



Weekly Geopolitical Report

Policy, Security, and Strategic Affairs in the
Horn of Africa and Beyond

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

In a significant diplomatic intervention underscoring the international community's stake in Ethiopia's peace process, the European Union delegation has urgently called for the immediate resumption of peaceful talks to fully implement the Pretoria Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The EU strongly criticized the Tigray People's Liberation Front for establishing an unauthorized parallel regional council and advancing unilateral measures, warning that such isolated administrative actions gravely undermine long-term constitutional stability and risk unraveling hard-won gains. This high-level call highlights the Pretoria Agreement's centrality to regional peace and signals growing external concern over potential renewed instability.

Exacerbating these localized political dynamics in a particularly alarming manner, Human Rights Watch has documented a systematic campaign of forced mobilization and mass conscription by Tigrayan regional authorities. Rights monitors confirmed that these coercive operations are targeting thousands of vulnerable civilians including children as young as 15 through street abductions, nighttime house raids, and roundups at workplaces such as gold mining sites. This widespread abuse, which includes family detentions as punishment for evasion, has created a pervasive climate of fear, severely heightened domestic tensions, triggered fresh displacement, and drawn sharp international condemnation. Such violations not only gravely endanger civilian lives and rights but also risk unraveling the fragile post-conflict peace, making them a critical threat to regional stability that demands immediate attention.

In response to these regional challenges, the federal government is actively pursuing multiple diplomatic and constitutional avenues to deter active conflict and prevent the outbreak of war. Federal authorities consistently emphasize that armed mobilization threatens national unity and have put forward constructive proposals aimed at dialogue and reconciliation. While seeking peaceful constitutional options to safeguard lasting peace, the government maintains that sustainable resolution requires the complete disarmament of regional factions and full compliance with nationwide governance frameworks. Despite resistance from the current Tigray administration to structural integration, the federal state remains committed to exhausting all peaceful avenues to de-escalate tensions and protect civilian lives.

Amid these domestic frictions, Ethiopian National Defense Force Field Marshal Birhanu Jula issued a particularly stark and urgent warning that the security situation across the Red Sea corridor and the broader Horn of Africa has become more concerning and complex than ever before. The military leadership emphasized that rapidly shifting

geopolitical alignments, combined with localized cross-border insurgencies and coordinated external-internal threats, pose serious multi-domain risks to Ethiopia's sovereignty and regional stabilizing role. In direct response, the armed forces are accelerating reforms, modernization, and the reinforcement of key defensive perimeters to counter potential proxy activities and safeguard national interests in this volatile environment.

To directly address these broader maritime and border vulnerabilities, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made his fourth official working visit to Addis Ababa within just six months. The high-level bilateral consultations with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed were primarily aimed at strengthening strategic cooperation on security, with a strong focus on synchronizing joint counter-terrorism frameworks and intensifying efforts to disrupt regional Al-Shabaab operations. Both nations stressed that deepening this partnership is vital for protecting cross-border trade routes, enhancing overall stability, and maintaining geopolitical equilibrium in the Horn of Africa.

Ethiopia continued its active diplomacy with longstanding partners. State Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hadera met with the outgoing Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Mohamed Salem Ahmed Mused Alrashdi. Ambassador Hadera underscored the longstanding and multifaceted diplomatic relations between the two countries, highlighting the steady expansion of cooperation in trade and investment, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, information and communication technology (ICT), and energy. He commended the Ambassador's valuable contribution to elevating the bilateral relationship during his tenure and expressed appreciation for efforts in advancing cooperation across various sectors. The two sides also exchanged views on enhancing collaboration in consular affairs, with particular emphasis on strengthening cooperation to facilitate the consular legalization process.

This regional stability push is reinforced by ambitious domestic modernization programs designed to build long-term national capacity. A flagship effort is the "5 Million Coders" initiative, a major capacity-building program backed by international partnerships. It offers targeted training and professional certifications in high-demand fields such as data science, artificial intelligence, software development, and digital technologies. Authorities have announced plans to scale enrollment to seven million citizens by the end of 2026, aiming to transform Ethiopia's workforce, foster innovation, and establish a solid foundation for digital economy growth and future cyber sovereignty.

The House of Peoples' Representatives officially approved the comprehensive Federal Tax Administration Reform Bill. This landmark legislation introduces an independent mediation mechanism to resolve disputes between taxpayers and authorities, while strengthening overall accountability, fairness, and efficiency in the national tax system. Parliamentary facilitators noted that the sweeping reforms modernize revenue collection

processes and incorporate strict compliance safeguards, providing critical support to the country’s broader macroeconomic transformation and fiscal sustainability goals.

In fiscal advancements, the House also ratified the new Ethiopian Carbon Market Proclamation, a landmark step to unlock green investment and climate action potential. The legislation establishes a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework to govern carbon trading operations under the National Carbon Market Strategy spanning 2025 to 2035. Standing committee facilitators highlighted that this unified system will ensure transparency, efficient revenue sharing, high-quality project standards, and technology transfer while enabling Ethiopia to meet its international commitments under the Paris Agreement. This development positions the country to monetize its green initiatives and attract sustainable foreign investment.

These far-reaching infrastructures and legislative investments have secured vital international financial support. The International Monetary Fund finalized its fifth review of Ethiopia’s Extended Credit Facility on 1 July, immediately unlocking \$464 million in new funding. This brings total disbursements under the program to approximately \$2.65 billion, with front-loaded resources to cushion external shocks such as global fuel price increases.

This substantial financing directly strengthens the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, whose recent achievements were prominently showcased at the “Ethiopia Delivers” national summit. The summit provided a comprehensive platform where senior officials presented tangible evidence of improving macroeconomic indicators, including better export performance, enhanced tax revenue collection, and greater fiscal discipline resulting from deep structural adjustments across mining, agriculture, tax administration, and public finance sectors. What stood out as particularly noteworthy was the clear demonstration of resilience despite external headwinds, marking a significant milestone in the reform journey. Looking ahead, the reform roadmap prioritizes completing commercial debt restructuring and fully eliminating central bank deficit financing to lock in sustainable fiscal discipline and long-term economic resilience.

To ensure long-term fiscal resilience, the government has officially designated tourism as a core economic pillar under the strategic theme “The New Economic Motor.” In a widely broadcast national address, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed provided detailed insights into the strategy, explaining how modernizing world-class regional destinations and experiences will enable Ethiopia to capture a significantly larger share of the rapidly expanding global tourism wealth. By strategically transforming the country’s rich cultural heritage and exceptional natural assets into high-value, high-employment sectors, the initiative is designed to generate sustainable revenue streams, create widespread job opportunities, and attract substantial foreign direct investment while promoting inclusive economic growth across regions.

On 3 July 2026, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Arba Minch in the South Ethiopia Region, where he closely inspected the completed corridor development projects and the community-managed Dorze Lodge. He stated that the Corridor Development Program is specifically designed to create more comfortable, modern, and livable urban environments for citizens. The projects feature modern asphalt roads, energy-efficient street lighting, digital display screens, and upgraded public spaces that are already delivering tangible benefits to residents. The Premier described these initiatives as integral to a nationwide urban transformation agenda that integrates high-quality infrastructure with environmentally sustainable development. He emphasized that such investments will significantly improve quality of life, boost local economies, enhance tourism potential, and create new opportunities while preserving cultural and natural heritage.

Simultaneously, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission officially finalized its preparatory phase and activated the final national conference stage. The commission unveiled the eight core thematic pillars designed to guide wide-ranging, structured consensus-building talks across all segments of society. Federal facilitators maintain that this nationwide civic space expansion will firmly root political dispute resolution within peaceful constitutional channels rather than conflict.

Furthering alternative external funding, the Council of Ministers endorsed a landmark draft proclamation for Ethiopia's official accession to the BRICS New Development Bank. The legislative framework details the acquisition of 2,945 operational shares valued at USD 100,000 each, cementing the country's pivot toward South-South financial mechanisms. This major institutional integration provides a vital sovereign funding shield to complement existing Western credit arrangements.

This economic expansion is mirrored by major entries in the global commercial tech sector, highlighted by strategic partnership talks with Apple Inc. in Addis Ababa. High-level executive delegations engaged with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology to align global tech operations with regional data infrastructure goals. This technical alignment accelerates the state's broader digital sovereignty strategy by embedding international digital architecture directly into the domestic economy.

2. Sudan

The The first week of July brought Sudan's war to a point of concentrated international alarm not seen since the fall of El Fasher. A UN Human Rights Council urgent debate on El Obeid, a landmark investigative disclosure of the UAE's Libya-based supply network for the RSF, and a major SAF offensive in Blue Nile each occupied the week, against a background of deepening displacement in Kordofan, accelerating economic sanctions evasion, and the diplomatic isolation campaign gaining a notable regional endorsement.

El Obeid consumed the week's international attention. On July 3, UN Human Rights High Commissioner Volker Türk addressed a rare urgent debate at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, issuing what he described as a formal red alert. His office had documented fifteen drone strikes on El Obeid and surrounding areas over three weeks, killing at least 45 civilians and hitting markets, schools, fuel stations, water infrastructure, and civilian vehicles. Residents reported RSF control over all routes out of the city except eastward, with military build-up documented in RSF-affiliated social media accounts. Türk stated that the signs were clear and unmistakable and that the alert was not a drill, calling on heads of state to act. He drew an explicit parallel with Zamzam camp and El Fasher, where his office had issued the same warnings and they had not been heeded, and called on the Security Council to limit the use of the veto, citing France and Mexico's decade-old proposal. Britain, which requested the urgent debate, presented a draft resolution with Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Norway condemning the RSF assault and calling for a complete ceasefire by all parties. HRW, addressing the Council, described the situation as eerily reminiscent of the weeks before El Fasher fell and highlighted the role of hundreds of Colombian private military contractors, hired through a UAE-based company and transited through UAE military facilities, in the El Fasher offensive. The former UN official who led the El Fasher response warned this time could be worse. Sudan's representative to the Council, identifying himself as a native of El Obeid, told member states the city would not fall as long as its people lived.

The week's most significant investigative disclosure provided the evidentiary infrastructure behind what the UN and HRW have been alleging for months. A joint investigation by Lighthouse Reports, Evident, Der Spiegel, and Sudan War Monitor, drawing on satellite imagery, phone data, social media analysis, and interviews with RSF defectors and Libyan National Army sources, identified four previously unidentified RSF training camps in Libya operating under UAE logistical support. The camps, located at Seweidiya near Kufra, Sabha, al-Jufra, and Camp 17 outside Benghazi, train RSF fighters on heavy machine guns, drones, and rocket launchers before they return to Sudan. Equipment, including purpose-built armoured vehicles bearing UAE markings, enters Libya by sea through Benghazi or by cargo flights into interior bases including a Gaddafi-era airbase southeast of Kufra. Colombian mercenaries conduct training at Camp 17 alongside LNA personnel, with Russian personnel described at the Jufra facility. The most telling moment in the investigation came when the RSF-Tasis Alliance's spokesperson in Nairobi, pressed on the UAE weapons flows, acknowledged on camera: "The Emirates gave it to us." The UAE denied all involvement. Lighthouse Reports director Klaas van Dijken told Dabanga that what the investigation uncovered is "really just the tip of the iceberg," and that without UAE support the RSF would quickly be unable to sustain its operations.

In Blue Nile, the SAF launched a large-scale offensive on July 4 against RSF and SPLM-N positions around Kurmuk, which has remained under the alliance's control since March. Military sources cited by Anadolu described a heavy assault on front-line positions following hours of fighting. The SAF has been working toward Kurmuk for months; its June 23 capture of the Al-Bar area in Geissan was aimed at clearing a corridor to the Ethiopian border before the final push. The Kurmuk campaign carries a cross-border dimension given documented RSF supply lines running through Benishangul-Gumuz, and previous attribution of a drone strike on the Ethiopian town of Kurmuk to the SAF, which Khartoum has not publicly addressed.

Displacement from Kordofan continued to accelerate. IOM warned that RSF attacks risk turning El Obeid into another El Fasher, with displacement rising across North and South Kordofan. The General Coordination for Displaced Persons in Darfur warned of catastrophic camp conditions, with malnutrition rising, health facilities shutting, and water and sanitation systems failing as the rainy season begins.

Uganda's external intelligence chief Joseph Ocwet, delivering a message from President Museveni, told Burhan that Kampala recognises the military-led government as Sudan's sole legitimate authority and rejects the establishment of any parallel state structures. The statement marked a regional diplomatic gain for Burhan's isolation campaign against the RSF and its political wing.

Sudan's Central Bank cancelled the operating license of Al-Asjad for Smart and Digital Solutions, a newly launched fintech firm whose UAE links triggered an investigation. The revocation followed a freeze directive ordering all banks and licensed fintechs to halt new partnerships without prior central bank approval, and underscored the broader tension between wartime financial sovereignty and external actors seeking points of entry into the payment system. On sanctions, official sources confirmed that Sudan is developing BRICS-aligned alternative banking mechanisms, shifting to local currencies in bilateral trade, and building new alliances to bypass anticipated expansions of US and European measures. Finance Minister Gibril Ibrahim denied that a foreign deposit had supported the currency's recent partial recovery, attributing it instead to the central bank's 400-million-dirham injection.

Assessment

The week's two dominant stories point to the same underlying reality from different angles. The El Obeid red alert documents what is happening to civilians as the RSF closes in on a city of 600,000. The Libya investigation documents the supply chain that makes it possible. The UAE's denial of involvement is now contradicted not only by the investigative evidence but by the RSF's own political spokesperson. What the international community has so far chosen to do with this information is issue statements, hold debates, and draft resolutions that the Security Council's veto architecture will

constrain. Türk was explicit about this. The question El Obeid now forces onto the table is the same one El Fasher forced before it fell: whether the gap between documentation and enforcement is a temporary political failure or a structural feature of the response that the RSF and its backers have correctly calculated they can continue to exploit.

3. Egypt

Egypt is fortifying its fragile domestic economy against intense regional shocks by securing a vital one point five-billion-euro aid tranche from the European Union. This sudden financial influx serves as a strategic buffer, directly offsetting soaring energy costs and mitigating the volatile fallout from ongoing Middle Eastern conflicts. To prevent a severe fiscal crisis, Cairo is simultaneously maintaining aggressive internal austerity measures, including the deliberate slowing of fuel intensive state infrastructure projects and enforcing mandatory remote work schedules. This calculated balancing act ensures that domestic economic vulnerabilities do not compromise Egypt's capacity to finance its expansive foreign policy objectives and sustain its military readiness across critical border zones.

This economic resilience faces an immediate geopolitical test in the Horn of Africa, where a sudden shift in American policy threatens to destabilize Cairo's regional alignment. The United States has moved to block all United Nations funding and logistical support for the upcoming African Union peace mission in Somalia, known as AUSSOM. This funding vacuum heavily disrupts Egypt's long-term strategy, which included a direct pledge of troops to the twelve thousand strong force. By creating a security void on the Horn's flank, this American obstruction directly compromises Cairo's efforts to establish a military presence to contain Ethiopian expansions and secure its vulnerable southern geopolitical perimeter.

In response to these shifting security dynamics in Somalia, Egypt is rapidly expanding its defense architecture by forging a monumental military alliance with Turkey. The recent signing of a comprehensive bilateral cooperation accord, paired with a massive three hundred and fifty-million-dollar drone acquisition, signals a profound reconciliation between the two regional heavyweights. By engaging in joint air force combat exercises alongside Somali partners, Cairo is deliberately integrating advanced Turkish aerospace technology into its strategic calculus. This burgeoning partnership effectively bypasses Western diplomatic gridlocks, cementing Egypt's self-appointed role as Somalia's primary security guarantor.

Egypt's enhanced defense posture extends directly into maritime arenas, where safeguarding the vulnerable Suez Canal and Bab al-Mandeb shipping corridors remains an absolute national priority. Rejecting direct participation in Western led naval coalitions to preserve its diplomatic independence, Cairo is instead projecting localized power through targeted regional partnerships. The deployment of an Egyptian naval helicopter carrier to

Djibouti for joint patrols with Emirati and Bahraini forces underscores this defensive shift. This maritime assertiveness is anchored by the grand inauguration of the Octagon, a modern Strategic Command Headquarters designed to unify Egypt's armed forces, enabling seamless command and control capabilities to protect vital trade routes from persistent regional proxy threats.

These sweeping maritime and military maneuvers ultimately serve to safeguard Egypt's most existential vulnerability: the Nile River basin. The continuous, agonizing collapse of Sudan into a profound human rights and refugee catastrophe directly threatens Cairo with destabilizing border spillovers and fracturing regional unity. This civil warfare intensifies the geopolitical paralysis surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, where operational plans from Addis Ababa remain a deadlocked threat to downstream states. By coordinating tight diplomacy with a fractured Sudan and projecting military power across neighboring corridors, Egypt is attempting to force a binding water agreement, demonstrating that Nile security is thoroughly inseparable from broader Horn stability.

4. Eritrea

The Bank of Eritrea has ordered all holders of large cash reserves to deposit their Nakfa into bank accounts by 31 July or face possible legal measures. The directive, which echoes steps taken before the 2015 currency reform, appears intended to tighten state control over liquidity and draw currency circulating outside formal channels back into the banking system. The move comes amid reports of the growing use of the Nakfa in cross-border trade, particularly in neighbouring Tigray and Sudan, and has prompted speculation that the authorities may be responding to mounting monetary pressures or preparing for broader economic measures.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh held talks on 3 July to review bilateral relations and regional developments, reaffirming their commitment to deeper political and economic cooperation. While the call was couched in familiar rhetoric on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and Red Sea security, it primarily reflects the continued strategic alignment between Cairo and Asmara, which has increasingly converged around countering Ethiopia's regional ambitions and shaping the evolving balance of power in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea.

A report by Africa Intelligence revealed that eight candidates have applied to succeed the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, despite Asmara's sustained efforts to abolish the mandate. The candidates include Gambian human rights lawyer Fatou Jagne Senghore, Jordanian international law specialist Hassan Alhattab, former UNAIDS official Sihaka Tsemo, Indian UN expert Daniel Ravindran, Dutch academic and Eritrea specialist Mirjam Emma Helena van Reisen, Tanzanian human rights consultant Aloyce Chamoto, Rwandan investigator Emmanuel Ndacyayisenga, and Egyptian security specialist Ahmed Farrage. The appointment remains contingent on the

UN Human Rights Council renewing the mandate at the conclusion of its current session in Geneva.

Eritrea has meanwhile renewed its efforts to abolish the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the country, repeating a campaign it also pursued during last year's Human Rights Council session. On the sidelines of the 62nd session in Geneva, Eritrean diplomats intensified lobbying among member states, including through diplomatic engagements hosted by the Eritrean mission in Geneva. In parallel, Foreign Minister Osman Saleh briefed the diplomatic community in Asmara, reiterating the government's position that the mandate is a politicized mechanism that should be terminated and arguing that Eritrea should instead engage solely through broader UN human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies.

Eritrea's community in Saudi Arabia signed a medical cooperation agreement with Jeddah's Al Saqqaf Eye Center to provide specialised eye care services to Eritrean nationals through a formal referral system overseen by the Eritrean consulate. While limited in scope, the agreement is another indication of Asmara's efforts to deepen its engagement with Saudi Arabia and strengthen institutional links with the Eritrean diaspora in the Kingdom. The move comes as Eritrea appears increasingly interested in cultivating closer ties with Riyadh amid shifting Gulf alignments and a cooling of its previously close relationship with the UAE, potentially opening space for greater Eritrean-Saudi cooperation in the future.

5. Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh congratulated U.S. President Donald Trump on the 250th anniversary of American independence, using the occasion to reaffirm the "privileged" and "strategic" nature of Djibouti-U.S. relations. Guelleh highlighted cooperation in economic development, energy, defence, and security, describing the bilateral security partnership as evidence of a high degree of trust and convergence between the two countries. The message comes amid growing geopolitical competition in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa and underscores Djibouti's continued commitment to maintaining close ties with Washington despite the country's increasingly diversified external partnerships, particularly with China and Gulf states. The emphasis on defence and security cooperation also serves as a reminder of the enduring importance of the U.S. military presence in Djibouti and the country's role as a critical strategic hub for American operations in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and East Africa.

Djibouti hosted a week-long joint live-fire exercise involving U.S. and French forces at the Arta training range, culminating in combined close air support drills featuring

American Joint Terminal Attack Controllers and French Mirage 2000 fighter jets and Gazelle attack helicopters. While framed as an interoperability and readiness exercise, the training underscores Djibouti's enduring role as a critical security hub at the intersection of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The exercise also carries broader geopolitical significance, taking place in a country that hosts both the U.S.'s largest military presence in Africa at Camp Lemonnier and China's first overseas military base, located only a few kilometres away. The continued frequency and sophistication of U.S.-French military activities in Djibouti reflect the country's growing importance as a platform for power projection, counterterrorism operations, and crisis response, while simultaneously highlighting its position as one of the principal arenas of strategic competition among global powers in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa.

Awash Bank has announced plans to establish a presence in Djibouti, formally requesting approval from the National Bank of Ethiopia to open a branch in the neighbouring country. The bank's leadership described Djibouti as a strategically important market due to its central role in Ethiopia's external trade and logistics chains. The planned expansion comes amid Ethiopia's gradual financial liberalisation and increasing openness to cross-border banking activities. For Djibouti, the potential entry of Ethiopia's largest private bank would further reinforce its position as Ethiopia's principal maritime and commercial gateway while deepening financial integration between the two economies. The move also reflects a broader trend of growing economic interdependence, with Ethiopian firms increasingly seeking a more direct presence in Djibouti's banking, logistics, and port-related sectors as Addis Ababa pursues greater regional economic connectivity.

During Somalia's Independence Day celebrations on 29 June, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud referred to Ethiopia's Somali Region, Kenya's Northeastern Province, and Djibouti as the "three missing parts" of the Somali nation, reviving the language of Greater Somali nationalism and irredentism that shaped regional politics in the decades following Somali independence. Although the president did not elaborate further, the remarks implicitly resurrect historical claims that once contributed to regional conflict and directly touch on Djibouti's national identity and sovereignty. The comments also come amid a deepening political crisis in Somalia, marked by disputes over constitutional reforms, a controversial extension of President Hassan Sheikh's term in office, armed confrontations in Mogadishu, and growing opposition criticism of his administration. Against this backdrop, the invocation of pan-Somali nationalism may be interpreted as an attempt to rally domestic support and project a unifying nationalist narrative at a time of mounting internal political pressures. For Djibouti, however, the remarks are likely to be viewed cautiously, given the country's historical sensitivity to irredentist claims and its long-standing commitment to preserving regional stability and internationally recognised borders in the Horn of Africa.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's week was defined by compounding humanitarian collapse in Jonglei and a food security system that multiple agencies described as approaching a point beyond which donor inaction becomes irreversible. The killing of five aid workers in Duk County and the reported death of the government-appointed Akobo commissioner in renewed fighting framed the week's most urgent news, while the broader picture of malnutrition, displacement, and funding shortfall continued to deepen without any indication of the political breakthrough that would alter the conditions producing it.

On June 30, armed men ambushed a clearly marked humanitarian convoy operated by the John Dau Foundation in Duk County, Jonglei State, killing five humanitarian workers and injuring four others. The convoy was transporting staff returning from an Action Against Hunger training session along the route between Payuel Payam and Pajut in Panyang Payam when it came under attack. Several civilians were also reportedly killed or wounded. UN Humanitarian Coordinator Ramanathan Balakrishnan described the attack as deliberate and brutal and called for a prompt impartial investigation. UNMISS head Anita Kiki Gbeho called on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law. UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher noted that the killings brought the total number of humanitarian workers and contractors killed in South Sudan in 2026 to 29. A separately published UNMISS report documented more than 760 civilians killed between January and March of this year, an 89 percent increase on the previous quarter, alongside a significant increase in conflict-related sexual violence. The Duk County ambush is a data point in a trend, not an exception to one.

Fighting continued in Akobo County around the town of Walgak, where SPLA-IO forces launched an attack in the early hours of Sunday, briefly overrunning the area before government reinforcements arrived from Waat and retook it. The government-appointed commissioner of Akobo County, James Kueth Makuach, was reported killed in the engagement, along with several other officials, though state authorities said his whereabouts remained formally unknown at the time of reporting. Makuach had defected from the SPLM-IO to the ruling SPLM in April and was reappointed commissioner following the SSPDF's March offensive on Akobo. His death, if confirmed, would remove a figure whose appointment itself was contested under the R-ARCSS, which allocates the Akobo commissioner position to the SPLM-IO. Bol Deng Bol, chairperson of the Jonglei Civil Society Network, said the renewed fighting underscored the need for inclusive dialogue that includes the participation of Machar, noting that continued exclusion of the opposition risks producing more violence. Civil society groups issued a broader call for an immediate ceasefire across the county following the commissioner's reported death.

The food security picture moved from severe to systemic during the week. A coalition of UN agencies and humanitarian organisations warned that South Sudan is approaching a tipping point at which, without timely and significant donor action, millions of people face sliding into acute food insecurity with no recovery pathway. The warning drew on a convergence of deteriorating indicators: the IPC Phase 5 classification for Akobo, a SMART survey from Maiwut County in Upper Nile State showing acute malnutrition rates above emergency thresholds, a WFP funding shortfall that threatens to reduce coverage for up to 1.5 million people, and the continuing collapse of humanitarian access across Jonglei and Upper Nile. The warning about a tipping point is technically specific: it refers to the seasonal window before lean season peaks in August, within which food distribution must reach targeted populations or the cost of preventing famine-level outcomes rises exponentially. UNHAS reported significant constraints on transporting humanitarian cargo to affected areas, reflecting not only insecurity but also the physical inaccessibility of the worst-affected zones during the onset of the rainy season.

UNMISS's new chief, Anita Kiki Gbeho, convened her first joint interagency meeting during the week, establishing her initial priorities around civilian protection, political engagement, and coordination with humanitarian actors. The mission has simultaneously been absorbing a 15 percent budget cut that is expected to reduce operational capacity by between 25 and 30 percent, removing a temporary operating base from Akobo among other contractions. The UNMISS dialogue call, issued alongside the civilian casualties and food security warnings, reflects an institution that is being asked to do more with significantly less at the moment the crisis it monitors is deepening.

Assessment

The week's compounding signals point to a system under cumulative stress at every level simultaneously: military, humanitarian, political, and financial. The convoy ambush in Duk and the fighting in Walgak are not the crisis; they are the most visible expressions of a conflict that has been producing 29 aid worker deaths since January, 760 civilian deaths in a single quarter, and IPC Phase 5 in counties where the humanitarian infrastructure was looted months ago and has not been rebuilt. The food security tipping point warning is the most consequential claim made this week: it places a seasonal deadline on donor response that the political conditions making that response difficult are themselves actively undermining. South Sudan is asking the international community to fund a humanitarian system that its own government is making increasingly dangerous and inaccessible to operate.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

Somalia marked its 66th Independence Day on July 1 with military parades and nationwide celebrations conducted under heightened security measures. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud presided over official commemorations in Mogadishu. Security forces were deployed across major cities to prevent potential Al-Shabaab attacks during the festivities.

On another note, Puntland MPs and regional authorities formally accused the federal government of undermining the federal system citing what they described as encroachments on regional autonomy. The Puntland government subsequently banned the Turkish commercial fishing company SOMTURK from operating in its territorial waters asserting exclusive authority over maritime resources and requiring prior Puntland approval for all foreign activities in its jurisdictional waters.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Hassan Mohamed Ali received 129 Somali nationals returning voluntarily from Libya under the International Organization for Migration program. Of the returnees, 110 were repatriated to Mogadishu and 19 to Hargeisa. The government confirmed its commitment to providing reintegration support including housing assistance, livelihood programs and psychosocial services.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud announced on July 3 that the government would present a comprehensive strategy for the next phase of military operations against Al-Shabaab in the coming weeks. Speaking at an official event in Mogadishu, the President stated that planning and preparations are underway for an offensive to liberate remaining Al-Shabaab controlled areas. He did not specify the timing, scope or operational focus of the planned campaign.

Turkish F-16 fighter jets conducted multiple airstrikes against Al-Shabaab targets in southern Somalia on June 30. The strikes executed in coordination with Somali National Army forces targeted the Godey area of Lower Shabelle region. The Somali Defence Ministry reported that approximately 35 militants were killed and over 20 wounded in the operation which focused on caves, weapons storage facilities and militant hideouts.

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency carried out a security operation in the Basra area of Middle Shabelle region on July 4 targeting an Al-Shabaab network involved in bomb making and attack facilitation. NISA confirmed eight militants were killed including Ahmed Eybka Aalim also known as Daqare identified as a key figure in the militant network. Six other operatives linked to the group were also eliminated. The operation specifically targeted individuals responsible for manufacturing improvised explosive devices and coordinating attacks using heavy weapons.

United States forces in coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia conducted an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab militants in the vicinity of Farsooley approximately 90 kilometers west of Mogadishu. The operation was part of US counterterrorism efforts to degrade Al-Shabaab's operational capabilities.

Residents on the western outskirts of Mogadishu reported that heavily armed Al-Shabaab militants have been openly patrolling populated neighbourhoods after sunset. These nocturnal patrols have occurred despite government claims of improved security in and around the capital indicating persistent militant presence in areas adjacent to Mogadishu.

The United States informed the African Union via diplomatic note on July 1 that it will not support the renewal of United Nations logistical and operational support for the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia beyond the end of 2026. The United States indicated it would not block the mandate renewal but formally opposed the continuation of UN backing which currently provides approximately \$500 million annually for logistics including food, fuel, medical care, and transportation for nearly 12,000 AUSSOM troops.

On another front, Somalia and Turkey signed two maritime cooperation agreements in Istanbul on July 3. Ports and Marine Transport Minister Abdulqadir Mohamed Nur signed on behalf of Somalia. The first agreement signed with Piri Reis University advances maritime education and professional training by providing ministry staff and personnel across Somalia's ports with access to higher education and specialized training programs. The second agreement signed with DEHUKAM focuses on strengthening Somalia's maritime legal framework and governance systems through technical assistance, legal capacity building, and institutional development.

On another diplomatic front, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement strongly condemning the terrorist bombing at a café in Damascus, Syria. The statement expressed condolences to the families of victims and affirmed Somalia's solidarity with the Syrian people and government in confronting terrorism.

Somaliland

President The Cabinet unanimously approved the joint statement signed by President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paving the way for the agreement to be submitted for further legislative and procedural action. This approval formalizes the executive branch's endorsement of the diplomatic understanding reached between the two parties.

The KAAH political party criticized the government's recent decision to establish a diplomatic mission in Jerusalem describing the move as insufficiently considered. The party argued that the decision does not adequately reflect national interests and called for greater consultation on foreign policy matters of importance. However the opposition

Kulmiye Party reaffirmed its support for Somaliland's international recognition and its diplomatic relationship with Israel including the recently established Somaliland embassy in Jerusalem. Kulmiye's endorsement provides cross party backing for the government's foreign policy direction though it stands in contrast to KAAH's critical stance.

Former President Muse Bihi Abdi publicly raised questions regarding the current administration's handling of the Israel relationship specifically concerning the embassy in Jerusalem and related diplomatic steps. Bihi's remarks have sparked internal political debate on foreign policy transparency and priorities highlighting divisions within the political elite regarding the pace and nature of engagement with Israel.

On another note, Somaliland's Ministry of Information, Culture and Awareness announced new regulations tightening oversight of media activities. The regulations stipulate that only licensed media organizations and accredited journalists will be permitted to conduct journalistic activities within Somaliland. The new rules represent a shift in media governance, requiring all media entities to obtain proper licensing and all journalists to secure accreditation before practicing their profession. The Ministry did not provide specific details regarding the implementation timeline or penalties for non-compliance.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through the Somaliland Maritime Security Coordination Office convened the Quarterly Somaliland Maritime Security Coordination Meeting at the Ambassador Hotel in Hargeisa. The meeting brought together relevant government agencies and international partners to assess maritime security challenges and coordination mechanisms. Following the meeting, the Ministry released an official communiqué outlining key discussions, national priorities and agreed coordination measures aimed at strengthening Somaliland's maritime security, governance frameworks and sustainable maritime development. The communiqué specifically referenced coordination with international partners including support from EUCAP Somalia and detailed priority areas for maritime domain awareness, fisheries management and counter piracy operations.

8. Yemen

Between early July 2026 and the following days, Yemen's conflict dynamics appear to have shifted from low-intensity containment under the post-2022 UN-mediated truce toward a sharper phase of escalation along both the western front in Hodeidah and the Red Sea maritime corridor. According to Al Jazeera and AFP reporting, the most significant development was a series of intense clashes in southern Hodeidah (Jabal Dabbas/Jabal Dubas area) on 4–5 July, where Houthi forces launched a surprise offensive against government-aligned positions, temporarily overran outposts before being pushed back after several hours of fighting. Yemeni government officials reported 16 soldiers killed and suggested that more than 50 Houthi fighters were also killed, with both sides

acknowledging casualties but offering divergent figures; medical sources cited by AFP confirmed at least 16 government fatalities and 22 wounded. The fighting was characterised by the use of snipers, drones, and mortars, and was described by a government-aligned officer as the most lethal exchange in years, underscoring a potential erosion of the de facto front-line stability that had largely held since the 2022 truce.

In parallel, political and military signalling from the Houthis indicates an expansion of escalation thresholds beyond the domestic battlefield into regional deterrence posturing. On 3 July, Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree issued threats against Saudi Arabia, warning of strikes on airports and critical infrastructure following what the group described as an airspace violation linked to the attempted obstruction of an Iranian civilian aircraft landing in Sanaa. While these claims were not independently verified and reflect the movement's own narrative, they align with a broader pattern of calibrated external messaging aimed at sustaining pressure on Riyadh and embedding Yemen's conflict within wider Iran–Saudi–Israel strategic tensions. The Houthis' emphasis on continued Sanaa–Tehran air connectivity, including claims of high-level travel linked to Iranian figures, further signals the consolidation of their diplomatic and logistical alignment with Iran's regional network, even as formal recognition remains absent.

At the same time, maritime insecurity in the Red Sea has re-emerged as a parallel escalation track, reinforcing the strategic internationalisation of the conflict. The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported a distress incident involving a cargo vessel under attack approximately 30 nautical miles southwest of Hodeidah on 5 July, with unknown armed assailants implicated and no immediate attribution confirmed. Although details remain limited, the location and timing are consistent with previous patterns of Houthi-linked or Houthi-tolerated maritime disruption in response to regional escalatory cycles. Taken together, the renewed ground fighting in Hodeidah, intensified rhetoric toward Saudi Arabia, and renewed maritime incidents suggest a partial breakdown of the relative deterrence equilibrium that had prevailed since 2022, with both local front-line competition and Red Sea leverage mechanisms reasserting themselves as mutually reinforcing theatres of escalation rather than isolated arenas.

9. Kenya

Kenya experienced a tense and politically significant week between June 29 and July 5, 2026. The country faced rising social unrest, economic pressure, and security concerns, while the government attempted to respond through policy measures, budgetary decisions, and regional cooperation. The events of this week reflected deeper national challenges, including public frustration over the cost of living, youth led protests, allegations of police abuse, fiscal strain, and growing political polarization ahead of the 2027 election period.

One of the most important developments during the week was the continuation of youth led protests, especially those associated with Kenya's "Gen Z" movement. These protests

were driven by anger over economic hardship, alleged abductions, and concerns about government accountability. On June 30, police opened fire during a protest in Nairobi's Mathare area, killing at least one protester and wounding two others. This incident intensified public criticism of the security forces and raised serious concerns about excessive use of force. President William Ruto acknowledged that there had been cases of excessive and extrajudicial actions by security officers, and the government set aside approximately KSh2 billion for victims. While this move may help reduce public anger in the short term, it does not fully address the deeper distrust between citizens and the state.

Politically, the government continued to push forward its legislative and economic agenda despite public pressure. Parliament passed the 2026 Appropriations Act, which authorized a KSh4.82 trillion budget for the 2026 and 2027 financial year. This budget was presented as part of President Ruto's Bottom Up Economic Transformation Agenda, which seeks to support economic recovery and development. The budget allocated large amounts to national government operations, county governments, education, and security. However, Kenya's rising debt burden remains a major concern. With debt service consuming a large share of government revenue, the state faces a difficult balance between funding public services, managing debt, and responding to public demands for relief.

Security issues were also visible beyond Nairobi. On July 5, armed men attacked a political convoy in Kisii County linked to supporters of Linda Mwananchi. One person was injured, and three suspects were arrested. This incident highlighted the risk of localized political violence as the country moves closer to the next election cycle. Although no major Al Shabaab or militia attack was reported during the week, Kenya continued to prioritize counterterrorism and anti extremism efforts, especially in coastal and northern counties. In Kwale County, community forums were held to combat radicalization, showing that security concerns remain both national and local.

Economically, Kenya continued to face pressure from inflation, fuel costs, and public dissatisfaction with living conditions. Inflation stood at around 6.4 percent in June 2026, slightly lower than the previous month but still high enough to burden households. Fuel and food prices remained major concerns for ordinary Kenyans. In response to earlier transport sector pressure and public frustration, the government reduced diesel prices by about KSh10 per liter for June and July. This helped prevent a planned transport strike, but it also placed additional pressure on the national budget. The government's use of subsidies and price cuts may provide temporary relief, but these measures are expensive and difficult to sustain if revenue remains limited.

At the regional level, Kenya took steps to strengthen economic integration within East Africa. On June 30, Kenya and Rwanda signed a ten year fuel import agreement that allows Rwanda to import fuel through the Port of Mombasa. This agreement is important because it strengthens Kenya's role as a regional trade and logistics hub while helping

Rwanda diversify its fuel supply routes. The deal also supports broader East African Community cooperation by linking energy security with regional infrastructure and trade. Kenya also continued to participate in regional peace and stability efforts through IGAD, particularly in relation to conflicts in Somalia and Sudan, although no major diplomatic shift occurred during the week.

Social media and public discourse played a major role in shaping the week's events. Young Kenyans used online platforms to share videos of police actions, call for justice, and organize public pressure. Activists debated whether previous protests had achieved meaningful policy change, while opposition figures criticized the government over the cost of living crisis. Government aligned media emphasized compensation for victims and called for calm, while civil society groups demanded independent investigations into the June 30 shootings. This shows that digital activism has become a powerful force in Kenyan politics, even if the executive still controls many final policy outcomes.

The credibility of the information surrounding these events depends on the sources used. International news agencies such as Reuters and AP provided timely reporting on protests, police violence, and government responses. Kenya News Agency offered useful information on local development and official initiatives, although it reflects a government perspective. Parliamentary sources were authoritative for budget and legislative details, while think tank and human rights organizations helped provide broader context on youth activism, governance, and civil liberties. Even so, gaps remain, especially regarding independent casualty figures, the progress of investigations, and the full scale of arrests or compensation efforts.

Overall, Kenya's situation during this week can be described as moderately risky. In the short term, social unrest, police violence, high living costs, and fiscal pressure are the most serious challenges. Government responses such as compensation funds, fuel price cuts, and budget allocations may reduce immediate tensions, but they do not remove the underlying causes of public dissatisfaction. In the medium term, the approach of the 2027 elections could intensify political competition and increase the risk of localized violence. At the same time, Kenya's strong civil society, active media environment, parliamentary system, and regional economic role provide important sources of resilience.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Throughout the first week of July 2026, Saudi Arabia's political and diplomatic posture was shaped by a significant recalibration of its regional security strategy, expanding international diplomacy, and intensified efforts to position itself as a leading mediator in regional conflicts. Security assessments during the week revealed growing differences between Riyadh and Washington over the management of regional tensions with Iran, as

Saudi Arabia continued to prioritize de-escalation and regional stability while simultaneously diversifying its strategic partnerships. Against this backdrop, Riyadh accelerated defense cooperation with Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt, reflecting an increasingly multidimensional security doctrine designed to strengthen Gulf air defense capabilities and reduce dependence on a single security partner. At the same time, tensions with Yemen's Houthi movement remained elevated as the group threatened Saudi airports, energy infrastructure, and maritime routes following renewed airspace restrictions. In response, the Saudi-led Coalition reaffirmed its commitment to protecting national infrastructure and preserving the security of Red Sea shipping lanes, emphasizing its readiness to respond decisively to any attacks targeting the Kingdom.

Diplomatically, Saudi Arabia significantly expanded its international engagement across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Gulf. Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held high-level discussions in Beijing aimed at deepening economic cooperation with China while coordinating positions on regional security developments. Riyadh also strengthened its African outreach by hosting the inaugural Saudi–Kenyan Political Consultations Committee, resulting in agreements covering investment, customs cooperation, and labor mobility. Relations with Western partners also advanced through the implementation of the Electronic Travel Authorization system for British citizens and preparations for expanded cooperation with Canada in trade, technology, and defense. Within the Gulf, Saudi Arabia maintained close coordination with Bahrain while continuing diplomatic consultations with Qatar, underscoring the Kingdom's commitment to preserving Gulf unity during a period of heightened regional uncertainty.

Saudi Arabia also reinforced its role as a principal diplomatic actor in resolving regional conflicts. Together with the United States, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, Riyadh unveiled a comprehensive political roadmap for Sudan proposing a humanitarian ceasefire, a permanent cessation of hostilities, and a structured transition toward civilian governance. The initiative was widely viewed as strengthening Saudi Arabia's diplomatic influence across both the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa while reinforcing its broader objective of promoting regional stability through political dialogue. Collectively, these developments demonstrated Riyadh's evolving foreign policy, which increasingly combines military preparedness, diversified strategic partnerships, and proactive diplomacy to safeguard national interests and reinforce stability across the wider Middle East and the Red Sea region.

UAE

During the first week of July 2026, the United Arab Emirates continued to strengthen its position as one of the region's leading economic, diplomatic, and strategic actors through expanded international partnerships, enhanced security cooperation, and active engagement in regional peace initiatives. Security developments attracted considerable

attention following confirmation that Israel had deployed an Iron Dome air defense battery to the UAE to reinforce protection against evolving missile and drone threats in the Gulf. Simultaneously, Abu Dhabi continued reviewing its broader defense posture as discussions surrounding advanced military modernization, including the future of the F-35 acquisition program, remained part of its long-term strategic planning. These developments reflected the UAE's continued emphasis on strengthening national defense while maintaining a balanced and diversified security architecture amid an evolving regional environment.

On the diplomatic and economic front, the UAE accelerated its global commercial outreach through the entry into force of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Ukraine, further expanding the country's role as a global trade and logistics hub linking Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi also concluded a comprehensive trade mission across South America aimed at expanding non-oil commercial partnerships and opening new investment opportunities. Bilateral engagement with the United States continued through high-level consultations between President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and senior American officials on maritime security, regional stability, and strategic cooperation, while preparations advanced for broader trade, technology, and defense discussions with Canada.

The UAE also maintained an active humanitarian and diplomatic role in addressing regional crises. Alongside Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United States, Abu Dhabi introduced a joint political roadmap designed to advance peace efforts in Sudan through a humanitarian ceasefire and political transition process. Complementing these diplomatic initiatives, President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed approved US\$30 million in emergency humanitarian assistance for civilians affected by the conflict in North Kordofan. The UAE further reinforced its commitment to humanitarian diplomacy by participating in deliberations at the United Nations Human Rights Council, where it called for an immediate ceasefire and enhanced protection of civilians. These developments highlighted Abu Dhabi's continuing strategy of combining economic diplomacy, humanitarian engagement, and strategic partnerships to strengthen its regional and international influence.

Qatar

Throughout the first week of July 2026, Qatar reinforced its position as one of the Gulf's leading diplomatic mediators while simultaneously strengthening national resilience, expanding international partnerships, and safeguarding critical economic infrastructure. Security assessments published during the week highlighted Doha's continued efforts to enhance its defense architecture following recent regional tensions that affected energy infrastructure at Ras Laffan. In response, Qatar accelerated efforts to deepen security

cooperation with regional and European partners while preserving the resilience of its strategic energy sector. Domestically, the government announced the reopening of maritime navigation for leisure, fishing, and recreational vessels after lifting precautionary restrictions imposed during the previous regional security escalation, signaling improving confidence in maritime security conditions.

Diplomatically, Qatar remained at the center of regional mediation efforts by facilitating indirect discussions between the United States and Iran in Doha aimed at advancing dialogue on nuclear and regional security issues. Qatari leaders also expanded bilateral engagement with major international partners, including India, where discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in energy, regional security, and economic relations. Additional diplomatic progress was achieved through new political consultation mechanisms established with North Macedonia, while continued engagement with both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates demonstrated Doha's commitment to preserving Gulf cooperation despite broader regional tensions. These initiatives further reinforced Qatar's long-standing role as a trusted platform for dialogue and conflict mediation.

Economically, Qatar demonstrated continued resilience despite ongoing regional geopolitical challenges. Qatar Airways expanded its African network by launching scheduled services to Port Sudan, strengthening connectivity between the Gulf and the Red Sea region while supporting commercial and humanitarian mobility. At the same time, Mwanani Qatar reported robust port performance during the first half of 2026, with nearly half a million containers handled across hundreds of commercial vessels, highlighting the country's ability to sustain trade flows despite continuing pressure on regional maritime routes. Together, these developments underscored Qatar's strategy of combining diplomatic mediation, economic diversification, and infrastructure resilience to maintain its position as a key political and commercial actor in the Gulf and beyond.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Between early July and the first week of the month, Mali experienced a significant escalation in insurgent activity alongside continued efforts by the transitional authorities to reinforce internal political control and strengthen regional cooperation against terrorism. The reporting period underscored the increasingly complex security environment confronting the country as coordinated militant operations expanded across northern and central Mali while regional organizations reaffirmed their support for Bamako's counterterrorism campaign.

The most consequential development was the coordinated offensive launched by the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) in partnership with the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nusrat

al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM) against multiple military positions across northern and central Mali. Simultaneous attacks targeting strategic locations, including Aguelhok, Anefis, Gao, Sévaré, and areas southwest of Bamako, demonstrated an unprecedented level of operational coordination between separatist and jihadist groups. Although the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) reported successfully repelling several assaults and inflicting significant militant casualties, continued fighting around Kidal highlighted the persistent volatility of northern Mali and the evolving capacity of insurgent groups to threaten military installations and key transportation corridors across the country.

Domestically, the transitional government continued consolidating state authority through measures aimed at disrupting networks accused of supporting armed groups. The decision to impose financial sanctions against several prominent political opponents living abroad reflected the authorities' broader strategy of targeting individuals alleged to provide financial or logistical assistance to insurgent organizations while reinforcing national security during a period of heightened military pressure. The move attracted international attention and contributed to broader debates regarding governance, political freedoms, and national security under the transitional administration.

At the regional level, Mali's security challenges prompted renewed diplomatic engagement across Africa. The African Union strongly condemned the coordinated attacks and reaffirmed its solidarity with Mali in confronting terrorism and violent extremism throughout the Sahel. The organization emphasized the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, intelligence sharing, and collective security mechanisms to address increasingly interconnected threats facing the central Sahel. Together, these developments reflected Mali's continuing position at the center of regional counterterrorism efforts, where military operations, state consolidation, and continental diplomacy remain closely intertwined in shaping the country's political and security trajectory.

Niger

Between early July and the first week of the month, Niger's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was shaped by the continued assertion of national sovereignty, efforts to strengthen regional security cooperation, and renewed concerns over internal military cohesion amid persistent terrorist threats along the country's western frontier.

Diplomatically, Niger continued advancing its sovereign foreign policy agenda following its decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute. The International Criminal Court (ICC) formally acknowledged the commencement of Niger's withdrawal process alongside its Alliance of Sahel States (AES) partners, Mali and Burkina Faso, highlighting the broader regional trend toward strengthening domestic judicial authority and reducing reliance on external legal mechanisms. At the regional level, security cooperation remained an important priority as neighboring Nigeria intensified consultations with Niger and other

partners to strengthen coordinated responses against expanding jihadist threats operating across shared border areas.

On the security front, authorities remained focused on containing persistent insurgent activity while addressing emerging internal military challenges. Security measures were significantly reinforced around the Presidential Palace in Niamey following reports of limited unrest involving elements of an armored military unit. The incident reportedly stemmed from concerns regarding operational deployments and equipment shortages associated with counterterrorism operations in the Tillabéri Region, highlighting the continued demands placed on Niger's armed forces as they confront increasingly complex security threats. Despite the isolated nature of the incident, the government maintained firm control while continuing military operations against extremist groups operating along the country's volatile border regions.

Overall, the reporting period reflected Niger's continued emphasis on consolidating national sovereignty, reinforcing regional security partnerships, and preserving internal stability while confronting the persistent security pressures facing the central Sahel.

DRC

The first week of the month, the Democratic Republic of the Congo strengthened its international diplomatic profile while continuing to confront persistent security and humanitarian challenges in the country's eastern provinces. The reporting period was characterized by the DRC's assumption of a prominent multilateral leadership role, continued implementation of regional peace initiatives, and sustained efforts to stabilize conflict-affected areas amid the ongoing presence of armed groups.

On the diplomatic front, the DRC assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council, placing Kinshasa at the center of international deliberations on global peace and security. Under the leadership of Ambassador Zénon Mukongo Ngay, the Congolese presidency emphasized transparency, inclusive multilateralism, and coordinated responses to security crises affecting Africa, the Middle East, and other regions. During the same period, the Security Council renewed the DRC sanctions regime for an additional year, maintaining measures including arms embargoes, travel restrictions, and asset freezes targeting armed groups and individuals contributing to instability in eastern Congo. Regionally, the DRC continued participating in the implementation of the Washington Accords, where Congolese, Rwandan, and international representatives advanced dialogue through the Joint Oversight Committee aimed at reducing cross-border tensions, supporting ceasefire implementation, and facilitating durable solutions to regional displacement and security concerns.

Domestically, political attention remained focused on the evolving peace process in eastern Congo. Authorities in Kinshasa continued balancing national security priorities

with diplomatic engagement regarding the M23 and the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), while discussions increasingly centered on the practical challenges of monitoring ceasefire arrangements and verifying compliance in areas with limited international access. These debates reflected the broader complexity of advancing political dialogue while maintaining state authority in conflict-affected provinces.

Security conditions remained fragile despite a temporary reduction in large-scale military confrontations. M23 forces continued to maintain influence across parts of Rutshuru and Masisi territories in North Kivu, while clashes persisted in the South Kivu highlands where Congolese government forces and M23-aligned fighters continued contesting strategic positions. Alongside ongoing military tensions, humanitarian agencies worked to expand access to vulnerable populations, with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) negotiating security guarantees to deliver humanitarian assistance to isolated communities, including those affected by continued insecurity around Minembwe. Collectively, these developments underscored the DRC's simultaneous pursuit of international diplomatic leadership and domestic stabilization while confronting one of Africa's most complex security environments.

Chad

The first week of the month, Chad's political, diplomatic, and security landscape continued to be shaped by the widening consequences of the Sudanese conflict, deteriorating security conditions across the Lake Chad Basin, and sustained efforts to preserve regional stability while protecting its national borders. The government remained focused on balancing humanitarian responsibilities with growing military and diplomatic pressures as instability on both its eastern and western frontiers intensified.

Diplomatically, President Mahamat Idriss Déby's administration sought to reinforce Chad's image as a stabilizing regional actor by firmly rejecting allegations linking N'Djamena to efforts aimed at destabilizing the Central African Republic (CAR). Through an official statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Chad's adherence to the principles of sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful coexistence, emphasizing continued political dialogue with the Central African Republic and members of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in support of regional peace and stability. Simultaneously, relations with neighboring Sudan remained under close observation after the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) regained control of strategic positions near the Chadian frontier, prompting heightened monitoring of developments along the eastern border and reinforcing Chad's commitment to preventing any spillover of the conflict onto its territory.

Security developments remained dominated by cross-border threats emanating from both Sudan and the Lake Chad Basin. Along the eastern frontier, Chadian security forces maintained an elevated operational posture amid continued movements of Rapid Support

Forces (RSF) elements, armed community militias, and Zaghawa factions operating across the border. In western Chad, authorities faced mounting concerns following international assessments warning of a significant deterioration in security across the Lake Chad Basin, where attacks by Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have intensified against civilian communities and security forces. The growing frequency of cross-border raids, kidnappings, and armed attacks reinforced the importance of sustained regional counterterrorism cooperation between Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria to safeguard one of Africa's most fragile security environments.

Humanitarian governance remained another defining priority throughout the reporting period. International agencies intensified appeals for emergency financial support to sustain refugee protection and humanitarian operations as Chad continued hosting more than 1.3 million refugees and displaced persons, the overwhelming majority having fled the conflict in neighboring Sudan. The continued influx of displaced populations placed additional pressure on national institutions responsible for refugee management, border administration, healthcare, and humanitarian logistics. Despite these challenges, the government continued working with international partners to strengthen humanitarian coordination while maintaining security along critical border regions, reflecting Chad's central role in managing one of the Horn and Sahel region's largest displacement crises.

12. North Africa

Libya

International scrutiny has intensified over alleged foreign involvement in Sudan's ongoing conflict, with Libyan officials drawn into accusations alongside Emirati counterparts. A coalition of human rights organizations submitted a report to the International Criminal Court detailing military support routes for Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that reportedly transited through Libyan hubs, alongside supplies from Abu Dhabi airports. These routes allegedly facilitated weapons, mercenaries, and logistics contributing to atrocities in Darfur. Libyan forces linked to Khalifa Haftar have denied any cooperation with the RSF, dismissing the claims as attempts to sow division. The UAE has similarly rejected accusations of providing military or financial aid to warring parties in Sudan.

Qatar has reaffirmed strong diplomatic backing for Libya's stability amid these regional tensions. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met with Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh in Doha, reviewing bilateral cooperation and discussing ways to advance it. Qatar expressed firm support for Libya's unity, sovereignty, and the political process aligned with UN Security Council resolutions, emphasizing peaceful solutions that address the Libyan people's aspirations for development and stability.

Egypt continues to play a pivotal role in supporting Libyan reconciliation efforts, aligning with broader international initiatives. Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, in a phone call with US Senior Adviser Massad Boulos, stressed the need for a Libyan-led process focused on unifying state institutions and holding simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections. Egypt endorsed the UN roadmap and a recent declaration of principles from Libyan stakeholders, highlighting coordinated regional and international efforts to overcome political stalemates that have persisted since the cancellation of elections in 2021.

Algeria

Algeria is pursuing strategic international partnerships to modernize its key infrastructure. The Port of Algiers hosted a delegation from Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Gateway Terminal (RSGT) at the end of June to explore cooperation opportunities. The engagement focuses on sharing expertise to accelerate the port's modernization, digital transformation, and overall operational improvements, positioning it as a more competitive Mediterranean hub through enhanced capabilities and technology transfer.

Morocco

Morocco is actively expanding diplomatic and practical partnerships across the region, beginning with renewed engagement with Syria. A joint workshop in Damascus between Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Moroccan delegation focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation, coordination mechanisms, and addressing shared interests across various fields. This builds on earlier steps, including the reopening of embassies and high-level visits, aimed at reinforcing relations and fostering collaboration in political, economic, and other domains.

These outreach efforts extend to North African neighbors, as evidenced by deepening ties with Libya in human development sectors. Libya's Minister of Labour and Rehabilitation Ali Al-Abed met with Morocco's Minister of Economic Integration, Small Businesses, Employment, and Skills Younes Sekkouri in Rabat. Discussions centered on exchanging expertise, leveraging Morocco's experience in labor market development, vocational training, and skills enhancement to support human resources and employment opportunities. Both sides emphasized ongoing institutional coordination to advance development goals and address labor market needs.

13. Middle East

Iran

Iran's nuclear dossier remains at the center of international concern. The UN's atomic watchdog reports little net change in Iran's enrichment program after months of conflict, and Western diplomats continue to insist Tehran forgo any bomb-related activities.

NATO summit preparations highlighted this stance: alliance communiqués reaffirmed that “Iran must never have a nuclear weapon”. Tehran’s interim ceasefire deal with Washington (signed in mid-June) sidestepped final nuclear negotiations, deferring tough questions about Iran’s enriched uranium stocks and IAEA access for later talks.

Meanwhile, Iran’s leadership has publicly rejected pressure: the top negotiator urged that ceasefire terms be ironed out before resuming nuclear dialogue. AP News notes that the U.S.-Iran initial agreement calls for Iran to dilute its enriched uranium stockpile and waive related sanctions, immediately freeing Iran to resume oil exports, a major diplomatic concession. In short, Iran has committed to restart inspections under the deal, but the mechanics (and verification) of its nuclear program will be a live issue as talks continue.

Even as war clouds lift, strategic friction remains in the Gulf. Maritime trade has begun to normalize under the ceasefire: Reuters reports that shipping between Iran and Qatar resumed after a roughly five-month halt, and Iran cleared goods for export at Dubai’s Jebel Ali port. However, Iran insists on retaining a dominant role in the Strait of Hormuz. Foreign Minister Araqchi warned that Iran will “school” any country threatening its leadership and described U.S. commitments to restrain Israel as effectively recognizing Iran’s upper hand.

On July 1, it was revealed that U.S. and Iranian technical teams met in Doha to negotiate how war-hobbled shipping routes (especially the Hormuz chokepoint) will operate going forward. Iranian leaders have signaled they expect to co-manage the strait with Oman and even levy transit “tolls” once formal peace talks conclude. The U.S. has countered that oil flows are already back to normal and vowed to block any unilateral tolls. These competing claims – Iran’s maritime sovereignty versus global freedom of navigation – remain a key unresolved issue of the interim agreement.

On Lebanon and Hezbollah, Iran is leveraging its influence to shape the ceasefire’s scope. In past weeks Tehran made clear that a lasting peace requires “ceasefire in Lebanon” as part of a comprehensive deal. Iran even directly struck Israeli territory in support of Hezbollah, a notable escalation that underscored its commitment to the Lebanese front. Hezbollah, for its part, rejects any permanent truce without an Israeli withdrawal, leaving the Israel–Lebanon border in limbo.

The United States helped broker a framework between Israel and Lebanon in late June, but Israeli officials balk at constraints on continued operations against Hezbollah. As Reuters notes, Israel killed several Hezbollah fighters near the frontier under the fragile truce, even as it prepares buffer zones for an eventual pull-back. Iran’s continued military role in Lebanon ensures Beirut remains a bargaining chip: Iranian diplomats have warned that renewed hostilities there would unravel the U.S.-Iran accord.

The diplomatic fallout from these arrangements is stark. Israel feels increasingly marginalized by U.S. negotiations with Iran and Hezbollah. Prime Minister Netanyahu has publicly vowed to keep troops in southern Lebanon “until Hezbollah is gone”, underscoring Jerusalem’s distrust of any U.S.-brokered settlement. Domestically, Israeli opposition figures have blasted the outcome: Yair Lapid declared that “Netanyahu lost the war” when Trump imposed a ceasefire as part of the Iran deal. Internationally, President Trump’s rhetoric has irked many Israelis.

AP News observed that Trump repeatedly expressed “sympathy for Lebanon” and criticized Israel during the negotiations, portraying Israel as a source of regional tension. Israeli diplomats publicly bristled at this tone, insisting Jerusalem’s security needs were being downplayed. In Tehran, the government has used these tensions to rally national sentiment. Iran’s leadership insists the U.S. will “muzzle” Israel’s threats under the ceasefire. In sum, Iran’s wars have paused and negotiations proceed, but hardliners on all sides remain wary. The Iran–Israel front is now shaped by uneasy ceasefires and high-stakes diplomacy: deep distrust lingers even as brinkmanship recedes.

Israel

In Israel, the security situation remains volatile on multiple fronts. Along the Lebanese border, Israeli forces have largely observed the U.S.-mediated ceasefire reached on June 19, but sporadic clashes continue. The military reports it killed seven Hezbollah militants near the occupied Lebanese frontier even after the ceasefire took hold, while roughly 32 Israeli soldiers and four civilians lost their lives during the months of fighting. Israel has established a 10-kilometer “security zone” in southern Lebanon, issuing evacuation notices (for example, to the village of Mansouri) to create buffer space against Hezbollah rocket fire.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has emphasized that Israeli troops will not withdraw from southern Lebanon “if Hezbollah remains armed,” rejecting any pullout before Israeli security demands are met. Ceasefire talks in Washington envisaged Lebanese army deployment into vacated areas, but Hezbollah’s refusal to disarm leaves the outcome uncertain. Thus, the Israel–Lebanon front remains tense: the specter of renewed cross-border fire persists even as formal truce holds.

Israel’s southern front has seen limited but consequential violence as well. On July 5, Israeli aircraft struck militants in the Gaza Strip after rocket fire was launched at southern Israel. Hamas’s Gaza health ministry reported two Palestinians killed and two wounded in this raid, condemning it as a violation of the October 2024 ceasefire. Israeli sources say such strikes target rocket launchers and underground complexes, intended to deter further attacks. Since the Gaza truce took effect, violence has waxed and waned.

Over eight months, more than 1,060 Palestinians and 32 Israelis have been killed in flare-ups and retaliatory raids, underscoring the fragility of calm. Indirect negotiations (mediated by Egypt and Qatar) on a longer-term Gaza settlement remain stalled. The Biden administration privately cautions Israel to show restraint for now, but Israeli leaders emphasize their right to respond to any incoming rockets. Overall, although large-scale war with Hamas has not resumed, the underlying ceasefire is brittle and subject to frequent violations.

At home, Prime Minister Netanyahu's coalition is bracing for political fallout. Criticism is mounting that he failed to translate military gains into a comprehensive victory. Opponents note that Hamas remains intact in Gaza and that Hezbollah, despite heavy losses, still holds significant rocket arsenals. Reuters reports that key political rivals (many of them hawkish ex-generals) have formed a new alliance, suggesting Netanyahu could face a stiff challenge in the upcoming elections. Yair Lapid (who withdrew from governing coalition) declared candidly that "Netanyahu lost the war... he collapsed" after the U.S.-imposed ceasefire.

Yet Netanyahu's hardline base supports his narrative: he has publicly touted Israel's elimination of Hezbollah's top commanders and destruction of tunnels as victories. He insists on remaining firm against any Iranian or Hezbollah threat, even as some U.S. officials warn such rhetoric could reignite hostilities. In foreign policy, Jerusalem's relations with Washington and others are under strain. AP News notes that Trump's deal prioritized Lebanese civilian protection and even sympathy for Lebanon over Israel's demands, which Netanyahu's critics say signaled a neglect of Israel's security view. Israel's own defense relationship with its Arab neighbors is likewise impacted: Gulf partners are now more openly cooperating with U.S.-Israeli strategy against Iran and its proxies, leaving Israel with both allies (some Gulf normalization talks continue quietly) and new competitors in the region. In sum, Israel remains on edge: military vigilance persists even as political debates rage over the war's conduct and the alliances it is forging.

Turkey

Turkey is playing a high-profile role as host of the upcoming NATO summit (July 7–8 in Ankara). Turkish officials have emphasized alliance cohesion and burden-sharing in public statements. NATO ambassadors drafted a summit communiqué pledging that "an armed attack against one is an attack against all", and included a specific call that Iran "must never have a nuclear weapon." President Erdogan will host U.S. President Trump (making his first post-election trip to Europe) and Ukrainian President Zelenskiy for summit events.

The meeting is intended to signal revival of transatlantic unity: Europe promises to spend more on defense (having allocated ~\$90 billion extra in the past year), while Trump has

hinted he may use the forum to push for greater European commitment. For Turkey, the summit is an opportunity to showcase its strategic importance in NATO. Ankara has conducted significant arms deals with other members (e.g. purchasing F-35 parts and S-400 systems) and contributed troops to NATO missions, highlighting its status as the alliance's second-largest military. By convening NATO in Ankara, Turkey ensures that alliance discussions explicitly include the Middle East security agenda – for example, the draft text's mention of Iran's nuclear ambitions and Hormuz transit.

Turkey's relations with Western partners reflect a pragmatic security focus. Reuters notes that as the summit approached, NATO allies largely avoided public criticism of Turkey's domestic record, instead emphasizing military cooperation. U.S. officials have dropped earlier threats and personal animosity; President Trump often refers to Erdogan as a "friend". This thawed atmosphere owes partly to shared concerns: both sides now see Turkey as a needed bulwark against Russian assertiveness on NATO's flank.

Brussels has also signaled a limited rapprochement: EU foreign ministers agreed to "re-engage" with Ankara in July, although they insisted on conditions such as progress on Cyprus and human rights. Ankara's offer to revive long-stalled EU accession talks (in exchange for Turkey's previous approval of Finland and Sweden's NATO bids) was cautiously received. In practice, EU nations pledged closer dialogue but stopped short of full membership talks. In short, Turkey's Western allies appear willing to set aside earlier tensions (from democracy issues to Syria policy) in return for strategic partnership. Ankara's campaign portrays itself as a responsible NATO host and regional security provider, smoothing over the past era of contentious US–Turkey exchanges (including Trump's rebuke over Greenland).

Turkey also remains deeply engaged in regional security, especially regarding Syria. In northern Syria, Turkey has stationed troops and "observation posts" to control border areas and counter Kurdish forces it deems terrorist. When fierce fighting erupted in Aleppo between Syrian government forces and Kurdish militias (late June 2026), Turkey declared itself ready to intervene to restore order. Foreign Minister Cavusoglu stated that Turkey would assist Syria's interim administration after the clashes, signaling Ankara's willingness to guarantee stability in areas it influences. At the same time, President Erdogan has taken a hard line against Israel's actions in neighboring conflict zones. He publicly condemned recent Israeli airstrikes on Syrian and Lebanese targets as dangerously destabilizing Turkey's own security environment.

Erdogan even went so far as to blame Israel for dragging Turkey into wider conflicts, reflecting Ankara's close identification with opponents of Israeli policy. Moreover, Ankara has hinted at re-engagement with Damascus: in mid-2024, Erdogan surprised many by inviting President Assad for talks to normalize relations (though no summit has yet occurred). These moves indicate Turkey is hedging its bets: it may seek a moderated

Assad government if that serves its interests, while also demonstrating force against Kurdish and Israeli moves. In sum, Turkey's NATO orientation and its Middle East policy are linked: Ankara is using its alliance credentials to win international support, even as it pursues ambitious regional security goals from Syria to the eastern Mediterranean.

Syria

Syria's internal transition is underway under the internationally backed interim government. Former rebel commander Ahmed al-Sharaa, who assumed the presidency in December, announced a new cabinet on March 29 that broadened representation of Syria's ethnic and sectarian minorities. Key portfolios went to former anti-Assad figures from varied communities: an Alawite was named transport minister and a Druze became agriculture minister, alongside a Christian woman (a past Assad-era opponent) heading social affairs.

Notably, Sharaa created for the first time a Ministry of Emergency and appointed Raed al-Saleh, founder of the White Helmets rescue group, to lead it. This innovative move signals the government's intent to integrate civil defense actors into formal structures. A provisional constitution was also issued, reaffirming the centrality of Islamic law while explicitly guaranteeing women's rights and free expression. These steps – crafting a transitional charter and inclusive government – aim to stabilize Syria's governance after 14 years of Assad rule, though many Syrians remain uncertain how quickly promised elections will come.

The Syrian state is also actively absorbing former opposition forces into its security apparatus. In early February, Damascus and the U.S.-supported Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reached a ceasefire: government troops have now deployed to Kurdish-held cities like Hasakah, implementing the deal. Under this agreement, three SDF brigades (and an additional brigade in Kobani) will be merged into a new army division under Syrian command.

Future plans call for SDF fighters to be transferred into the national defense and interior ministries as individual personnel, effectively ending the SDF's autonomous status. The U.S. hailed this arrangement as “historic” reconciliation after years of separate administrations; one Syrian state media source said the process of formally integrating the Kurds is now underway. This marks the most significant binding of rebel forces into Damascus's fold to date. At the same time, residual non-state armed groups (particularly Islamist militias) are being disarmed or reconstituted under state control as ceasefires hold. In parallel, the presence of Iran-backed units (such as Hezbollah operatives) inside Syria is a potential next issue, though Sharaa's government has not yet announced any moves on that front.

Regionally, Syria's new leadership is navigating complex influences. Damascus signaled openness to the U.S.-led peace process with Iran and Lebanon: Syrian Foreign Minister Shibani told Lebanese media that Syria is "open to meeting Hezbollah if interests require it," but would not take sides in Lebanon's politics. This cautious stance suggests Damascus wants to maintain ties with its Iranian and Lebanese allies without being drawn into their internal disputes. Syria also remains at the center of Turkish outreach. President Erdogan, in 2024, invited Assad to talks aimed at restoring pre-war relations, and Ankara continues to pressure for integration of former rebels on terms agreeable to Turkey.

Turkish forces in northern Syria remain poised to intervene if Kurdish moves appear to threaten them, and Ankara has publicly condemned Israeli strikes near Damascus and in Lebanon as hazards to regional security. Meanwhile, Russia – still a major powerbroker – has signaled support for Syria's transitional government but also expects Syria to resume full cooperation on chemical weapons and other obligations. Thus, Syria today is both consolidating central control (as seen in the Kurdish integration and cabinet inclusivity) and remaining a focal point of international influence. The country's fate in the coming months will depend on how well it can balance these external pressures while moving toward elections.

14. Global Powers

Washington confirmed that senior envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would travel to Doha for emergency negotiations with Iranian officials. The talks were convened after renewed military exchanges in the Gulf threatened the June 17 Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding. The discussions focused on preserving the ceasefire, implementing the memorandum, and restoring confidence in maritime security through the Strait of Hormuz.

On 30 June, negotiations in Doha produced agreement to continue technical discussions on implementing the ceasefire framework, although major disagreements remained over maritime transit, sanctions implementation, and nuclear verification. The Trump administration maintained that the talks were intended to stabilize the Gulf while preventing a return to open conflict.

The administration also intensified preparations for the NATO Summit in Ankara, which begins this week. On 5 July, the White House confirmed that Trump will hold bilateral meetings with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Ahmed al-Sharaa on the sidelines of the summit. The meeting with Zelenskyy will focus on reviving efforts to end the Russia–Ukraine war, while discussions with Syria are expected to address regional security, Hezbollah, and post-conflict stabilization.

Ahead of the summit, the administration continued pressing NATO members to increase defense spending, arguing that European allies should assume greater responsibility for

regional security while allowing the United States to focus more resources on strategic competition elsewhere. This message remained a central pillar of U.S. diplomacy throughout the week.

On 4 July, President Donald Trump confirmed that he is expected to meet Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House after returning from the NATO Summit in Ankara. Trump said Netanyahu had requested the meeting and indicated it could take place as early as next week. According to U.S. and Israeli officials, the agenda will include implementation of the U.S.–Iran ceasefire framework, Iran's nuclear program, the war in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and broader regional security. The planned meeting is particularly significant because it comes after weeks of public friction between the two leaders over Israel's military operations in Lebanon and Trump's pursuit of diplomacy with Iran.

Russia expanded its strategic military coordination with China as both navies announced joint exercises off the coast of Qingdao scheduled from 6–13 July. The drills involve Russian surface combatants, submarines, and support vessels, and are designed to enhance interoperability and signal sustained alignment in maritime security planning. The exercises also include joint patrols in the Pacific following completion of the drills, reflecting an incremental deepening of operational coordination between Moscow and Beijing in the Indo-Pacific theater.

On 1 July, President Xi Jinping delivered a major address marking the anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, stressing the need for institutional discipline, political unity, and adaptation to an increasingly complex external environment. He reiterated Beijing's long-standing position on Taiwan, reaffirming that “reunification” remains a core strategic objective. The speech also emphasized anti-corruption enforcement within the military and continued modernization of the People's Liberation Army, signaling sustained internal tightening at a time of external strategic pressure.

On 2 July, tensions in East Asia escalated further as China and Japan entered a new phase of diplomatic friction following export-control measures and military signaling around dual-use technologies. Beijing accused Tokyo of escalating regional instability after Japanese defense posture adjustments and statements linking Taiwan contingencies to Japan's security doctrine. The episode reinforced a broader pattern of China treating Japan's defense normalization as a strategic threat in the Western Pacific.

On 29 June, China and the European Union entered a structured three-month negotiation framework aimed at addressing the widening trade imbalance between both sides. The talks focus on industrial overcapacity, export controls (including rare earths), intellectual property, and market access disputes. This marks a shift toward managed economic confrontation rather than immediate escalation into a trade war, although tensions remain high over technology restrictions and Chinese export surges.

15. Europe

On 30 June, the UK government advanced a controversial asylum reform package led by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood. The proposal introduced stricter financial requirements for asylum seekers and accelerated deportation mechanisms for failed applicants, reflecting mounting domestic political pressure on migration policy following recent electoral volatility. The reforms were framed as a shift toward tighter immigration control combined with expanded legal migration pathways.

On 1 July, Britain formally reoriented its post-Brexit European engagement strategy. Senior UK officials confirmed preparations for a new EU–UK summit, with negotiations focusing on trade alignment, youth mobility, and regulatory coordination. The political signal was a deliberate attempt to stabilize relations with Europe amid domestic political uncertainty following the leadership transition.

On 29 June, France also participated in a broader European discussion on reparative justice frameworks linked to historical colonial legacies. At an international gathering in Accra, French representatives acknowledged the UN-backed resolution on historical injustices and signaled willingness to engage in structured historical and institutional review processes with African partners, including Ghana.

Several European states, including France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark, formally engaged in the UN-linked reparative justice framework discussions in Accra, marking a notable shift in European diplomatic positioning on colonial legacy debates. This reflects an emerging normative alignment pressure within EU external relations discourse.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

On 30 June 2026, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) wrapped up a nine-day technical capacity building workshop on Field Remote Infrastructure Monitoring (FRIM) in Mogadishu. The workshop brought together participants to explore how advanced monitoring technologies can enhance resource efficiency, optimize logistics and improve operational sustainability for UN and partner activities across Somalia. It was a practical, hands on initiative aimed at equipping teams with the skills needed to make the most of limited resources in a challenging environment. The timing of the workshop however, felt somewhat ironic given the dark clouds gathering over UNSOS itself with the US decision to block future funding casting serious doubt on the longevity of the very operations the training was designed to support. Still, for those who took part the knowledge and tools gained will no doubt prove valuable in the months ahead even as uncertainty looms over what comes next for the mission.

On 1 July 2026, the US decision to block UN logistical support for AUSSOM beyond December has thrown the UN system into a tailspin, triggering intense discussions among member states about the future of UNSOS and potential mandate renewals at the Security Council later this year. The move adds significant pressure on an already strained system, coming amid existing UN liquidity challenges and prior budget reductions that have affected UNSOS operations. With the UN Support Office in Somalia operating on a roughly \$500 million budget and providing essential logistics for the 12,000-strong AU force, the implications are profound. The African Union has since informed its Peace and Security Council members, warning that the decision carries significant implications for the mission's logistical sustainment and operational posture. For now, the international community is left grappling with how or whether to fill the gap left by Washington's withdrawal.

Africa Union

On 2 July 2026, in partnership with the Australian Embassy in Ethiopia and the UN Office to the African Union, a Roundtable Dialogue on Climate, Peace and Security in Africa was convened in Addis Ababa. The gathering brought together a diverse mix of representatives from the African Union Commission, AU Member States, UN agencies, COP Presidencies, think tanks, civil society and academia all united by a shared recognition that climate change is increasingly intertwined with peace and stability on the continent. The dialogue aimed to deepen collective understanding of how climate dynamics interact with security, take stock of emerging African responses and identify practical ways to strengthen advocacy, partnerships, and implementation support in the lead up to COP31 and COP32. Dr. Pipatto Quayefio, Climate, Peace and Security Adviser at the African Union, set the tone with a thoughtful opening remark, noting that while climate change doesn't directly cause insecurity, its impacts can deepen vulnerabilities and intensify pressures on livelihoods in communities already facing fragility and inequality. The discussions were frank and forward looking, with participants leaving with a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to advancing Africa-led priorities on climate, peace, and security through strengthened AU-UN cooperation and tangible follow up actions.

On 1 July 2026, the United States delivered a diplomatic note to the African Union signaling its intent to block UN funding for the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) beyond the end of the year. This move could effectively spell the end of the peacekeeping force that has been propping up Somalia's federal government since 2009. The mission, which relies heavily on UN support for logistics, medical services, and troop transportation, had a budget of \$190 million last year, but financing has become increasingly difficult and a huge funding shortfall now looms. The US, one of the largest backers of the UN Support Office in Somalia, cited insufficient progress on core mission goals and called for greater Somali self-reliance. The African

Union has since informed members of its Peace and Security Council of Washington's decision, warning that the implications for the mission's future are significant. President Donald Trump, who has grown increasingly hostile toward Somalia and imposed a travel ban on the country, appears to be driving the shift.

In response, the African Union Commission convened an emergency meeting on 4 July 2026 to discuss the future of its peace support mission in Somalia, following Washington's bombshell decision to end critical funding for the operation. The US delivered a diplomatic note on 1 July informing the AU that it would terminate financial support to the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) by the end of the year and block any future UN Security Council authorization for logistical support to AUSSOM. This is a significant blow because UNSOS provides the backbone of logistical support for the roughly 12,000 AU troops from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and other nations who have been on the ground since 2009, propping up Somalia's federal government against the Al-Shabaab insurgency. Without that lifeline for food, fuel, medical service and troop transportation, the mission could face severe operational constraints or even risk collapse.

A senior African diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the US decision as irreversible, warning that without UN logistics, the mission would have to draw a line under its work in Somalia. The US justified its decision by pointing to what it described as Somalia's failure to sustain progress against Al-Shabaab and take ownership of its security functions, despite having contributed nearly \$2 billion to UN missions in Somalia since 2007. The timing couldn't be worse the announcement comes amid renewed political tensions in Somalia, with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud having extended his term by one year through constitutional changes, a move rejected by opposition parties and regional administrations. The funding uncertainty is also a bitter irony, given that the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2809 just last December, extending AUSSOM's mandate until the end of 2026 while warning of persistent funding shortfalls. Regional leaders had previously met in Ethiopia in September 2025 to discuss financing options, but no meaningful progress on sustainable funding has materialized since. For the AU troops on the ground and the Somali forces they support, this decision casts a long shadow over their operations and raises serious questions about what comes next for Somalia's fragile stability as the Al-Shabaab insurgency continues to rage.

On the ground, operations under AUSSOM pressed on as usual, with Burundian forces remaining actively engaged and reiterating their dedication to supporting peace and stability in Somalia around 1 July 2026.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

On 30 June 2026, IGAD continued its broader regional integration initiatives, with a strong emphasis on digital connectivity, cybersecurity, sustainable agriculture and resilience building in response to shared challenges around food security and economic development. As part of this push the region marked a significant step forward in its digital journey with the Third Project Steering Committee meeting for the Horn of Africa Digital Market Integration (HDMI) project, hosted in Juba, South Sudan. It was a productive two-day gathering where representatives from member states and key partners rolled up their sleeves to take stock of how far we've come and more importantly to map out the road ahead. The conversations were candid and focused, acknowledging the encouraging progress we've made over the past year in harmonizing policies and building shared digital infrastructure, while also tackling the inevitable challenges head on. It felt like a real moment of collective ownership with South Sudan's Deputy Minister warmly welcoming everyone and reinforcing their national commitment to the cause. The IGAD team led by Dr. Victoria Anib, set a clear and optimistic tone, reminding us that this project is about more than just technology, it's about creating a more connected, inclusive and resilient regional economy. A highlight of the event was the visit to South Sudan's Ministry of ICT and the National Communication Authority, which gave delegates a valuable, on the ground look at the country's own digital transformation efforts. By the end of the meeting, there was a palpable sense of shared purpose and a clear set of strategic priorities to accelerate our work, reaffirming that digital integration is key to unlocking new opportunities for trade and sustainable growth across the Horn of Africa.

On 2 July 2026, IGAD remained actively engaged in supporting South Sudan's humanitarian and stability efforts. Special Envoy to South Sudan, H.E. Moussa Djama, met with Hon. Albino Akol Atak Mayom, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management for a frank discussion on the country's pressing humanitarian needs. With elections on the horizon the conversation centered on the growing impacts of climate change and natural disasters and how IGAD can better support durable solutions for communities affected by displacement and conflict. It was a timely and meaningful exchange that highlighted both the scale of the challenges and the shared resolve to address them. IGAD reiterated its unwavering commitment to standing with South Sudan as it works to build resilience, foster lasting stability and improve the everyday lives of its people.

On 1 July 2026, IGAD extended its warmest wishes to the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Somalia on the occasion of their Independence Day. As a founding member of IGAD, Somalia holds a special place in the regional family and this historic moment was an opportunity to celebrate the nation's remarkable journey, resilience and enduring aspirations for peace, unity and prosperity. It was a simple but heartfelt gesture,

recognizing not just the struggles of the past but also the hope and determination that continue to drive Somalia forward. IGAD reaffirmed its continued solidarity and commitment to walking alongside Somalia as it strives for a brighter, more stable future for all its people.

On 2 July 2026, IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary, H.E. M.A. Ware, welcomed H.E. Berk Baran, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union, to the IGAD Office in Addis Ababa. It was a productive meeting that centered on how IGAD and Turkey can deepen their collaboration on mediation, peace and security across the region. The discussions also touched on Turkey's constructive role in supporting the Ethiopia-Somalia resolution through the Ankara Declaration, which has proven to be a valuable model for dialogue and mediation. There was a genuine sense of appreciation for Turkey's continued engagement and commitment to stability in the Horn of Africa, and both sides left the meeting with a shared resolve to build on this momentum.



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