



Weekly Geopolitical Report

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

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Horn Review: Weekly Report

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1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia joined regional maritime security talks in Nairobi during a two-day dialogue facilitated by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. Officials from Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, and Yemen gathered to combat Red Sea threats, including piracy, illicit trafficking, and illegal fishing. It highlights ambitions for stronger regional influence, better information-sharing tools such as a national maritime center, and closer cooperation that supports long-term goals of reliable sea access and Horn of Africa stability.

On August 26, President Taye Atske Selassie bid farewell to outgoing South Korean Ambassador Jung Kang at the National Palace, reviewing the longstanding partnership rooted in Ethiopia's historic support during the Korean War. Both sides reaffirmed commitment to expanding cooperation in trade, investment, technology, education, and development, with the ambassador emphasizing the need for greater trade volume, Korean investment, and people-to-people exchanges to elevate ties further.

The same day, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom moved to deepen their strategic partnership when State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Hadera Abera met with UK Minister of State for International Development Kirsty McNeill. The two sides explored expanded cooperation in trade and investment, development assistance, economic reform, migration, regional peace and security, climate action, and multilateral affairs, underscoring a shared commitment to a more resilient and mutually beneficial relationship.

Complementing these efforts, Ethiopia and Thailand moved on August 28 to strengthen trade, investment, and diplomatic relations through a signed Memorandum of Understanding establishing a platform for regular political consultations. Foreign Minister Gedion Timothewos and Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow highlighted shared values and the potential to transform strong political ties into robust economic cooperation, including Thai expertise in agriculture and value addition, while Thailand confirmed plans to open a resident embassy in Addis Ababa.

Reinforcing its broader engagement across continental governance structures, Ethiopia elected for a major diplomatic milestone on August 25, when Health Minister Dr. Mekdes Daba Feyssa was elected Chairperson of the 76th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa. Presiding over 47 member nations in Addis Ababa, Dr. Mekdes positioned national healthcare sovereignty and collective regional action at the center of the agenda. Her leadership highlights Ethiopia's commitment to advancing universal health coverage, pandemic preparedness, and emergency health responses.

Parallel to these healthcare governance initiatives, international development partners moved to secure Ethiopia's rural economic foundation on August 26. The European Investment Bank Global and the World Food Program launched a four-million-euro parametric microinsurance initiative aimed at safeguarding 210,000 smallholder farmers against severe climate-related crop failures. By integrating climate risk protection with rural credit systems, the program strengthens domestic food security and de-risks agricultural investments against volatile weather patterns.

On August 27, the federal government further expanded its national development agenda by launching comprehensive infrastructure and economic growth frameworks across key regional states. The multi-sectoral projects prioritize sustainable land management, modern transportation links, and trade facilitation aimed at improving local livelihoods. These initiatives reinforce internal economic resilience, supporting the national ambition to achieve balanced economic transformation while building resilient local institutions.

On August 30, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed extended heartfelt condolences to the Norwegian royal family, government, and people on the passing of King Harald V, underscoring Norway's role as a steadfast partner and Ethiopia's solidarity in a time of shared loss.

Concluding this series of strategic milestones on August 28, state financial institutions announced enhanced digital finance platforms designed to streamline cross-border trade transactions and increase domestic revenue mobilization. The modernization drive aims to integrate small and medium enterprises into formal banking networks while reinforcing macroeconomic stability. This final measure solidifies Ethiopia's trajectory toward building modern economic structures capable of sustaining long-term growth and regional leadership.

2. Sudan

Sudan's war entered another increasingly regionalized and politically consequential phase during the week as fighting intensified across Kordofan and Blue Nile, the humanitarian crisis around El Obeid deepened, and tensions with neighboring Chad and Ethiopia became more pronounced. At the same time, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continued to translate battlefield gains into political leverage, while civilian actors sought to establish an alternative national dialogue framework. The cumulative effect was a conflict in which military pressure, regional involvement, humanitarian deterioration, and competing visions of Sudan's political future are becoming increasingly inseparable.

Military developments remained concentrated in Kordofan and Blue Nile. In North Kordofan, continued fighting west of Bara generated further civilian displacement, with the Sudan Doctors Network accusing the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of killing five civilians and displacing more than 3,000 people from Al-Qaa and Al-Kawakiti. The

attacks followed the army's recapture of Bara and surrounding territory in late July, pushing RSF forces toward West Bara and Sodari. At the same time, reports of fighting around El Obeid highlighted the strategic importance of the city as the SAF seeks to maintain control of the corridor linking Khartoum with western Sudan.

The Blue Nile front also became increasingly active. The SAF reported repelling a joint RSF-SPLM-N attack on Fazughli, while the opposing alliance claimed to have captured military positions at Bakori and Surkum southeast of Ed Damazin. Neither side's battlefield claims could be independently verified. More significantly, satellite analysis by Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab identified a substantial military build-up at an Ethiopian base near Asosa. Around 100 newly present light military vehicles, armored personnel carriers, transporters, and cargo trucks were identified between August 23 and 28. Yale assessed that the concentration could support between 750 and 1,000 personnel and warned that it could increase the risk of an assault on Ed Damazin. The assessment did not establish that Ethiopia was preparing an operation against Sudan, nor did it provide evidence of an Ethiopian decision to intervene in the conflict. The Ethiopian government has not publicly responded to the findings. Nevertheless, the reported build-up has added to concerns over the increasingly strategic Blue Nile theatre, particularly as fighting and cross-border tensions intensify along the Sudan-Ethiopia frontier.

The regional security dimension became even more pronounced along Sudan's western and southeastern borders. Chad accused the Sudanese military of conducting an airstrike on a fuel market near the Sudanese border that killed at least 12 people and wounded seven. Chad subsequently raised its military alert level and deployed additional armored vehicles and electronic-warfare equipment near the frontier. Khartoum denied responsibility and called for an independent investigation, while accusing Ethiopia of allowing drones to enter Sudanese airspace. The Sudanese army said it had intercepted a third drone crossing from Ethiopian territory in Blue Nile within the same week. The competing accusations demonstrate how Sudan's war is increasingly generating direct security consequences for neighboring states, raising the risk that the conflict could expand beyond Sudan's borders.

The humanitarian consequences of the fighting continued to worsen. El Obeid has become a major destination for civilians fleeing violence across Kordofan, with more than 15,000 families reportedly arriving since mid-July, in addition to more than 200,000 people who had reached the city during the first half of the year. Conditions in the city and surrounding displacement camps have deteriorated sharply as water infrastructure remains damaged, sanitation is inadequate, and food prices continue to rise. The wider Darfur crisis has also been aggravated by funding reductions, with humanitarian groups warning that a 50 percent cut in World Food Program food rations is increasing hunger and malnutrition among displaced populations.

The humanitarian crisis extends beyond immediate food and shelter needs. Education has been severely disrupted, with around eight million children reportedly out of school. A new \$22 million Education Cannot Wait program aims to support approximately 200,000 children, including internally displaced children, refugees, and vulnerable host communities. The initiative provides an important intervention in rebuilding Sudan's social infrastructure, but the scale of the education crisis demonstrates how the war is creating consequences likely to persist long after the fighting ends.

The week's developments reinforced the growing effort by SAF commander al-Burhan to shape the political process from a position of military strength. His proposed national dialogue, backed by offers of legal and security guarantees for participants, has now generated a parallel initiative by Sudanese civil figures seeking to organize an internal peace process. The newly formed committee argues that dialogue should be independently managed and preceded by confidence-building measures, including binding guarantees against arrest or prosecution. However, major anti-war groups, including Somoud and Abdel Wahid al-Nur's SLM, continue to reject Burhan's call, arguing that dialogue under current conditions risks legitimizing military control.

The political significance of this competition is increasingly tied to battlefield developments. The SAF's advances in North Kordofan, the disruption of RSF supply routes and a series of defections from the paramilitary force have strengthened Burhan's negotiating position. Yet the RSF remains militarily capable and continues to operate across multiple fronts, particularly in Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile. Burhan therefore appears to be pursuing military pressure and political engagement simultaneously, rather than treating dialogue as an alternative to war.

Meanwhile, Khartoum took steps to normalize life in areas under its control. Authorities lifted the two-year night-time curfew and state of emergency in Khartoum, allowing residents to move and work around the clock, although military checkpoints and security restrictions remain. The move reflects the government's broader effort to portray the capital as increasingly stabilized and to demonstrate the benefits of SAF territorial consolidation. Yet the continued arrival of displaced civilians from surrounding areas illustrates the uneven nature of that recovery.

Economic pressure remained severe. The Sudanese pound fell to a record low of 6,500 to the US dollar on the parallel market, while domestic gold prices reached unprecedented levels as currency depreciation overwhelmed the effect of falling international gold prices. The widening gap between official and parallel exchange rates, dollar shortages, and inflation continue to undermine household purchasing power and complicates economic recovery.

Taken together, developments during the week underscored a conflict increasingly shaped by the interaction of battlefield momentum and regional security dynamics. The SAF's

gains around Kordofan and growing defections from the RSF may be strengthening Burhan's ability to shape the political agenda, but the expansion of fighting in Blue Nile and the increasingly tense borders with Ethiopia and Chad demonstrate that military consolidation has not translated into strategic resolution. At the same time, the worsening humanitarian situation around El Obeid and across Darfur illustrates the human cost of continued warfare. Sudan therefore appears to be moving toward a more contested political phase in which battlefield gains may influence negotiations, while regional tensions and humanitarian pressures increasingly constrain the possibility of a sustainable settlement.

3. Egypt

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held high-level security consultations with Djiboutian counterpart Abdoukader Houssein Omar, the fourth such engagement in a month. Discussions centered on Red Sea maritime security, port logistics, and coordinated responses to unilateral maritime claims in East Africa. Cairo's intensified outreach to Djibouti reflects a deliberate strategy to construct a littoral coalition around Ethiopia, securing influence over key sea lanes and countering potential Ethiopian expansion of Red Sea access that could undermine Egypt's strategic depth in the Horn.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi addressed military commanders at Strategic Command headquarters in the New Administrative Capital, declaring the Egyptian Armed Forces fully prepared to defend borders and national assets against external threats. He stressed continuous monitoring of regional frontiers, indicating that economic pressures would not diminish operational readiness along Libyan, Sudanese, or maritime approaches.

Foreign Minister Abdelatty spoke by phone with Sudanese Foreign Minister Mohi El-Din Salem to review field developments and bilateral coordination. Egypt reiterated its commitment to Sudan's territorial integrity and sovereign institutions while both sides insisted that Red Sea littoral states alone manage navigation, rejecting external military interference near the Bab el-Mandeb. This alignment strengthens Cairo's effort to deny Ethiopia alternative maritime outlets and preserve Egyptian leverage over Horn trade corridors essential to its own Suez revenues and regional security perimeter.

Abdelatty described Egypt's economy as facing a "perfect storm" from Gaza hostilities, Houthi Red Sea attacks, and Gulf disruptions, revealing more than eleven billion dollars in lost Suez Canal revenue from diverted shipping. Cairo is pursuing mediation among combatants and drawing on reserves plus bilateral trade to offset the shortfall while maintaining fiscal stability.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly represented President El-Sisi at the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Peace and Security in Luanda, Angola. He advanced Egypt's

framework linking continental stability to economic development and advocated African-led solutions to prevent external fragmentation of states such as Sudan and Somalia.

Abdelatty coordinated with U.S. envoys on de-escalation across Sudan, Libya, and the Horn of Africa. He cautioned against unilateral maritime claims that sidestep international law and highlighted Egypt's role in the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia as a force for regional order. The exchanges underscore Cairo's dual track of engaging Washington while consolidating African partnerships to limit external actors' ability to reshape Horn access routes that directly affect Egyptian Red Sea interests.

The U.S. Treasury proposed restrictions cutting UAE branches of Banque Misr, Egypt's second-largest state bank, from dollar clearing, citing alleged facilitation of Iranian financial transfers. The Central Bank of Egypt clarified the measures apply only to offshore operations, seeking to contain any domestic liquidity impact while preserving compliance with global financial rules.

Tensions over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam intensified after Ethiopian announcements of further upstream hydroelectric projects. Egyptian diplomats reaffirmed that downstream water security constitutes an existential red line under the UN Charter, insisting on protection of Egypt's 55.5 billion cubic meter annual Nile allocation. The dispute forms part of broader strategic competition in the Horn, where Cairo views Ethiopian hydrological and potential maritime advances as linked threats to its long-term regional position and resource security.

Abdelatty held consultations with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar aimed at expanding bilateral trade toward a twelve-billion-dollar target. Facing foreign-exchange pressure, Egypt is prioritizing non-Western partners for agricultural imports, manufacturing inputs, and infrastructure investment to diversify supply chains.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification selected Egypt to host the eighteenth Conference of the Parties. The designation positions Cairo to use environmental diplomacy to underscore downstream water vulnerability, agricultural sustainability, and land security across Africa and the Middle East.

4. Eritrea

The Eritrean-flagged Sibu 1, an oil-products tanker suspected of links to Iran's shadow fleet, was hijacked off the Yemeni coast on August 20 and reportedly diverted toward Somalia. Reuters and The New York Times reported that the vessel was flying an Eritrean flag, while Reuters noted that the ship had been sanctioned by the United States in December 2025 for allegedly transporting Iranian petroleum products. On August 25, however, the Eritrean regime's Embassy in London rejected the characterization, stating that UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) had never identified the vessel as Eritrean-flagged and that International Maritime Organization records classify its

ownership as “indeterminate.” The Eritrean Mission to the IMO further claimed that the vessel was flying a false Eritrean flag and had no ownership or registration links to Eritrea, making the purported Eritrean connection contested rather than an established fact.

The episode nevertheless remains relevant to the wider Iran-Eritrea relationship, although the vessel itself cannot be used as evidence of an Eritrean state connection to Iran's shadow fleet. Eritrea has maintained a broadly sympathetic posture toward Iran and has reportedly served as a transit point for Iranian military shipments destined for the Sudanese Armed Forces, making the appearance of an allegedly Eritrean-flagged vessel with documented links to Iranian petroleum networks noteworthy despite the subsequent dispute over its registration. The conflicting accounts also illustrate the difficulty of attributing vessels operating within Iran's shadow-fleet ecosystem, where ownership, management, registration and flagging can be deliberately obscured. The incident should therefore be treated primarily as evidence of the increasingly interconnected maritime-security environment around Yemen, Somalia and the Red Sea, rather than as evidence of direct Eritrean involvement in Iranian sanctions evasion or the hijacking itself.

The African Union Commission reported on August 27 that its Chairperson, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, met Eritrea's Chargé d'Affaires to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU, Biniam Berhe. The AU said the meeting focused on AU priorities, including the outcome of the 49th Executive Council and preparations for the forthcoming extraordinary Assembly session in Luanda. The readout contains no indication that Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions, Eritrean regional activities, or any specific security issue were discussed, so the meeting should be understood primarily as routine diplomatic engagement rather than evidence of a substantive AU shift toward Asmara.

The encounter nevertheless fits a broader pattern of increased international engagement with the Eritrean regime, including at the continental level. The AU's willingness to maintain direct contact with Eritrea is diplomatically significant given Asmara's gradual re-engagement with multilateral institutions, but the meeting itself provides little basis for concluding that the AU endorses Eritrea's positions or has adopted a more accommodating stance toward its regional conduct. The distinction is important as the Eritrean regime has intensified its diplomatic messaging over Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions: routine institutional engagement can provide Asmara with greater diplomatic visibility and an opportunity to advance its preferred narratives, even where the AU has made no corresponding political judgment on those claims.

The Century Foundation published a new assessment on August 24 arguing that the Houthis are attempting to expand their influence from Yemen into the Horn of Africa and become a more autonomous hub within Iran's wider “Axis of Resistance” network. The report, by Peter Salisbury, Nadwa Al-Dawsari and Jay Bahadur, identifies alleged Houthi

links with Somali al-Shabaab, elements associated with the Sudanese Armed Forces and other armed or marginalized groups across the region. On Eritrea, the authors report claims from Yemeni and regional sources that the Houthis are attempting to re-establish a presence in Eritrea with Iranian support, while also citing allegations that Eritrea has been used as a transit point for Iranian arms bound for Yemen, including alleged ship-to-ship transfers around the Dahlak archipelago. The authors explicitly caution that the evidence is uneven and note that their open-source investigation found little to no activity at some of the alleged Dahlak smuggling sites, making the Eritrean component considerably less established than some of the report's other findings.

The assessment is nevertheless significant because it places Eritrea within a wider emerging logistics network connecting Iranian, Houthi and African actors across the Red Sea. The report argues that Eritrea's renewed relationship with Tehran, following Asmara's deterioration of relations with the UAE and increasing tensions with Ethiopia, has created conditions for the restoration of earlier Iran-Houthi links, although the extent of any current operational relationship remains uncertain. If substantiated, the alleged use of Eritrean territory or waters would give the Houthis an additional logistical corridor around the Red Sea while providing Iran with greater strategic depth on the African side of the maritime route. The findings therefore warrant monitoring alongside the broader evidence of Iranian military logistics through Eritrea, but the report's own caveats mean that claims of an established Houthi logistical hub in Eritrea should not yet be treated as confirmed.

A Rubystar-operated Il-76TD cargo aircraft, registered EW-567TH and operating as RSB7680, departed Minsk for East Africa, with open-source tracking indicating Massawa in Eritrea or Port Sudan as possible destinations. The flight is not the first of its kind: OSINT tracking identified 27 suspected cargo flights between July 3 and August 8 linking Belarus, Turkey, Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan, including repeated Belarusian Il-76TD flights from Minsk to Massawa. Satellite imagery has reportedly placed aircraft associated with these flights at Massawa, while other flights from Turkey's Baykar facility in Tekirdag travelled to East Qwainat airbase in southwestern Egypt. Although the available evidence does not establish the contents of the current flight or the earlier movements, the repeated pattern suggests an expanding air-logistics network potentially supporting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

Eritrea's significance in this emerging network appears to lie principally in its potential role as a transit and logistical node rather than as a confirmed supplier of military equipment. Repeated links between Minsk and Massawa would place Eritrean territory within a broader supply architecture connecting Belarusian, Turkish and Egyptian military logistics with SAF-controlled areas, alongside the increasingly visible military relationship between Cairo and the SAF. Massawa's position on the Red Sea could provide an additional route for matériel moving toward Sudan, particularly given the

disruption and contestation surrounding Sudan's main wartime logistics corridors. While the evidence remains circumstantial and the cargoes cannot be independently established, the recurrence of these flights makes Eritrea's role worth monitoring, particularly as Asmara's closer alignment with the SAF increasingly intersects with the wider regional networks supporting the Sudanese military.

5. Djibouti

Ethiopia's Ministry of Transport and Logistics reported that 15.34 million tonnes of maritime cargo, or 96.71 percent of Ethiopia's seaborne trade, passed through Djibouti's SGTD and DMP/PAID terminals during the 2025/26 fiscal year. Djibouti's Tadjourah port accounted for a further 1.23 percent, while Berbera handled 2.74 percent and the Mombasa-Moyale corridor just 0.56 percent. The figures confirm that, despite Ethiopia's efforts to develop alternative corridors, Djibouti remains overwhelmingly dominant in handling the country's maritime trade, with the two economies continuing to be tightly linked through the port and transport corridor.

For Djibouti, this concentration reinforces its strategic importance in the Horn of Africa by making access to its ports a critical component of Ethiopia's external trade and giving Djibouti considerable structural leverage over its much larger neighbour. For Ethiopia, however, the figures highlight the extent to which diversification remains incomplete: Berbera and Mombasa currently account for only marginal shares of the country's maritime traffic, leaving Addis Ababa heavily exposed to a single maritime corridor. This dependence strengthens Ethiopia's longer-term incentive to develop alternative routes and pursue direct access to the Red Sea, while also making port diversification a geopolitical rather than merely commercial objective. Djibouti therefore currently benefits from Ethiopia's dependence even as Ethiopia's strategic policy increasingly seeks to reduce it.

Djibouti's Doraleh Container Terminal recently received the CMA CGM Benjamin Franklin, a Malta-flagged ultra-large container vessel with a capacity of nearly 18,000 TEU, reportedly making it the largest container ship to call at a Djiboutian port. The arrival highlights upgrades at Doraleh, including larger ship-to-shore cranes, expanded storage capacity and more powerful tugboats capable of handling vessels approaching 400 metres in length. The development reinforces Djibouti's position as a major logistics hub on the Red Sea and comes as the country continues to expand its capacity to handle larger vessels and greater container volumes.

The milestone is particularly significant given Djibouti's role in servicing Ethiopia, whose maritime trade remains overwhelmingly concentrated through the Djibouti corridor. The ability to accommodate increasingly large vessels could improve economies of scale and strengthen the efficiency and competitiveness of the corridor, while further entrenching Djibouti's position as Ethiopia's principal maritime gateway. For Djibouti, continued investment in port capacity therefore has significance beyond commercial expansion,

reinforcing the country's strategic position at the intersection of Ethiopia's trade routes and the wider Red Sea shipping network.

Djibouti's Minister of Economy and Finance, Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh, warned in an August 14 *Addis Fortune* op-ed that growing instability around the Bab-el-Mandeb requires a permanent security framework involving Red Sea littoral states, major maritime powers and users of the route. He argued that the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa now constitute a single geostrategic space, warning of renewed piracy, attacks on tankers, environmental risks and the spillover of external rivalries into the Red Sea.

The appeal is particularly relevant to Ethiopia because Djibouti remains its principal maritime gateway, making Bab-el-Mandeb security directly consequential to Ethiopian trade and supply chains. Djibouti's call for a framework that includes the "major users" of the route could provide Ethiopia with an avenue to deepen security cooperation with Djibouti and establish a greater role in Red Sea security despite its landlocked status. For Djibouti, such cooperation would reinforce its position as both Ethiopia's maritime gateway and a critical security actor around Bab-el-Mandeb, while potentially strengthening the strategic importance of the corridor it provides to its larger neighbour.

UN Relief Chief Tom Fletcher announced a \$2 million allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for Djibouti to support anticipatory measures covering food and nutrition, protection, and water and sanitation amid worsening drought conditions. The UN estimates that more than 256,000 people, or over a quarter of Djibouti's population, could face Crisis-level food insecurity or worse (IPC 3+) between July and December 2026, driven by persistent rainfall deficits across the northern Horn of Africa. The funding is intended to provide assistance before conditions deteriorate further, reflecting the UN's growing emphasis on anticipatory action in climate-related emergencies.

The allocation highlights Djibouti's exposure to the wider climatic pressures affecting the Horn of Africa, where prolonged rainfall deficits can compound existing food-security and livelihood vulnerabilities. For a small, heavily urbanized country whose strategic importance is derived largely from its ports, trade corridors and military facilities, a deterioration in rural livelihoods could increase pressure on already limited domestic resources and humanitarian systems. The relatively modest CERF allocation also underscores the gap between the scale of the projected needs and available international assistance, particularly if drought conditions persist through the second half of 2026. The situation therefore represents a humanitarian concern with potential implications for Djibouti's broader economic and social stability, rather than simply a short-term weather-related emergency.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan's political and security environment deteriorated further during the week as violence intensified ahead of the scheduled December elections, an attack killed two UN peacekeepers in Jonglei State and renewed communal violence in Warrap State left dozens dead. At the same time, President Salva Kiir sought regional support for the electoral process through a visit to South Africa, while divisions within the transitional leadership became increasingly visible. The combination of escalating insecurity, political tensions, and persistent humanitarian pressures underscored the growing uncertainty surrounding South Sudan's transition as the country approaches the December polls.

Security developments were dominated by the attack on a UN peacekeeping patrol in Jonglei State. Two UN peacekeepers were killed and three others wounded when armed men ambushed a patrol travelling toward Pajut. Two South Sudanese police officers and two civilian UN staff were also wounded. UNMISS deployed a Quick Reaction Force to secure the area, while the African Union condemned the attack. The incident was particularly significant because attacks against humanitarian personnel have become increasingly frequent, with UN figures indicating more than 450 attacks against humanitarian workers and assets between January and July alone. The killing of peacekeepers therefore highlighted the increasingly difficult operating environment facing international actors attempting to support South Sudan's fragile peace process.

Communal violence remained another major source of insecurity. An armed raid on a cattle camp and nearby village in Tonj North County, Warrap State, killed at least 49 people and wounded 33 others. Local authorities attributed the attack to what they described as an armed cross-border criminal network, while calling for restraint and humanitarian assistance. The incident came only weeks after another attack in the same area reportedly killed 60 people and wounded 50, reinforcing concerns over a recurring cycle of cattle raids, competition over grazing land and water, and localized armed violence. The persistence of such violence demonstrates that South Sudan's security crisis extends beyond the national political confrontation and remains deeply rooted in unresolved communal and resource-based conflicts.

The deteriorating security environment also continued to raise questions about the viability of the December elections. Increased security deployments in Juba, renewed armed violence, and continuing instability in several states have intensified concerns over whether the conditions necessary for credible and peaceful elections can be established before the vote. The central dispute is increasingly less about whether elections should eventually take place than whether elections conducted under current security and political conditions could produce a legitimate and stabilizing outcome. Critics continue to argue that unresolved conflict, political restrictions, and institutional weaknesses could

turn the electoral process into another source of political confrontation rather than a mechanism for consolidating peace.

Political divisions within the transitional government became more visible during the week. A rare public dispute between President Kiir and Vice President Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior exposed tensions within the ruling establishment. Nyandeng publicly criticized the country's political direction, governance failures, and the concentration of power, while questioning the leadership surrounding the president. Kiir's office responded by defending his role in the liberation struggle and rejecting portrayals that diminished the collective nature of the movement. The confrontation was significant not simply because of the personalities involved, but because it revealed growing unease within the political elite at a particularly sensitive moment for the transition.

President Kiir nevertheless continued to pursue regional diplomatic support for the electoral roadmap. During his week-long visit to South Africa, he held talks with President Cyril Ramaphosa on elections, bilateral relations, and regional stability before returning to Juba on August 30. According to the presidency, Kiir briefed South African authorities on preparations for the elections and the remaining legal and technical requirements for a peaceful, credible, transparent, and inclusive process. His visit also preceded renewed engagement by the African Union's High-Level Ad Hoc Committee on South Sudan, suggesting that regional diplomacy will remain important as questions surrounding the transition intensify.

Humanitarian conditions remained fragile alongside the political and security deterioration. Continued displacement, insecurity, and attacks affecting humanitarian personnel have placed additional pressure on an already overstretched aid system. The broader regional refugee crisis also remains a concern as South Sudan continues to host large numbers of people displaced by conflict in neighboring Sudan while facing its own internal displacement pressures. The worsening security environment risks further reducing humanitarian access at precisely the moment when vulnerable communities require greater assistance.

There were, however, limited signs of institutional efforts to strengthen state capacity. UNESCO supported South Sudan in developing its first education-sector monitoring system, designed to track implementation of the General Education Strategic Plan 2023–2027. The initiative seeks to establish mechanisms for measuring progress, identifying gaps, and improving coordination between government and development partners. While modest compared with the country's broader political and security challenges, the initiative reflects continuing efforts to build basic state institutions despite the instability surrounding the transition.

Taken together, developments during the week highlighted the widening gap between South Sudan's formal transition timetable and conditions on the ground. The government

continues to insist that elections should proceed, and President Kiir is seeking regional backing for that position, yet renewed communal violence, attacks on peacekeepers, political divisions within the leadership, and persistent humanitarian pressures continue to undermine the environment required for a credible electoral process. As December approaches, the central challenge will therefore be whether the government and its regional partners can contain security deterioration and rebuild political consensus quickly enough to prevent the elections from becoming another trigger for instability rather than a pathway out of it.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

The relationship between Somalia's federal government and Southwest State has reached critical following the African Union Commission's authorization of AUSSOM forces to participate in combat operations against Darawish forces loyal to former Southwest State President Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen. In a letter dated August 21 and publicly detailed on August 29, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf formally authorized the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia to conduct joint military operations with the Federal Government of Somalia against Al-Shabaab and what it described as affiliated militias and armed entities in Southwest State.

In a formal statement issued on August 27, Laftagareen's office strongly denied the federal allegations describing the Darawish units as legitimate state security forces mandated to protect civilians and state institutions. The statement warned that unsubstantiated claims of Al-Shabaab affiliation endanger civilian populations and undermine AUSSOM's credibility as a neutral peacekeeping force. Laftagareen's office specifically called for political neutrality by the African Union mission and urged the resolution of federal-member state disputes through dialogue rather than military confrontation. The federal government's position has been further complicated by concurrent clashes in the Baidoa area involving these forces with residents and local officials reporting heightened tensions and military movements.

In a development affecting Somalia's federal member state governance framework, the country's electoral commission announced on August 26 that it has formally accepted the Supreme Court ruling ordering a rerun of the Galmudug municipal and regional elections. The acceptance marks a step in resolving the electoral dispute that has plagued the Galmudug administration and its relationship with the federal government. Local political stakeholders in Galmudug have expressed cautious optimism regarding the rerun while also raising concerns about security conditions and the potential for political violence during the electoral process.

Federal security forces conducted a violent midnight raid in a Mogadishu on August 24, resulting in the deaths of at least five individuals and injuries to more than ten others, according to local media reports. The operation, which involved gunfire and heavy equipment including bulldozers, reportedly emptied a portion of the area in the capital. The precise circumstances of the raid remain unclear, with federal authorities yet to provide a detailed official account of the operation's objectives and outcomes.

The National Intelligence and Security Agency announced on August 30 that Abdullahi Hashi Labajir, also known as Ikhlāas, the overall head of Al-Shabaab's intelligence wing since 2013 was killed in a planned joint operation with international partners. The airstrike occurred on August 23 in Jilib district, Middle Juba region, according to NISA's statement. Labajir was described by security officials as having played a senior role in intelligence gathering, surveillance operations, and attack planning for the militant group.

Sustained heavy fighting between Somali government forces and Al-Shabaab militants entered its second week in the Basra area of Middle Shabelle region approximately thirty to thirty-five kilometres from Mogadishu. The clashes, which involve both NISA and Danab special forces have continued for at least six consecutive days with both sides employing heavy weapons. Residents have reported sustained gunfire and explosions though casualty figures remain unclear due to restricted access to the conflict zone.

Local media reported on August 25 that Al-Shabaab claimed it had thwarted an attack by Somali militia forces in Daynile District, Mogadishu. The reports indicated that three government or militia members were killed and nine wounded during the clashes or thwarted operation. The militia forces involved in the Daynile operation were reportedly affiliated with Somali government security structures, suggesting ongoing efforts to expand the security perimeter in the capital's outskirts.

In a development with implications for the African Union mission's sustainability, Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces General Muhoozi Kainerugaba announced on August 29 that the Uganda People's Defence Force will completely withdraw from Somalia by August 1, 2027. The announcement which carries weight given Uganda's status as one of the longest serving and largest contributors to peacekeeping operations in Somalia marks the end of nearly two decades of continuous Ugandan military presence in the country. General Kainerugaba's statement explicitly declared that there will be no Ugandan troops in Somalia after that date, signaling a definitive end to Kampala's participation in both AUSSOM and bilateral security arrangements. The withdrawal announcement represents a test for AUSSOM which is already facing funding pressures and questions about its long-term viability.

On another note, the period witnessed continued federal military operations against Al-Shabaab. In addition to the sustained fighting in Basra and the Daynile District operations in Mogadishu, federal forces conducted a successful anti piracy operation that resulted in

the liberation of the hijacked Cameroon flagged cargo vessel MV LUTUF. The Ministry of Defence announced that Turkish Navy and Somali National Armed Forces freed the ship following a ten day anti piracy operation off the Jifile and Eyl area in the Nugaal region of Puntland. According to the ministry's statement, four pirate boats were destroyed, fourteen alleged pirates were killed, and sustained pressure forced the remaining pirates to abandon the vessel, which subsequently resumed its voyage.

However, the federal government's account was immediately contested by Puntland's Ministry of Security which rejected the military operation narrative entirely. Puntland authorities stated that the pirates released the vessel following a reported \$2.5 million ransom payment which was allegedly facilitated with federal and Turkish involvement and that no joint military rescue operation occurred. Puntland's statement condemned any ransom payment as emboldening pirate networks and also criticized earlier Turkish strikes that it said killed civilians and fishermen.

The United Nations Support Office in Somalia initiated a process of layoffs and asset auctions during the period signaling deepening problems for AUSSOM linked to U.S. funding cuts and the potential termination of international support after December 31, 2026. The UN began issuing layoff notices including for ten civilian staff of the African Union United Nations Information Support Team with contracts ending by September 10.

The asset auction process includes vehicles, information technology equipment, construction machinery, medical units, and other operational equipment.

UN Concludes Rule of Law Assistance Programme. The United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS) formally concluded its thirteen year rule of law assistance programme on or around August 25 marked by a ceremony in Mogadishu attended by Justice Minister Hassan Moalim Mohamud and international partners. The programme which provided training and capacity-building support to Somalia's justice institutions and prison services concluded as part of the phased transition and handover ahead of the mission's planned closure. The Somali government has assumed greater ownership of justice sector development, though questions remain about the sustainability of progress achieved during the UN assistance period.

In a positive development for Somalia's international engagement, Nigeria's Ambassador-Designate to Kenya with concurrent accreditation to Somalia, Danlami Ibrahim, presented copies of his Letters of Credence in Mogadishu during the period. Talks with Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdisalam Abdi Ali covered a broad range of potential areas of cooperation, including education, security, trade and investment, diaspora management, culture, and the creative economy. Both sides expressed commitment to strengthening bilateral ties, with particular emphasis on economic cooperation and diaspora engagement.

An AFP analysis of IMO data released during the period shows that Somali piracy attacks have reached their highest level since 2013 with at least fifteen attacks reported in 2026 through the analysis period in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and western Indian Ocean within approximately two thousand kilometers of Somalia. This presents a sharp increase from the handful of attacks reported annually in prior years and from the five attacks recorded in 2025. The attacks are concentrated in the Gulf of Aden, with eight attacks reported since May alone. The increase in piracy activity has been linked in reporting to disrupted shipping patterns stemming from broader regional conflicts. The largest incident involved approximately thirty-armed pirates targeting the oil tanker Honour 25 near Eyl in Puntland on April 21.

Somaliland

Somaliland security forces have conducted operations in the western regions of Awdal and Salel, successfully seizing combat vehicles and an assortment of weapons from clans engaged in recent inter clan hostilities. Military officials formally displayed the confiscated items to local media issuing a clear warning that the civilian population will not be permitted to illegally retain military-grade equipment or combat vehicles. The operation was initiated in response to reported violations of a recent peace agreement that had called for the upholding of the ceasefire and the avoidance of actions that could restart hostilities. Security forces have been specifically tasked with enforcing these measures with authorization to use force against individuals found in possession of prohibited weapons or those accused of instigating conflict.

Former North eastern Administration Legislators Pledge Allegiance to Somaliland. President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Irro welcomed four former lawmakers from the Northeastern Administration who have formally resigned their seats and declared their allegiance to Somaliland. The delegation comprising Makhtal Said Mohamud, Ahmed Caabbi Hassan, Sidiq Jama Muse, and Ahmed Ali Mohamed, met with the President in discussions focused on peacemaking, social cohesion, community security, stability and development in their areas of origin in the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn regions.

President Irro Advances Somaliland's Role in Red Sea Security. The official Republic of Somaliland account highlighted Berbera's infrastructure, referencing the longest runway in Africa its gateway to the Red Sea and newly developed airbase and port infrastructure designed to support a new era of partnership with the UAE, Israel, and Taiwan. This promotion was accompanied by reference to a recent article published in The Economist on August 20, in which President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro discussed Somaliland's willingness to assist in securing the Red Sea. The President indicated that Somaliland is open to offering bases at Berbera to international partners, including the United States and Israel, as part of a broader strategy to advance its bid for international recognition.

In a diplomatic move following a phone call between Somalia's parliamentary speaker and the leader of the Turkish backed administration in northern Cyprus, Somaliland has called upon Cyprus and Greece to review their positions on its recognition bid. Hargeisa expressed support for Cyprus and Greece while voicing concern over deepening Somalia–Turkey strategic ties. Somaliland argued that recognition would open opportunities for diplomacy, trade, and security cooperation between the respective states.

Somaliland's representative to Kenya, Dr. Mohamed Abdilahi Omar received Israeli Ambassador Gideon Behar who is accredited to Kenya and also serves as Ambassador to UNEP and UN-Habitat, at the Somaliland Mission in Nairobi. Discussions between the two envoys covered Somaliland's political trajectory, historical context and the evolving political and security of the Red Sea region. Dr. Omar described the exchange as a warm and productive dialogue focused on matters of shared interest between Somaliland and Israel

The Taiwan Representative Office officially launched a funded project in Hargeisa aimed at enhancing maritime security, maritime domain awareness, information sharing, and safeguarding freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Somaliland Interior Minister Abdalle Mohamed Arab , Presidency Minister Khadar Hussein Abdi, Coast Guard Commander Admiral Ahmed Hurre Hariye and other senior officials, alongside Taiwan's representative Allen C. Lou. Taiwan described the initiative as building upon prior cooperation, including a 2025 Coast Guard agreement, and expressed the hope that it would encourage broader international participation in regional maritime security efforts based on shared interests.

Somaliland Ports Authority hosted a high-level delegation from Ukraine's RIDNE Consortium, accompanied by representatives of the Tony Blair Institute, at Berbera Port for strategic discussions related to the facility's development. Ports Authority Manager Ali Diiriye Ahmed received the delegation which was interested in the port's strategic potential and infrastructure enhancements.

8. Yemen

The Century Foundation's August 24 report, *From Spoke to Hub: The Houthis in Africa*, argues that the Houthi movement is moving beyond its earlier role as a recipient of Iranian support and is attempting to establish itself as an independent regional node within the wider "Axis of Resistance." Drawing on interviews, open-source material, maritime and air-traffic data, satellite imagery and interdiction records, the report identifies growing Houthi links with actors across the Horn of Africa, including al-Shabaab and Islamist elements within the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). It also describes the use of African migration networks for recruitment, smuggling and intelligence activities, suggesting that the Houthis are increasingly exploiting the interconnected geography of the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea.

The report's principal concern is the emergence of a more deliberate Houthi strategy for cultivating nonstate armed actors outside Yemen, modelled in part on the earlier expansion of Iran's IRGC and Hezbollah networks. While evidence of actual transfers of advanced Houthi weaponry to African groups remains limited, the authors argue that the movement has already developed the capabilities needed to provide training, technical knowledge and logistical support to external partners. The report also raises allegations that the Houthis, with Iranian support, are reestablishing a presence in Eritrea and that Eritrean territory may have been used as a transit point for Iranian arms moving toward Yemen, including through maritime transfers around the Dahlak archipelago. However, the report's own investigation found little to no activity at several alleged smuggling locations, and it explicitly cautions that evidence for some of the Eritrea-related claims is weaker than for other elements of the network.

The wider significance is the potential integration of previously separate conflict and illicit networks around the Red Sea. Houthi cooperation with al-Shabaab, links with elements of the SAF and alleged connections through Eritrea could provide the movement with additional logistical routes and relationships while giving African armed actors access to new sources of training and expertise. For the wider Horn, this raises the possibility that instability in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and the Red Sea will increasingly interact rather than remain discrete conflicts. The report consequently argues that the current stage represents the point at which emerging Houthi relationships are still relatively weak and transactional, making them more susceptible to disruption before deeper military and technological transfers take place.

From August 24–31, fighting between the Iran-backed Houthis and Yemen's Saudi-backed internationally recognized government (IRG) continued to intensify across several fronts, reinforcing concerns over a return to large-scale conflict. Houthi attacks were reported across Marib, Hadramawt, Taiz and the Hodeidah–West Coast area, while government-aligned forces increased drone and artillery strikes against Houthi positions. On August 24, IRG forces reported intercepting Houthi drones west of Aden, while government forces also reported further casualties among Houthi fighters around Hodeidah. The escalation comes amid repeated warnings that the conflict is approaching its most dangerous point since the April 2022 truce, although neither side has yet demonstrated a clear willingness or capacity to return to sustained nationwide warfare.

The Houthis simultaneously expanded their campaign against Saudi-linked maritime and military targets. On August 24, the group claimed a ballistic missile strike against the Saudi-flagged crude tanker **Amzan** in the northern Red Sea, approximately 63 nautical miles west of Yanbu. UK Maritime Trade Operations reported that a tanker had been struck by an unknown projectile and caught fire, although its crew remained safe and no environmental damage was reported. The Houthis described the attack as part of their declared blockade of Saudi shipping, while also claiming missile and drone attacks

against Saudi military concentrations and a military convoy along the Yemen-Saudi frontier. The attacks mark a continuation of the escalation that has seen Saudi-linked vessels and infrastructure targeted, although Riyadh has so far maintained a relatively measured military response, apparently seeking to avoid being drawn back into a prolonged Yemen war.

Government forces have meanwhile focused increasingly on disrupting the Houthi supply network. On August 30–31, Yemen's National Resistance Forces announced the interception of a shipment of Iranian-made drone components in the Red Sea, including control boards, receivers, transmission equipment and propulsion components, which they said was bound for the Houthis. The announcement followed another reported interception near al-Makha around August 26 and came alongside the destruction of a remotely operated Houthi explosive-laden boat before it could attack shipping. On August 26, PLC Chairman Rashad al-Alimi also ordered the closure of ports and border crossings operating outside government authority, explicitly linking the measure to efforts to disrupt smuggling and Houthi arms and financing networks. These developments indicate that the conflict is increasingly extending beyond battlefield engagements into a contest over the logistical infrastructure sustaining Houthi military capabilities.

The escalation also reflects the increasingly regional character of the Yemen conflict. The Houthis have framed their attacks as a response to Saudi pressure and adopted a “blockade-for-blockade” approach, while the Saudi-backed government has sought to contain Houthi military capabilities and prevent the consolidation of supply routes. The conflict is unfolding alongside broader regional tensions, including the recent US-Iran confrontation, which has affected the strategic calculations of the Houthis and their external supporters. At the same time, continued fighting is placing additional pressure on Yemen's already fragile humanitarian situation through disruption of supply routes, rising prices, displacement and worsening food insecurity. With both sides strengthening their military capabilities and Saudi Arabia combining limited military responses with wider diplomatic and security initiatives, the coming weeks will determine whether the current escalation develops into a broader war or remains a contained confrontation.

9. Kenya

Kenya closed the final week of August with growing political tension at home while remaining active diplomatically abroad. Between 24 and 30 August 2026, the government dealt with protests, pressure on public services and preparations for the 2027 election, while also pursuing investment partnerships and taking part in African discussions on health and security.

Diplomacy was particularly active on 25 August. Kenyan officials met Portugal's Ambassador to Kenya, Paulo Neves Pocinho, in Nairobi for talks on expanding trade,

investment and air links between the two countries. The discussions also covered the blue economy, maritime cooperation and coordination on peace and security.

Kenya also turned to Japan for investment. On the same day, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi met the president of Japan's Fujita Corporation alongside the Japanese ambassador. Talks centred on the Dongo Kundu Special Economic Zone and possible Japanese investment in data centres, agriculture, housing, technology and fisheries infrastructure. The meeting reflected Kenya's wider effort to use foreign policy to bring investment and jobs into the country rather than limiting diplomacy to political relations.

Regional engagement continued in Addis Ababa. On 26 August, Health Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale addressed the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, calling for African countries to reduce their dependence on external health financing and build stronger local health systems. Two days later, on 28 August, Kenya joined Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola and other African states in an agreement aimed at improving cooperation on disease outbreaks, health information sharing and medical supplies across borders.

Kenya was also investing in its diplomatic institutions. On 26 August, the Foreign Service Academy launched a strategy seeking about US\$30 million to expand diplomatic training, research and foreign policy capacity. Mudavadi argued that African countries need diplomats who can do more than attend international meetings and instead negotiate effectively for African interests.

Security diplomacy became more important toward the end of the week. On 28 August, Mudavadi travelled to Luanda, Angola, to represent President William Ruto at an extraordinary African Union summit held on 30 August. The summit focused on strengthening Africa's ability to prevent and resolve conflicts. Discussions came against the background of continuing crises in Sudan, eastern DRC, Somalia, the Sahel and other parts of the continent. Kenya's participation reinforced its effort to maintain a visible role in African peace and security affairs.

At home, however, economic pressure remained clear. Kenya Airways announced on 26 August that losses for the first half of 2026 had risen to roughly KSh16 billion, even as passenger numbers and revenue improved. The airline is now looking for new investors, with interest reportedly coming from countries including the United States, China, South Africa and Singapore.

Taxation again became a political issue on 28 August. Hundreds of traders demonstrated in Nairobi against changes to customs valuation for imported goods. Police used tear gas to disperse protesters, while businesses in parts of the city centre closed. Traders argued that the new system would increase import costs, while the Kenya Revenue Authority said it was intended to prevent undervaluation of goods.

The week therefore showed two sides of Kenya. Internationally, Nairobi continued building ties with European and Asian partners while keeping a strong presence in African health and security diplomacy. Domestically, however, taxes, public dissatisfaction and political competition remained serious concerns. With the August 2027 General Election approaching, Kenya is trying to strengthen its regional and international position while managing growing pressure at home.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's political, diplomatic, and security landscape this week was shaped by escalating regional hostilities, growing threats to Red Sea shipping, and Riyadh's efforts to strengthen its strategic position through new security and economic partnerships. The week began with a major escalation when Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement fired a ballistic missile that struck the Saudi oil tanker *AMZAN* off the Red Sea coast near Yanbu. The incident reinforced concerns over the vulnerability of Saudi maritime and energy infrastructure as the wider U.S.-Iran conflict continued to affect regional security. In response, Saudi Arabia began exploring alternative oil distribution routes, including a longer transit route around Africa using Egypt's Sidi Kerir port and the Suez Canal, in an effort to reduce exposure to threatened maritime routes and prevent major disruptions to global oil markets. At the same time, Saudi-backed diplomatic efforts concerning Sudan faced difficulties at the UN Security Council as the United States advanced a nationwide arms embargo proposal, prompting Riyadh to further recalibrate its approach toward supporting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and protecting the Red Sea corridor.

Diplomatically, Riyadh continued to expand and consolidate partnerships beyond its traditional Western security relationships. On August 25, the United States formally submitted the July 2026 U.S.-Saudi civil nuclear cooperation agreement to Congress for review, including provisions allowing Saudi Arabia to undertake domestic uranium enrichment under American supervision. The agreement represents a significant strategic development for Riyadh as it seeks to balance American cooperation with growing Russian and Chinese influence in the Gulf. Meanwhile, international analysis continued to focus on the August 7 Makkah Joint Defense Agreement between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Pakistan, with the arrangement increasingly viewed as an emerging security framework intended to supplement traditional Western security guarantees. Saudi Arabia also intensified diplomatic engagement across the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. By August 30–31, the arrival of Saudi envoy Dr. Zaid bin Mukhlad Al Harbi in Khartoum and his reception by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan pointed to a more strategic Saudi approach toward Sudan and the western Red Sea.

Security developments toward the end of the week highlighted both deeper regional coordination and growing competition within the Gulf. Houthi authorities issued warnings

to maritime insurance companies against relying on Saudi security assurances, accusing Riyadh of attempting to economically pressure Yemen through its counterblockade of ports. At the same time, Qatar, Oman, and Pakistan engaged in rapid diplomatic consultations as part of wider efforts to establish an inclusive regional non-aggression framework capable of managing the consequences of the conflict. Analytical assessments also pointed to increasing support among smaller GCC states for deeper Gulf integration around Saudi Arabia's military capabilities. Saudi Arabia further expanded its regional security architecture through a 14-nation maritime coalition involving African littoral states including Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Nigeria, as well as Qatar. However, the refusal of the UAE and Oman to join the founding group exposed significant strategic differences among Gulf states, particularly over the Horn of Africa and southern Yemen. Alongside these security initiatives, Riyadh increasingly turned to its Public Investment Fund to secure strategic assets in East Africa, focusing on agriculture, renewable energy, and critical minerals as part of a broader effort to build resilient supply chains.

UAE

Between August 24 and August 31, 2026, the United Arab Emirates' political, diplomatic, and security landscape remained heavily shaped by the ongoing U.S.-Iran conflict, heightened threats to Gulf infrastructure, and Abu Dhabi's efforts to reinforce its strategic partnerships in the Gulf and Africa. On August 24, the UAE maintained a high state of air-defense readiness amid continuing threats to its territorial airspace and waters, with official figures indicating that more than 97 percent of the 2,832 missiles and drones directed toward the country since the escalation began had been intercepted and destroyed. Continuing maritime and aviation disruptions also affected regional travel, with flights to neighboring Gulf states such as Bahrain and Kuwait experiencing delays and cancellations. At the economic level, UAE authorities continued enforcing the indefinite trade embargo imposed on Iran by closely monitoring financial and payment networks to prevent commercial activity across the affected routes. The security environment deteriorated further when an unidentified projectile struck a crude oil tanker traveling along a U.S.-protected route off Oman, placing additional pressure on Gulf shipping and energy logistics.

Diplomatically, Abu Dhabi continued strengthening its relations with both Washington and African partners while maintaining a firm position on the regional conflict. On August 26, the newly appointed UAE Ambassador to Ethiopia, Abdalla Hassan Obaid Hassan AlShamsi, met Ethiopian leadership in Addis Ababa to discuss trade, infrastructure investment, and security stabilization in the Horn of Africa. The UAE also supported broader efforts to adapt Gulf energy infrastructure to the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation advancing discussions with Saudi Arabia and the UAE on expanding interconnected pipeline networks to facilitate overland oil transportation. On August 27, UAE Diplomatic Adviser Anwar Gargash publicly backed

sweeping U.S. economic sanctions against Iran, arguing that Iranian attacks on Gulf infrastructure had strengthened the case for closer alignment with Washington. At the same time, Abu Dhabi monitored Qatar's diplomatic engagement with Tehran as Doha sought to reopen channels for direct U.S.-Iran maritime negotiations. The UAE also pushed back against Western descriptions of its expanding African economic presence as "imperial," while simultaneously deepening its technological relationship with the United States through plans for a joint \$30 billion artificial intelligence campus.

Security pressures intensified toward the end of the week as Gulf energy infrastructure remained exposed to regional attacks. Intelligence assessments identified major UAE energy facilities, including ADNOC's Al-Ruwais Industrial City and the Habshan gas complex, as continuing targets amid Iran's efforts to increase economic pressure on the Gulf. The situation escalated sharply on August 31 when Iran claimed responsibility for a drone strike against the UAE's Al Minhad Air Base, stating that the attack targeted sections of the facility housing U.S. forces and military helicopters. Tehran presented the operation as retaliation for a U.S. strike on Iranian assets on Larak Island. The reported attack represented a further deterioration of the UAE's security environment and reinforced Abu Dhabi's reliance on air-defense capabilities and its strategic alignment with Washington. At the same time, the UAE's expanding diplomatic and economic engagement in Ethiopia and broader Africa demonstrated that Abu Dhabi continued pursuing longer-term strategic interests beyond the immediate Gulf conflict, particularly through trade, infrastructure, logistics, and technology partnerships.

Qatar

Between August 24 and August 31, 2026, Qatar's political, diplomatic, and security landscape was dominated by efforts to manage the escalating U.S.-Iran conflict, particularly the disruption of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, while Doha simultaneously expanded its diplomatic engagement across the Gulf and Africa. On August 25, Qatar emphasized restoring normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz as one of its principal diplomatic and economic priorities, while maintaining defense coordination with other Gulf states in response to the regional escalation. This approach was reinforced on August 26–27 when Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani traveled to Tehran for high-level meetings with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Doha sought to reopen diplomatic channels and identify an off-ramp from the escalating confrontation, particularly as the United States intensified economic sanctions against Iran. The discussions also included a proposal for a temporary joint shipping corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and a possible framework for subsea mine-clearing operations aimed at reducing maritime threats affecting Gulf states.

Qatar also remained active in diplomatic engagement beyond the immediate Gulf crisis.

During the week, Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi, met Saddam Haftar in Benghazi and extended an official invitation for him to visit Doha for further consultations on Libya's stability and unity. On August 29, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani held a telephone discussion with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan focused on regional de-escalation mechanisms and diplomatic tools to preserve freedom of maritime navigation in Gulf waters. Qatar's diplomatic outreach also extended to Somalia, where Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre visited Doha on August 30 and met with his Qatari counterpart, delivering a written message from Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to the Amir of Qatar. Discussions covered trade, international peace, and the expansion of the January 2026 Somalia-Qatar Defense Cooperation Agreement, while Qatar reaffirmed its support for Somalia's territorial unity and sovereignty in opposition to unilateral foreign recognition of Somaliland.

Qatar's security environment deteriorated sharply on August 31 when Iran launched a major wave of ballistic missile and drone strikes against U.S. and allied installations across the Gulf, directly affecting Qatar. Several missiles were fired toward Al Udeid Air Base, which hosts the regional presence of U.S. Central Command, prompting Qatari armed forces to activate air-defense systems and intercept incoming missiles over Doha. The Qatari Ministry of Interior subsequently raised the national security threat level twice within the same morning and issued emergency mobile alerts instructing residents to remain indoors and avoid glass-fronted buildings. The attacks also raised serious questions about Qatar's ability to continue its mediation role while directly exposed to military escalation. Following the strikes, Dr. Mohammed Al-Khulaifi stated that Qatar and Oman could not act as mediators while under attack and called for an immediate halt to hostilities. Despite the security escalation, Qatar continued expanding its economic links with Africa, with Qatar Airways commencing an expanded codeshare arrangement with South African carrier Airlink, strengthening connectivity between Doha and Southern Africa.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali's principal political development during the week was the inauguration of the inaugural session of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) Confederate Parliament in Niamey, marking a further step in the institutional consolidation of the bloc formed by Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Forty-five appointed deputies, with 15 representatives from each member state, convened to establish the new legislative body. The parliament created three principal committees responsible for Defense and Security, Diplomacy, and Development, while also adopting internal rules of procedure intended to guide future legislative harmonization among the three military-led governments. The creation of the

parliament represents an important evolution in the AES project, moving beyond its initial emphasis on military cooperation toward the development of a broader political and institutional framework operating independently of traditional regional structures such as ECOWAS.

The new institutional structure also reflected Mali's continuing effort to consolidate a sovereign and increasingly multipolar foreign-policy orientation. The AES diplomatic framework is intended to facilitate closer coordination among Bamako, Niamey, and Ouagadougou while reducing their dependence on established West African institutions. Within this emerging structure, defense and security cooperation have been formally incorporated into the parliamentary framework through the newly established Defense and Security Committee, giving the bloc an institutional mechanism through which joint counter-terrorism strategies and broader security policies can be coordinated. Mali's approach also continued to build on its strengthened relations with external partners, particularly Russia, as part of its wider strategy of diversifying its international partnerships.

Security pressures nevertheless remained significant despite these institutional developments. Mali's security apparatus continued operating under heightened alert following severe coordinated offensives earlier in the year involving JNIM and Tuareg separatist groups, including the Azawad Liberation Front. The persistence of these threats highlights the challenge facing the AES as it attempts to build common regional institutions while its member states continue confronting powerful insurgent and separatist movements. The decision to place security stabilization and joint counter-terrorism strategies within the new AES parliamentary structure therefore reflects not only the bloc's political ambitions but also the continued centrality of insecurity to Mali's domestic and regional policy agenda.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) faced an unusual diplomatic controversy during the week following the arrival of a U.S. deportation flight in Bangui, while the government continued dealing with the regulatory and economic consequences of the Zamboye mining disaster and persistent insecurity along its borders. On August 29, a U.S. deportation flight reportedly arrived in Bangui under third-country arrangements, carrying dozens of foreign asylum seekers with no familial or cultural ties to the Central African Republic. The group reportedly included 12 Afghan nationals and eight Iranians, alongside individuals from Nepal and Nicaragua. The operation generated strong criticism from advocacy organizations and immigration lawyers, particularly because CAR remains under a U.S. State Department "Do Not Travel" warning due to security concerns. The case therefore created an unusual diplomatic and human-rights issue for Bangui, placing

the country at the center of controversy over the use of third-country deportation arrangements.

The government also continued enforcing the closure of the artisanal gold mine at Zamboye following the fatal August 18 landslide that killed more than 100 people. Although the disaster occurred before the reporting week, its regulatory and economic consequences continued directly into August 24–31, with the Ministry of Mines and Geology maintaining the closure because of administrative non-compliance, inadequate structural reinforcement, and failures to meet safety standards. A judicial investigation remained open. The closure nevertheless carries broader economic and security implications because thousands of local residents depend on small-scale mining for their livelihoods, while armed groups are known to operate around unregulated mining corridors and use them as sources of financing. The government's enforcement action could therefore reduce immediate safety risks while simultaneously creating economic displacement and potential local tensions.

Security conditions also remained volatile in the country's peripheral regions. In Vakaga prefecture, particularly around the strategic town of Am-Dafock near the Sudanese border, security forces remained on high alert following an earlier assault by armed rebel factions, while intelligence indicated that rebel fighters were regrouping in neighboring rural areas and could attempt another offensive. The continuing conflict in Sudan was also contributing to cross-border arms networks and broader instability. In the southeast, the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (AAKG) militia continued to pose a localized threat in Haut-Mbomou, operating in defiance of the Bangui government amid disputes over broken promises and unpaid compensation. Humanitarian access also remained increasingly constrained across Central Africa as insecurity and the growing use of armed drones complicated civilian protection and aid distribution.

Niger

Niger experienced its most serious political and security crisis of the week after an attempted mutiny erupted in Niamey on August 29, exposing internal tensions within the military establishment and prompting a rapid government counter-operation. Pre-dawn gunfire and explosions were reported between approximately 2:00 and 5:00 a.m., when renegade soldiers from Base 101 at Diori Hamani International Airport reportedly detained fellow soldiers and opened fire around sensitive locations, including areas near the Presidential Palace and the state broadcaster RTN. The mutiny appeared to involve predominantly young soldiers whose grievances were linked to concerns over military welfare and the government's continuing difficulty in containing jihadist insurgencies. Loyalist forces responded with substantial ground and aerial support from Russia's Africa Corps operating from the airport base, and by August 30 the junta announced that it had

retaken the airbase and restored order. Dozens of alleged mutineers were subsequently shown in state media after being arrested or neutralized.

The attempted coup did not dislodge General Abdourahamane Tiani's military government, which remained in control as authorities worked to dismantle emergency roadblocks and restore normal activity in Niamey by August 31. Russia's role in the response also demonstrated the depth of the security relationship between Moscow and the Nigerien authorities. On August 30, Russia's Foreign Ministry officially confirmed that personnel from the Africa Corps had assisted the local authorities in repelling the attempted coup, publicly acknowledging a direct role in supporting the junta during the crisis. The episode consequently reinforced the importance of Russia to Niger's current security architecture while simultaneously exposing internal pressures within the armed forces that remain difficult to separate from the broader insurgency affecting the country.

The crisis also generated concern among neighboring states, particularly Nigeria, which issued a formal statement on August 30–31 expressing deep concern over the political and security instability in Niger. Abuja warned against the use of force to resolve political disputes and called for an inclusive constitutional order and greater regional stability. The reaction is significant given the broader political divide between Niger and Nigeria and the continuing security challenges along their shared frontier. The mutiny therefore had implications beyond Niamey, demonstrating how internal instability within Niger can quickly generate regional concern while also highlighting the competing approaches of Niger's military government, its Russian security partners, and neighboring states seeking a return to constitutional political order.

DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) entered the week with renewed political maneuvering, a first operational step toward monitoring the fragile ceasefire with M23, and continuing violence in the east. On August 27, President Félix Tshisekedi announced the launch of a nationwide political dialogue intended to address the country's governance and security tensions. The process is expected to run for up to three months, beginning with consultations across all 26 provinces before moving to final discussions in Kinshasa. Tshisekedi, however, explicitly excluded the Rwanda-backed Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC)/M23 from participating as a political entity, arguing that armed conquest could not provide political legitimacy and that issues concerning M23 should remain within the Doha peace process. The initiative immediately encountered opposition, with Article 64 opposition coalition rejecting the dialogue on August 28 and arguing that it could instead be used to prepare the ground for constitutional reforms that would potentially enable Tshisekedi to seek a third presidential term.

Diplomatic efforts with M23 nevertheless continued alongside the domestic political process. On August 24, an international ceasefire monitoring team arrived in eastern

DRC, initially deploying around South Kivu and Minembwe, marking the first operational monitoring effort connected to the Qatar-mediated Doha framework between Kinshasa and M23. The development followed the Switzerland negotiations, after which the Congolese government and M23 formally published a sequenced roadmap establishing a schedule for comprehensive peace negotiations. Despite the diplomatic progress, concerns remained over the absence of sufficiently strong local enforcement mechanisms. Rwanda also continued to defend its security position in relation to eastern DRC, with President Paul Kagame stating on August 25 that Rwanda's military footprint and security involvement remained justified because of the continued presence of the Hutu militia FDLR inside Congolese territory. His position underscored the unresolved security disputes that continue to complicate broader normalization between Kinshasa and Kigali.

The diplomatic developments did not translate into an immediate reduction in violence. Heavy fighting and localized clashes continued in the Fizi and Uvira highlands of South Kivu between M23-allied elements and pro-government coalition forces, with reports also indicating that an aircraft was shot down over Minembwe during the escalation. In Ituri Province, suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) fighters killed at least seven civilians and burned approximately 20 homes in Mambasa territory between August 29 and 30, with several other people reportedly missing. The continuing violence demonstrated the gap between the diplomatic track and conditions on the ground, while the Ebola outbreak involving the Bundibugyo virus continued to expand across health zones in the eastern provinces. The World Health Organization and UN agencies continued warning that the outbreak was placing severe pressure on already overstretched health infrastructure and humanitarian access, adding a major public-health dimension to the region's continuing security crisis.

Chad

Chad's security environment deteriorated during the week as tensions with Sudan escalated following a cross-border airstrike and prompted N'Djamena to place its armed forces on the highest level of alert. Although the reported airstrike itself occurred on August 20, the development became a major issue during the reporting period after the Chadian authorities formally accused the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) on August 24 of carrying out the attack against a vehicle convoy more than 100 kilometers inside Chadian territory in Ennedi-Est Province. Chad warned all parties involved in Sudan's war against allowing the conflict to spill across the frontier and asserted its right to defend its territorial integrity. In response to the perceived threat from foreign aircraft and drones, approximately 100 armored vehicles and specialized signal-jamming trucks were deployed to the eastern border town of Tine, indicating that N'Djamena was moving from diplomatic warnings toward a more substantial defensive posture.

The accusation generated a wider diplomatic reaction during the week. On August 27, Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected responsibility for the strike, reaffirmed its respect for Chadian sovereignty, and called for an independent investigation before accepting the allegations. Khartoum also accused the international community of overlooking other cross-border drone threats entering Sudan from different directions. The dispute nevertheless attracted direct international condemnation, with U.S. Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos on August 27 condemning the reported SAF strikes inside Chad and stating that there was no justification for extending Sudan's war across international borders. African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf similarly expressed concern over the reported violation of Chadian territory and called on both countries to exercise maximum restraint and strengthen cross-border cooperation. The episode therefore elevated the Sudan conflict from a humanitarian and border-management challenge for Chad into a more direct national security concern.

12. North Africa

Libya

On 26 August a group of Western countries including France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States issued a joint statement welcoming the Tunis progress by the 4+4 committee on restructuring the High National Elections Commission and the electoral framework. They urged finalization, support and implementation as a credible step toward inclusive elections and unified institutions while reaffirming backing for UNSMIL and Libya's sovereignty.

UNSMIL Special Representative Hanna Tetteh met Saddam Haftar, deputy commander-in-chief of the Libyan National Army, in Benghazi on 27 August. She praised the eastern side's constructive role in the mini group talks on the first two roadmap steps and urged building on the momentum to break the political deadlock while discussing broader political, economic and security issues along with national reconciliation under the rule of law.

Qatari Minister of State Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi visited both Tripoli and Benghazi in late August. He met Government of National Unity Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and other western figures as well as Khalifa Haftar and Saddam Haftar, discussing bilateral ties, support for stability and consensus, energy and healthcare cooperation, and Qatar's commitment to ending political division through a process that preserves Libyan sovereignty.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi received the foreign ministers of Algeria and Tunisia in Cairo on 25 August within the trilateral neighboring-countries mechanism on Libya. The ministers stressed a comprehensive political solution under Libyan ownership,

ending division, unifying institutions, simultaneous elections under UN auspices, rejection of foreign interference, and support for the 5+5 Joint Military Commission on the ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign forces.

Authorities aligned with the Libyan National Army announced the execution by firing squad of ten people convicted by military courts on terrorism-related charges. The Military Prosecutor's Office stated that legal procedures had been completed. Rights groups, the Government of National Unity and the UN Human Rights Office condemned the actions, citing concerns over military-court jurisdiction, fair-trial guarantees and the first such judicial executions in Libya in roughly fifteen years.

On 30 August the 4+4 Group signed an agreement at UNSMIL headquarters in Tripoli in the presence of Special Representative Hanna Tetteh. The text provides for restructuring the High National Elections Commission board, addresses electoral-law disputes including eligibility and dual-nationality rules, and commits to legislative and presidential elections within twenty-four months under a single executive authority and unified national institutions.

Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah welcomed the 4+4 signing as an important step toward ending transitional phases and holding elections. Khalifa Haftar and Saddam Haftar also backed the outcomes, with Haftar stressing progress on long-unresolved issues and a commitment to unification and ending division. UNSMIL and the European Union Delegation likewise welcomed the agreement while calling for concrete implementation.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani met Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in Tripoli on 30 August. Talks covered strengthening bilateral relations, raising diplomatic representation, reactivating the joint higher committee, economic and security cooperation, consular issues, prisoners and refugees, and plans to reopen the Syrian embassy and a consulate in Benghazi, which Dbeibah described as opening a new chapter.

Libya's Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Salah al-Namroush met his Turkish counterpart General Bayraktaroglu in Ankara on 30 August. Discussions focused on strengthening military cooperation, training, modernization, professional development, air-force and special-forces capabilities, and operational readiness, with Turkey reaffirming readiness to provide support and expertise.

Morocco

Tensions with Spain over Ceuta/Melilla and migration (ongoing through the week, with key statements around August 24–30): Amid the aftermath of the late-July mass migrant crossings into Ceuta, Morocco's Justice Minister Abdellatif Ouahbi reiterated historical/geographical claims to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and called for a bilateral dialogue mechanism toward a "definitive solution" (integration into Morocco).

Spain's Foreign Ministry issued a categorical rejection, affirming the enclaves as integral parts of Spanish and EU territory with no negotiations on sovereignty. Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares publicly ruled out any talks on the issue while praising security/migration cooperation with Morocco. Border incidents continued (e.g., migrant assaults on Spanish patrols in Ceuta around August 27, followed by expulsions). Analysis linked the assertiveness partly to Morocco's strong U.S. ties under the Trump administration.

Algeria

Malian Prime Minister Abdoulaye Maïga arrived in Algiers on 24 August for a working visit, meeting President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and Algerian Prime Minister Sifi Ghrieb. The trip followed roughly fifteen months of strained relations linked to a prior border drone incident and focused on security cooperation, border stability, northern Mali conditions, and economic ties. It marked a pragmatic restoration of intelligence and border channels amid broader Sahel dynamics.

After a mutiny by disaffected soldiers in Niamey that began overnight on 28–29 August and targeted Base 101 at the airport along with sites near the presidential palace, Niger's military authorities regained control. Algeria expressed full solidarity and on 30 August deployed four Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets, a transport aircraft, and a refueling tanker to Niamey at Niger's request. Algeria's Defense Ministry stated the move was intended to help counter destabilization efforts, with Russian Africa Corps elements also assisting Nigerien forces.

13. Middle East

Iran-Israel Conflict

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced an "Economic D-Day" package designating sixty foreign entities, individuals, and vessels linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The measures target procurement networks supporting ballistic-missile and nuclear infrastructure in an effort to restrict state revenues.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei warned that continued enforcement of the U.S. economic blockade could trigger military interdiction of all oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. He stated that any country assisting the campaign would be treated as a combatant.

High-level Israeli representatives met a Syrian delegation led by Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani in Jordan. The talks sought de-confliction protocols along the Golan Heights and mechanisms to reduce the risk of miscalculation involving Turkish forces inside Syria.

A Greek military delegation finalized a 3.6-billion-dollar multi-layered air-defense agreement with Israel, the largest defense export deal in Israeli history. The package includes David's Sling interceptors and SPYDER systems for deployment across Aegean islands.

Omani Foreign Minister Badr al Busaidi reported progress in talks with Tehran on interim navigation rules for the Strait of Hormuz. The proposed framework aims to standardize inspection protocols for commercial traffic and reduce the risk of uncontrolled interdictions.

Iranian Artesh Spokesperson Brigadier General Mohammad Akraminia announced a doctrinal shift from defensive to offensive posture. Core elements include rapid multi-target retaliation, pre-emptive action against regional U.S. assets, and expansion of conflict to energy facilities and undersea infrastructure.

The U.S. State Department formally rescinded Syria's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, removing investment barriers to support reconstruction under the current Damascus government. Israeli analysts noted potential implications for military coordination involving Turkish training programs.

Tehran rejected International Atomic Energy Agency requests to inspect nuclear facilities damaged in earlier strikes. The denial prevented independent verification of enriched-uranium stocks and centrifuge status.

Public discussion intensified among Iranian parliamentarians and commentators advocating development of a nuclear breakout capability. Proponents argued that conventional deterrence had been weakened and that nuclear options were required to restore strategic parity.

Basij Commander Hossein Taeb stated that Iran would respond to economic pressure by imposing financial and supply-chain costs on the United States and Israel, including potential targeting of maritime logistics and regional trade networks.

Iran's Intelligence Ministry announced the arrest of thirty individuals described as organizers of anti-government networks. The operation occurred amid inflation, currency decline, and fuel shortages linked to the U.S. blockade. Israeli airstrikes and ground operations caused eight fatalities in Gaza and the West Bank, illustrating the fragility of existing ceasefire frameworks and complicating mediation efforts in Cairo and Doha.

The IRGC Naval Forces declared operational control over commercial traffic in the Strait of Hormuz while U.S. naval units redirected eighty-two merchant vessels attempting to reach Iranian ports, intensifying the maritime confrontation.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged a thirty-five percent decline in foreign trade resulting from six months of military operations, sanctions, and the naval

blockade. He indicated that domestic production and resistance-economy measures would sustain institutions while seeking diplomatic relief.

U.S. forces conducted airstrikes against IRGC missile infrastructure on Larak Island inside the Strait of Hormuz, destroying hardened anti-ship missile sites and associated radar installations. In response the IRGC Aerospace Force launched ballistic missiles and drones against U.S. bases in Jordan, extending kinetic engagement beyond the immediate waterway.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated in a Channel 14 interview that Israeli operations had altered the regional balance by degrading opposing networks. He framed his security record as essential ahead of elections and warned against concessions that could reverse gains.

Hundreds of Israeli settlers, accompanied by military personnel, entered religious sites in the West Bank village of Awarta amid simultaneous security operations and road closures that produced localized violence.

Facing tightened banking restrictions, Iran's Petroleum Ministry concluded an emergency energy agreement with Russia covering gas swaps, joint infrastructure, and non-dollar clearing mechanisms to circumvent Western financial isolation.

Turkey

Senior foreign, defense, and military leaders from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan prepared an Istanbul summit to establish working committees under the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement signed earlier in August. Modeled on collective-defense principles, the pact combines Turkish defense industry capacity, Pakistani military resources, and Saudi financing. The meeting signals Ankara's construction of an independent regional security framework amid shifting external security guarantees.

Strategic assessments noted Ankara's concerns over Somaliland's outreach to Greece, Cyprus, and Israel. Turkey has invested heavily in Somalia through the TURKSOM training facility, maritime security arrangements, and offshore energy exploration. A Somaliland linkage of Berbera port access to an emerging Greek-Cypriot-Israeli network risks constraining Turkish influence at the Bab el-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden, effectively projecting Eastern Mediterranean disputes into Red Sea geopolitics and challenging Ankara's established Horn of Africa foothold.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, speaking after a cabinet meeting in Bitlis, stated that Turkey would maintain its development path and counter-terrorism efforts regardless of regional instability. He cited bipartisan support for "Terror-Free Türkiye" legislation and underlined the priority of domestic stability together with cross-border operations in northern Syria and Iraq.

In a Victory Day address Erdogan declared that a strong Turkey had emerged and cautioned external actors against testing Turkish military resolve. He linked ongoing southern-border conflicts to the necessity of uncompromising defense posture and domestic unity, asserting that threats would be neutralized before reaching Turkish territory.

Justice Department filings showed the Turkish Ministry of National Defense contracted Ballard Partners for 2.4 million dollars annually to lobby for re-entry into the F-35 program. Ankara has indicated readiness to transfer its S-400 systems to a third country in exchange for lifting sanctions and restoring access to advanced fighter aircraft.

Erdogan rejected Israeli airstrikes on the Abu al-Duhur airbase and dismissed claims that Turkish deployments at Syrian airfields constitute a red line. He affirmed continued assistance to Damascus in building a unified military and stated that no external power could dictate the geographic limits of Turkish security operations in the Levant.

A ten-day joint operation by the Turkish Navy and Somali forces freed the Cameroonian-flagged MV LATUF and neutralized fourteen pirates off the Somali coast under the 2024 Defense and Economic Cooperation Framework. The action reinforces Turkey's position as a primary maritime security provider in the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden, protecting trade routes while consolidating influence over Somali territorial waters and countering rival attempts to establish alternative security architectures in the same maritime space.

Tensions rose after Turkey designated Aegean marine parks, prompting Greece to seek EU support at an informal foreign ministers meeting. Ankara responded that Greek spatial frameworks carry no legal weight on Aegean rights and accused Athens of using environmental measures to alter the maritime status quo.

Turkish Aerospace Industries completed flight acceptance testing of the first serial-production Hürjet advanced jet trainer and light combat aircraft prior to delivery to the Turkish Air Force. The milestone advances Turkey's goal of reducing reliance on foreign suppliers and expanding its defense export portfolio.

Turkey conducted successful ground-launched tests of a next-generation long-range precision cruise missile and a new bunker-busting munition. The systems are designed for deep-strike capability against fortified targets and reflect continued investment in regional deterrence capabilities.

The Turkish Presidency announced Erdogan's travel to Bishkek for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit on 31 August. The agenda prioritizes expanded economic, energy, and security cooperation with Central Asian and Eurasian partners, illustrating a multi-vector approach that balances NATO membership with non-Western institutional engagement.

Turkish and Syrian military engineers completed a heavy-duty floating bridge across the Euphrates, the second major joint logistics project. The crossing restores commercial and troop transit routes disrupted by flooding and demonstrates deepening operational coordination between the two forces.

An official letter from Defense Minister Yaşar Güler confirmed that Turkey is conducting inter-agency contingency planning for crisis-to-war scenarios. The document noted close monitoring of expanding military and air-defense coordination among Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, integrating Eastern Mediterranean conflict risks into national defense planning.

Bangladeshi State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humayun Kabir indicated Dhaka is evaluating a reported Saudi invitation to join the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement. Inclusion of Bangladesh would expand the pact beyond its original tripartite Middle Eastern core into a wider inter-regional security arrangement.

Following a U.S. ultimatum of severe secondary sanctions on entities maintaining commercial ties with Iran, Turkish policymakers adopted a cautious approach. Unlike some regional partners that suspended links, Turkey avoided public compliance while managing energy transit needs, balancing economic interests against potential financial penalties.

14. Global Powers

The administration continued “Operation Economic Outcast” / “Economic D-Day,” emphasizing secondary sanctions to isolate Iran. Treasury imposed limits on UAE branches of Egypt’s Banque Misr for alleged Iran-related business (around August 28). Additional Iran-related designations targeted entities/individuals (including Hong Kong-linked and Bank Melli-related). Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signaled weekly secondary sanctions starting with banks, warning partners of dollar-system cutoffs. Trump stated the U.S. is “not looking to meet or talk” with Iran and is focused on economic measures; White House noted the campaign continues until meaningful negotiations. China warned it would take “all necessary measures” against expanded sanctions.

On August 30, U.S. forces struck two Iranian rocket launchers on Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz—the first publicly acknowledged U.S. strikes on Iran since late July. CENTCOM said IRGC forces were preparing to launch rockets with sea mines into the strait. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards reported casualties and vowed retaliation; Iranian media said Iran attacked U.S. bases in Jordan with ballistic missiles (Jordan intercepted some). Oil prices rose. Trump had previously claimed all mines were cleared from main shipping lanes and warned any new mining would be destroyed. Iran-Oman talks continued on a temporary navigational corridor.

Military leaders reportedly warned Defense Secretary Hegseth against extending large-scale Iran operations due to risks to U.S. capabilities elsewhere; weapons shortages from

the conflict raised concerns among Asian allies facing China/North Korea. State Department planned to return some diplomatic personnel to Middle East posts (Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iraq).

On August 24, the State Department formally rescinded Syria's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (in place since 1979) after the 45-day congressional review. Concurrently, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, formerly al-Nusrah Front) was delisted as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. Treasury and State cited positive counterterrorism steps by the Syrian government under President Ahmed al-Sharaa (including joining the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS). Officials said this removes major barriers to private investment and economic reintegration. Additional sanctions relief measures accompanied the move.

Trump announced what he called "the biggest oil deal in world history," stating the U.S. had secured majority control (via partnership with private business) of more than 65 billion barrels of Venezuelan proven oil reserves "at no cost to the American taxpayer." He said it was negotiated by Secretaries Rubio and Hegseth with Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez and would more than double U.S. reserves while lowering gas prices. Rodríguez welcomed the "historic" agreement covering development of 17 fields, projecting over \$100 billion in investment and \$209 billion in tax revenue for Venezuela. Details remain limited; a U.S. official described a new private company structure with significant U.S. output share and cost-price purchase rights for strategic reserves/military use.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe made an unannounced visit to Moscow around August 25 (arriving via military C-17 from Riga after departing Andrews). He met Russian intelligence counterparts but not Putin (per Kremlin). Trump described it as "semi-routine." Reports indicated discussions included warnings against actions testing NATO and encouragement for Russia to limit support for Iran. The visit occurred amid ongoing Ukraine long-range strikes.

The U.S. Embassy updated its Ethiopia Travel Advisory on August 27 (level unchanged: Reconsider Travel due to unrest, crime, kidnapping, terrorism, landmines, etc.). Specific high-risk areas (Tigray, parts of Afar/Amhara/Gambella, Eritrea border) remain "Do Not Travel."

On August 29, 2026, the U.S. Bureau of African Affairs announced that Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Frank Garcia will travel to Zambia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The stated purpose is to strengthen key bilateral relationships and advance shared economic and security partnerships. Additional country stops are possible "if commercial deals get done."

Putin arrived for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (August 31–September 1, marking the bloc’s 25th anniversary). Planned bilateral meetings included Chinese President Xi Jinping (topics expected to cover the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline), Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and others (including Turkey’s Erdogan). The summit was framed by Moscow as reinforcing a multipolar order and countering Western influence amid the Ukraine war and Iran conflict.

Putin held a phone call with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on August 26 reaffirming support for Syrian unity/sovereignty and the recent Khmeimim/Tartus base memorandum. Lavrov held calls/meetings including with Egyptian and Brazilian counterparts, and met a Vatican official (Archbishop Gallagher) who called for ending the Ukraine war.

China on the other hand, firmly opposed the US “Operation Economic Outcast” / secondary sanctions campaign targeting Iran and its partners (announced around August 24, including some Hong Kong/mainland entities linked to oil shipping, procurement, etc.). Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian stated that China-Iran cooperation occurs “within the framework of international law and should not be interfered with or disrupted,” that Beijing “firmly opposes illegal unilateral sanctions,” and that China “will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests.” China is Iran’s largest oil buyer; the response signaled readiness to protect those ties while calling for de-escalation and a return to negotiations.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi met US Ambassador David Perdue in Beijing (around August 26–27). Wang urged both sides to “focus on the positive agenda, properly manage differences, remove interference and overcome obstacles to high-level exchanges,” citing the guidance of the two heads of state toward a “constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability.” This came ahead of an expected Xi-Trump meeting (tentatively September 24 in the US). MFA confirmed ongoing communication on the leaders’ meeting “within the year.”

President Xi Jinping arrived in Bishkek for the SCO summit (August 31–September 1). He held an initial meeting with host Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and was scheduled for bilaterals including with Putin (Power of Siberia 2 pipeline expected on the agenda). Iranian President Pezeshkian, Indian PM Modi, and others also attended. The summit was presented as advancing multipolar cooperation, regional security, connectivity, energy, and digital ties on the SCO’s 25th anniversary.

On August 27, Moscow warned that it could strike British military targets in response to Ukraine's use of British-supplied long-range weapons. Russian officials accused London of becoming increasingly directly involved in the war after Burnham authorized the release of information on British components of the Storm Shadow/SCALP system.

Moscow described Britain's actions as effectively bringing London closer to direct participation in the conflict.

15. Europe

Following his Kyiv visit, Burnham began preparing for a possible meeting with President Donald Trump in September during the UN General Assembly. The central issue is expected to be Ukraine's shortage of air-defense interceptors, particularly U.S.-made Patriot missiles. Burnham has argued that European countries cannot compensate for the shortage entirely from their own stocks and that Washington needs to increase its contribution.

A major development that should be included in the UK update is the August 26 tanker incident in the Strait of Hormuz. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations organization reported that a commercial tanker had been struck by an unidentified projectile near Oman's Khasab area. The vessel caught fire, although there were no reported casualties and the fire was extinguished.

On August 27, UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell met Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in London. The two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism, intelligence sharing and regional security. Discussions covered South Asia, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

On August 27, Burnham made his first visit to Northern Ireland as prime minister, meeting First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly and the main political parties. His agenda included economic development, employment and the cost of living.

The week began with Emmanuel Macron's participation in the Coalition of the Willing meeting in Kyiv on August 24 alongside UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

France committed to continuing military support for Ukraine, with particular emphasis on air defence and long-range strike capabilities. Paris's cooperation with Ukraine on the domestic production of SCALP cruise missiles is especially significant because it moves French support beyond weapons deliveries toward helping Ukraine build its own defence-industrial capacity.

Another important development emerging at the end of the week is the growing coordination between Macron and Merz over Europe's economic relationship with China.

The two leaders are working toward a European approach to China's very large trade surplus. Reuters reported that the French and German governments are considering pressure on Beijing to allow greater currency appreciation and stimulate domestic

demand, with China's trade surplus reaching approximately \$687 billion during January–July 2026.

In August 30, Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Germany was finalizing its response to the suspected drone attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport.

A drone carrying explosives had been discovered near a Ukrainian cargo aircraft on August 4. German authorities subsequently identified another explosive-laden drone in the vicinity. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt described the incident as a possible hybrid attack scenario, with investigators examining possible foreign involvement.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

The UN Security Council received a sobering briefing on Sudan on August 24, with Under Secretary General Rosemary DiCarlo warning that the conflict continues to escalate with devastating consequences. Approximately 13 million people have fled their homes, including 8.7 million internally displaced across all 18 states. Around 1,400 civilian deaths were documented in the first half of 2026 alone most from drone strikes. Fighting remains intense in North Kordofan, Darfur and Blue Nile with growing risks of regional spillover. DiCarlo noted the UN is working closely with Quintet partners including the AU and IGAD to advance an inclusive political path with the next round of talks scheduled for Addis Ababa in September. She urged the Security Council to use all available tools to push warring parties away from their zero sum military logic and toward meaningful negotiations. Humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher also briefed on severe access challenges hampering relief efforts. The US proposed expanding the Darfur arms embargo to cover all of Sudan.

The UN Security Council issued its strongest condemnation of the August 24–25 ambush on a UNMISS patrol in Jonglei State that killed two Ethiopian peacekeepers and injured seven others including three peacekeepers, two South Sudanese police officers and two UN civilian staff. In a statement released August 28, Council members stressed that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes and demanded a prompt, thorough investigation to bring those responsible to justice. They extended condolences to the victims' families and reaffirmed unwavering support for UNMISS, urging South Sudan's government to ensure the safety of peacekeepers operating under the mission's mandate.

Africa Union

On August 28, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf strongly condemned the fatal attack by unidentified assailants on a joint UNMISS patrol in Jonglei State, South Sudan which occurred on or around August 24–25. The tragic ambush

claimed the lives of two Ethiopian peacekeepers and left seven others injured, including additional peacekeepers, South Sudanese police and civilian staff. The Chairperson paid tribute to the fallen and wounded, extended his heartfelt condolences to the Government of Ethiopia and the grieving families and called on South Sudanese authorities to immediately investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. He reaffirmed the African Union's unwavering commitment to supporting South Sudan's credible democratic transition and sustainable peace.

On August 26, the AU Peace and Security Council convened to assess the fragile situation in South Sudan ahead of the country's planned December elections. Briefings from the AU High Level Ad Hoc Committee and High Representative Jakaya Kikwete painted a sobering picture of deepening political mistrust ongoing armed clashes and a worsening humanitarian crisis that together threaten to unravel the transition. With less than four months until elections, concerns remain over the lack of inclusivity, contested amendments to the peace agreement and the continued detention of First Vice-President Riek Machar. The Council emphasized that while elections must proceed they cannot come at the cost of returning the country to war. Members called for urgent diplomatic coordination, an objective assessment of electoral readiness and regular PSC oversight to prevent further escalation. The meeting concluded with a commitment to support South Sudan's path toward credible, peaceful, and inclusive elections.

In a significant policy shift the African Union Commission has authorized its peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) to join federal government forces in combat operations in Southwest State. The directive, issued by AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf on August 21, permits AUSSOM to fight alongside Somali troops against Darwish forces loyal to ousted regional president Abdiiaziz Laftagareen, citing alleged ties between local militias and Al-Shabaab. This marks the first time AU peacekeepers have been cleared to take sides in a Somali political dispute a move that has drawn criticism from former Southwest leaders who reject the Al-Shabaab connection and urge the mission to remain politically neutral. Notably the authorization comes just weeks after President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud publicly declared Somalia ready to assume full responsibility for its own security and suggested foreign forces could leave. The decision raises questions about the mission's impartiality and the timing of the expanded mandate amid ongoing political tensions.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

IGAD Executive Secretary Workneh Gebeyehu met with AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf in Addis Ababa on August 26 to discuss pressing regional peace and security concerns with a particular focus on Sudan. Dr Workneh briefed the Chairperson on his recent diplomatic mission to Sudan as both organizations seek to revitalize stalled peace efforts. The two leaders agreed to deepen joint IGAD-AU

coordination and work more closely with international partners, including the EU and UN to advance stability in Sudan. They emphasized that the interests and aspirations of the Sudanese people must remain at the heart of all engagement.

IGAD's engagement with Sudan took a step forward on August 24 when Mrs. Rania Hassan, Head of Mission to Sudan, formally presented her credentials to Foreign Minister Mohieddin Salem. The accreditation follows the reopening of IGAD's Khartoum office and signals the organization's renewed commitment to supporting dialogue and stability in Sudan. The move reinforces IGAD's role in promoting regional integration and collective peace efforts at a critical time for the country.

IGAD concluded a three-day workshop in Torit, South Sudan, on August 28 aimed at strengthening gender responsive land governance. The training brought together 41 participants from government, civil society, and land administration bodies to address barriers limiting women's access to land, including discriminatory customs and weak enforcement of existing laws. Participants explored practical ways to integrate gender considerations into land policies, budgeting and dispute resolution, while a training of trainers approach ensures the knowledge spreads beyond the workshop. The initiative is part of IGAD's broader push to link women's land rights with economic empowerment and sustainable peace in the region.

IGAD marked a leadership transition at the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMVM) in Juba at the end of August. Representing the Executive Secretary, IGAD Head of Mission Dr. Victoria Anib thanked outgoing Chairperson Maj. Gen. Teshome Anagawe for his dedicated service and welcomed incoming Chairperson Maj. Gen. Dr. Hailu Endashaw and his deputy. IGAD reaffirmed its steadfast support for the monitoring mechanism and the wider peace process in South Sudan.

Maritime security officials from Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen gathered in Nairobi in late August to address growing threats in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The two day dialogue facilitated by UNODC with support from IGAD, the EU, INTERPOL and IMO, focused on tackling piracy, human trafficking, illegal fishing and disruptions to vital shipping routes. Participants agreed that no single country can address these challenges alone and stressed the need for stronger intelligence sharing and coordination among maritime law enforcement agencies. Ethiopia proposed developing more robust national and regional maritime information systems to enhance early warning and response capabilities. The meeting comes amid rising security tensions that have threatened commercial shipping in one of the world's most critical trade corridors.



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