This document provides an overview of developments in the Mediterranean Basin and other regions of interest from 24 July – 30 July, with hyperlinks to source material highlighted and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to the region, please contact the members of the Med Basin Team, or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.

In Focus: The Chemical Weapons Threat in Syria
By Linda Lavender

Syria is one of only a few countries in the global community that has not joined the 1997 UN Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which prohibits its parties from possessing chemical weapons and requires parties to destroy existing stocks. The CWC is considered by experts to be one of the world’s most successful non-proliferation agreements. Since the convention entered into force in April 1997, there has not been a state-on-state conflict where chemical weapons have been deployed, which is an impressive achievement. International leaders are at present concerned by Syria’s recent threat to use chemical weapons, especially in the “current fog of war”, as it is believed Syria possesses the largest stockpile of chemical and biological weapons in the world.

Since the early 1980s, Syria has made efforts to acquire and maintain an arsenal of chemical weapons, according to Reuters. Syria’s decision to acquire this capability was born from its defeats in the 1967, 1973 and 1982 conflicts with Israel and the realisation that it was unlikely Syria would ever achieve conventional military parity with Israel. For over 30 years, Syria has demonstrated its ability to produce mustard gas, Sarin, VX nerve agent and Tubun. While the exact amount of these weapons cannot be determined, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has estimated that Syria possesses several hundred litres of chemical weapons and produces hundreds of tonnes of agents annually.

The epicentre for Syria’s chemical weapons programme lies at the Centre D’Etudes et de Recherches Scientifiques (CERS) in Damascus. Leonard Spector, from the Monterey Institute of International Studies’ James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, states that Syria’s chemical weapons programme has both production and delivery capabilities. (continued on page 10)
Algeria

Algerian and Iraqi officials rejected a joint statement by the Arab League foreign ministers who called for Assad to “renounce power”, stating the decision belongs to the Syrian people, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). According to Algerian interior ministry officials, the number of Syrians seeking refuge in Algeria is now estimated at 12,000; however, the Syrian opposition puts the number between 18,000 and 20,000, AFP reports. Many Syrian refugees are also thought to have arrived from Lebanon and Jordan. The large number of Syrian refugees is attributed to the lack of visa requirements between the Syria and Algeria. In order to reduce the number of Syrians fleeing, Syria has eliminated two of three weekly Air Algerie flights and now requires passengers to purchase return tickets and provide proof of where they will stay in Algeria.

Libya

Libya is expected to reach pre-war oil production levels by October 2012, later than originally forecasted, stated Libya’s Deputy Oil Minister, Omar Shakmak, in a Reuters report. Delays are attributed to production stoppages enforced by local militias as a means of protest in various parts of the country and the slow return of oil services firms to Libya. Shakmak also indicated that the country is looking into proposals to build two new refineries and update existing facilities. Libya’s largest refinery, Ras Lanuf, has not yet reopened.

General Khalifa Haftar, the commander of Libya’s Tripoli Revolutionary brigade, and 30 former Libyan fighters went to Syria to assist the Free Syrian Army, according to CNN. Al Harati is now leading the “Liwaat al Ulmaa” or “Banner of the Nation” brigade. A senior Libyan official confirmed that Libyans were fighting in Syria but they had gone freely and without the sponsorship of the Libyan government. Many Libyan’s feel solidarity with Syrians seeking to overthrow the regime.

Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are considering the removal of visa requirements for travelling citizens, following a meeting between President Mohamed Morsi and the foreign ministers of Libya and Tunisia, writes Egypt Independent. The easing of requirements will enhance Arab unity and is contingent on the security situation in these countries.

Mali

The United Front for the Defence of the Republic (FDR), a coalition consisting of 40 political parties and 100 civil-society organisations, called for the resignation of Mali’s interim Prime Minister, Cheick Modibo Diarra, reports AFP. The FDR cited Diarra’s “incompetence” in resolving the crisis in the rebel Islamist-controlled North. Diarra responded 28 July on state TV, stating “I will not resign and cannot resign”, informs Reuters. According to BBC, the country’s interim president, Dioncounda Traore, returned from Paris where he received medical treatment for injuries sustained in a mob attack. On 29 July, Traore appeared on state TV, announcing the addition of a national council of transition and two vice-presidential positions, one to be held by the military and the other by “social actors,” reports Reuters. The announcement came two days before the 31 July deadline set by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the creation of a new transitional unity government. According to AFP, Traore’s government restructuring “side-lined” Diarra. According to the report, Traore would “lead the High Council of State, lead talks for the unity government and create a committee to negotiate with Islamists controlling Mali’s north”.

Captain Amadou Sanogo’s forces, who carried out the 22 March coup, have arrested, tortured, killed and forcibly disappeared soldiers suspected of involvement in the 30 April counter-coup, reports Human Rights Watch. Witnesses at the Katmi detention camp saw detained soldiers hog-tied and dragged on the ground by policemen, struck with batons, burned with cigarettes, urinated upon, forced to sodomise other detainees, and stabbed in the extremities. Armed men in the capital of Bamako have also arrested a soldier.
and religious leader over suspected involvement in the counter coup, South African Press Association (SAPA) reported on 28 July. Al Qaeda-linked rebel groups in the northern region have been recruiting youth under the age of 18 and placing them in “military and religious training”, reports Magharebia. A leader of the MUJAO Islamist group informed that recruits came from Mali, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Ghana, Gambia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Algeria and Guinea.

John Ging, Director of Operations for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), says NGOs have managed to undertake “remarkable work” in northern Mali despite insecurity; however, the largest obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance in the country is the shortage of funding. The most critically underfunded sectors are health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Mr. Ging told reporters that “there appears to be a misconception that without a solution to the security and political crisis in the north of the country, little can be done to scale up the humanitarian response. In fact, 80 per cent of the country’s humanitarian needs are in the south where there is relative stability”.

ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) has called for continued planning efforts for the deployment of a regional intervention force of 3,000 military personnel. Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara stated that ECOWAS will submit a new request to the United Nations (UN) Security Council for the approval of a military intervention in Mali, reports Reuters. The force would consist of soldiers from Mali, Niger, Nigeria and potentially Chad and would require logistical support from France and the United States. The European Union (EU) announced its support for the ECOWAS intervention on 23 July and has since agreed to send a team to Niger to provide training in counter-terrorism and criminal networks to security forces, informs AP.

Mauritania

Mauritania’s Department of Imamate, created by the High Institute of Islamic Studies and Research, has graduated its first group of imam scholars, reports Magharebia. The programme was created to train imams in the promotion of moderate Islam in order to counter religious extremism. Imams are trained in mechanisms of persuasion and communication.

Tunisia

Tunisia’s ruling Ennahda party is advocating for a parliamentary system, while the opposition in the Constituent Assembly is pursuing a semi-presidential system, informs ANSAmed. The semi-presidential system would grant the president more power than the parliamentary system. With the Constituent Assembly at an impasse, Amor Chetou, president of the Commission on legislative and executive powers of the assembly, is seeking a popular referendum on the matter.

Tunisia’s President Moncef Marzouki issued a pardon for 1,300 prisoners on 25 July, the 55th anniversary of the proclamation of the Tunisian Republic, states ANP/AFP. According to Justice Minister Nouredin B’Hiri, those pardoned included minors, university students, and school children. In other related news, Magharebia reports that Italian security services in Marsala dismantled an international arms trafficking network that operated in Italy, France and Tunisia. The operation followed the arrest of some 50 alleged members of the gang by the Tunisian National Guard in early 2012.

Tunisian police fired warning shots and tear gas to disperse demonstrators who attacked the provincial government headquarters in Sidi Bouzid on 26 July, reports AFP. The demonstrators were protesting living conditions in the town where the revolution began. The interior ministry confirmed the violence, but denied warning shots were fired. The ministry estimated 150 people participated in the demonstrations, while union sources put the number closer to one thousand.

Hussein Dimassi, Tunisia's Finance Minister, resigned on 27 July over differences with the ruling government, reports Reuters. Dimassi stated that he resigned over financial compensation to be paid to 20,000 former political prisoners, who are mostly Islamist; the reparations were expected to cost the country up to 750 million dinars (USD 463 million). The statement also cited “the sacking of the central bank governor”. Dimassi’s deputy, Slim Besbes, has been appointed the interim Minister. Tunisia’s National Constituent Assembly (ANC) elected Chedly Ayari as the new central bank governor on 24 July by a vote of 97 to 89, reports AFP. His appointment to the position has been criticised because of his age and connections to Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s regime. The firing of the previous governor of the central bank, Mustapha Kamel Nabli, prompted allegations that the ruling coalition is seeking to control the bank.

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Egypt
On 28 July, Prime Minister Hisham Kandil stated that he “will announce the formation of the \textit{cabinet} in its final form next Thursday”, reports \textit{Reuters}. According to \textit{al Masry al Youm}, the Prime Minister has stated that 70\% of the Cabinet has \textit{been determined}; however, cabinet sources said that President Mohamed Morsi objected to certain ministers and asked that they be \textit{replaced}. The Salafi’s Nour Party has not been nominated for a seat in the new government despite Morsi’s earlier promise that three members of the party would be ministers. In other governance news, the Constituent Assembly met on 25 July to draft articles for the new constitution and Constituent Assembly spokesperson Wahid Abdel stated that he expected the \textit{new constitution} to be drafted within three months. According to \textit{al Masry al Youm}, there are disagreements between the Nour Party and the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) over part of the text. The \textit{second article} originally stipulated that the “principles” of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation; however, the Nour Party insists on removing the word “principles” and making Sharia law the primary basis of legislation. The FJP supports preserving the current text. The Constituent Assembly also discussed article 53, which grants power to \textit{declare war}, reports \textit{Egypt Independent}. The army has requested that a declaration of war must be approved by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) per Article 52; however, the assembly prefers that SCAF is consulted but the National Defence Council (NDC) should have final approval because it includes civilians.

A new Islamic Jihadi group named “Magles Shoura al-Mujahddin” has claimed responsibility for a June cross-border \textit{attack on Israel} that resulted in the death of one Israeli, reports \textit{Reuters}. A second group named “\textit{Ansar Bayt al Maqdes}” claimed responsibility for recent gas pipeline blasts in Egypt’s Sinai. Egyptian security sources said they had no information on these two groups, but are aware of the existence of some Jihadi elements in the Sinai. \textit{Magles Shoura al Mujahddin} dedicated their attack to al Qaeda’s leader, Ayman al Zawahiri. According to \textit{Reuters}, experts say that the militant groups in the Sinai are not directly affiliated with al Qaeda but are actively seeking closer alignment.

President Morsi held talks with the head of the \textit{Hamas-led government} in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, about “solutions” to the blockade on Gaza, reports \textit{BBC}. Former President Mubarak had complied with Israel’s request to impose restrictions on Gaza in 2007. Hamas was originally founded in the 1980s as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas leaders are hoping that Morsi, a fellow Islamist, will end the blockade. Signalling a shift in Egypt-Gaza relations, \textit{Reuters} reports that Egypt has \textit{agreed} to: increase the flow of fuel supplied to Gaza via Egypt, keep the Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip open an additional four hours a day and increase the number of Palestinians allowed to cross by about a third (approximately 1,500 a day), marking the first time since 2005 that the crossing will be open for a full twelve hours.

South Sudan
South Sudan’s \textit{annual inflation} has increased by 74\% from June 2011 to June 2012, reports the \textit{Sudan Tribune}. The country is faced with high fuel and food prices and a scarcity of hard currency, as a result of the shutdown in oil production in January this year following a dispute with Sudan. South Sudan’s vice president, Riek Machar, has stated that the country must work to diversify its \textit{economy} in order to be competitive in regional and international export markets. Machar hopes to focus on agriculture, forestry and livestock, among others. In South Sudan’s first \textit{economic agreement} with Israel, the two countries agreed to cooperate on water related programmes such as desalination, irrigation, water transport and purification. According to the \textit{Sudan Tribune}, it is unclear why the agreement was signed between South Sudan’s Ministry of Water and Irrigation and Israel Military Industries Ltd (IMI), which is a weapons manufacturer. In other economic news, the United Nation’s (UN) Economic and Social Council presented a \textit{report} which says that “South Sudan represents one of the largest State-building challenges of our generation. Poverty is endemic, and prospects for diversified growth in the near term are minimal. None of the public infrastructure required for growth is in place”.

Upper Nile state has seen an increase in the number of \textit{children admitted} to its teaching hospital, reports \textit{Miraya FM}. Since the onset of the rainy season in May, nearly 200 children a day are visiting the Malakal Teaching Hospital with most suffering from Malaria, chest infection, diarrhoea and severe cases of malnutrition. The Ministry of Health has stated that the country lacks Hepatitis A and B \textit{vaccines} but that plans are underway to introduce Hepatitis B vaccines in 2014. The Hepatitis B virus infects 10-17\% of the population of South Sudan. In other health news, according to the \textit{Sudan Tribune}, an official from the South Sudan Ministry of Health stated that the country will remain alert in light of a \textit{confirmed Ebola} outbreak in neighbouring Uganda that has reportedly killed 13 people.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of \textit{Toby Lanzer} of the United Kingdom as his Deputy Special Representative in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), where he will also serve in other UN roles. In other humanitarian news, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released a detailed \textit{map} showing the “Population of Concern in South Sudan”. The map shows that 350,000 people in 2011 were newly displaced by conflict in South Sudan and a further
164,000 people have been displaced in 2012. South Sudan also hosts over 210,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.

**Sudan**
The African Union (AU), UN and Arab League mediation team has suspended talks between the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) and the Sudanese government, reports the Sudan Tribune. The talks were to address the provision of humanitarian access to the rebel-held areas in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. The Sudanese government has previously refused UN agencies access to rebel held areas and is currently refusing SPLM-N’s involvement in the distribution of humanitarian supplies. Earlier in the week, Sudan said it was sending a delegation to start political talks with SPLM-N in Addis Ababa; however, SPLM-N Secretary General Yasir Arman ruled out political talks with the Sudanese government because of the government’s refusal to allow humanitarian aid into the area. Arman has accused Khartoum of practicing a mass starvation policy.

Following a UN Security Council (UNSC) discussion of the report by the UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID), France urged Darfur rebel groups to join the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) and to end the escalation of violence in western Sudan, reports the Sudan Tribune. There has been a surge of clashes between government forces and rebels during the period of 15 April to 15 July, particularly in South and East Darfur states near the South Sudanese border of Bar el-Ghazal. On 26 July, Sudanese troops chased Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebels in south-eastern Darfur in renewed fighting in the region; however, it is difficult to verify causality claims, reports Agence France-Press (AFP). The Joint Special Representative for UNAMID, Ibrahim Gambari, stated that “initiatives that advanced peacebuilding and early recovery and development in Darfur” were needed. According to the Sudan Tribune, Sudan has strongly warned the UNSC against incorporating the issue of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) into the resolution to renew the mandate of UNAMID. In the past, Sudan has been accused of harbouring Ugandan LRA rebel leader Joseph Kony.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) concluded a mission to Sudan which lasted from 15 to 23 July. Discussions during the visit centred on recent policy measures taken by the government in response to its current economic challenges. One week after the introduction of 150% price increases on electricity, the government announced that it was suspending the price increase “pending further consultations”, reports the Sudan Tribune. The decision coincides with rising public discontent over wider austerity measures in the country that have led to weeks of protests. According to the Sudan Tribune, in an effort to generate revenues for the country, Sudan aims to increase gold exports. There is potential for gold exports to generate USD 3 billion; 600 contracts have been issued to private mining companies and new mining areas will be opened.

A list of “Who’s Who” in Sudan’s opposition is provided in an article by Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). According to the article, despite some alliances, anti-government forces lack strong cohesion and coordination.

**Political and Humanitarian Issues along Sudan and South Sudan Border**
Sudan said on 27 July that it had made price concessions in oil talks with South Sudan; however, the two countries ended negotiations without agreeing on the details, according to Reuters. Sudan has offered to accept USD 32.20 per barrel, down from the original USD 36 per barrel. South Sudan recently offered USD 7-9 per barrel. The two countries must resolve all their security, political and humanitarian conflicts before 2 August or they could face sanctions from the UN Security Council.

Malnutrition is one of the most urgent problems facing South Sudanese refugee camps, reports Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders). In the Batil camp, more than 1,000 children were admitted to the MSF clinic within three weeks for severe malnutrition, 50 of whom required hospitalisation. Other needs in the camps include water, food, shelter, soap and jerrycans to collect water. UNHCR completed the relocation of 4,000 refugees on 24 July from Jammam refugee camp, where living conditions are poor, to another camp 25 km away. The agency will move another 15,000 refugees during the week of 30 July to the newly established Gendrassa refugee camp. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, announced that more than USD 20 million would be provided for Sudanese refugees living in South Sudan. The European Commission announced that it was increasing its aid to the Sudanese refugee crisis by EUR 40 million and the United Kingdom has also pledged an additional GBP 31 million.

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Eritrea
The UN Security Council (UNSC) extended the United Nations (UN) Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea mandate for an additional year through 25 August 2013, reports the UN News Centre. The UNSC, by resolution, excluded from the embargo protective clothing temporarily exported to Eritrea by UN personnel, media representatives and humanitarian and development workers and associated personnel. Exclusions were also granted to the supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use.

According to the UN Monitoring Group, the Eritrean consulate in Toronto is imposing a 2% income tax on its diaspora. According to the report, these revenues are financing the Eritrean military, a “fundraising practice” which “arguably” violates a 2009 UN arms embargo, reports The Star. An Eritrean consular official denied earlier allegations stating it is a voluntary income tax to help reconstruct the country’s roads, hospitals and schools. A Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) assessment asserts that, “refusal to pay the tax often results in denial of service or threats against, or harassment of, family members still residing in Eritrea, or possible arrest of the individual should they travel to Eritrea without paying the taxes alleged to be owing”.

Eritrean authorities captured 15 Yemeni fishing boats and their 160 crewmembers while traveling in international waters. The crewmembers were taken to Eritrean territorial waters and their boats looted. Only the captain was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment while the 159 remaining crewmembers were set afloat on three of their boats. Eleven fisherman have reported to have been taken by force in international waters stated Abudelah Makki, director of the Ministry of Fisheries in Yemen.

Ethiopia
Eighteen people died and twelve were injured on 26 July due to deadly tribal clashes between the Borana and Garri communities in Ethiopia’s southern Moyale region and near the Kenyan border, states Al Jazeera. The dispute was over land rights and the “situation has now normalised”, according to Eritrean spokesperson Bereket Simon. Thousands fled their homes due to the fighting crossing into Kenya. The Kenya Red Cross Society is providing humanitarian assistance but a preliminary report states that more than 10,000 people require “urgent humanitarian support”.

Every year, thousands of Ethiopian women migrate to the Middle East seeking employment but experience cruel torture, such as beatings and sexual abuse, and denial of wages, reports the Sudan Tribune. Many of these women suffer mental illness while others prefer to commit suicide as a result of their experiences. In order to protect its citizens from “widespread human rights abuse and inhumane treatment”, the government has issued a temporary ban on Ethiopians working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As a result of this effort, numerous agencies were closed last week for illegal recruitment; only one agency is reported to be recruiting legally. The ban will be lifted once Ethiopia reaches an agreement with domestic and UAE agencies. An estimated 100,000 Ethiopians are currently in the UAE.

Kenya
Three police officers and three civilians were wounded after an explosive device hit a police vehicle inside the Dadaab refugee camp, informs Reuters. The six were escorting aid workers from Care International en route to distribute food in the complex. No one has claimed responsibility for the incident. Kenya-based, extremist Islamic cleric, Aboud Rogo Mohammed, was identified by the UNSC Committee on Somalia and Eritrea and added to the list of individuals and entities subject to travel ban, assets freeze and protective clothing temporarily exported to Eritrea by UN personnel, media representatives and humanitarian and development workers and associated personnel. Exclusions were also granted to the supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use.

According to Reuters, Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) has invited local and international firms to submit bids for the design and construction of three berths at its port at Lamu as part of the USD 23 billion project to link the port with Ethiopia and South Sudan. The project includes the construction of a railway, pipeline, highway, airport and refinery. The Lamu port project will reduce dependency on its Mombassa port, attract investments to the northern part of the country, create new jobs and also facilitate increased trade in East Africa.

Somalia
Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and allied forces repelled an al Shabaab ambush on TFG and Ethiopian troops stationed in Yurkud in the Gedo region, reports Garowe Online. As many as 10 people died on both sides and 15 were injured in the 28 July attack. The TFG and allied troops captured new areas of the Middle Shabelle region that have been controlled by al Shabaab and are moving forward to capture Jowhar and other parts in the Middle and Lower Shabelle regions, writes Somalia Report.

31 July 2012
Al Shabaab members met for four days in the coastal town of Barawe to “reorganize their chain of command”, reports The Washington Times. Sheikh Ahmed Abdi Godane, known as Muktar Abu-Zubeyr, will remain the “emir” or main leader. Others have been reassigned to regions other than their own which may create some friction because of strong local and tribal ties. According to Somalia Report, two senior insurgent leaders were spotted in various parts of Galgudud, the central region of Somalia seeking support of different communities in their fight against TFG-allied forces. According to some eyewitnesses, the sheikhs demanded donations of money and animals and recruited fighters; residents who refuse might face severe punishment. In Ceel Buur, a former Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma (ASWJ) controlled city, the head of security “vowed to seize the city and free the oppressed residents from the militants’ grip”.

Massive new security operations were launched on 24 July in Galkayo by several hundred security forces of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland to combat crime and piracy, writes Somalia Report. During the first phase of operations, five pirates were arrested and one killed. According to the article, “Galkayo has been a hotbed of violence and the site of at least three kidnapping cases”.

The 825-members of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) convened for the first time on 25 July in Mogadishu. The NCA is due to vote on the new provisional Somali constitution and select the members of parliament, reports Agence France-Presse (AFP). Their meeting was delayed on Friday, 27 July after several mortar shells exploded nearby; however, the NCA reconvened the next day, reports Sabahi.

On 25 July, the UNSC ruled that weapons and military equipment or the provision of assistance for use by the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) are excluded from the arms embargo on Somalia, reports UN News Centre. The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, whose mandate was extended until 25 August 2013, recently recommended that the UNSC establish a Joint Financial Management Board for Somalia tasking it to improve financial management, transparency and accountability of Somalia’s public resources.

The UK recently sent 10 military advisors to support the African Union (AU) with non-combat planning, communications and medical support, reports BBC. The team is based at the AU headquarters located in the capital, but has been seen in Afgoye – a former al Shabaab stronghold about 30 km west of Mogadishu. After Somalia’s general election, Uganda will send its 10th contingent since 2007 to support AMISOM, reports Sabahi. The Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) graduated 3,237 soldiers on 27 July; the new graduates will relieve the UPDF currently deployed in Somalia. Uganda’s AMISOM contingent comprises 6,700 troops but according to The Observer, UPDF plans to increase its 2012-2013 budget for Somalia by 78% from USD 55 million during the previous fiscal year to USD 98 million.

The 2011 famine was a catastrophe for the Horn of Africa; in order to facilitate a quicker response in the future, the Humanitarian Forum urges the international community to increase coordination, improve humanitarian access and support local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). “More needs to be done to build the capacity of local NGOs, who have access and ideas but need support” in a country where 2.3 million still rely on food aid, informs AlertNet. In order to provide food and shelter for Somalis, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade and Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore, has pledged a EUR 3 million aid package, informs Independent on 30 July. These monies are in addition to the Irish emergency and long-term development funding which has been given to aid agencies in Somalia over the past five years.

The self-declared autonomous Somaliland is working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to establish a campaign warning citizens about the dangers and negative social consequences of piracy, reports Sabahi. The public awareness campaign aims to prevent further spread of piracy in the region and will be conducted via media announcements and meetings with the public starting in September. Further plans will also include educating prisoners to facilitate their reintegration into society and creating jobs for the youth in order to provide an alternative income to piracy.

### Other Piracy Related News

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Number of Hostages</th>
<th>Vessels Held</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>EU NAVFOR/NATO</td>
<td>172 as of 02 August 2012</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMB</td>
<td>211 as of 29 July 2012</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somalia Report</td>
<td>229 as of 28 July 2012</td>
<td>15</td>
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*Due to different definitions the figures can vary from entity to entity. While both EU and NATO only count vessels hijacked for ransom in their statistics, IMB also includes fishing vessels and dhows hijacked for other reasons than ransom. When it comes to the number of hostages, figures can vary due to different information regarding how many persons originally were on board the captured ships.*

For further information on piracy-related topics please visit the CFC Horn of Africa page.

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IRAQ

Some experts see striking similarities between Iraq’s and Iran’s foreign policies on Syria, even as Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki insists that Iraq’s position on Syria is “independent, nationalist and unified”, reports al Arabiya. Iraq has long cautioned neutrality regarding the Syrian unrest, rejecting the Arab League’s call for Syrian President Assad to step down. Experts suggest that while Iraq attempts to project an image of mediator to outside actors, there are pressures being exerted by Iran on the Iraqi government to support the Assad regime.

The United Nations Security Council voted to extend the UN mission in Iraq for an additional year, stating “that challenges to security in Iraq still exist and that improvements need to be sustained through meaningful political dialogue and national unity”, according to United Press International (UPI). In the wake of renewed attacks by al Qaeda insurgents in Iraq, the United States signaled its willingness to support Iraq’s national security initiatives, according to UPI. Also, the United Kingdom will assist Iraq in destroying remnants of chemical weapons from the Hussein era, according to Associated Press (AP). As party to the UN Chemical Weapons Convention, Iraq is required to dispose of its remaining materials.

In the aftermath of what has been called Iraq’s bloodiest day in two and a half years, Iraqi forces tightened security at marketplaces in Baghdad neighbourhoods, reports Middle East Online. The series of 29 bombings on 24 July affected 19 cities across the country, killing 115 people and wounding over 300 others, according to AP. Shortly after, in a statement posted on radical Islamist websites, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), an al Qaeda-affiliated insurgent group, claimed responsibility for the attacks, according to Reuters.

AP reported on 25 July that bomb attacks in Iraq killed nine people. A motorcycle rigged with explosives killed six Kurdish intelligence officers in the northeast and hours later, a parked minibus exploded near a police checkpoint in Baquba, killing three passengers. According to the New York Times (NYT), 12 people were killed in central-eastern Iraq, Diyala province, on 26 July and AP reported the downing of an Iraqi army helicopter in the attack. The Diyala attacks appear to be al Qaeda’s attempt to retake the provincial capital of Baquba, once an insurgent stronghold. Another series of attacks on 29 July in Fallujah resulted in seven Iraqi police officer deaths, reports Australia-Asian Associated Press (AAP). Fallujah’s leadership quickly responded by sealing off all roads leading into the city and instituting a curfew. Also in Anbar province, a bomb in Muqdadiya killed three civilians and wounded 10 others, while in Garma, gunmen killed four Iraqi police officers.

Officials in Baghdad reported that they have uncovered a weapons deal between the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan and an unnamed foreign country, according to Middle East Online. The weapons transfer includes anti-armour and anti-aircraft missiles and a large number of heavy weapons. Recently, Kurdish officials have voiced concerns over Iraq’s purchase of 36 F-16 warplanes from the United States which could be used against the Kurds. On 29 July, 7,000 Iraqi troops transporting heavy weaponry were stopped from advancing in the northwest region of Nineveh province by Kurdish Peshmarga troops, who control the region and are deployed along 60 km of the Syrian-Iraqi border, reports Rudaw. Iraqi Prime Minister and Commander in Chief Maliki stated the Peshmarga were acting “against the Constitution”.

Four days after Iraqi forces sealed the border with Syria, Maliki reopened its borders to refugees fleeing the violence in Syria, reports Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty. Additionally, the Iraqi government announced it would build two camps, one near al Qaim and the other in Rabiya while the Kurdish province of Dohuk currently hosts refugees in northwestern Iraq, according to Gulf News. Meanwhile, the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reports that more than 15,000 Iraqis have returned to Iraq since 18 July. The returning Iraqis will face significant challenges reintegrating into a country with high rates of unemployment, poor basic services and ongoing sectarian strife. Yaseen Ahmed Abbas, the president of the Iraq Red Crescent (IRC) suggested that “we will face a humanitarian crisis regarding this issue”.

SYRIA

In the aftermath of Syria’s declaration that it would consider using chemical weapons on foreign invading forces, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov “laid out in an extremely clear form Russia’s position on the inadmissibility of any threats of the use of chemical weapons”, reports Reuters. Meanwhile, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the United States of justifying terrorism by its failure to swiftly condemn the killing of four top Syrian officials on 18 July.
Defections continue to rise as two Syrian diplomats from the United Arab Emirates and Cyprus deserted their posts, reports the Telegraph. On 30 July, the London Evening Standard reported that senior diplomat Khaled al Ayoubi, charge d’affaires in Britain, also defected from the Syrian government and the first defector from the Syrian Parliament, Ikhlas al Badawi, said that she had crossed safely into Turkey. Badawi, a member of the Ba’ath party, stated that she “defected from this tyrannical regime...because of the repression and savage torture against a nation demanding the minimum of rights”. On 30 July, the deputy police chief of the predominately Alawite city of Latakia defected to Turkey along with another 12 Syrian officers, according to Foreign Policy.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the international community to intervene in order to stop further bloodshed in Syria, reports World News. Meanwhile, US President Barack Obama considered moving towards greater support of Syrian opposition forces as international diplomatic efforts faltered, reports Reuters. The White House has issued a presidential directive that would allow “US covert assistance” to Syrian rebels. In a joint news conference with British Prime Minister David Cameron, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan indicated that steps needed to be taken within the UN Security Council, the Organisation of Islamic Countries and the Arab League to address the crisis in Syria, according to Reuters. Also, Gulf sources indicated that Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey set up a base of operation in southeastern Turkey to assist the Free Syrian Army. Meanwhile, Iran indicated that it would not tolerate the collapse of its key regional ally, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP). Top Iranian leadership stated that Iran was ready to share “experience and capabilities” with Syria in their fight against rebel groups, reports AP. Iranian General Masoud Jazayeri stated that Assad had “friends in the region to strike out against opposition forces”; referring to Hezbollah and Hamas. Tehran leadership believes the Syrian uprising has been incited and assisted by the United States and its ally Israel, according to Middle East Online. Additionally, support from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, both Arab sultanates, is confirmation to Iranian leadership that the uprising is not about democracy in the region. On 18 July, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah called Assad’s government a “real military partner” in Syria’s support of the 2006 war with Israel, reports Le Monde.

UPI reported on 27 July that fighting in Aleppo between Assad and opposition forces had broken out. Rebels claim to control 60% of the city with an estimated 2,000 rebel soldiers and 2,000 more reinforcements strategically positioned throughout the city. Citizens of Aleppo were terrified that Assad’s elite Fourth Armoured Division was mobilising to join the Aleppo offensive and would employ a “scorched earth” operation in the city. Foreign Policy reports that the massive offensive by Syrian forces has forced 200,000 civilians to flee Aleppo as rebel forces continued to engage in guerilla-style warfare throughout the country’s largest city. Syria’s forces claimed they had retaken Salaheddine in the southwestern region of the city while opposition forces denied the government’s claims.

The “massive counter-assaults” in Damascus and Aleppo by Assad’s forces has resulted in the retaking of Damascus by Syrian forces, reports Reuters. On 29 July, Syrian government forces declared victory in the capital city after two weeks of fierce fighting with opposition forces, according to a separate Reuters report. Meanwhile, the head of the Syrian National Council called on foreign allies to provide the heavy weaponry to stop “Assad’s killing machine”. The NYT suggests that over recent months, the emergence of a larger, more organised and better armed Syrian militant organisation pushing an agenda based on jihad has emerged in Syria. Homegrown jihadists, as well as small groups of fighters from al Qaeda, are taking a more active role and demanding a greater voice in the conflict.

The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) will pull some of its workers out of Syria over the next few days and relocate to Beirut, while 50 staff members will remain in Damascus, al Arabiya reported on 27 July. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) continues to operate in war-ravaged Aleppo where over 200,000 civilians have fled the fighting to surrounding areas in a 48-hour period, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Those remaining in Aleppo are in need of food, blankets and drinking water. The security situation along main transport routes to cities is making it difficult for relief agencies to reach displaced persons in Aleppo, Hama and other areas.

Death Toll in the Syrian Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Fatalities* (as of 7/29/12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Hasakah</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Qamisra</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Raqqaq</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Suwaaidi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleppo</td>
<td>1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus Countryside</td>
<td>2923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deir ez Zor</td>
<td>1277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hama</td>
<td>2567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homs</td>
<td>7228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idlib</td>
<td>3492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latakia</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tartus</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Syrian Revolution Martyr Database

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The four production facilities are believed to be in al-Safirah, Hama, Homs and Latakia; two munitions storage sites are located in Khan Abu Shamat and Furqlus. Spector suggests that, in addition to production facilities, there are four suspected chemical weapons sites in Syria. However, Spector cautioned that Syria “has a lot of sites, and not all of them are known”. The Financial Times recently reported that Syria’s chemical weapons are located in 20 to 30 storage sites around the country while Dr. Bilal Saab, an expert on chemical weapons proliferation, asserts that Syria has more than 55 sites across the country. The Washington Post reported on 27 July that the expansion of Syria’s chemical weapons capabilities has been assisted in part by Iran. The Syrian strategy to build and grow its stockpiles relies on a two-prong approach: overt assistance from Iran and acquisition of “dual use” equipment and chemicals from unwitting businesses through a network of front organisations.

Some experts report that Syria’s chemical weapons programme is self-sufficient from the research and production stages all the way to storage and weaponisation. Others, however, indicate that Syria is not capable of producing the “precursors” to create chemical weapons and is dependent upon importing production equipment. The CIA reports that historically Syria has stockpiled necessary precursors for future use; however, it is likely they have exhausted those reserves at this point. “No one but the Syrians knows the inventory, and if the rebels overrun one of these depots, there are worries about the physical control of the weapons”, states Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association.

Because of the top secret nature of Syria’s chemical weapons programme, information on delivery capabilities varies. It is believed Syria has stockpiled several hundred tonnes of Sarin agent and mustard gas that could be deployed in air-dropped bombs and artillery shells. A Reuters article reports that Syria has well-developed and diverse delivery methods for its chemical weapons. In addition to the “several thousand aerial bombs and between 50-100 ballistic missile warheads”, Syria also possesses new long-range North Korean Scud Cs with ranges of up to 600 km and possible nerve gas warheads. According to the Washington Post, intelligence agencies say that Syria had prepared chemical weapons for use with its Scud and SS-21 missiles and launchers, as well as Scud B missiles and launchers. Shortrange M-1B and SSC-1b cruise missiles are also fitted to carry weapons of mass destruction, according to David Friedman at Tel Aviv University’s Institute for National Security Studies. Friedman states, “[f]or weaponisation, the material is poured into warheads, which can be anything from ballistic missiles to standard artillery shells to air-dropped munitions. The weapons can also be as small as mortar bombs”.

In an unprecedented disclosure, the Syrian government officially confirmed on 23 July, that it possessed chemical and biological weapons and in the event the country faced foreign intervention, it could use the weapons to defend itself. Some interpret the regime’s disclosure as evidence that it is increasingly desperate to regain control of the country. The Daily Telegraph reports that British military intelligence chiefs suggest there is “high probability” that the Assad regime will resort to chemical agents following the recent assassination of four senior Syrian military figures on 18 July which amounted to a “red-line crossed”. Meanwhile, Syrian activists in the city of Deir ez Zur circulated a video purported to document evidence that the regime had already begun to use chemical weapons on civilian populations, reports al Arabiya. Defected ex-ambassador from Syria to Iraq, Nawaf Fares, also alleges that chemical weapons have been used on civilians and believes that Assad’s regime will use chemical weapons stocks if cornered. On 27 July, National Broadcasting Company (NBC) reported that the Syrian government had been moving its chemical weapons around the country, amidst its civil war, which in turn has forced foreign intelligence agencies to guess where the chemical weapons are located and who controls them. Andrew Tabler, a senior fellow and Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, states that some chemical weapons have been moved to an area around Homs where some of the heaviest fighting has recently occurred. Additionally, Israel and the United States are believed to have evidence that the Syrian government transferred some conventional weapons over the border into Lebanon; the concern is they could also transfer non-conventional weaponry. Syrian troop movements have been closely monitored and the locations of Syria’s 125 BDRM-2 RKh armoured vehicles, which provide high-level protection from chemical attacks, are being closely watched. Rob Danin, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and former US intelligence analyst, says “no scenario [regarding chemical weapons] is too fanciful” and there is speculation that if a chemical attack occurs it will be made to look “accidental”.

To address international concerns, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) is creating a special unit to deal with securing chemical weapons, reports the Telegraph. The most senior defecting general from Assad’s military forces, General Adnan Silou, stated that the FSA was ready to secure such sites. Until 2008, Silou was in charge of the emergency response plans should Syria’s weapons fall out of the control of the government and is a strong resource to ensure the security of stockpiles. Middle East Online reports that the United States and Jordan have co-developed plans to secure Syria’s chemical weapons in the event of regime collapse. Also, chemical weapons could potentially come under the control of extremist organisations such as Hezbollah or al Qaeda. If this should occur, it would pose a significant threat to regional stability. Israel has already stated that any transfer of chemical or biological weapons between Syria and Hezbollah, historical allies, would be cause for war. Former US national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski cautioned that Syria’s conflict and regional issues are interconnected and warned of “a region-wide outbreak in which the issues within Syria will become linked with a conflict between the Saudis and the Shites, Iraq will become destabilized, Iran will be involved”.

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