



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

On July 13, 2026, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Doha to offer condolences on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani. He was received at Hamad International Airport by Qatar's Minister of Transport, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Thani, and Ethiopia's Ambassador to Qatar, Faisal Ali Ibrahim. The following day, Prime Minister Abiy met His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani at Lusail Palace, where he conveyed Ethiopia's sympathies. Senior Qatari officials attended the meeting, underscoring the strong bilateral ties between the two countries.

Following his diplomatic visit, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed returned to Addis Ababa on July 14, 2026, where he received Senior Minister Romuald Wadagni of Benin. Their high-level discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations and expanding economic cooperation. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing trade partnerships and strategic collaboration across sectors of mutual interest and development.

On the same day, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed issued a public address urging citizens to actively participate in the upcoming National Dialogue, describing it as a historic opportunity for the country. He emphasized that achieving sustainable peace requires shared responsibility and nationwide commitment, calling on all Ethiopians to prioritize national unity over regional divisions in pursuit of lasting prosperity.

Maintaining strong diplomatic momentum, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also met with prominent international figures, including former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Their discussions focused on drawing lessons from historical peace processes and applying conflict-resolution experiences to contemporary continental challenges. The meeting reaffirmed Ethiopia's active role in African peacebuilding and pan-African diplomatic cooperation.

The National Dialogue Conference officially opened on July 15 in Addis Ababa, bringing together more than 4,000 representatives from across the country. The Chief Commissioner described the conference as a historic forum aimed at promoting harmonious coexistence, healing national wounds, and building consensus on critical issues, including state-building, federalism, the rule of law, peace, and constitutional governance. Addressing participants, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed urged them to safeguard national sovereignty, embrace mutual listening, and pursue collective solutions rather than division or external interference.

The dialogue seeks to foster a culture of inclusive roundtable discussions and address deep-rooted national issues through eight agenda pillars developed from extensive nationwide consultations. It is also intended to serve as a model for inclusive dialogue across Africa. Preparatory efforts included broad public awareness campaigns and inclusive representation. Ahead of the formal deliberations, the National Dialogue Commission warned against false information circulating about the process and reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and credibility.

On July 15, the US Ambassador visited Tigray to engage with regional leaders and aid agencies. The visit aimed to revive implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement, which some parties had recently described as effectively dead. Discussions emphasized the urgent need for open dialogue, full adherence to the peace deal, and a shift from emergency relief toward long-term stability and self-reliance in the region.

Shifting to foreign relations, Ethiopian diplomats intensified their engagement with Saudi Arabian authorities regarding Ethiopian nationals facing execution or detention on drug-related charges. Stressing humanitarian and human rights concerns, Ethiopian officials requested clemency and comprehensive legal reviews for hundreds of detained citizens. The diplomatic initiative reflects Ethiopia's continued commitment to protecting its citizens abroad while upholding international standards of fair legal representation.

Ethiopian diplomats also engaged Saudi Arabian authorities regarding nationals facing execution or detention on drug-related charges. Officials requested clemency, consular access, and transparent legal procedures while working to secure amnesty and accelerate repatriation. Consular services established tracking systems and partnered with humanitarian organizations to provide direct support and streamline family communications.

During broader international consultations, Ethiopia sought stronger security guarantees and accelerated economic partnerships. While partners offered diplomatic support and recognized reform efforts, immediate financial commitments remained limited. All sides agreed to continue structured negotiations for tangible long-term outcomes. Broader discussions focused on regional trade infrastructure, energy integration, and cross-border connectivity. Ethiopian representatives stressed the importance of economic interconnectivity for shared prosperity, while partners showed interest in investments and infrastructure projects across the Horn of Africa. Additional talks addressed administrative reforms, capacity building, digital transformation, and joint security efforts including intelligence sharing and border management.

Broader diplomatic discussions likewise focused on expanding regional trade infrastructure, energy integration, and cross-border commercial connectivity. Ethiopian representatives emphasized that greater regional economic integration is essential for overcoming macroeconomic challenges and promoting shared prosperity. Partner states

expressed strong interest in expanding commercial investment and supporting major infrastructure initiatives throughout the Horn of Africa.

On July 16, 2026, the German Federal Foreign Office State Secretary visited Addis Ababa to strengthen bilateral relations with Ethiopia and the African Union. High-level discussions focused on enhancing diplomatic cooperation, supporting regional peace initiatives, and expanding economic partnerships. The visit reaffirmed Germany's continued commitment to governance reform, sustainable development, and regional stability.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister also held productive discussions with the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on strengthening Ethiopia-EU and EU-Africa partnerships, regional developments, economic cooperation, and the National Dialogue process. Meanwhile, the State Minister of Finance discussed trade, investment, and major infrastructure projects, including Bishoftu Airport, with EU officials. Ethiopia further advanced COP32 preparations and engaged Afreximbank leadership on African economic growth.

Additional bilateral discussions addressed administrative reform, civil service modernization, and joint technical training initiatives. Ethiopian officials highlighted the importance of institutional capacity building to strengthen public sector performance and economic governance. Partner institutions agreed to share technical expertise, support digital transformation projects, and reinforce bilateral regulatory frameworks to improve administrative efficiency and public trust.

The finance minister met with the World Bank's Managing Director for Operations to review Ethiopia's reform progress and future partnership priorities. In parallel, the Ethiopian Parliament approved €124.6 million in concessional loans from Italy and France to support the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda and accelerate digital transformation. The Italian financing provides budget support under the World Bank's Development Policy Operation III, while the French loan will modernize command-and-control and asset management systems, strengthening public administration efficiency.

On July 17, 2026, the African Development Bank approved \$110 million in financing for Ethiopia's first 300-megawatt independent wind power project in the Somali Region. Developed by AMEA Power at a total cost of \$508 million, the Aysha Wind Project is expected to diversify Ethiopia's energy mix, strengthen energy security, generate clean electricity for the national grid, and create employment opportunities.

On July 19, 2026, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission issued a strong warning against false information intended to undermine the forthcoming dialogue sessions. Commission leaders cautioned that disinformation poses a significant threat to public confidence and national stability, urging both media organizations and citizens to rely

exclusively on verified official information in order to safeguard the credibility and integrity of the dialogue process.

Public opposition to renewed conflict also became increasingly visible during the week as demonstrators gathered in Addis Ababa to protest repression and forced recruitment in Tigray, while calling for the full implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement and the preservation of peace. Similarly, the Chairman of the Tigray Democratic Solidarity Party appealed for greater unity among political actors to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement.

2. Sudan

This week witnessed renewed operational fluidity across multiple fronts as the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continued to contest strategically significant territory while reinforcing broader military campaigns. The RSF maintained pressure around El Obeid, tightening its siege through continued drone attacks on critical infrastructure, particularly water facilities, while mobilizing forces that have raised international concerns over the possibility of another large-scale assault comparable to previous offensives in Darfur. The humanitarian situation in the city has deteriorated sharply as attacks on water infrastructure have created a water deficit estimated at around 70 percent, forcing humanitarian organizations and local authorities to rely on emergency water trucking, well drilling, and solar-powered pumping systems to sustain millions of residents and internally displaced people.

Although major territorial changes were limited during the week, military operations remained active across Kordofan and other contested regions. Both parties continued to prioritize the disruption of supply routes, infrastructure, and civilian support systems rather than pursuing decisive territorial breakthroughs, reinforcing the increasingly attritional nature of the conflict.

The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate as attacks on civilian infrastructure became increasingly systematic. The RSF's siege of El Obeid expanded beyond conventional military objectives to include repeated attacks on water infrastructure, severely disrupting access to drinking water for both residents and displaced populations. Local authorities estimate that the city's population has increased from approximately 750,000 before the war to more than 3.4 million due to successive waves of displacement, intensifying pressure on already overstretched humanitarian services. Emergency interventions have partially mitigated the crisis, but officials stress that sustainable recovery remains impossible while attacks on critical infrastructure continue.

Beyond Kordofan, humanitarian concerns remained widespread as international agencies continued warning that attacks on essential civilian infrastructure are increasingly being integrated into military strategy. The cumulative destruction of water systems, health

facilities, and basic services continues to deepen displacement, food insecurity, and protection risks across conflict-affected areas.

International diplomatic engagement intensified this week through multiple parallel initiatives aimed at reviving momentum for a political settlement. The Arab League and the United States agreed to establish a structured framework for regular coordination on Sudan, focusing on securing a ceasefire, protecting civilians, expanding humanitarian access, and supporting an inclusive political process while reaffirming Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This represents one of the clearest efforts in recent months to synchronize regional and international diplomatic initiatives after repeated failures to secure sustainable ceasefires.

Domestically, Sudan's Democratic Bloc reiterated its support for an inclusive Sudanese-led political dialogue involving all political actors without exclusion. The coalition emphasized national unity, institutional preservation, and consensus-building while highlighting ongoing engagement with regional and international partners. Although internal divisions remain within pro-army political coalitions, the renewed emphasis on inclusive dialogue reflects continued attempts to establish a viable post-conflict political framework.

Meanwhile, Sudan continued to intensify its legal campaign against the United Arab Emirates. Justice Minister Abdallah Dirif announced that Khartoum has finalized preparations to pursue additional legal action against the UAE in United States courts and other international jurisdictions. The planned cases cover allegations including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, illegal arms transfers, and mercenary recruitment, with Sudanese authorities claiming to possess documentary evidence linking advanced weapons captured from the RSF to procurement channels involving the UAE.

Sudan's economic outlook deteriorated further as new United States sanctions entered into force following Washington's determination that Khartoum failed to meet statutory requirements under the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act. The measures require the United States to oppose international financial assistance to Sudan, restrict exports of most American goods and technology, and suspend aviation permissions, although humanitarian assistance remains exempt. Sudan rejected the sanctions as politically motivated and reiterated its denial of allegations that chemical weapons had been used during the conflict, insisting that it remains compliant with the Chemical Weapons Convention and has repeatedly requested that the United States provide evidence through established international verification mechanisms.

The sanctions come at a particularly vulnerable moment for Sudan's economy. Annual inflation rose to 51.28 percent in June, driven by continued currency depreciation and rising food prices, while economists warned that reduced access to international financing could further weaken reconstruction prospects and accelerate inflationary pressures.

Despite these pressures, Sudan continued pursuing reconstruction partnerships with external actors. Sudanese officials engaged Chinese solar manufacturer JA Solar to explore cooperation in renewable energy development and post-war infrastructure reconstruction, reflecting Khartoum's growing emphasis on diversifying international partnerships beyond traditional Western financial institutions.

Infrastructure development also advanced through Sudan's signing of a memorandum of understanding with Turkey's Ergaz to construct the country's first dedicated gas terminal at Suakin Port under a Build-Operate-Transfer model. The project aims to strengthen energy security, expand storage capacity, reduce recurring fuel shortages, and improve long-term maritime infrastructure.

Regional dynamics remained heavily influenced by both the war and broader geopolitical considerations. Sudan's Ministry of Agriculture attributed a temporary decline in Nile water levels to reduced discharge from Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), noting that lower inflows disrupted pumping stations supplying drinking water across parts of Khartoum State. While officials characterized the situation as temporary and manageable through reservoir operations, the development highlights the continuing strategic importance of Nile water management even as Sudan remains consumed by internal conflict.

International attention also remained focused on illicit wartime financing. The United Kingdom imposed new sanctions targeting individuals, companies, procurement networks, and mining enterprises linked to both the RSF and SAF, emphasizing Sudan's gold sector as a principal source of conflict financing. British authorities identified illicit gold exports through Dubai and Hong Kong as central components of the war economy and called for greater international efforts to disrupt financial networks sustaining both armed actors.

This week's developments reinforced the multidimensional character of Sudan's conflict. On the battlefield, the continued targeting of essential infrastructure, particularly water systems in El Obeid, demonstrates the increasingly deliberate use of humanitarian deprivation as an operational instrument. Diplomatically, international actors are attempting to consolidate parallel mediation efforts through closer coordination between regional organizations and global partners, although these initiatives remain disconnected from battlefield realities.

Economically, Sudan faces mounting isolation through expanding sanctions while simultaneously seeking alternative reconstruction partnerships with China, Turkey, and other non-Western actors. At the regional level, disputes surrounding Nile water management, continued legal confrontation with the UAE, and growing international efforts to disrupt conflict-financing networks illustrate how Sudan's war continues to reshape regional geopolitical alignments beyond the battlefield itself.

3. Egypt

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty hosted a high-level summit in Cairo bringing together Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, Somali Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali, and senior White House adviser Massad Boulos to coordinate positions on security and stability across the Horn of Africa. The gathering built on a rapidly deepening Cairo-Asmara-Mogadishu alignment that has moved from political rhetoric into operational cooperation over the past year, including an Egyptian-Somali military pact and expanding arms transfers. While official statements framed the talks around regional stability, the underlying purpose is to consolidate a coalition capable of isolating Ethiopia diplomatically across the Horn.

Following a bilateral session on the summit's sidelines, Abdelatty and Osman Saleh issued a joint declaration asserting that Red Sea security and governance belong exclusively to its littoral states, explicitly rejecting any security role for non-bordering parties. Although framed as a general principle, the declaration functions as a direct rebuff to landlocked Ethiopia's ambitions for naval access, reinforcing Cairo's long-standing strategy of denying Addis Ababa any alternative maritime leverage that could offset Egypt's position in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam dispute. The pact deepens an Eritrean-Egyptian security partnership already advancing through joint visits and defense coordination.

Abdelatty also met separately with his Somali counterpart to reaffirm Egyptian support for Mogadishu's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, explicitly rejecting unilateral actions that undermine federal authority. The statement targets Ethiopia's port access agreement with the breakaway region of Somaliland, but it also reflects a more concrete strategic calculation, since Cairo has already signed a military pact with Somalia and supplied arms to bolster its campaign against al-Shabaab. Egypt's rhetorical defense of Somali sovereignty doubles as an instrument for expanding its own security footprint in the Horn at Addis Ababa's expense.

During the same meeting, Abdelatty condemned Somaliland's opening of a self-described diplomatic mission in occupied East Jerusalem, calling it a violation of international law and relevant UN resolutions. Beyond its stated defense of Palestinian and Jerusalem related legal norms, the condemnation serves a second function, denying any diplomatic legitimacy to a secessionist entity whose port deal with Ethiopia threatens Egypt's Red Sea and Nile strategy simultaneously. By framing Somaliland's outreach as unlawful, Cairo reinforces its alliance with Mogadishu while starving Addis Ababa's maritime ambitions of the international recognition they would need to endure.

Separately, Abdelatty pressed Somali federal authorities to intensify efforts securing the release of eight Egyptian sailors among the twenty-two-member crew held by suspected pirates aboard the Togolese-flagged tanker MT Eureka off the Puntland coast since early

May, with negotiators reportedly stalled over a ransom demand that has fluctuated sharply during months of talks. Beyond the immediate humanitarian concern, the crisis gives Cairo a practical opening to deepen operational coordination with Somali federal and Puntland security services, extending its counter-piracy footprint along a corridor increasingly vital to shipping rerouted away from the Red Sea's more contested waters.

On the Nile file, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Hani Sewilam warned that Ethiopia's unilateral operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam forces continuous, costly recalibration of Egypt's own downstream infrastructure, insisting the Aswan High Dam remains the cornerstone of national water security absent any binding data-sharing arrangement with Addis Ababa. The statement is less a technical bulletin than a domestic and diplomatic signal, reinforcing the narrative that Ethiopia's dam operations pose an unmanaged risk and justifying continued Egyptian investment in both infrastructure adaptation and the broader coalition-building effort playing out simultaneously in Cairo's Horn of Africa diplomacy.

Abdelatty also held separate strategic talks with Boulos focused on Sudan, Libya, and Nile water security, calling for a sustainable ceasefire in Sudan that preserves the country's national institutions and sovereignty. Raising Nile security in the same conversation as Sudan and Libya reflects a deliberate Egyptian strategy of anchoring its water dispute with Ethiopia inside Washington's broader regional security dialogue, seeking American attention and potential leverage that Cairo has been unable to secure through bilateral negotiation or African Union mediation alone, particularly as US engagement across Sudan and the Horn continues to expand.

Egypt's development diplomacy in the Nile Basin advanced further when South Sudanese officials inaugurated an Egyptian funded groundwater station at Juba University, intended to strengthen bilateral relations and technical cooperation with an upstream Nile state. Such projects extend well beyond goodwill, functioning as part of a deliberate Egyptian strategy to cultivate upstream allies within the Nile Basin Initiative framework and dilute the coalition of riparian states that have historically supported Ethiopia's position on dam operations, positioning Cairo as an indispensable technical partner even as its confrontation with Addis Ababa over the dam remains unresolved.

That water security narrative gained further scientific weight from research warning that the Aswan High Dam, while shielding Egypt from flooding, has trapped sediment historically carried downstream from Ethiopian highlands within Lake Nasser. The resulting nutrient loss has accelerated land subsidence and shoreline erosion across the Nile Delta, leaving it increasingly vulnerable to Mediterranean coastal currents. The findings complicate Cairo's public messaging, since they highlight structural vulnerabilities originating from Egypt's own infrastructure choices rather than solely from

Ethiopian dam operations, even as officials continue to frame the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as the primary threat to national water security.

On the Gulf, Egypt's Foreign Ministry issued a strong condemnation of Iranian missile and drone strikes targeting Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, describing the attacks on civilian facilities as flagrant violations of Arab sovereignty and a dangerous escalation threatening regional stability. The statement positions Cairo firmly alongside its Gulf partners at a moment of intensifying confrontation between Washington and Tehran, reflecting Egypt's dependence on Gulf financial support and its long-standing role as a diplomatic anchor for Arab state solidarity whenever conflicts spill beyond Iran's immediate borders into the wider Gulf security architecture.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi reinforced that position directly, reaffirming Cairo's commitment to the security and stability of its Gulf allies and declaring full Egyptian solidarity with Gulf Arab nations as US strikes on Iran and the renewed Hormuz naval blockade generate severe regional friction. The statement underscores how tightly Egypt's foreign policy calculus remains bound to Gulf stability, given the scale of Gulf investment and remittance flows underpinning Egypt's own strained economy, making solidarity with Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Manama as much an economic imperative as a diplomatic one.

Egyptian economic diplomacy also advanced in East Africa, where seven Egyptian investors signed memoranda of understanding to secure industrial land at the Elsewedy Industrial City in Tanzania during the Egyptian-Tanzanian Business and Investment Forum, attended by President Sisi and Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan. The agreements extend Egypt's commercial footprint across East Africa at the same moment Cairo is courting upstream Nile states diplomatically, reinforcing a pattern in which Egyptian investment and development assistance serve as complementary tools alongside formal diplomacy in building influence across a region increasingly contested with Ethiopia.

On a separate bilateral track, the chairman of Egypt's General Authority for Healthcare, Ahmed el-Sobky, met with Serbian Ambassador Miroslav Sestovic to outline a roadmap for medical technology cooperation, with an upcoming memorandum of understanding focused on digital health, artificial intelligence driven medical services, and pharmaceutical distribution. The engagement reflects Egypt's continued effort to diversify its international partnerships beyond its immediate regional neighborhood, positioning Cairo as a hub for medical technology cooperation with European partners even as its diplomatic bandwidth remains heavily consumed by Nile, Gulf, and Horn of Africa priorities.

Closer to home, the entry of humanitarian aid and petroleum products into Gaza resumed through the Karm Abu Salem crossing under coordination by the Egyptian Red Crescent,

with the two hundred thirty seventh aid convoy carrying meat, flour, and medical supplies departing North Sinai supported by more than sixty-five thousand volunteers along the border. The resumption underscores Egypt's continued role as the principal logistical conduit for Gaza's humanitarian relief, a position that reinforces Cairo's regional diplomatic standing even as the broader ceasefire it helped negotiate remains fragile and frequently violated.

4. Eritrea

On 19 July, Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh met in Cairo with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty to discuss bilateral relations, developments in the Horn of Africa, and coordination on regional issues, before holding separate talks with U.S. Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs Massad Boulos on Eritrea-U.S. relations and wider regional developments. While the Eritrean statement emphasized strengthening strategic ties and reiterated the official position that “Red Sea security” should remain the exclusive “responsibility of littoral states”, the meetings are more significant for what they reveal about evolving regional alignments. The continued intensification of Egyptian-Eritrean engagement, alongside Cairo's parallel diplomacy with Somalia, reflects Egypt's broader strategy of consolidating a strategic partnership with Eritrea and Somalia as a counterweight to Ethiopia, particularly over Red Sea dynamics and Addis Ababa's maritime ambitions. More notably, Osman Saleh's meeting with Boulos represents another step in the gradual re-engagement between Eritrea and the United States; although significant structural obstacles continue to limit the prospects for a full rapprochement, the engagement suggests that Egyptian diplomatic lobbying has remained an important driver of renewed U.S.-Eritrea contacts.

On 17 July, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan visited Asmara for talks with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, marking the latest in a series of high-level exchanges as military cooperation between the two sides deepens. The visit followed the SAF's recapture of the strategic town of Kurmuk and underscored Eritrea's continued role as a security partner through support to SAF-aligned forces and its broader influence in eastern Sudan. Beyond the battlefield, the meeting reflects the growing strategic convergence between Asmara and Port Sudan, driven in part by their shared alignment with Egypt and common opposition to Ethiopia's regional ambitions. While the strengthening partnership has enhanced Eritrea's regional leverage, particularly along Ethiopia's western frontier, any renewed momentum toward a Sudan ceasefire could reduce Asmara's influence by weakening the strategic rationale underpinning its expanding involvement in the conflict.

On 6–7 July, UNESCO, in partnership with Eritrea's Commission for Culture and Sports and with funding from Japan, held a workshop in Asmara to strengthen Eritrea's capacity to implement the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural

Heritage and prepare UNESCO nomination dossiers. The initiative reflects Eritrea's gradual expansion of technical engagement with multilateral institutions, with Japan continuing to emerge as a key partner facilitating the country's international re-engagement through development and cultural cooperation.

According to Martin Plaut, Eritrea's honorary consul in Switzerland, Toni Locher, has proposed offering Eritrean asylum seekers financial incentives of up to CHF 15,000 to encourage voluntary return, with the funds intended to support business creation through Eritrea's Development Bank. The proposal forms part of a broader argument for tightening Switzerland's approach to Eritrean asylum seekers and reducing future arrivals. As the proposal comes from an honorary consul closely aligned with the Eritrean regime, it should be viewed as an advocacy position rather than an indication of Swiss government policy.

5. Djibouti

On 17 July, Djibouti and the European Union signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) establishing the legal framework for the deployment and operations of the EU's EUNAVFOR ASPIDES mission from Djiboutian territory, during EU High Representative Kaja Kallas' visit to Djibouti. The agreement reflects Europe's growing strategic investment in Djibouti as Red Sea maritime security has become increasingly critical amid persistent Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and heightened regional tensions following the Iran conflict. With the Bab el-Mandeb remaining a vital chokepoint for European trade and the Houthis threatening to further disrupt maritime traffic, the EU is seeking to deepen security cooperation with Djibouti to strengthen its operational presence and safeguard freedom of navigation along one of its most important commercial corridors.

On 17 July, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported that more than 256,000 people, approximately a quarter of Djibouti's population, are expected to face crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in the coming months, driven by worsening climatic conditions, inflation, and disruptions to regional trade. The assessment underscores Djibouti's vulnerability to instability around the Bab el-Mandeb, where persistent Houthi attacks and broader geopolitical tensions have increased import costs for a country heavily dependent on external food supplies. The findings also highlight how Red Sea insecurity is generating humanitarian consequences beyond Yemen, reinforcing the strategic importance of maintaining secure maritime trade routes for states across the Horn of Africa.

On the 16th, Djibouti announced the death of Defence Minister Hassan Omar Mohamed, who passed away while receiving medical treatment in France after serving in the post since 2019. A longstanding figure within Djibouti's political establishment, Hassan oversaw a period of expanding defence cooperation with regional and international

partners as the country's strategic importance grew amid heightened Red Sea security challenges. His death creates a vacancy in one of Djibouti's most consequential ministries at a time of intensified external military engagement and evolving regional security dynamics, making his successor's appointment significant for the continuity of the country's defence partnerships.

On 15 July, the African Development Bank (AfDB) announced a US\$10.75 million Trade Finance Transaction Guarantee Facility for Djibouti's Intercontinental Investment Bank East Africa to expand trade finance for small and medium-sized enterprises and women-owned businesses. The facility is intended to support imports of equipment for renewable energy, manufacturing and telecommunications, while improving access to hard-currency financing for the private sector. The agreement reflects continued multilateral investment in Djibouti's role as a regional commercial hub, with development partners seeking to strengthen economic resilience and trade capacity despite growing geopolitical and maritime security risks in the Red Sea.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political transition continued to face mounting pressure as debates over the country's postponed elections intensified. Public discourse increasingly shifted from whether elections should be held to whether meaningful democratic competition is possible under the current political framework. Analysts argued that the central obstacle is not merely the repeated postponement of elections but the absence of the institutional reforms envisioned under the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Continued delays in completing the constitution-making process, security sector unification, and electoral preparations have reinforced concerns that elections without these prerequisites could deepen rather than resolve the country's political crisis.

The National Elections Commission acknowledged that preparations remain constrained by significant financial shortages, logistical challenges, and the continued deterioration of the security environment. Officials stressed that voter registration, civic education, electoral infrastructure, and deployment of electoral personnel cannot proceed effectively without additional funding and improved stability across the country. These constraints continue to cast uncertainty over the government's commitment to the planned electoral timetable and have reinforced concerns among regional and international observers regarding the credibility of any future vote.

Political engagement at the regional level nevertheless continued. A high-level delegation from Kenya's United Democratic Alliance visited Juba for discussions with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), focusing on strengthening inter-party cooperation, governance, and regional political collaboration. The visit reflected continued efforts by regional political actors to maintain engagement with South Sudan despite persistent domestic instability.

The unresolved status of Abyei re-emerged as a significant source of tension between Sudan and South Sudan following disagreements over participation in South Sudan's planned elections. Sudan objected to the inclusion of Abyei residents in the electoral process, arguing that the territory's final status remains unresolved under previous bilateral agreements.

Juba rejected these objections, defending the inclusion of Abyei voters and maintaining that residents should exercise their political rights despite the territory's disputed status. South Sudanese officials argued that excluding Abyei would deny representation to communities that have long identified politically with South Sudan.

The dispute also generated local protests after residents reported being prevented from participating in electoral processes because of Sudan's objections. The controversy highlights how unresolved territorial disputes continue to intersect with South Sudan's internal political transition, carrying implications for bilateral relations and future negotiations over Abyei's final status.

Economic challenges remained pronounced as fuel shortages and rising transportation costs continued to affect domestic markets. The government announced the arrival of approximately 200 fuel trucks destined for South Sudan in an effort to stabilize fuel supplies and reduce soaring pump prices. Authorities expressed hope that increased imports would alleviate supply constraints that have disrupted transportation, commerce, and humanitarian operations in recent weeks.

At the same time, development cooperation with Egypt expanded through the inauguration of the Egyptian-funded SOMBA groundwater station at the University of Juba. The project is intended to strengthen access to clean water while enhancing scientific research and technical cooperation between the two countries. The initiative reflects Cairo's continued investment in South Sudan's infrastructure and development sectors as part of broader bilateral engagement.

Domestic governance also attracted renewed attention following the implementation of South Sudan's controversial Cybercrime Act. Authorities have begun enforcing the legislation, prompting concern among journalists, civil society organizations, and human rights advocates who argue that several provisions could be used to restrict freedom of expression and limit online criticism of public officials. Critics contend that broad legal definitions and expanded enforcement powers risk narrowing civic space at a time when political openness remains essential for a credible transition toward elections.

This week's developments underscore the widening gap between South Sudan's formal electoral timetable and the institutional conditions required for a credible democratic transition. Financial constraints, unresolved security reforms, and incomplete implementation of the peace agreement continue to undermine preparations for elections,

while renewed disputes over Abyei demonstrate how unresolved sovereignty questions remain intertwined with domestic politics. Although regional diplomatic engagement and development partnerships continue to provide limited sources of support, South Sudan's political trajectory remains defined by fragile institutions, economic vulnerability, and persistent uncertainty over whether the transition can move beyond repeated postponements toward a genuinely inclusive constitutional and electoral process.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

In a development concerning opposition unity, former foreign minister Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud disclosed that former president Mohamed Farmajo was denied entry into the country's main opposition coalition, the Somali future council. According to Mohamud certain members of the coalition threatened to withdraw their participation if Farmajo was admitted scoring divisions within the political opposition to President Hassan sheikh Mohamud's administration. Farmajo has consequently maintained a separate opposition bloc that recently participated in internationally mediated talks with the federal government highlighting the nature of political opposition in the country.

Despite underlying tensions, diplomatic engagement between the federal government and opposition factions continued to show signs of progress. Foreign minister Abdisalan Abdi Ali Dhay reported on July 15 that the country's internationally mediated political negotiations were gaining momentum with prospects for a breakthrough appearing increasingly plausible. The minister's remarks suggested that ongoing dialogue mechanisms were yielding constructive outcomes even as deep-seated differences remained on fundamental governance issues.

Security forces in the southwest state experienced a disruption on July 16 when heavy fighting erupted in Baidoa, the regional capital. The clashes occurred between forces loyal to ousted former southwest leader Laftagaren and Somali national army positions resulting in sustained exchanges of heavy weaponry throughout the night. The incident scored the challenges of maintaining stability and command coherence across federal and regional security forces particularly in areas where political rivalries intersect with military loyalties.

The Somali national army operating with support from international partners conducted a series of counterterrorism operations targeting al-Shabaab positions in the Hiraan region of central Somalia. On July 14, the Somali ministry of defence reported that airstrikes in the region had killed 42 al-Shabaab militants, injured an additional 12 and resulted in the destruction of a military vehicle along with multiple defensive positions held by the militant group.

In a follow up operation on July 18, Somali armed forces conducted additional airstrike targeting al-Shabaab hideouts in the Suullaay area of Hiraan approximately 17 kilo meters south of Teedaan where the militant group had reportedly established a base. This operation resulted in the deaths of 25 al-Shabaab fighters with 18 others wounded in the strike. Significantly, four suspected members of the group surrendered to government forces following the operation. The ministry of defence confirmed that the airstrike was carried out by the Somali national army in coordination with international partners and that weapons and equipment were recovered from the targeted positions.

On July 13, the United States Africa command conducted a separate airstrike targeting al-Shabaab militants in the vicinity of Sablaale approximately 190 kilo meters southwest of Mogadishu. The operation conducted in coordination with the federal government of Somalia formed part of ongoing international efforts to degrade al-Shabaab's operational capabilities in southern Somalia.

Foreign minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali engaged in a series of high level international meetings. On July 19 the minister met in Cairo with Massad Boulos, senior adviser to us President Donald trump on Arab and African affairs. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations between Somalia and the United States with both sides reaffirming support for Somalia's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. The meeting also reviewed ways to deepen cooperation on counterterrorism and security.

The United States commended Somalia's federal government on July 19 for continued law enforcement cooperation following Mogadishu's extradition of Somali American Abdikerm Eidle, an alleged ringleader in the 250 million dollars feeding our future fraud scheme in Minnesota. Eidle, who was accused of helping orchestrate one of the largest pandemic relief fraud schemes in Minnesota history, was extradited on July 17 to face charges in the United States. The extradition was praised by Washington as an example of Somalia's commitment to governance, anticorruption and accountability.

Domestically, the third Somalia development forum convened in Mogadishu on July 15 at the Jazeera hotel organized by the heritage institute for policy studies and city University of Mogadishu. The forum held under the theme "Somalia at a critical juncture: strengthening stability, unity and development," brought together policymakers, academics, development partners, and experts to discuss national priorities. foreign minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali delivered the opening keynote address, emphasizing the importance of stronger institutions, national ownership, resilience, constructive international partnerships, peace, unity, sovereignty, sustainable development, and inclusive dialogue.

In maritime and economic diplomacy, Somalia signed a tax free fish export agreement with china on July 14, opening the Chinese market to Somali seafood. The agreement allows Somali businesspeople to export the country's fish products to China without

customs duties, representing a significant economic opportunity for the fisheries sector and broader economic diversification efforts.

The horn of Africa intensified diplomatic engagement with Egypt at the center of regional security discussions. Egyptian foreign minister Badr Abdelatty held separate talks on July 19 with his Eritrean counterpart Osman Saleh on enhancing the partnership and with Somali foreign minister Abdulsalam Abdi Ali focusing on strengthening bilateral relations. Both discussions also touched on coordinating positions and addressing the latest developments in the horn of Africa. The discussions followed Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki's July 17 meeting with general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in Asmara where the two leaders discussed bilateral ties and regional and international issues.

Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia have each endorsed the position that the security and management of the red sea remain the exclusive responsibility of its littoral states reflecting an emphasis on the role of red sea coastal countries in determining the future of the waterway. Egypt's recent signing of a memorandum of understanding with Somalia on maritime transport and ports cooperation coming weeks after a similar agreement with Eritrea, further cemented the axis of coordination among red sea.

The regional security environment was also affected by a suspected maritime piracy incident on July 17 when pirates hijacked the Tanzanian flagged chemical and general tanker MT asana in the Gulf of Aden approximately 65 nautical miles south of al Mukalla, Yemen. The vessel which was en route toward the Somali port of Bosaso in Puntland was moved toward waters off Somalia's northeastern Bari region near caluula. This marked the second such hijacking in three months raising concerns about renewed piracy activity in the Gulf of Aden. A South Korean warship was reported to be in the vicinity and Puntland security officials were involved in tracking and response efforts.

Separately, Somalia's efforts to arrange an official visit by President Hassan sheikh Mohamud to Uganda during his recent regional diplomatic tour reportedly stalled amid indications of a rift with Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni. The inability to secure the visit suggested underlying tensions in bilateral relations though specific details regarding the nature of the disagreement were not immediately available.

Somaliland

The Somaliland house of elders known as the Guurti underwent a leadership transition on July 12 when the legislative body elected a new speaker following the resignation of the previous officeholder. This development represented a key institutional adjustment within Somaliland's hybrid political system where traditional clan elders and modern governance structures intersect. The upper house plays a crucial role in Somaliland's politics particularly in matters of constitutional significance, conflict resolution, and the mediation of political disputes.

The period witnessed intensive engagement between Somaliland authorities and the United Kingdom reflecting the depth of bilateral ties that Hargeisa maintains with London. On July 14, Somaliland president Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Irro received United Kingdom ambassador to Somalia Charles King at the presidential palace in Hargeisa for high level discussions covering a comprehensive range of cooperation areas. The meeting addressed strengthening ties in development cooperation, security sector collaboration, democratic governance support and economic infrastructure development, institution building initiatives, water resource management, climate adaptation strategies, energy sector development, education reform, healthcare improvement, trade facilitation, and investment promotion.

During the discussions, president Irro urged greater United Kingdom support for Somaliland's international recognition, a priority for the Hargeisa administration that has sought to formalize its self-declared independence through bilateral diplomatic engagement. Ambassador King, for his part, praised Somaliland's stability and democratic progress acknowledging the region's relative peace and the functioning of its electoral processes compared to other parts of the horn of Africa. These discussions followed broader UK engagement with Somaliland authorities as reports throughout the period of July 14-15 confirmed continued dialogue on strengthening bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.

Complementing the presidential level engagement, Somaliland's minister of internal security, Abdalle Mohamed Arab met with a high level United Kingdom delegation in Hargeisa on July 13-14. The delegation included officials from the United Kingdom office in Hargeisa, embassy staff from the British embassy in Mogadishu and a representative from the United Kingdom ministry of defence. The discussions focused comprehensively on strengthening security cooperation between Somaliland and the United Kingdom, with particular attention to counterterrorism efforts, the modernization of security agencies, intelligence sharing mechanisms and the enhancement of the Somaliland national operations command center for improved coordination and emergency response capabilities.

In a separate diplomatic engagement, a delegation from Somaliland's ministry of health development, led by director general Dr. Ahmed Mahmoud Jama conducted official working visits and meetings in Taiwan with senior officials at Taiwan's ministry of health. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the health sector with particular emphasis on healthcare reforms, technical collaboration, capacity building, and the exchange of expertise between Taiwanese and Somaliland health professionals.

8. Yemen

According to Reuters, citing senior Iranian and regional sources, Iran has instructed the Houthis to prepare to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait if the United States targets Iranian power infrastructure, with the group reportedly positioning missiles and drones near the strategic waterway while awaiting authorization. If implemented, such a move would severely disrupt global energy markets by threatening the principal alternative export route following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, significantly escalating the regional confrontation. Although the claims have not been publicly confirmed by either Tehran or the Houthis, the reported coordination underscores Iran's continued use of allied non-state actors to expand strategic pressure beyond its own territory and highlights the growing vulnerability of Red Sea maritime security.

On 13 July, the UN Security Council convened an emergency meeting at Yemen's request to discuss unauthorized Iranian flights to Sanaa International Airport, with UN officials warning that Yemen must not be drawn further into escalating regional tensions. While the United States, United Kingdom, France and several regional states argued that the flights may have violated Yemen's sovereignty and potentially breached UN sanctions, Russia maintained that the 3 July flight served a humanitarian purpose and acknowledged it should have received authorization from Yemen's internationally recognized government. The meeting underscored widening international concern that the dispute over access to Sanaa Airport is becoming another flashpoint in the broader Iran-Yemen confrontation, with UN officials urging de-escalation and renewed commitment to a Yemeni-led political process.

Between 13 and 20 July, tensions between the Houthis and the internationally recognized Yemeni government escalated after the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) said it had struck the runway at Sanaa International Airport to prevent an Iranian aircraft from landing without the required authorization, arguing that the flight had bypassed official government procedures. The Houthis accused Saudi Arabia of carrying out the airstrike and responded by launching ballistic missiles and drones toward Abha International Airport in southern Saudi Arabia, all of which Riyadh said were intercepted by its air defenses. In the days that followed, Saudi Arabia reported intercepting additional Houthi missiles and drones targeting its southern regions, while localized clashes continued between Houthi and government forces, particularly along the Al Hudaydah front.

On 19 July, the PLC reiterated its position by announcing that it had again prevented an Iranian aircraft from reaching Sanaa, with Transport Minister Mohsen Al-Amri stating that no flights would be permitted without authorization from the internationally recognized government. The confrontation represents the most serious cross-border escalation since the 2022 truce and illustrates how Yemen's conflict is becoming increasingly intertwined with the broader Iran-led regional confrontation. By asserting

control over access to Sanaa Airport, the PLC is attempting to constrain Iranian support to the Houthis and reinforce its claim to sovereign authority, while the Houthis continue to demonstrate both the capability and willingness to threaten Saudi territory in response.

On 17 July, armed assailants hijacked the oil tanker ASANA off Yemen's Hadramout coast, with the Yemeni Coast Guard stating that the vessel was heading toward Somalia as naval units and surveillance aircraft monitored its movement. The incident, which coincided with a UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) advisory on a vessel boarded by unauthorized personnel in the Gulf of Aden, highlights the increasingly complex maritime security environment, where piracy risks are re-emerging alongside ongoing instability linked to the Yemen conflict.

9. Kenya

During the past week, Kenya continued to reinforce its position as one of East Africa's most influential regional powers while addressing domestic economic challenges and strengthening its security policies. The country's geopolitical agenda was largely shaped by efforts to promote economic stability, enhance maritime security, and maintain regional peace amid ongoing security threats in the Horn of Africa.

One of the most significant developments during the week was the Kenyan government's decision to extend the reduced value-added tax (VAT) on petroleum products for an additional three months. This measure was introduced to protect consumers and businesses from rising global fuel prices and inflationary pressures. By easing the tax burden on fuel, the government aims to support economic growth while minimizing the impact of international market volatility on households and industries. The decision also reflects Kenya's awareness of how global geopolitical tensions continue to influence domestic economic conditions.

In the field of security, Kenya made notable progress in strengthening its maritime governance. Government officials, together with international partners, advanced the development of Kenya's National Maritime Security Strategy. The strategy seeks to improve the country's ability to combat piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, and other transnational maritime crimes in the Western Indian Ocean. As one of the region's leading maritime states, Kenya views secure sea routes as essential for protecting trade, safeguarding national interests, and supporting the growth of its blue economy.

Regional security also remained a major priority. Kenya continues to face security challenges along its northeastern border with Somalia due to the persistent threat posed by the militant group Al-Shabaab. The government maintained close cooperation with regional and international partners to strengthen border security and counterterrorism efforts. These security concerns continue to influence Kenya's foreign and defense policies, highlighting its important role in promoting stability within the Horn of Africa.

At the domestic level, governance and human rights issues also attracted international attention. Allegations of violence during security operations at a major agricultural estate prompted renewed calls from human rights organizations and political leaders for transparent investigations and greater accountability. These developments demonstrate that, alongside its growing regional influence, Kenya continues to face internal governance challenges that may affect its international reputation.

Overall, Kenya's geopolitical position during the past week was characterized by efforts to balance domestic economic management with regional leadership. Through policies aimed at stabilizing the economy, strengthening maritime security, and addressing regional security threats, Kenya continues to play a central role in East African affairs. However, ongoing governance and human rights concerns underscore the importance of maintaining democratic accountability as the country seeks to expand its influence both regionally and internationally.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Throughout the third week of July 2026, Saudi Arabia's political and security environment was dominated by renewed escalation with Yemen's Houthi movement, intensifying regional tensions involving Iran, and sustained diplomatic efforts to prevent a broader regional conflict. Following Houthi missile and drone attacks targeting Abha International Airport, Riyadh reinforced the security of its southern border while the Saudi-led Coalition continued operations in Yemen. At the same time, growing instability in the Strait of Hormuz placed significant pressure on Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure, prompting Saudi Aramco to maximize crude exports through the East-West Pipeline to the Red Sea in order to safeguard oil supplies amid disruptions to Gulf shipping. Saudi Arabia also intensified its criticism of Iranian actions, condemning threats to maritime navigation and violations of neighboring Gulf states' sovereignty while reaffirming its commitment to protecting regional security and international energy markets. Despite continued Houthi threats against Saudi infrastructure, Riyadh simultaneously pursued discreet mediation efforts aimed at preserving the fragile ceasefire and preventing further escalation.

Diplomatically, Saudi Arabia expanded coordination with both regional and international partners to address the evolving security environment. High-level consultations with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Oman, and other Gulf states focused on coordinating responses to regional instability, strengthening counterterrorism cooperation, and protecting maritime security in the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz. Saudi Arabia also welcomed regional initiatives aimed at facilitating humanitarian access to Yemen, including support for renewed civilian flights between Amman and Sana'a as part of wider peace efforts. Bilateral engagement with Canada continued through discussions on expanding defense

cooperation, while Saudi participation in international maritime forums further reflected Riyadh's growing emphasis on strengthening global maritime governance, enhancing shipping security, and reinforcing its position as an international logistics hub.

Strategically, the Kingdom continued advancing its long-term international partnerships alongside its regional diplomacy. Reports indicating progress toward a civilian nuclear cooperation framework with the United States underscored Saudi Arabia's ambition to diversify its energy portfolio while preserving strategic balance amid growing regional competition. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia maintained active diplomatic engagement to contain the wider consequences of the U.S.-Iran confrontation, balancing military preparedness with sustained political dialogue. Humanitarian cooperation also remained evident through continued coordination with Ethiopia regarding legal amnesties granted to Ethiopian nationals residing in the Kingdom. Collectively, these developments illustrated Saudi Arabia's evolving foreign policy, which combines regional crisis management, diversified strategic partnerships, energy security, and proactive diplomacy to strengthen its leadership role across the Middle East and the Red Sea.

UAE

During the third week of July 2026, the United Arab Emirates faced one of its most challenging regional security environments as escalating tensions between the United States and Iran increasingly affected Gulf maritime and airspace security. Iranian missile strikes targeting Emirati commercial vessels and disruptions across the Strait of Hormuz heightened concerns over regional energy security and commercial shipping. Although domestic security remained stable, authorities maintained a heightened state of readiness while reinforcing public confidence through continuous monitoring and emergency preparedness. The deterioration of the regional security environment also disrupted international aviation, prompting airlines to reroute or suspend flights through Gulf airspace while Emirati carriers adjusted operations to preserve international connectivity.

On the diplomatic front, Abu Dhabi intensified efforts to contain the regional crisis through active engagement with both regional and global partners. The UAE consistently called for restraint, dialogue, and the protection of civilian infrastructure while emphasizing the importance of preserving freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. High-level consultations with Russia and Jordan focused on restoring regional stability, strengthening maritime security, and coordinating responses to the growing crisis. The UAE also condemned attacks targeting neighboring Gulf states, reaffirming its solidarity with Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan while advocating adherence to international law and the protection of regional sovereignty.

Alongside its diplomatic initiatives, the UAE continued strengthening its strategic international partnerships despite the volatile regional environment. The country maintained close cooperation with Western partners while adapting its transportation and

logistics networks to mitigate the impact of regional disruptions on global trade. Emirati authorities emphasized that critical infrastructure, borders, and domestic institutions remained fully operational despite heightened external threats. Together, these developments reflected Abu Dhabi's broader strategy of combining robust national security, active diplomacy, and economic resilience to preserve regional stability while reinforcing its position as a leading political and commercial hub in the Gulf.

Qatar

Throughout the third week of July 2026, Qatar experienced one of the most significant security challenges in recent years as escalating regional tensions directly affected its territory. Iranian missile and drone attacks prompted the activation of national emergency protocols, with Qatari air defense systems successfully intercepting incoming threats while authorities issued emergency alerts instructing residents to remain indoors. Although falling debris caused limited civilian injuries, the government quickly restored public confidence by confirming that the immediate security threat had subsided and that national infrastructure, including Hamad International Airport, remained fully operational. These events temporarily shifted Qatar from its traditional role as a regional mediator toward prioritizing domestic security and national defense.

Diplomatically, Qatar adopted a firm but balanced position throughout the crisis. Doha formally condemned violations of its sovereignty, held Iran accountable for attacks on its territory, and reaffirmed its right to self-defense under international law. At the same time, Qatari leaders remained actively engaged in regional diplomacy through intensive consultations with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and South Sudan. These engagements focused on preventing further military escalation, preserving freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, and supporting diplomatic mechanisms capable of restoring regional stability. Qatar also maintained its participation in international peace initiatives beyond the Gulf, including continued engagement in mediation efforts related to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

Despite heightened regional tensions, Qatar continued to demonstrate its commitment to diplomacy and regional stability. While temporarily suspending direct communication with Tehran following attacks on Gulf infrastructure, Doha simultaneously worked with neighboring states to encourage de-escalation and preserve the broader U.S.-Iran diplomatic framework. The government also reaffirmed that foreign military facilities on Qatari territory would not be used for offensive operations against Iran, reinforcing its long-standing policy of balancing strategic partnerships with diplomatic neutrality. Collectively, these developments highlighted Qatar's ability to manage immediate security threats while preserving its role as an important diplomatic actor and mediator within the Gulf and the wider Middle East.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Throughout the third week of July 2026, Mali experienced a difficult security environment marked by intensified insurgent operations, mounting political pressure on the military government, and continued efforts to strengthen both international partnerships and economic resilience. Armed groups affiliated with Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) expanded their operational reach by attacking military convoys in central Mali while maintaining an economic blockade along major transport corridors linking the country with Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. The disruption of fuel and commercial supply routes significantly affected domestic trade and forced the Malian Armed Forces and Russia's Africa Corps to divert substantial resources toward convoy protection rather than offensive operations, illustrating the increasingly economic dimension of the insurgency.

The security situation deteriorated further following a large-scale ambush against a joint Malian and Africa Corps convoy near Tabankort in northern Mali. The coordinated attack by the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) and JNIM inflicted heavy casualties and represented one of the most serious setbacks for the military in recent months. Government forces responded with precision air and drone strikes targeting insurgent logistical infrastructure around Anefis, seeking to restore operational momentum and secure strategic transport routes. Nevertheless, the circulation of images showing captured government personnel intensified domestic criticism of the military leadership and renewed debate over the junta's ability to stabilize northern Mali following the collapse of the 2015 peace framework.

Diplomatically, Mali continued pursuing a diversified foreign policy while consolidating recent regional gains. The visit of senior U.S. diplomat Frank Garcia reflected Washington's renewed interest in maintaining engagement across the Sahel despite Mali's growing cooperation with Russia. At the same time, discussions at the United Nations highlighted the normalization of relations between Mali and Algeria through the restoration of ambassadors and the reopening of shared airspace, easing regional diplomatic tensions. Economically, the government continued advancing its strategy of strengthening state influence over the mining sector as new investment moved forward in southern Mali's gold industry, reinforcing the junta's broader objective of preserving mining revenues while navigating an increasingly challenging security environment.

Central African Republic (CAR)

During the second half of July 2026, the Central African Republic continued to focus on consolidating state authority, strengthening national security institutions, and managing the persistent spillover effects of regional instability. A significant milestone was reached

as the government, in coordination with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), completed the transfer of several UN operational bases to the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), reflecting the gradual transition of security responsibilities to national authorities. This process coincided with renewed calls for national mobilization to support state security forces and safeguard peace against the continued activities of armed groups. Despite improvements in parts of the country, humanitarian conditions remained challenging, particularly in the eastern border regions where insecurity linked to the Sudan conflict continued to hinder the return of displaced populations. Humanitarian assessments also indicated that although hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons had returned to their communities, substantial displacement persisted around strategic border areas such as Am-Dafock, where security conditions remained fragile despite intensified patrols and humanitarian operations.

Diplomatically, Bangui devoted considerable attention to preparations for upcoming United Nations Security Council deliberations concerning the renewal of the country's sanctions regime. The government continued advocating for the relaxation of existing restrictions, arguing that recent security gains justified greater national control over defense capabilities, while several international partners maintained that sanctions oversight remained necessary because of persistent cross-border arms trafficking and regional instability. At the same time, discussions continued regarding the country's evolving security partnerships and the broader geopolitical competition surrounding external actors operating in the CAR. Alongside these diplomatic developments, authorities expanded reconstruction efforts in relatively stabilized areas such as Bria, strengthened monitoring against disinformation campaigns intended to undermine public confidence, and explored the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to improve early-warning systems, monitor transhumance-related conflicts, and enhance the country's capacity to detect emerging security threats before they escalate into wider violence.

Niger

During the second half of July 2026, Niger continued to consolidate its regional realignment through deeper engagement with the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) while broadening diplomatic outreach beyond its traditional partners. Relations with neighboring countries showed signs of gradual improvement as diplomatic contacts between Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria contributed to easing regional tensions. The reopening of the Kamba border crossing with Nigeria restored one of the country's most important commercial corridors, facilitating trade and strengthening economic cooperation across West Africa. Niger also advanced institutional integration within the AES after President Abdourahamane Tiani enrolled for the bloc's new biometric passport, reinforcing efforts to harmonize regional mobility and security

policies among Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Beyond the region, Niamey expanded its diplomatic diversification through bilateral discussions with Oman focused on strengthening economic cooperation, attracting investment, and broadening international partnerships.

Security conditions, however, remained highly fragile as jihadist violence continued to threaten western Niger. A major terrorist attack against the Defense and Security Forces in the Tillabéri region resulted in significant military casualties, underscoring the persistent operational capabilities of armed groups active along the Mali–Burkina Faso–Niger tri-border area. Although Nigerien forces launched immediate counteroffensives supported by air assets and inflicted losses on the attackers, military operations continued throughout the week to contain threats posed by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP). These developments highlighted that while Niger continues strengthening regional integration and diversifying its diplomatic partnerships, counterterrorism operations remain central to the country's political and security priorities.

DRC

During the second half of July 2026, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to leverage its presidency of the United Nations Security Council to strengthen its international diplomatic profile while simultaneously confronting escalating security and humanitarian challenges in the eastern provinces. Kinshasa used its leadership position at the Security Council to advance international discussions on regulating conflict minerals and limiting the exploitation of natural resources that finance armed groups. The government also intensified its international justice campaign through the establishment of a new advisory council composed of prominent international legal experts to support investigations into war crimes and pursue legal accountability. Diplomatically, the DRC and Rwanda concluded another round of internationally mediated peace negotiations under the Washington Accords and the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism, reaffirming commitments to strengthen ceasefire implementation, address cross-border security concerns, and accelerate efforts to neutralize armed groups operating in eastern Congo. International engagement further intensified as the United Nations announced new sanctions against individuals and networks contributing to instability, while Congolese military representatives deployed to Goma to reinforce ceasefire monitoring under parallel regional peace initiatives.

Despite these diplomatic advances, the security situation in eastern Congo deteriorated further. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militants launched successive attacks in North Kivu, causing civilian casualties and triggering new waves of displacement around Beni, while clashes intensified in South Kivu between government forces and armed groups aligned with the M23 rebellion. The continued presence of rebel groups also complicated

humanitarian operations as conflict increasingly overlapped with a worsening Ebola outbreak. International concern grew after infected humanitarian personnel required overseas medical evacuation and several countries introduced stricter public health measures to limit cross-border transmission. The convergence of armed conflict, humanitarian displacement, and public health emergencies continued to illustrate the multidimensional nature of the crisis facing the DRC, where diplomatic progress remains constrained by persistent insecurity on the ground.

Chad

Throughout the third week of July 2026, Chad strengthened its regional diplomatic engagement while continuing to manage mounting humanitarian pressures and persistent security challenges stemming from instability in neighboring Sudan and the Lake Chad Basin. The growing influx of Sudanese refugees remained one of the government's most pressing concerns, with the refugee population approaching one million people and placing considerable strain on public services, security institutions, and humanitarian resources in eastern Chad. Authorities continued accelerating the relocation of refugees into organized settlements while working with international partners to address widening protection gaps along the Sudanese border, where ongoing conflict necessitated sustained military deployments and strict border controls to prevent cross-border incursions.

Diplomatically, N'Djamena significantly expanded its international outreach during the week. Chad deepened its strategic partnership with Russia through agreements aimed at facilitating official travel and strengthening institutional cooperation, while President Mahamat Idriss Déby secured renewed Russian commitments for military equipment, counter-terrorism assistance, and security training to reinforce Chad's efforts against Boko Haram and other extremist groups. President Déby also announced his intention to participate in the upcoming Russia–Africa Summit to further consolidate bilateral cooperation. Beyond Russia, Chad broadened its diplomatic footprint by formally establishing diplomatic relations with Moldova and intensified coordination with the African Union on regional counter-terrorism initiatives designed to address the growing spillover of violent extremism across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

The week also marked an important political milestone as President Déby announced that Chad would abolish entry visa requirements for all African citizens beginning in January 2027. Presented during the African Water Forum in N'Djamena, the initiative underscored Chad's commitment to advancing African integration, facilitating trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and promoting the free movement of people across the continent. Together, these developments reflected Chad's effort to balance expanding regional diplomacy and continental integration with the pressing demands of border security, counter-terrorism, and one of Africa's largest refugee crises.

12. North Africa

Libya

Libya's week was defined by a domestic political pushback against externally brokered solutions, renewed Russian accusations of Ukrainian drone sabotage off its coast, another catastrophic migrant shipwreck, and a reshuffled national oil sector approving a major new reserve discovery.

Tripoli-based Prime Minister Abdel Hamid Aldabaiba used the year's fourth cabinet meeting to reject any Libyan settlement negotiated behind closed doors, declaring that no decision on the country's future would be imposed on Libyans without their consent. His remarks were widely read as a rebuff of a reported American-backed proposal to install a Haftar family member alongside him atop an interim presidency council ahead of elections. Aldabaiba pledged to address the public directly and announced a national dialogue drawing in municipalities, political parties, and civil society to help shape an agreed roadmap toward elections.

On the diplomatic front, US senior adviser Massad Boulos met Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty in Cairo, with both reaffirming support for a Libyan-led political process capable of delivering simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections. Abdelatty stressed Egypt's commitment to preserving Libya's unity and national institutions and welcomed continued American, UN, and regional mediation, folding the Libya file into a broader conversation covering Sudan's civil war, instability in the Horn of Africa, and Cairo's Nile water security concerns. The meeting underscored Washington and Cairo's shared interest in steering Libya's fractured institutions toward a unified path.

Geopolitical friction over Libya's coastline escalated as Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Borisenko publicly accused Ukrainian instructors, officially in Libya to train local forces on drone warfare, of directing the naval drone strike that damaged the Russian LNG carrier Arctic Metagaz earlier this year. Moscow cast the episode as part of a broader Ukrainian effort to open a second front against Russian interests across Africa, citing similar activity in Mali and Sudan. The accusation adds another layer to the contest for influence over Libya's western coastline, where Turkish, American, Italian, and reportedly Ukrainian personnel all maintain a presence.

Migration tragedy struck again off eastern Libya when a wooden boat carrying roughly sixty people, including women and children, capsized near Bardaa Island outside Tobruk. Coast Guard officials said at least fifty passengers were dead or missing, with only ten survivors reaching shore, in the latest of repeated mass-casualty wrecks along one of the Mediterranean's deadliest migration routes. The disaster, occurring weeks after a similar wreck killed dozens more, renewed scrutiny of the coastal security arrangements that Libyan authorities, with European backing, are meant to enforce.

On energy, the National Oil Corporation's recently reshuffled leadership, installed to balance interests aligned with Tripoli and with eastern commander Khalifa Haftar, approved the commercial viability of a major new discovery, with Austria's OMV confirming an estimated 195 million barrels in the Sirte Basin. Analysts noted the reshuffle reflects deeper dynamics: oil revenue increasingly functions as the currency of political compromise between rival power centers, financing coexistence between Tripoli and the east rather than resolving the institutional divisions the new find's proceeds will ultimately help sustain.

Algeria

On July 16, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune made a landmark official visit to Berlin, his first trip to Germany since taking office. He met with Chancellor Friedrich Merz and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The leaders signed a Joint Declaration on a Strategic Agenda for Bilateral Partnership that established formal high-level political, security, and migration dialogues.

Talks focused heavily on the SouthH2 Corridor, a pipeline network designed to transport four million tonnes of green hydrogen annually from Algeria through Tunisia and Italy to Austria and Germany. Amid global instability including disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, Algeria leveraged its position as a stable natural gas exporter to Europe. This followed Sonatrach's first direct liquefied natural gas shipment to Germany's Wilhelmshaven terminal on July 2.

In regional security, Algeria and Mali officially restored diplomatic relations after a year-long rift that began in April 2025. Both countries reinstated ambassadors and reopened their airspaces. Intelligence updates indicated that the eight-week negotiations were mediated behind the scenes by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who balanced Russia's defense ties with Algeria and its security support for Mali's military junta.

Domestically, President Tebboune, speaking from Berlin to the Algerian diaspora, stressed that political opposition is welcome as long as it avoids defamation or inciting hatred. Algeria also began implementing the Apostille Convention on July 9, streamlining consular documentation for citizens abroad. The parliament concluded its 2025-2026 session on July 16 following the July 2 legislative elections.

At the multilateral level, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lounes Magramane led Algeria's delegation at the UN Economic and Social Council in New York. On July 16, Algeria hosted a side event on startups advancing innovation and water security. Magramane also presented Algeria's contributions to UN reform during discussions on the Pact for the Future. Internal security incidents remained limited during the week.

13. Middle East

Israel

Over the past weekend, fourteen United States Air Force refueling aircraft arrived in Israel, the leading edge of a broader plan to station up to one hundred refuelers across Ramon Airport, Ovda Airbase, and Ben Gurion Airport. Coordinated between US Central Command and the Israeli Air Force, the buildup is designed to sustain deep-penetration long-range strike campaigns should hostilities with Tehran widen. The scale of this logistics effort signals that Washington and Jerusalem are preparing operational infrastructure for a protracted multi-front air campaign rather than a single retaliatory strike, reflecting how seriously both governments now treat renewed confrontation with Iran.

That expanding military footprint finds its clearest expression in Gaza, where Central Command chief Avi Bluth publicly confirmed during a change of command ceremony for the 99th Division that Israeli forces now control more than sixty percent of the Strip, well beyond the boundary Israel was permitted to hold under the October 2025 ceasefire. Bluth cautioned that Hamas still governs the remaining territory, even as security cabinet briefings have placed the true figure closer to seventy percent, echoing Netanyahu's earlier directive. The disclosure marks the first official acknowledgment that ceasefire boundaries have been superseded on the ground.

Operationally, that expansion is sustained through a continuing campaign of targeted strikes against Hamas's remaining command structure inside the enclave. An Israeli airstrike in northern Gaza killed Nihad Riyad Abd al-Rahim Arouq, a platoon commander in Hamas's Shati Battalion whom the military accused of training fighters and plotting attacks on Israeli ground forces stationed within the territory. The strike forms part of a broader decapitation effort aimed at degrading Hamas's residual chain of command even as the group maintains nominal governance over the portion of Gaza still beyond Israeli control, illustrating the uneasy coexistence of ceasefire and active combat.

That same tension turned lethal days later when an Israeli drone struck a funeral procession gathering outside the Ahmad Yassin Mosque in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing at least seven Palestinians and wounding nineteen others. The strike, hitting a civilian religious gathering rather than a military target, exposed how fragile and frequently violated the de facto ceasefire in Gaza has become. Such incidents complicate Israel's narrative of a stabilizing security architecture in the enclave and continue to draw scrutiny from humanitarian monitors tracking casualty figures amid what remains, in practice, a low intensity conflict.

North of Gaza, diplomacy moved forward on a separate but related front when delegations led by Israeli ambassador Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese officials concluded a

round of American mediated talks in Rome, agreeing on a phased withdrawal framework for southern Lebanon. The parties settled on pilot zones in Froun, Burj Qalaouiyah, and Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, where Israeli forces would withdraw and cede control to the Lebanese Armed Forces on condition the areas are cleared of Hezbollah weapons. The framework represents the most substantial direct diplomatic engagement between Beirut and Jerusalem in four decades, though officials describe implementation as fragile.

That diplomatic momentum was almost immediately undercut on the ground. Within a day of the Rome talks concluding, the Israeli military launched waves of airstrikes and artillery barrages against the outskirts of Nabatieh al-Fawqa, Beit Yahoun, and Rashaf, sending columns of smoke visible from Beirut's southern suburbs. Israeli officials framed the strikes as necessary to disrupt Hezbollah coordination and to physically enforce a security buffer regardless of the negotiating track underway in Rome. The timing illustrates a recurring pattern in which Israel pairs diplomatic engagement with continued kinetic pressure, treating negotiation and coercion as complementary rather than contradictory instruments.

The human cost of that sustained pressure was underscored when Lebanon's education minister, Rima Karami, said Israeli troops had looted and detonated explosives inside three schools in Bint Jbeil and Khiam, reducing them to rubble. The destruction brings the total number of fully destroyed schools in southern Lebanon to twenty, with UNESCO estimating that more than five hundred thousand children remain out of school as a result of the wider conflict. The systematic targeting of civilian educational infrastructure has drawn international condemnation and renewed warnings from rights monitors that such actions may constitute violations of the laws of war.

A parallel crisis unfolded inside the West Bank, where a wildfire swept through the settlement of Havat Gilad, destroying thirteen homes, damaging twenty-nine additional structures, and forcing over one hundred families to evacuate. An initial police and fire service inquiry attributed the blaze to a cigarette discarded from a passing vehicle on Shabbat, but the Shin Bet subsequently withdrew from the arson investigation after finding no evidence of accelerants at the scene. The episode has strained local emergency services and sharpened communal tension in a territory already marked by rising friction between settlers and Palestinian residents.

That tension escalated further when Israeli police and military authorities warned of potential retaliatory arson by radical settlers against nearby Palestinian villages, following an attack on a West Bank mosque attributed to settlers reportedly avenging the Havat Gilad fire. The warning prompted the Israeli military to redeploy forces in the area specifically to prevent so called price tag attacks from triggering broader communal clashes. The sequence reflects a familiar cycle in which unresolved fire investigations and

unverified blame feed a pattern of vigilante retaliation that security services must then contain after the fact rather than prevent in advance.

That climate of settler violence has reverberated diplomatically in Brussels, where the European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, convened foreign ministers to weigh a European Commission paper proposing trade restrictions on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Under consideration are an import licensing regime, elevated tariffs, or an outright ban, measures framed as a response to Israel's approval of thirteen new settlements and a documented spike in settler related violence over recent months. The deliberations illustrate a widening rift between European governments and Jerusalem over settlement policy, even as consensus among member states on binding measures remains elusive.

Domestically, Israeli politics entered a new phase when the twenty fifth Knesset formally dissolved ahead of its summer recess, setting general elections for October 27. Speaker Amir Ohana credited the coalition with completing a full four year term, an outcome unmatched in Israel since 1988, before urging lawmakers to remember shared national bonds despite political rivalry. The dissolution followed a marathon final legislative session and now plunges the country into a volatile campaign season in which Prime Minister Netanyahu faces mounting pressure from centrist opposition figures, including a former prime minister and a retired military chief drawing significant polling support.

Much of that final legislative session was consumed by measures long sought by the ultra-Orthodox parties propping up Netanyahu's coalition. Lawmakers passed, by a vote of sixty-three to fifty-two, a quasi-constitutional Basic Law declaring Torah study a foundational value of the state, a bill pushed through by Shas and United Torah Judaism as a political condition for keeping the coalition intact. Critics and legal organizations immediately petitioned the High Court, arguing the law is designed to permanently entrench military draft exemptions for Haredi men, a dispute now certain to shape both the courts and the coming election campaign.

In the same legislative window, the coalition passed a companion measure temporarily freezing the arrest and prosecution of yeshiva students who evade military enlistment orders, with the freeze set to remain in effect until November. The law was designed to delay enforcement of a Supreme Court mandate requiring the draft of Haredi men, a mandate the High Court has since paused pending formal constitutional hearings. The measure has generated significant friction among military reservists, IDF leadership, and secular political parties, who view continued draft exemptions as an inequitable burden sharing arrangement during an extended period of active combat.

The coalition's final legislative blitz also targeted institutional checks on executive authority, stripping Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara of her power to issue legally binding opinions to cabinet ministers. Ministers are now permitted to act contrary to

formal legal advice, removing what had functioned as one of the principal internal constraints on government decision making. Coming alongside the Torah study law and the draft exemption freeze, the measure represents a significant milestone in the right wing coalition's broader judicial overhaul project, consolidating executive discretion months before voters are asked to render judgment on the government's overall record.

Rounding out the legislative session, the coalition passed a media reform law expanding government regulatory authority over broadcast television, radio, and digital platforms. Opponents and civil rights organizations have characterized the law as an attempt to weaken independent journalism and cultivate state aligned news outlets ahead of the October vote. Taken together with the curbs on the attorney general and the entrenchment of draft exemptions, the media legislation completes a pattern in which the outgoing coalition used its final weeks in session to reshape institutional and informational terrain in ways likely to favor incumbents heading into the campaign.

Within Netanyahu's own party, internal maneuvering mirrored the broader consolidation of power underway across the coalition. The Likud central committee granted the prime minister direct control over eight strategic slots on the party's Knesset candidate list and the authority to cancel primary elections altogether. Senior Likud figures, including Yuli Edelstein, criticized the move as a blow to internal party democracy, though it passed regardless. The decision positions Netanyahu to shape his party's electoral list with minimal internal challenge, reinforcing his personal control over Likud's direction as the party heads into what polling suggests will be a difficult campaign.

Beyond domestic politics, Israeli diplomacy notched a rare success in Latin America. Following meetings in Washington between Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Colombia's foreign minister designate, Omar Bula, Israel announced a roadmap to fully restore relations once president elect Abelardo de la Espriella takes office in early August. The plan includes reappointing ambassadors, lifting mutual tourist visa restrictions, and relocating Colombia's embassy to Jerusalem, reversing the diplomatic freeze imposed by outgoing president Gustavo Petro. The restoration signals a broader realignment in Bogota's foreign policy and offers Jerusalem a diplomatic counterweight to its deteriorating standing among European governments.

That diplomatic push extends to public messaging as well. The government secured cabinet approval for Masa Diplomacy, a new advocacy program targeting young Diaspora Jews, backed by the Prime Minister's Office and the Foreign Ministry with roughly one million shekels in funding to train seventy participants in public relations and international advocacy. The program is explicitly framed around combating what officials describe as delegitimization campaigns abroad, reflecting growing concern within the government that Israel's international image, particularly among younger audiences,

requires structured cultivation rather than reactive messaging after a prolonged period of conflict and settlement related controversy.

Security lapses closer to home also drew attention this week. Israeli troops detained a group of settlement activists who had illegally crossed the border near Majdal Shams into Syria, spending a full day on Syrian territory before being located and handed over to police. The military condemned the incursion, noting that it compromised border security and diverted forces from active combat duties elsewhere. The episode highlights ongoing friction between the settlement movement's more radical elements and the military establishment, which increasingly views unauthorized activist actions along contested borders as a liability rather than an asset to security operations.

Finally, Israel's longer-term strategic planning showed signs of shifting focus beyond its immediate combat theaters. The military formally received a fleet of American made amphibious landing craft, acquired specifically to address a growing perception of threat from Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Israeli defense planners indicated that countering a potential maritime confrontation with Ankara will require a substantial rebuilding of naval capacity in the years ahead. The acquisition suggests that even as Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank dominate current operations, Israeli strategic planners are increasingly looking past Iran's proxy network toward a more traditional state level rival.

Iran

President Donald Trump directed the US Navy to reimpose a comprehensive maritime blockade on Iranian ports, oil terminals, and coastal areas across the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, restricting commercial and energy exports and effectively halting crude shipments to international markets. The move marks the collapse of the navigation protections established under the Islamabad memorandum of understanding and re-escalates the economic dimension of the conflict alongside its military one. By targeting Iran's primary revenue source directly, Washington signaled its intent to compound battlefield pressure with financial strangulation, tying the war's trajectory explicitly to Tehran's oil exports.

Even as the blockade tightened, Trump reversed course on a separate maritime measure, dropping his proposed twenty percent toll on neutral cargo transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The reversal followed direct appeals from Gulf monarchies, which offered multi-billion-dollar investments in the United States to help fund the US Navy's ongoing maritime security operations in the waterway instead. The shift illustrates how Gulf states are using their financial leverage to shape the terms of American military engagement in the region, trading investment commitments for influence over policies that directly affect their own shipping and energy exports.

Tehran responded to the reimposed blockade by formally suspending its commitments under the Islamabad memorandum, with Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi declaring that the United States had already violated the ceasefire by launching fresh airstrikes and reinstating the naval blockade. Gharibabadi said Iran had shifted all available resources toward defending the homeland, effectively ending the diplomatic track that had underpinned the fragile truce. The suspension confirms that both sides now regard the negotiated framework as defunct, removing whatever restraint the agreement had placed on further escalation and leaving military operations as the primary language of engagement.

Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei addressed the collapse of the agreement directly in remarks broadcast on state television, describing Trump's signature on regional accords as worthless and invalid. Khamenei warned that the United States and its regional allies would face what he called unforgettable lessons from Iran's joint military command and its allied Axis of Resistance networks should attacks on the country's infrastructure continue. The statement signals that Iran's leadership views the conflict as existential rather than transactional, and that Tehran is prepared to draw on its regional proxy network rather than negotiate under continued military pressure.

On the ground, US Central Command intensified its campaign against Iranian infrastructure, destroying highway and railway bridges in Bandar Khamir in an apparent effort to isolate the major port city of Bandar Abbas from the rest of the country. The strikes also severely damaged southern power grids, prompting Iran's Energy Ministry to order immediate rationing in provinces already suffering under extreme summer heat. The targeting of dual use civilian infrastructure alongside military sites has generated sharp diplomatic friction, with critics arguing the strikes are designed to inflict broad economic and humanitarian pressure rather than purely military effect.

That infrastructure campaign extended to Iran's nuclear program when US forces struck the construction site of the Darkhovin nuclear power plant in southwestern Khuzestan province. Iran's Atomic Energy Organization condemned the attack as an aggressive violation of international law, while the International Atomic Energy Agency said it was investigating the strike and noted the facility remained in early construction with no nuclear material present. The attack marks a significant escalation in the campaign against Iranian nuclear infrastructure, extending the conflict's military logic to facilities that, however preliminary, carry substantial symbolic and proliferation related weight.

Iran answered the intensified strikes with a wave of retaliatory ballistic missiles and kamikaze drones launched by the Revolutionary Guard against coalition installations across the region. Projectiles targeted the Ali Al Salem and Camp Arifjan bases in Kuwait, the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, and American naval assets in Bahrain, prompting all three governments to activate air defenses. The breadth of the barrage,

striking three separate host nations simultaneously, demonstrates that Tehran is willing to widen the conflict geographically to impose costs on Washington's regional partners rather than confine retaliation to direct exchanges with American forces.

The Revolutionary Guard also struck the Al-Tanf military facility in eastern Syria, a base American force had formally transferred to the new Syrian government earlier in the year. The Guard described the target as an active enemy special operations headquarters and framed the strike as retaliation for the killing of Iranian personnel elsewhere in the conflict. Even though the base no longer falls under direct American control, the strike underscores how Tehran continues to treat Syrian territory as part of its operational theater, complicating Damascus's efforts to distance itself from the wider Iran-US confrontation on its soil.

Enforcement of the naval blockade produced its first major interdiction when American forces opened fire on the Curacao flagged tanker Belma as it approached Kharg Island, Iran's principal crude export terminal. After the vessel ignored repeated warnings to halt, a US military aircraft fired into its smokestack, disabling propulsion and forcing it to a stop. Tracking data indicated the tanker had already moved thirty-eight million barrels of Iranian crude prior to interception, illustrating both the scale of the shadow fleet Iran has relied on to sustain exports and Washington's determination to physically disrupt it.

Washington paired its naval enforcement with a parallel financial squeeze when Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced the freezing of roughly one hundred thirty million dollars held in digital wallets linked to the Central Bank of Iran. The sanctions target the cryptocurrency-based trade networks Tehran has increasingly relied upon to bypass the naval blockade and move value outside conventional banking channels. Combined with the interdiction of tankers like the Belma, the action reflects a coordinated strategy pairing physical and financial interdiction, aimed at closing off the alternative channels Iran has built to sustain oil revenue under sanctions.

The cumulative weight of blockade, sanctions, and strikes has driven Iran's currency into freefall, with the rial crashing to a historic free market low of roughly one point nine one million to the dollar. The euro and British pound also surged past two point one eight million and two point five six million rials respectively, fueling hyperinflation and widespread domestic panic over the cost of basic goods. The currency collapse translates military and economic pressure directly into everyday hardship for ordinary Iranians, compounding the strain already imposed by war damage and years of prior sanctions on household purchasing power.

Internationally, the United Kingdom moved to formally outlaw the Revolutionary Guard, introducing regulations under the National Security Act that designate the organization as a hostile foreign entity. Approved by the House of Commons, the legislation criminalizes accepting funds from the Guard to conduct surveillance or intimidation against dissidents

and Jewish communities within Britain. The designation places the Guard alongside other organizations Britain now treats as direct state threats, extending the diplomatic and legal consequences of the conflict beyond the Middle East and signaling that Western governments are hardening their posture toward Tehran's international networks.

Inside Iran, political prisoners in Karaj's Ghezel Hesar facility and Ahvaz's Sheiban prison launched coordinated hunger strikes to protest the transfer of death row inmates into solitary confinement ahead of expected executions. The strikes have continued despite what prisoners and their families describe as severe physical abuse and the denial of medical care by prison authorities. The unrest reflects how wartime conditions are intensifying pressure inside a penal system already known for harsh treatment of dissidents, with the regime showing little sign of moderating internal repression even as it faces mounting external military and economic pressure.

To contain the risk of parallel unrest at the political level, Iranian authorities extended the suspension of the Majlis, keeping parliament sidelined to prevent factional infighting and public dissatisfaction from boiling over during the conflict. Basij and Revolutionary Guard forces remain heavily deployed across Tehran and provincial capitals to deter protests linked to deteriorating living conditions. The extended suspension suggests the clerical establishment views open political debate, even among loyalist factions, as a liability at a moment when the war effort requires a united public front and minimal visible dissent.

The conflict's human cost continued to mount on the American side as well, with a US service member killed in northern Iraq during a controlled detonation of unexploded ordnance from a downed Iranian attack drone. The death brings the total number of American service members killed in the conflict to seventeen, as US forces carried out a ninth consecutive night of airstrikes across Iran. The mounting toll on both sides, layered atop the economic collapse and diplomatic breakdown chronicled elsewhere this week, points to a conflict now settling into a sustained and costly attritional phase rather than trending toward resolution.

Turkey

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan submitted a motion to the Grand National Assembly requesting a two-year extension of Turkey's military deployment in Somalia, pushing the mandate through July 2028 and authorizing Turkish forces to operate across Somali maritime zones against piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. The extension formalizes a presence that has grown steadily beyond training and advisory roles into direct combat support against al-Shabaab, cementing Ankara's position as Somalia's principal security guarantor. Geopolitically, the bill consolidates Turkey's foothold along the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden corridor, a waterway increasingly central to its broader ambitions across the Horn of Africa.

That deepening military footprint extends into space and missile technology, with unconfirmed accounts indicating Turkey intends to use its proposed spaceport near Somalia's Indian Ocean coast to test domestically developed hypersonic missiles capable of striking targets up to two thousand kilometers away. Neither Ankara nor Mogadishu has publicly confirmed the plan, though the facility's location, near the equator and along a coastline offering favorable launch conditions, has drawn scrutiny from regional powers including Israel, since a range of that distance would place Israeli-backed Somaliland within reach even as Israel itself remains outside it.

Erdogan also announced that Turkey aims to complete its first deep-sea oil exploration drilling off the coast of Somalia's Galmudug state within six to nine months, framing the project as a stabilizing energy initiative for the federal government. Somali opposition leaders have rejected that framing, accusing Ankara of resource piracy carried out under bilateral defense agreements they consider illegitimate. The dispute illustrates how Turkey's expanding footprint in Somalia increasingly blends security assistance with direct commercial extraction, a combination critics argue entrenches Mogadishu's dependence on Ankara while sidelining the federal states that host the resources in question.

That dependence was visible again when Turkey's deputy intelligence chief chaired a secret round of reconciliation talks in Mogadishu between the federal government and opposition groups, an initiative the federal states of Puntland and Jubaland boycotted outright. Both accused Ankara of using its military assets, including drones and the TURKSOM training base, to support the federal government's centralization of power rather than acting as a neutral mediator. The boycott exposes the limits of Turkey's influence beyond Mogadishu, where its security and economic entanglement with the federal government increasingly undermines its credibility as an honest broker among Somalia's competing regions.

Beyond the Horn, Turkey advanced a separate strategic realignment when Defense Minister Yasar Guler hosted Egyptian counterpart Lieutenant General Ashraf Salem Zaher in Ankara, the first visit by an Egyptian defense minister since 2013, culminating in a letter of intent to expand joint training, military connectivity, and operational coordination between the two armed forces. The visit builds on a rapid thaw that has already produced joint naval drills and fighter exercises after more than a decade of estrangement, positioning Ankara and Cairo as an emerging counterweight to the deepening defense coordination among Greece, Cyprus, and Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Zaher also met separately with Haluk Gorgun, head of Turkey's Defense Industry Agency, to sign a second letter of intent establishing a framework for defense industry cooperation and joint military manufacturing, built around an agreement reportedly valued near three

hundred fifty million dollars. Officials on both sides have floated cooperation extending into drone production and even Egyptian participation in developing Turkey's fifth generation KAAN fighter jet. The expanding partnership could turn Egypt into a manufacturing and export hub for Turkish military hardware, deepening an alliance that reshapes the balance of power across the Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea.

Turkish commercial reach extended further into Sudan, where the government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Turkish energy company Ergaz to construct the country's first specialized gas terminal at the Red Sea port of Suakin under a build-operate-transfer framework. The facility, with a planned storage capacity of twenty-eight thousand cubic meters, is designed to address Suakin's severe petroleum and fuel shortages. The deal adds an energy dimension to Turkey's existing security and infrastructure presence at Suakin, reinforcing Ankara's position along a Red Sea corridor where it now competes directly with Egyptian and Gulf interests.

On the diplomatic front, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called during a strategic interview in Doha for a return to the US-Iran Islamabad memorandum of understanding, warning that the escalating war has severely damaged the regional economy and stating that Turkey is coordinating closely with Qatar to revive diplomatic channels. The appeal positions Ankara alongside Doha as a would-be mediator between Washington and Tehran, reflecting Turkey's broader strategy of inserting itself into major regional crises as an indispensable interlocutor even as its own military footprint expands across multiple contested theaters from the Horn of Africa to the Mediterranean.

Fidan went further, warning that unresolved technical issues within the Islamabad memorandum may prove difficult to fix and that Israel could actively attempt to sabotage the fragile diplomatic process, urging the international community to prepare a response to any such interference. The warning reflects deepening mistrust between Ankara and Jerusalem, already strained by their rival positioning across Syria, Somalia, and the Eastern Mediterranean, and signals that Turkey views Israeli actions as a persistent threat to any negotiated de-escalation between Washington and Tehran rather than a side issue separate from the broader regional confrontation.

Closer to home, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oncu Keceli condemned Greece's decision to close eight primary schools belonging to the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, arguing that shuttering the schools under the pretext of low enrollment violates the education provisions of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The condemnation reopens a long-standing minority rights dispute between Ankara and Athens, one that periodically resurfaces alongside broader disagreements over Aegean maritime boundaries and Cyprus, and underscores how bilateral friction between the two NATO members continues to simmer even during periods of relative calm elsewhere in their relationship.

That friction was reinforced when Turkey's military leadership held official ceremonies marking the fifty second anniversary of the 1974 Cyprus peace operation, commemorations that occurred as Ankara rejected new European Union envoys assigned to the island, arguing that EU neutrality in the territorial dispute has been compromised. The rejection signals Turkey's continued refusal to accept European institutions as impartial arbiters on Cyprus, reinforcing Ankara's preference for bilateral or Turkish Cypriot-led negotiating frameworks over EU-brokered processes it regards as structurally biased against Turkish Cypriot interests and the continued division of the island.

Domestically, Turkish prosecutors ordered the arrest of nearly one thousand suspects in nationwide raids targeting alleged members of the outlawed Gulen network, timed two days before the tenth anniversary of the failed 2016 coup attempt. The scale of the operation, spanning all eighty-one provinces, demonstrates that the state's post-coup purge remains fully active a decade later, with security services continuing to treat residual Gulenist influence as an ongoing threat rather than a closed chapter, even as critics argue the anniversary timing serves as much to reinforce government legitimacy as to address any current security risk.

Ousted Republican People's Party leader Ozgur Ozel is reportedly preparing to launch a new political party as mounting legal and judicial restrictions narrow his options within the existing opposition structure. The move comes amid a broader government crackdown on opposition-controlled municipalities that rights groups describe as a deliberate effort to weaken organized political opposition ahead of future elections. Ozel's potential departure from the CHP framework could fragment the secular opposition further, complicating efforts to present a unified challenge to the ruling coalition at a moment when judicial pressure on elected opposition figures continues to intensify nationwide.

Syria

Syria's newly formed People's Assembly convened its inaugural session. This milestone is recognized internationally as a pivotal step in the country's political transition roughly a year and a half after the fall of the Assad government. The two hundred ten member body established under the transitional constitutional declaration drew two thirds of its lawmakers from regional electoral colleges while President Ahmed al-Sharaa appointed the remaining third directly. The assembly is expected to sit for approximately thirty months. It is tasked with drafting a permanent constitution and laying the legislative groundwork for Syria's first national elections since the fall of the former government.

President al-Sharaa addressed the new parliament directly. He presented it as the cornerstone of the post-Assad political order and urged lawmakers to become a model of responsibility and competence. He described the assembly as a platform for truth and justice. The address was aimed as much at international audiences as domestic ones. Damascus is seeking sanctions relief, foreign investment, and diplomatic normalization

from Western and regional governments that have consistently tied further engagement to demonstrable political reform and inclusive governance rather than symbolic gestures alone.

Much of the debate surrounding the assembly's formation has centered on whether it adequately reflects Syria's ethnic and religious diversity. Unofficial tallies show roughly ten seats held by Kurdish, Christian, and Alawite representatives. Women account for about ten percent of the body. Yet four seats remain vacant including three allocated to the predominantly Druze province of Suwayda where sectarian violence has killed an estimated seventeen hundred people since mid-2025. Authorities have said those seats will be filled only once conditions become suitable. This leaves Druze representation and executive influence over future elections as unresolved points of contention.

That unresolved legitimacy question extends to personnel as well. Domestic and international observers have raised alarm over the retention of former regime officials within the new administrative framework. Demonstrations have recurred across several cities in recent months demanding accountability and opposing what protesters describe as the recycling of Assad-era figures into positions of authority. The controversy underscores a persistent tension within Syria's transition between practical governing continuity which favors experienced administrators and the demand for a clean institutional break that many Syrians view as essential to the credibility of the new order.

Damascus has moved to address that demand for accountability by initiating judicial proceedings against former regime security officials. This is part of a broader push that has already seen authorities arrest nearly six thousand former regime members including senior officers. A draft transitional justice law is being developed jointly by the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the Ministry of Justice. United Nations officials stress that any credible framework must address atrocities committed by all parties to the conflict not solely the former government. It must fully account for survivors of conflict related sexual violence.

The European Union welcomed the assembly's convening as another step forward in the transition. Its High Representative reaffirmed readiness to deepen the EU-Syria partnership and explicitly cited the possibility of a future Association Agreement should reforms continue. The statement tied that deeper engagement to the assembly's ability to build an inclusive political system grounded in rule of law and transparent elections alongside progress on accountability and transitional justice. Brussels is prepared to expand support conditionally rather than unconditionally as Syria's institutions take shape.

That external validation found its most visible expression when French President Emmanuel Macron conducted a state visit to Damascus. This was the first time a head of state from a European Union country has visited Syria in recent memory. The visit signaled a further step in Syria's reintegration into Western diplomatic circles following

years of isolation under the former government. It reflected France's interest in positioning itself as an early mover in Syria's reconstruction and reconciliation process even as security conditions inside the country remained visibly fragile throughout the trip.

That fragility was underscored days earlier when a bomb detonated outside a cafe near Damascus's Justice Palace frequented by judicial officials. The attack killed at least ten people and was attributed by authorities to the Islamic State. The bombing formed part of a broader shift in the group's tactics toward softer symbolically resonant targets tied to the transitional government's judicial and accountability efforts rather than the checkpoints and military convoys that had previously dominated its post-Assad era attacks against Syrian security forces.

Days later two additional blasts struck Damascus. Explosive devices detonated near the Ministry of Tourism and the Four Seasons Hotel where Macron's delegation had been staying before departing in a motorcade shortly beforehand. The attacks wounded at least eighteen people. The timing coinciding precisely with the first European head of state visit to Syria since the transition began reflected a deliberate strategy to maximize geopolitical shock value. It aimed to sow doubt about the new government's ability to secure high profile diplomatic engagements and discourage the foreign investment and normalization Damascus has been actively courting.

In direct response Syrian security forces launched sweeping raids across Qudsaya, al-Husainiyah, Qatayfa, and Ush al-Warour on the outskirts of Damascus. They arrested several Islamic State operatives tied to the bombing campaign. The Ministry of Interior said the same cell responsible for the attacks during Macron's visit had also carried out an earlier strike in May against the Defense Ministry's Armaments Directorate building in the capital's Bab Sharqi district. This suggests a single persistent network capable of sustained operations against both government and diplomatic targets across multiple Damascus neighborhoods.

Authorities scored a further counter-terrorism success in southern Syria. They dismantled a five member Islamic State network in Daraa and captured a senior figure known as the Governor of Lebanon and Palestine. He had been directing a campaign of armed robberies and assassination plots in the province. The arrest points to the group's continued operational reach well beyond Damascus. Analysts caution that the true scope of Islamic State activity nationwide likely exceeds what has been publicly attributed given the group's post-2020 practice of leaving many attacks unclaimed to obscure its operational footprint.

The United Nations Security Council scheduled its monthly session on Syria's political and humanitarian developments. Deputy Special Envoy Claudio Cordone and a representative from the UN humanitarian affairs office are expected to brief members. The session comes as the Council continues to weigh Israel's military presence beyond the

1974 disengagement line, stalled progress on the Suwayda reconciliation roadmap, and a humanitarian appeal exceeding two point nine billion dollars that remains only about one fifth funded. This underscores how deeply Syria's political transition remains intertwined with unresolved security and financing gaps.

14. Global Powers

President Donald Trump formally notified Congress that U.S. hostilities against Iran had resumed, arguing that renewed fighting opened a new 60-day period for military operations under his administration's legal interpretation of the War Powers Resolution.

The United States reimposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports after renewed fighting in the Gulf. Trump warned that further Iranian attacks could trigger strikes on Iran's energy infrastructure, bridges, and other strategic targets. U.S. forces also conducted attacks against Iranian maritime, missile, and drone facilities linked to operations around the Strait of Hormuz.

The Middle East remained the administration's overriding foreign-policy priority. U.S. Central Command continued military operations against Iranian targets while reinforcing American positions across the Gulf. Iran responded with missile and drone attacks against U.S. facilities and regional partners, making the Strait of Hormuz the central flashpoint of the crisis. Additional naval and air assets remained deployed to secure regional bases and maritime routes.

On July 19 U.S. Central Command confirmed that an American service member was killed during the controlled detonation of a downed Iranian drone in Iraq, underscoring the increasing risks facing U.S. personnel during the conflict

Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted representatives from more than 60 countries at an international counterterrorism ministerial. He announced that the Trump administration would reorient U.S.-led counterterrorism cooperation toward what it described as transnational "far-left terrorism," alongside new visa restrictions targeting individuals affiliated with designated extremist groups. The meeting marked one of the administration's most significant multilateral diplomatic initiatives of the week.

The State Department announced that Rubio would travel to the Philippines for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and ASEAN Regional Forum. The visit is intended to reaffirm U.S. alliances in Southeast Asia, address South China Sea security, Myanmar, regional cybercrime, and prepare the ground for a possible Trump–Xi summit later this year.

Ahead of the ASEAN meetings, Washington conducted extensive consultations with the Philippines and other regional partners on freedom of navigation, Chinese maritime activities in the South China Sea, and regional supply-chain resilience. The trip signals

that, despite the Middle East crisis, the Indo-Pacific remains Washington's principal long-term strategic theatre

Massad Boulos meets Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh in Cairo. President Trump's Senior Adviser for Arab and African Affairs, Massad Boulos, held extensive talks with Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh in Cairo.

Coming to China, Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Peter Shanel Agovaka in Beijing and rejected Western claims that China is seeking geopolitical dominance in the Pacific Islands.

Wang stated that China "does not seek any sphere of influence" and emphasized that Beijing's engagement is based on mutual respect and development cooperation rather than bloc politics. The meeting reflected China's continued effort to consolidate influence in the Pacific while countering growing U.S. and Australian engagement.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov travelled to Manila to participate in the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

President Vladimir Putin received North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui at the Kremlin. Putin thanked Pyongyang for its continued support of Russia's war effort in Ukraine, while both sides reaffirmed implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty signed in 2024. The meeting fueled speculation about another visit by Kim Jong Un to Russia later this year.

15. Europe

Prime Minister Keir Starmer received France's highest civilian honour, the Legion of Honour, from President Emmanuel Macron in Paris. Macron praised Starmer's leadership in strengthening European security and supporting Ukraine. The ceremony came as Starmer attended his final meeting of the "Coalition of the Willing" before leaving office.

Starmer joined Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other European leaders in Paris for a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing. Britain announced additional financial and military support for Ukraine as European leaders sought to demonstrate continued unity.

Britain joined the other G7 foreign ministers in issuing a joint statement condemning the attack on El-Obeid, Sudan, calling for protection of civilians, respect for international humanitarian law, and unrestricted humanitarian access. The statement reflected continued British diplomatic engagement on the Sudan conflict.

President Emmanuel Macron travelled to Germany for a two-day summit with Chancellor Friedrich Merz aimed at resetting Franco-German relations. The two leaders agreed to

deepen defence cooperation, accelerate missile defence and long-range strike projects, continue work on the Future Combat Air System (FCAS), and strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy in response to reduced U.S. engagement. They also discussed China, economic competitiveness and European defence industrial cooperation.

Following the summit, Chancellor Merz confirmed that German forces will participate in a French military nuclear exercise later this year, marking a significant step in Franco-German strategic cooperation while respecting France's independent nuclear deterrent.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

This week, UNSOS conducted a full-scale aviation emergency response exercise at Mogadishu's Aden Abdulle International Airport, bringing together AUSSOM, UNTMIS, Somali aviation authorities and other partners to test coordinated response procedures. The live drill simulated a UN helicopter emergency, with teams practising search and rescue, firefighting and casualty evacuation under realistic conditions. UNSOS Chief Aviation Safety Officer Kingsley Boateng emphasized that preparedness is essential to saving lives and property and that these exercises build confidence for all flights operating in Somalia. The month-long preparations included a communications exercise prior to the live drill to clarify roles and procedures.

A UN-backed food security alert issued this week warns that over 256,000 people in Djibouti roughly a quarter of the population are projected to face crisis or emergency-level hunger over the coming months. The IPC report, released on July 17, 2026, represents a significant deterioration from the May-June period when 166,000 people were affected.

Refugees in the Ali Addeh and Holl-Holl camps are the hardest hit, with nearly 70 percent of their population, more than 21,000 people now classified under crisis levels or worse. The worsening situation is driven by looming El Niño climate hazards, high food import prices and inflation that has eroded household purchasing power. The report calls for urgent action to reduce consumption deficits and strengthen resilience warning that without expanded food assistance and support the situation could deteriorate further

UN officials and monitors observed escalating strategic realignments in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea corridor. Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed concerns over a perceived "encirclement" strategy linked to recent maritime and port cooperation agreements involving Egypt, Somalia, and Eritrea. These developments highlight ongoing geopolitical competition for influence over Red Sea access and security arrangements.

This week marked a significant milestone for Ethiopia as the historic National Dialogue Conference officially opened in Addis Ababa on July 15, bringing together more than

4,000 delegates from across the country to deliberate on eight core agenda pillars aimed at building national consensus and addressing deep-rooted political divisions. The month-long forum, organized by the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission, has drawn support from regional and international partners, with both the African Union and IGAD reaffirming their commitment to the process. The UN has been providing technical and financial backing to the dialogue through the UNDP, supporting the commission's work since its establishment.

In a complementary effort to strengthen national institutions, stakeholders convened in Addis Ababa this week for an event co-organized by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Ethiopian government to enhance biosafety practices and build local capacity in managing biological risks. These efforts reflect the broader push to address Ethiopia's security challenges through institutional strengthening and inclusive dialogue, with the dialogue itself seen as a foundation for lasting peace and reconciliation across the country

Africa Union

This week, discussions on the future of AUSSOM remained a key focus, following the United States decision not to support UNSOS logistical and operational funding beyond December 2026. The AU, troop-contributing countries and other partners held urgent consultations on transitional arrangements and alternative financing options, including potential bilateral support and increased African contributions. The overarching concern was ensuring that hard-won security gains against Al-Shabaab are not lost. The AU Peace and Security Council also continued its broader work on sustainable financing for African-led peace operations, exploring mechanisms such as the AU Peace Fund and levy systems to reduce dependency on external donors.

This week, AU Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Amb. Bankole Adeoye held productive discussions with the AU Special Envoy on the Prevention of Genocide and Other Mass Atrocities, H.E. Adama Dieng. Their meeting focused on reviewing priorities for the remainder of the year, particularly the Special Envoy's upcoming engagements in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Discussions also centered on advancing atrocity prevention efforts, transitional justice and strengthening coordination to support peace, accountability and civilian protection across the continent.

This week, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, attended the official opening of Ethiopia's historic National Dialogue conference. In his remarks, he delivered a message of congratulations and reaffirmed the African Union's steadfast support for the process. He praised the initiative for its scale and inclusiveness, expressing confidence that the dialogue will help advance lasting peace, sustainable development and positive transformation in Ethiopia.

This week, H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Edrees, the AU Permanent Observer to the United Nations, held discussions with Mr. Oumar Sylla, Director of the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa. Their conversation covered a range of developmental issues facing the continent, including post-conflict reconstruction, urban resilience, climate change, housing, land management and municipal finance. Mr. Sylla reaffirmed UN-Habitat's commitment to Africa and its ongoing work with partners to reduce urban poverty and improve development outcomes. Both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships to advance Africa's Agenda 2063 and the global Agenda 2030.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

This week marked a significant step forward for regional cooperation, as the Ministry of Agriculture and IGAD's Agriculture and Environment Division convened their inaugural collaboration meeting. The primary focus was on strengthening our regional food systems and building climate resilience a topic that remains critical for all member states.

The Somali delegation had the opportunity to brief the IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary, H.E. Mawareso, outlining the core objectives of their mission. The Deputy Executive Secretary provided a very encouraging response giving strong assurances of IGAD's unwavering support for Somalia's efforts to advance sustainable agriculture and improve food security.

The session was formally opened by Mr. Daher Elmi, the Director of Agriculture and Environment at IGAD, who set a productive tone for the discussions. Much of the dialogue centered on how we can better align Somalia's national agricultural priorities with broader regional frameworks like the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The goal is to find practical ways to boost productivity, improve coordination between stakeholders and drive a sustainable agricultural transformation that benefits the entire region.

Progress on the digital trade front was notable this week, as IGAD continues to advance its regional integration agenda under the EARDIP framework. Dr. Mohyeldeen Eltohami Taha, Director of Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration, addressed the project meeting to outline IGAD's digital trade priorities. The session brought together senior experts from across member states all focused on practical ways to accelerate digital commerce and reduce barriers to cross-border trade.

A concrete outcome emerged from the meeting the establishment of a dedicated Technical Working Group housed within the Trade, Industry and Tourism Unit. This group is tasked with driving digital trade initiatives, strengthening regional coordination and supporting the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is a timely step that aligns our regional efforts with the broader continental vision. This milestone reinforces IGAD's commitment to building a more connected and competitive region. The

work underway on digital cooperation is about more than policy it is about creating real economic opportunities and ensuring the region stays competitive in an increasingly digital global economy.

This week, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh expressed heartfelt condolences following the passing of H.E. Hassan Omar Mohamed Bourhan, Djibouti's Minister of Defense. He was remembered as a distinguished statesman whose commitment to regional stability and security was exemplary, leaving a lasting mark on IGAD's peace and security framework. The Executive Secretary extended deep sympathies to President Ismail Omar Guelleh and the people of Djibouti.

This week, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh visited the Embassy of Qatar in Addis Ababa to sign the book of condolence following the passing of His Highness the Father Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. On behalf of IGAD, he conveyed heartfelt sympathies to Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the Qatari people, honoring the Father Emir's visionary leadership and enduring legacy. IGAD stands in solidarity with Qatar during this period of national mourning.

This week, IGAD Executive Secretary H.E. Dr. Workneh had the honor of representing IGAD at the historic opening session of the Ethiopian National Dialogue conference in Addis Ababa where he delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he reaffirmed IGAD's unwavering commitment to supporting inclusive, homegrown processes that pave the way for lasting peace, unity, and prosperity in Ethiopia and the wider region.

European union (EU)

This week, Djibouti and the European Union took a significant step in their strategic partnership by signing a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on July 17, 2026, during EU High Representative Kaja Kallas's official visit. The agreement establishes a formal legal framework for the EU's naval operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, to operate from Djiboutian territory, providing essential legal protections and operational arrangements for personnel.

The signing comes against a backdrop of persistent threats to international shipping in the Red Sea. Speaking aboard the Italian frigate BERGAMINI, High Representative Kallas emphasized that Operation ASPIDES is protecting lives, trade and stability but ships cannot secure sea lanes without reliable partners on shore. She also noted that over the past 29 months, the mission has successfully protected more than 670 merchant vessels and rescued 128 seafarers.

Djibouti's role as a strategic partner in regional maritime security was further underscored by Prime Minister Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed during separate discussions with the EU

delegation, where they addressed broader security challenges facing the Horn of Africa, including migration, refugee support and regional stability in Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea . The agreement ensures the EU can maintain access to Djibouti's logistical support, including fuel, water, food and air assets reinforcing Europe's ability to help secure one of the world's most critical maritime corridors

This week, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas visited Addis Ababa on July 15, 2026, where she held productive talks with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos. Describing Ethiopia as a valued partner and one of Africa's most influential countries, Kallas reaffirmed the EU's commitment to deepening ties across investment, digital governance, renewable energy, and critical raw materials.

Their discussions covered the region's most pressing security challenges, including the devastating war in Sudan, Al-Shabaab's terrorist threat in Somalia, Iran's attacks on its neighbors, and Russia's war against Ukraine along with its broader repercussions. Kallas also visited Ethiopia's National Dialogue conference, praising its scale and grassroots inclusiveness and expressed hope that it would deliver concrete results for peace and reconciliation.

She emphasized that stronger EU-Ethiopia ties serve shared interests, and that the EU is committed to more cooperation, business opportunities and investments while also noting the need for a welcoming business environment to attract European companies. The visit underscores Ethiopia's strategic role in the Horn of Africa and the EU's broader engagement with the continent as a partnership of equals.



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