



ML Strategies Update

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Africa Update

****Editor's Note: The next edition of the Africa Update will be published in the New Year. Happy holidays!***

Leading the News

West Africa Ebola Outbreak

On December 11th, the United Nations (U.N.) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) said while the priority in West Africa is to stop the transmission of Ebola, response efforts must be linked to strengthening health care systems in Ebola-afflicted countries in the long term. ECOSOC also recommended that the proposed Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Africa be equipped with the latest technologies necessary to respond to public health crises and that investments should be used to strengthen West African countries' national institutions. Input from ECOSOC was posted [here](#).

On December 11th, the Malian Ministry of Health reported that there were no remaining cases of Ebola in the country upon the discharge of the last patient from the hospital. Six people in Mali have died from Ebola and another two patients who were infected recovered from the virus. Mali is yet to be officially declared Ebola-free, a status achieved by Nigeria and Senegal, who also had cases of Ebola earlier this year. Details were shared [here](#).

On December 11th, the University Hospitals of Geneva said a test of the experimental Ebola vaccine recently licensed to Merck was temporarily stopped because some vaccinated volunteers experienced joint pain. Health officials involved in testing said joint pain was a common reaction to vaccines and the pause on testing is unlikely to be a major setback to the vaccines development. The vaccine being tested in Geneva was initially developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada and licensed to NewLink Genetics. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 12th, Dr. Marie-Paule Kieny, World Health Organization (WHO) Assistant Director-General of Health Systems and Innovation, urged the international community to help Ebola-stricken countries restart their health systems. At a high-level meeting with Ministers of Health and Finance from countries most affected by Ebola, international organizations, and development partners, Dr. Kieny said the region

should come out of the crisis with more resilient systems that can both react to emergencies like Ebola and provide regular health services. An article on the meeting can be read [here](#).

On December 12th, Defense Minister and head of Sierra Leone's Ebola response team Palo Conteh said the military will stop public celebrations at Christmas and the New Year out of concern for the spread of Ebola. Sierra Leone has been in a state of emergency since July, which has led to a prohibition on public gatherings and the closure of schools, bars, and nightclubs. It is not clear when the ban on Christmas will begin and if there will be any exceptions. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On December 12th, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced the first nominees for awards in the Fighting Ebola: A Grand Challenge for Development. The awardees, selected from over 1,500 submissions, focused their proposals on helping frontline health care workers provide better, timelier care and to contain the virus. The proposals primarily introduced technologies focused on improving the safety and comfort of the personal protective equipment (PPE) worn by health care workers and alleviating the heat stress that can cause in the hot, humid climates of West Africa. The awardees were announced [here](#).

On December 13th, the *New York Times* profiled a child in Sierra Leone who had recently been orphaned by the Ebola epidemic. According to U.N. data, more than 3,500 children have been infected with Ebola and at least 1,200 have died. Approximately 10,000 children are thought to have been orphaned since the start of the outbreak. In addition to leaving many children orphaned, the Ebola outbreak has also shut down schools, resulting in many children being drafted into hard labor. Additional information was posted [here](#).

On December 14th, WHO Assistant Director-General Dr. Bruce Aylward said the transmission of Ebola is likely to continue in Sierra Leone until people are shocked out of behaviors that are helping the disease to spread, including keeping infected loved ones close and touching the bodies of the dead. Sierra Leone has more than 70 percent of the Ebola cases reported in the past three weeks and more than half of the 18,000 confirmed cases in the nine-month outbreak. The situation in Sierra Leone was detailed [here](#).

On December 14th, Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Global Health hosted the Stop Ebola Hack-a-thon, which brought together more than 100 scientists, clinicians, and entrepreneurs to identify near-term solutions to address the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. In total, the organization considered 45 innovations, which were eventually narrowed down to 17. Among the ideas discussed were solutions for cumbersome PPE and monitoring and treating patients at a safe distance to help mitigate disease transmission. The meeting was summarized [here](#).

On December 15th, the National Election Commission of Liberia announced that the country will hold its delayed senatorial elections on December 20th, despite the ongoing Ebola outbreak. The scheduling of the elections was announced [here](#).

On December 15th, Liberia began treating Ebola patients with an experimental Ebola serum therapy made from the blood of recovered survivors. Ebola patients treated in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the U.S. have already received this type of treatment. Doctors at the ELWA Hospital in Monrovia are seeking not only to treat patients, but also to assess the safety and effectiveness of the experimental therapy. Developments were reported [here](#).

On December 15th, World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim authored an op-ed for the *New York Times* on the path to zero Ebola cases. While President Kim observed the regional response to the Ebola epidemic has been extremely effective in slowing the spread of Ebola in West Africa, he cautioned we are not yet on the path to end the epidemic. President Kim said it will be important to identify resources to continue the response, multiply the number of trained people to hunt down the virus, ensure that national response strategies can be nimble to local conditions, and empower regional leaders to champion the response. His op-ed can be accessed [here](#).

On December 15th, Pentagon Spokesman Colonel Steve Warren said U.S. troops participating in Operation United Assistance in Liberia could finish most of their work building new treatment centers by the end of the month. U.S. forces have already completed construction of three treatment units and will likely complete work on three additional facilities next week. It remains unclear if U.S. troops will return

from Liberia or deploy to other parts of the region affected by the Ebola outreach, such as Sierra Leone. Colonel Warren's comments were recorded [here](#).

On December 15th, Joint Forces Command (JFC) for Operation United Assistance announced plans to transfer food supply operations for Ebola treatment units (ETU) to the World Food Programme (WFP) this month. The handover has involved extensive training and exercises for the WFP warehouse workers and other NGOs to address the logistical challenges associated with resupply over the roads of Liberia. The transfer in authority was noted [here](#).

On December 15th, U.S. soldiers assigned to the 82nd Civil Affairs Battalion conducted a first aid training class for Liberian law enforcement personnel at the National Police Training Academy in Paynesville, Liberia. The class was intended to help train tactical instructors and medical providers on first aid skills that could be helpful in protecting them from diseases, such as the Ebola virus. More information can be found [here](#).

On December 15th, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a report on public health challenges over the past year. The report labels 2014 as an unprecedented year for public health challenges, notably due to the Ebola epidemic and a rise in other communicable diseases. According to the report, the CDC's response to Ebola is the largest in its history, involving 170 field staff and 700 others working on anti-Ebola projects. Excerpts of the report related to Ebola were highlighted [here](#).

On December 15th, *PolitiFact* selected exaggerations about Ebola as its 2014 Lie of the Year. According to *PolitiFact*, false claims about Ebola distorted the debate about a serious public health issue. *PolitiFact* and *PunditFact* rated 16 separate claims about Ebola as Mostly False, False, or Pants on Fire on its 2014 Truth-O-Meter. More information can be seen [here](#).

On December 16th, the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) announced that Ebola response workers in Sierra Leone would start receiving hazard pay through mobile money. UNDP says that without incentive, it is difficult to recruit and retain workers. Sudipto Mukerjee, UNDP's Country Director for Sierra Leone, said the move from direct cash to an electronic format improves efficiency, timeliness, and provides payment security. For details on the UNDP announcement, click [here](#).

On December 16th, Mali released the last 13 people under quarantine being monitored for symptoms of Ebola. Those released from quarantine were thought to have had contact with Mali's last infected Ebola patient, who was released from the hospital last week. If no further cases are reported, the WHO is expected to declare Mali Ebola free next month. An update on the situation in Mali was issued [here](#).

On December 16th, President Barack Obama signed the \$1.1 trillion spending bill passed by both houses of Congress into law. The bill included \$5.4 billion in emergency funding for Ebola response efforts. Of the \$5.4 billion, nearly \$2.5 billion would go to HHS to bolster the readiness of U.S. hospitals, accelerate vaccine development, and assist in traveler screenings. Another \$2 billion would go to USAID to scale up the global Ebola response. Meanwhile, the State and Defense Departments would each receive just over \$100 million. The bill was sent to the U.S. Senate for a vote. More information can be found [here](#).

On December 16th, USAID's Ebola Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) overseeing the U.S. Ebola response efforts in West Africa authored a blog post on the opening of a new ETU in Sierra Leone's Port Loko district. The facility is being run by International Medical Corps (IMC), with support from USAID for staffing and management. The blog post can be viewed [here](#).

On December 16th, more than 50 U.S. soldiers and airmen staying in the 21st Theater Sustainment Command's Controlled Monitoring Area since their return from missions in support of Operation United Assistance returned to their home units at Smith Barracks. The group is the first to complete the 21-day controlled monitoring period at the facility. During the monitoring period, service members had access to free Wi-Fi, gaming consoles, and gym facilities, as well as state-of-the-art communication infrastructure that allowed them to communicate with family and friends. The monitoring period was described [here](#).

On December 17th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon unveiled plans to visit Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone later this week with WHO Director-General Margaret Chan and Special Envoy for Ebola Dr.

David Nabarro. The trip is intended to send a message of solidarity to the three countries that have been most affected by the Ebola crisis. Secretary-General Ban's travel to West Africa was noted [here](#).

On December 17th, the U.N. warned the 500,000 people currently experiencing hunger in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone could increase to one million by March 2015 as a result of the Ebola outbreak. Ripple effects of the Ebola crisis in West Africa have shut down markets, caused labor shortages on farms, and disrupted supply chains. Details on food shortage in West Africa were provided [here](#).

On December 17th, the World Bank approved a \$30 million grant to support the Government of Sierra Leone in its Ebola response efforts. Francis Ato Brown, World Bank Country Manager for Sierra Leone, said the funding and subsequent operations will help in minimizing the economic impact of the Ebola crisis and therefore help improve job prospects and economic growth. Additional details on the grant can be found [here](#).

On December 17th, 187 Ethiopian health care workers arrived in West Africa to bolster the response to the Ebola outbreak. The doctors and nurses from Ethiopia will join an African Union (AU) mission already working to fight the virus that also includes 175 Nigerian medics that deployed to Liberia and Sierra Leone earlier this month. The Ethiopian health care workers are also expected work alongside 256 medical staff in West Africa from Cuba. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 17th, Operation Western Area Surge commenced as health workers in Sierra Leone scoured the streets looking for Ebola patients. President Ernest Bai Koroma said, as part of the operation, travel in the country and public assembly would be restricted. These efforts will continue for one month in a major attempt to stop the spread of Ebola. With high infection rates, Sierra Leone is home to more than half of the 18,000 confirmed Ebola cases. Additional information on the country's containment efforts can be read [here](#).

On December 17th, a new study published in the Nature Press Journal *Emerging Microbes and Infections* identified 53 existing drug compounds that could be effective in fighting Ebola. The study suggests that one of the most efficient ways to go about tackling the task of developing and distributing an Ebola drug is by screening drug compounds already available to see if any of those compounds could be used to create a drug to fight Ebola. Some of the compounds identified in scan of 2,816 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved compounds are currently used in drugs for cancer, antihistamines, antibiotics, and antidepressants. The research can be downloaded [here](#).

On December 17th, the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center and Governor Deval Patrick announced a \$1 million grant to help speed up the development of a toll for quickly diagnosing Ebola. The consortium of science companies, NGOs, and academics, which is led by the nonprofit Diagnostics For All, hopes to have the devices ready for testing in six months. The goal of the initiative is to make it easier and less costly for providers to diagnose Ebola earlier and in a wide range of clinical settings. The grant was announced [here](#).

On December 18th, the WHO announced that, as of December 14th, the death toll in the Ebola crisis had risen to 6,915 out of a total 18,603 cases. The WHO did say, however, that the increase of incidence in Sierra Leone has slowed. The latest statistics from the WHO are available [here](#).

On December 18th, U.K.'s House of Commons International Development Committee said the WHO and its supporting nations responded too slowly and ineffectively to the Ebola crisis in West Africa. The Committee also said the global response continues to be outpaced by the spread of the Ebola virus. More details can be viewed [here](#).

Nigeria

On December 11th, a twin bomb attack killed at least 30 people in a marketplace in Jos, Nigeria. Jos has a mixed population of Muslims and Christians and churches and mosques in the area have recently been targeted by Boko Haram. The incident in Jos was reported as police in Kano arrested a 13-year-old girl wearing a suicide belt and following a separate attack in Kano last Wednesday in which two female suicide bombers killed four people. An article on the attacks can be read [here](#).

On December 16th, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced France will coordinate a regional task force against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. While France has ruled out direct military intervention against Boko Haram in Nigeria, the French have been coordinating intelligence sharing and border monitoring across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The task force will aim to launch a regional force of 2,800 soldiers to combat Boko Haram, a concept initially agreed to in July. Details can be viewed [here](#).

On December 16th, Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said more than a million Nigerians displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency may be unable to vote in the February 14th presidential election unless the law requiring voters to cast ballots in their home constituencies is amended. The voters in the northeast part of the country who have been displaced disproportionately favor opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress over incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party. The National Assembly is expected to debate the issue when it reconvenes in January. More information was provided [here](#).

On December 17th, former military leader and opposition presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari garnered additional support in reiterating his campaign theme of anti-graft. In a statement written to opposition delegates last week, Buhari said he wished to shape a Nigeria where corruption no longer trespasses into institutions and national behavior. During his previous rule from 1983 to 1985, Buhari was largely thought to have acted free of financial corruption. While Buhari has gained support in a country plagued with graft scandals, others remember his previous crackdowns on press and arrests of political opponents. More information on Nigeria's presidential election can be read [here](#).

On December 18th, Nigerian officials reported that Boko Haram militants killed 32 people and kidnapped another 100 women and children in northeastern Nigeria. Haram gunmen stormed Gumsuri in Borno state and destroyed the village using petrol bombs. While the attack occurred on Sunday, there was a delay in reporting the incident because the mobile phone network in the relatively isolated village has largely collapsed and many of the roads are impassable. Emerging details on the incident were shared [here](#).

On December 18th, opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari chose Yemi Osinbajo, a southern Christian lawyer, to be his running mate in the 2015 presidential election. President Goodluck Jonathan, a southern Christian, has chosen current Vice President Namadi Sambo, a Muslim northerner. The pairings are not surprising, as past Nigerian elections show similar groupings as an effort by politicians to balance ethnic and religious feelings in order to gain voter appeal. For more details on Buhari's choice, click [here](#).

Libya

On December 15th, National Oil Corp (NOC), based in Tripoli, announced that Libya has declared a force majeure for Es Sider and Ras Lanuf—Libya's two largest oil export ports. NOC said oil production will gradually shut down as fighting increases nearby. Details on the force majeure can be read [here](#).

On December 16th, the internationally recognized Libyan Government based in Tobruk launched a new wave of air strikes against rival forces that are a part of Libya Dawn. Air forces loyal to Libyan Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni sought to attack rival troops controlling all of the roads leading to Es Sider port, the largest oil port in the country. A separate airstrike also targeted the town of Zuwara near the border with Tunisia. The latest air strikes were detailed [here](#).

On December 17th, the U.N. Support mission in Libya (UNSMIL) said it was encouraged with the positive response received as a result of the mission's invitation for a U.N.-organized political dialogue. According to UNSMIL, in agreeing to take part in this dialogue, all the parties have clearly signaled their determination to spare no effort towards safeguarding Libya's political transition and forging ahead with building a modern democratic state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. For more information on UNSMIL's statement, click [here](#).

On December 17th, African leaders urged the West to resolve the conflict in Libya, which, over three years, has destabilized regional governments and allowed Islamist groups to organize. At the African security forum in Senegal, the Presidents of Mali, Chad and Senegal, each voiced their discontent,

believing that NATO has an obligation to restore Libya. More details on the forum can be read [here](#).

On December 17th, fighting at major oil ports undermined efforts by the U.N. to hold a second round of talks to end the conflict between the two rival Libyan groups. Earlier this week, forces supporting the illegitimate government, moved east in an attempt to take control of the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf oil ports. In response, the recognized government carried out additional air strikes near Es Sider. Meanwhile, European Union (EU) Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini said the EU is considering sanctions against those preventing a political solution. Developments regarding the situation in Libya were reported [here](#).

On December 17th, Concerned Veterans of America launched the first installment in its Strength and Security Project Leading From Behind Case Study Series focused on how lack of a clear national security strategy created a failed state in Libya. The video was coproduced by The Heritage Foundation. The video can be watched [here](#).

South Sudan

On December 11th, the U.N. Security Council welcomed talks between South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and encouraged both governments to hold a high-level security meeting as soon as possible to address violence against civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid. The Security Council also reiterated longstanding concerns regarding continued fighting in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states in Sudan. Feedback from the Security Council was provided [here](#).

On December 11th, U.N. Special Representative for South Sudan and head of the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Margrethe Loj held a press conference in Juba to urge rival political leaders to reach a comprehensive peace agreement as soon as possible. Acknowledging the one-year anniversary of the resurgence of conflict in South Sudan, Special Representative Loj warned the patience of the international community with both parties is wearing thin. Excerpts from the press conference were highlighted [here](#).

On December 11th, Director of USAID's Office of Food for Peace Dina Espositio authored a post for USAID's *Impact Blog* on the threat of worsening hunger in South Sudan. In response to the outbreak of the political conflict in South Sudan last year, the WFP secured agreements with the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia to open up a corridor that USAID will use to transport food donations to South Sudan. USAID has tapped the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT) to procure additional food for the country. Further insights were shared [here](#).

On December 11th, in response to questions regarding the one-year anniversary of the political conflict in South Sudan, State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki reported that U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry continue to send clear messages to South Sudan's leaders that they have an obligation to put the interests of their citizens above their own. The U.S. is continuing to support the peace process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and urging South Sudanese leaders to honor the cessation of hostilities agreement. Spokesperson Psaki's comments were transcribed [here](#).

On December 12th, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) said the scale of crisis for children in South Sudan is staggering. Furthermore, the agency said an entire generation of children is being stolen as a result of the ongoing conflict. Nearly 750,000 children have been internally displaced, with 320,000 living as refugees since the start of the violence in December 2013. UNICEF reported that about 400,000 children are missing school and 12,000 are being used by armed forces and groups. For more information, click [here](#).

On December 12th, U.S. President Barack Obama issued a statement on the one-year anniversary of violence in South Sudan. President Obama said the political conflict in South Sudan has overtaken the hope and optimism felt around South Sudan's independence in 2011. President Obama appealed to the leaders of South Sudan to pursue peace as a way to honor those who have died. In addition, he urged the people of South Sudan to renew the spirit of hope, unity, and fortitude and to seek peaceful reconciliation. The full statement was posted [here](#).

On December 14th, on the one-year anniversary of the start of the conflict in South Sudan, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged for the killing to stop. In a press release, Secretary-General Ban expressed dismay and sadness at the lack of progress the warring parties of made in reaching a comprehensive peace agreement. Secretary-General Ban's statement was issued [here](#).

On December 15th, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that fighting in South Sudan could escalate with the start of the dry season. High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein urged parties to practice restraint and to participate in dialogue in order to work to restore peace. Talks between the Government and the opposition are set to resume this week. Feedback from High Commissioner Al Hussein was highlighted [here](#).

On December 15th, U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice and Secretary of State John Kerry authored an op-ed for the *Washington Post* advocating for South Sudanese political leaders to set aside their dispute to end the violence that erupted in the country last December. National Security Adviser Rice and Secretary Kerry noted the conflict has claimed the lives of thousands of men, women, and children and has displaced almost two million people. After months of delay and false pledges, they called on both sides to return to negotiations and make compromises to end the conflict without delay. The full op-ed can be read [here](#).

On December 15th, USAID Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Nancy Lindborg and Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration Anne Richard coauthored a blog post on the one-year anniversary of the start of political tensions in South Sudan. Assistant Administrator Lindborg and Assistant Secretary Richard noted the fighting was triggered by discord between political leaders and fueled by ethnic rivalries. They also noted that South Sudan is currently the most food insecure nation in the world. The blog post can be accessed [here](#).

On December 18th, Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Chief Mohamed Atta Al-Moula warned South Sudan against hostile moves, stating that any movement of rebels would be perceived and treated as an assault. The chief named two camps in South Sudan's Northern Bahr el Ghazal state where he encouraged rebels to lay down their arms. For more details, click [here](#).

Democratic Republic of Congo

On December 14th, Moustapha Soumare, U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for the DRC, said the country is in crisis with an insufficient amount of humanitarian aid. Assistance is particularly needed in the southeastern province of Katanga, where the number of displaced persons has reached nearly 600,000. The increase from 55,000 three years ago has been the result of escalating violence between armed groups. U.N. refugee agency spokeswoman Celine Schmitt blamed Congo fatigue and growing prioritization of the crises in Syria and the Central African Republic (CAR) for the lack of aid. Details on the humanitarian crisis in DRC can be seen [here](#).

On December 15th, the international community expressed concern with the overall lack of implementation of the Nairobi Declarations in the DRC. A team of U.N., AU and other Special Envoys on the Great Lakes region noted that while efforts have been made to address issues regarding amnesty and the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants, other critical provisions have not been implemented. In a joint statement, regional leaders were called upon to work with parties in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. For more details, click [here](#).

On December 15th, speaking to a joint session of parliament in Kinshasa, DRC President Joseph Kabila said he would reject foreign admonitions on the electoral process in his country. President Kabila is facing international pressure to step down at the end of his second term in December 2016. His remarks come a week after President Kabila's announcement of a new cabinet. Excerpts from President Kabila's address were recorded [here](#).

On December 16th, Uganda began the repatriation of more than 1,000 rebel fighters from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The first 120 fighters to be flown to the DRC had been seeking to avoid repatriation by escaping a military encampment in western Uganda and seeking refuge at a U.N. camp in the region. The DRC Government has been pressuring Uganda to initiate the repatriation process out of concerns that fighters could regroup to fight again. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 16th, U.N. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura hailed the conviction of former FARDC Lieutenant Colonel Bedi Mobuli Engangela. Also known as Colonel 106, Engangela was convicted for crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. Special Representative Bangura said the conviction provides a very clear message to perpetrators of sexual violence in DRC that they cannot hide behind a badge or evade justice with a uniform. A press release was issued [here](#).

Zambia

On December 17th, Zambia's interim President Guy Scott rejected calls by ministers to step down. Foreign Affairs Minister Harry Kalaba said 14 of 17 Patriotic Front ministers supported a vote of no confidence against President Scott and called for his resignation. Minister Kalaba said President Scott, who replaced President Michael Sata after his death in October, has betrayed the trust of the ministers. In response, President Scott said he would not be blackmailed and allow government resources to be used for party interests. Details on the power struggle within Zambia's ruling party can be viewed [here](#).

United States – Africa Relations

White House

On December 17th, Vice President Joe Biden and Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden issued a joint statement thanking USAID Administrator Raj Shah for his service. In the past, the Bidens have collaborated with Administrator Shah on food security, disaster relief, human rights, and economic development issues. Most recently, they recognized Administrator Shah for his active role in U.S. Ebola response. In addition, Dr. Jill Biden reflected on her trip with Administrator Shah to Zambia this past year, as well as to Kenya in 2011. The press release can be read [here](#).

Department of State

On December 12th, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Catherine Novelli met with U.S. Ambassador-designate to Madagascar Robert Yamate at the Department of State. The meeting was noticed [here](#).

On December 12th, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Charles Rivkin met with U.S. Ambassador-designate to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau James Zumwalt at the State Department. The meeting was listed [here](#).

On December 12th, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield co-led the U.S.-China Africa Sub-Dialogue at the Department of State. Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield's participation was noted on the State Department's daily appointment schedule, which can be accessed [here](#).

On December 17th, Secretary of State John Kerry, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and Director of Policy Planning David McKean participated in the U.S.-Angola Strategic Dialogue with Angolan Foreign Minister Georges Chikoti. Secretary Kerry and Assistant Secretary Greenfield also met separately with Foreign Minister Chikoti. More information was shared [here](#). Secretary Kerry's remarks with Foreign Minister Chikoti after their meeting were transcribed [here](#).

On December 17th, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Charles Rivkin met with U.S. Ambassador-designate to Rwanda Erica J. Banks Ruggles. Assistant Secretary Rivkin also met with U.S. Ambassador to Algeria Joan Polaschik. Both meetings were noticed [here](#).

On December 17th, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield met with Ambassador of Morocco to the U.S. Rachad Bouhlal at the Department of State. The meeting was listed [here](#).

On December 17th, Director of Policy Planning David McKean met with Cofounder of the Sudd Institute Dr. Jok Madut Jok and David K. Deng of South Sudan Law Society and the Department of State. The meeting was highlighted [here](#).

On December 18th, the State Department designated the Egyptian Ajnad Misr group as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, freezing the group's property and interests in the U.S. or that come within the U.S. or control of U.S. persons. Ajnad Misr is a violent extremist group that splintered from Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM). The group announced its formation in January 2014 and has since claimed responsibility for numerous attacks on Egyptian security forces at government buildings, public spaces, and universities. A press release was issued [here](#).

U.S. Agency for International Development

On December 17th, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah announced he will be stepping down in mid-February 2015. Reflecting on his past five years leading the agency, Administrator Shah highlighted the implementation of the Feed the Future initiative, which has improved nutrition for 12.5 million children, raised incomes for nearly seven million farm families, and leveraged more than \$10 billion from 200 global and local companies for African agriculture. He also noted that in the past year, Power Africa has financially closed over 3,000 megawatts (MW) of power projects and moved 15,000 MW of transactions into the planning stages. A statement from Administrator Shah was released [here](#).

Department of Defense

On December 11th, Chadian officials announced plans to host the Flintlock 2015 exercise. The exercise, which will kick off in N'Djamena with outstations in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Tunisia, on February 16th, is U.S. Africa Command's (AFRICOM) premier Special Operations Forces exercise. The goal of the exercise is to help improve information sharing at the operational and tactical levels across the Saharan region while fostering increasing collaboration and coordination. More information can be seen [here](#).

On December 13th-14th, AFRICOM representatives met with senior Chadian leaders at forum held in N'Djamena, Chad. The two-day symposium allowed for debate and discussion on security concerns, primarily in the Sahel region. His Majesty the Sultan, President of the Association of Tribal Leaders, Tamitah Djidingar, said that while Chad remains relatively stable, the country is a small island in an ocean of insecurity. In his speech, Sultan Djidingar emphasized the importance of civilian and military cooperation to address the many forms of extremism the region faces. The meeting was summarized [here](#).

On December 16th, Marine Forces Europe and Africa reported on training sessions recently hosted by the Special Marine Air Ground Task Force (SMAGTF) Crisis Response – Africa team in Contonou, Benin, and Lome, Togo, on theater security cooperation and base security. The purpose of the training engagement was to help develop and enhance armed sentry skills as several service members from both countries prepare to deploy for peacekeeping missions in West Africa. The engagement was described [here](#).

On December 17th, AFRICOM reported that Marines and Coast Guardsmen from SPMAAGTF Crisis Response – Africa recently instructed Beninese sailors on mechanical procedures, techniques, and maintenance skills while conducting small boat maintenance on Honda BF225 outboard engines. The training allowed the Beninese Navy to repair faulty engines, thereby saving money and resources and creating a better operational capability for coastline patrols. Details can be viewed [here](#).

Export-Import Bank of the U.S.

On December 11th, the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. (Ex-Im Bank) announced it will guarantee a \$50 million loan to finance the export of 55 American-made bridge sets to Cameroon and support 200 U.S. jobs. The loan, extended to Cameroon's Ministry of Public Works, facilitates the export of modular steel bridged manufactured by the Acrow Cooperation of America, a small business based in New Jersey. The modular steel bridges will contribute to the development of regional trade through the repair and modernization of Cameroon's rural infrastructure networks. The loan guarantee was announced [here](#).

U.S. Trade and Development Agency

On December 12th, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) awarded two grants to support the development of hydropower in Tanzania and Rwanda as part of President Barack Obama's Power Africa initiative. USTDA provided a grant to Kastan Mining to support the development of two 10 MW hydropower facilities that will supply power to Tanzania's public utility and to villages in the Lukosi River Basin area. The second grant will support the efforts of DC HydroPower to develop two hydropower plants with a combined 3.6 MW of new electricity generation capacity that will help to power 7,000 households and businesses in northwest Rwanda. A press release was issued [here](#).

On December 12th, USTDA signed memoranda of cooperation with the Eko and Ikeja Electricity Distribution Companies, who serve close to a million customers in Lagos, Nigeria. The agreements are intended to formalize USTDA's partnership with the distribution companies, who both participated in a recent USTDA-sponsored reverse trade mission (RTM) that introduced them to U.S. technologies to help reduce electricity losses on their grids. As part of the agreements, USTDA will conduct a feasibility study that will develop a roadmap for implementing smart grid solutions throughout the companies' power networks. Details can be seen [here](#).

Millennium Challenge Corporation

On December 12th, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) released a report on its recent Board meeting held to select countries that will be eligible for Millennium Challenge Act (MCA) compact assistance in FY15. The Board selected a number of countries as eligible for MCA compact assistance, including Benin, Lesotho, Liberia, Morocco, Niger, and Tanzania. Sierra Leone, which was not reselected for compact assistance, was selected as eligible for threshold assistance. Cote d'Ivoire was also selected as eligible for threshold assistance. A full report on the meeting was published [here](#).

North Africa

On December 12th, International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced the suspension of investigations into alleged war crimes in Darfur. Prosecutor Bensouda also criticized the U.N. Security Council for its failure to push for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for crimes against humanity. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 12th, the U.N. human rights office voiced concern over detentions and prosecutions occurring in Sudan, which appear to be attempts to quiet political opposition and criticism for the ruling party. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) cited the detention of two prominent figures--Amin Makki Medani, a well-known human rights defender and former U.N. rights official in the region, and Farouk Abu Issa, the leader of the opposition National Consensus Forum. The two were taken by Sudan authorities on December 6th after signing a document known as the Sudan Call, which calls for the dismantling of the one-party state regime. Additional information was posted [here](#).

On December 12th, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the fifth review of Tunisia's performance under an economic program supported by a Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), enabling the disbursement of \$104.8 million. In completing the fifth review, the Executive Board approved the authorities' requests to re-phase purchases under the arrangement, and to modify end-December 2014 quantitative performance criteria on net international reserves, net domestic assets, and the primary fiscal deficit. The IMF also observed that Tunisia is completing a successful political transition while navigating a challenging domestic and external economic environment. Feedback from the IMF was shared [here](#).

On December 13th, Michele Dunne, a former U.S. diplomat now with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was blocked from entering the country to attend a conference. Dunne, who frequently writes on Egypt, said she was given no reason for being turned away at Cairo International Airport. This is the first time a Carnegie scholar has been denied entry into the country. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 15th, World Bank Group Senior Director of the Energy and Extractive Industries Global Practice Anita George began a three-day visit to Egypt for meetings with government officials on the World Bank's support for the country's energy sector. Senior Director George was scheduled to meet with Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation, Minister of Electricity, Minister of Petroleum, and Minister of Finance, in addition to members of the private sector. The meetings were targeted at identifying solutions for Egypt's increasing electricity demand due to population growth, development of energy-intensive industries, and use of electrical household appliances. Senior Director George's trip to Egypt was announced [here](#).

On December 15th, following last week's parliamentary elections, Prime Minister of the Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) and the Parti Mauricien Social Democrate (PMSD) coalition in Mauritania Anerood Jugnauth announced the new cabinet. Former Finance Minister Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo will notably return to this post in the newly formed government. The new ministers were scheduled to be sworn in on December 17th. More information can be found [here](#).

On December 15th, the *New York Times* Editorial Board published an opinion piece arguing there is a contradictory relationship between the U.S. and Egypt. According to the article, the disconnect in the bilateral relationship is evidenced by the fact that the U.S. Congress recently approved a spending bill that could allow Egypt to receive more than \$1.3 billion in American military aid regardless of whether or not the Egyptian Government continues to repress Egyptian citizens or harass foreigners. The article can be read [here](#).

On December 16th, following a request issued by the Sudanese Government last month that the African Union (AU)-U.N. Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) develop an exit strategy, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Herve Ladsous noted a review of UNAMID has been completed and the mission is not planning to leave Sudan any time soon. UNAMID was deployed to Darfur with a mandate to protect civilians following the ICC issuing an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir. Meanwhile, the Sudanese Government has dismissed the charges and refuses to recognize the ICC. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 16th, the Egyptian Government announced an investigation into an accident in which a Kuwaiti container ship and an Egyptian fishing vessel collided in the Red Sea, resulting in the death of 13 Egyptians. A similar incident occurred in the Suez Canal in September. The investigation was reported [here](#).

On December 18th, the Hudson Institute hosted an event on "The State and Future of Egypt's Islamists." Panelists included Samuel Tadros of the Hudson Institute, Mokhtar Awad of the Center for American Progress (CAP), William McCants of the Center for Middle East Policy, and Eric Trager of The Washington Institute. Event logistics were shared [here](#).

East Africa

On December 13th, Bahame Tom Nyanduga, a U.N. independent expert on human rights in Somalia, said the Somali Government and the international community must work together to transition the country to peace, stability, and democracy. Following his first visit to the war-torn country, Nyanduga said the Government should ratify key international human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Nyanduga's recommendations were detailed [here](#).

On December 15th, Al Shabaab rebels attacked a military base in southern Somalia, killing at least ten soldiers and setting fire to two military vehicles. Somali officials say the attack occurred at approximately 3 a.m. Monday morning. The incident was recounted [here](#).

On December 15th, Ethiopia was awarded a \$1.1 million grant from the newly launched Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) Special Fund (CDSF) to strengthen its climate information and early warning systems for climate resilience development and adaptation. The project represents the second phase of an ongoing exercise to upgrade and expand climate monitoring and data rescue activities in line with Ethiopia's National Economic Development Plan. Ethiopia is the first African country to benefit from the Fund. A press release was issued [here](#).

On December 16th, the World Bank approved a \$200 million International Development Association credit to Kenya. The credit will finance the Mwache Dam, which will expand access to clean water supply as well as sanitation and income generating activities through sustainable practices. The full press release can be read [here](#).

On December 17th, Somali Ambassador to the U.S. Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke was nominated by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud to serve as the country's next prime minister. The Somalia parliament will now schedule a vote to confirm or reject Ambassador Sharmarke's nomination. The announcement was made [here](#).

On December 17th, the attorney general of Tanzania resigned. The move comes after a vote in parliament called on the government to dismiss senior officials for their role in an allegedly fraudulent energy deal. The corruption scandal involved the authorized transfer of about \$122 million in public funds to a private company back in 2013. President Jakaya Kikwete is scheduled to respond to parliament's resolution later this week. Additional details on the 2013 scandal and the resulting cabinet changes can be read [here](#).

On December 18th, the Kenyan parliament was scheduled to vote on a bill to increase the time a terror suspect can be detained from 90 days to 360. The bill also included measures to fine the media for any material likely to cause fear or alarm and a requirement for landlords to provide tenant information to security officers upon request. The proposal comes after an increase in deadly attacks by Islamist militants along Kenya's border with Somalia. Civil Rights activists say the bill threatens civil liberties and free speech. The vote was noted [here](#).

On December 18th, the Kenyan parliament was delayed in their vote on a new security law. Opposition lawmakers caused such a disruption with their shouting, singing, and water throwing, that Speaker Justin Muturi suspended the morning session. The disruption in the parliament was reported [here](#).

West Africa

On December 11th, U.N. Special Envoy for the Sahel Guebre Sellassie briefed the U.N. Security Council on developments in the region. Special Envoy Sellassie reported a situation made fragile by a proliferation of militant groups and increasing food insecurity. As a result, she urged the international community to ramp up assistance efforts, especially in light of the deteriorating security situation due to crises in Libya, Nigeria, Mali, and the CAR. Special Envoy Sellassie's message to the Security Council was summarized [here](#).

On December 15th, the Executive Board of the IMF completed the eight review of Senegal's economic performance under the program supported by the Policy Support Instrument (PSI) and concluded the 2014 Article IV consultation. In completing the reviews of Senegal's economic progress, the IMF applauded Senegalese authorities for successfully maintaining macroeconomic stability and advancing fiscal consolidation. The IMF also urged more expeditious implementation of structural reforms to help achieve poverty reduction. Additional feedback from the IMF can be viewed [here](#).

On December 15th, oil workers went on strike making specific demands of the Nigeria Government. The workers are demanding passage of a stalled petroleum industry bill aimed at tackling corruption in Nigeria's oil sector. Those on strike are also seeking assistance from the government in addressing unfair labor practices and improving the Nigerian road network that is critical to their job performance. The National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers said the strike will continue until their demands are met. The situation was described [here](#).

On December 17th, the human rights division of the U.N. Mission in the Ivory Coast (UNOCI) reported that 150 alleged supporters of the country's previous president were receiving medical treatment in prison after going on a hunger strike. According to UNOCI, six detainees were in serious condition, three of which were transported to a hospital. While President Alassane Ouattara has received praise for facilitating economic recovery, critics say he has been jailing political. The full story is available [here](#).

On December 18th, the Cameroonian Defense Ministry reported the army had killed 116 Boko Haram militants during an attack of a military base in the north. According to a Defense Ministry spokesman, Boko Haram militants ambushed army vehicles with an explosive device and began their attack in the region of Amchide. For more information on the attack, click [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

On December 10th, an IMF team concluded a visit to Kinshasa, DRC, to review recent economic developments and short-term prospects and discuss possible themes for the 2015 Article IV Consultation with the DRC. The IMF team observed that, despite a challenging external and domestic environment, the DRC's economy continues to show resilience with positive trends in key macroeconomic indicators. The IMF cautioned, however, that the economy remains highly dependent on the mining sector, which makes it vulnerable to volatile commodity prices. Additional analysis was provided [here](#).

On December 12th, U.N. Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman concluded his visit to Burundi with a meeting with President Pierre Nkurunziza. The two discussed the end of the U.N. Office in Burundi (BNUB) and the establishment of the U.N. Electoral Observation Mission (MENUM). Under-Secretary-General Feltman congratulated President Nkurunziza on the success of the dialogue and encouraged the continued commitment of the Government in the political process and the participation of the opposition. Under-Secretary-General Feltman's visit to Burundi was outlined [here](#).

On December 12th, the Executive Board of the IMF completed the first review under the Extended Fund Facility arrangement (EFF) for Seychelles, enabling a disbursement of \$2.4 million. The IMF found that Seychelles' program implementation and economic fundamentals continue to be strong, although the external position weakened in mid-2014. Additionally, the IMF reported that authorities have taken appropriate monetary and fiscal policy actions to address balance of payment pressures. More information can be seen [here](#).

On December 13th, South Africa's National Parks Service reported that officials killed three poachers in the past week. While park officials said that poaching in Kruger National Park traditionally increases in November and December, this year has seen a definite increase in the number of poachers coming into the park and killing rhinos. More than 1,000 rhinos have been killed this year in South Africa, two thirds of them in the Kruger park. More information was reported [here](#).

On December 14th, Mozambican President Armando Guebuza inaugurated a new international airport in the northern port city of Nacala. The \$200 million project was financed, in part, by a loan from the Brazilian state bank BNDES, and is expected to serve Brazilian mining company Vale's coal exports in the region. The airport has an initial capacity of 500,000 passengers a year and can accommodate long-distance aircraft. The project was detailed [here](#).

On December 15th, the African Water Facility (AWF) announced it has offered a grant to the Government of Mozambique to conduct a feasibility study for the development of a climate adaptation project in the lower Limpopo region. The project will include building infrastructure to protect the Limpopo basin from floods and droughts and will increase food security by boosting agricultural production. Details are available [here](#).

On December 15th, Tanzanian officials reported more than two hundred people missing after the sinking of a boat in the DRC's Lake Tanganyika. Amid conflicting death toll reports, the Congolese Government also sent a mission led by the Transport Minister to the scene. Deputy Inspector General of Police Abdulrahman Kaniki said the boat was carrying 500 people and that approximately 230 have been rescued so far. More details on the event can be read [here](#).

On December 15th, the Nelson Mandela Foundation announced plans to release the book that former South African President Nelson Mandela began writing shortly before he left office as a sequel to his autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom," next year. President Mandela had worked on the book, titled, "The Presidential Years," between 1998 and 2002. The book's forthcoming release was announced [here](#).

On December 16th, Burkina Faso's transitional government suspended the party of ousted President Blaise Compaore and two political groups that sought to support President Compaore's efforts to extend his 27-year rule. The Ministry of Territorial Administration noted the suspensions of the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), ADF-RDA, and Fedap-BC were temporary and could be contested before an administrative tribunal. More information was shared [here](#).

On December 17th, Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, reported that over 2.5 million children in the CAR have little access to essential services and rely fully on humanitarian aid. With limited funding and resources, UNICEF reports that two out of five children that need humanitarian aid do not have it. Efforts by the agency have been dampened by constant insecurity, looting, and attacks against aid workers and receiving less than half of the emergency funding it needed in 2014. Additional details on UNICEF's report can be read [here](#).

On December 17th, an IMF team completed a two-week visit to Burundi. The trip was made to hold discussions with senior officials in preparation for the sixth review of the government's economic and financial program, financed by the Extended Credit Facility (ECF). Jaraslaw Wieczorek, who led the mission, reported the performance of the Burundian Government has been broadly satisfactory. The full press release can be accessed [here](#).

General Africa News

On December 15th, along the margins of the U.N. Global Climate Change Conference (COP 20) held in Lima, Peru, the ClimDev Africa program held a dinner dialogue to discuss perspectives for enhancing the provision of climate information services in support of Africa's economic transformation. The ClimDev Africa program is implemented under the auspices of the AU Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The meeting was noted [here](#).

On December 15th, *Ventures* published a list of the top five elections to watch in Africa in 2015. Some of the highest visibility elections will include presidential elections in Zambia, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Nigeria. More information can be found [here](#).

On December 16th, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the U.N. Security Council to collaborate further with the AU Peace and Security Council to more effectively prevent, manage, and end conflicts across the continent. Referencing Mali and the CAR, Secretary-General Ban said successful efforts are already underway for African-led peace operations and their transition into U.N. peacekeeping operations. Secretary-General Ban's comments were recorded [here](#).

On December 17th, Google related its list of the Top Ten Global Trending Searches throughout 2014, as well as separate lists for Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya. Ebola was a leading search item on both the global list and the individual lists for African countries. Each of the lists was published [here](#).

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