



(Kano, Nigeria (CNN)Boko Haram militants opened fire on northern Nigerian villages, leaving bodies scattered everywhere and as many as 2,000 people feared dead, officials said."The attack on Baga and surrounding towns looks as if it could be Boko Haram's deadliest act," Amnesty International said in a statement.)

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

Rwanda: UK Calls On Regional Countries to Support FDLR Disbandment

The New Times (Kigali)/10 January 2015

Regional countries should play their respective roles to ensure that the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) militia group is annihilated, the UK Government has said.

In a statement released by the British High Commission in Kigali, Britain supported the call on the DRC President Joseph Kabila to 'swiftly approve' joint military action against the militia group.

"The UK believes that continued positive DR Congo, Rwandan and regional engagement including in the Peace, Security and Co-operation Framework, will help ensure that all regional countries do what is necessary to bring the FDLR to an end as quickly as possible," reads part of the statement.

The call reinforces one by the UN Security Council to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DR Congo (Monusco) to "neutralise the group with a long history of heinous crimes in the eastern regions of the vast country."

This follows the expiry of the six-month deadline given to the militia group by a regional framework under the auspices of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to disarm or face military action.

The deadline expired last Friday, January 2.

In a statement released on Thursday, the Council called on all parties, including troop-contributing countries, "to remain committed to the full implementation of the mission's mandate, including military action to neutralise the FDLR."

The troop contributing countries to the Force Intervention Brigade are South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania.

Meanwhile, just as the deadline for the voluntary disarmament of the FDLR expired, South African President, in his capacity as SADC chair, announced a meeting slated for next week in the Angolan Capital Luanda, to decide the next course of action regarding FDLR.

The meeting is, however, seen as "wastage of time and money" by Foreign Affairs Minister Louise Mushikiwabo, who told The New Times Thursday that the next course of action was clear, a military offensive and there was no reason for the meeting.

"If the concerned countries and Monusco are not ready to take military action, then they should not waste time in endless meetings," said Mushikiwabo, also the Government Spokesperson.

Rwanda: Rusumo One-Stop Border Launched

By Stephen Rwembeho/The New Times (Kigali)/11 January 2015

The One-Stop Border Post (OSBP) project that will eliminate tedious customs and immigration clearing procedures on the Rwanda Tanzania border has been completed.

It was launched yesterday by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Tanzania National Roads Agency.

The project consists of a 80-metre-long and 13.5-metre wide bridge, an administration building, verification storage, control shed for vehicle, guard house, and a parking yard for trucks.

A two-kilometre road that links the two OSBP facilities in Rwanda and Tanzania has also been built.

The two-lane bridge with capacity to support 180 tons, replaced the old one that was built 40 years ago to handle only 53 tons.

The new bridge will also increase the speed limit from five to 30km per hour. It was constructed by the Japanese Contractor, DAIHO Corporation, under the supervision of a consortium of consultant companies comprising CHODAI and NIPPON KOEI, also from Japan.

The government of Japan, through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) financed the project to the tune of Rwf22 billion as financial support to the Republic of Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Japanese Ambassador to Rwanda, Kazuya Ogawa, JICA President Akihiko Tanaka, the Minister of Infrastructure James Musoni and John Mongella, the Tanzania commissioner for Akagera region attended the launch.

Musoni said that the OSBP will eliminate traffic congestion, improve efficiency in cargo transportation, cut costs and generally facilitated faster movement of goods.

The Rusumo border is located on the Central Corridor, one of the leading trade routes in Africa.

"We are grateful for the good cooperation between Japan and Rwanda. The two nations [Rwanda and Tanzania] will benefit a lot from the project. The one stop border system is important... it is capable of simultaneously handling departure and entry procedures at border points to eliminate the snag of economic corridors," said Musoni.

The Japanese delegation hailed the cooperation between Rwanda and Japan, noting that it quickened the completion of the project.

"It is critical to develop regional infrastructure that enhance connectivity among countries... cross-border infrastructure promotes regional integration," said JICA President Akihiko Tanaka.

The project will be replicated at all the border posts in the region to ease intra regional trade and accelerate economic integration.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Ugandan Fisherman Hunted Down, Killed With A Spear A Crocodile That Ate His Pregnant Wife
[inquisitr.com/January 11, 2015](http://inquisitr.com/January_11,_2015)

A Ugandan fisherman, Mubalak Batambuze, of Kibuye village in Uganda, is being celebrated as a hero by fellow villagers after he hunted down and killed a 20-foot crocodile that weighed over 1,000 kg; the same croc that killed and ate his pregnant wife. And he did it with a stabbing spear.

The beast had terrorized the villagers for a year, lurking in the lake close to the shore, attacking unwary villagers that came too close to the shoreline and dragging them into the water for dinner.

Batambuze was so devastated by the loss of his wife, Dementilia Nabwire, who was eight months pregnant, that he spent his life savings to arm himself with a sharp spear. He went out with the spear, tracked down the beast and killed it.

Ugandan media reports say that Dementilia went to the shore of Lake Kyoga in search of firewood

on a Sunday morning. Her husband and villagers became worried when she failed to return after she had been gone for several hours.

A search party went out from the village to find her, and after a long search they found her body parts close to the water, including bloody toes and fingers, and personal effects, including her mobile phone. The villagers noticed a huge crocodile lurking in the river, the same beast they believed had killed six women and children, and wounded five others from the village over a period of one year.

Seething and thirsting for revenge, 56-year-old Batambuze returned to the village and used his life savings to procure the services of a local blacksmith who made a sharp hunting spear, the Ugandan newspaper New Vision reports.

“I went to a blacksmith and paid him sh20,000 (£4.65) so that he could make me a very sharp spear.”

The brave man returned to the lake and after a long search he found the monster lurking in shallow water close to the shore, apparently hoping to catch another human unaware. But this time the killer croc met its match. Batambuze stalked and killed the beast by stabbing it with his spear. He then dragged it up to the shore with the help of other fishermen.

According to the Telegraph, officials from the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) who measured the carcass confirmed that it measured a record-breaking 7.5 meters (more than 20 feet) and weighed about 157 stones (1,000 kg).

Measurements of specimens of Nile crocodiles rarely exceed six meters.

Peter Ogwang, spokesperson for the UWA, told the German press agency, DPA, that they found human remains and clothing inside the killer croc.

“I sent my people there, and they found human bones and clothes in the crocodile’s stomach. We believe this was the same animal that killed the woman.”

The villagers demanded compensation from the authorities. The head of the district, Wycliffe Ibanda, told reporters that the wildlife authorities were to blame for the deaths because they failed to respond to villagers’ call for help.

“Whenever we ask them to come over they ask for fuel.”

But officials said it was not the policy of the UWA to pay compensation to relatives of people killed by crocodiles. Officials said there has been an increase in crocodile attacks because humans were encroaching on crocodiles’ habitat.

Overfishing is also depleting crocodiles’ natural food sources, officials said.

Uganda Can Handle Dominic Ongwen

The Observer (Kampala)/11 January 2015

The Uganda government was last week contemplating what to do with Dominic Ongwen, the LRA commander who reportedly surrendered in the Central African Republic and who was eventually handed over to American troops.

Officially, Ongwen is a fugitive wanted by the International Criminal Court, over offences he committed while an officer of the Lord's Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony. So, one option is for Uganda, a law-abiding member of the international community, to hand Ongwen over to the ICC.

However, over the last three years, President Museveni has changed from being a choleric enthusiast of the ICC to arguably its harshest critic.

After complaining louder than Kenya about why President Uhuru Kenyatta should ever have gone to the ICC, it would border on the dramatic if Uganda were to hand over Ongwen to the same court.

Fortunately, Uganda has a fairly functional judiciary - and a special war crimes division - that should be able to try Ongwen to the satisfaction of the ICC.

But there is another angle that the ICC may not be expected to be sensitive to. Some leaders from northern Uganda have welcomed Ongwen's surrender not necessarily as another step to bringing him closer to punitive justice - but as another step to the end of the brutal LRA rebellion; as another step to enduring peace. Some have even called for leniency.

This latter aspect might be difficult for many people to understand. What leniency does a man deserve who has spent years brutalising, cutting and killing innocent people? Yet the often-overlooked reality is that Ongwen is as much a victim of LRA atrocities as he is their perpetrator.

Ongwen was 10 years when the Uganda government failed to protect him from the LRA rebels, who abducted him and converted him into the heartless killer he became.

If for no other reason, this should be a ground on which Uganda should see itself as responsible for resolving a problem it helped to create. Whether Ongwen qualifies for amnesty and restorative justice or gets punitive justice is a matter for Uganda to face up to - and one for ICC to keep off.

SOUTH AFRICA :

New data from Stats SA shows Eskom rolling blackouts here to stay
January 12, 2015/By Stephanie FINDLAY of Agence France-Presse

Eskom, which relies on its ageing coal stations for supply, has warned of a high risk of more "load shedding" until March at least.

South Africa's capacity to generate electricity is shrinking due to ageing power plants, latest statistics show, and the continent's most developed economy could face rolling blackouts for years to come.

New data released by Statistics South Africa highlight how the beleaguered state power utility Eskom, which generates around 95 percent of the country's electricity, is unable to meet demand. Electricity production dropped 1.4 percent from January through November last year compared with the same period in 2013. In November, Eskom had to introduce power cuts across the country to prevent a collapse of the grid after a coal storage silo collapsed. The outages escalated in December when swathes of the economic hub of Johannesburg were repeatedly plunged into darkness.

Eskom, which relies on its ageing coal stations for supply, has warned of a high risk of more “load shedding” until March at least. But analysts predict that the blackouts could continue for two more years until new power plants come on stream. That would be bad news for South Africa as one of the BRICS group of emerging economies considered to have huge potential, along with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Last year’s outages cost companies millions of dollars in lost production and business and battered South Africa’s already-struggling economy, which was expected to grow by 1.4 percent in 2014. Growth is forecast to rise to 2.5 percent this year, but that is still well below South Africa’s potential, and the impact of power cuts will be more widespread this year. “This year it’s a different situation. It’s negatively affecting the retail sector, it’s much more across the board and it’s much more immediate,” said Dennis Dykes, chief economist at Nedbank.

“Unfortunately it certainly has the potential of hurting growth, anything between half a percent to one percent of GDP,” said Dykes.

“It is a real constraint on the economy.”

Vicious cycle of breakdowns

Senior Eskom spokesman Andrew Etzinger summed up the situation: “The grid is tight, and we are vulnerable.”

“There is a medium risk of load-shedding on the grid at the moment and that will continue until the end of summer (March),” he added. In an effort to help slash usage, Eskom has posted energy conservation tips on its Twitter account.

“Open windows and doors to allow a cool breeze to circulate through the house” instead of turning on the air conditioning, says one tweet. “Only boil the amount of water in your kettle that you need for the number of cups of tea or coffee you are making,” reads another.

The news of more blackouts comes after Eskom said the launch of a new power unit will be delayed until February, one of a series of missed deadlines that has exacerbated the shortfall. The power company has embarked on massive schemes to build three coal-fired stations which will see the country’s generation and transmission capacity grow by 17,000 megawatts from the current 40,000 MW.

South Africa already has one nuclear power station and the government has also announced plans to build eight nuclear reactors worth up to \$50 billion to add 9,600 megawatts of generating capacity. To avoid outages, Eskom has been deferring maintenance on its old fleet of power stations, leading to a vicious cycle of breakdowns.

“It’s like when you have a car and you don’t service it, eventually it will fail and this is what is happening,” said energy analyst Chris Yelland. “You cannot keep the lights on at any cost forever,” he said, predicting that South Africa will experience load shedding for at least the next two years while it waits for new power stations to come on stream and join the grid.

“You’ve got to balance the need to keep the lights on with the need to do proper maintenance, which means load shedding,” he said.

Soth Africa needs a "New Deal"

12 January 2015/news24.com

I have a couple of questions for President Jacob Zuma, or if he is too busy possibly one – or more – of his loyal supporters would care to respond.

Firstly, why would the ANC want to win back the Western Cape from the DA?

The DA seems to be doing a fine job of governing the Western Cape and it is fairly obvious that they have neither the power base nor the capacity to govern any other province, let alone the country. They seem to know their limitations and are instead attempting to govern, effectively and with fairness, the one province where they have enough support.

Obviously the DA is a thinking party to be congratulated on their success so far and perhaps in time they will attempt to win other provinces, once they have consolidated what they have. This is how democracy works in the real world.

There also seems to be less corruption in the Western Cape than in the rest of the country, unemployment seems to be less critical, the infrastructure seems to be working, the matric pass rate seems to be adequate and tourism seems to be bringing in the money.

Why then would the ANC want to “rule” the place?

Secondly, why are you, President Zuma, so concerned about corruption when you personally seem to have been one of the main beneficiaries of it thus far?

Are you willing to now admit that you, and many others, have benefitted from corruption and are you now willing to submit yourself to the process of law or is this again just hot air you are spouting?

You are either part of the problem or part of the solution – you cannot be both, nor can you sit on the fence.

Third, and lastly, when can we South Africans expect the ANC to contest an election as a stand-alone party, which they insist they are?

Surely, in the interests of the democratic ideals which they seem to espouse, the ANC should insist that the SACP and COSATU register as political parties themselves – if they have not already done so – and independently contest forthcoming elections, based on their own individual manifestos.

The SACP, COSATU and ANC do not, in any way, have the same agendas, not even the same ideals or policies and they individually have the support of different sections of the electorate, with different visions, different needs and different goals.

The ANC are the party of the people, the downtrodden and poor, and they are part and parcel of a democratic South Africa with supposedly democratic principles.

The SACP are out and out communists, seeking to turn South Africa into a communist state.

COSATU on the other hand are a trade union organisation with their main thrust being the protection of the workers who belong to their organisation.

Thus, the three groups that make up the tripartite alliance all have different agendas, different aims and different support bases and cannot realistically expect supporters of their individual arms to be supporters of the ANC. Surely that is totally illogical, as Mr Spock would say?

As we stand at the moment we have massive political confusion, a failing electricity grid, collapsing infrastructure, endemic corruption, nepotism, a parliament in disarray and we are heading into another recession with the economy in dire straits.

Most of the above are the result not of Apartheid, which has been gone for over 20 years now, but of confusion because the electorate don't really know who they should be supporting to get them what they really need. A confused political system will always lead to a confused electorate and I cannot believe that the ANC, now 103 years old, are really seeking to confuse rather than govern effectively. That too would be illogical, and extremely short sighted.

The electorate are not sheep but today thinking, educated individuals all seeking something or other that a political system such as we now have cannot give them. Surely the ANC should be more interested in satisfying these needs and wants than remaining in power, no matter what, if they truly are the party of the people and one dedicated to service and the promotion of a better South Africa for all.

Obviously, in the interests of South Africa as a whole – which the ANC are at pains to point out is one of their main priorities – the three members of the alliance should thus split and independently gauge their individual support from the electorate. Thereafter, based on the results, all three could decide on their independent futures, whether as political parties or as socio-economic organizations, either supporting the ruling party or the opposition. Again, this would be true democracy at work.

To me this would be both logical and a forerunner to creating what we all desire – a democratic, efficient and sustainable country which we can all support, admire and work towards creating.

Mr President, in closing, please be aware that you now stand at your, and our, Rubicon.

Should the confusion persist, and the economy continue to falter, your biggest challenge will come not from the DA or any other conservative political party but from disaffected voters, especially the youngsters who are flocking to the EFF – a radical party you will not be able to contain by normal means. The world at the moment is seeing, first hand, how dangerous radicalism is and you surely do not want to be remembered for failing to see the danger signs.

Furthermore a tax revolt, as already evidenced with the e-tolls fiasco, will eventually be forthcoming as indebted South Africans dig in their heels against your rule and that too is not something you want to be remembered for.

You have the chance now, perhaps your last, to stand up for what we all believe in and enable South Africa to flourish. I would earnestly suggest you do so because the alternative is truly too ghastly to contemplate.

Looming power blackouts threaten South Africa's economy

By Stephanie Findlay | AFP /11012015

South Africa's capacity to generate electricity is shrinking due to ageing power plants, latest statistics show, and the continent's most developed economy could face rolling blackouts for years to come.

New data released by Statistics South Africa highlight how the beleaguered state power utility Eskom, which generates around 95 percent of the country's electricity, is unable to meet demand.

Electricity production dropped 1.4 percent from January through November last year compared with the same period in 2013.

In November, Eskom had to introduce power cuts across the country to prevent a collapse of the grid after a coal storage silo collapsed.

The outages escalated in December when swathes of the economic hub of Johannesburg were repeatedly plunged into darkness.

Eskom, which relies on its ageing coal stations for supply, has warned of a high risk of more "load shedding" until March at least.

But analysts predict that the blackouts could continue for two more years until new power plants come on stream.

That would be bad news for South Africa as one of the BRICS group of emerging economies considered to have huge potential, along with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Last year's outages cost companies millions of dollars in lost production and business and battered South Africa's already-struggling economy, which was expected to grow by 1.4 percent in 2014.

Growth is forecast to rise to 2.5 percent this year, but that is still well below South Africa's potential, and the impact of power cuts will be more widespread this year.

"This year it's a different situation. It's negatively affecting the retail sector, it's much more across the board and it's much more immediate," said Dennis Dykes, chief economist at Nedbank.

"Unfortunately it certainly has the potential of hurting growth, anything between half a percent to one percent of GDP," said Dykes.

"It is a real constraint on the economy."

- Vicious cycle of breakdowns -

Senior Eskom spokesman Andrew Etzinger summed up the situation: "The grid is tight, and we are vulnerable."

"There is a medium risk of load-shedding on the grid at the moment and that will continue until the end of summer (March)," he added.

In an effort to help slash usage, Eskom has posted energy conservation tips on its Twitter account.

"Open windows and doors to allow a cool breeze to circulate through the house" instead of turning on the air conditioning, says one tweet.

"Only boil the amount of water in your kettle that you need for the number of cups of tea or coffee you are making," reads another.

The news of more blackouts comes after Eskom said the launch of a new power unit will be delayed until February, one of a series of missed deadlines that has exacerbated the shortfall.

The power company has embarked on massive schemes to build three coal-fired stations which will see the country's generation and transmission capacity grow by 17,000 megawatts from the current 40,000 MW.

South Africa already has one nuclear power station and the government has also announced plans to build eight nuclear reactors worth up to \$50 billion to add 9,600 megawatts of generating capacity.

To avoid outages, Eskom has been deferring maintenance on its old fleet of power stations, leading to a vicious cycle of breakdowns.

"It's like when you have a car and you don't service it, eventually it will fail and this is what is happening," said energy analyst Chris Yelland.

"You cannot keep the lights on at any cost forever," he said, predicting that South Africa will experience load shedding for at least the next two years while it waits for new power stations to come on stream and join the grid.

"You've got to balance the need to keep the lights on with the need to do proper maintenance, which means load shedding," he said.

TANZANIA :

Tanzania airport to achieve record

eturbonews.com/12012015

Owing to the elevation of 3,720 feet above mean sea level, equivalent to about 1,135 meters, longer runways are the only guarantee that fully-loaded planes in Mwanza, Tanzania, which are often cargo planes exporting chilled lake fish fillets, can take off safely or without having to operate with weight restrictions if the airport runway is extended.

During a recent site visit to Mwanza, Tanzania's Minister for Transport was quoted to have said the runway of the lakeside airport would be extended to 3.8 kilometers in length, making it the country's longest upon completion.

Also tackled under the ongoing renovations and modernization of Mwanza airport is the problem of poor drainage which has in the past, after torrential rains, flooded part of the airport and made operations impossible.

Ongoing work has been slowed down by the lack of timely payments to the contractors it was learned, but overall Tanzania is rolling out airport, aerodrome, and airfield improvements across the country as part of an agreement some years ago within the East African Community to improve aviation infrastructure across the region. This involves not only airport installations but also navigational equipment as recently reported here when in fact Mwanza got new weather radar.

The Tanzania Airport Authority is the lead agency which is also overseeing the construction of a new international terminal at Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, the expansion

of Kilimanjaro International Airport, and is planning for the modernization and expansion of Mtwara airport (HTMT – runway length 7,415 feet) in the south of the country. Bukoba (HTBU – runway length 4,565 feet), across Lake Victoria from Mwanza in the extreme western part of Tanzania, has also seen extensive work on the facilities and was re-launched only a few months ago. In December 2012, the new Songwe airport (HTGW – runway length 10,925 feet) opened for traffic, located some 25 kilometers from the town of Mbeya, where another smaller aerodrome (HTMB – runway length 5,150 feet) also handles traffic. Fastjet, in terms of passengers Tanzania's largest jet airline, flies twice a day from Dar es Salaam to the new airport of Songwe.

The expansion and upgrade of Mwanza airport to full international status – the airport already receives regional flights from Rwanda and Kenya – has again raised questions on the logic and rationale of building another airport in the Serengeti district, as local tourism traffic can easily be flown to the Serengeti airstrips from Mwanza using available light aircrafts stationed there. Environmental concerns have been raised about the planned airport project near the Serengeti National Park by the dozens with in particular the frail environment and lack of enough water being cited as key reasons why no airport should be built in such a remote location.

Airlines using Mwanza, however, have in the meantime expressed their satisfaction about the ongoing developments, among them Fastjet, Precision Air, RwandAir, and Auric Air, the latter having originated from Mwanza before spreading operations across the entire country.

Tanzania: Kikwete to Grace Resumption of S. Sudan Peace Talks

Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/10 January 2015

By Hazla Omar

Arusha — PRESIDENT Jakaya Kikwete is expected to partake in the South Sudan peace talks that resume on January 15, this year in Arusha.

The ongoing talks are aimed at finding a lasting solution to the fighting in the Republic of South Sudan, which has hitherto claimed 20,000 lives and displacing over a million others.

"The target here is to re-unite the divided Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and forging unity among the social fabric and eventually ending the suffering of the people of South Sudan," stated Mr Abdulrahman Kinana, Secretary General for the Tanzania's ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). CCM is coordinating the intra SPLM talks that have been taking place at the Ngurdoto Mountain Lodge in Meru District since October 2014.

The talks were put on hold last December and resumed on January 5, this year. Those to attend the talks include Mr Daniel Awet Akot, leader of South Sudan government delegation, Mr Taban Deng Gai, leader of the opposition, Mr Deng Alor Kuol, head of former detainees' delegation and Mr Philip Mangula, CCM Vice-Chairman as well as Mr Samuel Malecela, former party Vice-Chairman and chairperson of the peace dialogue.

On October 20, last year, President Kikwete, who is also the Chairman of CCM, attended the first round of the talks and lauded efforts by the South Sudan delegation to end the crisis in the country through unifying the two split factions of SPLM.

"This will spare the people of South Sudan more sufferings brought about by civil wars that have been tearing the new country apart," stated Mr Kikwete, pointing out that this was a welcome move at a time when peace in the great lakes region was of paramount concern.

The first phase of the dialogue climaxed with the signing of a framework which took place in December, last year and was witnessed by the President of South Sudan, Mr Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President, Mr Riek Machar Teny.

Others present in the previous talks were the head of the detained leaders, Mr Pagan Amum Okiech, who admitted that South Sudan had lost direction due to SPLM conflicts, while both Peter Adwok Nyaba of SPLM opposition and Mr Akot praised the coordination and moral support of CCM.

Between October 12 and 18 delegations from the South Sudan factions had been meeting in Arusha, engaged in intra SPLM dialogue aimed at uniting the two factions of the split party.

CCM undertook the task of coordinating and hosting the South Sudan peace talks with the aim of re-uniting SPLM leadership and the people of that country.

The initial phase of the dialogue was held in frank, honest and cordial manner and after its conclusion, President Kikwete invited the principal leaders of SPLM for the official launching of the process in Arusha.

KENYA :

Gunmen Kill Pastor in Kenya's Mombasa

VOA News/January 11, 2015

Unknown gunmen shot dead a pastor during a church service Sunday in the Kenyan city of Mombasa, where police have clashed with radical Muslim youths.

Pastor George Karidhimba Muriki apparently was shot just inside the entrance gate at the Maximum Revival Center in the city's Majengo section.

Witnesses say police stopped the gunmen from getting inside the church itself and killing more victims.

The gunmen have not been identified, but Islamist al-Shabab militants from neighboring Somalia have carried out similar attacks in Kenya. Al-Shabab has vowed revenge for the presence of Kenyan forces in Somalia helping troops against the militants.

Chinese Foreign Minister Begins African Tour in Kenya

11 January 2015/telesurtv.net

Wang Yi started with a visit to Kenya Saturday as part of an eight-day diplomatic tour.

Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, arrived to Kenya Saturday as part of an official tour to various countries across Africa. During Yi's tour he will visit Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

In Kenya, the Chinese diplomat affirmed that his nation plans to increase funding to Kenya's industrial and technological sectors. He explained, "Kenya is at the stage of industrial take-off and

China is ready to support it with its experience in attaining successful industrialization."

"China stands ready to share its experiences on industrial zoning and special economic zones and we are ready for more cooperation in these fields," he added after meeting with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in Nairobi.

During his visit, Yi encouraged Kenyan and other East African states to incorporate elements of China's economic model. He emphasized the importance of industrial relocation. "Industrial relocation was how China took off and Kenya can benefit from it," he expressed. "China allowed companies from neighboring countries like Japan to set up shop within China," Yi continued.

China's partnership and cooperation in Kenya as well as other African nations focus primarily on development and infrastructure. This tour promises to expand cooperation to areas of agricultural modernization as well as technology.

In addition, the two countries will begin to partner in mineral exploitation and environmental conservation.

Currently, Kenya and China began the construction of the standard gauge railway. Kenyatta expressed his enthusiasm for the standard gauge railway stating that he hopes it extends into neighboring countries such as Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Our relationship is built on the principle of partnership," Kenyatta said. "This is a partnership I want to see increased and cemented to bring mutual benefits," he added.

Kenya also celebrated China's pledge to support regional initiatives in favor of peace.

The meetings were additionally attended by Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto, Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiangi and Internal Security Principal Secretary Dr. Monica Juma. The Chinese delegation included China's Ambassador to Kenya Liu Xianfa.

Wang's tour follows a last year's visit to Kenya by China's Premier Li Keqiang. Seventeen bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries in May 2014.

Key Witness in Kenyan Hague Trial Killed

11 January 2015/telesurtv.net

An ICC Prosecutor has denied any involvement in the murder.

The body of Kenyan Meshack Yebei was discovered after he was abducted on December 28. Yebei was a key witness for Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto for his trial at The Hague. International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda has denied any involvement in his murder.

Yebei's body was found on Saturday near a bridge on the road between Eldoret and Kisumu town in Kenya. His decomposing body showed signs he had been hit in the head with a blunt object, reports Kenya's newspaper the Standard.

Kenyan Director of Public Prosecutions Keriako Tobiko has ordered a "speedy and thorough investigation" into Yebei's murder. Ruto's lawyer Karim Khan wrote a letter to the head of Kenya's

Criminal Investigation Department, stating that Yebei was a "critical witness" who was referred to the ICC's Victims and Witness Unit for protection.

"It's our strongly held view that an attack on any witness constitutes an interference with the proper administration of justice and indeed an attack against William Ruto," Mr Khan said.

"The news of his abduction and murder is both shocking to us and a matter of grave concern."

In a statement issued Friday, the ICC prosecutor's office expressed that it hoped to "address recent speculation alleging the involvement of the Office in Mr. Yebei's tragic demise. The Office of the Prosecutor wishes to categorically state that any suggestion that the Office of the Prosecutor was involved in Mr. Yebei's alleged abduction and murder is both outrageous and utterly false. Nothing could be further from the truth."

The statement continued, "Prosecution witnesses in this case have been under siege," says the statement. "The Office of the Prosecutor has identified a network of individuals who have been working together to sabotage the Prosecution's case against Messrs. Ruto and Sang, by using bribes and/or threats to either dissuade witnesses from testifying in this case or influence Prosecution witnesses to recant their testimony."

The ICC said that Yebei was offered protection in a safe location as a witness but preferred to return to his home in Eldoret.

The ICC trial of Ruto and journalist Joshua Arap Sang opened in September 2013. The two are accused of crimes against humanity for their alleged roles in the violence that occurred following Kenyan elections in 2007. Ruto denies the charges.

The ICC dropped charges against President Uhuru Kenyatta in December on the basis that prosecution witnesses had been intimidated therefore altering their testimonies.

Kenya: New Mobile Payment platform rises

January 12, 2015 /itnewsafrika.com

Mobile Payments company Fortumo has launched carrier billing in Kenya for digital content merchants. The company has made a move to partner with Safaricom in order to take advantage of its 18 million customers located in Kenya. The partnership, according to both parties, will allow Kenyans to make payments online and by charging purchases to their mobile phone bill.

Gerri Kodres, Chief Business Officer of Fortumo, stated that: "Emerging markets like Kenya have become the biggest drivers of smartphone growth globally as cheap smartphones are becoming available to millions of people in growing economies. Meanwhile, digital content merchants are struggling to generate revenue from these users due to low credit card penetration. Fortumo helps solve the issue for merchants by allowing any person – banked or unbanked – to make payments online through carrier billing instead."

While overall mobile penetration in Kenya is still at around 65% (approximately 27.3 million mobile phones with a population of 42 million), the market is growing very fast and already an estimated 67% of all phones sold are smartphones. Meanwhile, there are only 200 thousand credit cards in circulation (0.3% penetration) making international online transactions impossible for the majority of Kenyans.

Kenya is the 3rd country covered by Fortumo carrier billing in Sub-Saharan Africa, with established connections already in place for Nigeria and South Africa. According to Fortumo, it is available in 15 markets in Middle Eastern & African regions.

Kenya: Joho to Honour Fidel By Naming Street After Him

By Simon Ndonga/Capital FM (Nairobi)/10 January 2015

Nairobi — Mombasa Governor Hassan Joho says a road in Mombasa will be named after Fidel Odinga to honour him for his outstanding achievements in life, especially his interaction with other people.

Speaking during the funeral ceremony on Saturday, Joho described Fidel as one who never kept a grudge but helped both friend and foe.

"As the Governor of Mombasa, Hassan Ali Joho has said that we will give respect to my brother Fidel Castro Makarios Odhiambo Odinga by having a road named after him so that we can preserve his memory. This is so that anybody who comes to Mombasa will always be seeing his name and remembering him," he announced.

While calling for calm following the death, the Mombasa Governor further stressed the need to get to the bottom of his death. READ: Fidel Odinga's tolerance wows politicians.

"We as ODM must find an answer as to what caused the death of Fidel Odinga. We must be told," Joho stated. "We also want to thank all who were involved in the funeral arrangements for Fidel and those who contributed. We especially want to thank the government for your assistance. But we must now use Fidel's death to bring Kenyans together. We must speak in unity so that we can bring Kenyans together," he said.

At the same time, Mombasa Senator Hassan Omar Hassan urged the youth to emulate the example set by the late Fidel of hard work despite his privileged background.

Omar indicated that Fidel never depended on handouts but rather went out of his way to labour for what he needed.

"Fidel was committed to pursue an ideal to its logical conclusion. This is the message that I want to give the youth of this country. It is never going to be too easy. Fidel came from a family where his father was Raila and his mother Ida but he worked hard because nothing comes on a silver platter," he said.

He called on all young people to work hard in the pursuit of their goals and ensure that they achieve what they set out to do. READ: Fidel 'was a gentle soul' - Raila.

"We as Kenyans must work hard until we achieve a truly democratic Kenya free of nepotism, ethnicity, malice, hatred or division," he stated.

Various leaders turned up for the ceremony at the Bondo University and the speakers included Mabior Garang, the son of Southern Sudan's first president John Garang who called for all leaders to remain united to continue with the legacy set forth by Fidel during his lifetime.

"The best way that we can honor Fidel is to honor his spirit. He was the Pan Africanist. We must use the example of his life to unite the people instead of creating more division," he stated.

The Vice Chairman of the Council of Governors Salim Mvurya reiterated his sentiments while offering his condolences and called on all Kenyans to maintain calm even as the cause of Fidel's death was being investigated.

"The death of Fidel is also a lesson to young men and women of this country. Fidel was an inspiration. As we mourn him, let us be inspired so that all the young people of his age can be able also to achieve all their dreams in life," he said.

Zimbabwe politician Morgan Tsvangirai who was also present stated that Fidel's death would have a huge impact not only in Kenya but in Africa.

"For some of us, the passing away of this promising young man is not only a loss to Kenya but a loss to the future of African potential. I believe that when we lose the next generation of leaders, the impact is that we all lose. I believe that Fidel represented the future of the potential of the African continent as we know it," he stated.

"My brother Raila Odinga and Ida Odinga are family to me and when he lost his first son, I felt that I needed to be with him to give him support during this trying time."

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Nigeria : après "la plus meurtrière" attaque de Boko Haram, l'armée appelle à l'aide internationale
Par Francetv info avec AFP/12/01/2015

Une attaque contre la ville de Baga et d'autres localités du nord-est du Nigeria pourrait avoir fait plusieurs milliers de morts.

L'armée nigériane a appelé, samedi 10 janvier, à une coopération internationale face à Boko Haram, après une vaste offensive du groupe islamiste armé dans le nord-est du pays, décrite comme son attaque "la plus meurtrière" en cinq années d'insurrection. Le bilan de cette attaque contre Baga et plusieurs autres localités sur les rives du lac Tchad, dans le nord de l'Etat de Borno, n'a pas encore été indépendamment déterminé, mais pourrait s'avérer extrêmement élevé, certains évoquant plusieurs milliers de morts.

Ces offensives "devraient convaincre tous les gens bien intentionnés à travers le monde que Boko Haram représente le mal que nous devons éliminer tous ensemble, plutôt que de critiquer les personnes qui essayent de les contrer", a déclaré le porte-parole du ministère de la Défense, Chris Olukolade. L'armée nigériane, la plus importante d'Afrique de l'Ouest, est régulièrement sous le feu des critiques pour son incapacité à mettre fin à l'insurrection de Boko Haram.

Une fillette se fait exploser et tue 19 personnes

"L'armée nigériane n'a pas abandonné Baga et les autres localités actuellement contrôlées par les terroristes", a déclaré le ministère de la Défense. "Des plans appropriés, des hommes, des ressources

sont actuellement mobilisés pour faire face à la situation."

D'autres attaques ont depuis ensanglanté la région. Au moins 19 personnes ont péri, samedi, lorsqu'une bombe fixée sur une fillette d'une dizaine d'années a explosé dans un marché bondé de Maiduguri, grande ville du nord-est du Nigeria. Boko Haram, qui ravage la région, semble être à l'origine de cet attentat.

Par ailleurs, deux femmes kamikazes se sont fait exploser, dimanche, tuant quatre personnes, sur un marché bondé de Potiskum, dans la même région. Cette ville a aussi été touchée, samedi, par un attentat à la voiture piégée.

Buyout group Helios raises record \$1bn Africa fund

Javier Blas/ft.com/January 11, 2015

The first \$1bn-plus Africa-focused private equity fund has been raised by Helios Investment Partners, a London-based group founded almost a decade ago by a pair of Nigerian-born dealmakers.

The record size of the fund signals the growing appetite for a continent that until a few years ago had been largely ignored by global investors.

Africa still attracts a tiny proportion of the world's private equity money, even compared with other emerging regions, notably Asia and Latin America. But interest has increased recently, buoyed by strong economic growth.

After stagnating for two decades, African gross domestic product per capita has surged almost 40 per cent since 2002, fuelled by high commodity prices, the rise of a small consumer class, and cheap Chinese loans.

The strong growth has encouraged regional and international private equity groups. US buyout group Carlyle last year launched a nearly \$700m fund to invest in the region, while US rivals KKR and Blackstone have also struck regional deals.

Dealmaking among companies in the sub-Saharan region has been strong during the past year as investors bet on growth. Recent transactions include an alliance between brewer SABMiller and Coca-Cola; the entry of French insurer Axa in Nigeria and a large merger in the retail sector in South Africa.

Helios plans to wrap up fundraising for its latest vehicle at \$1.1bn — the maximum that it promised it would take from investors. About 60 per cent of the new fund has come from existing investors. It is the third fund that Helios has raised since it was established in 2007.

Tope Lawani, Helios co-founder, said in an interview with the Financial Times that the size of the capital rising and the participation of pension funds and sovereign wealth funds was a sign that "private equity in Africa is maturing". Until now, wealthy families and entrepreneurs have been quicker than institutional investors such as pension funds to see the appeal of Africa.

Although more institutional investors are pouring money into private equity funds for Africa, some remain worried about their exit strategy as capital markets in the region — particularly stock exchanges — are still in their infancy, with the exception of South Africa and, to a lesser extent, Morocco, Nigeria and Kenya.

Buyout groups raised \$3.3bn for Africa funds in 2013, the latest year with full data, compared with a peak of \$4.7bn in 2007, according to estimates by EY, the consultancy.

The arrival of new investors to Africa coincides, however, with economic trouble in the region as commodities prices tumble and countries brace for the impact on capital flows of an anticipated increase in US interest rates.

Mr Lawani said that in the near term many African countries were going to suffer an “adverse impact” on their currencies as capital flew back to the US.

“We are witnessing sharply lower commodities prices and it is reasonable to expect African currencies to lose value against the dollar,” he said. But he claimed that the downturn would turn into an opportunity for investors holding large amounts of US dollars, such as Helios. “It is an excellent time to invest: asset values are going to come down,” he said.

Helios held the previous record for the biggest private equity fund in Africa, which it raised in 2011, at \$908m. Earlier this year, Edmond de Rothschild amassed \$530m for its first buyout fund focused on deals in the continent.

In 2012, Sir Bob Geldof, the musician and campaigner for aid to Africa, raised \$200m for his 8 Miles fund focused on the continent.

2,000 feared killed in 'deadliest' Boko Haram attack in Nigeria

Aminu Abubakar and Faith Karimi, CNN/January 10, 2015

Kano, Nigeria (CNN)Boko Haram militants opened fire on northern Nigerian villages, leaving bodies scattered everywhere and as many as 2,000 people feared dead, officials said.

"The attack on Baga and surrounding towns looks as if it could be Boko Haram's deadliest act," Amnesty International said in a statement.

Islamist militants sprayed bullets as they stormed in last weekend in trucks and armored vehicles, local authorities said Friday.

When they arrived, they unloaded motorcycles and pursued residents who fled into the bush, firing indiscriminately, said Baba Abba Hassan, a local district head.

Local officials reported death tolls ranging from hundreds to as many as 2,000 people.

"Dead bodies litter the bushes in the area and it is still not safe to go and pick them (up) for burial," said Musa Bukar, the chairman of the local government where Baga is located.

"Some people who hid in their homes were burned alive."

Raid lasted for days

During the raid that started January 3, hundreds of gunmen seized the town of Baga and neighboring villages, as well as a multinational military base.

Attacks started at dawn and continued throughout last weekend, according to residents.

Though local officials gave conflicting death tolls, they agreed on the massive number of fatalities.

More than 2,000 people were killed in attacks on 16 villages, Bukar said. He could not explain how he arrived at that toll.

But the local district head said hundreds of people had been killed, not thousands. The actual toll will be known after a headcount of households is complete, Hassan said.

An offensive is underway to reclaim the areas from the militants, according to Mike Omeri, a government spokesman.

exp Boko Haram attack in Nigeria_00002001

Tens of thousands displaced

At least 30,000 people were displaced, authorities said. About 20,000 of the displaced camped in Maiduguri city, the capital of Borno state.

Authorities are making arrangements to transport the 10,000 others from Monguno town, 60 kilometers (36 miles) from Baga. Some residents fled into neighboring Cameroon and Chad.

"If reports that the town was largely razed to the ground and that hundreds or even as many as 2,000 civilians were killed are true, this marks a disturbing and bloody escalation of Boko Haram's ongoing onslaught against the civilian population," Amnesty International's Daniel Eyre said.

Boko Haram has terrorized northern Nigeria regularly since 2009, attacking police, schools, churches and civilians, and bombing government buildings. It has also kidnapped students, including more than 200 schoolgirls who were abducted in April and remain missing.

The Islamist group has said its aim is to impose a stricter form of Sharia law across Nigeria, which is split between a majority Muslim north and a mostly Christian south.

The United States condemned the attacks, saying the group "shows no regard" for human life.

"All those responsible for these recurring terrorist attacks must be held accountable," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

Threats against Cameroon

In neighboring Cameroon, President Paul Biya urged the international community to help battle the terror group. His call came after the leader of the terrorist group threatened him in a YouTube video.

"Oh Paul Biya, if you don't stop this, your evil plot, you will taste what has befallen Nigeria. Your troops cannot do anything to us," Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau said in the video released this week.

The threat against the President came after Cameroonian soldiers killed dozens of Boko Haram fighters this month.

Biya told the international community that a global response is required to combat the terror group.

Amnesty International: Boko Haram attacks may have left 2,000 dead

By Siobhán O'Grady/sbs.com.au/12 Jan 2015

As many as 2,000 people may have been killed by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, in what Amnesty International said could be one of the Islamist terrorist group's deadliest acts since its inception in 2002.

As many as 2,000 soldiers and civilians may have been killed at the hands of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria this week, in what Amnesty International said could be one of the Islamist terrorist group's deadliest acts since its inception in 2002.

Boko Haram, the same extremist group responsible for the notorious kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria, last spring, launched a series of attacks on the town of Baga, near the border with Chad, over the weekend.

The threat of Boko Haram is a key issue in Nigeria's presidential election, which is scheduled for Feb. 14. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan has failed to control the group, which has grown in size and influence since he took office in 2010. Jonathan, a Christian, will face Muslim northerner Muhammadu Buhari, who is running on a platform of increased security.

Baga was targeted because it houses a multinational military base intended to provide security against such attacks. That base was raided and possibly destroyed over the weekend when Nigerian soldiers called for reinforcements that reportedly never arrived. Many soldiers and civilians fled over the border to Chad and many others were killed as they attempted to escape.

On Wednesday, Boko Haram insurgents attacked Baga's remaining residents, who also tried to flee to Chad. According to those on the ground in Baga, it was mainly women, children, and the elderly who were unable to escape fast enough to save themselves, leaving hundreds, if not thousands, of bodies strewn throughout the main town and its surrounding villages.

Baga's location in the rural bush made verifying reports of the violence slow and unreliable, but Muhammad Abba Gava, the head of a civilian vigilante group trying to counter the insurgents, told the Associated Press on Friday that "The human carnage perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists in Baga was enormous."

In a conversation with Foreign Policy, Joe Siegle, director of research at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, D.C., said the lack of reinforcement for soldiers during Sunday's attack is yet another example of the Nigerian military's failure to respond appropriately to the threat of Boko Haram. While soldiers may intend to stand their ground, he said if they can't rely on backup to actually arrive, defeating the insurgents will become impossible.

"The more telling story from this isn't just that there's been another attack, but that there's been a failure to launch an effective response after the concerted series of attacks on civilians and occasionally military bases," he told FP.

On Dec. 29, Boko Haram insurgents in northern Cameroon attacked a military base there, but were warded off by airstrikes issued by the Cameroonian government. No such increase in escalation has been suggested by the Nigerian government after this week's attacks.

And in a statement released Friday, Daniel Eyre, Amnesty's Nigeria researcher, reiterated the need for swift government response to the increased violence.

“This attack reiterates the urgent need for Boko Haram to stop the senseless killing of civilians and for the Nigerian government to take measures to protect a population who live in constant fear of such attacks,” he said.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

CHINA/AFRICA :

Chinese Foreign Minister to tour Africa
CCTV.com/01-10-2015

China's foreign minister Wang Yi is due in Kenya on Saturday for the start of a 5-nation African tour. His visit builds on those made by President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, to push for the growth of the China-Africa relationship.

It's a tradition stretching back a quarter of a century...

"Africa has been the place where each Chinese Foreign Minister chooses to visit first at the outset of a new year, showcasing the great importance attached by the Chinese side to Africa," said Hong Lei, spokesman of Chinese foreign ministry.

Last year, Wang Yi visited countries such as Senegal and Ethiopia.

This time, alongside Kenya, he'll visit Sudan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Each country faces challenges - particularly around security.

Wang is seeking to deepen friendships and co-operation.

He is also aiming to promote the spirit of the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, held in Beijing last November.

President Xi Jinping told that conference that China's priorities included promoting peace, development and what he called 'win-win co-operation'.

Xi himself chose Africa for his official visit after he took office, in March 2013.

Wang's tour will run until 17 January.

China 'will never be colonists' in Africa, says foreign minister

Monday, 12 January, 2015/scmp.com

Senior diplomat Wang Yi pledges his country would not emulate Western powers and grab continent's resources

China will not take path of "Western colonists" in Africa -foreign minister CHINA-AFRICA BEIJING, Jan 12 (Reuters) - China will not follow the path of "Western colonists" in Africa, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the start of a five-nation tour of the continent, parrying criticism that his country's hunger for resources had led to one-sided policies and damaging projects.

China is Africa's biggest trade partner, and has sought to tap the region's rich resources to fuel its own economic growth over the past two decades.

But Beijing's involvement has been called "neo-colonial" by some African leaders, who fear many of the projects bring little benefit to local people, with materials and even labour being imported from China.

"We absolutely will not take the old path of Western colonists, and we absolutely will not sacrifice Africa's ecological environment and long-term interests," Wang Yi told Chinese Central Television while in Kenya.

His comments were published on the ministry's website late on Sunday.

Beijing has previously said its cooperation with African nations covered farm, health and infrastructure-related projects.

In July, China said more than half its foreign aid, worth more than US\$14 billion between 2010 and 2012, went to Africa.


China says there are no strings attached to its aid, but some of its projects have drawn attention for their support of governments with poor human rights records and lack of transparency, such as Zimbabwe, Sudan and Angola.

Wang's trip includes stops in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Speaking to reporters in Sudan on Sunday, Wang defended China's mediation efforts in South

Sudan, rejecting the idea they were intended to safeguard its own oil interests.

China is the biggest investor in the oil industry in South Sudan, which split from Sudan in 2011. It has played an unusually large diplomatic role in the country and committed about 700 UN peacekeepers amid a civil war that has killed more than 10,000 people.

“China’s mediation of South Sudan issues is completely the responsibility and duty of a responsible power, and not because of China’s own interests,” Wang said in comments posted to the Foreign Ministry’s website on Monday.  (Reporting by Michael Martina; Editing by Clarence Fernandez)

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

EN BREF, CE 12 Janvier 2015... AGNEWS/DAM, NY, 12/01/2015