



## ML Strategies Update

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## Africa Update

### Leading the News

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

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the United Nations (U.N.) World Health Organization (WHO) announced the approval of a rapid diagnostic test kit for use in the Ebola response in West Africa. The new diagnostic test can provide results in 15 minutes and correctly identified 92 percent of patients infected with Ebola during testing. Meanwhile, at U.N. headquarters, WHO Assistant Director-General Dr. Bruce Aylward and U.N. Special Envoy on Ebola Dr. David Nabarro briefed U.N. Member States on the need to maintain a robust international response to get the number of Ebola cases in West Africa to zero. More information was shared [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the White House announced that President Barack Obama will host Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for a meeting at the White House on February 27<sup>th</sup>. President Sirleaf's visit comes at a time of critical cooperation between the U.S. and Liberia, especially following President Obama's recent announcement that the U.S. is moving to the next phase of its Ebola response, which will be characterized by an intensive effort to reach zero Ebola cases in West Africa. The two leaders are expected to discuss a range of topics, including the ongoing Ebola response, the region's economic recovery plans, and other meetings of mutual interest. President Obama's meeting with President Sirleaf was announced [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) profiled Dr. Thierno Souleymane Diallo, a survivor of Ebola in Guinea, who is now championing Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) skills that are saving lives. Dr. Thierno contracted Ebola last August during his rotation in the maternity ward at the Ignace Deen National Hospital after exposure to a patient who was not showing any symptoms, but later tested positive for Ebola. After a 21-day isolation period and two more months spent recovering from the virus, Dr. Thierno participated in a USAID-led training for health care workers on proper IPC practices. The full story was posted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$45.6 million disbursement for debt relief in Liberia. The funds, coming from the Rapid Credit Facility and the Catastrophe Containment and Relief (CCR) Trust, will aid in the Ebola response by helping the Government of Liberia to cover urgent

budgetary needs and strengthen international reserves. A press release on the disbursement for Liberia was published [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ordered the lifting of the nationwide Ebola curfew put in place in August to prevent the further spread of the virus. President Sirleaf also ordered the reopening of the country's borders with its West African neighbors, including Sierra Leone. Liberian Assistant Minister of Health for Preventative Services and head of the country's Ebola response Tolbert Nyenswah said Liberia is returning to a more normal state in light of the recent decline in the number of Ebola cases and the reopening of schools. An update on the situation in Liberia was provided [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) held a briefing titled, "Ebola Rapid Diagnostic Tests: What Lies Ahead?" Panelists included Dr. Michael Kurilla, Director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Office of Biodefense, Research Resources, and Translational Research, Rosemary Humes, Diagnostic Science Advisor at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), and Gene Walther, Independent Consultant to the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation on Ebola Diagnostics. J. Stephen Morrison, Director of the CSIS Global Health Policy Center moderated the event. A recording can be watched [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank reported on the findings of a new cell-phone survey on long-term welfare concerns related to the economic recovery from the Ebola crisis in Liberia. According to the survey, nearly 20 percent of the Liberians who had stopped working since the start of the Ebola outbreak have returned to work in the last month. The World Bank hypothesized this improvement was mainly driven by a large increase in wage work in urban areas, but cautioned that a percentage of those working pre-crisis remain out of work and that those in self-employment continue to be the hardest hit by the Ebola outbreak. Additionally, the World Bank urged local authorities to increase support for the agricultural sector in order to mitigate food insecurity. The survey findings were analyzed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the WHO issued updated statistics on the Ebola situation in West Africa. A total of 99 new Ebola cases were reported in the week to February 12<sup>th</sup>, with Guinea reporting 35 cases, Sierra Leone reporting 63 cases, and Liberia reporting one new case. In addition, the WHO reported that engaging communities effectively remains a challenge in several geographical areas of both Guinea and Sierra Leone. Additional information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank announced plans to partner with the Liberian Government and the Government of Japan in a project to address the psychological effects of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. Supporting Psychosocial Health and Resilience in Liberia, a \$3 million project funded by Japan, will also promote long term psychological health care services in the country. For more details, click [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Craig Spencer, an American doctor who became infected with Ebola while treating patients in Guinea, authored an article on his experience for the *New England Journal of Medicine*. In hindsight, Dr. Spencer lamented on the portrayal of his case by the media and the politics that surrounded his experience with the disease, both in the U.S. and West Africa. The article can be read [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethics released a brief examining the U.S. and global response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. According to the Commission, the U.S. has a prudential and moral responsibility to respond to global health emergencies, but must do so far more effectively by strengthening infrastructure and capacity at home and abroad. The Commission argued that governments and public health organizations should employ the least restrictive means necessary, on the basis of the best available scientific evidence, in implementing restrictive public health measures, such as quarantines and travel restrictions. The brief can be downloaded [here](#).

## **Nigeria**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on Nigeria's Government to take all measures necessary to ensure the new election dates are upheld. The elections, originally scheduled for February 14<sup>th</sup>, were postponed to March 28<sup>th</sup> and April 11<sup>th</sup> due to an increase of Boko Haram attacks in the northeastern part of the country. For details, click [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announced that France will support a bid by the African Union (AU) to win approval from the U.N. Security Council for its coalition force for fighting Boko Haram. Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin have been authorized by the AU to combine forces in operations against the Nigerian Islamist militant group. France's support was noted [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, suicide bombings at two bus stations in Nigeria killed at least 27 people, according to police and hospital sources. The first suicide bomber struck in Potiskum, killing 17 people and wounding 53 others. A few hours later, the second explosion went off in Kano, resulting in ten more deaths. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan blamed Boko Haram for both attacks and said the Boko Haram insurgency would soon be over. President Jonathan's comments came as the Nigerian military launched a series of airstrikes against Boko Haram in several areas. The suicide bombings were reported [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, two soldiers were killed and four were wounded by a mine planted by Boko Haram in Niger's southeastern Diffa region. According to Niger's Defense Ministry, the two soldiers were killed after their patrol car drove over the mine. The incident in Niger was reported [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, security forces in Nigeria reported that a U.S. female citizen was kidnapped in Nigeria's central Kogi state. The victim was later identified as Reverend Phyllis Sortor of the Free Methodist Church, who was working as a teacher at Hope Academy. The Free Methodist Church indicated it was working with the U.S. State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to find and rescue Sortor. It was not immediately clear if Boko Haram was responsible for Sortor's abduction. For details, click [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) announced the resumption of food aid to thousands of refugees on the border between Nigeria and Niger after deliveries had been suspended out of fear of instigating Boko Haram attacks. The latest deliveries were anticipated to provide assistance for approximately 3,000 people. The WFP also indicated it plans to provide food aid to approximately 240,000 people in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad this year. An update from the WFP was provided [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the Chadian Army announced that soldiers deployed as part of operations against Boko Haram killed 207 militants on Tuesday in the Nigerian town of Gambaru, close to the border with Cameroon. One Chadian soldier was killed in the fighting and nine others were wounded. The statement from Chadian military officials was highlighted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, a Cameroonian soldier and an officer were killed when their vehicle ran over roadside bombs in northern Cameroon. Cameroonian officials in Maroua said the explosives probably came from a stock that Boko Haram stole last May when they attacked a Chinese workers' camp in Waza. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, *Reuters* provided an update on how U.S. Special Operations Forces are training African armies that will participate in the regional African taskforce to battle Boko Haram as part of the annual Flintlock counterterrorism exercise. As Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin prepare to launch an 8,700-strong taskforce next month, the U.S. is providing intelligence and equipment, including helmets and bullet proof vests. An article on Flintlock was published [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Twitter suspended an account belonging to Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram. The affiliated account, under the username @Urwatu\_Wutqa, had only tweeted 19 times, but was flagged for inappropriate content. The account was used by Boko Haram as a propaganda tool to publicize its claims of responsibility for various attacks. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, two people were killed after their cart rolled over a mine suspected to have been planted by Boko Haram militants. The event occurred in Zaourarm, a village west of Diffa near Niger's border with Nigeria. For more details on the event, click [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Nigeria's opposition presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, said in a speech that additional delays in the presidential election would be unacceptable. Further, Buhari said the opposition is prepared to take the government to court over the issue, should further delays occur. The postponed elections are slated to be held March 28<sup>th</sup>. Excerpts from Buhari's speech were highlighted [here](#).

## ***Egypt***

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, a total of 215 defendants were charged by a public prosecutor in Egypt with forming a militant group called Helwan Brigades. According to the prosecution, the group is responsible for killing six policemen, wounding several civilians, and possessing weapons and ammunition amid separate attacks in Cairo. The charges are the latest in a series of crackdowns by Egyptian authorities on Muslim Brotherhood affiliates. The case was described [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Egyptian activist Alaa Abdel Fattah was sentenced to five years in jail by an Egyptian court. Fattah was a leading figure in the revolt that took down Hosni Mubarak in 2011. An article on the court decision can be read [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the U.S. Department of State said the U.S. Government is deeply troubled by the new harsh sentences of three or five years in prison recently issued against 20 Egyptian activities, including Alaa Abdel Fatah, for organizing an unauthorized protest under Egypt's demonstrations law. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki urged the defendants to pursue all legal avenues to contest the verdict, including the right to appeal. She noted the U.S. believes that a country's long-term stability is strengthened by protecting the right of its citizens to peacefully express dissent and expressed concern the new sentences will have a chilling effect on key freedoms of expression and assembly. Her comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt signed off on an anti-terrorism law giving authorities far-reaching power to stop individuals and groups perceived to be a threat to national security. Human rights groups have expressed increasing concern over the Government's recent crackdowns on opposition parties and protests. With the new law, groups may be outlawed on charges such as harming national unity, disrupting public order, or disrupting public transportation. For details, click [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Egyptian security sources reported that 18 suspected Islamist militants were killed in the North Sinai by Apache helicopter attacks, while another 20 were killed and 28 wounded when the military bombed a residence, school, and youth center where militants were gathering near Sheikh Zuweid. Meanwhile, local news reported that unidentified gunmen had kidnapped the local director of a water distribution company from his home in the same town. Both stories were reported [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter spoke with Egyptian Minister of Defense General Sedki Sobhy. Secretary Carter expressed condolences to Egypt for victims of recent terrorist attacks and his desire to work closely with Minister Sobhy as the U.S. and Egypt cooperate to meet security challenges. Minister Sobhy thanked Secretary Carter for U.S. support to Egypt and expressed his views on the need to strengthen global coalitions against terrorism and extremism. The two leaders also reaffirmed their shared commitment to strengthening the security partnership between Egypt and the U.S. Their call was summarized [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, five bombs exploded in Cairo, killing one person and wounding five others, including policemen. According to the Interior Ministry, one bomb went off in the district of Imbaba, one in Alwaraq, and three in Mohandeseen. The explosions in Egypt were noted [here](#).

## ***Libya***

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) condemned the recent suicide car bombings in the eastern city of Al-Qubba. Three separate attacks occurred in the span of a single day. Reports indicated at least 45 were killed and many others were injured. UNSMIL's response to the attacks was shared [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State condemned the terrorist attacks in eastern Libya that killed at least 40 innocent victims. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said this latest terrorist attack underscores the need for all Libyan parties, including former general and national congress members, to participate in the U.N.-led dialogue convened by U.N. Special Representative Bernardino Leon. According to the State Department, those who choose not to participate are excluding themselves

from discussions that are critical to combatting terrorism, as well as to the overall peace, stability, and security of Libya. Spokesperson Psaki's comments were transcribed [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, the U.N. Security Council condemned the deadly bombing attacks in Al-Qubba, Libya, carried out by an affiliate of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). According to reports, the Friday morning attack came in three separate waves and killed at least 45 people while injuring scores more. The first bomb was detonated in a vehicle near a gas station and was followed by two other car explosions near the home of Libya's Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Government's security headquarters. The Security Council said ISIL must be defeated and those responsible for the bombings should be brought to justice. The Security Council's reaction to the bombings was posted [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, amid frustration over ongoing chaos in Libya, *Reuters* reported that former army General Khalifa Hiftar was gaining public support. General Hiftar, who combined his rogue troops with regular army forces to fight Islamist militants, is a polarizing figure among politicians and lawmakers in Libya. While some see him as a military asset, others believe General Hiftar seeks to take control of the government. Public opinion of General Hiftar was articulated [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, ISIL loyalists claimed responsibility for bombing attacks on the residence of the Iranian Ambassador in Libya, as well as the rocket strike on the Labraq airport. Following the attacks, analysts observed the West is growing increasingly concerned as those loyal to ISIL take advantage of the instability in Libya to expand their reach. For more information, click [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the internationally recognized government of Libya announced it would terminate all contracts with Turkish companies. While an explanation was not provided by Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni, Turkey has been accused of supporting the rival administration. An article on the announcement can be read [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, UNSMIL announced it is undertaking a series of urgent consultations with stakeholders in Libya to ensure the convening of the next round of peace talks as soon as possible. The UNSMIL announcement followed this week's deadly bombings in Al-Qubba, as well as the decision of Libya's House of Representatives to suspend its participation in the political dialogue. In an attempt to correct misconceptions about the talks, UNSMIL reported the talks have been conducted in a responsible and serious environment with a high sense of resolve and determination. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the President of Libya's elected House of Representatives Aguila Saleh proposed appointing General Khalifa Hiftar as the country's top army commander, allegedly with the backing of the legislative body. The proposal came as protestors in eastern Libya demanded the resignation of internationally recognized Prime Minister Abdallah Al-Thinni and his replacement by a military council led by General Hiftar. The proposal was described [here](#).

## **Somalia**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, Al Shabaab terrorists detonated a car bomb near the Central Hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia, and then set off another bomb inside the hotel, where politicians were gathered. The explosions killed at least ten people, including a lawmaker, and wounded two government ministers. Al Shabaab immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and indicated they had intentionally targeted government officials. In response, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud issued a statement vowing to continue the fight against terrorists. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in concert with the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSO), condemned the Al Shabaab attack on the Central Hotel in Mogadishu. U.N. officials reported that many of those killed and injured in the attack had gathered in the area for prayer. Excerpts from the U.N. statement on the attack were highlighted [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. State Department issued a statement condemning Al Shabaab's terrorist attack on the Central Hotel in Mogadishu. In addition to offering condolences to the families of the victims, the State Department said the murderous attack, which targeted government ministers and

Members of Parliament, highlighted that Al Shabaab stands only for death and destruction and is firmly opposed to the Somali people's efforts to build a secure and prosperous future. The State Department said the U.S. will continue to support the Somali people and their government in rebuilding their country. The full statement can be read [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Somalia-based terrorist group Al Shabaab released a video calling for attacks on Western shopping malls, including the Mall of America in U.S., West Edmonton Mall in Canada, and the Oxford Street shopping area in London. The video showed six minutes of graphic images and the terrorists celebrating the 2013 Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya, that killed more the 60 people. The video's narrator, whose face was covered by a kaffiyeh-type scarf, spoke with a British accent and appeared to be of Somali origin. The video was described [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said it was not aware of any specific terrorist plot targeting U.S. shopping malls. DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson said he takes the threat issued by Somalia-based terrorist group Al Shabaab against prominent shopping malls in the West seriously, while DHS Spokeswoman said DHS and the FBI had shared information about the Al Shabaab video threat with local law enforcement and private sector partners. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the U.S. Department of State acknowledged the recent Al Shabaab propaganda video urging its supporters to undertake Westgate-style attacks against shopping centers around the world, including in the U.S. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said in recent months, the FBI and DHS have worked closely with state and local public safety counterparts and members of the private sector to prevent and mitigate these types of threats. Like the FBI and DHS, the State Department said it was not aware of any specific credible plot against the Mall of America or any other domestic commercial shopping center. For details, click [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, President Barack Obama announced his intent to nominate Katherine Dhanani to serve as the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia since 1991. Dhanani currently serves as Director of the Office of Regional and Security Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. She has previously held positions at the U.S. Embassies in Zimbabwe, Gabon, Zambia, DRC, and the Republic of Congo (ROC). Dhanani's appointment was announced [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of State issued a press statement on President Barack Obama's nomination of Katherine Dhanani to serve as the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia since 1991. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said this historic nomination signals the deepening relationship between the U.S. and Somalia and also marks the progress of the Somali people toward emerging from decades of conflict. If confirmed, Ambassador Dhanani will lead the U.S. Mission to Somalia, currently based at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. As security conditions permit, the U.S. will consider increasing its diplomatic presence in Somalia and eventually reopening the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu. The full statement was posted [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Al Shabaab militants in Somalia claimed they had carried out a mortar attack on the presidential palace in Mogadishu. However, police reported that while mortars landed near the palace, it was unclear if there were any shells that landed inside the palace or if anyone had been hit. Captain Ali Hussein said police investigations were still ongoing. For more details, click [here](#).

### **South Sudan**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a new campaign to increase education opportunities for the 400,000 children in South Sudan whose learning has been interrupted by the ongoing political conflict. Called Back to Learning, the \$42 million campaign aims to reach children in all ten states over the next year. For details on the UNICEF campaign, click [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, UNICEF condemned the abduction of scores of boys by an armed group near Malakal, South Sudan. A UNICEF education team reported that 89 children were abducted in the community of Wau Shilluk in Upper Nile State, where thousands of people have been internally displaced by the ongoing conflict. According to witnesses, armed soldiers surrounded the community, searched homes, and abducted all boys older than 12. UNICEF's reaction to the kidnappings was posted [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Herve Ladsous briefed the U.N. Security Council on the situation in South Sudan. Under-Secretary-General Ladsous reported there is a worsening humanitarian situation and security in the country remains fragile as the tensions continue between South Sudan's rival factions. In addition, he reported the South Sudanese Government and the opposition do not seem to take the political negotiations seriously and appear unwilling to compromise. The briefing was summarized [here](#).

## **United States – Africa Relations**

### ***White House***

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, National Security Advisor Susan Rice met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry at the White House. Ambassador Rice reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the strategic partnership with Egypt and offered condolences to the Egyptian Government and people on recent terrorist attacks, including the murders of Egyptian security personnel and civilians in the Sinai Peninsula and 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians at the hands of ISIL-affiliated terrorists in Libya. She emphasized the importance of U.S.-Egyptian cooperation to help the Libyan people address threats from terrorism and to promote a unified Libyan Government that can represent the aspirations of all Libyans. Ambassador Rice also conveyed continuing U.S. concerns about human rights and the environment for political participation in Egypt. A readout of the meeting was shared [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, National Security Advisor Susan Rice met with Libyan Foreign Minister Mohamed al-Dayri at the White House. Ambassador Rice expressed condolences for the recent attacks in eastern Libya and all those killed by terrorist groups in the country. She reiterated strong U.S. support for the mediation efforts led by U.N. Special Representative for Libya Bernardino Leon and for a political resolution to the ongoing conflict in Libya. Ambassador Rice also urged the swift formation of a national unity government that can partner with the international community to fight terrorist groups and conclude Libya's transition process, including the completion of a new constitution and holding elections for a new government. The meeting was summarized [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, U.S. President Barack Obama notified Congress of his intent to extend the national emergency declared with respect to Libya for another year. The national emergency was first declared in 2011 in response to the actions of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi and his government against the people of Libya. In addition, there was a serious risk that Libyan state assets would be misappropriated by the Gadhafi regime if they were not protected. President Obama noted the current situation in Libya continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the U.S. and highlighted the need to protect against the diversion of assets or other abused by members of the Gadhafi family and other former regime officials. For details, click [here](#).

### ***United States Trade Representative***

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Michael Froman signed a U.S.-East African Community (EAC) Cooperation Agreement on Trade Facilitation and hosted a ministerial meeting with ministers from the EAC. Details can be viewed [here](#).

### ***State Department***

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, the State Department issued a fact sheet on State Department and USAID Supported Initiatives to Counter Violent Extremism. The fact sheet highlights Regional Violent Risk Assessments in Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, and Uganda, as well as work with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) focused on developing national, multi-stakeholder strategies to address violent extremism. The fact sheet can be accessed [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki confirmed that U.S. Special Envoy to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Russ Feingold will step down next month. A successor will be named and the U.S. Government will continue to devote sustained, high-level attention to the Great Lakes region. In addition, Spokesperson Psaki recognized Special Envoy Feingold for his efforts to lead

the international envoys' participation in the Kampala Talks and his contributions to the resolution of the M23 rebellion. Special Envoy Feingold also helped drive the international community's renewed focus and commitment to ending the threat posed by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, State Department Counselor Thomas Shannon was on foreign travel to Ghana, Mali, and Senegal. In Ghana, Counselor Shannon met with senior government officials to discuss regional and security cooperation and bilateral economic engagement, as well as young African leaders and members of the American business community. He also participated in the launch of the West African Network for Peacebuilding's (WANEP) program to support successful elections across the region. In Mali, Counselor Shannon held meetings with senior government officials on the peace process and national reconciliation, as well as with international partners in support of the negotiations in Algiers, Algeria. He then traveled to Senegal for meetings with senior government officials and the American business and donor communities on regional security and economic development issues. Counselor Shannon's travel was outlined [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announced the appointment of Randy Berry as the first-ever Special Envoy for the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Persons. In announcing Special Envoy Berry's appointment, Secretary Kerry noted he has previously serviced in Uganda, Egypt, and South Africa. In his new role, Special Envoy Berry will work to overturn laws that criminalize consensual same-sex conduct around the world, to build capacity to respond to violence against LGBT persons, and to support programs advancing the human rights of LGBT persons worldwide. Special Envoy Berry's appointment was announced [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda-Thomas Greenfield met with German Director General for Africa, Asia, Latin America, Near and Middle East Ambassador Dr. Clemens von Goetze in Washington, DC. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield also met with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, at the Department of State. Her meetings were listed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken opened the U.S.-Djibouti Bi-National Forum, at the Department of State. The opening of the Forum was noted [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of State John Kerry participated in the U.S.-Djibouti Bi-National Forum with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf at the Department of State. Secretary Kerry was joined by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Secretary Kerry's participation in the Forum was noticed [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield met with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf at the Department of State. The meeting was included on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be accessed [here](#).

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

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, to mark Rajiv Shah's last day as USAID Administrator, USAID employees reflected on their experiences working under Administrator Shah's leadership. USAID staff highlighted Administrator Shah's efforts to find new ways to bring capital to the developing world, including using USAID's Development Credit Authority (DCA) to mobilize local private capital in markets such as Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and South Africa. In addition, USAID staff applauded Administrator Shah's promotion of new model partnerships, such as Power Africa, which was launched in June 2013 to add more than 30,000 megawatts (MW) of cleaner, more efficient electricity generation capacity in sub-Saharan Africa and to increase electricity access for 60 million new homes and businesses. Additional reflections on Administrator Shah's legacy at USAID were shared [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Acting USAID Administrator Al Lenhardt met with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at USAID. The meeting was noticed [here](#).



## **Department of Defense**

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) detailed a five-day live and simulated close air support exercise recently conducted by French and U.S. coalition forces in Arta, Djibouti. Broken out into smaller exercises, the training program introduced both military partners to integrating and refining work tactics for time-sensitive procedures. Instructors evaluated the teams in locating targets on different terrain, as well as communications skills. An article on the exercise was published [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, *Reuters* reported on a U.S. Army Research Office project that is seeking to train elephants in South Africa to use their exceptional sense of smell to sniff out explosives, landmines, and poachers. The project was inspired by the behavior of elephants in Angola who have been observed avoiding heavily-mined areas resulting from decades of civil war. While U.S. army researchers have been involved in the project for five years, they do not anticipate the use of elephants in combat. The project was detailed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter hosted an honor cordon and meeting in honor of the Minister of Defense of Djibouti Hassan Darar Houffaneh at the Pentagon. During his meeting with Minister Houffaneh, Foreign Minister Mahmood Ali Youssouf, and other senior Djiboutian officials, Secretary Carter discussed regional security interests and bilateral issues, including the inaugural Bi-National Forum, counterterrorism and maritime operations, support for Camp Lemonnier, and the initiation of a partnership between Djibouti and the Kentucky National Guard via the State Partnership Program. Secretary Carter also highlighted the U.S. and Djiboutian shared commitment to fighting terrorism throughout the Horn of Africa and coordinated efforts to defeat Al Shabaab in Somalia. More information on Minister Houffaneh's visit was shared [here](#).

## **Overseas Private Investment Corporation**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) highlighted Alistair James Co., which built a logistics company and hired 248 full-time workers in Tanzania with the support of OPIC financing. In a region where limited rail lines and airports make businesses and local aid operations heavily reliant on trucking, Alistair James built the company in Dar es Salaam eight years ago to offer a safe and reliable means of transport around Tanzania and several neighboring countries. The business has grown to a fleet of 110, and has become a major employer offering competitive wages and extensive training. For more information, click [here](#).

## **Millennium Challenge Corporation**

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) CEO Dana Hyde and Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom welcomed Liberian Finance Minister Amara Konneh to the Department of State for a MCC compact development signing ceremony marking MCC's engagement with Liberia post-Ebola. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield also participated in the ceremony. The ceremony formalized \$2.8 million in compact development funds for Liberia as it begins its post-Ebola recovery, helping it achieve lasting economic growth. More information can be seen [here](#).

## **Congress**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, House State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Kay Granger (R-TX) sent a letter to President Barack Obama pushing the White House to release weapons systems, especially F-16 fighter jets, to Egypt, as the region eyes the military intentions of ISIL. Congresswoman Granger pointed out that Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi retaliated against ISIL with F-16 strikes after ISIL fighters beheaded 21 Egyptian Christians in Libya. Excerpts from the letter were highlighted [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Senate State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee received testimony from Secretary of State John Kerry on the State Department's FY16 budget request. During the hearing, Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) asked Secretary about efforts to strengthen civil society with the number of elections on the continent this year. He also asked how the State Department will continue

its robust engagement with Africa on counterterrorism efforts. Secretary Kerry discussed allocations in the FY16 budget request for Africa programs, including \$76 million for Power Africa, \$10 million for the Young Africa Leaders Initiative (YALI), and \$110 million for the Africa Peacekeeping Rapid Response Initiative. A webcast of the hearing can be watched [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing with Secretary of State John Kerry to discuss the State Department's FY16 budget request. During the hearing, Secretary Kerry cited the U.S. response to the Ebola crisis as an example of how important it is for the U.S. to remain a global leader. He also highlighted last year's U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, as well as the State Department's efforts to combat AIDS in Africa. The hearing was recorded [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, The House State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee received testimony from Secretary of State John Kerry on the State Department's FY16 budget request. During the hearing, Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) raised the Power Africa initiative and suggested that coal could also be a solution for Africa's energy needs. Secretary Kerry also discussed the U.S. response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. More information can be found [here](#).

### **North Africa**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported over 41,000 people have fled Darfur as a result of conflict this year alone. A U.N. spokesperson said the number of those in need of humanitarian aid could be much larger due to the lack of access to parts of Jebel and Marra, where the heaviest fighting is thought to be taking place. In a press briefing, OCHA called on all parties in Darfur to respect international humanitarian law and allow aid organizations access to people in need. More information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the IMF published the recent evaluation provided by Jean-Francois Dauphin, the Mission Chief for Morocco. In his report, Chief Dauphin said that the environment in Morocco remains difficult, but the Government has made significant efforts to maintain a stable economy. Through these efforts, Morocco achieved a reduction in the fiscal and external debt. In his recommendations to reduce economic vulnerabilities, Chief Dauphin said that reforms to strength competitiveness are necessary. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Mohamed Ali Aroui, spokesman for Tunisia's Interior Ministry, said that nearly 100 suspected Islamist militants had been arrested over the course of three days. A cell was allegedly uncovered in the city of Hammam Ghazaz. For details on the arrests in Tunisia, click [here](#).

### **East Africa**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein denounced the recent attacks against people with albinism in Tanzania. Most recently, an albino baby was murdered and mutilated after being kidnapped from his mother. Commissioner Al Hussein said that attacks against albino people have killed 75 people in Tanzania since 2000 and appear to be increasing. He demanded an end to such acts. Details on the attacks can be read [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the IMF concluded an East African Regional Technical Assistance Center (EAST AFRITAC) harmonization workshop in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Participants included officials representing the EAC and national statistical offices of Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The economic statistics strategies for each country were presented and discussed and East AFRITAC provided additional training on compiling gross domestic product (GDP) data. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), and the U.S.-based National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) announced a partnership centered on linking gender and energy access. As part of the partnership, the three entities have organized a workshop to launch a project to develop an ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access and its Implementation Strategy. The workshop was held on February 24<sup>th</sup> in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. A press release was issued [here](#).

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kenyan Minister of Planning and Devolution Anne Waiguru said the government is now building permanent housing in the Kenyan slum of Kibera, which is infamous for its overcrowding, poverty, and lack of sanitation. The Kibera slums are home to approximately one fifth of Nairobi's population. Also included as part of the government's development plan for Kibera are tarred roads, mobile clinics, police stations, street lights, and Wifi service, which are intended to create a new minimum standard of living in Kenya. Details can be seen [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the World Bank highlighted its investments to support Kenya's interest in ramping up its use of geothermal power. Kenya is currently investing in 280 MW of geothermal energy as part of its accelerated green energy growth program. According to Kenyan officials, these investments are expected to lower electricity bills by over 30 percent, which will help to decrease the cost of doing business in Kenya. Additional information was provided [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, eight sections of an anti-terrorism law passed in 2014 were thrown out by a Kenyan court. A provision allowing the number of days a suspect can be held without charges to go from 90 to 360 was upheld. Details on the court decision were posted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, *Business Daily* highlighted investments in Kenya's dairy industry, which is expected to more than double in size over the next ten years. Just this week, billionaire Deepak Kamani announced plans to build a fresh and powdered milk plant in Nyahururu. Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote also recently unveiled plans to set up a factory in Kenya to produce dry milk for local and export markets. More information on Kenya's dairy market can be viewed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* published a study finding that the growth of farming in East Africa could attract more rats infected with diseases like the plague to population centers and could increase the risk of epidemics. The study linked the increase in corn fields to a twentyfold increase in the rat population in northern Tanzania. As farming in Tanzania has expanded by roughly 70 percent over the past few decades, the number of plague-carrying rodents has almost doubled in corn fields as compared with neighboring wilderness areas. Details can be accessed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, six schoolchildren and their teacher were killed after lightning struck a school in northwestern Tanzania. Eleven more students were injured in the accident. Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said he was shocked and saddened and called for calm from teachers and students. The incident was reported [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced a partnership with Eataly to support Ethiopian women in shipping locally produced jams to Rome. The Ethiopian cooperative was recently able to ship 4,000 jars of jam to Italy, resulting in extra income for female entrepreneurs and a stronger local economy. An article on the initiative can be read [here](#).

## **West Africa**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, VMK, a Congolese company that made Africa's first smartphone, launched its West African expansion plan, starting with Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. The new store will exclusively sell products from the VMK range, marking the beginning of the Congolese company's expansion beyond its borders. The Abidjan VMK store, which created ten jobs, will be an addition to the company's first-ever store in Brazzaville, ROC, which was opened in partnership with mobile telecom giant MTN. VMK plans to expand to five West African countries by the end of the year. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the IMF announced it had concluded Article IV consultations with Gabon on February 18<sup>th</sup>. In a press release, the IMF stated that while growth in Gabon has been strong, fiscal burdens have increased. For the full report, click [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the FAO announced the launch of a new effort to boost food safety and working conditions in West Africa. The new FAO program is focused on promoting the FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique, which seeks to transform the kiln-drying method traditionally used for smoking fish into a healthier and more environmentally friendly process. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Guinea's President Alpha Conde replaced the government minister in charge of organizing the upcoming presidential election with General Bourema Conde. No details were provided for the sudden change. General Conde replaces Alassane Conde, who held the position since 2010. Alassane will continue to hold a ministerial position and advisory role to President Conde. The full story can be viewed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Togo announced it would hold its presidential election on April 15<sup>th</sup>. President Faure Gnassingbe will likely seek a third term despite appeals by the opposition for him to step down. Details on the election in Togo can be seen [here](#).

### **Sub-Saharan Africa**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank completed a paper on climate change and water resources planning, development, and management in Zimbabwe, at the request of the Zimbabwean Government. The paper reviews the broad links between climate and the hydrological cycle and water management and case studies from cities, irrigation and hydropower projects, and recommends a range of adaptation measures. Among its recommendations, the paper encourages policymakers to develop an integrated climate change strategy for Zimbabwe's water and agricultural sectors and a plan for expanding water supply and infrastructure. The paper can be downloaded [here](#).

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, who also serves as the current Chairman of the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), celebrated his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. Despite a recent fall at Harare Airport that raised questions about President Mugabe's health, supporters recognized his birthday by expressing their support for him to serve out his full term until 2018. Lavish celebrations, costing more than \$1 million, are planned for next weekend in Victoria Falls. President Mugabe's birthday was noted [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the WFP announced the delivery of a first round of emergency supplies to more than 288,000 people in flood-affected Malawi, providing much needed relief among continuing rains. According to the WFP, more than 2,700 metric tons of food was distributed to 12 districts late last week and more than 200 metric tons of relief items were delivered by air to people cutoff by flood waters. The situation was described [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, President Edgar Lungu of Zambia said his administration will not allow mining jobs to be lost after Barrick Gold closes its Lumwana copper mine. The announcement comes after over 2,000 miners stopped work to demand answers about their future employment. For details, click [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, Harmony Gold, a mining company in South Africa, said that all 486 miners trapped underground following a fire had been rescued. The fire occurred 2.3 kilometers below ground during work on an air cooler in the Kusasaletu mine west of Johannesburg. The incident was reported [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the MTN group and the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) announced a new partnership to boost sustainable innovation in Africa. Over the next three years, MTN will invest in the construction of an innovation hub at UCT GSB. The collaboration will combine the action-learning and research strengths of UCT GSB with MTN's technological expertise and resources to create mobile apps and programs for educational, medical, and economic empowerment, as well as to promote entrepreneurship and small business growth. The project was detailed [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported an upsurge in violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) has triggered fresh displacement inside the country and across the border in the DRC. According to UNHCR, an estimated 30,000 people have fled their homes and found refuge in other parts of the CAR since January, while the DRC has registered more than 19,000 refugees who have arrived in Equateur Province. In response to the situation, UNHCR has distributed relief items, including blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, and plastic sheeting to displaced families. An update on the situation in the CAR was provided [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, South African Environmental Affairs Minister announced the South African Government will give a five-year reprieve to some top polluters, including power utility Eskom, to meet new air emissions standards. The announcement will allow certain entities until 2020 to improve their

facilities to curb emissions. South Africa is the continent's worst polluter, as it currently obtains much of its energy from coal-fired power plants. The full story is available [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Zimbabwe's state utility ZESA said four generating units at the Hwange power station had broken down, worsening power cuts in the country. Hwange power station, which is powered by coal, has six units with a capacity to produce 920 MW. However, aging equipment and constant breakdowns have result in far less electricity production. Zimbabwe has a shortfall of installed generation capacity and supplies 1,200 MW, nearly half the peak demand of 2,200 MW, resulting in daily power cuts. More information can be viewed [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the World Bank published its latest economic update for Rwanda. According to the report, the country's economy recovered in the first three quarters of 2014 and is predicted to continue in this trajectory. However, the report also indicated that Rwanda will have to address agricultural challenges such as pests, weather, and plant disease. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the DRC launched its first strikes as part of an offensive against Rwandan Hutu rebels. Ministers had previously pledged to target FDLR militants after they failed to meet a deadline to disarm in January. The first attack occurred in South Kivu province, although some reports indicate rebels were alerted to the attack in advance. The DRC Government reported that troops did not meet any resistance when they captured the FDLR position and ten weapons were seized. Details were posted [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, details on the mass leak of South African intelligence were detailed in the press. Among the revelations that are now causing diplomatic tensions include a cable stating that the U.S. pressured South Africa into spying on Iran. In the past, South Africa and Iran have had strong diplomatic and commercial ties. There has been no response on the leaks by the Government. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, in a budget speech, South African Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene said South Africa will raise income taxes for the first time in 20 years. While likely to be unpopular with the public, Minister Nene proposed raising personal income tax by 1 percent for everyone earning more than \$15,863. In addition, Minister Nene cut South Africa's economic growth forecast from 2.5 percent to 2 percent and increased budget deficit estimates from 3.6 percent of GDP to 3.9 percent of GDP. Excerpts from Minister Nene's address were highlighted [here](#).

### **General Africa News**

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Governors of the AfDB released an official list of candidates for the election of the next President of the AfDB. The candidates include Akinwumi Adesina of Nigeria, Sufian Ahmed of Ethiopia, Jaloul Ayed of Tunisia, Kordje Bedoumra of Chad, Cristina Duarte of Cabo Verde, Samura Kamara of Sierra Leone, Thomas Sakala of Zimbabwe, and Birama Boubacar Sidbie of Mali. More information can be found [here](#).

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, U.K. research firm YouGov published the results of a survey intended to identify the most dangerous destinations for female travelers. Egypt ranked fifth because of political instability that has given rise to cases of sexual assault after the 2011 revolution. South Africa ranked seventh for robberies at gunpoint, rape, and sexual assault cases, while Morocco ranked eight for harassment and Kenya took the tenth spot for sexual violence against women. Details were shared [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) held a meeting at U.N. headquarters on the role of the extractive industry in Africa. According to OSAA, Africa has an abundant natural resource endowment, boasting 12 percent of the world's oil reserves, 40 percent of its gold, and 60 percent of its uncultivated arable land. Despite strong performance in this sector, African countries have not yet fully harnessed the full potential to use their natural resources to promote inclusive economic growth. The meeting was summarized [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Bloomberg and the AfDB announced the launch of the Bloomberg African Bond Index (ABABI) through the African Financial Markets Initiative (AFMI). Calculated by Bloomberg Indexes, this composite index is comprised of the Bloomberg South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, local currency

sovereign indices. The ABABI is intended to provide transparent and credible benchmark indices in order to provide investors with a tool to measure and track the performance of Africa's bond markets. A press release was issued [here](#).

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, Merck & Co, a U.S. drug company, agreed to share their HIV drug with the international non-profit Medicines Patent Pool (MPP). In this arrangement, the company's drug raltegravir will be added to a group of patents that have been shared with generic manufacturers by other drug companies. With access to this patent, manufacturers can produce affordable drugs for areas where HIV is most prominent in Africa. Details on the agreement can be seen [here](#).

On February 26<sup>th</sup>, World Bank disaster risk specialist Daniel Kill noted the World Bank is in talks with other development finance institutions, including the AfDB and the Islamic Development Bank, focused on raising \$500 million to modernize weather and flood forecasting services in Africa. According to Kill, hydro-meteorological services in Africa are badly strained and are in need of new infrastructure and improved maintenance. More information can be viewed [here](#).

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