the vote had been rigged as foreign observers reported fear and intimidation at the polls. Developments were noted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed concern over the tense post-election situation in Uganda following reports that at least two people had been killed and an unknown number of people injured in the streets of Kampala. OHCHR reported an intimidating display of force by military and police forces in the capital, including the use of tear gas and ammunition to disperse protestors, harassment of journalists, and the arrest of four opposition leaders since the elections. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Women's Situation Room, set up to monitor violence against women and other obstacles preventing women from voting in Uganda's February 18<sup>th</sup> presidential election, said it had received nearly 600 complaints. The majority of complaints filed had to do with delays in voting in and around Kampala, which kept many women from voting because they needed to leave voting lines to return home to fulfill their domestic duties. For details, click [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Mugisha Muntu, chairman of Uganda's main opposition party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), said the party was working hard to gather evidence to legally challenge President Yoweri Museveni's victory in the February 18<sup>th</sup> presidential election. Under Ugandan electoral law, challenges to an election may be filed up to ten days after the results are announced. Muntu noted the party began collecting evidence as soon as it uncovered discrepancies between its own polling and the results cited by electoral authorities. More information was posted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, in the wake of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's reelection, experts monitoring the situation in Ugandan began to speculate President Museveni may seek to alter the constitution in his new term in a manner that would allow him to stay in power. Currently, President Museveni is barred from running in the next election in 2021 because he will be past the constitutional age limit of 75 for presidential candidates. The issue was discussed [here](#).

## ***Niger***

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, voters in Niger went to the polls to cast ballots in the presidential election in which incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou was confident in his prospects for reelection without the need for a runoff. While President Issoufou has campaigned on a platform focused boosting economic growth, building infrastructure, and tightening security, his opponents, including Hama Amadou who has campaigned from jail after being arrested in November upon his return from exile in France over his alleged role in a baby-trafficking scandal, have argued the vote could be rigged. A total of 7.5 million people were eligible to vote at 25,000 polling stations across the country. According to elections monitors, voting got off to a late start in many parts of Niamey. Election results were anticipated five days after the close of the polls. The election was discussed [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, voting in Niger's presidential and legislative elections stretched into a second day in parts of the country where logistical problems preventing polling the previous day, delaying the preliminary election results. The polls were open in four of the eight regions of the country, including in the Tahoua, Zinder, Diffa, and Tillaberi regions, allowing Nigeriens to cast their vote in the presidential contest in which President Mahamadou Issoufou faced 14 other candidates. The extension of voting was noted [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the U.S. Department of State congratulated the people of Niger for overcoming logistical challenges and participating peacefully in the presidential and legislative elections that began over the weekend. The State Department argued a peaceful post-election period is crucial to maintaining confidence in the credibility of the electoral process and in the results. The State Department also noted the continued U.S. commitment to supporting the people of Niger in their pursuit of democracy, security, economic growth, and development. Additional feedback was shared [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, opposition parties in Niger rejected the initial results of Sunday's presidential election, which showed incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou leading in the vote count. At the time, provisional results from 20 of 308 municipalities showed President Issoufou leading with 40.18 percent of the vote, more than ten points ahead of his closest rival. According to opposition groups, the provisional results were fraudulent. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the national election authority in Niger updated the provisional results from the February 21<sup>st</sup> presidential election. With 170 of 308 communes reporting, incumbent President Mahamadou Issoufou led with 52 percent of the vote. Under the Nigerien electoral law, a candidate must have at least 50 percent of the vote to win in a first round of voting and avoid a runoff. Opposition leader Hama Amadou had 15 percent of the vote and Seyni Oumarou, who finished second in Niger's 2011 election, trailed with 10 percent. An update was provided [here](#).

## ***West Africa Ebola Outbreak***

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Benjamin Black, an obstetrician/gynecologist for Doctors Without Borders (MSF), chronicled his experience caring for patients with Ebola in Sierra Leone during the peak of the outbreak. Stationed at the Magburaka government hospital to work alongside officials from the Ministry of Health, Black reported that the government's resources to care for pregnant women and pediatric patients were stretched prior to the Ebola outbreak. For details, click [here](#).

### ***African Migrant Crisis***

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Italian navy rescued more than 700 migrants from six leaky boats in the sea between Tunisia and Sicily. Four of the migrants were found dead. It was not immediately clear from where the migrants had departed. To date, more than 400 migrants have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean since the start of this year. An article on the latest rescues can be read [here](#).

## **United States – Africa Relations**

### ***White House***

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, President Barack Obama notified Congress of his intent to continue the national emergency with respect to Libya. The state of emergency was first declared in 2011 to address the threat constituted by the actions of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, his government, and close associates, who took extreme measures against the people of Libya, including by using weapons of war, mercenaries, and wanton violence against unarmed civilians. President Obama said the situation in Libya continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the U.S. and asserted the ongoing need to protect against the diversion of assets or other abuse by certain members of Gaddafi's family and other former regime officials. More information can be accessed [here](#).

### ***State Department***

On February 16<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon was on travel, making stops in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali. On February 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, Under Secretary Shannon visited Rabat for meetings with government officials, young entrepreneurs, and teachers and students in a U.S.-supported English Access Microscholarship Program. On February 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, Under Secretary Shannon traveled to Tunis for meetings with government officials, civil society leaders, and staff in the U.S. Libya External Office. Under Secretary Shannon was in Algiers February 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> for government meetings on countering terrorism, as well as meetings with local business leaders and entrepreneurs to discuss opportunities for continued U.S. investment in Algeria. From February 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>, Under Secretary Shannon was in Ouagadougou for meetings with Burkinabe President Rock Marc Christian Kabore, Prime Minister Paul Kaba Thieba, the Ministers of Security, Justice, and Foreign Affairs, and the head of the National Assembly. Under Secretary Shannon also visited Bamako to meet with Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and other government ministers focused on security and development. His travel was announced [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed Moroccan Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar to the State Department. Leading up to the U.S.-Morocco Strategic Dialogue in April, Secretary Kerry and Minister Mezouar discussed a broad range of shared concerns, including Morocco's leadership in the region, particularly against ISIL. They also discussed climate change, especially as Morocco will be hosting COP22 later this year. A readout of the meeting was provided [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Department of State Spokesperson John Kirby noted the U.S. is troubled by the detention of peaceful activities and opposition leaders in the DRC, including those detained in connection with the recent general strike. Spokesperson Kirby argued these detentions stifle the free expression of diverse political viewpoints, contributing to a closing of political space while undermining the credibility of the DRC Government during the electoral period. The State Department has raised these concerns with authorities in the DRC, calling on the DRC to honor its international human rights obligations and immediately release those detained. Additionally, Spokesperson Kirby underscored the need for all political stakeholders to exercise their rights peacefully and encouraged leaders to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that incites violence. Additional feedback was posted [here](#).

## ***U.S. Agency for International Development***

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) and ASPIRE unveiled the results of new studies carried out in South Africa, Uganda, Malawi, and Zimbabwe highlighting how a new vaginal ring providing sustained release of antiretroviral (ARV) daprivirine is reducing the chance of HIV infection during vaginal sex. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), has provided \$25 million in support for the trial and ring licensure. More information can be found [here](#).

## ***Department of Defense***

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) highlighted an open house recently held at the new Joint Operations Center (JOC). The JOC, which first became fully operational in December 2015, has provided significantly enhanced command and control and situational awareness to aid AFRICOM Commander General David Rodriguez and his senior staff in making decisions that affect U.S. military missions and operations on the African continent. The JOC was described [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) noted members of the U.S. Army's Bravo Company recently completed a validation exercise at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, displaying their ability to take over as the East Africa Response Force (EARF). The EARF serves as one of AFRICOM's crisis response capabilities and is tasked with responding to emergency situations at U.S. embassies in the East African region or in countries around the CJTF-HOA area of responsibility. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Michigan National Guard highlighted its partnership with the Armed Forces of Liberia to construct two new multipurpose buildings at the Edward Binyah Kesselly military training facility in Monrovia. The Michigan National Guard and Liberia have been connected since the launch of a formal partnership in 2009 under the National Guard State Partnership Program. Since then, several leader visits have taken place to exchange information and nurture relationships. An article on the partnership was published [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, *Reuters* reported on this year's Flintock exercise, which was designed to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities of partner nations in Africa. For the first time, African police have also been included in Flintock training sessions in an effort to boost security and the local response to more sophisticated threats in Africa, such as suicide bombings and rocket launches. For more information, click [here](#).

## ***Overseas Private Investment Corporation***

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) signed an agreement with Greenlight Planet to finalize \$5 million in OPIC financing to support the scaled up provision of affordable, off-grid solar energy systems to homes and businesses across the developing world. Greenlight Planet is already providing lighting and phone charging devices to populations living off the electric grid in emerging markets throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The new financing will be used to expand Greenlight Planet's global distribution network in sub-Saharan Africa. A press release was issued [here](#).

## ***Congress***

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) released a statement after the DRC Government announced it will allow for the issuance of exit visas to roughly 150 American children, the equivalent of more than a third of all outstanding adoption cases in the country involving U.S. Families. Congressman Royce said he is pleased to see the DRC Government following through on the promises made to a congressional delegation that visited Kinshasa last month. While labeling the announcement a promising step, Congressman Royce called for the DRC Government to make good on its pledge to resolve all outstanding adoption cases by the end of March. For details, click [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade held a hearing titled, "Boko Haram: The Islamist Insurgency in West Africa." The Subcommittee received testimony from Jennifer Cooke of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jacob Zenn of The Jamestown

Foundation, and Alice Hunt Friend of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). A webcast of the hearing can be watched [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the House Judiciary Committee met to mark up the Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Designation Act of 2015. Introduced by Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), the bill would require the State Department to report to Congress on whether Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood could be designated as a foreign terrorist organization. The bill was reported from the Committee on a 17-10 vote. The markup was noticed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, House Select Committee on Benghazi Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) announced the Committee will interview additional Obama Administration officials over the next week, bringing the total number of interviews conducted to 79. The Committee is scheduled to interview Gentry Smith, a former official within the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Admiral James Winnefeld, Jr., former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and Susan Curley, an official in the State Department's Office of Management Policy. Details were shared [here](#).

## **North Africa**

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank highlighted its efforts in Morocco to support authorities' efforts to expand agriculture through the adoption of irrigation techniques that make more efficient use of water resources, while building stronger ties between farmers and markets. In support of these goals, the World Bank has provided loans to finance the modernization of irrigation schemes, including the use of drip irrigation, which is sponsored by a government incentive program. Details are available [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank noted it is providing financial and technical assistance to the Government of Morocco in support of its implementation of a comprehensive, digital identification system capable of supporting access to public services. The new system will build on existing systems that are not currently interoperable by introducing a unique identifying number for every enrolled individual. The project was described [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi welcomed African Development Bank (AfDB) President Akinwumi Adesina to Egypt for the Africa 2016 Forum held in Sharm el-Sheikh. During their meeting, President Sisi praised the level of cooperation between Egypt and the AfDB and expressed interest in broadening the scope of cooperation to the agriculture and food security sectors, in addition to support for small and medium-sized enterprises. President Adesina hailed Egypt's economic progress thanks to the new economic policies put in place by the government. Their meeting was summarized [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) team completed a visit to Nouakchott, Mauritania to review recent economic developments as part of the annual Article IV consultation. The IMF team observed after years of strong economic performance, Mauritania is facing severe shock due to the decline in the price for iron ore. Noting that economic growth slowed during 2015, the IMF called on Mauritanian authorities to adjust their policies to promote economic diversification and more inclusive growth. Additional observations were highlighted [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, German authorities indicated they are considering sending troops to Tunisia to help train soldiers in the fight against ISIL, and perhaps to eventually set up a training camp in Tunisia for Libyan soldiers, run with other international partners. German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said the plans are being contemplated as the ISIL threat spreads across North Africa and are aligned with German efforts to support countries struggling with democracy, such as Tunisia. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Hudson Institute hosted a briefing titled, "Egypt's Ensuring Security Challenges." Presenters included Erin Brown and Samuel Tadros of the Hudson Institute, Michael Wahid Hanna of The Century Foundation, Amy Hawthorne of the Project on Middle East Democracy, and Mokhtar Award of George Washington University. A recording of the panel can be watched [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Middle East Institute (MEI) hosted Andrea Rugh for a discussion of her recent book, "Christians in Egypt: Strategies and Survival." Her book examines the social and political status of Egypt's Christians. Event logistics were posted [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, following her visit to the Jebel Marra area of Sudan, U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan Marta Ruedas noted concern for the plight of more than 85,000 newly displaced civilians in North Darfur state who have fled their homes due to an escalation of tensions in the region. While the U.N., its international partners, and national organization have been delivering assistance to those in need, Coordinator Ruedas warned the massive influx of new arrivals in recent days has put a strain on already logistically complex operations. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank highlighted its support for the Sudan Peacebuilding for Development Project (SPDP), which aims to improve livelihoods and promote peace between groups living along livestock migration routes. Under the project, Sudan has seen the construction of three water reservoirs in Central Darfur that have reduced conflict between pastoralists and farmers over scarce natural resources. Additionally the project has provided women in West Darfur State with safer employment opportunities. Details can be accessed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank called attention to its Local Governance and Service Delivery Project (LGSDP) in South Sudan. Since its launch in 2013, LGSDP has helped to build or rehabilitate 29 community infrastructure projects, including schools, clinics, and construction of boreholes in 37 communities across the country. In the next fiscal year, the project will oversee an additional 252 community projects across 23 counties in seven states. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, for the first time, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi publically indicated the Russian plane that crashed in the Sinai last October was brought down by terrorists targeting Egypt's tourism industry. ISIL has long claimed responsibility for the downing of the aircraft. The official recognition that a terrorist bomb brought down the passenger jet could expose Egypt to compensation payments to the families of the victims. An update was provided [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, during a publically broadcast address, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi claimed that unfair criticism of the Egyptian Government over policy brutality and other human rights abuses, as well as the election of a parliament that is perceived as a rubber-stamp legislature, is part of an attempt to bring down the state. In his remarks, President Sisi vowed to bring down anyone plotting to take down the Egyptian Government and urged Egyptians not to listen to anyone other than him regarding the state of the government. His remarks were transcribed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, an Egyptian court convicted four Coptic Christian teenagers for contempt of Islam on Thursday, after they appeared in a video mocking Muslim prayers. Three of the defendants were sentenced to three to five years in prison, while the fourth was referred to a juvenile detention facility. The harsh ruling was criticized by Egyptian human rights groups that continually opposed the culture of intolerance in the country's judicial system. The full story is available [here](#).

## **East Africa**

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the AfDB's Board of Directors approved an \$8.2 million equity investment in Kenya-based African housing and habitat company Shelter Afrique. The investment will be used to strengthen the organization's balance sheet and help it achieve its objective of providing quality affordable housing across the continent. Shelter Afrique is the only pan-African organization devoted to financing the development of proper housing and human settlements in Africa. A press release was issued [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, four men attacked an Uber driver and torched his car in Nairobi, Kenya. The driver was beaten, but escaped without major injuries. Uber began operating in Kenya in early 2015. As is the case in many other countries, Uber drivers in Kenya have frequently seen threats and protests from regular tax drivers, who argue cheap fares provided by Uber are driving them out of business. The situation was discussed [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta named a seven-person tribunal to investigate the conduct of Supreme Court Justice Philip Tunoi, who faces corruption charges. Justice Tunoi, who denies any wrongdoing, has been accused of accepting a \$2 million bribe to swing the court in favor of a litigant in a petition arising out of a result in the 2013 general election. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the AfDB's Board of Directors approved the 2016-2016 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Tanzania. In approving the CSP, the AfDB also approved a financial package worth \$1.1 billion over the next five years to help support infrastructure development for inclusive and green growth and strengthen governance and accountability for improved competitiveness. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said as many as 200 soldiers were killed during the January 15<sup>th</sup> attack on an AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) camp in El Adde, Somalia. Kenya authorities have refused to confirm the death toll from the raid, which was carried out by Al Shabaab fighters. President Mohamud's comments were captured [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Al Shabaab fighters executed a mortar attack near the presidential palace in Mogadishu, Somalia that left four people dead and eight others wounded. According to Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, Al Shabaab's military spokesperson, the attack was intended to target the presidential palace, but the mortars went off closer to the house of parliament. The attack was reported [here](#).

## [West Africa](#)

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, Cote d'Ivoire's Electrical Production Company (CIPREL) completed the final phase of a \$382 million steam and heat turbine project in Abidjan that is expected to boost the company's total production capacity by 70 percent to 556 megawatts (MW). During the inaugural ceremony for the new facility, Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara expressed his satisfaction, saying the country has neared its goal of reaching 2,000 MW in production capacity by 2016. An article on electricity generation can be read [here](#).

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, a mission from the IMF's Statistics Department completed a visit to Abuja, Nigeria to assist authorities with the implementation of the Enhanced General Data Dissemination System (e-GDDS), which was approved by the Executive Board in May 2015. The mission supported the development of the National Summary Data Page (NSDP), which aims to serve as a one-stop publication for essential macroeconomic data. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, nine prisoners and one guard were killed during a failed escape attempt by inmates at MACA prison in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire who had obtained firearms. Violence at the prison began on Saturday when the prisoners opened fire on guards. The unrest continued into Sunday. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF Mitsuhiro Furusawa visited Chad and Cote d'Ivoire to engage with policymakers and other stakeholders in both countries and to underline the strong relationship with the institution's African member countries. In Chad, Deputy Managing Director Furusawa met with President Idriss Deby and other senior officials, the private sector, and representatives of civil society. In Cote d'Ivoire, he met with President Alassane Ouattara and Prime Minister Kablan Duncan, as well as private sector executives, civil society representatives, and students. Deputy Managing Director Furusawa's visit to West Africa was outlined [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Volker Turk completed a visit to Nigeria to assess the needs of IDPs displaced by Boko Haram violence in the northeastern part of the country. During meetings with Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and government partners providing humanitarian assistance, Assistant High Commission Turk urged the Nigerian Government to take advantage of UNHCR's experience in voluntary repatriation and to work closely to ensure the welfare of people of concern while offering to help neighboring countries. His visit to Nigeria was highlighted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF Mitsuhiro Furusawa concluded his visit to N'Djamena, Chad. In his meetings with Chadian authorities, including President Idriss Deby, Deputy Managing Director Furusawa acknowledged the challenges posed by the massive negative external shocks, including the collapse in oil prices and the deterioration in regional security. These issues also came up in Deputy Managing Director Furusawa's meetings with the private sector, academics, and students. His visit to Chad was summarized [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, *BBC News* reported that Cote d'Ivoire has granted ousted Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore citizenship, putting an end to questions over whether or not he could be extradited to face charges for his role related to the murder of Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in 1987. The order was signed by Ivorian President

Alassane Ouattara in November 2014, but has just come to light. President Compaore has been in exile in Cote d'Ivoire since October 2014. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, South African mobile phone operator MTN Group withdrew its lawsuit against the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) over a \$3.9 billion fine and paid \$250 million towards a possible settlement. Last month, an arbitration court gave both parties a March 18<sup>th</sup> deadline to resolve the dispute, saying the NCC had no legal grounds to order the fine. Developments were reported [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) reported a U.N. peacekeeper opened fire inside a military base in Kidal, killing two people. Witnesses reported the shootings followed an argument between two men. An investigation is underway. The incident was noted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, World Bank Vice President for Africa Makhtar Diop and Cabo Verdean Minister of Finance, Planning, and Public Administration Cristina Duarte co-authored an op-ed for *The Huffington Post* titled "Closing the Gender Gap: Lessons Learned From Africa." The op-ed notes that Africa has been making significant progress in achieving gender equality, especially as many African countries have looked at economic development in conjunction with closing the gap between men and women. The op-ed can be read [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari responded to the criticism of his December budget speech, which included costly areas and opened his administration to accusations of graft. President Buhari said the miscalculations were embarrassing and disappointing and those responsible for the mistakes will not go unpunished. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, in his annual State of the Nation address, Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama told parliament his government will maintain strict financial discipline ahead of the presidential election scheduled for November. Ahead of the last elections in 2012, hikes in civil service wages led to a deficit and a fiscal crisis the current administration is still trying to address. In the November elections, President Mahama is expected to face a tough battle for a second term from opposition leader Nana Akufo-Addo. Details can be seen [here](#).

## Sub-Saharan Africa

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank issued a new report titled, "Inclusiveness of Growth and Shared Prosperity," analyzing Mauritius' growth pattern over the past decades and opportunities to accelerate progress toward achieving inclusive growth and shared prosperity. The study finds the rise in income inequality combined with lagging shared prosperity indicators have had adverse impacts on poverty in the country. It also encourages the adoption of policies designed to upgrade infrastructure, support research and development and innovation, advance public sector efficiency, and further improve the business environment. The report's findings were summarized [here](#).

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, MSF expressed concern that rising tensions and violence in Mozambique between government forces and the Renamo opposition have caused hundreds of people to flee to Malawi, potentially creating a humanitarian crisis due to overcrowded camps. According to MSF, overcrowding and a lack of sanitation has increased the risks for a malaria or cholera outbreak. The situation was detailed [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the progress made by the people of Comoros in preparations for presidential elections and polls for island governors, to be held on February 21<sup>st</sup>. Secretary-General Ban said people of Comoros had the collective responsibility to ensure that the elections would be peaceful, credible, and transparent, and pledged the U.N. and other international partners will continue to support the Comorian people in their efforts to consolidate democracy and promote socioeconomic development. His comments were captured [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Zimbabwean Government ordered diamond mining firms to cease operations in the eastern part of the country, claiming their mining licenses had expired. While Mines Minister Walter Chidhakwa announced the state-owned Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC) would take over mining operations in the region, he denied the government plans on nationalizing the mines. An article on the decision was published [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, South Africa cut its maize forecast in the face of drought and late plantings expected to negatively impact crop yields. According to the Crop Estimates Committee (CEC), the harvest is expected to produce 6.87 million tons of maize, representing the lowest levels of maize production since 2006 and a 31 percent decline from last year's yields. Details were posted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, during his visit to the DRC, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited IDP camps in the eastern part of the country. Secretary-General Ban reiterated his call for support from U.N. Member States to resolve the humanitarian crisis in the country, help put children back to school, and protect women and girls from sexual violence. While in the DRC, Secretary-General Ban will also visit Kinshasa for the opening session of the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference and to meet with President Joseph Kabila and other government officials. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa, DRC. Secretary-General Ban argued that while the region has seen violence and suffering that has kept many Great Lakes countries from reaching their potential, the people of the region must be given more opportunities to use their abundant natural resources to address the root causes of conflict and transform the region. In particular, Secretary-General Ban underscored the importance of private investment, promoting business activity, and enhancing regional economic cooperation and integration in the region. Excerpts from his remarks were highlighted [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma announced South Africa will withdraw its troops from peacekeeping operations in Darfur on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Members of the South African National Defense Force were first deployed in support of the AU-U.N. Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2008. The South African forces have attracted criticism, as some claim they have not done enough to protect civilians on the ground in Darfur. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank (AfDB) approved the 2016-2020 CSP for Seychelles, which aims to foster a more diversified economy with greater resilience to external shocks and job creation for youth. The approval comes with a \$39 million financing package to be complimented with trust resources, climate funds, and resources to be mobilized from parallel and co-financing mechanisms. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma announced elected officials in the country will receive salary increases of 4.4 percent, compared with inflation of more than six percent. President Zuma justified the level of the increase as in line with South Africa's current economic climate. More information can be accessed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma postponed a planned trip to Iran announced earlier this week. His office did not provide any reason for delaying the trip. The trip was thought to be centered on South Africa's desire to build an oil refinery in Pretoria that could process Iranian crude. The postponement of President Zuma's trip was announced [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, in a budget speech, South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan said South Africa will explore merging two of its state-owned airlines, South African Airways (SAA) and SA Express, and seek a minority equity partner for the company. According to Minister Gordhan, the goal of the merger would be to create a bigger and more operationally efficient airline. Excerpts from his speech were highlighted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, South African President Jacob Zuma condemned more violent student protests at universities across the country. Earlier this year, South Africa saw sporadic protests against university fee hikes. More recently, protests such as the one at North West University in which students set fire to a car and campus buildings, have sought to address broader issues with the education system. An article on the protests was published [here](#).

## **General Africa News**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, Chair of the U.N. Economic Commission of Africa (UNECA) High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa Thabo Mbeki briefed the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the need to address illicit outflows from the continent to maintain domestic resources for development. Chair Mbeki called on ECOSOC

to develop action plans to address a number of challenges related to illicit financial flows, including taxation, corruption, the function of the corporate sector, and the recovery of stolen assets. For more information, click [here](#).

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