



ML Strategies Update

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Africa Update

[Leading the News](#)

Cote d'Ivoire

On March 13th, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) gunmen armed with assault rifles stormed the beach hotels in Grand-Bassam, a region popular with Ivoirian and Western tourists. According to initial statements by Interior Minister Hamed Bakayoko, 15 civilians and three members of the special forces were killed and three others were wounded. The victims included foreign citizens from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, France, Germany, and Mali. Three militants were also killed in the clashes. Following the attack, President Alassane Ouattara declared three days of mourning for the country, which has never before been attacked by Al Qaeda. The attack was detailed [here](#).

On March 13th, United Nations (U.N.) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the terrorist attacks on Cote d'Ivoire's beach resort town of Grand-Bassam. Secretary-General Ban reiterated the U.N.'s commitment to standing with the people of the Cote d'Ivoire and extended his full support to the Government in its efforts to bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice. The attack was also condemned by the U.N. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The U.N.'s reaction to the attack was posted [here](#).

On March 13th, the U.S. Department of State condemned the terrorist attack in Cote d'Ivoire in the Grand-Bassam. The State Department noted the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan is making every effort to account for the welfare of American citizens in the area and is continuing to monitor the situation and provide updated information to the U.S. citizen community as it becomes available. Further, the State Department noted Cote d'Ivoire is an important regional partner to the U.S. and the U.S. Government stands ready to support the Ivoirian Government as it investigates the attack. A statement was issued [here](#).

On March 14th, the U.N. Security Council condemned the AQIM attacks in Grand-Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire, expressing sympathy for the families and governments affected. The Security Council also expressed its solidarity with Cote d'Ivoire and the countries in the region fighting terrorism, and stressed the need to intensify regional and international efforts to combat violent extremism, which may be conducive to terrorism. The Security Council's response to the attack can be viewed [here](#).

On March 14th, U.S. National Security Council (NSC) Spokesperson Ned Price condemned the terrorist attack in Grand-Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire, extending condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed and commending the bravery of Ivoirian and French security personnel who responded to the situation and prevented

even worse loss of life. As the State Department continued its coordination with partners on the ground to verify the safety of American citizens in Cote d'Ivoire, Spokesperson Price said the U.S. stands with the Ivoirian people and will remain a steadfast partner to the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, as well as regional governments and international partners, in the fight against terrorists in West Africa. The NSC's reaction to the attack was articulated [here](#).

On March 14th, France deployed Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, along with a counterterrorism team, to Cote d'Ivoire to offer support after the AQIM attack on Grand-Bassam. One French national was among the victims in the attack. An estimated 18,000 French citizens live in Cote d'Ivoire, which is a former French colony. The French response to the attack was outlined [here](#).

On March 15th, *The Wall Street Journal* noted the recent attack on Cote d'Ivoire's Grand-Bassam could be evidence of a shift in AQIM's tactics. For more than a decade, AQIM has focused its attacks on the poorest and weakest countries in Africa, including Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. AQIM's most recent attack on Cote d'Ivoire, which is largely viewed as an African success story, shows a pivot to attacks on flourishing states likely aimed at exacting the highest possible toll of civilian lives. The shift was analyzed [here](#).

On March 15th, *Quartz Africa* reported the death toll in the March 13th attack on Grand-Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire had risen to 22 people, including six assailants. In the wake of the attack, analysts noted it was possible the attacks could have negative impacts on the progress Cote d'Ivoire has made since 2000 in recovering from two civil wars and building a fast-growing economy. There was especially concern the attack could lead to a decline in tourism and weakened bonds, resulting in a loss of investor confidence. Additional analysis was provided [here](#).

Libya

On March 10th, U.N. sanctions monitors delivered their annual report to the U.N. Security Council. The monitors expressed concern that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has greatly expanded its control over territory in Libya as the country has become a more attractive place for foreign fighters arriving from Sudan and Tunisia. The monitors acknowledged foreign militaries are increasingly conducting military operations against ISIL in Libya, but cautioned that growing regional and international interference could provoke further polarization in the country. Excerpts from the briefing were highlighted [here](#).

On March 11th, the U.N. Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) called for humanitarian ceasefires to allow for the safe exit of civilians trapped in fighting areas in Benghazi, and in particular in the Qanfunda and Qawarsha neighborhoods where shortages of electricity, food, and medical supplies were reported. UNSMIL also reminded all parties of their obligations to respect international humanitarian and human rights law at all times. UNSMIL's input was shared [here](#).

On March 11th, European Union (EU) foreign ministers meeting in Brussels discussed imposing new sanctions on Nouri Abusahmain, the head of Libya's General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli, Khalifa al-Ghwell, the head of one of Libya's two rival governments, and Guila Saleh, the president of Libya's internationally recognized parliament based in Tobruk. The sanctions, which would reportedly include travel bans and asset freezes, would be implemented to punish those who have blocked the U.N.'s efforts to form a government of national unity in Libya. The discussion was reported [here](#).

On March 11th, U.S. President Barack Obama criticized European allies for their lack of support in addressing the crisis in Libya. President Obama noted both the U.K. and France participated in military action in Libya in 2011 to remove Muammar Gaddafi from power, but have since failed to take action to prevent the deterioration of stability and security in the country. President Obama's comments were captured [here](#).

On March 11th, U.S. Department of State Spokesperson John Kirby highlighted the meeting of the Libyan Political Dialogue held on March 10th-11th in Tunisia and reaffirmed the Libyan political agreement is the only legitimate framework for bringing an end to the political crisis and military conflict in Libya. Spokesperson Kirby urged the new government's leaders to begin their work in Tripoli rapidly and also welcomed the political dialogue's expression of support for Prime Minister al-Sarraj and the Presidency Council. He urged all public bodies in Libya to prepare for the immediate, orderly, and peaceful handover of power to the Presidency Council and other Government of National Accord officials. Spokesperson Kirby's comments were transcribed [here](#).

On March 13th, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and the U.S. and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy welcomed the statement of the members of the Libyan Political Dialogue, gathered in Tunis, Tunisia. The leaders articulated full support for the Government of National Accord as proposed by the Presidency Council and acknowledged a statement of support signed by a majority of members of the Libyan House of Representatives (HOR). Further, they called for an immediate and peaceful handover of power and warned those who undermine the political process in Libya may face sanctions. Additional feedback can be viewed [here](#).

On March 14th, the U.N. Security Council reiterated its support for the Libyan national unity government and renewed its call on U.N. Member States to end official contact with parallel institutions that claim legitimate authority but are outside the December 17th political agreement. Additionally, the Security Council welcomed the meeting of the Libyan Political Council in Tunisia and urged the Government of National Accord should be seated in Tripoli as soon as measures have been taken to ensure adequate security. Details can be accessed [here](#).

On March 14th, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said a military operation in Libya will only be permissible if the U.N. Security Council approves it. Further, Minister Lavrov advocated for an operation against terrorists in Libya that is unambiguously defined so as not to allow perverted and false interpretations. His comments were captured [here](#).

On March 15th, the U.N. Security Council voted to extend the mandate of UNSMIL through June 15th. The short extension of the mission's mandate is intended to allow UNSMIL to continue working with stakeholders in Libya to launch the Government of National Accord. The resolution extending UNSMIL's mandate also requested a report within 60 days on consultations with Libyan authorities on recommendations for UNSMIL's support to the next phases of the Libyan political transition process. For details, click [here](#).

Nigeria

On March 16th, Cameroonian soldiers killed 20 Boko Haram fighters during a raid in the Nigerian town of Djibrila, close to the border with Cameroon. The operation was executed by the multinational task force tasked with fighting the Islamist extremists. According to the Cameroonian Defense Ministry, the raid freed 12 hostages and also captured munitions and armored vehicles that Boko Haram fighters were using to carry out attacks. An article on the raid was published [here](#).

On March 16th, two female suicide bombers attacked a mosque in the Ummarari village outside of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The first explosion went off inside the mosque, while the second occurred a few minutes later near the building. More than 20 people were killed in the blasts. The attackers were thought to be connected to Boko Haram. The bombing was reported [here](#).

On March 16th, U.S. Department of State Deputy Spokesperson Mark Toner condemned the terrorist bombing at a mosque in Maiduguri, Nigeria. He said dozens of people were killed and injured in the attack. Deputy Spokesperson Toner observed Boko Haram continues to commit vicious attacks against innocent civilians, including children, and has repeatedly demonstrated a disregard for the lives of the tens of thousands it has killed, raped, and injured, and the millions it has displaced in the Lake Chad Basin. He also said the U.S. will continue to support those affected by Boko Haram's violence through ongoing humanitarian assistance and victim support, and remains committed to partners in the Lake Chad Basin region who are leading the fight against Boko Haram. His comments were transcribed [here](#).

Burundi

On March 10th, the U.S. announced more than \$31 million in additional life-saving humanitarian assistance for refugees from Burundi, Congolese refugees living in Burundi, and others in Burundi who are food insecure. The new funding brings the total U.S. humanitarian assistance for the regional response to the Burundi crisis to more than \$86 million since the start of the crisis in 2015. The new funding will allow the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide new refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia with basic life-saving assistance, including shelter, access to clean water and sanitation facilities, health care, essential household items, programs that protect children, and activities to prevent and

respond to gender-based violence. Inside Burundi, it will support the World Food Programme's (WFP) operation providing food vouchers, as well as locally and regionally purchased food, to both Congolese refugees in Burundi and citizens of Burundi affected by the current political crisis and natural disasters. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 14th, the EU suspended direct financial support for the Burundian Government after concluding that it had not done enough to facilitate a solution to the political conflict stemming from President Pierre Nkurunziza running for and winning a third term that has left more than 400 people dead. The EU, which funds about half of Burundi's annual budget, said it had concluded talks with government officials and the commitments proposed were unsatisfactory. The EU clarified, however, that it will continue to provide support for emergency assistance without channeling resources through the government. Details were posted [here](#).

On March 15th, Burundian Foreign Minister Alain Nyamitwe responded to the EU's decision to suspend some aid to the Burundian Government. Foreign Minister Nyamitwe said the Burundian Government is disappointed with announcement, but said only Burundians will be able to resolve the political tensions in the country. Further, he said foreign assistance is not the life blood of Burundi and that while the country would be glad to receive EU assistance, it can still survive without it. Minister Nyamitwe's comments can be seen [here](#).

Tunisia

On March 14th, investigations into last week's attack on Ben Guerdan, Tunisia by Islamist extremists uncovered that most of the militants appeared to have already been in the town, with a few brought in from Libya. Investigators also reported that arms caches were deposited around the city before the assault. While investigations are ongoing, the incident highlights the risk Tunisia faces from both homegrown terrorists, as well as ISIL fighters across the border in Libya. An article on the status of the investigations can be read [here](#).

Uganda

On March 11th, the U.S. Department of State reiterated its ongoing concerns with Uganda's post-election environment, in which the government and its security forces have persistently violated the rights and freedoms of Ugandan citizens and the media. The State Department expressed its position that the continued detention of opposition figures without legal justification, the ongoing harassment of opposition supporters, interference in legal challenges to the election results, and the intimidation of Uganda's media are unacceptable activities in a free and democratic society. It also pointed out that recently proposed legislation to enhance the power of the government to restrict media is an attempt to further limit the country's political space. A full statement was shared [here](#).

On March 14th, Ugandan police reported at least 22 people have been killed in election-related violence and ten others wounded since the disputed February 18th presidential election. Opposition party Forum for Democratic Change accused the government of stoking violence in areas where opposition candidate Kizza Besigye had a strong showing against incumbent President Yoweri Museveni. Nearly 150 houses were also burned during clashes between supporters of rival candidates. The situation was detailed [here](#).

Benin

On March 13th, reacting to Benin's Constitutional Court's confirmation of the results in the March 6th presidential election, opposition candidate Sebastien Ajavon said he will support businessman Patrice Talon in his runoff race against Prime Minister Lionel Zinsou. While the move was not surprising, as Prime Minister Zinsou's main opponents have previously vowed to support whoever came out on top in the first round against President Thomas Boni Yayi's chosen candidate, the development is expected to cause problems for Prime Minister Zinsou in the runoff. Ajavon finished third in the election with 22.07 percent of the vote, compared to 27.11 percent for Prime Minister Zinsou and 23.52 percent for Talon. More information was posted [here](#).

West Africa Ebola Outbreak

On March 16th, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its statistics related to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The WHO noted human-to-human transmission linked to the two most recent cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone would be declared to have ended on March 17th. The Ebola outbreak in Liberia was declared over on January 14th,

while Guinea was declared Ebola-free on December 29th. The WHO noted it is now working with the ministries of health in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and other partners to deliver a package of essential services to safeguard the health of the estimated more than 10,000 survivors. The latest developments can be seen [here](#).

On March 16th, former White House Ebola Response Coordinator Ron Klain authored an article for *Democracy* outlining six recommendations for the next president, drawn from his experience leading the U.S. Ebola response under President Barack Obama. In the future, Klain argued for better sounding of the alarms for public health crises, more support for behavioral changes to slow the spread of disease, and the creation of a new Public Health Emergency Management Agency. The full article can be accessed [here](#).

On March 17th, following the completion of 42 days without any new cases of Ebola, the WHO announced the most recent flare up of the virus in Sierra Leone has ended. While the WHO marked the declaration as a major milestone in the fight against Ebola, WHO officials cautioned that more flare ups are possible, especially as it has been discovered the virus can persist in the eyes, central nervous system, and bodily fluids of some survivors. The end of Ebola transmission in Sierra Leone was announced [here](#).

United States – Africa Relations

White House

On March 14th, NSC Spokesperson Ned Price issued a statement welcoming the significant steps undertaken by the Government of South Africa over the past several weeks to restore market access for U.S. poultry, pork, and beef products. He expressed appreciation for the strong collaboration between U.S. and South African trade and health experts to address outstanding concerns. Noting that South Africa has now met all of the benchmarks to remain eligible for African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) benefits, Spokesperson Price announced President Barack Obama has issued a proclamation revoking the impending suspension of benefits on March 15th. His full statement was published [here](#).

Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

On March 17th, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) announced it is establishing a process to petition the Obama Administration to review a country's eligibility for AGOA benefits outside of the normal cycle. The most recent reauthorization of AGOA requires President Barack Obama to lay out specific requirements for such a petition process, an authority which President Obama has designated to USTR. An interim final rule was published [here](#).

State Department

On March 11th, Secretary of State John Kerry issued a statement congratulating the people of Mauritius on the celebration of their 48th anniversary of independence on March 12th. Secretary Kerry said Mauritius has long been a valued friend and partner of the U.S. and shares a deep commitment to democracy. He said the country's political stability and history of transparent transitions of power have enabled Mauritius to advance economically and improve the standard of living of its citizens. Secretary Kerry's statement can be read [here](#).

On March 11th, State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said the U.S. is appalled by the attacks on civilians, sexual- and gender-based violence, mass pillage, and destruction of property carried out by the Government of South Sudan and allied forces documented in a U.N. report. Spokesperson Kirby noted the State Department has repeatedly called on the Government of South Sudan and the opposition to end human rights violations and live up to their commitment to establish a transitional government as soon as possible. Additionally, Spokesperson Kirby announced U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan Donald Booth will join the Human Rights Council next week to discuss an appropriation response. Details can be seen [here](#).

On March 11th, the State Department noted applications to participate in the fifth annual Global Business Institute program, a public-private partnership between the State Department and the Coca-Cola Company, are due on March 20th. The scholarship program will bring 100 entrepreneurs from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian territories, Pakistan, and Tunisia to the U.S. for a month-long summer business program at the Indiana

University Kelly School of business. The course will teach American international business practices and successful strategies for competing in the global economy. More information was posted [here](#).

Department of Defense

On March 10th, the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) concluded a course for more than 15 members of the Djiboutian Armed Forces (FAD) focused on open source intelligence research techniques. The course curriculum consisted of research versus collection, types of open sources, risk assessment and maintaining security, developing research strategies, evaluating sources, and use of tools. For details, click [here](#).

On March 11th, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) highlighted its partner capacity building efforts throughout the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the advances the region has made in maritime security endeavors. This progress was evidenced during a February hijacking incident, in which collaboration between four West African nations, with assistance from the U.S. and France, allowed the African navies to track and interdict the vessel, free 18 hostages, and apprehend the pirates. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On March 14th, in response to questions regarding whether or not the U.S. as it war with Somalia-based extremist group Al Shabaab, Lieutenant Colonel Joe Sowers, a Pentagon spokesperson, said that while the U.S. Government has not deemed Al Shabaab to be an associated force in the war against Al Qaeda, the airstrike carried out against the group last week was authorized by the 2011 authorization for the use of military force (AUMF), as were three smaller airstrikes carried out by the U.S. military and targeting Al Shabaab last year. Lieutenant Colonel Sowers' remarks were recorded [here](#).

On March 14th, AFRICOM reported last month it had signed a three-year agreement with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) outlining and extending the support relationship between the two entities. DLA sources provide nearly all of the consumable items AFRICOM needs, including food, fuel and energy, uniforms, medical supplies, and construction materials. The agreement was detailed [here](#).

On March 17th, AFRICOM noted U.S. Marines with Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Crisis Response-Africa (SPMAGTF-CR-AF) are now in their fifth week working alongside Senegalese armed forces partners in mentoring and devising a demining course for the country. The Marines, who are at the Camp Moussa engineering base at the Government of Senegal's request, have designed exercises focused on the tools used to move ordnances and the use of reconnaissance kits. Details were shared [here](#).

Department of Justice

On March 11th, federal prosecutor David Jones asked the Second Circuit to reconsider Sudan's appeal of a \$315 million judgment in favor of the victims of the 2000 USS Cole bombing, aligning with the Government of Sudan's position that the suit was served on Sudan's embassy in the U.S. in violation of the Vienna Convention. While prosecutors in the case have repeatedly sympathized with those injured by the USS Cole bombing and condemned the attack, the service of the suit on the embassy has raised concerns that have created friction between the U.S. and other nations. Developments were noted [here](#).

U.S. Trade and Development Agency

On March 13th-24th, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) will host a delegation of senior public and private sector officials from Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Djibouti for an East Africa Ports Security and Modernization RTM. The RTM is designed to introduce delegates to U.S. technologies, service providers, operational best practices, financing products, and training resources in the areas of port development, operation, and security. The RTM will address key themes of security and safety solutions, including risk assessment methodologies and best practices for cross-departmental coordination. More information was posted [here](#).

Overseas Private Investment Corporation

On March 11th, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) highlighted its support for Root Capital, a nonprofit social investment fund that provides loans to rural farmers in Africa who cannot access traditional bank loans and provides additional education and training to help farmers improve their productivity and bring their

products to market. In Ghana, Root Capital is supporting shea nut farmers with small loans that have been used to expand production and connection local farmers with larger markets and global cosmetics manufactures. For details, click [here](#).

On March 15th, OPIC called attention to the findings of a new survey released by African research group AfroBarometer on the state of consistent access to power. The survey found that many households throughout Africa that are connected to the grid still lack reliable access to energy. More specifically, grid access is lowest in Burundi, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone. However, in countries such as Nigeria where 96 percent of the population is connected to the grid, only about 18 percent of those connections work more than half the time. Other countries like Guinea, Mali, and Niger, also have large disparities between access to electricity in urban and rural areas. Details can be accessed [here](#).

On March 17th, OPIC noted Director of Social Enterprise Finance Dia Martin's participation at the Sankalp Africa Summit recently held in Nairobi, Kenya. At the Summit, Director Martin spoke on a panel titled, "Building the Global Ecosystem: Bridging the Divide," where she focused her remarks on OPIC's commitment to impact investing in Africa and the Portfolio for Impact (PI) program, which is focused on supporting small, high impact projects. More information can be found [here](#).

Congress

On March 8th, Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN) lead a letter sent to President Barack Obama calling for the White House to engage Ethiopian authorities to press for the release of former governor and human rights activist Okello Akway Ochalla. The letter was accompanied by a petition with nearly 6,000 signatures expressing support for diplomatic action. Ochalla is a Norwegian citizen who was kidnapped in South Sudan and returned to Ethiopia in March 2014. He has been charged as a terrorist and detained for the past two years for defending indigenous land rights. Additional background was provided [here](#).

On March 16th, House Select Committee on Benghazi Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) released a statement announcing rules to ensure equitable access to witness transcripts and preserve the integrity of the Committee's investigation of the September 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Congressman Gowdy noted he has offered Committee Democrats unfettered access to, and control of transcripts, but said he had no assurances Democrats would not leak or misuse the documents. Chairman Gowdy's comments were posted [here](#).

On March 16th, House Select Committee on Benghazi Ranking Member Elijah Cummings (D-MD) released a statement in response to Committee Republicans' refusal to provide Democrats with copies of witness interview transcripts. Congressman Cummings said Republicans are desperate to keep Democrats from sharing the facts with the public. Earlier this week, Congressman Cummings sent a letter to Committee Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-SC) objecting to the majority staff's refusal to provide copies of nine transcripts of interviews. The situation was detailed [here](#).

North Africa

On March 10th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma issued a joint statement condemning the recent attack by an unknown armed group that killed on South African peacekeeper with the AU-U.N. Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and injured another in Sudan's Darfur region. Secretary-General Ban and Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma called on the parties to the conflict in Darfur to respect the integrity of the peacekeeping force and urged Sudanese authorities to investigate the attack promptly and bring the perpetrators to justice. Their statement can be read [here](#).

On March 10th, Amnesty International released a new report finding that in October 2015, South Sudanese Government soldiers rounded up more than 60 men and boys accused of supporting opposition rebels in the town of Leer, locked them in a shipping container until they suffocated, and then dumped their bodies in a nearby field. According to Amnesty International, the incident constitutes a war crime committed by the Sudanese Government against its own people. The report can be downloaded [here](#).

On March 11th, the U.N. announced plans to launch an independent high-level board of inquiry to conduct an in-depth investigation into how the U.N. responded to last month's deadly violence in Malakal, South Sudan. Civilians

seeking protection from the U.N. were attacked, killed, and traumatized during the February 17th-18th clashes at the protection of civilians site in Malakal. Separate from the investigation, UNHCR expressed concern that fighting in South Sudan's Western Equatoria state is forcing thousands of people to flee into the CAR, the DRC, and Uganda. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 11th, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a new report on the human rights situation in South Sudan, documenting a multitude of violations perpetrated by Government forces, including cases of civilians burned alive or cut to pieces and a teenage girl being raped by ten soldiers. The report records more than 1,300 rapes in Unity State alone over just five months. The report's findings were highlighted [here](#).

On March 11th, the Algerian Defense Ministry announced it had killed three Islamist militants near the city of El Oued and seized weapons, including six anti-aircraft missiles, in an operation carried out late Thursday night. One of those killed was Kamel Arabiya, who led the local brigade of AQIM in Algeria and recently pledged allegiance to ISIL. Following the raid, the Algerian army remained on high alert due to the possibility of attacks from across the border in Libya where ISIL is growing its presence. Details were posted [here](#).

On March 14th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met in New York with Moroccan Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar to exchange views on the state of efforts to settle the Western Sahara dispute. During a recent visit to the region, Secretary-General Ban called for efforts to alleviate the plight of Sahrawi refugees in Algeria caused by the stall in negotiations. Morocco has presented a plan for autonomy, while the Polisario Front's position is that the territory's final status should be decided in a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option. The meeting was noticed [here](#).

On March 14th, the WFP and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) called for more financial contributions to fund their work in Mauritania, where more than 450,000 people are suffering from food insecurity. According to the WFP, funding shortfalls are already threatening the organization's ability to provide essential assistance to the most vulnerable families. Meanwhile, UNICEF warned the nutritional situation in Mauritania worsened during the 2015 hunger gap, leaving the organization in need of an additional \$2 million to meet vital assistance needs. The situation was described [here](#).

On March 14th, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) team completed a visit to Algiers, Algeria to hold discussions for the 2016 Article IV consultation. The IMF's discussions with Algerian authorities focused on the impact of the decline in oil prices on Algeria's economy and the policies needed to adjust to the shock. The IMF mission expressed support for fiscal consolidation, better rationalization of spending, and subsidy reform, and encouraged efforts aimed at diversifying the economy to achieve maximum growth over the medium term. Additional observations were recorded [here](#).

On March 14th, Egyptian Prime Minister Sherif Ismail removed Justice Minister Ahmed al-Zend from his position after he was criticized for saying he would jail Islam's Prophet Mohammed himself if he broke the law. Minister Zend subsequently apologized for his comments, but was still dismissed. It was not immediately clear who would replace Minister Zend, who was an outspoken critic of the Muslim Brotherhood. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 14th, the Tunisian Government floated draft legislation that would strengthen the autonomy of Tunisia's central bank. The proposed bill, which the parliament is expected to consider next month, would prohibit the government from interfering in central bank policy and give the central bank absolute control over monetary policy and currency and gold reserves. The bill was highlighted [here](#).

On March 15th, Mauritania became the second African country to ratify the U.N. protocol designed to give countries the legal backing to combat modern-day slavery, including forced labor and trafficking. Mauritania has the highest prevalence of slavery, according to the Global Slavery Index, which estimates four percent of the population, or roughly 150,000 people, are living as slaves. The country's efforts to address slavery were discussed [here](#).

On March 15th, the South Sudanese Foreign Ministry announced plans to cut staff at its embassies around the world to cut costs due to the economic crisis in the country. Since the start of the political conflict between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar in late 2013, South Sudan has seen a weakening

currency, rising inflation, and revenue losses due to falling oil prices and production. The news was announced [here](#).

On March 15th, *Mail & Guardian* reported on a cancerous bread scare in Egypt. While Egypt's quality and standards organization used one rule for the common ergot fungus, a globally accepted 0.05 percent set out in 2010 legislation, in recent months the Agriculture Ministry has begun imposing a zero tolerance policy dictated by an earlier law enacted in 2001. The contradiction had caused traders to withdraw from tenders and also sparked a media health scare. The situation was described [here](#).

On March 16th, the U.N. condemned the Government of Morocco's decision to reduce its contribution to the Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Following the announcement of Morocco's decision, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon canceled previously announced plans to travel to Rabat. Morocco was contributing \$3 million to provide food and housing for U.N. peacekeepers and some U.N. troops. The full story is available [here](#).

On March 17th, Ibrahim Mahmoud, an aide to Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, warned Sudan will close its recently reopened border with South Sudan if South Sudan continues to support armed rebel groups. The warning came just a day before peace talks were due to resume in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between the Sudanese Government, the opposition, and armed rebel groups. South Sudan has denied it is supporting armed groups in Sudan. An article on the tensions can be read [here](#).

East Africa

On March 10th, the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved \$70 million in new financing to support Tanzania's agriculture sector and strengthen it by linking smallholder farmers to agribusinesses for boosting incomes and job-led growth. The funding will be directed towards the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) Program, which seeks to promote agribusiness partnerships to tackle low farm productivity and limited market access. The program was described [here](#).

On March 11th, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights ordered the Ethiopian Government to pay \$150,000 to Woineshet Zebene Negash, a girl who said she was raped, abducted, and forced to agree to marriage at the age of 13. Woineshet filed a complaint with the Commission in 2007 after Ethiopia's court overturned the conviction of her perpetrator. This is perceived as a landmark ruling against child marriage, which has been a major problem in Ethiopia. The case was outlined [here](#).

On March 13th, Tanzanian President John Magufuli paid a surprise visit to the Bank of Tanzania, where he ordered the head of the Bank to eliminate ghost workers after demanding an audit of the 1,391 employee workforce. President Magufuli also demanded an investigation into allegations of corruption in an estimated \$424,565,107 the state owed to companies for various work being done for the government. His visit to the Bank was reported [here](#).

On March 14th, the Executive Board of the IMF approved a new \$989.8 million 24-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) and a \$494.9 million 24-month Standby Credit Facility (SCF) for Kenya. The IMF noted the agreements were facilitated to support Kenya as its economy remains vulnerable to shocks such as global financial market conditions, continued security threats, and extreme weather events. Kenyan officials pledged they do not intend to draw on the new SBA and SCF arrangements unless these shocks lead to an actual balance of payments need. A press release was issued [here](#).

On March 14th, Al Shabaab fighters seized control of a small port located in the town of Garad in Somalia's Puntland region. According to local authorities, many residents fled the town following the raid by Al Shabaab fighters who approached on several boats. Garad was formerly used by pirates to mount raids on commercial ships passing along nearby shipping lanes leading to and from the Red Sea. Details were posted [here](#).

West Africa

On March 11th, a delegation of top officials from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, led by Executive Vice President and Head of International Affairs Myron Brilliant and U.S.-Africa Business Center (USAfBC) President Scott Eisner, departed on a seven-day trip to West Africa to promote closer business ties with Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, and

Nigeria. During the trip, Brilliant and Eisner were scheduled to meet with Senegalese Prime Minister Mohammed Dionne and President Macky Sall, Ivorian Prime Minister Daniel Duncan and President Alassane Ouattara, and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and Finance Minister Kemo Adeosun. The delegation's visit to West Africa was outlined [here](#).

On March 11th, South African telecommunications firm MTN Group offered to pay a \$1.5 billion fine to settle the larger \$3.9 billion fine Nigerian regulators imposed for MTN's failure to meet a deadline to disconnect unregistered SIM cards from its network. MTN proposed paying the \$1.5 billion settlement through a combination of government bond purchases, cash installments, and network access to the Nigerian Government. MTN's proposal was outlined [here](#).

On March 11th, an explosion went off in a building associated with the Central Bank of Nigeria in the city of Calabar. At least two people were killed in the blast and 18 other injured. While the incident initially raised concerns that the explosion may have been planned by Boko Haram, police indicated they suspected it was actually caused by a gas cylinder controlling the central air conditioners. For more information, click [here](#).

On March 14th, an IMF mission completed a visit to Dakar, Senegal to conduct discussions on the second review of the three-year arrangement under the Policy Support Instrument (PSI) approved in June 2015. The IMF team observed Senegal's macroeconomic performance in 2015 was strong, with growth of 6.5 percent for the first time over the last 12 years. Noting the economic outlook remains favorable, the IMF officials encouraged Senegalese authorities to maintain a sound macroeconomic framework and to pursue reforms to create more opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and foreign direct investment (FDI). Additional feedback was reported [here](#).

On March 14th, the Executive Board of the IMF completed the sixth and seventh reviews of Guinea's economic performance under the program supported by an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, enabling the immediate disbursement of \$25.6 million. In conducting the review, the Executive Board found that program implementation under the ECF weakened in 2015, mostly because of the impacts of the Ebola outbreak. While growth is expected to rebound to four percent in 2015, the IMF cautioned full recovery is likely to be gradual. For details, click [here](#).

On March 15th, the World Bank published three new reports titled, "More, and More Productive Jobs for Nigeria," "Understanding and Driving Private Sector Growth in Nigeria," and "Skills for Competitiveness and Employability." The reports observe with over 170 million people and a high rate of population growth, Nigeria needs to create 40 to 50 million additional jobs between 2010 and 2030. In order to reduce poverty and promote more inclusive growth, the reports recommend these jobs need to be more productive and provide higher incomes than the country's jobs today. Additional analysis was provided [here](#).

On March 15th, a team from the IMF completed a visit to Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire for the 2016 Article IV consultation discussions with authorities. Following a series of meetings with senior government officials and representatives of the business and donor communities, the IMF observed Cote d'Ivoire's economy activity over the past four years has been impressive, as evidenced by strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth, declining poverty, and macroeconomic stability. Additional observations were recorded [here](#).

On March 15th, after leading an African Development Bank (AfDB) delegation to Liberia, AfDB President Akinwumi Adesina pledged to support Liberia's efforts to diversify its economy, with a particular emphasis on the agriculture and power sectors. Following a state dinner with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President Adesina observed Liberia has made considerable progress in recent years, including overcoming the Ebola epidemic, but the country still faces challenges especially with regards to diversification of its economy. A press release was issued [here](#).

On March 15th, Nigerian Auditor-General Samuel Ukura told the national assembly the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) withheld roughly \$16 billion in revenues from the federal government in 2014. Constitutionally, the NNPC is required to hand over all oil revenue to the government, and then receives a budget that is approved by parliament. Excerpts from Auditor-General Ukura's briefing were highlighted [here](#).

On March 16th, human rights activists criticized the Nigerian Senate for rejecting a bill aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. While activists argue the bill would promote women's equality in marriage,

inheritance, and education, vocal lawmakers contended the legislation was not compatible with Nigerian culture and religious beliefs. The debate was discussed [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

On March 6th-11th, a team of nine AfDB Executive Directors visited Malawi on a high-level consultation and dialogue mission. During their visit, the Executive Directors met with President Arthur Peter Mutharika, Finance Minister Goodall Gondwe, and Reserve Bank Governor Charles Chuka, as well as other cabinet members, senior government officials, representatives of the private sector and civil society, and development partners. While the Executive Directors noted concern with the difficult macroeconomic situation and the current food crisis, they also commended the Malawian Government for its tenacity in tackling the challenges under difficult circumstances. Their visit was outlined [here](#).

On March 9th, the Africa Training Institute (ATI), IMF, and the Banque de France concluded a high-level seminar at the ATI in Mauritius. The seminar brought together more than 30 policymakers from across sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to academics from Africa, America, and Europe, to discuss the future of currency areas, with a focus on conditions under which they remain an appropriate mechanism for improving welfare in their member countries. The seminar was summarized [here](#).

On March 11th, an IMF team concluded a visit to Antananarivo, Madagascar to assess progress under the Staff-Monitored Program (SMP). The IMF officials and Malagasy authorities reached consensus the SMP is a crucial tool in guiding policy and building a strong economic track record. The IMF team also observed improving economic and financial conditions in the country, with growth estimated to accelerate to more than four percent this year. Details can be seen [here](#).

On March 11th, at a meeting of Angola's ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party, President Jose Eduardo dos Santos announced he will step down from politics in 2018. President dos Santos, who has ruled since 1979, did not provide any justification for his decision and it was not clear if he would remain MPLA leader. Angola holds its next parliamentary election in 2017 and the leader of the winning party will become president. President dos Santos' decision was discussed [here](#).

On March 13th, lawyers for South Africa Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan said he would be unable to respond to police questions on his role in setting up a spy unit at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) by a March 14th deadline because Minister Gordhan was attending an investor roadshow in London and the U.S. The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, also known as the Hawks, is investigating the unit on suspicion of conducting illegal surveillance on taxpayers. Upon the missed deadline, the Hawks said it would exercise its constitutional powers against Minister Gordhan for missing a deadline for the second time in their investigation. Developments were noted [here](#).

On March 14th, Mauritius' Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth announced that Finance Minister Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo had been relieved of his post and that he would assume the responsibilities of the office. The announcement followed days of speculation given that Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo had not returned for several weeks from a visit to the U.S. Prime Minister Jugnauth said Minister Lutchmeenaraidoo had been offered the position of foreign minister in a cabinet reshuffle. More information can be found [here](#).

On March 11th, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) reported a South African teenager had found a piece of debris on a beach in Mozambique while on vacation with his family in December that might be part of the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 aircraft. The teen took the debris home to South Africa, but reported it following the discovery of other suspected debris from the doomed flight in Mozambique last week. The part will now be sent to Australia for testing. The full story is available [here](#).

On March 14th, in a move intended to inspire confidence in investors, Angolan Minister of Finance Armando Manuel announced the government has cut spending under its 2016 budget by 20 percent as part of its strategy to cope with persistently low oil prices. Additionally, Minister Manuel said that President Jose Eduardo dos Santos' recent announcement that he will step down in 2018 is part of a normal process and should not concern foreign investors. His comments were recorded [here](#).

On March 15th, UNHCR welcomed the Malawian Government's decision to reopen a former refugee camp in Lurwani to help cope with the rising number of people fleeing internal fighting in Mozambique. The camp was previously used to house refugees during the 1977-1992 civil war and closed in 2007. The camp will provide Mozambican refugees with health and education services, water, and protection. The U.N.'s response was articulated [here](#).

On March 15th, UNICEF reported Zimbabwe is facing its worst malnutrition rates in 15 years, with nearly 33,000 children in urgent need of treatment for severe acute malnutrition. Further, UNICEF said the number of hungry families has double in the last eight months, with nearly 2.8 million people in rural Zimbabwe, or roughly 30 percent of the rural population, requiring food assistance. Details were posted [here](#).

On March 15th, U.N. Independent Expert on the human rights situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) Marie-Therese Keita-Bocoum visited the country for the sixth time to observe humanitarian needs. During her visit, Independent Expert Keita-Bocoum called on the international community to support President-Elect Faustin Archange Touadera and his pledge to restore security, disarm groups, strengthen rule of law, and encourage national reconciliation. Her observations were summarized [here](#).

On March 15th, South Africa's Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the government against a ruling that the state had made an error in letting Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir leave the country during the AU summit last June, despite a court order barring him from doing so. The Supreme Court ruled the government's failure to arrest President Bashir was inconsistent with South Africa's obligations under the Rome Statute, which created the International Criminal Court (ICC). An article on the ruling was published [here](#).

On March 16th, the World Bank, along with the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), noted their support for the Government of Mozambique's efforts to rebuild roads following weather disasters. The World Bank has supported an approach that prioritizes building better infrastructure, while also getting people moving and back to work, schools, and markets quickly. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On March 16th, the AfDB announced a \$24 million loan to support Rwanda's contribution to the development of the Multinational Ruzizi III Hydropower Project. The project is a joint initiative of Burundi, the DRC, and Rwanda, and is aimed at increasing electricity trading within the region and beyond. Project details were posted [here](#).

On March 16th, Botswana's Court of Appeals rejected an attempt by the government to ban a gay rights lobby group, upholding a lower court decision that the Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana should be allowed to register and campaign for changes in anti-gay legislation. The ruling is viewed as a milestone for the gay rights agenda in Africa and stands in stark contrast to Botswanan President Ian Khama's record of instituting anti-gay policies. Details can be accessed [here](#).

On March 16th, police arrested 18 protestors in Goma, DRC during a peaceful demonstration over the jailing of two fellow activists. The demonstrators were detained as they started a march demanding the release of fellow members of the Struggle for Change who were arrested in Kinshasa last year. The arrests were reported [here](#).

On March 17th, the WFP announced for the first time it will not suspend relief operations to vulnerable people in Zimbabwe during the spring and summer, but instead continue food and cash assistance throughout the year in response to conditions brought on with El Nino. While April is usually bountiful as the harvest begins, this year nearly three million people face food insecurity. The situation was described [here](#).

On March 17th, in response to allegations that a wealthy family close to him had influence over political appointments, South African President Jacob Zuma said all cabinet ministers were appointed directly by him. President Zuma went on to deny Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas' claims that the Gupta family offered him the position of finance minister. President Zuma's response to the accusations was highlighted [here](#).

On March 17th, former South African President FW de Klerk warned South Africa's constitutional democracy is facing a serious crisis as President Jacob Zuma and members of his administration use their positions to pursue their personal interests. President de Klerk said the dismissal of Nhlhla Nene as finance minister last year and the ongoing vendetta against Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan are pushing the country closer to a catastrophic ratings downgrade. His comments were recorded [here](#).

General Africa News

On March 16th, this year's World Happiness Report was released, seeking to quantify happiness as a means of making societies healthier and more efficient. According to the index, Burundi is the most miserable country in the world, followed by Syria, Togo, and Afghanistan, and six other countries in Africa, including Benin, Rwanda, Guinea, Liberia, Tanzania, and Madagascar. The report's findings were analyzed [here](#).

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