



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

Coverage Period: July 06 – July 12

Publication Date: July 13, 2026



Issue No. 28 | 2026

For analytical and informational purposes only

Horn Review: Weekly Report

July 06 – July 12, 2026

1. Ethiopia

On July 7 with high-level diplomatic engagements as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Addis Ababa. Discussions focused on strengthening longstanding bilateral ties spanning generations, expanding cooperation in trade, investment, technology transfer, and coordination on regional, continental, and international issues, including within BRICS. These meetings underscore Ethiopia's strategy of diversifying partnerships amid shifting global dynamics to support economic growth and multilateral influence.

During the 30th Regular Session of the House of Peoples' Representatives on July 7, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed responded to lawmakers' questions on the government's performance in the 2018 Ethiopian fiscal year. He outlined a strategic vision of three pillars for self-reliance to safeguard Ethiopia's sovereignty amid global changes: building resilience through strong national institutions capable of withstanding external pressures using the country's own political, economic, and institutional strength; leveraging opportunities by transforming challenges into strategic advantages for development; and shaping Ethiopia's own path by independently setting national priorities while confidently engaging in regional and global affairs. PM Abiy declared that these principles ensure no external interference in national decisions, guiding foreign policy and development from a position of confidence and independence.

On peace and security, particularly the Pretoria Peace Agreement and Tigray, the PM highlighted its achievements as the heavy price paid for sustainable peace, including the establishment of an interim administration, demobilization and reintegration of over 60,000 former combatants, and ongoing infrastructure rebuilding. He criticized disruptive factions linked to foreign interference for depriving Tigrayans of peace through daily provocations, recruitment of youth into Sudan's conflict while their families stay safe abroad or in Addis and risking renewed war, stressing that Tigrayans bear the consequences rather than creating problems, with many living peacefully elsewhere in Ethiopia. Abiy affirmed the government's restraint, readiness with bolstered security forces using advanced technology, and capacity to neutralize threats, while explicitly stating that Sudan, Eritrea, and the TPLF pose no threat to Ethiopia and dismissing speculation of any alliance as inconsequential.

Parallel to these internal security developments, Ethiopia achieved a key WTO accession milestone on July 8 by signing a Bilateral Market Access Protocol with Thailand in Geneva. This advances the country's integration into the global trading system, promising

expanded trade, investment, and economic growth through a rules-based multilateral framework.

This momentum in international integration was mirrored regionally. On July 9 member states convened in Addis Ababa for the 22nd Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP) Council of Ministers meeting. A pivotal leadership transition occurred as Ethiopia officially assumed the EAPP chairmanship from Egypt. Simultaneously, Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) announced that the critical infrastructure required for cross-border power trading is fully complete, even as the bloc debates necessary governance reforms to operationalize the regional market.

Institutional capacity building was also prioritized on July 9, when the Ethiopian Federal Police signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IGAD to enhance regional security cooperation. This agreement coincided with the launch of the Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu Scholarship Program in Forensic Science at the Ethiopian Police University. These joint initiatives are designed to provide advanced forensic training to law enforcement personnel across IGAD member states, effectively strengthening cross-border intelligence-sharing, investigative capacity, and judicial systems to better combat transnational crime.

Ethiopia strengthened energy ties with Kenya through a renewed electricity supply agreement signed on July 10 in Addis Ababa between Kenya Power and the Ethiopian Electric Utility. Under the deal, Kenya will import power at approximately ETB 24.07 per kWh (roughly KSh 20 or US\$0.15), plus a monthly demand charge, supplying around 3MW to over 10,500 customers in northern border areas like Moyale while exploring expansions to Marsabit and Mandera. Officials from both sides highlighted the pact as a model of regional synergy, promoting reliable, cleaner energy over costly diesel, reducing blackouts, and fostering long-term economic diplomacy and cross-border community development.

Building on enhanced regional infrastructure, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed inaugurated the modernized King Tekle Haymanot Airport in Debre Markos, on July 12. The facility, out of service for nearly 30 years, now features a 2,400-meter runway capable of handling larger aircraft such as Q400 and Boeing 737 models. This upgrade restores air connectivity, boosts trade, investment, tourism, and logistics in East Gojjam Zone, and supports broader national development by improving movement of people and goods while demonstrating the government's focus on transforming infrastructure challenges into economic opportunities.

Complementing domestic connectivity gains, Ethiopian Airlines launched direct flights to Port Louis, Mauritius, on July 12, operating three times weekly and marking Mauritius as the carrier's 41st African destination. State Minister of Foreign Affairs Hadera Abera and airline CEO Mesfin Tasew described the route as a bridge for tourism, trade, investment,

and cultural exchange, advancing African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) goals and positioning Addis Ababa as a key aviation hub linking Indian Ocean and mainland markets.

These connectivity efforts align with Ethiopia's push for deeper continental trade. On July 11, Trade and Regional Integration Minister Kassahun Gofe announced that Ethiopia exported goods worth USD 15 million under AfCFTA in the 2018 Ethiopian fiscal year (out of USD 23 million regional total) while achieving record overall exports of USD 11.195 billion, exceeding targets. Progress includes digitized trade services, implementation of AfCFTA air/land procedures, and WTO accession advancements, all aimed at boosting competitiveness, market access, and intra-African integration.

Ethiopia is preparing for a landmark national dialogue to address longstanding issues. The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission begins orientation sessions for participants ahead of the main conference on July 15 in Addis Ababa. Chief Commissioner Professor Mesfin emphasized inclusive, consensus-driven discussions on peace, nation-building, human rights, and social development to overcome political misunderstandings through constructive engagement.

On the security front, Ethiopia hosted the Parliamentary Intelligence-Security Forum on July 10-11, gathering global lawmakers, intelligence officials, and experts. House Speaker Tagesse Chaffo called for renewed multilateralism to tackle terrorism, cyber threats, trafficking, and regional challenges in the Horn of Africa, stressing democratic oversight, root-cause solutions like poverty reduction, and Ethiopia's Digital Ethiopia 2030 agenda. US Ambassador Ervin Massinga reaffirmed enhanced bilateral security cooperation with Ethiopia for regional peace, transparency, and information sharing.

Overall, these interconnected developments in energy, aviation, trade, dialogue, and security underscore Ethiopia's strategy of leveraging infrastructure and partnerships to drive economic growth, foster stability, and contribute to African integration amid a complex regional landscape.

2. Sudan

The second week of July produced three developments of lasting significance that each, in their own register, defined where Sudan's war now stands: the UN Fact-Finding Mission formally concluded that the RSF committed genocide in El Fasher; the SAF recaptured Kurmuk in its most consequential battlefield gain of the year; and a Sudanese counter-terrorism court sentenced RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and fifteen co-defendants to death in absentia. Against these three, the continuing siege of El Obeid, the five-pillar US peace proposal, and the deepening economic fracture ran as the week's sustained undertow.

The UN Fact-Finding Mission published its final report on July 9, formally concluding that the RSF's systematic campaign in El Fasher constituted genocide. Investigators documented mass killings, gang rape committed with bodies of recently killed family members still present in the same rooms, and the deliberate starvation of the city's population through a prolonged siege that blocked relief supplies and destroyed food production systems. The mission's chairman Mohamed Chande Othman stated that the patterns documented in El Fasher, including encirclement, attacks on civilian infrastructure, restrictions on humanitarian access, and widespread atrocities, serve as a stark warning for El Obeid. The report built on the mission's February findings that the El Fasher siege bore hallmarks of genocide but moved to a formal conclusion of intent and systematic conduct. The Human Rights Council, meeting in urgent session earlier in the week, established an inquiry into reported abuses around El Obeid and condemned ongoing violence. The EU issued a statement, warning that any attack targeting the civilian population of El Obeid would lead it to consider robust measures against those responsible and called on foreign actors to immediately end direct or indirect support enabling the conflict. The RSF has denied all systematic abuse accusations throughout the war.

On July 8, the SAF recaptured Kurmuk, ending more than three months of RSF and SPLM-N control over the strategic border town in southeastern Blue Nile. The operation began at dawn with simultaneous advances from the southern and western axes under artillery cover, with ground forces breaching the first defensive lines and conducting street-by-street clearing operations before the RSF-SPLM-N alliance withdrew. Mada Masr's reconstruction of the three-stage campaign described an initial containment phase, followed by isolation of RSF forces inside the city, culminating in the final assault. Kurmuk's recapture removes the RSF's primary southeastern foothold and eliminates pressure on the Roseires Dam and the road to Damazin. The city's infrastructure, including water, electricity, and health facilities, sustained extensive damage and neighborhoods remain littered with explosive remnants of war, making civilian return a phased and resource-intensive prospect. SAF-aligned joint forces separately captured the Kulbus locality in West Darfur, near the Chadian border, a gain partly produced by RSF defections that the SAF has been cultivating through its standing amnesty offer.

A Port Sudan counter-terrorism court sentenced Hemetti, his brothers Abdelrahim and Al-Qoni Hamdan Dagalo, and thirteen others to death in absentia on July 12 for crimes committed during the RSF's assault on El Geneina, including the killing of West Darfur Governor Khamis Abakar in June 2023. The sixteen defendants were convicted of crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes, and the use of prohibited methods of warfare. The court ordered the confiscation of all RSF assets in favor of the state and instructed authorities to seek Interpol notices for the convicted individuals. The judge stated that these crimes are not subject to statute of limitations and cannot be subject to political

pardons under Sudan's international obligations. The verdict carries limited immediate enforcement capacity given that Hemedti remains in control of most of Darfur, but it materially complicates any negotiated settlement that would require Hemedti's participation in a political process, and places further pressure on governments that maintain contact with him.

The US five-pillar peace proposal, which was presented to Khartoum following a June 21 meeting in Cairo between Sovereign Council member Kabbashi and US envoy Massad Boulos, continued to be negotiated during the week. The proposal calls for an immediate 90-day humanitarian truce, a UN-AU-Arab League mechanism to oversee limited military withdrawals and deploy international observers, civilian-led national dialogue toward a transitional period, and an economic stabilization and reconstruction fund. Sudan has not rejected the proposal, and the Security and Defense Council issued a statement on July 12 confirming positive engagement. Two points of contention remain: Khartoum insists that political talks must occur inside Sudan and include all factions without exception, while the US proposal explicitly excludes the National Congress Party and groups with violent Islamist ties; and the SAF demands comprehensive RSF withdrawal from all territory seized after May 11, 2023, while the US advocates a phased pullback beginning in North Darfur and North Kordofan. Burhan separately conditioned acceptance of any proposal on alignment with what he described as the aspirations of the Sudanese people, while confirming that the military campaign would continue regardless.

The Reckoning Project published a report this week documenting seventeen air and drone strikes across Darfur between October 2024 and April 2026, including a February 2025 SAF airstrike on Cinema Street in Nyala that killed at least 22 civilians, a March 2025 strike on the Tora weekly market estimated to have killed up to 450 people, and an alleged RSF drone strike on a mosque in El Fasher in September 2025 killing over 70 worshippers. The report documented the use of double-tap tactics by both sides and described Sudan as having evolved into a drone-dominated conflict sustained by foreign supply chains. The Khartoum state government separately began exhuming and transferring the remains of 27 war victims from makeshift graves in markets and residential areas, part of a broader effort to clear temporary burial sites ahead of the rainy season. Hundreds of mass graves have been discovered across Khartoum state, most believed to contain victims of enforced disappearance and mass killings carried out during the RSF's occupation of the capital.

Taken together, this week's events tighten rather than resolve Sudan's contradictions: the war is being won in partial, reversible territorial increments; the accountability architecture is producing verdicts without enforcement; and the peace diplomacy is progressing on a five-pillar framework that both parties are treating as a basis for negotiation rather than a commitment to act.

3. Egypt

On July 7, 2026, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi mandated twice-yearly nationwide emergency response simulations at Egypt's Strategic Command to optimize ministerial and regional governorate coordination. This directive underscores Cairo's systemic push to harden domestic administrative frameworks against complex crises, establishing a synchronized state apparatus capable of rapid mobilization. By integrating localized governance with centralized defense infrastructure, Egypt aims to mitigate domestic vulnerabilities while projecting internal stability. This institutional readiness serves as the essential baseline for Egypt's increasingly assertive posture, ensuring domestic operational continuity as the state shifts toward broader regional deterrence and proactive foreign policy interventions.

Building directly upon this internal readiness, an evaluation on July 10, 2026, highlighted the strategic significance of Egypt's newly inaugurated "Octagon" command headquarters. This massive facility marks Cairo's formal transition to a proactive regional deterrence posture, shifting away from historically reactive defense models. The Octagon centralizes military operations, intelligence processing, and asymmetric threat management, enabling rapid power projection across adjacent theaters. By establishing this advanced command infrastructure, Egypt signals its capacity to project military influence and safeguard its geopolitical interests, particularly along vital maritime corridors and contested border regions experiencing heightened geopolitical friction.

This evolving deterrence capability is actively reshaping dynamics in the Horn of Africa, where Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addressed parliament on July 8, 2026. While Abiy dismissed the immediate threat of a hostile alliance emerging between Eritrea, Sudan, and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, regional analysts underscored Egypt's behind-the-scenes role in facilitating these strategic alignments. Cairo's diplomatic maneuvers in East Africa represent a calculated strategy to encircle Addis Ababa. By cultivating ties with Ethiopia's immediate neighbors, Egypt seeks to build asymmetric leverage to counter Ethiopia's unilateral geopolitical ambitions and protect its own foundational Nile water security.

Further executing this containment strategy, Somalia's Council of Ministers formalized a critical maritime Memorandum of Understanding with Cairo on July 9, 2026. This legal development directly supports Egypt's broader operational ambitions to expand its military footprint in East Africa under the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia framework. For Cairo, deploying personnel under this peacekeeping mantle provides a legitimate mechanism to station armed forces on Ethiopia's border. This move transforms a traditional bilateral dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam into a forward-deployed security presence, effectively shifting the strategic balance of power in the region.

Deepening this diplomatic offensive, Egypt signed a comprehensive maritime transport Memorandum of Understanding with Somalia on July 10, 2026, establishing a powerful geopolitical corridor. This agreement deliberately anchors an alignment extending from the Suez Canal directly to the Gulf of Aden, a choke point designed to isolate landlocked Ethiopia. By formalizing this maritime partnership, Cairo directly counters the controversial access deal struck between Ethiopia and the breakaway region of Somaliland. Egypt's intervention aims to deny Addis Ababa a permanent naval foothold, reinforcing Mogadishu's sovereign integrity while securing dominant Egyptian influence over critical global shipping lanes.

Consolidating these gains, Somalia's Council of Ministers officially approved the maritime transport and ports cooperation agreement with Egypt on July 11, 2026. This milestone deal substantially expands Cairo's Red Sea port partnerships and its overarching security footprint within the Horn of Africa. Rather than simple diplomatic goodwill, Egypt's maritime expansion is driven by the necessity to control peripheral choke points that feed into the Suez Canal. By embedding its security architecture into Somali ports, Cairo secures its vital economic lifelines, safeguards freedom of navigation, and establishes a forward operational base to project power against regional adversaries.

Compounding this defensive alignment, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and his Somali counterpart, Ahmed Fiqi Ali Dhaay, jointly rejected any unilateral moves by Israel to recognize Somaliland on July 12, 2026. Both diplomats characterized such potential recognition as a flagrant violation of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Cairo's explicit intervention reveals its intent to prevent external powers from legitimizing Somaliland, which would inadvertently validate Ethiopia's port access ambitions. By holding a firm line on international law, Egypt isolates breakaway entities while positioning itself as the primary guarantor of stability and sovereign law across the Horn.

While Egypt focuses heavily on securing its eastern maritime perimeter, its western and southern borders face severe destabilization, as detailed in a July 12, 2026, UNHCR report. The document outlines a massive, ongoing influx of Sudanese refugees fleeing their country's destructive civil war into Egyptian territory. This migration surge imposes intense humanitarian, economic, and resource pressures on Egyptian authorities, who must manage these populations amidst domestic fiscal constraints. The escalating crisis underscores how internal collapses within neighboring states directly impact Egypt's domestic stability, complicating Cairo's broader regional strategy by diverting critical state resources toward border management.

To mitigate these border vulnerabilities at their source, details emerged on July 12, 2026, regarding intense security coordination between Cairo and Riyadh to support the Sudanese Armed Forces in Port Sudan. This joint intervention raises significant concerns

among regional analysts regarding the wider regionalization of the Sudanese conflict and the destabilizing influx of foreign mercenaries. For Egypt, backing the traditional state military apparatus in Sudan is a vital security imperative designed to prevent a hostile vacuum on its southern border. Simultaneously, this partnership allows Cairo to maintain a strategic foothold along the critical Red Sea coast.

Egypt's regional security concerns extend well beyond the Nile Valley, as evidenced on July 12, 2026, when Cairo strongly condemned Iranian retaliatory drone and missile strikes targeting Gulf nations and Jordan. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs labeled these aggressive actions a direct threat to broader regional stability and a dangerous violation of sovereign airspace. This explicit condemnation signals Cairo's recognition that its own economic and security interests are fundamentally intertwined with the stability of the Levant and the Gulf, prompting a firm diplomatic stance against asymmetric threats that risk igniting a wider regional conflagration.

Reinforcing this diplomatic stance, Egypt joined Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan on July 12, 2026, in a cohesive joint statement addressing maritime instability. The coalition explicitly invoked United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817 to condemn ongoing Iranian attacks on commercial vessels operating within the Strait of Hormuz. By aligning with key Arab monarchies, Cairo emphasizes that freedom of navigation through global trade choke points is a non-negotiable component of collective regional security. This joint legal invocation demonstrates Egypt's reliance on multilateral frameworks to pressure Tehran and protect the maritime traffic essential to global commerce.

This multilateral alignment was further solidified on July 11, 2026, during a high-level meeting between Egyptian Foreign Minister Abdelatty and his UAE counterpart, Abdullah bin Zayed. Abdelatty explicitly emphasized that Gulf security and maritime freedom represent central, indivisible components of Arab national security. This diplomatic rhetoric reflects Egypt's deeper strategic calculation; Cairo relies heavily on Gulf financial support and investment to sustain its domestic economy. Consequently, defending Gulf sovereignty against Iranian encroachment is not merely an act of regional solidarity, but a core defensive measure to safeguard Egypt's own economic survival and regional influence.

As maritime threats escalated rapidly, Foreign Minister Abdelatty initiated direct phone consultations on July 12, 2026, with his counterparts in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain. These urgent discussions focused entirely on managing immediate maritime security risks following the sudden closure of the strategic Strait of Hormuz. With global energy corridors disrupted, Cairo sought to coordinate crisis-management protocols with its Gulf partners to mitigate the severe economic shocks associated with shipping

blockades. This proactive outreach positions Egypt as a central diplomatic coordinator, working to stabilize volatile supply chains that directly impact global market pricing.

Prior to these broader consultations, Foreign Minister Abdelatty conducted a focused telephone alignment with Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on July 10, 2026. The two diplomats jointly urged both the United States and Iran to immediately resume diplomatic negotiations and strictly respect international freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. This bilateral coordination leverages Qatar's traditional role as a diplomatic mediator to open channels of communication. For Egypt, defusing the immediate US-Iran standoff is vital to preventing an unmanageable naval conflict that would severely depress transit revenues through the Suez Canal.

Expanding its diplomatic options to mitigate this crisis, Egypt and Turkey agreed on July 11, 2026, to leverage a specialized four-way diplomatic mechanism. Foreign Ministers Abdelatty and Hakan Fidan confirmed that Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan will cooperate closely to restore the fragile US-Iran de-escalation track and prevent a wider regional war. By assembling this diverse coalition of prominent Sunni Muslim powers, Cairo and Ankara aim to build a robust geopolitical buffer capable of mediating between Washington and Tehran. This institutional initiative highlights Egypt's strategic flexibility, utilizing trans-regional partnerships to defuse high-stakes conflicts.

Amidst these sweeping diplomatic maneuvers to stabilize major regional conflicts, Egypt maintained its critical humanitarian commitments on July 12, 2026, when the Egyptian Red Crescent dispatched its 232nd aid convoy. This massive deployment transported over 2,635 tons of food, essential medical supplies, and vital petroleum products directly to Gaza via the Rafah border crossing. By sustaining this vital humanitarian pipeline, Cairo fulfills its traditional role as a primary mediator and logistics hub for the Palestinian territories. This continuous aid delivery reinforces Egypt's geopolitical relevance, balancing hard-power security strategies with necessary soft-power humanitarian interventions.

Sustaining these extensive regional engagements requires a resilient domestic economy, which received positive reinforcement on July 11, 2026, from Minister of Agriculture Alaa Farouk. The minister reported that Egypt's agricultural exports have officially surpassed 5.8 million tons so far this year, reflecting robust international demand for Egyptian produce. This commercial expansion provides a critical influx of foreign currency, helping stabilize the national economy amidst regional volatility. By broadening its agrarian export base, Egypt enhances its macroeconomic resilience, ensuring the financial stability required to fund its ambitious foreign policies and large-scale defense infrastructure projects across the region.

To protect this economic foundation from systemic volatility, Egypt's Financial Regulatory Authority took decisive action on July 11, 2026, by extending regulatory

compliance deadlines. This administrative extension applies directly to healthcare administrators and foreign reinsurance brokers operating under the mandate of the newly enacted Unified Insurance Law. By granting additional operational flexibility, the regulatory body aims to preserve institutional market stability and prevent capital flight during a period of heightened regional tension. This calculated regulatory intervention ensures that Egypt's domestic financial services sector remains resilient, structured, and capable of absorbing external geopolitical shocks.

Complementing these financial safeguards, Egypt's General Organization for Export and Import Control signed a binding agreement with Property Finder Egypt on July 12, 2026. This partnership enforces mandatory licensing protocols for real estate brokers in strict compliance with Law Number 21 of 2022. By formalizing this oversight framework, the state aims to eliminate informal actors, enhance transactional transparency, and regulate the highly valuable domestic property market. This domestic structural reform finalizes a comprehensive week of governance, demonstrating Cairo's dual focus on hardening its internal markets while simultaneously projecting sophisticated geopolitical influence across the Middle East.

4. Eritrea

According to internal sources, a drone strike targeting a meeting of TPLF-affiliated Army 70 commanders in Kurmuk also injured three Eritrean soldiers. Asmara has not commented publicly on the reported casualties, and the claims remain independently unverified. If accurate, the incident would reinforce persistent allegations of continued Eritrean security involvement beyond its borders despite repeated official denials of any military presence. It would also suggest that operational links between Eritrean personnel and armed actors along the Sudan–Ethiopia frontier remain active, highlighting the increasingly interconnected security environment spanning Tigray, eastern Sudan, and the wider Horn of Africa.

The UN Human Rights Council voted to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea, despite an intensive diplomatic campaign by Asmara to terminate the mechanism. Eritrea's delegation reiterated its rejection of the mandate and signalled that it would cease engagement with the Council on the issue if the renewal passed, while the resolution was adopted with 23 votes in favour, six against, and 17 abstentions. The outcome represents a diplomatic setback for the Eritrean government and ensures continued international scrutiny of longstanding allegations of systematic human rights abuses. The voting pattern, including widespread abstentions among African and other Global South states, also reflects Eritrea's ability to limit consensus against it, illustrating how geopolitical alignments increasingly shape multilateral human rights diplomacy even as international monitoring mechanisms remain in place.

The Eritrean government held the graduation ceremony for the 38th round of the Sawa

National Service program, attended by President Isaias Afwerki and senior officials. Official media portrayed the event as a celebration of youth development and national responsibility, with graduates completing their final year of secondary education alongside mandatory military and political training. The ceremony nevertheless underscores the continued centrality of the Sawa system to the regime's model of governance, which has fused education, conscription, and ideological indoctrination since the closure of University of Asmara in 2006. Rather than serving solely as an educational institution, Sawa remains a principal mechanism for state control over Eritrea's youth, channelling students into national service while limiting independent higher education and reinforcing a militarized political order that continues to attract sustained international human rights criticism.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed dismissed concerns over the alignment involving Eritrea, the TPLF, and Sudan, stating that Ethiopia faced no threat to its sovereignty and emphasizing that the country was strengthening its defensive capabilities. Addressing parliament, Abiy declared that Ethiopia faced no threats from the alliance and asserted that the government was prepared to defend the country if necessary. His remarks explicitly identified Eritrea i.e “Shabia” as one of the principal external actors in Ethiopia's current security discourse, reflecting the continued deterioration in relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara.

Eritrean authorities released 15 Yemeni fishermen from Yemen's Al-Khokha district after detaining them for approximately three months following their apprehension in the Red Sea. According to local sources, the fishermen were freed after mediation by representatives of the Yemeni fishing community and have since departed Eritrean territory. The group had reportedly been detained after losing contact during a routine fishing trip in April. The release follows a pattern of recurring detentions of Yemeni fishermen by Eritrean authorities in disputed or poorly demarcated Red Sea fishing grounds, an issue that continues to affect coastal livelihoods and periodically strains local cross-border relations despite the absence of sustained diplomatic confrontation between the two countries.

5. Djibouti

Ethiopian, Djiboutian, and Chinese officials convened the third meeting of the technical committee overseeing the expansion of the Ethio-Djibouti Railway Corridor, advancing plans to transform the railway into a broader economic and industrial corridor under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The discussions focused on improving transport capacity, reducing logistics costs, and integrating manufacturing, mining, and trade infrastructure along the route. For Djibouti, the initiative reinforces its position as the principal maritime gateway for Ethiopia and deepens its strategic partnership with China through infrastructure-led development. The project also underscores Beijing's continued commitment to consolidating its economic footprint in the Horn of Africa,

where transport corridors are increasingly viewed as instruments of regional integration, commercial influence, and long-term geopolitical leverage.

According to Meta-Defense, China is continuing to expand its strategic presence in Djibouti by further integrating its military footprint with the country's port and logistics infrastructure. The publication argues that Beijing increasingly views Djibouti as more than a commercial hub, positioning it as the cornerstone of its defense posture in Africa and the western Indian Ocean. The reported evolution of China's presence reflects a broader strategy of combining economic investment with sustained military access to safeguard maritime trade routes and project influence across the Red Sea. For Djibouti, the trend reinforces its importance as the principal arena for external power competition in the Horn of Africa, where commercial infrastructure and security interests are becoming increasingly intertwined.

President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh extended official condolences to Qatar following the death of the Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, expressing sympathy to the Qatari leadership, government, and people. While largely ceremonial, the message reflects Djibouti's continued emphasis on maintaining close diplomatic ties with Gulf states, particularly Qatar, which remains an important political and economic partner in the Red Sea region. The statement also underscores Djibouti's broader approach of sustaining balanced relations with Gulf monarchies as part of its wider foreign policy and regional engagement strategy.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's fifteenth independence anniversary on July 9 arrived under conditions that made celebration a largely performational act. The government declared the day a national public holiday but scaled back major national events, citing severe economic instability and active conflict. The Ministry of Culture instructed citizens across states to host localised festivities, acknowledging that a budget sufficient only for Juba would not constitute a national celebration. In its place, the anniversary became an occasion for stocktaking, and the stock was bleak across every indicator examined.

The most precise single measure of where the country stands came from recent assessments placing R-ARCSS implementation below 25 percent. Security sector reform has not advanced; unified forces have not been deployed; the permanent constitution remains unfinished; and elections have been postponed five times since 2015, with December 2026 as the latest scheduled date. ACLED documented 13,256 armed incidents between independence and the fifteenth anniversary, averaging more than two attacks per day across fifteen years. ICRC reported that in the first six months of 2026, it conducted 266 medical evacuations, a 50 percent increase over the same period in 2025, with Juba Military Hospital now operating beyond capacity. GDP per capita has fallen from approximately \$1,400 at independence to under \$500. Oil finances between 90 and 95

percent of the national budget, and a UN panel of experts found in 2026 that South Sudan continued to sell oil months ahead of delivery, with disputes over undelivered cargoes and oil-backed debts reaching UK commercial courts. Research published this week offered the most structurally compelling reading of this record: that South Sudan's successive peace agreements have not so much failed as worked, in the sense that they stabilise elite order precisely by preserving the extraction systems that make violence profitable. The argument, grounded in revenue tracing back to 1899 across colonial, rebel, and independent rule, is that each settlement reshuffles who profits from the machinery without dismantling it.

Against that structural backdrop, the SPLM announced on July 11 that it had received a donation of five billion South Sudanese pounds from a company called Digital Dots Interior Designing Ltd ahead of December elections. The party's Secretary General received the funds and issued a statement praising the contribution as a demonstration of comradeship. Digital Dots is not unknown to SPLM financing; the company sponsored the party's SPLA Day celebrations in May 2025. What is unknown is the company's ownership, its shareholders, and the source of its capacity to make a contribution of this scale to a ruling party preparing for the country's first general election. Political party financing disclosure requirements in South Sudan are limited, and the SPLM statement addressed none of the questions the announcement raised. The donation is the single most concrete data point this week on what electoral preparation looks like from the inside of the governing party.

Fighting resumed in Walgak, Akobo County, during the week, with SPLA-IO forces launching an attack that briefly overran the area before government reinforcements from Waat retook it. The government-appointed commissioner of Akobo, James Kueth Makuach, was reported killed in the engagement, a development whose implications were detailed last week. RJMEC strongly condemned the renewed violence, calling on all parties to immediately cease hostilities and resolve differences through dialogue consistent with R-ARCSS provisions. The commission's statement landed in a week when the agreement it monitors was being reviewed and found to be less than a quarter implemented.

On the diplomatic front, Agriculture Minister Josephine Lagu met Ethiopian counterparts in what her office described as a key bilateral meeting, with Minister Aleu publicly calling Ethiopia the "father of South Sudan" in recognition of the role Addis Ababa played during the liberation struggle. The statement was diplomatically fulsome and carries context given the ongoing fighting in Jonglei, where cross-border movement of people and supplies has been a recurring security concern. South Sudan and Saudi Arabia separately discussed bilateral ties and regional issues. The government also announced consideration of urgent rehabilitation of the Juba-Nimule highway, citing the need to boost tax collection efficiency on a route that is the country's primary overland import

corridor. The customs chief separately warned clearing agents against revenue fraud, describing it as a systemic problem undermining state finances.

South Sudan launched its first drought response plan during the week, a pre-emptive measure aimed at addressing emerging drought conditions in the country's arid zones before they reach crisis threshold. The initiative is notable as a departure from the country's historically reactive humanitarian posture, though its implementation capacity depends on the same fiscal and institutional constraints that have limited all previous emergency responses.

Fifteen years after independence, South Sudan's central challenge is no longer the absence of peace agreements but the persistence of a political order that rewards instability over reform. The week's developments offered little evidence that this trajectory is changing.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed graduates of the 8th Officer Cadet Class at the Turkish-run TURKSOM Military Academy in Mogadishu urging the newest military officers to safeguard peace and national unity. The President warned against those who incite conflict and emphasized that Somalia's security can only be guaranteed through strong state institutions. He called on the officers to remain disciplined, uphold their constitutional responsibilities and serve the Somali people with integrity. President Mohamud stated that true courage lies in understanding the devastating consequences of war and working to prevent it adding that a truly brave person respects the dangers of conflict, refrains from it and actively guards against anything that might provoke it.

The Somali Future Council has presented the Transitional Direct Elections Model 2026 as a transitional electoral framework intended to bridge Somalia's current political realities with the constitutional goal of one person, one vote elections. According to a proposal document the framework would for the first time in Somalia's modern electoral history introduce direct citizen voting for members of the Federal Parliament and Federal Member State legislatures while retaining the 4.5 clan power sharing formula during the transition. The proposal distinguishes the proposed direct elections from full one person, one vote elections stating that the latter remains Somalia's constitutional end goal. The transitional framework would be established through a negotiated political agreement under a Transitional Elections Implementation Framework governing both federal and state-level elections. No political parties would participate in elections conducted under the transitional model with recognized traditional elders continuing to allocate parliamentary seats among eligible sub-clans during the transition.

Somalia's Defense Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi has drawn criticism after stating that only two parties are competing for control of Somalia with saying Al-Shabaab and the Justice and Social Party, a comment that has generated a wide political debate.

The United States Embassy in Mogadishu issued a statement on July 12 warning that anti American acts could undermine its partnership with Somalia following a video circulating showing individuals in Somali National Army uniforms desecrating an American flag. The Embassy stated that such actions threaten bilateral cooperation on security, development and counterterrorism and ultimately harm the Somali people. The Embassy welcomed the Federal Government of Somalia's prompt and decisive response to the incident noting that the United States has provided Somalia with billions of dollars in taxpayer funded assistance over many years to support security forces and operations against terrorist groups. The Embassy added that individuals seeking to undermine U.S.-Somalia relations should be held accountable because their actions hurt ordinary Somalis who benefit from American assistance.

Somalia's Ministry of Defence separately confirmed that all individuals accused of taking part in the flag desecration incident have been arrested. The Ministry condemned the act and warned it would not tolerate anything that undermines the dignity, reputation, or integrity of the Somali National Armed Forces stating that those responsible would be held accountable.

Turkish intelligence officials held preliminary talks on July 7 with representatives of Somalia's federal government and opposition leaders ahead of internationally mediated negotiations. Turkey played an active role in launching and sustaining dialogue between Somalia's government and the opposition during a period of debate about the Constitution and electoral system. Talks began in Mogadishu following initiatives by Turkey's National Intelligence Organization after disagreements about proposed changes to the Constitution and election system. Representatives of the Somali Federal Government and the opposition agreed to continue talks with the process being conducted in close coordination with the Turkish Foreign Ministry. Turkey conveyed to the parties that lasting peace and stability in Somalia can only be achieved through dialogue compromise and an inclusive political process, while emphasizing that the future can only be shaped by the will of Somalis. The Somali government thanked Turkey for its mediation role stating that government and opposition representatives met in Mogadishu in a friendly atmosphere, enabling the parties to exchange their views openly, sincerely and constructively. Former President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo attended the talks on behalf of part of the opposition and the parties agreed to continue an inclusive dialogue process for Somalia's political stability, security and prosperity.

Following that Puntland and Jubaland declined to participate in the Turkey mediated talks citing concerns over Turkey's neutrality and perceived bias toward the federal government

in Mogadishu highlighting deepening federal and regional rifts. Prominent Somali senator and scholar Abdi Ismail Samatar criticized Somalia's political opposition for allowing Turkey's deputy intelligence chief as mediator calling it a serious mistake and doubting Ankara's impartiality.

At least 26 Al-Shabaab militants were killed in airstrikes carried out in Adow Jilib, Gayfo and Qordheere in Somalia's Middle Shabelle region, the Ministry of Defence announced. The strikes were conducted by the Somali National Army with the support of international partners and targeted locations where Al-Shabaab members were gathered. A military style pickup truck and a fuel tanker were destroyed in the strikes with the vehicles reportedly being used by Al-Shabaab to support its movements and carry out attacks. The Ministry of Defence thanked Somalia's international partners for supporting the fight against Al-Shabaab and stated that military operations against the group would continue. The Somali government recently announced it is increasing airstrikes against Al-Shabaab with support from international partners.

The United States Africa Command publicly reported on July 10 a strike conducted on July 8 targeting Al-Shabaab militants approximately ninety kilometers northwest of Kismayo in the Jubaland region continuing the pattern of coordinated U.S.-Somali operations to degrade militant capabilities. No civilian casualties were reported in official statements. On another front Tensions escalated in Somalia's northeastern Puntland state after regional authorities blocked General Jima'le Takar recently appointed by Somalia's federal government as the military standoff deepened.

Somaliland

The long serving Speaker of Somaliland's House of Elders, Hon. Saleebaan Maxamuud Aadan, formally announced and submitted his resignation on July 12 citing health issues and fatigue after more than two decades of service. The House held an extraordinary session unanimously accepted the resignation and elected Hon. Muse Haji Abdi Ducaale as the new Speaker by acclamation. The Speaker of Somaliland's Upper House of Parliament had been expected to officially announce his resignation from the speakership and membership citing health challenges and fatigue after long service since his election in 2004.

Preparations and announcements continued for the Somaliland Diaspora Week Conference 2026, scheduled for early August with events in Hargeisa, Borama, and Burao. The initiative led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to engage the diaspora in investment, development, innovation, and nation building.

A Le Monde report published July 6 detailed discreet UAE led expansion and construction at Berbera Airport for potential use by the United States and Israel. Satellite images reviewed by Le Monde revealed major excavation work underway in at least three

locations south of the runway with at least eighteen trenches dug in the sandy soil between October 2025 and March. The development includes underground facilities for ammunition and fuel and possible air-defense systems amid Red Sea security concerns including Houthi threats. The construction coincides with Israel's recognition of Somaliland's independence, announced on December 26, 2025 which ultimately aims to establish a forward Israeli outpost in the Gulf of Aden close to the Yemeni coast where Houthi rebels operate. The work aligns with a 2017 UAE-Somaliland defense agreement and aims to provide alternatives to bases in Djibouti. According to a European security source, the location of Berbera at the southern entrance to the Red Sea is attracting interest due to its position near the Bab al-Mandab Strait a red line for both Israel and the United States amid threats to block maritime traffic.

Security forces in Beledweyne city thwarted a raid that two Al-Shabaab operatives were planning to conduct in Haawo-taako village. Somali security forces shot dead one of the operatives while capturing another alive. A statement posted in state-run media confirmed that the security forces in Beledweyne city thwarted a terror attack where two-armed Al-Shabaab operatives planned to conduct operations. The Spokesman of Hiraan administration, Mr. Liibaan Omar Hassan further disclosed that information provided by the city's residents played a crucial role in thwarting the alleged attack. He called upon Beledweyne local residents to continue their cooperation with security forces and stated that action would be taken against anyone who attempts to cause trouble in the city.

8. Yemen

According to an analysis by *Al Jazeera*, Yemen witnessed a marked increase in military and political tensions during the week, although the developments stopped short of indicating an imminent return to full-scale war. Clashes intensified across several frontlines, most notably in Hays district where Houthi attacks inflicted significant casualties on government forces, while military mobilization was also reported in Marib, Taiz, Al-Dhale, and Al-Jawf. At sea, a commercial vessel came under attack near Hodeidah, reinforcing persistent security concerns in the Red Sea. Concurrently, disputes over an Iranian flight to Sanaa, disagreements over the management of the airport, and the collapse of a planned prisoner exchange involving more than 1,600 detainees underscored the deterioration of political confidence between the parties.

The week's developments suggest that Yemen's conflict is entering a more volatile phase in which military pressure, political bargaining, and regional dynamics are becoming increasingly intertwined. The Houthis appear to be employing calibrated military operations alongside pressure over humanitarian and sovereignty-related issues, including airport access, maritime security, and detainee negotiations, to strengthen their negotiating position without necessarily triggering a nationwide offensive. At the same time, the internationally recognized government and Saudi Arabia remain focused on preserving

the relative stability established by the 2022 truce, even as its mechanisms show signs of weakening. As *Al Jazeera* notes, while neither side appears to have committed to a renewed large-scale conflict, the cumulative effect of battlefield escalation, stalled negotiations, and regional rivalries is steadily eroding the foundations of the existing de-escalation framework.

According to an analysis by the Middle East Research and Information Project, Yemen's conflict is increasingly being redefined by competition between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates rather than solely by the war against the Houthis. The analysis argues that Saudi Arabia has moved to consolidate political and military control over non-Houthi territories following the reported withdrawal of Emirati forces, while the UAE continues to retain commercial and political influence through local partners, particularly the Southern Transitional Council (STC). These shifts have altered the balance of power within the anti-Houthi camp, stalled previous military initiatives, and intensified competition over strategic areas such as Hadhramaut and Socotra.

The analysis further contends that Riyadh is pursuing a managed exit from the conflict by consolidating influence in southern Yemen while maintaining an apparent understanding with the Houthis to preserve the current military balance. At the same time, the unresolved question of southern independence and competing Saudi and Emirati visions for Yemen's future continue to complicate prospects for a comprehensive political settlement. Rather than moving toward resolution, Yemen appears to be entering a new phase in which regional power competition, control of strategic infrastructure, and access to maritime routes are becoming as consequential as the conflict between the internationally recognized government and the Houthis themselves.

9. Kenya

Kenya's geopolitical developments during the week of July 6 to July 12, 2026, reflected a growing tension between the country's international ambitions and its domestic political pressures. While the government continued to promote Kenya as a stable investment and diplomatic centre in East Africa, political protests, heavy police deployment and economic uncertainty raised questions about the strength of that image.

The most important domestic event was the July 7 Saba Saba commemoration. Police blocked roads, restricted access to central Nairobi and arrested several demonstrators. Saba Saba has historical importance because it represents Kenya's struggle for multiparty democracy. The strong security response therefore raised concerns about political freedom and the government's approach to public protest. Similar restrictions in Tanzania suggested a wider regional trend in which East African governments are increasingly treating political mobilisation as a security threat.

These developments have geopolitical consequences. Kenya's regional influence depends partly on its reputation as a comparatively open and stable democracy. Nairobi hosts international organisations, diplomatic missions, humanitarian agencies and multinational companies. If political freedoms continue to decline, Kenya could weaken one of the main advantages that distinguishes it from more unstable or authoritarian states in the region.

At the same time, the government continued efforts to attract international investment. Kenyan officials met with United Nations representatives and development partners to promote projects in transport, energy, agriculture, water and climate resilience. Kenya presented dozens of public and private partnership projects valued at more than KSh1.1 trillion. This reflects the government's effort to reduce dependence on traditional foreign aid and attract more private capital.

Kenya is also pursuing a broad foreign policy that maintains relations with Western countries, China, India and Gulf states. This allows Nairobi to seek investment and cooperation from several global partners without becoming dependent on one major power. The strategy supports Kenya's ambition to become the main commercial and diplomatic gateway to East Africa.

However, international instability continues to affect Kenya's economy. During the week, the World Bank reduced Kenya's 2026 growth forecast to 4.3 percent. Higher energy prices, shipping disruption and weaker investment were identified as major risks. Because Kenya imports most of its fuel, conflicts in the Middle East can quickly raise transport, food and production costs inside the country.

This creates a direct link between global events and domestic political unrest. Rising fuel prices increase the cost of living, while higher living costs increase public opposition to taxes and government spending. Political protests can then create further uncertainty, which may discourage the same foreign investors Kenya is trying to attract.

Kenya remains one of East Africa's most influential states, but its position is being tested. Its success will depend on whether it can balance security with democratic rights, economic reform with social protection and global ambition with domestic accountability.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Throughout the second week of July 2026, Saudi Arabia's political and diplomatic agenda was shaped by escalating regional tensions with Iran, intensified efforts to safeguard Gulf and Red Sea security, and an expansion of its international defense and maritime partnerships. As regional instability deepened following attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and growing threats from Iran-backed actors, Riyadh adopted a dual-track approach that combined firm diplomatic condemnation with continued back-channel engagement aimed

at preventing broader regional escalation. Simultaneously, the Kingdom strengthened its international profile through multilateral diplomacy, defense cooperation, and participation in global maritime governance, reinforcing its broader strategy of balancing military preparedness with proactive regional and international engagement.

Security developments were dominated by heightened tensions with Iran and continued concerns over maritime stability in the Gulf and the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia strongly condemned Iranian attacks that violated the sovereignty and airspace of Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, while joining international partners, including Canada, in denouncing attacks targeting commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Despite the increasingly confrontational regional environment, Riyadh continued maintaining discreet diplomatic communication channels with Tehran through European intermediaries, complementing broader international efforts to reduce tensions surrounding regional security and the Iranian nuclear file. At the same time, the Kingdom remained focused on deterring threats posed by Yemen's Houthi movement. Following renewed warnings against Saudi territory and maritime navigation in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, the Saudi-led Coalition reaffirmed its readiness to respond decisively to any attacks targeting the Kingdom or critical shipping routes. Saudi authorities also maintained heightened border security operations along the Kingdom's southwestern frontier as part of broader efforts to combat cross-border smuggling and strengthen national security.

Diplomatically, Saudi Arabia continued expanding its international engagement across both bilateral and multilateral platforms. Saudi Ambassador Princess Reema bint Bandar held high-level consultations with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio to reaffirm the strategic partnership between Riyadh and Washington despite policy differences over aspects of regional security management. The Kingdom also strengthened defense cooperation with Canada through meetings between Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman and Canadian Defence Minister David McGuinty, where both sides discussed expanding military collaboration and exchanged views on regional security developments. In parallel, Saudi Arabia reinforced its international maritime diplomacy by participating in the 137th session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council in London. The Kingdom used the forum to promote maritime safety, strengthen international cooperation, and advance its long-term objective of consolidating its position as a global logistics and maritime hub. Alongside these initiatives, Saudi Arabia maintained an active presence at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where its delegation continued promoting the international objectives of Vision 2030 and expanding the Kingdom's engagement within multilateral development frameworks.

UAE

Throughout the second week of July 2026, the United Arab Emirates' political and security landscape was dominated by heightened regional tensions resulting from the confrontation between Iran and Gulf states, while simultaneously advancing major technological partnerships with the United States and reinforcing its diplomatic commitment to regional stability. Against a backdrop of increased missile threats across the Gulf, Abu Dhabi combined robust defensive preparedness with active diplomatic engagement, strengthening international partnerships and promoting de-escalation initiatives designed to prevent a wider regional conflict.

Security developments centered on the UAE's response to heightened regional military threats. The Ministry of Defence confirmed the successful interception of multiple ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones launched toward the country, demonstrating the effectiveness of the UAE's integrated air defense architecture. Following the incident, the National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) maintained continuous public updates, confirming that the domestic security environment remained stable while national monitoring systems continued operating at maximum readiness. Concurrently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reinforced the country's counterterrorism framework by reaffirming its commitment to strengthening measures against terrorist financing and enhancing operational coordination with international security partners.

Diplomatically, the UAE significantly expanded both its strategic partnerships and regional engagement. A landmark development came with the United States' decision to ease restrictions on advanced artificial intelligence and high-technology exports, opening the way for deeper cooperation with leading American technology companies and broader collaboration in advanced digital infrastructure and civilian innovation. Regionally, Abu Dhabi strongly condemned attacks targeting Kuwaiti infrastructure, reaffirming its solidarity with Kuwait and its commitment to safeguarding Gulf security. The UAE also welcomed Washington's decision to begin removing Syria from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, viewing the move as an opportunity to support regional recovery and reconstruction. At the same time, Emirati diplomacy worked closely with Qatar and Jordan to advocate continued dialogue and de-escalation between Washington and Tehran, underscoring the UAE's broader strategy of combining strategic partnerships, technological advancement, and proactive diplomacy to preserve regional stability while strengthening its international influence.

Qatar

Throughout the second week of July 2026, Qatar's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was dominated by the rapid escalation of the Gulf security crisis, forcing Doha to simultaneously manage direct military threats, sustain its role as a regional mediator,

and respond to a major national political event. The regional confrontation between Iran, the United States, and Gulf states placed Qatar on heightened military alert as authorities activated emergency response mechanisms following missile and drone threats directed toward the country. National emergency alerts instructed residents to remain indoors while the Qatari Armed Forces successfully intercepted incoming aerial threats, allowing authorities to restore normal conditions shortly afterward. The heightened tensions followed earlier concerns over attacks targeting satellite infrastructure and occurred despite Qatar having recently been recognized as the most peaceful country in the Middle East and North Africa in the 2026 Global Peace Index. The security situation also disrupted parts of Qatar's energy sector, with QatarEnergy declaring force majeure on several liquefied natural gas export contracts, highlighting the broader economic implications of instability in the Gulf and reinforcing Doha's interest in strengthening regional and European security partnerships.

Domestically, Qatar experienced one of its most significant political moments in recent years following the death of the Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, widely regarded as the architect of modern Qatar. The announcement prompted four days of national mourning, with flags lowered across the country and government institutions temporarily suspended as the state honored the leader whose reforms transformed Qatar into a major diplomatic and economic power. The period of mourning coincided with an already tense regional environment, requiring the government to balance domestic political continuity with ongoing national security concerns.

Despite the deteriorating regional security environment, Qatar remained deeply engaged in regional diplomacy and conflict mediation. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani intensified diplomatic contacts with Iran while urging both Tehran and Washington to adhere to existing understandings aimed at preventing further escalation. Qatar also participated actively in the GCC Ministerial Council to coordinate Gulf positions on regional security and condemn violations of neighboring states' sovereignty. Collectively, these developments reinforced Qatar's foreign policy approach of combining robust domestic security measures with proactive mediation efforts, allowing Doha to preserve its role as one of the Gulf's principal diplomatic intermediaries during one of the region's most volatile periods.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Throughout the second week of July 2026, Mali experienced one of its most significant security and diplomatic weeks in recent months as government forces intensified military operations against insurgent coalitions while simultaneously achieving an important diplomatic breakthrough with Algeria and further accelerating the country's geopolitical realignment away from France. Following coordinated attacks by the Azawad Liberation

Front (FLA) and the al-Qaeda-linked Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), the Malian Armed Forces launched large-scale air and ground offensives across northern Mali, particularly around the strategic town of Anefis. Supported by Russia's Africa Corps and allied local militias, government forces regained control of key positions after extensive military operations, marking an important tactical success in Bamako's broader campaign to restore state authority in the north. Meanwhile, security agencies initiated investigations into suspected financial and logistical networks believed to be supporting insurgent groups, highlighting the government's increasing focus on disrupting militant financing alongside conventional military operations.

Diplomatically, Mali achieved a major breakthrough by restoring relations with Algeria after more than a year of strained ties. Both governments agreed to normalize diplomatic relations through the reopening of their respective airspace and the return of ambassadors, significantly improving regional cooperation after relations had deteriorated following the 2025 drone incident. At the same time, Mali further consolidated its strategic orientation within the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) by coordinating with Burkina Faso and Niger to complete the withdrawal of remaining French diplomatic and military personnel, symbolizing the definitive end of France's longstanding security presence in the country.

Collectively, these developments reflected Mali's continuing strategy of combining intensified military operations against insurgent networks with a broader diplomatic realignment toward regional partnerships and alternative international security partners. The simultaneous military gains, normalization with Algeria, and coordinated disengagement from France underscored Bamako's effort to reshape both its domestic security architecture and its broader geopolitical position across the Sahel.

Central African Republic

Throughout the second week of July 2026, the Central African Republic's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was dominated by escalating cross-border insecurity linked to the Sudan conflict, efforts to strengthen regional economic integration, and continued dependence on external security partners. Security concerns intensified as armed groups operating along the northeastern frontier increased pressure on government positions following fighting around the strategic border town of Am-Dafock. In response, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra established a centralized Crisis Defense Board to coordinate military operations against the Alliance du Sursaut Patriotique (ASP), a newly emerging rebel coalition reportedly linked to Sudanese armed actors. Meanwhile, renewed violence in Zemio triggered fresh civilian displacement into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, illustrating the growing humanitarian consequences of localized insecurity and ethnic tensions.

The country's security environment was further complicated by reports exposing the expansion of illicit criminal networks involving former Wagner Group personnel

operating independently in remote areas of the country. Investigations indicated that these networks had diversified beyond traditional mining activities into narcotics trafficking and illegal logging, highlighting persistent governance challenges in areas where state authority remains limited and underscoring concerns over the increasing autonomy of foreign armed actors operating within the country's resource-rich regions.

On the diplomatic and economic front, Bangui pursued greater regional financial integration while preparing for key international security discussions. The Bank of Central African States' integration into the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System represented an important step toward facilitating intra-African trade and reducing reliance on external financial systems. At the same time, government officials intensified diplomatic consultations ahead of deliberations on the future mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the existing UN sanctions framework. Collectively, these developments reflected Bangui's continuing effort to balance immediate security challenges with longer-term objectives of strengthening regional cooperation, economic resilience, and state authority.

Niger

Throughout the second week of July 2026, Niger continued advancing its strategic realignment through deeper institutional cooperation with Russia, stronger integration within the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), and further distancing itself from France while maintaining pressure against persistent jihadist threats. The most significant diplomatic development came as Niger hosted the second ministerial consultations between Russia and the AES, where both sides established a permanent framework for political consultation and adopted a structured action plan covering 2026–2027. The agreement represented a transition from ad hoc security cooperation toward a more institutionalized long-term partnership, reinforcing Niger's broader foreign policy shift toward alternative international alliances.

Niger also completed another major stage of its geopolitical repositioning by finalizing the termination of its remaining diplomatic relationship with France alongside its AES partners. The coordinated withdrawal of French diplomatic and military presence marked the culmination of a broader effort to redefine regional partnerships on the basis of sovereignty and strategic autonomy. Relations within the wider region also improved as Algeria reopened its airspace, easing transport and logistical connectivity for the landlocked country following months of diplomatic tensions linked to the Mali–Algeria dispute.

On the security front, Niger strengthened preparations to confront growing insurgent threats across its western and tri-border regions through expanded military cooperation with Russia. Agreements reached during the Russia-AES consultations included

additional training, technical assistance, and military equipment intended to enhance the operational capacity of the emerging AES Unified Force. At the same time, authorities continued balancing strengthened border security with humanitarian responsibilities by maintaining migration management systems in Agadez and other transit corridors despite ongoing threats from Islamic State Sahel and other armed groups. Together, these developments demonstrated Niger's continued effort to combine regional security cooperation, geopolitical realignment, and pragmatic border governance as it adapts to an evolving security environment across the central Sahel.

DRC

Throughout the second week of July 2026, the Democratic Republic of the Congo occupied an increasingly prominent position in international diplomacy while continuing to confront persistent insecurity in its eastern provinces and mounting domestic political tensions. Having assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council, Kinshasa used its leadership role to elevate discussions on conflict prevention, international peace, and the illicit exploitation of natural resources that continue to fuel armed violence across eastern Congo. The DRC also remained actively engaged in the U.S.-brokered Washington Accords process alongside Rwanda and international partners, while the United States imposed additional sanctions targeting networks involved in smuggling conflict minerals from M23-controlled territories. These parallel diplomatic initiatives reflected growing international efforts to address both the political and economic drivers of instability in the eastern DRC.

Domestically, political tensions eased temporarily after the country's main opposition coalition agreed to postpone planned nationwide demonstrations against proposed constitutional reforms. The opposition continued to accuse President Félix Tshisekedi's administration of attempting to pave the way for an extension of presidential rule through constitutional amendments, while African Union mediation helped prevent an immediate escalation of unrest. At the same time, international human rights organizations intensified scrutiny of the government's handling of previous demonstrations, raising concerns over the excessive use of force by security services against protesters and adding further pressure to the already polarized political environment.

Security conditions in eastern Congo remained highly volatile despite ongoing diplomatic efforts. M23 forces consolidated their positions across parts of North Kivu through intensified security operations and reinforced deployments in strategic areas of Lubero and Walikale, while heavy fighting continued around Minembwe in South Kivu as government forces attempted to regain lost territory. The continued use of heavy weapons in populated areas prompted renewed warnings from the United Nations over the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the risks facing civilian communities. Together, these developments underscored the DRC's dual challenge of exercising greater

international diplomatic influence while continuing to confront unresolved political divisions and a persistent armed conflict at home.

Chad

Throughout the second week of July 2026, Chad's political, diplomatic, and security landscape continued to be shaped by the widening regional consequences of the Sudanese civil war, mounting domestic governance pressures, and persistent security challenges across both its eastern and western frontiers. The conflict in neighboring Sudan increasingly affected Chad's internal security environment as ethnic dynamics along the border became more complex. Reports indicated that members of the Zaghawa community continued crossing into Darfur to support allied armed groups despite government efforts to prevent such movements, raising concerns that the conflict could spill further into Chadian territory through retaliatory attacks and cross-border incursions. Simultaneously, the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin remained fragile as the Chadian military prepared renewed counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) militants following the extension of emergency measures. Security forces also intensified regional intelligence cooperation, resulting in the interception of illicit trafficking networks believed to be supplying terrorist groups operating around the Lake Chad Islands.

Politically, President Mahamat Idriss Déby's administration continued consolidating its authority following recent constitutional reforms that expanded presidential powers and removed term limits. The political environment remained tightly controlled, with restrictions on public demonstrations and continued pressure on opposition figures and civil society organizations reinforcing the government's centralized governance model. At the same time, authorities faced growing humanitarian and administrative challenges as the continued influx of Sudanese refugees placed significant pressure on public services, healthcare systems, and local infrastructure, prompting renewed appeals for greater international financial support.

On the diplomatic front, Chad sought to reinforce regional partnerships while maintaining its focus on managing the Sudan crisis. President Déby strengthened bilateral engagement with Algeria by reaffirming longstanding security and political cooperation, reflecting N'Djamena's broader effort to preserve regional stability through diplomatic engagement. Alongside these bilateral initiatives, Chadian officials continued lobbying international partners for humanitarian assistance to address the country's expanding refugee burden, underscoring how regional conflict, domestic security, and humanitarian governance have become increasingly interconnected in shaping Chad's foreign and domestic policy priorities.

12. North Africa

Libya

Under United Nations auspices, competing military commanders Salah al-Din al-Namroush of the Government of National Unity and Khaled Haftar of the Libyan National Army convened in Sirte for historic unification talks. The home-soil meeting aimed to neutralize localized factional violence by establishing regularized institutional communication and formulating joint border security protocols. Additionally, both sides planned integrated military field exercises in Libya's restive southern region, a strategic move designed to assert state sovereignty over porous borders, combat transnational smuggling networks, and bridge the deep-seated military schism separating eastern and western coalitions.

This military rapprochement is fundamentally tied to a leaked United States mediation proposal orchestrated by presidential advisor Massad Boulos, termed the "Oil for Unity" framework. The American strategy leverages massive Western energy investments as an economic incentive to induce the rival factions into a functional power-sharing government. To safeguard international financial ties, Boulos convened high-level meetings with the heads of the Central Bank, National Oil Corporation, and Audit Bureau, urging the swift execution of Libya's first unified national budget in over a decade to prevent institutional fragmentation and ensure fiscal accountability.

Concurrently, internal institutional friction persists within the eastern political establishment as House of Representatives Speaker Aguila Saleh explicitly directed Major General Hussein Al-Ayeb to retain full operational command of the Intelligence Service. Saleh's directive to safeguard sensitive agency files and reject unauthorized external restructuring reveals a calculated effort to preserve eastern institutional leverage amid broader unification discussions. This maneuver highlights the deep-seated mistrust that remains between rival political figures, as domestic factions continuously attempt to shield their respective security apparatuses from being dissolved or compromised by transitional power-sharing agreements.

On the international stage, regional stakeholders are accelerating efforts to manage Libya's unstable security environment. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and United States Advisor Boulos coordinated diplomatic stances to vigorously advocate for Libya's territorial integrity and enforce simultaneous national elections. Simultaneously, Presidential Council member Musa Al-Koni engaged European Union Ambassador Nicola Orlando to advance the regional "One Desert" border security framework. This multilateral cooperation highlights a shared Western and regional imperative to secure Libya's volatile southern borders, mitigate unchecked sub-Saharan migration flows, and suppress active smuggling rings threatening Mediterranean security architectures.

Algeria

Algeria and Mali successfully terminated their fifteen-month diplomatic rift by fully reopening shared airspace and reinstating their respective ambassadors, with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune ordering Ambassador Kamel Retieb back to Bamako. While official rhetoric frames this as a return to natural historical relations, strategic analysis reveals a transactional truce driven by Algeria's slipping grip on Sahelian security architectures. Faced with the evident failure of its economic containment policies and the geopolitical challenge posed by Moroccan maritime alternatives, Algiers accepted this détente to restore its diplomatic relevance and prevent total isolation along its volatile southern border.

To reinforce its regional positioning, President Tebboune conducted bilateral consultations with Tunisian Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafti, focusing tightly on coordinated diplomatic maneuvers and border management. This synchronization is crucial for Algiers as it attempts to solidify a unified North African front capable of resisting external security interventions. By deepening ties with Tunis, Algeria seeks to establish a buffer zone against transnational illicit networks and coordinate migration policies. This partnership underscores Algiers' broader defensive strategy to anchor its remaining neighbors within its sphere of influence, ensuring that regional security mechanisms remain aligned with Algerian national interests.

Domestically, the National Independent Authority for Elections announced provisional legislative poll results, revealing that the National Liberation Front secured a plurality of ninety seats in the lower house. However, the election was severely undermined by a historically low domestic voter turnout rate of roughly twenty-one percent. Constitutional Court President Leila Aslaoui received the official tallies to initiate the validation and appeals phase amidst deep widespread public apathy. This minimal civic engagement exposes a profound crisis of institutional legitimacy, indicating that the ruling elite faces a significantly disconnected populace skeptical of the state's managed political transitions.

In response to these domestic and external vulnerabilities, President Tebboune presided over the annual graduation ceremonies at the Cherchell Military Academy, directly reinforcing military oversight regarding ongoing state transitions. Concurrently, the cabinet enacted rigorous new anti-money laundering and financial oversight legislation while hosting the AFRIPOL cyber-threat summit in Algiers. These parallel developments highlight the administration's dual strategy of leveraging the armed forces as the ultimate guarantor of regime survival, while simultaneously updating its legal and technological apparatuses to counter modern financial crimes and digital subversion that could threaten national sovereignty.

Morocco

To reinforce domestic stability against climate-induced economic vulnerabilities, the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture established an unprecedented eight-million-quintal strategic reserve of soft wheat. By introducing targeted storage subsidies designed to double national food coverage to six months, Rabat seeks to insulate its domestic market from global supply chain disruptions and volatile food inflation. This defensive economic policy serves as a critical internal security measure, proactively mitigating the risk of popular social unrest and ensuring social cohesion, which remains foundational for the monarchy as it navigates complex regional geopolitical pressures.

On the diplomatic front, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita held extensive bilateral security discussions with his United Arab Emirates counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. This high-level communication underscores the enduring strategic alliance between Rabat and the Gulf monarchy, focusing on coordinated intelligence sharing and regional stabilization efforts. For Morocco, maintaining tight-knit diplomatic synchronization with Abu Dhabi provides vital financial backing and diplomatic leverage within the Arab League. This alliance effectively reinforces Rabat's geopolitical stance against regional adversaries while bolstering its expanding security architecture across North Africa and the wider Mediterranean basin.

Furthermore, Morocco's long-term geopolitical maneuvers continue to successfully project influence into the Sahel, intentionally challenging neighboring Algeria's historical hegemony in the region. By championing alternative maritime trade networks and offering landlocked Sahelian states direct access to the Atlantic Ocean via Moroccan ports, Rabat seeks to permanently alter regional trade dependencies. This sophisticated economic diplomacy serves as a powerful instrument to undermine Algerian containment strategies. Consequently, Morocco is building a robust coalition of trans-Saharan partners, transforming its economic connectivity initiatives into a lasting security framework that secures its southern flank and elevates its standing as a regional leader.

13. Middle East

Israel

Democratic Congressman Ro Khanna faced sudden containment when Israeli settlers briefly detained him during an official human rights inspection in the West Bank town of Turmus Ayya. The incident quickly triggered a wave of coordinated pro-Israel political attacks against him back in the United States, vividly illustrating the increasingly volatile and high-stakes environment confronting foreign observers tracking the conflict on the ground. This confrontation underscores how heavily scrutinized international oversight has become, fueling further debates within Washington regarding political accountability and the real-world conditions within the occupied territories.

The atmospheric tension surrounding international observation echoes the harrowing conditions inside the Gaza Strip, where local civil defense teams are engaged in a desperate search for thousands of victims remaining buried deep under heavy rubble. These urgent humanitarian extraction efforts are being severely hampered by restrictive fuel blockades and absolute prohibitions on importing heavy excavation gear into the enclave. Consequently, rescue workers are forced to clear massive fields of debris using primitive tools, leaving countless families trapped in an agonizing state of prolonged limbo.

Amidst these compounding humanitarian struggles, Israel's ruling coalition officially confirmed that the next Knesset general elections will proceed as scheduled later this autumn. This critical political announcement establishes a definitive timeline for the nation's governance, mandating that the current administration transition into a temporary caretaker status within the coming days. This impending domestic political shift introduces an element of institutional transition even as the state continues to manage high-stakes regional security challenges and maintain its current intensive military operations across multiple distinct fronts.

This upcoming domestic transition within the Israeli government mirrors deep political fractures developing within its primary international benefactor, the United States, where the protracted war continues to heavily dominate the Democratic Party's midterm election races. Progressive American candidates are actively leveraging widespread anti-war sentiment among voters to directly challenge moderate, pro-Israel establishment Democrats across several competitive districts. This shifting political dynamic highlights a growing polarization over foreign policy within Washington, potentially threatening the long-standing, historically bipartisan consensus regarding unconditional military and diplomatic support for Israel.

While Western political spheres experience this polarization, regional diplomatic alignments shifted decisively as the Palestinian Authority presidency issued a strong formal condemnation against Iranian missile strikes targeting Gulf Cooperation Council states that host United States military forces. By explicitly denouncing Tehran's aggressive regional maneuvers, the Ramallah-based leadership strategically aligned itself with the moderate Arab bloc against expanding Iranian regional influence. This calculated diplomatic stance underscores the broader geopolitical fractures in the Middle East, as the Palestinian Authority navigates its complex relationships with both Western allies and neighboring Arab states.

Simultaneously navigating these external alignments, the Israeli government accelerated its institutional integration of the West Bank when the military's Central Command officially signed an administrative order upgrading the Givat Ze'ev settlement to full city status. Located northwest of Jerusalem, this significant administrative elevation directly

reinforces Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's ongoing political campaign to institutionalize and permanentize settlement structures throughout the occupied territories. By granting city status, the state effectively deepens its bureaucratic and legal infrastructure within the area, signaling a long-term commitment to permanent demographic expansion.

Expanding this urban footprint, the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved a major new housing project, authorizing the construction of four hundred and fifty settlement units within the neighborhood of Umm Lison in occupied East Jerusalem. Human rights organizations quickly warned that this substantial residential expansion is intentionally designed to alter East Jerusalem's delicate demographic character while increasing local friction. The approval has significantly heightened localized tensions, intensifying worries about imminent property expropriation and structural displacement within the contested and heavily patrolled holy city.

In direct response to these dual administrative escalations, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued an urgent appeal to the Arab League, requesting immediate mobilization against Israel's unilateral territorial actions. Abbas formally called upon the regional body to coordinate an aggressive international diplomatic and legal offensive to counter Israel's rapid land expansion and restrictive municipal zoning policies. The Palestinian leadership argued that these unchecked territorial maneuvers represent an existential threat to future sovereignty, demanding unified Arab resistance to protect what remains of their geographic integrity.

Answering this high-level diplomatic appeal, the Arab League issued its own comprehensive declaration calling for an immediate international investigation into ongoing settlement activities across the occupied territories. The regional body warned that these unilateral building projects, particularly inside East Jerusalem, directly violate established international law and systematically block the implementation of a two-state solution. By demanding a global legal probe, the Arab League sought to elevate the crisis beyond regional borders, pressuring international bodies to hold the Israeli administration accountable.

On the ground in the West Bank, this diplomatic friction was mirrored by direct military actions as Israeli troops executed a tactical incursion into the town of Beit Jala near Bethlehem. Units deployed extensively across several prominent districts within the municipality, maintaining a highly visible operational presence without immediately initiating house raids or mass detentions. According to geopolitical analysts, this calculated deployment reflects Israel's broader strategy to assert absolute security dominance over Area C, keeping Palestinian urban centers under constant surveillance and systemic military pressure.

This continuous military presence took a lethal turn near Hebron, where Israeli occupation forces shot and killed two Palestinians, including a minor, during a standard security patrol. The deadly encounter emphasizes the highly volatile environment that persists within non-combat zones across the West Bank, where everyday interactions can rapidly escalate into fatal kinetic engagements. The sudden loss of life sparked immediate local outrage, further underscoring the pervasive civilian risks that stem from routine, high-friction military policing operations in contested territories.

Compounding the friction generated by official military forces, Israeli settlers conducted an aggressive raid into the Palestinian village of Awarta, located southeast of Nablus. Operating under explicit military cover provided by accompanying Israeli troops, the settlers entered the community and triggered localized clashes with Palestinian residents who attempted to defend their property. This volatile incident highlights the systemic and ongoing risk of settler-led land encroachment in the West Bank, where non-state actors frequently deploy violence to displace rural Palestinian populations from their ancestral lands.

A nearly identical convergence of state and non-state pressure manifested on the outskirts of al-Mughayyir, where armed Israeli colonists launched coordinated attacks against local Palestinian agricultural assets. This settler violence directly coincided with the Israeli military tightening local restrictions and installing new roadblocks throughout the immediate geographic area. These synchronized actions illustrate a dual-pronged demographic pressure campaign, where state-enforced mobility restrictions and vigilante property destruction work in tandem to systematically isolate Palestinian farming communities and disrupt their traditional agricultural livelihoods.

This targeted economic warfare against agrarian communities extended to the northern Jordan Valley, where Israeli settlers violently assaulted Palestinian farmers working their lands near Tayasir village, located in the Tubas governorate. The assault resulted in multiple physical injuries to the laborers, demonstrating a systematic pattern of intimidation aimed at driving Palestinian farmers away from vital agricultural zones. Geopolitical experts note that these persistent rural attacks are key components of a broader strategy to seize fertile valley lands and expand informal settlement boundaries.

Shifting the focus to the coastal enclave, the Israeli military heavily prioritized terrain modifications, deploying specialized engineering units to continue the systematic bombardment and razing of agricultural lands across northern Gaza. Alongside the destruction of crops, military forces demolished numerous residential structures to consolidate physical control over the terrain. This extensive leveling of land is part of an explicit operational campaign to enforce the designated buffer zone, a security perimeter aimed at permanently restructuring borders and restricting future Palestinian access.

Complementing these large-scale engineering efforts, Israel maintained localized kinetic pressure through targeted aerial assets, executing an unmanned aerial vehicle strike in central Gaza that wounded four innocent Palestinian civilians. This specific drone attack demonstrates the persistent use of precision airpower to enforce security boundaries, even during periods governed by nominal truce frameworks or temporary de-escalation understandings. The strike serves as a stark reminder that the airspace over the enclave remains heavily weaponized, with surveillance and low-level bombardment continuing entirely unabated.

This relentless aerial surveillance yielded more lethal results further south, where another targeted Israeli drone strike struck an area west of Khan Younis, killing one Palestinian and injuring several others. The precision strike targeted individuals near established security boundaries, illustrating the high-intensity monitoring and immediate kinetic response mechanisms utilized by Israeli forces to deter movement along frontline perimeters. These ongoing localized operations prevent any return to normalcy for displaced populations, enforcing a state of perpetual insecurity across the southern districts.

The devastating human toll of this pervasive fire was further documented by international health officials, who reported that separate Israeli actions killed six people, including a nine-year-old girl named Tala Abu Matar, inside a central Gaza camp. Additionally, targeted drone strikes struck a blacksmith shop in the Sabra neighborhood, showcasing the high level of civilian collateral damage occurring under the guise of counter-militant actions. These lethal incidents underscore how everyday civilian spaces and economic infrastructure remain completely vulnerable to sudden military strikes.

These daily casualties culminated in a grim milestone, as Gaza medical sources announced that the aggregate death toll from the multi-year military campaign has officially surged to 73,221 fatalities, with injuries climbing to 173,654. This massive statistical update emphasizes the unprecedented civilian toll of the protracted war, reflecting the catastrophic consequences of urban warfare conducted within a densely populated, blockaded territory. The spiraling numbers continue to draw widespread international condemnation, highlighting the profound humanitarian crisis that defines the ongoing conflict.

Further compounding the enclave's total isolation, an Israeli military strike targeted area directly adjacent to the Karameh crossing, temporarily halting all civilian transit and disrupting vital logistical operations. This targeted strike severely compromised one of the few remaining functional lifelines for Palestinians, cutting off critical corridors used for minimal aid delivery and specialized medical evacuations. By paralyzing this vital junction, military action has effectively deepened the systemic chokehold on the population, amplifying the broader humanitarian catastrophe across the region.

Iran

The week opened with a sharp escalation in maritime hostilities after Iran fired on commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz, prompting a robust U.S. military response designed to protect commercial shipping and degrade Tehran's capacity to threaten maritime traffic. On July 7, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said President Donald Trump authorized precision strikes against Iranian coastal installations near Sirik, Qeshm Island, Jask and west of Bandar Abbas. Explosions were reported across those areas; Hormozgan authorities reported no civilian casualties. CENTCOM said the strikes targeted Iranian drone, missile, ammunition, surveillance and naval sites used to coordinate attacks on civilian mariners and commercial ships.

Over the next three nights U.S. forces expanded operations, striking roughly 300 targets in southern Iran to degrade capabilities the United States says were being used against shipping. CENTCOM described the campaign as aimed at radar networks, communications infrastructure, drone batteries and naval facilities, and said transits were continuing via a southern route near Oman. In one overnight phase the U.S. reported striking about 90 coastal targets, and on another night roughly 140 targets; across the full operation CENTCOM said it struck more than 300 sites, including air defenses, missile and drone sites, port logistics nodes, and naval infrastructure.

U.S. officials justified the strikes as retaliation after Tehran's forces fired on a ship in the Strait, killing or displacing crew and damaging the vessel, and after a series of attacks beginning July 7 that followed a fraying ceasefire memorandum reached in June. Washington also demanded that Iran publicly affirm that the Strait of Hormuz is fully open to commercial shipping and stop firing on vessels, warning of "severe consequences" if Tehran refused. President Trump declared the 60-day ceasefire over after both sides accused the other of violating last month's memorandum of understanding.

Iran responded with missile and drone strikes against U.S. facilities and partners across the region. Tehran and allied forces launched counterattacks at U.S. bases and regional states, with reported strikes affecting sites in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan; Iranian statements claimed attacks on bases, radars and logistics locations. Iran also repeatedly asserted the right to restrict traffic through the Strait, at one point declaring the waterway closed and firing warning shots at container ships it said used unapproved routes. Iranian authorities said some U.S. strikes were provoked by an "errant faction" within Iran seeking to sustain hostilities, while CENTCOM described the strikes as necessary to protect commercial passage.

The exchange has had important regional and economic effects. Oil prices rose amid the escalation, and traffic through the Strait remained well below normal as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and regional states struggled to agree on safe southern

transit routes for stranded vessels. CENTCOM said commercial transits continued along an alternate southern corridor near Oman, but Iran's declaration of closure and its traffic-control measures created continued uncertainty for shipping.

Alongside the immediate military confrontation, diplomatic efforts and proposals have circulated to reduce tensions and re-establish rules governing passage. European and regional officials reviewed a "Malacca-style" proposal for the Strait of Hormuz, presented by Oman with assistance from British legal experts at the IMO, which would shift Iran's demand for compulsory tolls toward voluntary contributions funding navigational safety services. Advocates argued this model conforms with international law guaranteeing transit passage without mandatory fees. Oman and EU-aligned states pressed the proposal as a means to depoliticize navigation, though Iran's foreign minister planned discussions in Oman amid internal Iranian divisions. Qatar and several states opposed any arrangement that could be interpreted as granting Iran sovereignty over the strait, warning it might empower IRGC hardliners. Meanwhile, the IMO continued to struggle to agree on a practicable southern route for ships.

These diplomatic fissures reflect deeper divisions inside Iran. Intelligence and policy analysts reported that the leadership was split between negotiators seeking to preserve talks with the United States and IRGC hardliners enforcing control over the Strait. The IRGC, according to some reports, approved attacks on commercial vessels to assert Iran's traffic scheme; negotiators later blamed an "errant faction" for actions that jeopardized diplomacy while attempting to preserve channels for negotiation.

The crisis also had symbolic domestic reverberations in Iran. On July 9, the state held the burial of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad; the funeral drew massive public gatherings amid the conflict and was used by the government to reinforce rhetoric of resistance. In the funeral's aftermath, Mojtaba Khamenei, described in reporting as the new Supreme Leader, vowed revenge for his father's killing, saying "vengeance is the will of our nation" and noting that targets had been compiled. In a separate exchange of threats, President Trump warned on social media that any attempt to assassinate him would prompt the U.S. to "completely decimate" Iran, saying missiles were "locked and loaded." Those statements heightened tensions as mediators urged restraint.

Despite the bombardment of coastal and logistical targets, open-source and official reporting indicated that Iran maintained significant resilience in certain areas of its military-industrial base. On July 10 Iran's Acting Defense Minister announced a major expansion in the country's unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) program, claiming production capacity had tripled during the conflict and that Iran retained more than half of its drone inventory. Satellite imagery analysts also verified that Iran was constructing a concrete-hardened roof over the Taleghani 2 facility within the Parchin military complex, an

engineering measure intended to protect sensitive nuclear-related sites from future strikes. U.S. officials expressed concern that imagery suggested rebuilding at nuclear and military sites, including Parchin, and cited these indicators when arguing Tehran might be breaching aspects of prior agreements.

Concurrently, the U.S. hardened its negotiating posture on nuclear matters. American officials signaled that surrender of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile, about 410 kg of highly enriched material described in U.S. statements as "nuclear dust," was a non-negotiable condition for any final nuclear deal. Washington placed this demand within the 60-day negotiation window set by the June memorandum of understanding but expressed growing skepticism about Tehran's compliance given signs of reconstruction at relevant sites.

As the military exchange unfolded, mediators from regional states and Europe pressed both sides to return to diplomacy and salvage the ceasefire framework. Major gaps remained: the U.S. insisted Iran restore free commercial passage and halt attacks, while Iran sought to preserve its traffic-control measures in the Strait and to link any changes to broader concessions, among them demands related to its nuclear program and recognition of certain maritime arrangements. Internal Iranian divisions and competing interpretations of incidents at sea impeded quick resolution.

In sum, the early July hostilities around the Strait of Hormuz evolved quickly from shipboard attacks and targeted U.S. retaliatory strikes into a broader regional escalation involving cross-border strikes, diplomatic maneuvering, and competing security and legal claims over control of maritime passage. The confrontation combined immediate kinetic operations, reportedly more than 300 U.S. strikes across several nights and Iranian retaliatory missile and drone attacks on U.S. facilities and partners, with persistent diplomatic efforts, competing legal proposals including a Malacca-style funding model for navigational safety, and domestic Iranian mobilization around leadership succession and the protection of strategic programs. The situation's trajectory turned on whether Tehran would publicly affirm free passage through the strait and halt vessel attacks, and on whether mediators could bridge the substantial political and security differences that have reopened since the June memorandum began to unravel.

Turkey

Turkey's National Intelligence Organization has officially launched and facilitated a series of high-stakes reconciliation talks in Mogadishu, aiming to bridge the political divide between Somalia's federal government and the domestic political opposition. Representatives from Turkish intelligence arrived in the capital to orchestrate direct dialogues designed to resolve a long-standing election dispute that has paralyzed local governance. This proactive intervention underscores Ankara's expanding footprint in East African diplomacy, positioning its intelligence apparatus as a primary vehicle for conflict

resolution while attempting to navigate deep-seated opposition anxieties regarding the structural neutrality of Turkish mediators in local affairs.

The efficacy of this mediation framework faces immediate operational challenges due to explicit political boycotts by the autonomous federal regions of Puntland and Jubaland. These regional administrations have distanced themselves from the Mogadishu talks, severely testing Ankara's perceived neutrality and threatening to limit its broader diplomatic leverage within the Horn of Africa. The reluctance of these critical regional stakeholders highlights the immense difficulty Turkey faces in projecting itself as an impartial broker. Consequently, the absence of key regional factions complicates the path toward a unified national consensus, risking the fragmentation of the entire reconciliation process.

Domestic skepticism regarding Turkey's role has reverberated into the legislative sphere, exemplified by prominent Somali Senator Abdi Ismail Samatar publicly criticizing opposition factions for accepting Turkey's deputy intelligence chief as a legitimate mediator. Senator Samatar explicitly questioned Ankara's diplomatic impartiality, arguing that relying heavily on foreign intelligence operatives compromises sovereign political integrity. This internal dissent underscores a growing apprehension that Turkey's security-centric approach may prioritize short-term stabilization over equitable political representation. The critique highlights the delicate balance foreign intermediaries must maintain to prevent local actors from viewing international mediation as an external imposition.

Independent global analysts have simultaneously evaluated this "security-first" mediation style, warning that Turkey must carefully balance its quest for international legitimacy with a genuine representative consensus among Somalia's diverse federal regions. Observers note that while Ankara's intelligence-driven diplomacy provides rapid operational deployment and direct communication channels, it possesses distinct limitations when applied to highly fragmented, long-term conflicts. If Turkey fails to integrate comprehensive regional consensus alongside its centralized security measures, its broader aspirations for regional influence could falter, transforming its East African diplomatic investments into a test case for the boundaries of security-led foreign policies.

Beyond its unilateral African engagements, Ankara has dramatically elevated its multilateral standing by successfully hosting the comprehensive NATO Summit, an event widely viewed as an opportunity for a strategic reset between the European Union and Turkey. European policy experts highlight Ankara's foundational role in securing the alliance's highly vulnerable southeastern flank and managing critical trans-regional migration corridors. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan declared the summit an absolute success, asserting that the robust, leader-level attendance demonstrated profound

global confidence in Turkey's strategic value under an evolving "NATO 3.0" collective security framework.

During the summit proceedings, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte issued a stern directive to member states, demanding that allies present credible, binding plans to achieve an unprecedented five percent GDP defense spending target. This aggressive fiscal demand arrives as the United States actively reassesses its traditional European security footprint, compelling continental allies to rapidly assume greater financial responsibility for their own protection. Rutte's ultimatum set a demanding tone for the ministerial meetings, forcing member states to confront structural shortfalls in their defense budgets while navigating the volatile geopolitical landscape defined by shifting American commitments.

In a concrete realization of these expanded fiscal goals, Secretary General Rutte highlighted the finalization of over fifty billion euros in joint military procurement contracts aimed at reinforcing allied capabilities. A central pillar of this defense expansion is the newly launched Drone Edge initiative, designed to integrate advanced autonomous systems across allied militaries. Furthermore, the summit finalized extensive agreements to modernize critical fuel supply pipelines servicing NATO's eastern flank. These infrastructure upgrades collectively aim to enhance regional logistical resilience, ensuring that allied combat forces stationed near vulnerable borders remain fully sustained during potential high-intensity operational contingencies.

Complementing these broad logistical upgrades, France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs detailed specific operational contributions, focusing on French participation in the Ankara summit and clarifying its upcoming ground deployments. Paris confirmed it will deploy substantial military assets to the newly formed Forward Land Forces stationed in Finland, directly reinforcing NATO's northernmost boundary with Russia. This deployment represents a tangible manifestation of allied solidarity, shifting French strategic focus toward the Baltic and Arctic theaters. By embedding troops directly into Finland's defensive framework, France aims to deter potential northern incursions while demonstrating its unwavering commitment to collective alliance defense.

Further strengthening the alliance's institutional architecture, summit leaders officially launched a multinational defense bank designed to streamline military financing and bypass traditional commercial lending hurdles for urgent security infrastructure. Simultaneously, Sweden finalized a major defense procurement deal at the summit, securing the acquisition of advanced GlobalEye airborne early warning and control aircraft. This transaction enhances Stockholm's integrated surveillance capabilities within the alliance framework. The combination of innovative financial institutions and cutting-edge sensor technology reflects a broader NATO effort to modernize its collective

technological edge, ensuring member states can rapidly field state-of-the-art defense platforms.

The geopolitical spotlight focused intensely on a live press conference held by US President Donald Trump in Ankara, where he explicitly praised President Erdogan's leadership and geopolitical acumen. Trump utilized the platform to address escalating Persian Gulf tensions, while simultaneously dropping strong hints regarding potential US sanctions relief for Turkey. This public display of diplomatic alignment signaled a potential thawing in bilateral relations, suggesting a transactional shift in Washington's approach to Ankara. The press conference underscored how personal executive chemistry could redefine strategic alliances, reshaping expectations for near-term American foreign policy choices across the broader Middle Eastern theater.

Amidst this highly charged diplomatic atmosphere, the summit was jolted by severe regional security developments as President Trump authorized immediate retaliatory military strikes against Iran during his stay in Ankara. This sudden decision, driven by escalating friction in the Persian Gulf, highlighted the volatile intersection of global diplomacy and active military conflict. The authorization introduced immense tension into the summit proceedings, forcing allied leaders to rapidly assess the potential consequences of a direct US-Iran confrontation. Trump's unilateral move underscored the unpredictable nature of American security policy, dramatically raising the geopolitical stakes for all regional actors involved.

Simultaneously, the summit yielded significant tangible breakthroughs for Turkey's long-term air defense requirements, highlighted by formal US commitments to finally license the advanced Patriot missile defense system to Ankara. This crucial policy shift represents a massive strategic concession from Washington, aimed at addressing Turkey's persistent security vulnerabilities while attempting to pull Ankara closer to standard NATO equipment protocols. The licensing agreement marks a dramatic departure from years of bilateral gridlock over missile procurement, opening up new pathways for deep military-technical cooperation and laying the groundwork for a broader reconciliation regarding Turkey's contested position within allied defense structures.

President Erdogan effectively utilized his direct, calculated personal chemistry with President Trump to secure critical commitments for Turkey's domestic defense sector, specifically obtaining crucial American production engines for the nascent KAN fighter jet program. Alongside these vital aerospace components, Erdogan successfully negotiated the preliminary framework for substantial sanctions relief, significantly boosting his domestic political standing and validating his personalized approach to international diplomacy. By bypassing traditional bureaucratic diplomatic channels, the Turkish leader demonstrated the utility of transactional executive relationships in

overcoming deeply entrenched structural disputes, securing critical defense technology that ensures the continuity of Turkey's sovereign military aviation aspirations.

To visually emphasize Turkey's burgeoning defense-industrial capabilities, President Erdogan presented custom, elaborately engraved Turkish-made Magnum revolvers as symbolic gifts to visiting NATO leaders during the summit. This unconventional diplomatic gesture served as a calculated showcase of Turkey's domestic manufacturing precision and defense self-reliance, projecting strength directly to its western allies. The presentation of these firearms highlighted Ankara's desire to be recognized not merely as a consumer of Western military hardware, but as an advanced producer in its own right, leveraging symbolic hospitality to reinforce its sovereign identity within the broader transatlantic alliance framework.

Central to resolving Turkey's most persistent diplomatic impasse, reports indicate that Ankara is finalizing the formal resale of its controversial Russian-made S-400 missile systems to a third-party Gulf nation, specifically eyeing Qatar or the United Arab Emirates. This complex transaction is strategically engineered to clear the primary diplomatic obstacles blocking Turkey's return to the lucrative F-35 joint strike fighter program. By offloading the Russian hardware to a mutually acceptable intermediary, Ankara seeks to satisfy Washington's stringent security requirements without completely rupturing its delicate bilateral ties with Moscow, illustrating a highly pragmatic maneuver to restore its core defense relationships.

The Kremlin has officially confirmed it remains in active, direct contact with Turkish authorities regarding the ultimate fate of these advanced anti-aircraft systems, explicitly characterising the proposed transfer to a third-party Gulf nation as a highly sensitive matter. Moscow's public acknowledgment underscores the geopolitical friction generated by Turkey's attempt to pivot back toward Western defense architectures. While Russia avoids an immediate diplomatic rupture, its cautious rhetoric highlights the significant strategic stakes involved in losing a high-profile defense export customer to a NATO member, signaling that the final execution of the transfer will require delicate diplomatic recalibration.

Elaborating on these multi-directional negotiations, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan publicly stated that Turkey is taking concrete, systematic steps to permanently resolve the S-400 impasse with Washington. Fidan emphasized that maintaining national security remains Ankara's absolute priority, but acknowledged that integrating into the broader allied radar and air defense framework necessitates resolving long-standing friction with the United States. This statement reflects a coordinated diplomatic offensive by Ankara to assure its Western allies of its long-term reliability, framing the potential divestment of Russian technology as a necessary evolution rather than a complete abandonment of its independent defense posture.

These intensive diplomatic maneuvers have already yielded highly positive signals from Washington regarding Turkey's potential formal reinstatement into the advanced F-35 stealth fighter jet program. Defense analysts note that the removal of the S-400 hurdle satisfies the statutory requirements under American law, opening the door for Turkey to reclaim its status as a core production and operational partner. Rejoining the program would drastically modernize Turkey's air combat capabilities, securing its aerial dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean while solidifying its long-term strategic alignment with the core industrial base of the transatlantic alliance.

Contrasting with this external diplomatic success, international human rights organizations have strongly condemned a severe pre-summit domestic security crackdown executed by Turkish authorities within the capital city of Ankara. Law enforcement units arrested over two hundred political activists, human rights lawyers, and vocal opposition figures in the days leading up to the high-profile NATO event. This internal suppression highlights the persistent tension between Turkey's outward-facing role as a vital geopolitical mediator and its highly restrictive domestic political environment. The sweeping arrests underscore the state's ongoing focus on total internal stability, even at the cost of intense international scrutiny.

Syria

United States President Donald Trump formally notified Congress of his intention to rescind Syria's long-standing designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism following a critical bilateral meeting with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa at the NATO summit in Ankara. This pivotal geopolitical shift reflects Washington's acknowledgment of the transitional government's ongoing counterterrorism measures and formal commitments to renounce international militancy. By initiating this forty-five-day congressional review process, the United States aims to dismantle the most significant legal impediment hindering international trade and Western capital investments necessary for Syria's post-war structural reconstruction.

Simultaneously, French President Emmanuel Macron executed a landmark state visit to Damascus, making him the first major Western head of state to visit Syria since the previous regime's collapse. The diplomatic summit culminated in a comprehensive cooperation framework establishing joint economic committees alongside Gulf partners to facilitate massive reconstruction projects. This rapid re-engagement underscores Europe's strategic imperative to restore regional stability and proactively secure influence over Syria's emerging banking and energy sectors. By formalizing these bilateral accords, Paris positions itself as a primary Western interlocutor, signaling an equal partnership rooted in mutual security interests.

On the regional front, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani conducted bilateral security talks in Beirut with Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam to reinforce state-to-

state relations and validate absolute noninterference. Damascus explicitly rejected recent American suggestions prompting Syrian military intervention against Hezbollah in eastern Lebanon, choosing instead to prioritize domestic stabilization and economic channels over foreign entanglements. This cautious posture emerges as Damascus struggles to maintain its own territorial integrity against repeated Israeli military incursions in the south, where Israeli forces have continuously breached the 1974 Disengagement buffer zone to establish permanent security sectors.

Domestically, President al-Sharaa urged the newly elected People's Assembly to spearhead a modern political era defined by transparency and institutional competence as parliament convened its initial legislative session. However, persistent domestic friction was underscored by a fatal bombing cell operation in central Damascus, which was subsequently dismantled by Interior Minister Anas Khattab. The resilience of these insurgent networks illustrates the fragile nature of Syria's transition, highlighting that while international legitimacy is expanding rapidly, deep-seated internal security threats and unresolved regional funding deficits continue to challenge the central government's consolidation of state authority

14. Global Powers

On 7 July, President Donald Trump arrived in Ankara for the NATO Summit, where he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan before holding bilateral meetings with NATO leaders. Ahead of the summit, the White House reiterated that Trump would press allies to increase defense spending and would meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa to discuss ending the Russia-Ukraine war and regional security in the Middle East.

Trump also renewed his demand that Greenland should come under U.S. control, arguing that the territory is strategically important for American and NATO security. The remarks prompted an immediate response from Denmark, which reaffirmed Greenland's sovereignty and rejected any suggestion that it could be transferred to another country.

The NATO Summit was dominated by Trump's demand that allies substantially increase defense spending. He criticized Spain over its defense commitments and initially threatened trade measures while also declaring that the interim ceasefire with Iran had effectively ended following renewed attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Despite these disputes, Trump later described the summit as demonstrating "a lot of unity" and welcomed new allied commitments to higher defense spending and expanded purchases of U.S.-made military equipment. NATO leaders also reaffirmed collective defense under Article 5.

On 8 July, the United States carried out a new round of military strikes against Iranian targets after attacks on merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. Washington stated that

the strikes targeted Iranian military infrastructure and port facilities linked to threats against international shipping. Iran condemned the operation as a violation of previous understandings, marking a significant deterioration in the fragile diplomatic process established under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding.

U.S.–Turkey relations entered a new phase after Trump announced the lifting of sanctions imposed on Turkey over its acquisition of the Russian S-400 air defense system. The administration also indicated its willingness to move forward with a possible sale of F-35 fighter aircraft to Turkey, reversing a long-standing point of contention in bilateral relations. The proposal immediately generated opposition from Israel and some members of the U.S. Congress.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Trump on July 8 to reconsider the proposed F-35 sale to Turkey, warning that it could alter the regional military balance. Shortly afterward, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth canceled a planned meeting with Netanyahu amid growing disagreements over the issue, highlighting emerging strains in U.S.–Israeli defense coordination despite continued cooperation on Iran and regional security.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov arrived in Ethiopia on July 7, beginning a multi-country African tour aimed at expanding Russia's political, economic, and security partnerships across the continent. In Addis Ababa, Lavrov met Ethiopian leaders and African Union Commission Chair Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, reaffirming Russia's support for stronger Africa–Russia cooperation and preparations for the next Russia–Africa Summit.

On 9 July, Lavrov travelled to Niger, where he met the foreign ministers of the Alliance of Sahel States (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger). The talks focused on expanding military cooperation, counterterrorism assistance, training, and economic ties. Following that, Lavrov proceeded his visit to Mozambique and Burundi holding talks covering various issues.

The Kremlin announced that it would closely monitor the NATO Summit in Ankara, arguing that the alliance continued to pursue a confrontational approach toward Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow remained interested in diplomatic initiatives but viewed NATO's military build-up as a direct challenge to Russian security.

On 8 July, the United States criticized China for providing only limited advance notification of a 6 July submarine-launched ballistic missile test into the Pacific Ocean. Washington argued that Beijing's notification fell short of the transparency standards observed by other nuclear powers. China rejected the criticism, stating that the launch was part of routine military training and posed no threat to any country.

On 10 July, President Xi Jinping met North Korean Premier Pak Thae Song in Beijing during celebrations marking the 65th anniversary of the China–North Korea Friendship Treaty. Xi called on both countries to maintain "strategic resolve" amid global instability, accelerate implementation of agreements reached during his recent summit with Kim Jong Un, and deepen cooperation in politics, trade, and cultural exchanges.

15. Europe

At the NATO Summit in Ankara, Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled a British-led multinational program worth more than \$50 billion over the next decade to jointly develop long-range precision strike weapons with France, Germany and other European allies. The initiative aims to strengthen Europe's defence industrial base while reducing dependence on U.S. capabilities.

The UK and France jointly proposed a multinational maritime security mission in the Strait of Hormuz during the NATO Summit to safeguard commercial shipping following renewed Iranian attacks. Oman agreed to cooperate on security in the Gulf of Oman, although Iran opposed the proposal.

President Emmanuel Macron became the first European Union head of state to visit Syria since the fall of Bashar al-Assad. He held talks with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on reconstruction, counterterrorism, regional security, sanctions relief, and Syria's reintegration into the international community. France also announced new economic cooperation initiatives and support for reconstruction.

Two explosions struck central Damascus shortly after Macron's motorcade departed from the Four Seasons Hotel. Macron continued his programme, reaffirming France's support for Syria's stabilization and announcing plans to restore full diplomatic relations, including exchanging ambassadors.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy told Parliament that the summit produced agreement on stronger European defence investment, continued support for Ukraine and consultations with Gulf partners on maritime security and the threat posed by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz.

President Emmanuel Macron stated that Europe has significantly increased its defence contribution within NATO and argued that Europe should continue strengthening its own defence industrial capacity while remaining committed to the Alliance.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz supported NATO decisions to increase defence spending and strengthen European military capabilities, describing the summit as evidence that Europe is assuming greater responsibility within the Alliance.

Merz confirmed that Germany had reached an agreement with the United States to acquire Tomahawk cruise missiles, significantly strengthening Germany's long-range strike capability while Europe develops its own missile systems.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

The United Nations system remained intently focused on the far-reaching implications of the United States stance on UNSOS and the future mandate renewal of AUSSOM later in 2026. Throughout the reporting period, discussions among Member States intensified, addressing critical issues including potential funding gaps, alternative financing mechanisms and the overall sustainability of the mission. These deliberations built upon prior capacity-building efforts and longstanding logistical dependencies that have underpinned the mission's operations for nearly two decades. With the December 2026 deadline looming, the UN and its partners continued to engage in high-level consultations to chart a viable path forward, ensuring that the hard-won security gains in Somalia are not undone by the abrupt withdrawal of essential support.

Africa Union

President Salva Kiir Mayardit has reaffirmed his government's steadfast commitment to the full implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, upholding the rule of law and holding the scheduled general elections in December 2026. The President made the remarks during a courtesy call by the visiting ministerial delegation of the AU Ad Hoc High-Level Committee for South Sudan (C5), which is in Juba to assess progress in implementing the outcome declaration adopted at the C5 Plus meeting held on the margins of the AU Summit in February. Mr. Ronald Lamola, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa and Chair of the Ministerial Committee, commended the Government and people of South Sudan under President Kiir's leadership for their continued efforts to maintain peace and stability in the country. Minister Lamola further reiterated the call of the C5 Plus Summit for, among other priorities, an inclusive national dialogue to foster national cohesion and reconciliation, the de-escalation of tensions and the conduct of free, fair, and credible elections in December 2026 as a key milestone in South Sudan's democratic transition in line with the Revitalized Agreement.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, addressed the AU Peace and Security Council's informal consultation on the future of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), underscoring that the mission's future should be guided by clear strategic objectives. He called for strengthened support for AUSSOM to reinforce African ownership of peace and security and advance sustainable financing for African-led peace support operations. Mr. Youssouf stressed that

honoring the sacrifices of Troop Contributing Countries requires safeguarding the gains achieved in Somalia through a mission that is sustainable, adaptable, and fit for purpose. The Chairperson also urged the accelerated operationalization of the AU Peace Fund, implementation of the 0.2 per cent levy, and increased Member State contributions. The session was chaired by the Republic of Uganda the Chair of the PSC for the month of July.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, received H.E. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and his delegation for the annual AU–Russia High-Level Consultations at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The consultations reaffirmed the growing Africa-Russia partnership, anchored in mutual respect, sovereign equality and shared interests. Discussions between the two principals focused on expanding cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, energy, technology, food security, public health and industrialization, in support of Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Chairperson welcomed Russia's growing investments across Africa, as well as its continued support in areas including humanitarian assistance, health, education, food security and capacity-building. They also exchanged views on peace and security, African-led solutions to conflicts, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2719, UN Security Council reform in line with the Ezulwini Consensus and strengthening multilateral cooperation. Minister Lavrov reaffirmed Russia's support for a more representative and equitable UN Security Council, including permanent African representation. He commended Africa's economic progress and echoed the Chairperson's call for greater value addition to Africa's agricultural products and mineral resources. He also reaffirmed Russia's support for strengthening the AU's institutional architecture including the African Humanitarian Agency and the African Medicines Agency. The Chairperson and Minister Lavrov reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the AU-Russia strategic partnership and to the successful preparations for the 3rd Russia-Africa Summit in October this year.

The United States informed the African Union in early July 2026 that, when the renewal of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) mandate comes before the United Nations Security Council in December 2026, it would not support the renewal if it includes UNSOS or any UN logistical and operational support. UNSOS provides essential life support, fuel, maintenance, medical services and transportation for the nearly 12,000 troops serving in the mission. In its communication, Washington noted that despite more than a decade of substantial international support Somalia has been unable to sustain meaningful progress against Al-Shabaab, assume full ownership of its security functions, or implement serious security sector reform. This development has prompted urgent discussions within the AU the Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) and the UN on possible transitional arrangements and alternative

financing or bilateral support mechanisms beyond December 2026. Analysts note that countries such as Turkey could play a larger role, while the coming months offer a critical window to prepare an orderly transition and avoid reversal of recent security gains.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

At the IGAD Headquarters in Djibouti, the Executive Secretary, H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, recently hosted partners from Finland, Sweden and Switzerland for high-level discussions. The primary focus of the meeting was to review the contribution of the ISAP project to IGAD's institutional strengthening and its broader support for the organization's regional mandate. During the engagement the Executive Secretary conveyed IGAD's profound appreciation to the governments and peoples of the three nations for their unwavering commitment to regional cooperation, resilience and integration within the Horn of Africa. This meeting which took place around July 6-7, 2026, underscores IGAD's continued advancement of its institutional strengthening and partnership efforts even as it navigates the ongoing challenges in the region.

At the IGAD Headquarters in Djibouti on 6 July 2026, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu received H.E. Hu Bin, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Djibouti and accredited to IGAD for discussions on regional priorities. The two sides signed a grant agreement to enhance institutional support to IGAD.

This meeting reflects the growing and longstanding partnership between China and IGAD. Ambassador Hu Bin expressed China's high appreciation for IGAD's role in promoting cooperation, stability and economic integration in the Horn of Africa and reiterated China's commitment to further strengthening friendly cooperation.

Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu welcomed China as an important and reliable partner and conveyed IGAD's readiness to work closely with China to advance regional peace, stability and sustainable development. The grant agreement further solidifies bilateral ties and supports IGAD's institutional capacity within the framework of shared priorities for the Horn of Africa.

At the United Nations General Assembly, IGAD Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Cherinet Hariffo, delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of IGAD, during the debate on the Responsibility to Protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Mr. Cherinet reaffirmed the Executive Secretary's call that protecting communities starts with preventing conflict underscoring that the most effective way to safeguard populations from mass atrocities is to address root causes before they escalate into violence. He emphasized the importance of local peacebuilding initiatives, including

cross-border efforts in Moyale, which serve as a practical example of community-driven conflict prevention that transcends national boundaries. The statement also urged greater investment in women and youth, recognizing their critical role as agents of peace and stability and called for stronger regional cooperation to complement national and international efforts in preventing atrocities. Furthermore, Mr. Cherinet expressed IGAD's strong support for Ghana's landmark resolution recognizing the transatlantic enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity aligning IGAD with the broader international community in acknowledging historical injustices while committing to a future of peace, dignity and shared responsibility. This address reinforces IGAD's steadfast commitment to the principle that protection begins with prevention and that sustainable peace can only be achieved through proactive, inclusive and collaborative approaches at all levels.

In Djibouti and Ethiopia, IGAD moved to strengthen both its institutional capacity and regional security infrastructure. Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Ethiopian Federal Police to expand advanced forensic training for law enforcement officers across all Member States. This initiative represents a significant step toward enhancing regional security cooperation and building a more robust criminal justice framework that will benefit the entire Horn of Africa by equipping law enforcement personnel with modern investigative capabilities.

Across the region and on the global stage, IGAD championed diplomatic partnership, climate-resilient agriculture and socio-economic integration. The authority continued to drive sustainable development across the Horn of Africa by advancing the Free Movement Protocol in Somalia and convening regional leaders in Kenya to accelerate the deployment of climate-smart agriculture food systems. Broader activities during this period, as reflected in weekly summaries, included notable progress on digital and economic integration, climate-resilient agriculture and enhanced coordination with key partners. IGAD's The Week at IGAD recap for late June and early July underscored these overarching themes of capacity building, security infrastructure and sustainable development demonstrating the organization's unwavering commitment to addressing the region's most pressing challenges through collaborative, forward-looking and inclusive approaches.

The IGAD Head of Mission to Somalia, together with an IGAD delegation, paid a courtesy call on Somalia's Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Salim Alio Ibrow, to discuss progress on the ratification and domestication of the IGAD Free Movement Protocol. The discussions focused on strengthening regional integration by advancing the implementation of the Protocol, enhancing institutional capacity and promoting safe, orderly and productive labour mobility across the IGAD region. The Minister reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to accelerating the ratification and domestication process,

underscoring Somalia's support for greater regional cooperation and the free movement of people within the IGAD region.

IGAD extended warm congratulations to the Government and people of the Republic of South Sudan on the occasion of the country's 15th Independence Day. As South Sudan marked this important milestone, IGAD reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to working alongside the Government and people of South Sudan in advancing lasting peace, stability, and sustainable development for the continued wellbeing and prosperity of all its citizens.

IGAD Head of Mission to the Republic of Uganda, Ms. Joselyn Bigirwa, on behalf of H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, paid a courtesy call on Hon. Haruna Kyeyune Kasolo, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Regional Affairs) and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda. The meeting provided an opportunity to brief the Minister on IGAD's mandate, institutional framework and strategic interventions supporting Uganda, while highlighting the organization's role in advancing regional integration, peace, and sustainable development.



HORN **REVIEW**

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas | Connections | Synergy