



(Gunmen from Islamic extremist group al-Shabab were suspected in an attack that killed one person and severely wounded three others on Sunday in the northern Kenyan county of Mandera, which borders Somalia and has experienced a string of attacks in recent months, a police official said.)

BURUNDI :

RWANDA :

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda to start oil production by early 2018
thenationonline.net/16/03/2015

Uganda is confident it will get crude out of the ground by early 2018 and start feeding it into a proposed refinery as it seeks to become a regional energy hub, government officials said.

The government and Russia-based RT Global Resources have started negotiations about the start of construction of the \$2.5 billion refinery, energy and minerals minister Irene Muloni told Platts.

“The negotiations have started in Kampala city to conclude the project agreements to the satisfaction of both parties and Kenya has already acquired a 2.5 per cent stake in Uganda’s refinery,” Okello Oryem, minister of state for international affairs, said separately.

Last month, RT Global Resources won Uganda’s contract to build and manage a 60,000 b/d refinery in Hoima district.

Regional states in the East African Community asked Uganda last week to expedite formation of a national oil company and refining subsidiary as prerequisites for a special purpose vehicle to implement the refinery project.

Although analysts have cast doubt on the viability of Uganda’s refinery project, Muloni said it remains viable and she expects global crude prices to rebound by the time production starts.

She said oil production licenses for Tullow Oil and Total would be issued in a few weeks to allow the two companies to prepare wells.

“We are very close to grant Tullow Oil and Total production licenses since we have OK’ed most of their field plans – in a month’s time, we could give them,” Muloni said.

Virginia teacher is Uganda-bound

Monday, March 16, 2015/BY MALISSA WATTERSON/EASTERN SHORE
NEWS/fredericksburg.com

A TEACHER FROM EASTERN SHORE IS PARTICIPATING IN ‘GLOBAL CLASSROOMS’ PROGRAM THIS SPRING

EXMORE—For Sandra Thornton’s students, access to learning is never a question of privilege.

The girls and boys in her Broadwater Academy classroom in Exmore, on the Eastern Shore, don’t know what it’s like to not attend school because their day is largely spent walking to access water or doing household chores.

In April, the middle and upper school science teacher will be traveling 16,000 miles round-trip to see where such educational setbacks do exist.

She and 10 other teachers from schools throughout the United States will spend two weeks in Uganda in central Africa.

Thornton will be taking part in this year’s “Teachers for Global Classrooms,” an exchange program offered through the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

“I’m going there because I have expertise as a science teacher, but I’m going because I get to learn as well,” Thornton said in her home during a recent snow day.

The exchange program offers middle and high school teachers the opportunity to promote global education in their classrooms and around the world.

It is one-year program composed of an online professional development course, two Washington-based symposiums and the in-country experience.

Thornton, who actively seeks professional development opportunities, applied February of last year and was notified in May that she was among 80 teachers who had been chosen out of hundreds of applicants.

She was later given the option to choose a region for the in-country portion of the program and decided to pick Africa because she had never been to the continent.

This past fall, Thornton completed the graduate course that covered how to teach students “global competencies”—skills like recognizing other perspectives, communicating ideas and investigating the world around you.

“If we don’t address global competencies within our classrooms, we put our students at a disadvantage,” said Thornton. “Whether they are applying for U.Va., or a university in some other country, they are competing on a global level for that seat.”

The course required Thornton to develop globalized lesson plans for her Broadwater students.

In addition to teaching electricity and magnetism in her energy unit, the science teacher also covered fossil fuel use in other countries like China, where much U.S. coal and fossil fuels are used.

By learning that pollution from China can travel to the United States, students made the connection that actions in their home country can affect other countries and vice versa.

Thornton’s classes also interacted with students at an international school in India, when they participated in a global share project titled “Through the Lens.”

After Thornton shared she would be traveling to Uganda, her classes began participating in her journey.

They started to follow her program blog, asked questions about vaccinations she will need and started general discussions about travel.

“A lot of times on the Shore, we’re bound very much by tradition and if you don’t know to dream; if you don’t know those opportunities are out there, then a lot of times you don’t have that frame of reference,” she said. “So I hope by going on this trip they see that the world is out there and they can do anything they want to do.”

When she arrives in Uganda’s capital, Kampala, she will be placed in the Old Kampala Senior Secondary School and will work alongside her host teacher, Joseph Kalisa.

She said she will be teaching science lessons to the middle and high school students, but it is more likely she and the class will be practice English—the language of their instruction.

She is curious to see how the classroom environment differs from her own.

“A lot of times they will have 70, 80 students in a classroom, but no behavioral problems; not out of turn talking,” said Thornton. “If a student presents a behavioral problem, they’re out of school and that’s it, so it will be interesting to see that.”

She said she is most looking forward to meeting people and experiencing life the way Ugandans experience it. She is also excited to visit Uganda's Great Rift Valley, where the oldest fossils of pre-humans and humans have been found.

Before she departs, Thornton will conduct research for a capstone project, the final requirement of the exchange program.

Thornton will wrap up "Teachers for Global Classrooms" in August or September and present research findings at the fall Virginia Association of Science Teachers conference.

She will be in Uganda from April 6–20.

SOUTH AFRICA :

Shell pulls shale team out of South Africa

Loni Prinsloo/rdm.co.za/16 mars 2015

Legislative certainty is a significant factor in projects being given the go-ahead

Multinational oil and gas company Royal Dutch Shell is pulling its top shale-gas man out of South Africa, an indication that companies are growing increasingly frustrated with government delays over shale-gas legislation.

This week, Business Times was told that Jan-Willem Eggink — whom Shell sent to South Africa from Libya to monitor South Africa's shale gas opportunity — would be pulled out of the country in coming weeks. Other highly skilled staff would follow him.

"While government is sitting around farting, these companies are shifting their money away from South Africa and our economy will lose billions," said a member of parliament, who declined to be named.

Shell said on Friday that as part of a review due to falling oil prices, the company had adjusted its activities in shale oil and gas opportunities outside of the Americas.

It also said it had adjusted staffing in local exploration in South Africa. The company said it needed clarity on legislation and technical regulations in the country before making any further decisions.

"Should attractive commercial terms be put in place, the Karoo project could compete favourably within Shell's global shale gas and oil portfolio. We will continue our ongoing consultation with government [and] industry about the long-term opportunities of shale gas exploration and the regulations that will govern this industry," it said.

But the parliamentary source said: "Shell will resist saying it publicly, but they have given up on the government getting it together any time soon to fix the position of oil and gas companies in the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act [MPRDA] or to release fracking [hydraulic fracturing] regulations."

The redeployment of senior staff by Shell signals a lost opportunity for South Africa. In initial shale gas exploration in the Karoo alone, Shell would have spent a minimum of R2.5-billion.

Sean Lunn, who leads negotiations with the government on behalf of oil companies on exploration legislation, said countries compete within the global portfolio of energy companies and therefore whichever projects rank best would receive the high-risk exploration budgets.

Legislative certainty is a significant factor in projects being given the go-ahead, he said.

An industry spokesman explained that “basically, these companies are told to play soccer on a field without any lines, with only two poles instead of goalposts and not enough linesmen. A company like Shell operates in 90 different countries. If they are not making money in South Africa and the government is not getting its act together, then that money can very easily be allocated elsewhere.”

The biggest hiccup in terms of legislation for upstream oil and gas exploration is the stake that the South African government wants to take in terms of black economic empowerment and the terms that the state demands, which include a 20% free stake in exploration projects before companies have recouped their costs.

For the most part, oil and gas companies are happy to hand over the 20%, but only after they have recovered drilling and exploration costs that run into billions.

This has been included in the amendments to the MPRDA that were sent back to parliament in December, after the government tried to push them through just before elections in May last year.

Without that legislation in place, Shell and other companies are unable to acquire a licence, and, even if the legislation is pushed through today, the companies interested in shale gas development would still need to do an environmental impact assessment that would take another two years.

Shell is not the only oil and gas major that is fed up. Last year, US oil and gas explorer Anadarko Petroleum said it had halted spending on exploration in South Africa until it could get more clarity on changes in the country’s laws.

Aside from the 20% free stake, the government is also interested in raising its share in future projects by acquiring greater stakes in successful projects through production-sharing agreements or by buying in at an agreed price.

Things are not looking much better on the downstream side of the industry, as oil and gas companies have been talking to the government since 2009 to get guarantees and regulations in place to upgrade refineries to produce cleaner fuels.

To upgrade the country’s refineries to make clean fuels would cost about R40-billion. Companies need support from the government and final regulations on specifications for clean fuels. This is now expected only in 2017.

But the government has approved the Burgan clean fuels storage project in Cape Town. This will open the door for other countries to dump their excess product in the country.

Chairwoman of Chevron (trading as Caltex) Nobuswe Mbuyisa is concerned: “This will definitely have a negative impact on our refineries and is threatening the viability of the industry.”

The company has estimated that the impact could amount to \$20-million a year if the government does not assist in the upgrades and put certain regulations in place.

But while these debates continue, essential oil and gas experts are packing their suitcases and leaving.

Hiring ex-Apartheid mercenaries by Nigeria is awkward for modern South Africa
qz.com/16/03/2015

Leon Lotz, a white South African military ‘advisor’ who died in battle with Boko Haram last week, was a Koevoet man.

In post-Apartheid South Africa, this tag hardly draws any admiration. Koevoet was an Apartheid paramilitary organization established at the height of the South African Border War in 1979. After the fall of Apartheid, many ex-Koevoet and ex-SADF men established “private military companies”.

PMCs – as they’re commonly known – provide military and security expertise to governments or rebel groups at a premium.

Soldiers of Fortune

Over the past two weeks, it has come to light the Nigerian government, with its renewed focus to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency ahead of rescheduled elections on March 28, had recruited around 100 mainly former pro-Apartheid soldiers. The news has unsurprisingly attracted much controversy.

The men, mainly tasked with training the Nigerian Defense Force (NDF) in counter-insurgency tactics, form the core of a multinational team of private military security soldiers and experts.

Jakkie Cilliers, director at the Johannesburg-based Institute for Security Studies, told Quartz the move by the Nigerian government to use former South African Apartheid soldiers is largely a strategy for Nigeria to assert itself.

“The Nigerian government is proud, and by asking for assistance from South Africa, or any other African countries except Lake Chad Basin Commission countries before an election, Jonathan would suffer humiliation. He doesn’t want to be seen asking for assistance.”

With such a complicated history, and Nigeria’s immediate need to regain control of national security, it’s only fair that we expect complexity, and not easy answers.

John Stupart, editor at Africa Defense Review spoke to Quartz on the role of the Koevoet men in the Nigerian operation.

“This is pragmatic move by the Nigerian government. And I wouldn’t be surprised if these guys stuck around for a while. Its important to note that the their role is not meant to be combative. They’re highly trained counter-insurgency operatives who are in their 60s and 70s. While they may engage in peripheral combat, their role is to mainly train the Nigerian forces,” said Stupart.

Liberation history cast away?

Having been born just two years before the fall of Apartheid in 1994, I’ve been curious to know what the former leaders of South Africa’s anti-Apartheid movement – many who now occupy high positions as cabinet ministers, legislators and high-rank civil servants – have to say about this.

For the most part, their silence has been deafening.

The only senior political leader in South Africa to comment on this issue openly and publicly is Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, minister of Defense and Military Veterans.

Mapisa-Nqakula has an illustrious history in South Africa's liberation struggle, having left the country in 1984 to undergo military training in the Soviet Union and Angola respectively. She even worked in the political military structures of the ANC from 1986 to 1988.

But through a spokeswoman, Mapisa-Nqakula seemed to stick with South African government's stock response to the saga which is that no serving members of the army are in Nigeria.

"The SANDF [South African National Defense Force] would like to distance itself from any reports which may insinuate any involvement, deployment or existence of its military assets in Nigeria."

But it is what is not mentioned in the response that draws further questions.

Where is the condemnation from the ruling African National Congress, particularly of the use of former Apartheid soldiers and operatives?

And shouldn't Nigeria – a country that once offered military training and support to ANC to fight Apartheid – have decided against the use of former Apartheid soldiers?

Having just gained its independence in 1960, Nigeria played a leading role in the establishment of the UN Special Committee against Apartheid in 1960. There are countless of stories of ordinary Nigerians who contributed financially to the anti-apartheid movement, especially in the late 70s, after the historic 1976 youth-uprisings.

Does all of this matter still? Or is this history of solidarity, much like sentimentalism, heart warming and nostalgia inducing, but not enough to determine fidelities in the present?

After all, South Africa's relationship with Nigeria post-Apartheid has not always been that rosy. Remember when Former President Nelson Mandela, willingly accepted a \$50 million donation from General Sani Abacha?

The right side of history

On the 28th of March, millions of Nigerians will head to the polls, without any interruptions, hopefully. The Koevoet men, having provided stellar training and counter-insurgency tactics once used against Africans in countries like Namibia and Angola, would've achieved their short-term task and collected a small fortune.

Back home in South Africa, their place in the country's history and present will always be questioned. And while many of the Koevoet men are relics of a past my generation knows little about, they're a reminder that the past never leaves – it is always with us.

And sometimes it raises its head, recasting itself in a new light to fight for good. This, no matter how noble the intention, can be unsettling.

Quartz is launching in Africa in June 2015. Sign up for announcements and updates [here](#).

TANZANIA :

Ambitious Tanzania plans 'East Africa's biggest port'

by Edith Honan/Reuters/mars 16 2015

BAGAMOYO — In its heyday, Bagamoyo was a gateway to the heart of Africa for colonisers, with trade goods surging in from the Indian Ocean, and timber, ivory and countless slaves exported from the east coast harbour. Then Bagamoyo, which looks out towards the island of Zanzibar, fell on lean times for more than a century.

Now, Tanzania is planning an \$11bn project to make it the region's biggest port and an engine of Africa's boom.

The Chinese-backed project would dwarf Kenya's port at Mombasa, East Africa's trade gateway some 300km to the north, and include an industrial zone and rail and road links to capitalise on growth in a region hoping to exploit new oil and gas finds.

"It will be the engine for economic activity, not only for Bagamoyo but for the entire region," said district executive Ibrahim Matovu, speaking from offices overlooking beaches where ship-builders hammer out wooden dhows as they have for centuries.

Many doubt the plan can succeed and ask if Bagamoyo is even the right location for a port, given it is just 75km up the coast from Dar es Salaam and far from gas deposits off Tanzania's southern coast.

Politics also plays a role. President Jakaya Kikwete comes from Bagamoyo and many see the port as his legacy project. But a groundbreaking ceremony was delayed from July and the project is unlikely to be revived during an election season that culminates in October, when his successor will be chosen.

Also, Tanzania faces a budget crunch and has been cutting infrastructure spending, and the country lacks a credit rating, making borrowing more costly.

China Merchant Holding International has been joined by Omani sovereign wealth fund, the State General Reserve Fund, on the project but there has been little progress on building the infrastructure. The companies could not be reached for comment.

Critics say the project is too much too soon for a nation with solid growth but big infrastructure gaps.

Instead, they say the government should focus on improving Dar es Salaam's port, which handles 90% of exports and is growing at 10% per year.

"Unfortunately, I think they lost a bit of focus. There is a need for more coordination and clear direction on priority projects," said Jacques Morisset, the World Bank's lead country economist.

Tanzania, a former socialist state, is struggling to shake off its image as aid-dependent and corrupt.

Last month, the acting port authority director was suspended amid a corruption inquiry, two years after his predecessor was similarly ousted.

Across the region, fast-growing economies have launched infrastructure projects at a scale unprecedented in most of Africa.

Many are hitting bottlenecks. Kenya, East Africa's top economy, is upgrading the port of Mombasa and says it plans to move ahead with a long-delayed megaport in Lamu, an ancient Arab trading post near the border with Somalia.

The Bagamoyo plan, 10km from Bagamoyo town, a tentative United Nations World Heritage site which has the crumbling remains of a slave market and other remnants of the East African slave trade, was unveiled during a visit of the Chinese premier in 2013.

It is meant to ease congestion in Dar es Salaam and transform a depressed area into a trade and manufacturing hub. Yet there are practical difficulties, not least that Bagamoyo's port, unlike Dar es Salaam's, would most likely need regular, extensive dredging.

"Bagamoyo is a really good example of a white elephant," said one analyst who focuses on infrastructure. "If you're going to have two major ports, then isn't the place to have it in the south, where the gas is?" Tanzania has up to 53.28-trillion cubic feet of off-shore gas, putting it on par with some Middle East producers, but it has yet to construct a liquefied natural gas plant.

Plans to upgrade Tanzania's central corridor rail line that connects the mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo to the coast, are moving slowly. "If you improve only the ports without improving the railway, you are not doing anything," the Transport Ministry's Shaaban Mwinjaka said. In the meantime, Dar es Salaam has problems of its own.

The World Bank recently issued a stark assessment of the efficiency of a port expected to reach capacity within a decade. Last September, the Bank signed a \$565m deal to nearly double Dar es Salaam's capacity by 2020.

"If the port was as efficient as Mombasa, which is certainly not a great benchmark, the country would make almost \$2bn profit gain per year," said World Bank economist Mr Morisset.

At the port, warehouses are being raised to handle more goods and machinery is being brought in to convert general cargo wharves into container terminals, while there are plans to deepen two berths to make way for bigger ships.

Back in Bagamoyo, artisans wait for the odd tourist to amble by. "They've been talking about this (port) project for so, so long, but there's no action," said Rast Mwhite, a painter selling leather sandals. "But people, they hope."

Tourists saved from rising Tanzania park fees?

eturbonews.com/16/03/2015

The Tanzania National Park Authority (TANAPA) acknowledged that there was a downturn in business in 2014. This was attributed to the punishing anti-travel advisories against neighboring Kenya and in the second part of last year the trend to shun much of Africa over entirely unjustified ebola fears. With the previous steady increase in visitor numbers coming to an abrupt halt and suffering a downturn, would this prompt an increase in park fees to make up the sluggish income?

Confirmation was received over the weekend that TANAPA has apparently decided to hold park entrance tariffs which were due for upward revision, until 2016. Last revised on July 1, 2013, and initially due to be valid until June 30, 2015, the move to keep Tanzania park fees holding steady came as a surprise of sorts.

"It is something when a state organization admits to reality. We have been saying that increasing tariffs has a detrimental effect on travel into the parks. We, therefore, add a third reason to what TANAPA has said, that the park fee increase in 2013 was too high and shocked the market. Together with the Kenya situation and the ebola campaign against parts of Africa not affected at all, has all this contributed to break our constant visitor increases. We paid the price, and I congratulate TANAPA for showing some wisdom this time and keeping tariffs for at least another year," contributed a regular Arusha-based source.

TANAPA is also engaged in efforts to raise fees from lodges and camps in the parks through a new royalty regime but has been unable to implement new charges in the absence of ministerial consent. It is feared that should the new terms and conditions come into effect, something strongly opposed by the private hospitality sector through HAT, the Hotel Association of Tanzania, and other tourism trade associations, that tariffs might have to be raised by the affected lodges and camps, leading to a further erosion of arrival numbers.

Tourism stakeholders in Uganda and Kenya have apparently been unaware of the move but, when alerted to it, were prompt to demand that Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) equally refrain from raising charges, calling the present business climate difficult and challenging.

KENYA :

Al-Shabab Suspected in Kenya Attack That Kills 1, Wounds 3

By TOM ODULA Associated Press/Mar 15, 2015

NAIROBI, Kenya

Gunmen from Islamic extremist group al-Shabab were suspected in an attack that killed one person and severely wounded three others on Sunday in the northern Kenyan county of Mandera, which borders Somalia and has experienced a string of attacks in recent months, a police official said.

The official, who insisted on anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak with the media, said the victims were believed to be non-Muslims. The attack comes two days after gunmen attacked the convoy of Mandera Gov. Ali Roba, killing four people including two policemen. Roba survived the attack.

Adan Duale, a Kenyan Somali who is majority leader in parliament, was quoted on the BBC Somali Service on Saturday telling al-Shabab to leave Kenya alone.

"If you wish to, we shall send you elders, religious leaders and politicians. We shall come, tell us your whereabouts. Leave Kenya alone," Duale said in a statement that many in Kenya interpreted as a call for negotiations with al-Shabab. But Duale said Sunday on his Twitter account that Kenya will never negotiate with "terrorists."

Al-Shabab, based in Somalia, has vowed to inflict violent attacks on Kenya because it has contributed troops to the African Union force supporting the Western-backed government in Somalia. Kenya has experienced a string of attacks since it sent troops into Somalia in October 2011. Police said last month that 312 people have been killed in extremist attacks since 2012.

In October, Roba's convoy was hit by an improvised explosive device as he was being driven to work, injuring one of his guards.

In November, al-Shabab fighters hijacked a bus near Mandera, singled out non-Muslims and non-Somalis, and shot dead 28 passengers. Twenty-two of those killed were teachers. Ten days later, al-Shabab massacred 36 quarry workers who were non-Muslims.

Hundreds of teachers in parts of northern Kenya that border Somalia have refused to return to work, fearing attacks despite government reassurance of increased security.

Toyota to expand vehicle assembling plant in Kenya

BY PSCU/standardmedia.co.ke/Monday, March 16th 2015

Toyota Tsusho has announced plans to expand its vehicle assembling plant in Kenya. Toyota Tsusho CEO Jun Karube said a company team will look into the prospects of the multi-million shilling investment billed to significantly transform Kenya's motor vehicle industry at a meeting in Kenya in April. "We are keen to build on our investment portfolio in Kenya because of the country's strategic position as a gateway to the East and Central African regions," Mr. Karube said. Mr. Karube spoke on Monday during a Kenya-Japan business forum in Tokyo that was opened by President Uhuru Kenyatta. In 2013, Toyota Kenya opened a bus assembly plant in Changanwe – a Sh500 million investment that is expected to produce 40 units a month initially, rising to 200. This was the first plant of its kind opened by the Toyota subsidiary in Africa. Speaking at the forum, Japan's Economy, Trade and Industry Vice-Minister Shigeki Iwai lauded the robust economic partnership between Kenya and Japan. Mr. Iwai cited Toyota Tsusho's active presence in Kenya, undertaking mega projects on public private partnership as an example of the growing cooperation between the two countries. Having completed the 280-megawatt Olkaria IV Geothermal power plants in January this year, Toyota Tsusho has set its focus on other projects in Kenya including a unit of Olkaria I and V, and Olkaria VI. The company's other fields of interest include Menengai, Akiira, Longonot, Baringo-Silali and Suswa power projects.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

ISIS gains an ally in Nigeria, and terror threat in Africa grows worse

March 16, 2015/bostonglobe.com

The Nigerian jihadist movement Boko Haram already walks the walk of the younger but more notorious Islamic State, or ISIS — beheadings, enslavement, the brutal razing of towns. Now the

Nigerian-based insurgency is also tweeting the talk. It appears to be part of a showy new bid to bring international recruits to Africa's bloodiest ongoing conflict. The world should be paying closer heed.

Boko Haram last week formally pledged allegiance to ISIS. What that means in practical terms is unclear — the arming and training of the sub-Saharan terrorists by the more polished murderers of the Islamic State is one possibility — but the symbolism is chilling. The Nigerian extremists are acknowledging spiritual submission to ISIS, rebranding themselves as an Islamic State subsidiary.

Aside from the “bayat” — or pledge of loyalty — made by the leader of the Nigerian movement to ISIS, the most striking shift has been Boko Haram's slick switch to intensive use of social media. It has dramatically expanded Twitter messages to proclaim atrocities large and small. It increasingly releases adrenaline-fueled battle footage meant to appeal to disaffected, action-seeking adolescent Muslim males, whether in Boston or Bombay. And, of course, there are the closely scripted beheadings of civilian captives using production styles and camera angles taken from the ISIS playbook, perversely a huge drawing card. Even the long-bladed killing blades are identical to those wielded by ISIS executioners.

Although Western analysts are reluctant to guess whether ISIS has dispatched military instructors to Boko Haram, the upgraded use of social media strongly suggests ISIS — whose own network puts out some 90,000 Twitter and other social media messages per day — has deployed experienced propagandists to its new affiliate. Meanwhile, Boko Haram is also now fighting under the same black prayer-inscribed banners. Its online rhetoric — once mostly parochial tirades against the Nigerian government and African Christians — now proclaims international jihad. It has even adopted the battle hymn of ISIS as background soundtrack for videos boasting of its latest violence.

Boko Haram's creepy show of obeisance is alarming. It can only accelerate the Islamic State's ascendancy among terrorist groups, and it brings exactly the sort of recognition so desperately craved by ISIS, which is seeking to forge an Islamic “caliphate,” or empire.

ISIS split from the depleted ranks of Al Qaeda in 2013 and was at first underestimated. President Obama only last year dismissed the Islamic State as a J.V. team — a few months later he reconsidered and launched a massive air campaign against the Sunni militants. Still, ISIS has overrun roughly a third of Iraq and Syria, controlling an 80,000-square-mile territory in which it collects taxes, administers a variety of government functions, from mail delivery to maintenance of infrastructure, and imposes harsh Koranic law. The US bombing campaign, coupled with ground assaults by Iraqi forces and US-allied Kurds, has lately nibbled at the edges of ISIS holdings, but barely scratched its Syrian heartland.

The great danger posed by ISIS to the rest of world is not so much its military gains but its uncanny power to attract young Muslim recruits, male and female alike, from around the world, including hundreds from the United States and Canada and thousands from Europe. It speaks their languages, literally — tweeting in English, French, German, and Arabic, among others. And instead of presenting new arrivals with suicide vests, the movement is promising stipends, subsidized housing, and free medical care in a “purified” Sunni homeland. Some 1,000 foreign volunteers arrive every month.

The United States, Australia, Canada, and Europe have scored some success in preventing would-be ISIS recruits from traveling to Syria, Iraq, and other conflict zones in the Middle East. However, world observers should be alarmed: All the signs point to a Boko Haram that wants to make embattled Nigeria the next top spot for journeying jihadists.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

Americans exposed to Ebola return from Africa for monitoring

By Elizabeth Cohen and Steve Almasy, CNN/March 16, 2015

(CNN)Eight American aid workers who were exposed to Ebola in Sierra Leone have been flown back to the United States where health authorities will watch them closely for signs of the disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Three more exposed workers are due to arrive back in the United States on Monday.

The returning workers are clinicians for Partners in Health, a Boston-based aid group. None of them is showing symptoms of Ebola, but all had contact with a colleague who's been diagnosed with the disease and is being treated at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

While in West Africa, the workers "came to the aid of their ailing colleague," according to a Partners in Health statement.

As the CDC investigates who else might have had contact with the Ebola patient, more workers might be flown back to the United States, according to Tom Skinner, a spokesman for the CDC.

The workers are being housed near hospitals that specialize in treating Ebola patients, and if they show signs of the disease, they'll be admitted as patients.

Nurse who contracted Ebola sues hospital company

Coming to Nebraska, Georgia, Maryland

Four of the clinicians arrived Saturday to housing on the campus of the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, according to spokesman Taylor Wilson. The workers have voluntarily agreed not to leave their housing.

"They will be monitored so they'll stay there," Wilson said.

Another aid worker was flown to Atlanta over the weekend and is being housed near Emory University Hospital, and three more workers are scheduled to arrive in Atlanta on Monday, according to Nancy Nydam, spokeswoman for the Georgia Department of Public Health.

As in Nebraska, the workers in Georgia must stay in their housing for 21 days after the date of their exposure to Ebola.

"Twice a day, we'll have visual monitoring either face to face or we'll Skype with them, or do FaceTime," Nydam said. "And if it's Skype or FaceTime, they'll have to be in a place where we can clearly identify that they are where they're supposed to be."

Three more exposed workers arrived Saturday at the National Institute of Health in Maryland.

These workers "will remain restricted from public places" and have "limited movement, including no mass transportation," according to a statement from Christopher Garrett, a spokesman for the Maryland Department of Health.

The health care worker with Ebola was in serious condition Friday, the NIH said. Details about the patient's identity weren't released.

The patient is the second with Ebola admitted to the NIH hospital.

A deadly and stubborn epidemic

Nina Pham, a nurse at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas, was admitted to NIH in October after she contracted the disease while treating Liberian national Thomas Eric Duncan. Pham recovered and was released free of disease. Duncan died.

Emory, the NIH and Nebraska are three of only four hospitals in the United States that have biocontainment units to deal with a highly infectious disease such as Ebola.

More than 10,000 people have died in a West African epidemic of Ebola that dates back to December 2013, according to the World Health Organization. Almost all of the deaths have been in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Ebola is spread by direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person.

CNN's Carma Hassan, Joe Sutton and Elliott C. McLaughlin contributed to this report.

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

CHINA/AFRICA :

Leaders of China, South Africa Exchange Congratulations on Launch of 'Year of China'
March 16, 2015/Editor: Kathy Cao/womenofchina.cn

Chinese President Xi Jinping and South African President Jacob Zuma exchanged messages on March 15, congratulating the launch of "the Year of China" in South Africa.

Under the framework of "the Year of China" in South Africa, both China and South Africa will hold a series of wonderful activities on mutual exchanges in South Africa's nine provinces and major cities, which will open a new chapter for the people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and South Africa, Xi said in his congratulatory message.

China is willing to join hands with South Africa to push for more achievements in the China-South Africa cooperation as well as the China-Africa cooperation, and bring more benefits to the Chinese and African peoples, Xi added.

Zuma said in his congratulatory message that China and South Africa's hosting of the "country year" celebrations bear a historic significance in further boosting their bilateral ties.

South Africa sincerely thanked China for supporting South Africa's staging "the Year of South Africa" in China in 2014, and it will fully support the running of "the Year of China" in South Africa in 2015, Zuma said.

The South African president expected the event will fully display China's enormous achievements in history and culture as well as its national development.

"The Year of China" in South Africa is to be officially launched on March 15, 2015.

(Source: CRI English)

China Overtakes Germany as World's Third-Largest Arms Exporter

By Robert Wall and Doug Cameron/wsj.com/March 15, 2015

Report on global arms trade shows China's share of export market more than doubled in past decade

China has overtaken Germany as the world's third-largest arms exporter and cut its dependence on imports by producing more-sophisticated weapons, according to a new report.

State-owned defense suppliers, such as Norinco Group, have become prominent at arms fairs, opening new markets beyond established customers in South Asia by, for example, selling armed drones to Nigeria in its battle against Boko Haram rebels.

U.S. and allied military chiefs and lawmakers have expressed concern about China's fast-growing military capabilities and territorial claims in the Pacific, but its role as an exporter has garnered less attention.

China's arms exports rose 143% between the five-year period ended in 2009 and the five-year period ended in 2014, according to the annual report on weapons transfers from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which is closely watched by policy makers and defense contractors.

China represents just 5% of a global export market valued at more than \$300 billion a year. That's far behind the 31% secured by the U.S. and 27% by Russia in the 2010-2014 period. Still, China's share has more than doubled over the past decade.

“The equipment you get nowadays from China is much better than 10-15 years ago,” said Siemon Wezeman, a senior researcher at the institute. Customers who used to buy Western or Russian equipment can now turn to China and often secure weapons of similar quality at far lower costs, he said.

A proposed \$3.4 billion deal to sell a missile-defense system to Turkey, while not finalized, shows how Chinese arms makers are winning business outside their traditional markets, as well as from countries shunned by Western rivals.

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar accounted for two-thirds of China’s exports. Africa has become a key market, with the institute identifying sales by China to 18 countries on the continent.

Chinese arms makers are increasingly attending global arms fairs to showcase their weapons, including participating last month at the IDEX exhibition in Abu Dhabi. State-owned Chinese firms marketed a range of weapons including the advanced FD-2000 air and missile defense system, designed to shoot down aircraft at a range of up to 125 kilometers, or about 80 miles, and the Wing Loong armed drone that closely resembles the General Atomics Reaper unmanned aircraft used by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

While Pentagon leaders fret about the more advanced long-range missiles and other weapons being fielded by China in the Pacific, their potential proliferation is also becoming an issue.

“One of the concerns about China is not just that they are modernizing—we don’t anticipate a conflict with China, certainly—but [that] they export,” Frank Kendall, the Pentagon’s chief weapons’ buyer, told Congress last year.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has said that Beijing is “prudent and responsible” when it comes to exports and abides by its international obligations.

The rise in its domestic arms industry also is leading China to slip in the ranking of weapons importers. The country was the top arms importer in the 2005 to 2009 period, and now has fallen to third, according to the Stockholm Institute’s study. The level of imports fell 42% during the period.

Germany continued to slip in the global ranking of exporters. Economics Minister Sigmar Gabriel, of the center-left Social Democrats, has become reluctant to approve some deals.

The country’s arms exports have slipped 43% in the five years ended 2014 compared with the 2005 to 2009 period, the institute said. Arms makers such as Rheinmetall AG have struggled amid more restrictive export policies.

Saudi Arabia is among the markets where Germany is reluctant to sell weapons, and Sweden last week ended a military cooperation deal with the Mideast kingdom. Still, Saudi Arabia has risen to be the second biggest importer of arms, trailing only India, and is likely to remain at that high level for some time, Mr. Wezeman said. The U.K. and U.S. are the largest provider of arms to Saudi Arabia, including such systems as the European Typhoon combat jet and the Boeing Co. F-15 fighter plane.

INDIA/AFRICA :

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

Mass protests present big challenge to Brazil's Rousseff

By BRAD BROOKS and STAN LEHMAN/Associated Press/March 16, 2015

SAO PAULO — Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff faced the biggest challenge yet of her young and turbulent second term, as hundreds of thousands of protesters took to streets in more than 150 cities to demand her impeachment and an end to corruption.

The Sunday protests, organized by right-leaning groups on social media and held across the continent-sized nation, had none of the violence seen in massive anti-government demonstrations that hit the country in 2013 and lingered into the following year.

They add to the mounting pressure on Rousseff, who is facing both political and economic crises as Brazil's economy stalls and dozens of top political figures are investigated in a kickback scheme at state-run oil company Petrobras, which prosecutors label as the largest graft scheme yet uncovered in the country.

The biggest protest was seen in Sao Paulo, where some 210,000 people gathered on a main avenue, according to the polling and statistics firm Datafolha. Large gatherings were also seen in the capital Brasilia, Rio de Janeiro and the southern city of Porto Alegre.

Rousseff didn't appear in public, but government ministers held a nationally televised press conference in which they said they would introduce anti-corruption measures in Congress, action the president promised during her campaign for re-election in October.

"We are here to express our indignation with the government-sponsored corruption and thieving, and to demand Dilma's impeachment," said Andre Menezes, 35, protesting on Avenida Paulista in Sao Paulo.

"She may have not been directly involved in the corruption at Petrobras, but she certainly knew about it, and for me that makes her just as guilty and justifies her ouster," he added.

In Rio, police estimated 15,000 people marched along the golden sands of Copacabana beach, where they waved Brazilian flags and many openly called for a military coup to dissolve the government.

In contrast to the widespread violence seen during Brazil's 2013 protests, on Sunday the only conflict reported was police using tear gas and stun grenades to disperse a small group of protesters in Brasilia who authorities said were trying to enter the Congress. In Sao Paulo, police arrested about 20 young men who were carrying powerful fireworks and brass knuckles.

Justice Minister Jose Eduardo Cardozo defended the government, emphasizing Rousseff's record as a leftist guerrilla who stood up to Brazil's 1964-85 military regime — and who was jailed for three years and brutally tortured because of it.

Rousseff has said she fully supports peaceful demonstrations and Cardozo added Sunday night that the rallies "confirm that Brazil is a democratic state that allows for divergences, the existence of opposing opinions and that we're far from any coup option."

Much protester ire was focused on a kickback scheme at Petrobras, in which at least \$800 million was paid in bribes and other funds by Brazil's biggest construction and engineering firms in exchange for inflated Petrobras contracts.

Top executives are already in jail and the attorney general is investigating dozens of congressmen, along with current and former members of the executive branch, for alleged connections to the scheme that apparently began in 1997 before Rousseff's party took power in 2003. Rousseff, a former chairwoman of Petrobras' board, has not been implicated and so far is not being investigated, though top officials from her administration, including two former chiefs of staff, are caught up in the inquiry.

The mass marches are another thorn in Rousseff's side, adding impetus to opposition efforts to thwart measures she backs in Congress.

Brazilian growth has been weak since Rousseff took office in 2011. The country likely entered a recession in 2014 and most economists surveyed by the Central Bank forecast negative growth this year. Inflation is rising and the currency has plummeted against the dollar in recent weeks, making life more expensive in a nation with a surprisingly high cost of living.

Still, Brazil's top opposition political figures say impeachment is undesirable, because the president isn't accused of any connection to the Petrobras scandal, and because it could affect Brazil's stability.

Pedro Arruda, a political scientist at Sao Paulo's Pontifical Catholic University, said demonstrators have the right to demand Rousseff's ouster, "but the impeachment they ... demand has no legal foot to stand on."

At Copacabana, protester Sheila Alcantara said she recently had to close a restaurant she owned because of rapidly rising prices for electricity and food. "Never in my life have I heard of so much corruption, of so much money lost."

Brooks reported from Rio de Janeiro and Lehman from Sao Paulo. Associated Press writer Adriana Gomez Licon contributed from Rio.

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