



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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Horn of Africa and Beyond

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

On July 21, Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister Temesgen Tiruneh arrived in Ghana, to participate in the African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Health. The summit focused on building a self-reliant, resilient, and sustainable health future for Africa through universal health coverage, disease elimination targets by 2030, reduced maternal and child mortality, local pharmaceutical manufacturing, and a sustainable health-financing roadmap. During his visit, on July 23, Deputy Prime Minister Temesgen held bilateral discussions with Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama at Jubilee House, reaffirming longstanding Pan-African friendship, welcoming Ghana's new chancery building in Addis Ababa, and commending preparations for the 12th Tana Forum.

On July 23, 2026, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hadera Abera met with Kyrgyzstan's Ambassador Adylbek Tultemirov to pledge deeper bilateral cooperation in mining, energy, agro-processing, agriculture, tourism, trade, and infrastructure, while highlighting Ethiopia's recent political developments including the ongoing National Dialogue.

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Conference, which opened on July 15, 2026, continued actively throughout last week. Delegates worked in smaller groups (teams of 10 and 50) for idea generation, synthesis, and thorough discussions, supported by expert briefings on key themes including nation-building, history, federalism, and identity. The National Dialogue is expected to continue for several more weeks in its current phase, with broader plenary-style sessions involving all 4,000 delegates planned for the coming days across multiple venues. The core points framed last week focused on foundational national issues such as identity, federalism, history, and inclusive nation-building, laying the groundwork for deeper negotiations in subsequent stages.

On July 23, 2026, the company announced it generated 215.8 billion Birr in revenue during the just-ended fiscal year, marking a strong 33.2 percent increase over the previous year. This growth was driven by significant expansion of network infrastructure, wider 4G and 5G coverage, increased use of renewable energy, and a customer base that reached 90.1 million. The following day, on July 24, 2026, Ethio Telecom highlighted its critical role in the national digital ID (Fayda) program, having successfully registered nearly 32 million citizens accounting for 69 percent of all national enrollments, with special focus on reaching various regions and priority groups including farmers and internally displaced persons.

On July 24, Addis Ababa Mayor Adanech Abiebie launched the construction of Ethiopia's first Smart Polytechnic College in partnership with the Menschen für Menschen Foundation. The institution will offer technology-driven vocational training in manufacturing, engineering, and other key sectors to equip youth with practical skills and support job creation.

Also on July 24, Ethiopia and the United States convened a Public-Private Dialogue to strengthen commercial diplomacy, address investment barriers, and create a more predictable business environment, with senior officials and American business leaders discussing concrete action plans.

Looking ahead, Addis Ababa is set to reinforce its position as Africa's diplomatic capital by hosting two major international events at the end of July 2026. On July 29, the city will welcome the inaugural World Public Summit: Africa, which will bring together participants from across the continent and beyond to discuss sustainable development, innovation, public diplomacy, and cultural cooperation. Additionally, from July 27 to 31, Ethiopia will host the first African Logistics and Communication Symposium, convening representatives from 40 countries to strengthen collaboration in logistics and communication systems vital for peace, security, and humanitarian operations.

On July 26, Burundi's Foreign Minister Édouard Bizimana arrived in Addis Ababa for the 49th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council. This important meeting, scheduled for July 29, will focus on sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063, addressing critical challenges of water scarcity, urbanization, and climate change across the continent.

On the defense front, the Ethiopian National Defense Force inaugurated a new Advanced Central Laboratory at the Defense University on July 26, 2026. This state-of-the-art facility, developed in partnership with the United Arab Emirates, is equipped for cutting-edge research and training in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, communication engineering, automation, power systems, and more. It represents a major boost to innovation, technological capacity, and national security capabilities.

This important development connects directly to the graduation of the 71st Metemma Course officer cadets. Field Marshal Berhanu Jula affirmed that the Ethiopian National Defense Force is effectively thwarting plans of destructive forces seeking to undermine the country's progress. He stressed the critical need for modern training, advanced technology, and skilled human capital to safeguard Ethiopia's sovereignty and support its development path.

These interconnected activities demonstrate Ethiopia's proactive international diplomacy, continued national reconciliation efforts, digital and economic progress, educational investments, and defense modernization throughout the week.

2. Sudan

Sudan witnessed one of its most consequential weeks militarily in recent months as the Sudanese Armed Forces achieved significant territorial gains across North Kordofan while simultaneously hardening their political position against negotiations with the Rapid Support Forces. These battlefield advances, however, unfolded alongside continued civilian suffering, renewed concerns over human rights violations, and growing debates over Sudan's long-term political settlement and economic recovery.

The week's most significant development was the SAF's recapture of Bara, Um Sayala, Al-Baraka, and several surrounding localities in North Kordofan, culminating in the reopening of the strategic Omdurman–El Obeid Export Road after nearly two years of RSF control. The restoration of this critical transport corridor reconnects Khartoum with North Kordofan, strengthens logistical support to El Obeid, and creates favorable conditions for future military operations toward Darfur, where the RSF continues to maintain its strongest territorial presence. Following these gains, Army Commander Abdel Fattah al-Burhan rejected any prospect of renewed accommodation with the RSF, vowing to eliminate the group militarily, while senior military officials announced plans to extend operations westward toward the Central African Republic border. These statements suggest that Khartoum increasingly views recent battlefield successes as an opportunity to pursue a decisive military outcome rather than revive stalled mediation efforts.

Despite the military momentum, the humanitarian situation remained dire. Reports from Blue Nile alleged that an SAF drone strike hit a gathering of internally displaced civilians, causing significant casualties, while humanitarian organizations continued warning that civilians remain caught between increasingly sophisticated military operations. International reporting also highlighted the continued use of civilians as human shields in contested areas and the persistence of large-scale displacement, even as the International Organization for Migration reported that more than 4.6 million internally displaced Sudanese have returned to their areas of origin since the conflict began. These returns remain fragile, with many communities facing destroyed infrastructure, limited public services, and continuing insecurity.

Political and diplomatic tensions also remained prominent. Khartoum firmly rejected any international proposal that could grant political legitimacy to RSF-controlled territories, reinforcing its position that the paramilitary force cannot be treated as a legitimate political actor in any future settlement. Simultaneously, Sudan continued to contest U.S. allegations regarding the use of chemical weapons, arguing that Washington had ignored previous Sudanese offers to facilitate independent verification while imposing sanctions based on unsubstantiated claims. The dispute further reflects the deterioration of Sudan's

relations with Western partners at a time when international diplomatic efforts to revive negotiations remain largely stalled.

Economic recovery featured prominently in government discourse as authorities increasingly emphasized mining as the country's principal source of post-war reconstruction financing. Prime Minister Kamil Idris called for stronger regulation of artisanal mining and greater environmental oversight while positioning the sector as a pillar of Sudan's long-term economic strategy. The announcement that 17 companies had entered commercial gold production in South Kordofan further highlighted the government's effort to expand mineral production despite ongoing conflict. However, these ambitions continue to face challenges from widespread gold smuggling, environmental degradation linked to mercury and cyanide use, and insecurity in key mining regions.

Meanwhile, Sudan continued to confront serious structural challenges beyond the battlefield. Authorities introduced new electricity generation capacity through a power barge at Port Sudan to alleviate chronic nationwide blackouts, although officials acknowledged that damaged infrastructure, suspended electricity imports from Ethiopia, and wartime disruptions continue to undermine energy security. At the same time, renewed debates emerged over Sudan's water security following declining Nile water levels, with experts again calling for a legally binding agreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Taken together, this week's developments indicate that the conflict may be entering a new operational phase. The SAF's territorial advances have shifted momentum in central Sudan and strengthened the government's confidence in pursuing a military strategy, yet humanitarian conditions, economic fragility, and unresolved political divisions continue to complicate prospects for sustainable peace. As military operations increasingly push westward toward Darfur, Sudan appears to be approaching another decisive stage in the conflict—one in which battlefield gains may reshape the strategic balance but are unlikely, on their own, to resolve the country's deep political and governance crisis.

3. Egypt

Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty formally classified Nile water security as an existential threat on July 20, following reported declines in downstream river levels across Sudan and Egypt. Cairo's rhetoric, framed around Ethiopia's post-inauguration GERD operations, functions less as crisis management than as a diplomatic instrument to internationalize the dispute and pressure Addis Ababa after stalled bilateral technical negotiations.

That same day, senior diplomats from the United States, Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia met in Cairo to establish a joint framework spanning Horn of Africa security, Red Sea

governance, and Sudan's war. The summit illustrates Washington's growing reliance on a Cairo-anchored coalition, positioning Egypt as the indispensable broker linking Red Sea stability to containment of Ethiopian regional influence.

Egyptian and Turkish commando and paratrooper units conducted joint Golden Eagle exercises on July 20, focused on securing maritime infrastructure, countering drone threats, and rehearsing anti-terrorism raids. The drills mark a deepening Cairo-Ankara defense partnership, allowing Egypt to diversify its security guarantees for Eastern Mediterranean and Suez Canal approaches beyond traditional Western defense arrangements.

Between July 20 and 26, Egyptian transport authorities deepened bilateral port connectivity and maritime transit frameworks with Somalia, building on earlier maritime protocols. Beyond stated cooperation, the agreement advances Cairo's broader effort to keep Red Sea and Gulf of Aden governance confined to littoral states, effectively constraining Ethiopia's landlocked ambitions for independent sea access.

Egyptian defense and media briefings issued between July 20 and 24 warned that any blockade or disruption at the Bab el-Mandeb strait constitutes a direct threat to national security. Analysts noted that continued maritime diversion around the Cape of Good Hope already undercuts Suez Canal revenue, a persistent drain on foreign currency earnings central to Egypt's economic stability.

On July 25, Foreign Minister Abdelatty held a priority call with Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud to coordinate responses to escalating Red Sea military tensions. The consultation centered on establishing de-escalation protocols safeguarding shipping through Bab el-Mandeb, reflecting Cairo and Riyadh's shared exposure to disruptions along one of the world's most consequential maritime corridors.

On July 26, Abdelatty consulted with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to assess escalating regional flashpoints across the Levant and Gulf. Both ministers stressed unified Arab diplomatic messaging, underscoring Cairo's broader strategy of anchoring itself within Gulf-funded diplomatic coalitions to reinforce financial and political backing amid mounting regional instability.

Security monitoring confirmed on July 23 that over 4.4 million Sudanese refugees have fled into neighboring states, straining Egyptian border security and regional humanitarian systems. The scale of displacement transforms Sudan's civil war from a bilateral security concern into a structural burden reshaping Egypt's domestic resource allocation, migration policy, and diplomatic calculus toward Khartoum and the RSF.

On July 23, the United States allocated \$24 million through the World Food Programme to support over 150,000 Sudanese refugees and host communities in Egypt. The funding, while addressing acute humanitarian strain along Egypt's southern border, also signals

Washington's intent to keep Cairo positioned as the primary logistical hub for regional refugee response coordination.

At the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation conference on July 24, Egypt urged global enforcement against transnational armed groups, calling for stricter adherence to state sovereignty, intelligence sharing, and targeted financial blockades against extremist networks. The appeal reflects Cairo's recurring effort to frame Sudan's conflict and Red Sea instability within a broader counter-terrorism narrative that justifies expanded Egyptian security engagement.

On July 20, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and Montenegrin President Jakov Milatović signed a memorandum linking the Alexandria Port Authority with Montenegro's Port of Bar, establishing a direct Adriatic shipping connection. The agreement extends Egypt's maritime footprint into Western Balkan supply chains, diversifying trade routes and reducing reliance on Suez-dependent revenue streams amid regional shipping disruptions.

Petroleum Minister Karim Badawi announced on July 25 that Egypt's domestic crude oil output reached its highest level in two years. The increase bolsters national energy security at a moment when global transit disruptions and Red Sea shipping risks threaten import reliability, reducing Cairo's exposure to external supply shocks while easing pressure on foreign currency reserves.

Defense analyses published on July 20 detailed sustained Chinese intelligence interest in Egypt's centralized military command center, known as the Octagon. Beijing's monitoring highlights the facility's role in coordinating rapid-response deployments along Belt and Road maritime corridors, underscoring how Egypt's military modernization increasingly intersects with competing great-power interests in Red Sea and Mediterranean access routes.

Between July 20 and 24, Foreign Minister Abdelatty led Egypt's delegation to the fifty-ninth ASEAN Ministerial Summit in Manila, urging adoption of preventive diplomacy frameworks. He argued that localized conflicts rapidly generate global economic volatility, calling for structural reform of international financial institutions to better support developing states navigating overlapping security and economic shocks.

On July 24, Abdelatty affirmed Cairo's intent to broaden economic, agricultural, and diplomatic ties with Timor-Leste, expanding Egypt's commercial footprint in Southeast Asia. Combined with the ASEAN outreach and the Montenegro port agreement, the move reflects a deliberate strategy of geographic diversification, reducing Egypt's economic dependence on any single region amid persistent Middle Eastern and Red Sea volatility.

4. Eritrea

On 22 July, Eritrea's Ministry of Information announced the death of Minister Semere Russom, a veteran EPLF fighter and one of the country's longest-serving officials, at the age of 83 following an illness. According to the official announcement, Semere served in a succession of senior positions spanning nearly five decades, including ambassador to the United States, Minister of Education, Governor of the Central Region, and, from 2018 to 2025, Eritrea's ambassador to Ethiopia while simultaneously serving as education minister. The announcement focused on his service within the ruling establishment but provided no indication of any changes to government responsibilities or succession arrangements following his death.

Semere's passing is significant beyond the loss of a senior official, as it reflects the continued attrition of the liberation-era leadership that has dominated Eritrea's political system since independence. Like many senior PFDJ figures, his political authority was rooted in the EPLF generation that fought the independence war and subsequently occupied the state's principal political, diplomatic, and security institutions. His death further narrows an already aging governing elite at a time when Eritrea has shown little evidence of institutional leadership renewal or succession planning. The gradual disappearance of this cohort underscores the regime's longstanding reliance on liberation-era legitimacy rather than institutionalized governance, reinforcing uncertainty over the state's long-term political trajectory as the generation that built the system steadily recedes.

On 21 July, Al Jazeera reported that the series of diplomatic consultations in Cairo involving Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia, and US Senior Adviser for Africa Massad Boulos reflected growing efforts to coordinate responses to evolving security challenges in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. While official statements indicated that regional security dominated the agenda, Al Jazeera noted that the discussions occurred as Ethiopia's maritime ambitions, persistent Red Sea insecurity, and shifting regional alignments increasingly converge into a single strategic theatre. Following his meeting with Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, Boulos stated that the two sides discussed expanding cooperation on trade, regional economic development, security, and conflict resolution, underscoring continued, though limited, US diplomatic engagement with Asmara.

Al Jazeera's analysis argues that Eritrea's strategic importance derives less from alignment with any single regional actor than from its geographic position on the Red Sea and its longstanding rivalry with Ethiopia. The publication assesses Cairo's engagement with Asmara as part of a broader effort to shape the emerging regional security architecture by strengthening ties with states that share concerns over Ethiopia's expanding regional influence, particularly its maritime ambitions. At the same time, the participation of a senior US envoy suggests Washington is seeking to maintain dialogue with key regional

actors amid heightened geopolitical competition, signalling continued diplomatic engagement with Eritrea without indicating a broader normalization of bilateral relations.

On 22 July, an Eritrean delegation led by Biniam Berhe, Eritrea's Permanent Representative to the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, participated in the 20th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union Assembly on Health in Accra. According to Eritrea's Ministry of Information, the delegation presented the country's experience in expanding healthcare access, highlighting progress in maternal and child health, community-based healthcare delivery, and childhood vaccination. Eritrean officials stated that healthcare is provided free of charge or at minimal cost, claiming that 80% of the population lives within 10 kilometres of health services and that childhood vaccination coverage has reached 98%.

Beyond the health agenda, Eritrea's participation reflects its continued engagement with African multilateral institutions as part of a broader pattern of gradual international rehabilitation. Alongside increased engagement with the African Union, UN agencies, UNESCO, Japan, and other international partners, such participation illustrates Asmara's efforts to expand its diplomatic footprint after years of relative isolation. While these engagements indicate growing international willingness to work with Eritrea on sector-specific issues, they should not be interpreted as evidence of broader political normalization or improvements in governance and human rights, which continue to be assessed critically by UN mechanisms and international rights organizations.

On 23 July, the 28th Annual Eritrean Community Festival in the Scandinavian countries opened under the theme "Our Resilience: Our Guarantee", according to Eritrea's Ministry of Information. The event was inaugurated by Eritrea's Ambassador to Italy, Fesehatsion Petros, and brought together Eritrean community organizations from across Scandinavia. The programme included seminars by senior government representatives, cultural performances, exhibitions, a book fair, and youth activities, with organizers presenting the festival as a platform for preserving Eritrean history, culture, and national identity among diaspora communities.

The festival reflects the PFDJ's longstanding strategy of maintaining political influence over Eritrean diaspora communities, particularly in Europe, where large expatriate populations constitute an important source of financial and political support for the regime. Such events provide channels for mobilizing diaspora networks, reinforcing the government's preferred national narrative, and sustaining its claim to represent Eritrean unity abroad. They also help preserve transnational organizational structures that facilitate fundraising and political engagement, contributing to the regime's resilience by extending its influence beyond Eritrea's borders despite sustained international criticism of its domestic governance and human rights record.

5. Djibouti

On 26 July, Capital reported that Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tiryaki Agro, a Turkish agribusiness and logistics company, to explore a long-term concession for the management and operation of Tadjourah Port. According to the report, the agreement envisages technical and commercial assessments before negotiations on a formal concession, alongside investments to modernize port infrastructure, expand logistics and storage facilities, and improve the handling of agricultural and bulk commodities. The project builds on advisory support from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and follows Djibouti's earlier but unsuccessful efforts to secure Ethiopia's participation in administering the port.

The agreement reflects Djibouti's continued strategy of attracting diverse international investors to reinforce its position as the Horn of Africa's principal maritime and logistics hub amid intensifying regional competition over ports. By bringing in a Turkish operator, following Saudi investment in Tadjourah and continued Gulf involvement elsewhere, Djibouti is broadening its portfolio of strategic partners while reducing reliance on any single external actor. The development also illustrates how Djibouti is leveraging sustained demand for Red Sea infrastructure despite Ethiopia's pursuit of alternative maritime arrangements. As competition over regional ports increasingly intersects with geopolitical rivalry and maritime security concerns, Djibouti continues to consolidate its role as the principal gateway linking the Horn of Africa to global trade and investment networks.

On 21 July, Ethiopia and Djibouti agreed on a joint roadmap to operationalise the Galafi One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) following a two-day technical workshop in Bishoftu. According to the programme's organisers, the initiative is financed by the European Union through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and implemented by TradeMark Africa in partnership with both governments. The roadmap outlines the legal, institutional, and operational measures required to establish a single border clearance system at Galafi, the principal gateway linking Ethiopia to the Port of Djibouti, through which more than 95 percent of Ethiopia's maritime trade passes. The project also incorporates digital trade systems and capacity-building measures aimed at improving border efficiency.

The initiative underscores the strategic importance of the Ethiopia-Djibouti corridor beyond physical port infrastructure, highlighting the growing emphasis on trade facilitation and institutional integration as key components of regional connectivity. By streamlining customs and border procedures, the OSBP is expected to reinforce Djibouti's role as Ethiopia's primary maritime gateway while reducing logistical costs and transit times. The substantial involvement of the EU, AFD, and TradeMark Africa also reflects sustained international support for strengthening critical trade corridors in the Horn of

Africa, where improving cross-border infrastructure has become increasingly important amid heightened regional competition over ports, transport networks, and access to global markets.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political landscape remained dominated by preparations for the country's first post-independence elections, alongside continuing debate over implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement. Analysts argued that constitutional amendments and delays in implementing key provisions of the peace deal continue to shape the electoral environment, with concerns that unresolved political disputes could undermine a credible transition. While President Salva Kiir reiterated that the elections should deliver meaningful political change, observers stressed that credible polls will require stronger institutional reforms, inclusive political participation, and full implementation of the peace agreement before voting takes place.

International attention also remained focused on South Sudan's democratic transition. Commentary emphasized that the upcoming elections represent a critical opportunity to stabilize the country but warned that continued militarization, weak institutions, and political fragmentation could threaten both the electoral process and long-term peace.

Security concerns continued to center on the risks surrounding the planned elections. Reports warned that illicit arms trafficking remains one of the most significant threats to electoral security, raising concerns that political competition could escalate into localized violence. Analysts also pointed to the continued militarization of politics as a structural challenge that could undermine confidence in the electoral process if security sector reforms remain incomplete.

China reaffirmed its commitment to expanding military cooperation with South Sudan, signaling Beijing's continued role as an important security partner. The strengthening of defense cooperation reflects China's broader strategic engagement in South Sudan while complementing its growing economic and political presence in the country.

Regional diplomacy focused on strengthening cooperation with neighboring states. South Sudan and Uganda reaffirmed commitments to improving cross-border coordination, urging border communities to respect agreements reached during joint consultations. The two governments also accelerated discussions on border demarcation, reflecting ongoing efforts to reduce cross-border tensions and improve regional stability.

At the broader regional level, analysts examined South Sudan's policy of neutrality in the Sudan conflict, warning that Juba's balancing strategy may become increasingly difficult to sustain as the conflict evolves and regional actors face mounting pressure to align with competing diplomatic and security interests.

China continued expanding its engagement with South Sudan through both development cooperation and strategic partnerships. Analysts suggested that South Sudan could draw lessons from China's development experience in areas such as infrastructure, state capacity, and economic transformation. Beijing further pledged stronger bilateral military cooperation, reinforcing its position as one of Juba's principal international partners.

Meanwhile, debate continued within Western policy circles regarding international engagement with South Sudan. Commentators argued that the United States should move beyond symbolic diplomacy and adopt a more consistent strategy to preserve its influence while encouraging implementation of the peace agreement and democratic reforms.

The humanitarian situation remained fragile as conflict, displacement, and weak public services continued to place enormous strain on the country's healthcare system. Reports indicated that insecurity has pushed South Sudan's health sector toward a breaking point, limiting access to essential medical services and worsening humanitarian conditions in conflict-affected areas. Humanitarian agencies continued to warn that sustained political stability remains essential for improving service delivery and addressing the country's long-term development challenges.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

Relations between the federal government and Puntland State deteriorated sharply by military confrontations, verbal accusations and ultimatums. On 20 July fierce fighting erupted in the port city of Bosaso between Puntland Darwish forces and Puntland Security Force troops aligned with the federal government. The clashes resulted in casualties and the rift between Mogadishu and Garowe. The following day Puntland Darwish forces announced they had captured eight members of the PSF and seized multiple armed technical vehicles during operations in the aftermath of the Bosaso confrontations. On 23 July, Puntland authorities issued an ultimatum ordering federal government aligned security forces in Bosaso to surrender after they had allegedly seized positions within the city. This directive escalated the standoff with Puntland asserting its authority over security matters within its territory and rejecting federal military presence without regional authorization.

The tensions expanded beyond Bosaso when on 26 July Puntland authorities issued a formal statement declaring they were closely monitoring what they characterized as military activities by federal government forces in Galkayo. The regional administration alleged that President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was pursuing a deliberate plan to dismantle Puntland's system of government. Puntland's statement further asserted that it was closely monitoring military activities allegedly backed by the Somali president, describing these movements as a threat to peace and stability in areas under its

administration. The regional government also clarified that no force officially known as the PSF legally forms part of the Puntland Defence Forces and it does not recognize troops recruited or registered by the federal government operating inside Puntland without authorization from the regional administration and its security institutions.

Electoral negotiations continued in Mogadishu with a second round of Turkey facilitated talks convening on 20 July. Participants included representatives of the Federal Government, opposition groups including the Somali Salvation Forum and Nabad iyo Nolol and international observers from the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the United Nations. The parties reached agreement on three basic principles with preserving clan quotas, maintaining the 30 percent women's quota and pursuing one person, one vote elections.

The second round of talks concluded on 22 July without a comprehensive settlement. Delegations from Puntland and Jubaland withdrew from the negotiations citing insufficient progress on electoral models, constitutional amendments and broader federal issues. Core disputes centered on the mechanics of transitioning to one person, one vote elections, the preservation of clan quotas, women's representation and concerns regarding potential presidential term extensions. Despite the lack of a final agreement participants indicated that further sessions were expected in the future.

In a separate electoral development, the National Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission set deadlines for political party registration by 25 July and candidate nominations closing 30 July for local council elections in Galmudug. These preparations represent continued efforts to advance direct elections at the local level.

On 25 July, the federal government issued a call for an immediate end to clan fighting in Dawaco, Badhan district, Sanaag region. The Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and Reconciliation stated that it was closely monitoring the conflict between communities in the Dawaco area and urged warring parties to exercise restraint and seek dialogue. The ministry called on both sides to cease fighting and gunfire, to refrain from any actions or statements that could further inflame the conflict and emphasized that priority should be given to dialogue, mutual understanding and a lasting peaceful solution.

On 21 July the Somali National Army backed by international partners conducted a coordinated airstrike targeting an al-Shabaab hideout in the Suullaay area approximately 17 kilometers south of Teedaan in Hiiraan region. The operation successfully killed 18 militants, wounded 21 others and destroyed a technical combat vehicle, defensive positions, and fortifications. This strike followed a similar operation conducted in the same area on 17 July. The Ministry of Defence subsequently announced the operation on 23 July emphasizing that ongoing efforts continue to degrade al-Shabaab capabilities while prioritizing civilian safety.

On 26 July Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency supported by international partners conducted joint operations in the Miirtaqwo and Tardo areas located in Middle Shabelle and Hiiraan regions. The operations resulted in the deaths of 16 militants including two key figures: Abdisamad Mohamed, identified as the head of al-Shabaab's Radio Andalus propaganda unit and operative Ali Salad. One additional militant was seriously injured. The strikes targeted a Security House used for propaganda equipment including Radio Andalus facilities and destroyed vehicles and equipment. The operations were specifically designed to disrupt militants mobilizing for attacks in nearby areas including Goobo and Waabweyn.

On 20 July the second round of Turkey facilitated electoral talks commenced in Mogadishu, demonstrating Ankara's mediation role in Somalia's political transition. On 22 July, Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Musa Kulaklıkaya met with Somalia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar in Ankara. Discussions covered bilateral ties including diplomacy, trade, investment, security and education as well as regional developments.

On another front, Turkey's parliament approved a two-year extension of its military deployment in Somalia authorizing continued support for counterterrorism, training, maritime security and other threats until July 2028. This decision approved around 21 July shows Turkey's commitment to Somalia's security sector.

Reports on or around 25 July noted that the Turkish navy continued to escort a drilling fleet off Somalia's coast tied to hydrocarbons exploration efforts. However, former Puntland minister and political commentator Ali Haji Warsame publicly questioned Turkey's ability to commercially develop Somalia's offshore oil resources. He described current activities as limited to exploration and test drilling rather than full commercial production and criticized the agreement's terms, alleging profit sharing arrangements providing up to 90 percent to Turkey and citing a lack of transparency. Warsame suggested that commercial production was unlikely before 2034.

Additionally, a Turkish delegation from the agriculture ministry and fishing companies visited Mogadishu to assess the port and advance a bilateral fisheries project including meetings with the Ports and Marine Transport Minister to accelerate implementation.

On another front, The United States stepped up engagement with governments including Eritrea and Somalia regarding Red Sea security. Senior White House adviser for Arab and African affairs Massad Boulos met with the foreign ministers of Somalia and Eritrea in Cairo alongside Egyptian officials to discuss security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. This diplomatic initiative reflects Washington's renewed attention to the African side of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait amid a widening campaign of attacks on shipping in the Red Sea.

On 21 July the African Union Commission expressed concern over reported security developments and armed clashes in Mogadishu. The Commission called for utmost restraint, protection of civilians, an end to fighting and resolution of differences through dialogue and constitutional processes. The AU reaffirmed its support through the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia for peace and stability in the country.

Somaliland

On Saturday, Deputy Minister of Education Mr Mohamed Muuse Abdi widely recognized as Galayr, confirmed that a coordinated release and exchange of prisoners is imminent. Deputy Minister Galayr articulated that the resolution of this sensitive issue has been designated a paramount priority by the President of the Republic of Somaliland. He clarified that the operational oversight of this process has been formally delegated to the National Peace Committee which is tasked with finalizing the terms of the agreement. In a public address Minister Galayr appealed for patience from the citizenry stating that upon the conclusion of the Committee's deliberations and the finalization of an agreement, all prisoners held by both parties those detained in Las Anod and those within Somaliland's custody are scheduled to be released or exchanged on the same day.

Prominent Elder Articulates Conditional Reunification Position. In a contribution to the national dialogue on sovereignty, veteran traditional elder King Osman Aw Mohamud also known as Buurmadow has publicly articulated his perspective on the future of Somaliland-Somalia relations. In an interview with Dirane Television, King Buurmadow advocated for genuine dialogue between the two parties as the sole viable mechanism for resolving the political discord. While asserting that Somalia remains Somaliland's closest potential partner, the elder proposed a conditional framework for reunification. He stated that should a political settlement grant Somaliland the national flag and designate the city of Hargeisa as the capital of a unified state, he would strongly advocate for the reunification of the two entities. King Buurmadow further expressed confidence in the leadership of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud identifying him as a suitable counterpart for such high level negotiations.

The Republic of Somaliland has intensified its diplomatic engagement with the United States through a high level official visit to Washington, D.C. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Hon. Abdirahman Dahir Adan have arrived in the U.S. capital to undertake a series of meetings. The visit is designed to engage with U.S. government officials and leading American institutions with the core objective of bilateral relations and expanding cooperation between the Republic of Somaliland and the United States. The Foreign Minister's agenda is expected to focus on advancing shared interests, enhancing diplomatic engagement and exploring avenues for collaboration in areas of mutual importance.

8. Yemen

On 20 July, the Houthis announced an immediate naval blockade of Saudi Arabia, declaring that Saudi-linked vessels would be barred from transiting the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait. According to Al Jazeera, the group presented the move as retaliation for the attack on Sanaa International Airport on 13 July, which the internationally recognized Yemeni government said was intended to prevent an Iranian aircraft from landing, while the Houthis blamed Saudi Arabia. The announcement was followed by threats of military action against Saudi energy infrastructure, reports of attacks on Saudi oil facilities, and increased concerns over maritime security along one of the world's most critical shipping routes.

The declaration marks a significant broadening of the confrontation from Yemen's domestic conflict to regional maritime competition. By directly threatening Saudi shipping and energy exports through the Bab el-Mandeb, the Houthis are seeking to raise the economic costs of continued pressure on their administration while aligning the Yemen theatre more closely with the wider confrontation involving Iran, the United States, and regional partners. The renewed focus on the Red Sea also underscores the Houthis' continued ability to leverage their geographic position to influence global trade, particularly as disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have increased the strategic importance of Saudi export routes through the Red Sea.

Following the Houthi blockade announcement, military tensions intensified. On 24 July, the Saudi-led coalition confirmed that it had conducted strikes against what it described as legitimate Houthi military targets in Hodeidah, stating that the operation responded to Houthi threats against commercial shipping while emphasizing that Hodeidah Port remained open to maritime traffic. On 23 July, President Donald Trump warned of "major military punishment" for the Houthis and Iran, while an analysis by the Arab Center Washington DC argued that Yemen was increasingly becoming another front in the broader US-Iran confrontation after months of relative restraint.

Taken together, these developments indicate that the fragile equilibrium which had largely held since the 2022 truce is deteriorating. The convergence of Houthi attacks on maritime infrastructure, Saudi military responses, and increasingly explicit US deterrent messaging suggests that Yemen is becoming more deeply integrated into the wider regional contest between Iran and its adversaries. Rather than representing isolated incidents, the sequence reflects the growing interconnection between the Yemen conflict, Red Sea security, and broader geopolitical competition, increasing the risk that local escalation could generate wider regional and global economic consequences through disruptions to critical maritime trade routes.

9. Kenya

Kenya's geopolitical activity this week reflected its effort to strengthen national sovereignty while maintaining its role as a regional diplomatic and security partner. The most significant development was the dispute with the United Kingdom over their defence cooperation agreement. Britain cancelled a planned military exercise after Kenya withheld permission for British troops to train in Laikipia.

The disagreement focuses on legal jurisdiction when British soldiers are accused of crimes in Kenya, as well as compensation and accountability for communities near British training facilities. Kenya's position suggests that Nairobi is no longer willing to accept security agreements that appear to weaken the authority of Kenyan courts. However, both countries remain interested in continuing military cooperation, making a revised agreement more likely than a complete breakdown in relations.

Kenya also continued promoting regional integration through the East African Community. Government discussions focused on implementing previous summit decisions, improving regional institutions and expanding trade and investment. For Kenya, regional integration offers access to larger markets and strengthens Nairobi's position as East Africa's main commercial and diplomatic centre.

The country also hosted discussions on peace and trade in the Great Lakes region, particularly the continued instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Participants argued that the region already has several peace agreements, but governments have failed to implement them effectively. Kenya is therefore attempting to position itself as a mediator that connects security negotiations with practical issues such as border trade, civilian protection and economic cooperation.

Beyond East Africa, Kenya strengthened relations with Saudi Arabia and India. Talks with Saudi officials covered development, security and cooperation in international institutions. India also delivered medical supplies to support Kenya's preparedness for Ebola and other infectious diseases. These engagements demonstrate Kenya's strategy of maintaining relations with Western, Gulf and Asian partners without depending too heavily on any single power.

Kenya's regional ambitions were also visible in preparations for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, which it will host alongside Tanzania and Uganda. Successful preparation would strengthen Kenya's tourism, infrastructure and regional reputation. However, delays in stadium construction and fiscal pressures remain important challenges.

Overall, the week showed Kenya seeking greater strategic independence while preserving its international partnerships. Nairobi is strengthening its regional influence through security negotiations, economic integration and diplomatic mediation. Its main challenge

will be turning diplomatic agreements and international partnerships into measurable economic and security outcomes.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia faces renewed pressure on its Red Sea export corridor after Yemen's Houthis declared a maritime embargo framed as retaliation for long-standing restrictions on Yemeni ports and airports. The kingdom has diverted a substantial share of crude through Yanbu following disruptions elsewhere, making the route strategically vital for maintaining export volumes and fiscal revenues amid elevated regional tensions.

Two laden tankers carrying Saudi crude destined for Asian markets executed U-turns in the Red Sea shortly after the Houthi warning, redirecting toward safer alternatives. This immediate commercial response underscores how announcement alone can raise insurance costs, delay shipments, and complicate logistics for both energy and industrial imports such as steel products arriving via Asian routes

Saudi-led coalition forces conducted strikes on targets in and around Houthi-held Hodeidah and Kamaran Island according to Houthi and coalition statements. The operations appear calibrated to degrade capabilities that threaten shipping and coastal infrastructure while avoiding broader entanglement that could further strain the informal 2022 truce framework

In parallel Riyadh signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States permitting domestic uranium enrichment under American technology. The arrangement advances long-term energy diversification and technological capacity goals yet its entry into force remains subject to congressional review and political conditions that intersect with broader regional normalization dynamics.

Public messaging from senior Saudi officials reaffirmed strategic alignment with the United Arab Emirates through coordinated statements emphasizing shared history and leadership. This display serves to project Gulf cohesion at a moment when maritime threats and external conflicts test coordination among partners whose interests have diverged on Yemen and energy policy.

UAE

The United Arab Emirates has advanced infrastructure resilience by securing a long-term concession through DP World to develop two new shipping terminals on the eastern coast at Fujairah. This expansion creates alternative container and cargo capacity outside the Strait of Hormuz, reducing exposure to disruptions that have sharply curtailed traffic through the waterway and supporting continued trade flows amid regional maritime pressures

Senior Emirati diplomacy has focused on coordinated consultations with Qatar and Oman, as the foreign minister held telephone discussions with counterparts covering Middle East developments and pathways toward lasting regional security. These exchanges also reviewed bilateral fraternal ties and opportunities to expand cooperation across multiple domains, reflecting an interest in maintaining intra-Gulf communication channels during periods of elevated uncertainty

Official Emirati statements condemned recent attacks by Israeli settlers on West Bank villages, including the arson of a mosque in Tulkarm, characterizing the incidents as provocative acts of extremism. The foreign ministry called on Israeli authorities to assume responsibility, hold perpetrators accountable, and warned that inaction would deepen instability, while urging international support for efforts to revive a comprehensive peace process centered on a two-state outcome.

Economic engagement with the United Kingdom continues to deepen through established investment frameworks that have already exceeded original multi-year commitment targets. Such partnerships align with broader diversification objectives, channeling capital into priority sectors and reinforcing the UAE's position as a stable platform for cross-border commercial activity even as regional security conditions evolve.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali entered a more volatile phase this week as fighting intensified in the north, where a growing alliance of Tuareg separatists and jihadist groups has increased pressure on the military government. Analysts say shifting battlefield alliances, improved coordination among armed groups, and repeated attacks on military positions and supply routes have exposed the limits of Bamako's security strategy despite continued support from Russian forces.

The military leadership faces sustained internal pressure following the sentencing of a former intelligence chief and associates on July 24 for conspiracy against the government. The proceedings illustrate efforts to neutralize perceived internal threats while reinforcing hierarchical control, yet they also highlight underlying elite fractures that complicate unified command during external security challenges.

The security situation was underscored by a major attack on a military convoy involving Malian soldiers and Russian fighters, highlighting the increasing risks faced by government forces in northern Mali. At the same time, reports indicated that Russia's Africa Corps has continued finding alternative logistical routes into Mali to sustain its operations despite sanctions and regional constraints.

Politically, President Assimi Goïta's grip on power remains anchored by a close circle of senior military officers who continue to shape both the country's governance and its wartime strategy. The military leadership has shown little sign of altering its course despite mounting security challenges and growing international scrutiny.

Diplomatic developments also drew attention after reports emerged that the Trump administration was considering possible U.S. military action in Mali, while Malian officials reportedly did not rule out the prospect of U.S. intervention if it aligned with the country's security interests. Separately, Mali reaffirmed its support for Morocco's position on Western Sahara, endorsing Rabat's autonomy proposal in another sign of strengthening ties between the two governments.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's military government faced growing internal and external pressure this week as Captain Ibrahim Traoré publicly warned against any challenge to his leadership amid rumors of divisions within the ruling junta. His remarks followed speculation over tensions among senior military figures, with Traoré insisting there could be only one leader and signaling that the government would not tolerate attempts to undermine its authority.

The group also opened a new front in its domestic agenda by escalating its confrontation with influential Muslim scholars and religious leaders. Authorities accused some clerics of spreading messages that undermine the state, while Traoré declared a campaign against individuals he said were exploiting religion to weaken national unity. The move has raised concerns about deteriorating relations between the government and parts of Burkina Faso's Muslim community.

Economically, the government announced that more than \$6 billion worth of gold had passed through official channels, reflecting efforts to increase state oversight of the country's most important export sector and capture greater mining revenues despite the ongoing security crisis.

Regionally, the African Union Peace and Security Council prepared to review the political transitions in Burkina Faso and Niger alongside worsening security conditions across the central Sahel. Meanwhile, humanitarian concerns persisted after reports accused the Burkinabè military of preventing civilians from leaving towns besieged by jihadist groups, leaving many residents trapped between armed groups and government forces.

Niger

Under the 2025 Refoundation Charter, General Abdourahamane Tiani's mandate extends through 2030 with political parties dissolved, consolidating authority around a security-first governance model. This structure prioritizes institutional continuity and

counterinsurgency capacity while limiting formal avenues for organized political competition during a period of elevated militant activity.

Islamic State Sahel Province and Islamic State Greater Sahara elements maintain active campaigns in Tillabéri, Tahoua, and Dosso, with reported fatality levels in the second quarter of 2026 markedly higher than the previous year. The concentration of violence in these western and southwestern zones threatens population centers, trade corridors, and the government's ability to project consistent territorial control.

Formal withdrawal from the International Criminal Court and completed exit from ECOWAS continue to reshape external relationships. These decisions align Niger with Alliance of Sahel States partners in rejecting certain international legal and regional institutional frameworks viewed as constraining sovereignty and security autonomy.

The African Union Peace and Security Council is scheduled to review the situation on July 27. Such continental scrutiny intersects with ongoing efforts to deepen military and technical cooperation with non-Western partners, reflecting calculated trade-offs between external legitimacy and operational flexibility in addressing cross-border militant threats.

DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remained focused on security, humanitarian, and environmental challenges this week despite ongoing diplomatic efforts to stabilize the country's east. Fresh violence in eastern DRC left dozens dead, with authorities recovering bodies after attacks blamed on armed groups, underscoring the continued insecurity more than a year after the Washington-backed peace agreement that has yet to deliver lasting stability.

Regional diplomacy continued alongside the violence, with Qatar reaffirming its support for peace efforts in eastern DRC and international partners maintaining engagement with dialogue initiatives. Analysts, however, cautioned that recent stabilization efforts remain fragile, arguing that underlying political, governance, and security challenges continue to hinder durable peace.

Humanitarian concerns also remained acute. The Norwegian Refugee Council again ranked the DRC among the world's most neglected displacement crises for the tenth consecutive year, citing chronic underfunding, ongoing conflict, and limited international attention. Aid organizations also highlighted continued insecurity for humanitarian workers following recent kidnappings in conflict-affected areas.

Separately, Human Rights Watch warned that the operations of a Chinese-owned oil company in the Cuvette Centrale region pose a serious pollution risk to one of the world's largest tropical peatlands and surrounding communities. The organization called on

Congolese authorities to halt environmentally harmful activities and strengthen protections for the ecologically sensitive area.

Chad

Chad's security situation remained closely tied to developments in neighboring Sudan this week after a drone crossing from Sudanese territory struck the eastern border town of Tiné, injuring civilians, including two children, and destroying vehicles and market stalls. Chadian officials said the attack occurred several kilometers inside their territory and called on the central government to strengthen protection for border communities, marking the latest in a series of cross-border drone incidents linked to the Sudan conflict.

Regional security cooperation also featured prominently as Saddam Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army's Ground Forces, met with Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno to strengthen military and security coordination. The discussions focused on border security, counterterrorism, and efforts to curb transnational crime and instability affecting both countries.

Humanitarian agencies warned that severe funding shortfalls are threatening assistance for hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees in Chad, raising concerns over access to food, healthcare, shelter, and education as refugee arrivals continue to strain already limited resources. The UN refugee agency cautioned that without additional donor support, critical services could be significantly reduced.

Domestically, Chad continued to face criticism over its political environment following the imprisonment of eight opposition leaders and the banning of an opposition coalition earlier this year, developments that rights groups and opposition figures say reflect an increasingly restrictive political landscape under President Déby.

12. North Africa

Libya

On July 20-21, the US State Department notified Congress of a \$41 million allocation to resume diplomatic operations in Tripoli, ending a nearly fourteen-year absence. Beyond restoring diplomatic presence, the move signals Washington's intent to reassert influence in a theater where Russian and Turkish actors have expanded unchecked for years.

Between July 20 and 26, US Special Envoy Massad Boulos advanced shuttle diplomacy toward a power-sharing arrangement between Tripoli's Government of National Unity and Benghazi's Libyan National Army. Analysts questioned whether centralizing executive authority in Tripoli can realistically deliver stability across Haftar-controlled eastern and southern territories.

On July 20, a Turkish Air Force A400M transported a contingent of Haftar's Libyan National Army forces from Benghazi to Izmir for the EFES 2026 exercises. The gesture illustrates Ankara's calculated outreach to eastern Libyan military leadership, hedging its historically GNU-aligned position amid shifting regional alliances.

On the same day, the Turkish frigate TCG Giresun conducted joint operational training with Libyan naval personnel off the coast, reinforcing Ankara's maritime security partnership. Combined with the Izmir transport, the exercises underscore Turkey's strategy of maintaining leverage across Libya's fractured political and military landscape.

Reports published between July 20 and 25 highlighted growing scrutiny of logistics routes through eastern Libya, which reportedly serve as transit points for military materiel destined for Sudan's Rapid Support Forces. The corridor illustrates how Libya's unresolved fragmentation increasingly entangles it in neighboring conflict economies.

On July 24-25, human rights monitors confirmed that security forces in Benghazi detained over 6,000 African migrants, including roughly 3,000 Sudanese refugees held in a single facility. The crackdown reflects eastern authorities' use of migration control as both security policy and negotiating leverage with international partners.

Energy analyses published on July 20 highlighted internal friction following leadership changes at the National Oil Corporation. Industry observers warned that crude production stability remains fragile, with revenue distribution disputes reflecting the deeper east-west power struggle over Libya's most consequential economic lever.

Reports published on July 20 and 21 detailed ongoing anti-corruption investigations targeting senior ministry officials in Tripoli. The probes have exposed institutional rivalries within western Libyan political factions, suggesting that GNU cohesion remains fragile even as it seeks international legitimacy through embassy reopenings and mediation talks.

On July 20, demonstrators in Nuqat al Khams reportedly shut down natural gas pipelines serving the Mellitah industrial complex, protesting government inaction over an abandoned Russian tanker drifting toward Misrata. The incident highlights how weak state capacity leaves critical energy infrastructure vulnerable to localized grievances.

On July 25-26, temperatures reaching 50°C triggered severe power grid failures and a 1,350-megawatt deficit across Tripoli. Protesters blocked coastal highways, burned tires, and forced closures of government buildings in Janzour, Tajoura, and Souq Al-Jumaa, demanding Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah's resignation amid mounting public frustration.

On July 20, demonstrators in Zawiya blocked primary coastal transportation corridors west of Tripoli, protesting inflation, deteriorating infrastructure, and local security

instability. The unrest echoes broader public discontent visible in Tripoli's power-outage protests, reflecting a governance crisis extending well beyond the capital's political disputes.

On July 20, crowds gathered outside Tripoli's Ministry of Interior to oppose international proposals for local integration of irregular migrants, calling for stricter border enforcement. The demonstration underscores rising public resistance to externally driven migration policy, complicating Western partners' efforts to manage regional displacement pressures.

Algeria

On July 24-26, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune concluded an expanded natural gas agreement during state visits to Berlin, extending long-term pipeline export volumes. The deal reinforces Algeria's position as a central non-Russian energy supplier to Northern Europe, converting energy diplomacy into durable geopolitical leverage with the EU.

On July 20, Tebboune held formal talks in Algiers with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, focused on bilateral economic cooperation, Mediterranean migration management, and regional energy grid stability. The visit signals Algeria's parallel courting of Southern European partners alongside its expanding German gas relationship.

Morocco

On July 21, US Chargé d'Affaires Benjamin Ziff joined regional naval leaders in Rabat to open the African Maritime Forces Summit 2026, focused on Atlantic and Mediterranean maritime domain awareness and counter-piracy cooperation. The summit reinforces Morocco's positioning as Washington's preferred security anchor along Africa's Atlantic coast.

Progress reports released on July 26 detailed national milestones under King Mohammed VI's renewable energy program, including expansions at the Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex and national wind initiatives. Morocco remains on track toward 52 percent renewable capacity by 2030, strengthening its energy independence and regional soft-power credentials.

US President Donald Trump thanked Morocco's King Mohammed VI for naming the new 1,055-km Tiznit-Dakhla expressway the "President Donald J. Trump Highway." In a Truth Social post, Trump called it a "great honor" and said he hopes to travel its full length soon. The gesture underscores strengthening US-Morocco ties.

13. Middle East

Israel

In a Jerusalem Post interview published July 26, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu outlined firm conditions for ending the Iran conflict, asserting that the war will conclude only once the Iranian regime falls or permanently abandons its nuclear ambitions. His framing sets a maximalist benchmark for resolution, suggesting Israel anticipates a protracted campaign rather than any near-term diplomatic settlement with Tehran.

Reinforcing that outlook, Hebrew media reported the same day that Israeli defense leadership believes President Trump will ultimately be compelled to resume air strikes against Iran despite the current operational pause. The assessment reflects deep skepticism within Israel's security establishment that existing restraint will hold, anticipating renewed American military engagement in the coming weeks regardless of diplomatic efforts underway.

Consistent with that expectation, senior Israeli officials separately signaled that Israel will join offensive combat operations should Washington escalate from limited tactical strikes to directly targeting Iran's leadership and nuclear facilities.

Anticipating potential Iranian retaliation, municipalities including Kiryat Gat, Carmiel, Eilat, and Ramat Gan ordered civil defense teams to unlock public bomb shelters as a precautionary measure against possible ballistic missile strikes. The preparations illustrate how domestic civil defense readiness remains closely tied to the unresolved and volatile trajectory of the broader Iran confrontation.

On the legal front, President Trump publicly stated that Netanyahu would face no arrest by federal law enforcement if he visited the United States, effectively neutralizing enforcement of the International Criminal Court's warrant over alleged Gaza war crimes and reinforcing Washington's longstanding rejection of ICC jurisdiction over Israeli government officials and military personnel.

That shielding drew immediate domestic pushback when New York political figure Zohran Mamdani publicly urged the federal government to enforce the ICC warrant against Netanyahu, while acknowledging that municipal authorities lack legal power to execute international warrants, highlighting a widening rift within American politics over broader Israel policy and international accountability questions.

Israeli intelligence agencies meanwhile issued public awareness warnings after Mossad exposed covert Iranian campaigns seeking to recruit local informers inside Israel for espionage and sabotage purposes, underscoring how Tehran is pursuing internal infiltration tactics alongside its overt missile and nuclear posturing amid the broader, still-unresolved regional confrontation between the two states.

Mossad separately announced it had disrupted an Iranian intelligence plot aimed at infiltrating Israel to conduct surveillance and assassinate senior officials, a disclosure reinforcing growing concerns that Tehran is actively targeting Israeli leadership figures directly, not merely relying on missile strikes or proxy militant operations elsewhere across the wider region.

Ahead of Tisha B'Av, President Isaac Herzog addressed the nation, cautioning that internal political polarization poses grave risks during the ongoing war, a message aimed squarely at unifying public sentiment amid mounting external threats and simultaneous domestic social tensions straining the country's governing coalition, public morale, and overall civic cohesion.

That domestic strain became visible when demonstrators from the Gur Hasidic sect staged aggressive protests near the Attorney General's residence and breached perimeter barriers at Beit Lid military prison, objecting to the arrest of draft-evading yeshiva students, exposing persistent internal fractures over conscription exemptions and long-running religious-secular political tensions overall.

Beyond domestic politics, international monitors and human rights groups documented escalating operational coordination between IDF units and armed Israeli settlers in the West Bank following a lethal military operation, heightening diplomatic scrutiny over accountability structures and territorial governance across the contested population centers of the broader occupied West Bank territory.

Compounding those concerns, Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz announced plans for expanded IDF ground operations targeting militant strongholds throughout the West Bank following fatal cross-border security clashes, signaling a broader military posture shift likely to intensify friction with Palestinian communities across the territory over the coming weeks and months ahead.

In Gaza, Israeli strikes conducted on July 20 targeted Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas infrastructure across central and northern areas of the territory during a period of heightened regional tension, underscoring that active combat operations there continued largely uninterrupted despite the broader strategic focus shifting toward the Iran and Lebanon fronts.

Along the northern border, the Israeli military launched a pilot zones security program in southern Lebanon in cooperation with US and Lebanese armed forces, issuing strict warnings against contractual violations and signaling a structured, internationally monitored approach to managing the fragile post-conflict security arrangement now taking shape in the south.

Supporting that expanded regional posture, Israeli defense officials announced preparations to host additional US aerial refueling tankers following American tactical

posture realignments across the Middle East, indicating deepening logistical cooperation between the two militaries amid sustained operational tempo across multiple simultaneous active fronts stretching from Gaza through Lebanon and beyond.

Israeli military briefings further revealed a subterranean complex beneath Lebanon's Beaufort Ridge that served as a primary Hezbollah command hub, an intelligence disclosure illustrating the considerable scale of militant infrastructure still operating beneath the surface despite months of sustained Israeli strikes and ground operations across southern Lebanon's rugged terrain overall.

Parallel to these military disclosures, Israel and Lebanon initiated a trilateral security arrangement involving US military observers to coordinate the initial phase of Hezbollah's strategic disarmament in southern border sectors, offering a diplomatic counterpoint to ongoing kinetic operations continuing simultaneously across the same contested and increasingly volatile southern border region.

That diplomatic track faced friction when the Lebanese Army stated that continued Israeli military demolitions and artillery sweeps in the south were obstructing its own planned deployment under the security framework, exposing growing tension between Israel's sustained operational tempo and Beirut's efforts to reassert sovereign state authority in the south.

Cultural and diplomatic friction extended further when UNESCO added new heritage sites in the West Bank and Lebanon to its World Heritage List despite formal diplomatic objections lodged by Israel, a symbolic move likely to intensify longstanding Israeli criticism of the organization's perceived political bias toward Palestinian and Lebanese positions internationally.

On broader regional strategy, former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and senior defense figures voiced public alarm over a proposed US-Saudi civilian nuclear deal, calling it a severe strategic threat capable of catalyzing regional nuclear proliferation and undermining Israel's long-held deterrence posture across the wider, already volatile Gulf region more broadly.

Amid this security turbulence, newly released trade data showed Israeli overseas exports reached an all-time high of \$169 billion, surpassing the previous record set in 2022, demonstrating the economy's underlying resilience despite sustained regional security constraints and ongoing multi-front military commitments straining national resources, budgets, and available manpower reserves considerably.

Iran

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's account of the strike that killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, describing it as the opening of a full-scale war, has been reinforced by the campaign's mounting costs: Defense Secretary Hegseth disclosed \$37.5 billion in expenditures and seventeen American deaths since early July, while the Pentagon separately confirmed recovery of a missing soldier and an additional fatality from drone-disposal operations in Iraq.

That toll has not slowed the bombardment, as US Central Command executed a tenth consecutive night of strikes targeting infrastructure threatening Hormuz shipping, followed two nights later by a twelfth-night campaign against western Iranian cities including Ahvaz, Ramshir, and Andimeshk, and ultimately a thirteenth night that provoked Iranian missile retaliation against American facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan.

That same thirteenth night coincided with the US House passing a symbolic resolution demanding an end to military engagement in Iran, even as Iranian forces fired surface-to-surface missiles at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait and later launched drones against American bases in Bahrain and Jordan, illustrating how battlefield escalation and domestic political dissent are now unfolding simultaneously.

Kuwait's air defenses intercepted the incoming drones, while both governments hardened their deterrence rhetoric: Foreign Minister Araghchi adopted an explicit "eye for an eye" framework, and President Trump announced a policy of destroying one Iranian bridge or power plant for every attack launched against commercial shipping transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's own military command warned that any strike on nuclear facilities, including the fortified Pickaxe Mountain site, would trigger direct retaliation against American assets, a threat that gains context from intelligence reports that Iranian teams had secretly relocated thousands of centrifuges into that same mountain complex, effectively daring Washington to test its own infrastructure-targeting deterrence policy against Tehran's most sensitive asset.

Beneath this military crossfire, Iran's asymmetric campaign against Gulf shipping continued unabated, with the IRGC Navy forcibly intercepting four commercial vessels navigating unauthorized routes, separately disabling two oil tankers through onboard explosions, and striking a third vessel so severely that its crew was ultimately forced to abandon ship entirely amid the chaos.

Tehran paired that interdiction campaign with explicit sovereignty claims over the Strait of Hormuz, warning foreign powers against disrupting its maritime protocols, while the US Navy fired on a merchant vessel attempting to breach its own naval blockade of

Iranian ports, and the IRGC ordered regional civilians to remain five hundred meters clear of any facility hosting American personnel.

Maritime tensions persisted into the war's final week, as Iranian forces intercepted six additional vessels attempting Hormuz transit on July 26, even as Human Rights Watch warned that public threats against energy grids and transport infrastructure from both Washington and Tehran risked constituting grave violations of the laws of war.

Iran's proxy network extended the crisis southward, as Houthi forces first announced a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia following air combat over Yemeni airspace, then formalized a blockade targeting Aramco tankers and energy assets near Jizan and Yanbu, before expanding strikes into the Bab el-Mandeb corridor against additional Saudi oil facilities.

Diplomatic efforts moved in parallel through Baghdad, where Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's first official visit to Tehran to discuss border stability coincided with Iran's transmission of a ten-day ceasefire framework through intermediaries, an overture Tehran ultimately rejected when a formal US ceasefire proposal, again conveyed through al-Zaidi, was turned down.

A more durable pause nonetheless emerged by week's end, as Washington and Tehran observed a forty-eight-hour airstrike lull while an Omani delegation negotiated Hormuz transit rules in Tehran, Iran's army spokesman confirmed a reciprocal halt to strikes against American allies, and Washington separately authorized the resumption of direct US airline flights to Lebanon.

President Trump insisted throughout that American forces were "not finished" and that Iran would need decades to recover, a posture underscored when credible proxy threats forced a mid-trip switch of his presidential aircraft during NATO transit through Turkey, even as Lebanese President Joseph Aoun used a separate Washington summit to press for full Israeli withdrawal from the south.

Facing this pressure, Britain readied its own defenses after Iranian threats targeted UK bases hosting American bombers, while Araghchi reaffirmed Tehran's strategic coordination with Moscow and Beijing to blunt Western coercion, a defiant stance that came days after the European Union sanctioned five Iranian judges and a cyber official over domestic human rights abuses.

Domestic repression proceeded alongside these external pressures, as authorities executed twenty-six-year-old PMOI activist Mehdi Khanaki in Karaj, prompting MEK-led protests across multiple cities, while roughly fifteen hundred death-row inmates at Karaj's Ghezel Hesar prison sustained their hunger strike into a thirteenth day, according to reporting reaffirming the protest's persistence against surging state executions.

Iran's reach extended well beyond its borders, as newly filed US legal evidence showed that Hadi Matar, charged in the attack on author Salman Rushdie, had communicated with an Iranian handler codenamed Kamyar to verify a religious fatwa before the assault, while cybersecurity researchers separately exposed Trojanized VPN applications deployed to surveil Persian-speaking dissidents worldwide.

Turkey

Turkish Air Force F-16 fighters and T129 helicopters recently executed direct airstrikes against Al-Shabaab targets in Somalia. Shifting from traditional military advisory roles to active combat engagement, Ankara seeks to stabilize the Somali state apparatus while simultaneously expanding its own strategic and security footprint across the strategically vital Horn of Africa.

Beyond immediate combat operations, broader infrastructure and energy commitments further anchor Turkish influence within Mogadishu. The deployment of the Çağrı Bey drilling vessel into Somali offshore blocks is now augmented by specialized naval escorts. Concurrently, ongoing spaceport construction and missile testing site developments highlight Turkey's ambition to secure multifaceted maritime and aerospace leverage regionally.

Pivoting to broader maritime security frameworks, Turkish special forces recently partnered with Egyptian commandos for the Golden Eagle tactical exercises. These joint maneuvers prioritized counter-drone protocols and hostage rescue simulations. The collaboration underscores a mutual strategic interest in stabilizing critical commercial shipping lanes traversing both the Red Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Extending this cooperative regional engagement across North Africa, an A400M transport aircraft effectively airlifted Libyan National Army personnel to Izmir. Facilitating their participation in the EFES military maneuvers demonstrates an adaptive diplomatic approach. By actively integrating eastern Libyan forces, Ankara meticulously balances relations across rival administrations to preserve essential geopolitical and economic interests.

In a parallel assertion of maritime sovereignty, authorities designated an exclusive offshore zone north of Cyprus for advanced seismic research. Scheduled through late August, this initiative aims to map a comprehensive seabed route for natural gas infrastructure connecting the mainland to northern Cyprus. The maneuver actively consolidates regional energy claims amidst persistent jurisdictional disputes.

Directly responding to those expansive offshore energy explorations, the Greek administration finalized a multi-layered air defense procurement with Israel. Valued at approximately four billion dollars, this robust anti-missile shield spans the Aegean Sea. The resulting acquisition fundamentally alters regional deterrence dynamics by countering

potential tactical aviation strikes and limiting neighboring aerial maneuverability over contested waters.

Complicating these regional deterrence capabilities, the United States State Department formally notified Congress that Ankara remains excluded from the F-35 fighter consortium. Despite recent diplomatic overtures suggesting potential policy adjustments, Washington maintained a strict prerequisite. Total divestment from Russian S-400 missile defense architecture is definitively required before any future fifth-generation aircraft acquisitions proceed.

Economic friction subsequently compounded these bilateral defense disagreements as federal authorities applied a significant trade tariff against specific imported goods. Imposing a stringent tax rate under prevailing forced labor compliance statutes, the unilateral regulatory action introduces measurable financial pressures. This fiscal penalty effectively escalates the complex diplomatic tension currently defining their transactional partnership.

Further exacerbating financial disputes, the Treasury Department deliberately sanctioned a prominent commercial trading node operating domestically. Investigators asserted the corporate entity functioned as an essential conduit channeling monetary assets toward allied Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood networks. Such targeted fiscal isolation illustrates growing international scrutiny regarding perceived systemic vulnerabilities within local financial compliance frameworks.

Addressing ideological and diplomatic fractures in the Levant, the Foreign Ministry forcefully condemned a prominent Israeli cabinet minister's recent incursion into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Characterizing the deliberate visit as an intolerable violation of historical religious site protocols, the rhetorical escalation reflects a steadfast commitment to championing regional Palestinian causes amid deepening geopolitical polarization.

Internal media dynamics mirror these external regional sensitivities, prompting the Radio and Television Supreme Council to launch a formal investigation into an opposition broadcaster. An anchor's public criticism of the Syrian interim executive catalyzed the regulatory inquiry. This administrative intervention highlights an overarching governmental priority to stabilize diplomatic reconciliation efforts with neighboring Damascus.

Simultaneously refining overland logistical capabilities, newly operationalized freight convoys successfully navigated a direct transit corridor traversing Syrian territory into federal Iraq. Strategically circumventing traditional hubs managed by the Kurdistan Regional Government, this infrastructural realignment reduces operational dependencies. Consequently, the commercial bypass bolsters independent economic reach across volatile borderlands while reshaping regional supply chains.

Complementing these territorial realignments, state intelligence assets reportedly commenced discrete negotiations to systematically relocate senior militant cadres toward northern Iraqi zones. Moving these insurgent figures explicitly toward Sulaymaniyah reflects an intricate pacification strategy. This calculated diplomatic overture attempts to decisively neutralize persistent cross-border operational threats while managing complex sub-state political rivalries abroad.

These multifaceted external engagements coincide with a profound domestic political reorganization, initiated by a mass parliamentary exodus. Resigning alongside a substantial legislative bloc, former opposition leadership successfully launched a formidable new secular party. Controlling significant assembly seats, this emergent coalition immediately displaced the historical establishment to become the primary opposition force.

To insulate this evolving domestic landscape from external supply shocks, the government initiated a comprehensive public auction distributing numerous mining exploration licenses. Dispersing the expansive extraction rights directly bolsters industrial autonomy and generates crucial state revenue. Ultimately, expanding internal mineral production deliberately minimizes widespread strategic vulnerability to unpredictable global resource import obligations.

Syria

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres conducted a landmark diplomatic visit to Damascus, holding high-level discussions with interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa and Foreign Minister al-Shaibani. Touring the former Sednayah prison complex, Guterres advocated for substantial international financial backing during Syria's transition while explicitly criticizing ongoing Israeli military incursions.

Building upon this broader international engagement, Syrian and Turkish state representatives signed a bilateral agreement to establish reciprocal cultural centers in Damascus and Ankara. This landmark diplomatic accord highlights ongoing normalization efforts between the neighboring nations, fostering expanded civil, academic, and cultural cooperation following years of heightened regional friction.

Parallel diplomatic dialogues extended to Western partners as Ministry of Education officials convened with a United Kingdom delegation in Damascus. The consultations evaluated structural rehabilitation requirements across primary education, formulating international assistance frameworks aimed at facilitating systemic academic recovery and infrastructure restoration throughout Syria.

Expanding upon macroeconomic stabilization plans, Economy Minister Nidal al-Shaar announced the upcoming 63rd Damascus International Fair. Convening alongside the inaugural Damascus World Economic Forum in late August, the landmark event aims to

attract foreign capital, catalyze regional commercial integration, and cultivate strategic public-private investment partnerships.

Reinforcing these foreign investment directives, the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Commerce finalized a Memorandum of Understanding with the Syrian-Chinese Business Council. This strategic agreement intends to significantly expand direct bilateral trade, streamline cross-border logistical networks, and secure substantial Chinese capital for critical national infrastructure projects.

Complementing external trade agreements, domestic industrial revival gained visibility as First Lady Latifa al-Droubi toured the Syria International Textile Exhibition in Damascus. Showcasing indigenous manufacturing capabilities, the exposition highlighted state-backed efforts to rehabilitate regional supply chains, empower local enterprises, and restore Syria's historical textile export dominance.

While domestic economic initiatives advance, security challenges persist along the southern border following a military incursion by Israeli forces in Quneitra province, resulting in the detention of a Syrian civilian. Official channels condemned the cross-border operation, calling for sustained international diplomatic pressure to halt ongoing territorial violations.

Further underscoring southern border vulnerabilities, Syrian Drug Enforcement Administration units executed a major interdiction in Sweida province, seizing nearly half a ton of hashish. The targeted law enforcement operation effectively disrupted an organized illicit narcotic smuggling network attempting to transport contraband across sensitive international frontiers.

Highlighting domestic emergency response and regional diplomatic ties, a severe highway collision between Damascus and Deir Ezzor prompted presidential orders for military helicopter air evacuations. The tragic incident drew formal expressions of condolence from international diplomatic missions, including representatives from Turkey, the UAE, Iraq, Bahrain, and Iraqi Kurdistan.

14. Global Powers

President Donald Trump said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would not be arrested while in the United States, after New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani said he was examining legal options concerning the ICC warrant against Netanyahu. Trump reaffirmed his support for Netanyahu and rejected the possibility of his arrest on U.S. soil. Netanyahu's planned Washington visit became an important diplomatic event because it was expected to address Iran, Gaza and the wider Middle East security situation.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio travelled to Manila, Philippines, for a series of ASEAN-related ministerial meetings, including the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The trip was strategically important because Washington was attempting to reassure Asian partners that the U.S. focus on the Middle East had not weakened its Indo-Pacific commitment. Rubio told regional partners that improved U.S.-China relations would not mean abandoning American allies.

Rubio held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the margins of the regional meetings in Manila. The two sides discussed the possibility of a future Trump–Xi Jinping meeting, alongside broader U.S.-China relations and regional security.

The meeting is strategically significant because Washington is simultaneously attempting to manage competition with Beijing while preventing the relationship from deteriorating into a broader confrontation.

At the ASEAN Regional Forum, Rubio sought to reassure U.S. partners that Washington's pursuit of a more stable relationship with Beijing did not represent a retreat from the Indo-Pacific. The message was particularly important for Southeast Asian governments concerned that the U.S. focus on the Middle East could create a strategic vacuum that China might exploit.

This was one of the week's most important U.S. diplomatic developments outside the Middle East.

The White House issued an executive action aimed at securing U.S. defence supply chains and increasing domestic acquisition of critical materials. The measure fits the administration's broader strategy of reducing strategic dependence on foreign supply chains, particularly for minerals and materials essential to defence production.

This is relevant to the wider U.S.-China strategic competition because critical minerals have become a major element of economic and national-security policy.

The Kremlin said Russia believes Trump is sincere about trying to end the Ukraine war and would wait for new U.S. proposals, even as Washington continues supplying weapons to Ukraine. Moscow simultaneously indicated that it would continue pursuing its objectives militarily.

This indicates that the administration's Ukraine strategy remains a combination of military support for Kyiv and pressure for a negotiated settlement. The Russian response suggests that Washington has not yet succeeded in producing a breakthrough in negotiations.

Israel confirmed that Netanyahu would travel to Washington and meet Trump. The visit is expected to focus heavily on the Iran conflict and the wider regional security environment.

The timing is significant because the Trump administration is trying to manage the relationship between U.S. support for Israel and its broader diplomatic and strategic objectives in the Middle East.

President Trump said he trusted Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin not to provide weapons to Iran or facilitate Iranian military procurement. The statement came amid U.S. concerns about possible Russian and Chinese assistance to Tehran. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, meanwhile, told lawmakers that Moscow and Beijing were involved with Iran in unspecified ways. This is a significant development because the Iran crisis is increasingly becoming connected to the broader U.S.–Russia–China strategic competition.

The administration announced a new round of double-digit tariffs affecting around 60 countries, with rates reportedly ranging from 10% to 12.5%. The move forms part of Trump's broader trade strategy and should be included in the U.S. foreign-policy briefing because the administration increasingly uses trade policy as an instrument of geopolitical leverage.

The Trump administration notified Congress that it intends to allocate nearly \$41 million for security-related preparations to support a potential phased reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, which has been closed since 2014. The initial funding would strengthen the existing U.S. diplomatic satellite office in Tripoli and prepare the ground for a permanent diplomatic presence.

The State Department said the move is important to U.S. national security because Libya's location affects North African security, energy markets and migration, while Russia's growing influence in Libya poses a challenge to U.S. and allied interests. The development is particularly significant because U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Senior Adviser for Arab and African Affairs Massad Boulos, have recently engaged with Libyan actors from both the eastern and western political camps.

President Vladimir Putin met North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui in Moscow and thanked Pyongyang for its support of Russia's war effort. The meeting followed the third Russia–North Korea strategic dialogue between Choe and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

The Kremlin said it would welcome a meeting between Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the ASEAN-related meetings in Manila. The Russian side indicated that preparations for such contact were underway. The Kremlin's willingness to facilitate a Lavrov–Rubio meeting suggested that Moscow wanted to keep a direct diplomatic channel with the Trump administration open.

Russia announced that it had declared two Italian diplomats *persona non grata*, describing the move as reciprocal. The expulsion followed a deterioration in relations between Moscow and Rome and reflects the continuing diplomatic confrontation between Russia and European governments over the Ukraine war.

15. Europe

The week's defining British development was the formal change of government. Andy Burnham became Prime Minister on 20 July, replacing Keir Starmer after Starmer's resignation. Burnham became Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade and immediately pledged to reshape Britain's political and economic direction. His government faces a difficult domestic environment, but the transition also has significant foreign-policy implications because Britain remains deeply involved in Ukraine, NATO and European security.

On his first day as prime minister, Burnham held a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. The call is significant because Berlin is one of Britain's most important European security partners. The two countries are closely aligned on Ukraine, NATO and European defense, making this one of Burnham's first important international contacts.

By the end of the week, it was confirmed that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would become Burnham's first foreign visitor, with the meeting scheduled for 27 July. The symbolism is significant. It signals continuity in Britain's strong support for Ukraine despite the change from Starmer to Burnham and places the Ukraine war at the center of the new government's foreign-policy agenda.

On 23 July, EU ambassadors agreed on the bloc's 21st sanctions package against Russia. The package targeted Russia's banking sector and cryptocurrency networks and expanded restrictions connected to Moscow's war effort. At the same time, Greece secured a one-year exemption, with automatic renewal, allowing EU companies to transfer Russian LNG to third countries. This illustrates the continuing tension within the EU between maintaining pressure on Moscow and protecting the economic interests of individual member states.

On 24 July, EU foreign-policy chief Kaja Kallas publicly questioned the rationale behind new U.S. tariffs imposed on the European bloc. The issue added another layer of tension to transatlantic relations, coming at a time when European governments are simultaneously trying to maintain close security cooperation with Washington.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

UNMAS and UNSOS are conducting Conventional Munitions Disposal (CMD) training for Djiboutian peacekeepers serving under AUSSOM in Beletweyne, Somalia, aimed at enhancing their ability to handle conventional ammunition and improvised explosive devices that remain a persistent threat in the mission area.

One trainee noted the course would significantly improve understanding of the various ammunition types encountered in Somalia. This is critical given Al-Shabaab's continued reliance on roadside bombs and vehicle-borne IEDs as primary asymmetric weapons. Beletweyne, situated along a strategic corridor linking central and southern Somalia has seen repeated militant attacks, making counter-IED capability a life-saving competency for stationed troops. Djibouti remains one of the longest-serving contributors to AU missions in Somalia and this training reflects the broader effort to ensure peacekeepers possess the technical skills needed to operate safely while supporting the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces.

Africa Union

The African Union has asked Somalia to urgently nominate representatives for technical consultations in Addis Ababa from July 22 to 24 that will shape the future of AUSSOM, as the mission faces mounting financial uncertainty. The talks will bring together Somali officials, AUSSOM, UNSOS, UNOAU and troop contributing countries to examine operational, financial and legal aspects of the mission, as well as force structure, logistical support, and Somalia's security transition.

The urgency stems from the United States' decision to end support for UNSOS logistical operations beyond December 2026. UNSOS has long been the logistical backbone for AU missions in Somalia, handling fuel, rations, medical evacuations and base maintenance. Without predictable alternative funding, the AU has warned that AUSSOM may struggle to maintain its current strength, a worrying prospect given Al-Shabaab's continued ability to launch deadly attacks.

The Addis Ababa consultations will feed into high-level meetings in Kampala later in the week, culminating in an extraordinary summit of leaders from troop contributing countries on July 31. Underlying these discussions is a growing consensus among AU members that external missions must eventually end and that Somalia must accelerate security sector reforms and move toward self-reliance. The challenge remains managing this transition without creating a vacuum that Al-Shabaab could exploit.

The AU Peace Support Operations Division, led by General Cheick Dembelé, convened a Meeting of Experts on July 24 in Addis Ababa to exchange views on the future of the

AU's engagement in Somalia. The meeting brought together the Federal Government of Somalia, AUSSOM, troop and police contributing countries, the Military Staff Committee, the A3 and the United Nations.

The talks form part of the AU's strategic consultative process launched after the Peace and Security Council's July 8 decision to evaluate options for the mission's future. They took place just two days after armed clashes erupted in Mogadishu on July 22 between factions of Somali security forces near the presidential palace, prompting the AU Commission to call for restraint and constitutional dialogue.

The meeting fed into high-level sessions in Kampala culminating in an extraordinary summit of troop-contributing country leaders on July 31. All deliberations are shadowed by funding uncertainties following the US decision to end support for UNSOS logistical operations beyond December 2026, a move that threatens AUSSOM's operational capacity against Al-Shabaab. The consultations reflect the balancing act between sustaining security gains and accelerating Somalia's transition toward self-reliance without creating an exploitable vacuum.

AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf received the Letters of Credence of Ambassador Abdullah Al Zahrani as Saudi Arabia's Permanent Representative to the AU, with both sides pledging to deepen their strategic partnership.

Ambassador Al Zahrani conveyed greetings from King Salman and reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to Africa's health and development priorities through the Africa CDC and NEPAD Agency. He also commended the AU's African-led solutions to conflicts in Sudan, Libya and eastern DRC. Chairperson Youssouf briefed the Ambassador on the recent AU Health Summit in Accra and sought enhanced collaboration on pandemic preparedness. He expressed appreciation for Saudi Arabia's support to peace efforts in Somalia and its constructive role in easing Middle East tensions, noting that instability in the Strait of Hormuz directly harms African economies. The Ambassador welcomed the Chairperson's calls for restraint in the Middle East and his condemnation of attacks in the Red Sea. Both reaffirmed their commitment to consolidating the partnership, and the Chairperson wished Saudi Arabia success in hosting Expo 2030.

AU Commission Deputy Chairperson Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi received Ambassador Lemlem Fiseha Minale at AU Headquarters on July 23 in her first courtesy call since her appointment as Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the African Union.

Their discussions underscored the enduring cooperation between the AU and Ethiopia, a founding member state and host of the Union. Both reaffirmed their shared commitment to advancing Agenda 2063, strengthening continental integration and promoting sustainable development across the continent. Deputy Chairperson Haddadi also pledged

the Commission's close collaboration with Ethiopian authorities to ensure the successful hosting of the 49th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, scheduled for July 28 to 29 at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. She extended warm congratulations to Ambassador Lemlem and looked forward to continued collaboration during her mission.

AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf has strongly condemned Houthi attacks against commercial oil tankers in the Red Sea, following their announcement of a naval blockade targeting Saudi Arabia. He described the actions as a dangerous escalation with serious implications for regional peace and security.

The Chairperson expressed the AU's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed unwavering support for the Kingdom's security, sovereignty and stability. He stressed that attacks on commercial vessels and any obstruction of maritime traffic constitute a grave threat to international maritime security in one of the world's most strategic waterways, insisting that freedom of navigation must be fully respected under international law.

The Red Sea crisis, ongoing since late 2023 has forced major shipping companies to reroute vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, driving up costs and disrupting global supply chains. For African economies, the impact is acute. Coastal states like Djibouti, Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia depend on the waterway for trade, while landlocked nations rely on Red Sea ports for access to global markets. Chairperson Youssouf warned that any disruption undermines regional connectivity, energy security, and the economic interests of numerous African states. He called on the Houthis to immediately cease all attacks, refrain from further escalation, and respect international law. The Chairperson reiterated the AU's support for all efforts aimed at de-escalation and a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

This week, IGAD continued its active role in promoting peace and cross-border cooperation in the Horn of Africa. On July 22, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi met with IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, reaffirming Kenya's commitment to IGAD-led peace efforts.

Their discussions were laser focused on the two most pressing pressure points in the region the catastrophic conflict in Sudan and the fragile, stumbling peace process in South Sudan. On Sudan, where a brutal power struggle between the army and the Rapid Support Forces has created the world's largest displacement crisis, the call for "African-led solutions" carries profound weight. It reflects a collective anxiety that the conflict could not only fracture the country but spill over borders already strained by resource scarcity and historical grievances. IGAD, alongside the African Union has been trying to stitch together a ceasefire and a civilian-led political dialogue, often struggling against a maze

of external interests and entrenched warlords. Mudavadi's insistence on inclusive political processes is a diplomatic nod to the reality that a durable peace cannot be negotiated by generals alone and must bring in civilian coalitions, women and youth who have been systematically sidelined.

The situation in South Sudan while different in texture, is no less urgent. With elections slated for December 2026, the country stands at a precipice, needing to implement outstanding provisions of the 2018 revitalized peace agreement, including the critical unification of armed forces and the drafting of a new constitution. The meeting in Nairobi signaled Kenya's strategic patience and continued backing for IGAD's dogged mediation, recognizing that a relapse into full-scale war in Juba would have immediate humanitarian and security implications across its northern border.

Dr. Workneh's response was one of deep appreciation, framing Kenya not just as a member state but as the continent's diplomatic anchor. "I deeply appreciate Kenya's steadfast leadership," he noted, pointing to the country's enduring role as a safe harbour for peace talks, from the Sudan mediation efforts to previous Somali dialogues. His reference to strengthening IGAD's "institutional capacity" hints at the less visible but vital work of transforming a political bloc into a more agile, effective crisis manager, capable of early warning and rapid response.

This bilateral meeting underscores a defining feature of Kenya's foreign policy the understanding that its national balance sheet is directly linked to regional security architecture. The Northern Corridor a lifeline that channels goods to landlocked neighbours like Uganda, South Sudan and parts of the DRC functions on the assumption of peace. A stable neighborhood transforms borders from barriers into bridges allowing the ambition of the African Continental Free Trade Area to take root. Mudavadi's framing was therefore a clear eyed assessment that consensus building isn't a sign of diplomatic weakness but a hard nosed prerequisite for protecting Kenya's economic future in a volatile but opportunity-rich Horn of Africa.

IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) convened a Kenya-Ethiopia High-Level Experts Consultative Meeting in Arba Minch, Ethiopia, on July 22 and 23. The two day meeting focused on reviewing existing bilateral agreements and cooperation mechanisms between the two countries, with the goal of enhancing cross border coordination, information-sharing and joint conflict prevention efforts.

The discussions centered on two critical border corridors, the Moyale-Moyale crossing and the South Omo-Turkana borderlands, both of which have experienced recurring tensions driven by resource competition, cattle rustling and climate-related pressures. Experts from both sides examined gaps in current frameworks and produced a set of

practical recommendations and agreed follow up actions aimed at strengthening early warning and response systems in these areas.

The meeting, supported by the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization under the PLACE project, reaffirmed the commitment of both Kenya and Ethiopia to fully implement existing bilateral and regional peace and security frameworks. It underscored the growing recognition that stability in border regions is essential to protecting the broader economic and infrastructure ties between the two neighbours including the LAPSET corridor.

IGAD convened the Third Special Envoys and Representatives Forum on Sudan in Nairobi on July 21, bringing together a broad coalition of regional and international actors to harmonise peace efforts as the war enters its fourth year. Hosted jointly by IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi, the forum drew representatives from the African Union, United Nations, European Union, League of Arab States, the Quartet and the Quintet with support from the Government of Japan.

The central message from the gathering was an urgent call for unity of purpose. Dr. Workneh warned that fragmented peace initiatives risk prolonging a conflict that has already created the world's largest humanitarian crisis. He stressed the need for a shared strategic assessment, complementarity among mediation tracks and a clear division of responsibilities among all actors involved. The forum reaffirmed that any lasting solution must remain Sudanese owned and Sudanese-led, with external partners playing a coordinated supporting role rather than pursuing competing agendas.

The renewed diplomatic push comes against a backdrop of staggering human suffering. The United Nations' 2025 Sudan Annual Results Report, released this month, paints a dire picture. Sudan remains the world's largest humanitarian emergency with only 40 percent of the required funding received for the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. Civilian casualties continue to mount, displacement has reached unprecedented levels, and hunger is worsening across multiple regions. Conflict related sexual violence remains widespread, millions of children are out of school and the health system has been severely disrupted. Drone attacks have increasingly targeted civilian infrastructure adding a new dimension of terror to the conflict that erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

Despite these conditions, the UN reported that humanitarian agencies and local partners have continued delivering aid to hard-to-reach communities and expanding operations wherever security allows. The organization has renewed calls for humanitarian truces to

enable life saving assistance to reach isolated populations, while emphasizing that ending the conflict itself remains the only durable solution.

Tuesday's forum concluded with a reaffirmation of IGAD's commitment to an Africa-led peace process. Member states and international partners pledged closer cooperation to support a coordinated and sustainable path towards peace, recognizing that instability in Sudan carries direct consequences for the entire Horn of Africa and beyond.

UN-Habitat and IGAD signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding in Nairobi on July 20, establishing a strategic partnership to accelerate sustainable urbanization, climate resilience and integrated development across the Horn and Eastern Africa.

The agreement combines UN-Habitat's global technical expertise with IGAD's regional leadership to help member states address rapid urbanization, climate change, displacement and disaster risks in one of Africa's fastest urbanizing and most climate vulnerable regions. By combining UN-Habitat's global technical expertise with IGAD's regional leadership and convening power, we will work with Member States to translate regional priorities into practical solutions that improve lives and strengthen resilience, said Oumar Sylla, Director of UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Africa. IGAD Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu added that the partnership reinforces efforts to build synergies and co-design solutions with communities.

Under the MoU, the two organizations will focus on strengthening urban and cross-border resilience through integrated planning, improving land governance, promoting climate risk informed infrastructure development and integrating disaster risk reduction into national urban policies. The partnership also prioritizes enhanced data systems and capacity development on housing strategies, with special attention to climate induced human mobility and cross border urban systems. A Joint Steering Committee and Technical Task Team will be established to oversee implementation. The agreement reinforces commitments to SDG 11 the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the African Union's Agenda 2063.



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