

The background of the entire page is a photograph showing two soldiers in camouflage uniforms and green berets. They are standing next to a large, tall pile of ivory tusks. The tusks are of various sizes and some have handwritten markings. The soldiers appear to be inspecting or handling the ivory. The sky is overcast.

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A F R I C A

D E F E N S E

F O R U M

# TRAFFICKERS LOOT IRREPLACEABLE RESOURCES

Nations Debate Handling  
of Wildlife Stockpiles

Countries Work  
to Secure Borders

PLUS

A Conversation With Maj. Gen. Richard Addo Gyane,  
Commandant of the KAIPTC

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**ON THE COVER**

Traffickers are looting natural resources like this ivory, which Kenya Wildlife Service rangers are preparing for destruction. Security professionals are looking for new ways to shut down the criminal networks.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



**M**any African countries are battling the scourge of illicit trafficking. The illegal trade of drugs, weapons, minerals and wildlife fuels instability. It also deprives states of tax revenue and destroys irreplaceable natural resources.

The networks span the globe. South American drug traffickers use West Africa as a route to move narcotics to Europe and Asia. Chinese mafia organizations move timber, wildlife and minerals from Africa to Asian markets. The Russian Wagner Group has brokered deals with host governments to let it exploit natural resources in exchange for promises of security.

A report by the transnational crime research organization ENACT found that 61% of people in Africa live in a country with high levels of organized crime.

The problem is growing. In its 2021 report, ENACT studied 10 crimes, including human, arms and drug trafficking, and the theft of minerals, wildlife and flora. It found that all crimes except one — heroin trafficking — were increasing.

Trafficking is concentrated in countries with limited border security and endemic corruption. Central Africa, where war has left large areas effectively lawless, is the region with the highest growth in illicit trafficking.

“Conflict provides a breeding ground in which criminality thrives,” ENACT researchers wrote.

The cost is enormous. Illicit financial flows cost African countries \$50 billion per year, according to a report by the African Union. The report’s authors conceded that the estimated total likely is low.

But the harm goes far beyond lost revenue. Criminal networks have caused rising rates of drug addiction and youth exploitation. In some cases, powerful traffickers have co-opted public officials in a process known as “state capture.”

No country can address these threats alone. Countries must share information and cooperate on enforcement. International policing organizations Interpol and Afripol coordinate efforts to help cast a wide net and snare traffickers. Programs to better secure seaports, airports and borders make it harder for criminals to move goods undetected. Anti-corruption measures ensure that public officials and security professionals serve the people instead of the traffickers.

Through effective cooperation, security professionals can help ensure the safe, legal movement of people and goods; protect natural resources; and reduce cross-border crime.

U.S. Africa Command Staff



A member of Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency takes part in the raid of a narcotics lab. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



## Illicit Networks

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U.S. AFRICA COMMAND



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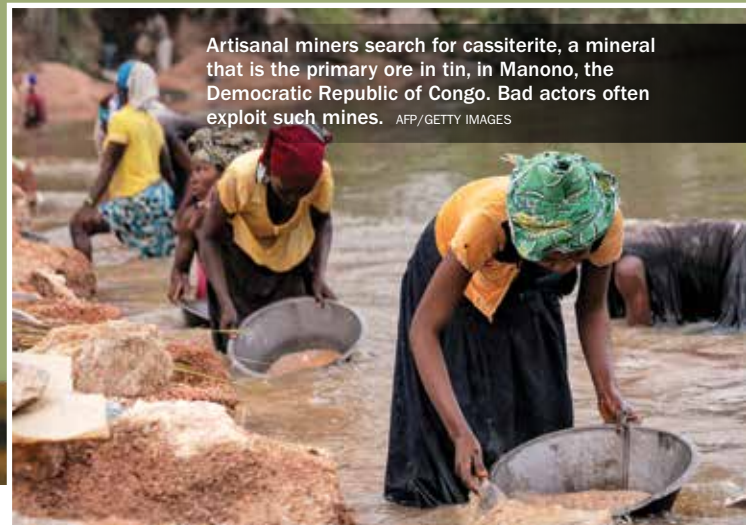
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# ‘An Equally Firm Commitment to Partnership’



*Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu addressed the General Debate of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, 2023. His remarks have been edited for space and clarity.*



Artisanal miners search for cassiterite, a mineral that is the primary ore in tin, in Manono, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bad actors often exploit such mines. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



In the aftermath of World War II, nations gathered in an attempt to rebuild

their war-torn societies. A new global system was born, and this great body, the United Nations, was established as a symbol and protector of the aspirations and finest ideals of humankind.

Nations saw that it was in their own interests to help others exit the rubble and wasteland of war. Reliable and significant assistance allowed countries emaciated by war to grow into strong and productive societies.

The period was a high-water mark for trust in global institutions and the belief that humanity had learned the necessary lessons to move forward in global solidarity and harmony.

Today and for several decades, Africa has been asking for the same level of political commitment and devotion of resources that described the Marshall Plan.

We are not asking for identical programs and actions. What we seek is an equally firm commitment to partnership. We seek enhanced international cooperation with African nations to achieve the 2030 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

There are five important points I want to highlight:

1. If this year’s theme is to have any impact at all, global institutions, other nations and their private sector actors must see African development as a priority, not just for Africa but in their interests as well.
2. We must affirm democratic governance as the best guarantor of the sovereign will and well-being of the people. Military coups are wrong, as is any tilted civilian political arrangement that perpetuates injustice.
3. Our entire region is locked in protracted battle against violent extremists. In the turmoil, a dark channel of inhumane commerce has formed. Along the route, everything is for sale. Men, women and children are seen as chattel.  
Yet, thousands risk the Sahara’s hot sand and the Mediterranean’s cold depths in search of a better life. At the same time, mercenaries and extremists with their lethal weapons and vile ideologies invade our region from the north.  
This harmful traffic undermines the peace and stability of an entire region.
4. The fourth important aspect of global trust and solidarity is to secure the

continent’s mineral-rich areas from pilfering and conflict. Many such areas have become catacombs of misery and exploitation.

The mayhem visited on resource-rich areas does not respect national boundaries. Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic — the list grows.

5. Climate change severely impacts Nigeria and Africa.

African nations will fight climate change but must do so on our own terms. To achieve the needed popular consensus, this campaign must accord with overall economic efforts.

In fundamental ways, nature has been kind to Africa, giving abundant land, resources, and creative and industrious people. Yet, man has too often been unkind to his fellow man, and this sad tendency has brought sustained hardship to Africa’s doorstep.

To keep faith with the tenets of this world body and the theme of this year’s assembly, the poverty of nations must end. The pillage of one nation’s resources by the overreach of firms and people of stronger nations must end. The will of the people must be respected. This beautiful, generous and forgiving planet must be protected.



# Investments Help Côte d'Ivoire Prevent Extremist Attacks

ADF STAFF

**E**ven though violent extremists plague its northern neighbors, Côte d'Ivoire has defended itself from terror attacks thanks to military intervention, enhanced security and investment in border areas.

"The goal is to reverse perceptions among border communities that the state has abandoned them," analyst William Assanvo wrote for the Institute for Security Studies. "Doing so will reduce the risk that they are exploited by insurgents."

Several Gulf of Guinea countries have similar dynamics: Wealth and economic investment is concentrated along the coast while the north tends to be poorer and less developed. That imbalance generates resentment that puts regions at risk of radicalization by extremists.

Côte d'Ivoire faced a terror attack in June 2021 when an explosive killed three Soldiers near the northeastern border community of Tehini close to Burkina Faso. Before that, a 2020 attack on a security post in Kafolo, also near Burkina Faso, killed 10 people.

Since those attacks, the Ivoirian government has boosted the military and security presence in Savanes and Zanzan districts that border Mali and Burkina Faso. Côte d'Ivoire continues to work with its neighbors under the Accra Initiative to detect and disrupt regional terrorism.

An Ivoirian Soldier provides security at the launch of a vast aid plan for young people in regions bordering Mali and Burkina Faso.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After the 2016 Grand Bassam attack, Côte d'Ivoire invested \$137.2 million to fight terrorism. The funding established programs to equip and train special counter-terrorism units, along with other measures to strengthen government ties with residents of northern districts.

The program invests in education, health care and key infrastructure. It also aims to develop apprenticeships and other employment for nearly 24,000 young people, Touré Mamadou, minister for the promotion of youth, professional integration and civic service, told broadcaster RTI.

The African Development Bank provided \$10.53 million in 2022 to help provide electricity to 71,600 households and more than 7,100 business centers in the Savanes, Zanzan and Woroba districts. The program is part of a larger effort to reduce poverty in the north and, by extension, radicalization.

Ghanaian security expert Fidel Amakye Owusu sees rural electrification and economic investments like those in Côte d'Ivoire as crucial to preventing terrorism.



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Ghana's President Seeks Coalition To Fight Terrorism in West Africa

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**G**hanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo called for a “global coalition of democracies” to fight violent extremist groups in West Africa that have been spreading south from the Sahel toward Ghana and its neighbors.

“The menace caused by terrorism is such that we must share the burden of the fight,” Akufo-Addo said in an October 2023 Washington, D.C., speech at the U.S. Institute for Peace. “This is a time for a global coalition of democracies, a coalition of the willing, determined to banish the specter of terrorism and violent extremism.”

With extremists controlling large swaths of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, external partners have been looking to help Ghana and other coastal West African states strengthen their defenses.

Ghana so far has been spared direct extremist violence, but Benin, Côte d’Ivoire and Togo all have suffered attacks near their borders in recent years.

The president’s call for more security assistance comes as France and the United States have pulled back security assistance in recent years from Burkina Faso and Mali as extremist violence has spiraled and military juntas have taken over. A July coup in Niger spelled the defeat of another Western partner in the region.

But Akufo-Addo said Ghana and other coastal countries are prepared to tackle their security challenges. “West African troops can do the job,” he said, praising cooperation and intelligence sharing among Gulf of Guinea and Sahel countries.

As of 2023, Benin had reported more than 20 armed incursions since 2021, and Togo’s president in April 2023 said that 100 civilians and 40 Soldiers had been killed in jihadist attacks.

## African Union Joins G20 As Permanent Member

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The group of the world’s 20 leading economies has welcomed the African Union as a permanent member, a powerful acknowledgement of Africa as its 54 countries seek a more important role on the global stage.

“Congratulations to all of Africa!” said Senegalese President Macky Sall, the previous AU chair who helped push for membership. The AU had advocated for full membership for seven years, spokesperson Ebba Kalondo said. South Africa had been the bloc’s only G20 member.

Permanent G20 membership signals the rise of a continent whose young population of 1.3 billion is set to double by 2050. With full G20 membership, the AU can represent a continent that’s home to the world’s largest free trade area. It’s also enormously rich in resources needed to combat climate change. Africa has 60% of the world’s renewable energy assets and more than 30% of the minerals key to renewable and low-carbon technologies.

The AU’s chairmanship, which changes annually, also gets in the way of consistency, but Africa “will need to speak with one voice if it hopes to influence G20 decision-making,” Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, a former prime minister of Niger, and Daouda Sembene, a former executive director of the International Monetary Fund, wrote in Project Syndicate in 2023.

African leaders have shown their willingness to take such collective action. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they united in loudly criticizing the hoarding of vaccines and teamed up to pursue bulk supply purchases for the continent.

Heads of state gather for the G20 Leaders’ Summit on September 9, 2023, in New Delhi. The African Union has joined as a permanent member. GETTY IMAGES





# 'WINNER-TAKE-ALL'

*In Sudan, Military Control  
of the Economy Has Led to War*

ADF STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ADF ILLUSTRATION



**O**mdurman National Bank (ONB) ranks among Sudan's largest financial institutions. It has branches across most of the country and was the first Sudanese bank to introduce ATMs. Founded in 1993, the bank sits at the center of an expansive web of companies that reaches into every corner of the national economy, a fact that benefits its largest shareholder, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

Through a network of military foundations, Sudan's army covertly owns 87% of ONB, which holds \$950 million in assets and is a major force in Sudan's financial system.

In 2015, the Central Bank of Sudan controlled more than 80% of ONB. By 2019, ownership was almost entirely in the hands of the military, making it a symbol of Sudan's broader economy. The ONB's only nonmilitary owner is the Karari International Foundation for Upbringing and Education, a group with close ties to the military.

As fighting continues between the country's warring generals — Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, leader of the SAF, and Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo, head of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) — it's important to examine the system of hundreds of state-controlled enterprises (SCE) that encompasses 85% of Sudan's economy, according to analyst Samah Salman, who has worked with international companies operating in Sudan.

"It is quite an unbelievable number," Salman told ADF, noting that under former dictator Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's security forces accounted for 80% of the national budget.

"That creates no space for the private sector to operate unless you become complicit and play by the rules of the game," Salman said.

Like the SAF, the RSF has its own bank, Al-Khaleej Bank, that it operates in partnership with the United Arab Emirates to access global financial institutions. Al-Khaleej is Sudan's second-largest bank by valuation behind ONB. It also is connected to an RSF-linked company called GSK Advance that was the target of international sanctions in September 2023.

Experts say the military's involvement in business plays a role in the fighting.

"Although it is unclear whether the financial and business interests were responsible for the beginning of the conflict, it is clear that both parties recognize they cannot rule Sudan without power over the economy," Denise Sprimont-Vasquez, an analyst with the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS), told ADF. "Economic control is crucial to rule, and, therefore, neither side is willing to loosen their vise grip on the portions of the economy that they control."

The scope of the generals' financial dealings adds an extra dimension to their widening war for power in Sudan. Each side knows that victory will mean an economic windfall.



**Top:** Through his involvement in Sudan's vast network of state-controlled enterprises, Rapid Support Forces leader Gen. Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo has become one of the country's wealthiest men.

As the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan stands atop a network of state-owned enterprises that controls 85% of Sudan's economy, ultimately benefiting him and well-placed military and political elites.

From oil fields to gold mines to farm fields, Sudan's military is involved in hundreds of companies that control up to 85% of the national economy.



The ongoing conflict between Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his rival, known as Hemedti, is at its heart a struggle for control of Sudan's economy, which is almost entirely controlled by the military.

"They're both protecting their economic empires," Salman said. "It's a winner-take-all scenario."

### Legacy of Tamkeen

Sudan's current conflict has grown out of the extensive patronage system known as "tamkeen" that al-Bashir created after his 1989 coup against a democratically elected government.

Unlike previous coup leaders, al-Bashir lacked the political authority needed to govern, so he turned to patronage, essentially buying off potential threats by giving military and political leaders increasing power over the economy.

"Al-Bashir was different than other previous dictators in Sudan," Salman said. "He paid for loyalty."

The tamkeen system gave security chiefs and al-Bashir's Islamist allies control over almost every part of public life in Sudan, according to Dr. Willow Berridge of Newcastle University.

The system produced a vast network of companies, such as ONB, that portray themselves as privately owned but actually are SCEs, also known as parastatal companies. C4ADS researchers defined SCEs as companies that are at least 10% in the hands of the government or members of the SAF, RSF or intelligence agencies. That level of control makes them vulnerable to ownership manipulation.

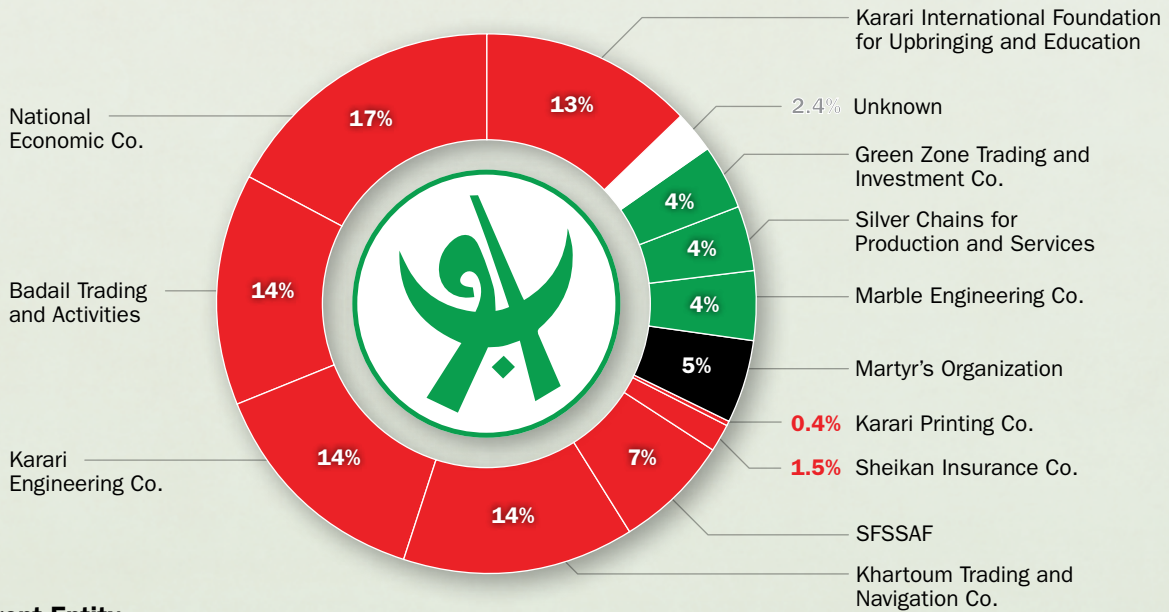
C4ADS researchers identified 408 SCEs based on data provided by the Sudanese Ministry of Finance, the pre-2021 coup Regime Dismantlement Committee and independent investigations. They found that the government conceals its ownership of SCEs as a way of circumventing international sanctions. It "privatizes" SCEs by transferring ownership to nonprofits and other groups that are ultimately controlled by members of the government or those with political connections.

SCE ownership structures show that companies such as ONB and construction conglomerate Zadra International Co. for Investment Ltd. either are controlled directly by the government or indirectly through other companies that the government controls.

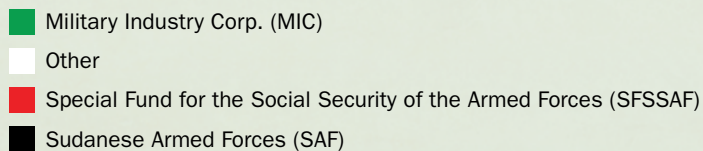
"After 2000, government control of SCEs was concealed behind companies within the Military Industry Corporation's Giad network, on the largest proxies for state ownership," C4ADS researchers reported. The Military Industry Corp. is a state-owned weapons-maker with its tendrils spread throughout Sudan's economy, including a stake in ONB through three of its subsidiaries.

## Multilevel State Ownership of ONB

As of 2019, Sudan's Omdurman National Bank (ONB) was owned by a network of charitable foundations and other companies associated with the Sudanese Armed Forces, which owned **87%** of the bank.



### Parent Entity

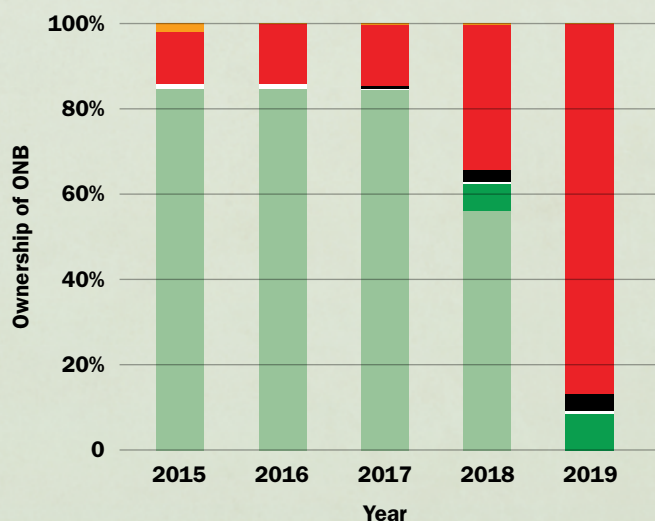
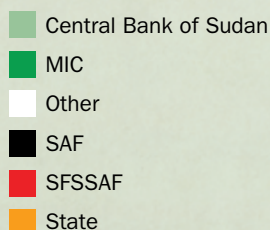


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## Changes in State Ownership of ONB

Between 2015 and 2019, the military ownership of Omdurman National Bank grew from less than **20%** to nearly **90%**, a reflection of Sudan's broader economy, leaving little room for private enterprise to operate.

### Shareholder Parent Entity



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## Distorting the Market

SCEs' profits typically go untaxed, starving the government of vital revenue while their activities benefit a cabal of military and government officials. Sudan's 408 SCEs spread across all sectors of the economy, from agricultural companies such as White Nile Sugar to banking, gold mining, transportation, weapons manufacturing and beyond.

"These parastatal companies sit outside any formal markets," Salman said. "They form a gray market. They've distorted the market in Sudan."

Canada's Fraser Institute ranks Sudan 162nd out of 165 countries for economic freedom, placing it alongside Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela and Zimbabwe near the bottom of the global rankings. Sudan also gets a score of

1.67 out of a possible 10 points for the degree to which the military shapes law and policy in the country. The lower the score the greater the military's influence.

"Pro-democratic civilian control of the economy is a prerequisite for a democratic Sudan," C4ADS researchers wrote in their analysis.

Sudan's SCEs exist in a system of vertically integrated monopolies. The system has engendered widespread corruption that undermines private enterprise, experts say. Any private company attempting to do business in Sudan inevitably must take part in the corruption.

C4ADS compiled its database of Sudan's parastatal companies by tracing the crisscrossing lines of ownership, boards of directors and beneficiaries to create a map of Sudan's deep state.

**"Throughout the thirty years of al-Bashir's rule, while the economy crumbled, the deep state solidified its control over resources and corporate assets across Sudan's key sectors."**

*~C4ADS 2022 report, "Breaking the Bank"*



Former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, center, attended the opening of White Nile Sugar in 2012, one of hundreds of state-controlled enterprises that lie at the heart of the ongoing conflict between the country's two top generals.

“Throughout the thirty years of al-Bashir’s rule, while the economy crumbled, the deep state solidified its control over resources and corporate assets across Sudan’s key sectors,” C4ADS analysts wrote in their 2022 report, “Breaking the Bank.”

The SAF, for example, used its connections to receive letters of credit from banks it controlled and avoid import taxes, giving it an advantage over private companies that could do neither of those things, the C4ADS report notes.

After the RSF’s precursor, the Hemedti-led Janjaweed, conducted a yearslong genocidal assault on the non-Arab population of the Darfur region, al-Bashir rewarded Hemedti with control over Darfur’s Jebel Amir gold mine.

“Hemedti thus became the country’s number one gold trader, smuggler and border guard, and the RSF became the de facto military rulers of northern Darfur,” analyst Alex de Waal wrote in the book “Sudan’s Unfinished Democracy: The Promise and Betrayal of a People’s Revolution.”

After the 2011 split with South Sudan took away much of Sudan’s oil revenue, gold mining became the country’s primary source of hard currency. Hemedti’s control over large chunks of the industry has made the former camel herder one of Sudan’s wealthiest men. Collectively, his family is worth an estimated \$9 billion.

“The RSF is a family business with a global footprint,” C4ADS researchers reported.

The revenue Hemedti earns from gold mining, smuggling and hiring out his fighters to other countries has helped him create a sort of state-within-a-state. Through shell companies inside and outside of Sudan, Hemedti also has amassed large amounts of agricultural land.

“We knew which agricultural schemes Hemedti was buying up at any time,” Salman said. “But he didn’t do that himself. He had other Sudanese entities or overseas entities — Emirati, Kuwaiti companies. He has a very strong financial and legal structure.”

As the head of the SAF and Sudan’s de facto leader, al-Burhan sits atop a financial network that includes the state-owned Military Industry Corp., along with what remains of Sudan’s oil industry. So far, the fighting between the SAF and RSF has done little to stop the flow of oil from Sudan and through its pipelines from South Sudan.

While Hemedti uses his wealth to fund the 100,000-strong RSF, he remains the primary beneficiary of his network of enterprises. Al-Burhan, on the other hand, is responsible for paying roughly the same number of soldiers along with pensions for military retirees. He also must keep the old al-Bashir patronage flowing to Sudan’s elite.

“Al-Burhan has to protect this large expanse of interest of which he is one beneficiary,” Salman said.

### Protecting Their Turf

By some assessments, the military’s deep involvement in Sudan’s economy was the primary motivation for the October 2021 coup that disrupted the country’s planned transition from military to civilian rule. At the heart of

that transition, the Regime Dismantlement Committee, known domestically as the Removal of Tamkeen Committee, set about breaking the military’s grip on Sudan’s economy.

While it was active, the committee recovered billions of dollars in illegally acquired assets. It seized more than 50 companies and 60 organizations, more than 420,000 hectares of farmland and 2,000 hectares of residential property, along with hotels, schools, factories and a golf course on the outskirts of Khartoum. The intentional complexity of ownership of some SCEs prevented the committee from breaking them up.

“The dismantling of the military-commercial complex was quietly emerging as [then-Prime Minister Abdalla] Hamdok’s priority agenda, which he would be in a position to push energetically once the military majority on the Sovereign Council was removed,” de Waal wrote in “Sudan’s Unfinished Democracy.”

Against the wishes of Sudan’s military and paramilitary leaders, the committee documented the corrupt networks of businesses. In doing so, “it angered senior military officers by targeting gold-smuggling rings in which they were involved,” de Waal wrote.

The October 25, 2021, coup put a stop to Hamdok’s plan, and the government returned much of the reclaimed properties to their former owners, restoring the status quo despite the wishes of the Sudanese people. The number of SCEs grew sharply after the coup, according to C4ADS.

“Al-Bashir-era cronies and leading military members of the CLTG [Civilian-Led Transitional Government] were opposed to true civilian control of the state all along,” C4ADS researchers wrote. “They knew their grip on Sudan’s economy was paramount to their lasting control.”

### Escaping Accountability

As the 2021 coup demonstrated, opening Sudan’s economy, although popular with the public, is not in the interest of Sudan’s military. Neither is a transition to democracy.

“Until the deep state’s economic structures are dismantled, the military will continue to hold all the cards, leaving them no incentive to come to the table and negotiate,” C4ADS researchers reported.

By continuing to corrupt the economy in their favor, al-Burhan, Hemedti and the rest of Sudan’s elite keep themselves wealthy and comfortable while their fellow citizens struggle. Their iron grip on Sudan’s economy also insulates them from accountability.

Al-Burhan and Hemedti both played roles in the genocide in Darfur two decades ago, Salman said. They’re under investigation by the International Criminal Court for the violence that their current war has unleashed in Darfur and around the capital. The loser of the conflict stands to lose more than just his economic empire.

“It’s a very high-stakes situation for both of them,” Salman said. “There’s no incentive for either of them to lay down their arms. It’s a scorched-earth strategy.” □



# **HACKERS TAKE AIM AT CYBER GAINS**

# Governments Move to Thwart Digital Attacks by Investing in Cybersecurity, Promoting Transparency

ADF STAFF

**W**ith great fanfare, Kenya launched its upgraded e-Citizen digital platform in 2023. The system offers access to 5,000 government services from more than 100 ministries and agencies, marking a leap forward in the ability of citizens to get digital access to their government.

“Not many countries can achieve what we have achieved,” Kenyan President William Ruto said. “Whenever I talk to other leaders, they wonder how Kenya can digitize this number of government services. It was possible because we have creative, innovative, hard-working young people in the republic.”

Just three weeks later, a hacker collective calling itself Anonymous Sudan claimed responsibility for a barrage of distributed denial-of-service attacks that halted traffic on e-Citizen.

As one of the continent’s most advanced digital economies, Kenya has become a model of modernization. But with its growth have come risks. The East African country has been hit with a surge in cyberattacks — 860 million incidents in the past year, Kenya’s Communications Authority said on October 3, 2023.

Cyberattacks by state and nonstate actors are increasing across Africa, and experts are calling on governments to provide more funding and resources for cybersecurity.

“Cybersecurity is not adequately prioritized by both governments and civil servants alike,” Anna Collard, senior vice president of content strategy for security software company KnowBe4 Africa, told ADF. “Only 18 out of 54 countries in Africa have completed national cybersecurity strategies, and only 22 African countries have national computer incident response teams (CIRT).”



Despite the rapid proliferation of digital technology and the growth of engineering talent on the continent, many countries are vulnerable to Russian and Chinese hacking operations. REUTERS

“Many countries and sectors are completely reliant on private-sector investments.”

Dr. James Shires is another among a chorus of voices warning African countries about the risks that come with digital growth, but he also cautions against generalizing cybersecurity on the continent.

“There’s a real difference in sectors,” the senior research fellow in the Chatham House International Security Program told ADF. “Kenya and Nigeria have really good sectors in terms of building CIRTs.

“Tunisia and Egypt have really been leaders in several areas of cybersecurity. There’s a strong financial sector in South Africa that I’m using as a case study, and the cybersecurity is really impressive and very mature.”

But, along with the rest of the world, African countries face a variety of threats online.

Many in the cybersecurity community have assessed Anonymous Sudan’s attacks, origins and modus operandi and see clear ties to Russia. Some suspect that the funding necessary for the group’s attacks, including the attack on Kenya’s e-Citizen, indicate Russian involvement.

When conducted by countries, cyber operations such as espionage and hacks serve strategic objectives. The hardware is expensive, and the skills required are in high demand, Shires said.

“They’re a scarce resource,” he said. “They are expensive, not in military terms, but still not cheap. It’s a clue, not a conclusion. Some nonstate actors can be very capable, but generally, sophistication is an indication of resource, and resource is an indication of state backing.”

Russia also is conducting information warfare in parts of Africa. Through its complex network of shell companies, mercenary groups and other proxies, Russia has been unrelenting in conducting misinformation and disinformation campaigns on African social media and online platforms.

Cultivating, paying and using local influencers, Russian propaganda and fake news have grown in sophistication. In some African countries, Russian proxies own and operate media entities.

These cyber awareness risks fall into a category that Shires refers to as threats to integrity.

“Do people trust what’s online? Do they trust what they see from governments or on social media platforms?” he said. “There’s a lot of disinformation and misinformation, and that makes the information ecosystem less reliable and less trusted.”

### China’s History of Cyberattacks

On May 24, 2023, a Reuters investigation revealed that Chinese hackers had engaged in a widespread, yearslong campaign of cyberattacks on the Kenyan government regarding the debt it owed to China, among many other economic and political issues.

It started in late 2019 when a Kenyan government employee unwittingly downloaded a document infected with malware that allowed hackers to infiltrate a server used exclusively by Kenya’s primary spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, and gain access to other agencies.

“A lot of documents from the ministry of foreign affairs were stolen, and from the finance department as well,” a Kenyan cybersecurity expert told the news service.

Two sources in Reuters’ investigation said the hacks show that China uses espionage and

**“We need collaboration across private and public sectors and the international community to assist African states with capacity-building and raising awareness among decision- and policymakers, as well as the general public!”**

~ **Anna Collard**, senior vice president of content strategy for security software company KnowBe4 Africa

### Hacktivists and Russia

The hacker collective Anonymous Sudan surfaced in January 2023 as a Russian-speaking channel on Telegram, an instant messaging app. Experts say the group has no verifiable links to Sudan and has collaborated with two notorious Russian cybergangs.

In March 2023, after researchers noted that the group conversed mostly in Russian, Anonymous Sudan deleted its older posts and started posting in rudimentary Arabic. It later adopted the Sudanese dialect.

“Anonymous is a very slippery label. It can be co-opted,” Shires explained. “While it did have a strong hacktivist identity earlier on, Russia especially has used a variety of hacktivist labels to further its own ends. There are other Russian operations that pretended to be ISIS, for example, in France. So, there’s a real range of what the cybersecurity industry called false flags in Russian cyber operations. And they’re very good at them.”





illegal cyber breaches to surveil governments and protect its economic and strategic interests.

For Collard, Shires and many other experts, the news brought to mind another infamous, yearslong Chinese hack.

In 2017, officials found bugs at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was built in 2012 as a \$200 million gift from the Chinese. Investigations revealed that classified data had been copied to servers in Shanghai for five years.

Nairobi-based investment analyst Aly-Khan Satchu said the AU hack was “really alarming,” because it showed that “African countries have no leverage over China.”

“There’s this theory in Africa that China is Santa Claus. It isn’t,” he told the Financial Times newspaper. “Our leaders need to be disavowed of that notion.”

The AU hack and the May 2023 Kenya hack are revealing, Shires said, but not surprising.



**TOP:** African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia was the site of one of the most notorious Chinese hacks when it was uncovered in 2017. AFF/GETTY IMAGES

African countries are being urged to invest in computer science education to help combat the growing threat of cyberattacks.



A masked member of the Anonymous hacktivist group conducts a cyber operation. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“You see China’s strategic interest in gathering data from different places on the African continent,” he said, “and you would expect them to be persistent, to be patient in a strategic target.”

China denied any involvement in the AU hack, just as it did in its May 2023 response to the Kenya allegations. But in the digital environment it is harder than ever for attackers to cover their tracks.

Chinese digital technology is nearly ubiquitous in Africa, from government surveillance systems to smartphones, a market dominated by Chinese brands.

“China has been investing heavily in Africa,” Collard said. “Tech companies like Huawei are very prevalent in African organizations and telecoms.”

Huawei, the world’s top maker of cell-phone network equipment, sold 70% of the 4G base stations in use on the continent. Because it is poised to dominate the 5G market as well, vast troves of African data

are vulnerable to the Chinese Communist Party, which in recent years has enacted expansive laws that require companies to assist in national intelligence gathering.

“Many African governments are inviting China to assist them with their security challenges, including online security,” Collard said. “China is not really seen as a malicious actor, despite evidence of their espionage tactics. Decision-makers here mainly act on price and write off any potential privacy implications due to the cost savings. Others may lack the necessary understanding of what the privacy implications could be.”

Many authoritarian countries in Africa are interested in using Chinese technology precisely for its surveillance, monitoring and suppression capabilities.

“They may see clear benefits in using the censorship mechanisms in Huawei technology and other technology providers,” Collard added.



The AU Headquarters is one of many governmental buildings on the African continent with Chinese-supplied information and communications technology. Some observers warn this technology is vulnerable to hacking and spying. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Kenyan President William Ruto, left, watches a demonstration of Gava Mkononi, the digital government services hub, on June 30, 2023, at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi. REPUBLIC OF KENYA

## Countering Cyber Threats

As digital technology proliferates across the continent, Africa is becoming a burgeoning cyber battleground, a shadowy realm of espionage and misinformation.

When it comes to covert intelligence operations, the distinction between the approaches of China and Russia used to be greater.

Five years ago, Shires would describe China's covert cyber operations as "pretty loud and noisy. They'd go for scale and didn't mind if they got caught."

Russia, on the other hand, had more specific targets and went to great lengths to not be identified. Now there's less of a distinction.

"China has much more sophisticated capabilities," he said. "They're targeting critical infrastructure networks, internet infrastructure networks that have impacts in Africa. Just in terms of size, the ability or the scale of Chinese cyber espionage is far greater than that of Russia."

"But rather than having a targeted, stealthy actor [in Russia] and a large, noisy actor [in China], you now have a large, stealthy actor in China as well. So, it's kind of the worst of both worlds."

Shires believes that countering these changing strategies requires transparency, persistence and international cooperation. Here is a breakdown of those topics:

- **Transparency:** Sunshine is said to be the best disinfectant. In terms of cyberattacks, public attribution is the naming of a malign actor as the responsible party. "Attention is a good thing, and attention often galvanizes policy responses," Shires said. "You're not expecting a reaction from the malicious actor or the particular state that's being reported on, but you are changing the public perception. That's a long-term change. But more reliable reports in the public domain make

a massive difference to what can be done in the policy space on these issues."

- **Persistence:** "Over time, the volume of incidents begins to skew both public perception and political perception of [malign actors]. So that's the indirect result of transparency. But you need transparency plus persistence to achieve that. Because if, for example, in Kenya, China is perceiving that its hacking operations are causing problems with the Kenyan government due to public releases and condemnation of them over time, then that might factor into diplomatic negotiations and then finally into actual cooperation."
- **International cooperation:** Countries could have more power if they join together to denounce cyberattacks. Shires said countries could make a statement on a regional or continental basis to say: "We agree that this is a red line." There are well-publicized norms out there that say cyberattacks against critical infrastructure or defensive organizations are out of bounds. And so, if there's international cooperation within Africa on trying to reinforce those norms, that would be an extremely positive step."

Collard agrees with the need for a broad coalition of international and regional partners to work with African officials in funding and developing cybersecurity infrastructure, talent, strategies and responses to attacks.

"We need collaboration across private and public sectors and the international community to assist African states with capacity-building and raising awareness among decision- and policymakers, as well as the general public," she said, because the threats will only continue to grow.

"The majority of cybersecurity incidents go unreported or unresolved, meaning that cyberthreats in Africa are likely much worse than recognized." □



# ‘I Have Always Believed in an Educated Soldier’

A Conversation With Maj. Gen. Richard Addo Gyane,  
Commandant of the Kofi Annan International  
Peacekeeping Training Centre



Ghanaian peacekeepers in South Sudan parade during a medal ceremony. The U.N., AU and regional economic communities are looking at ways to reform peacekeeping missions to improve results. UNMISS



*During more than 30 years in the military, Maj. Gen. Gyane has held key positions in the Ghana Armed Forces, including commanding officer Base Workshop, Burma Camp; commanding officer Army Headquarters; director of Army Logistics; acting director of Army Administration; and director-general of plans, research and development at General Headquarters. He has served in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Western Sahara. He served in the U.N. and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) missions in Sierra Leone. In 2022, he was appointed commandant of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC). He spoke to ADF by videoconference from his office in Accra. This interview has been edited for space and clarity.*

*ADF: You have multiple degrees and diplomas in fields ranging from mechanical engineering to international affairs and business administration. Why have you chosen to continue pursuing education throughout your military career?*

**Gyane:** Knowledge has become so critical in the world we live in. Although the military itself will train you and give you the knowledge and tools to do the military work — which they have done very well — I also felt that there was a need to add on. The more educated you are and the more diverse knowledge you have, it makes you a better person, it makes you able to appreciate people, appreciate other cultures and it helps in your leadership. More importantly, it helps you in your critical thinking. It all goes to make you a multitasking person who has a multitasking capability. And all these things come into play at the senior management level.

For instance, I came from a purely military environment to the KAIPTC, which is a quasi-military environment where you have the Women, Peace and Security Institute; we have a training department that runs about 35 courses a year, and we have an academic and research department. Coming from a purely military background, how do you manage academics or professors? The fact that they get the impression that you also have knowledge means you fit into that space.

*ADF: Many countries are investing in professional military education (PME) as a way of professionalizing their armed forces. Ghana, for example, recently announced that it will establish a national defense university. In your opinion, what is the value of investing in PME for a nation's armed forces?*

**Gyane:** I have always believed in an educated Soldier. Although he is supposed to take orders, he becomes better

if he appreciates that he is working in a bigger security environment, and defense is only part of it. Also, he can appreciate why we have security in the first place. It's for the development of our people. Once the Soldier understands that, then they will not go about abusing or taking advantage of the civilian population, as has happened in so many countries. Education is critical.

*ADF: During your career, you have served in peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone. What are some lessons that you learned from these missions about how to be an effective peacekeeper?*

**Gyane:** As I moved throughout these missions, I saw a sad environment of destruction and poverty, despondency and disillusionment. In the people's faces you see their regrets. I learned that there is a very thin line between peace and war. We should never stray into the conflict area because it sets everybody back. It sets back development, people lose confidence in themselves as human beings, and it takes a very long time to get that restored. I learned that democracy, especially in our part of the world, hasn't been very efficient and effective. We have a problem of bad governance. There are abuses of power, there's corruption, there's tribalism, nepotism, and it is winner take all. It breeds hatred. It divides a country. But are coups the answer? No. I've also learned that democracy is the best option, and we have no alternative. But we have to make it work to encourage people not to take to arms and overthrow governments.

*ADF: Today, peacekeeping missions face increased threats from extremist groups as well as hostility from civilian populations in host countries. The U.N. missions in Mali and the DRC have*



Maj. Gen. Richard Addo Gyane speaks during a graduation ceremony at the KAIPTC in December 2023.

KAIPTC

Ghanaian peacekeepers in Bentiu, South Sudan, interact with civilians while on patrol. UNMISS

*been forced to announce mission end dates amid protests and government hostility. What needs to be done to reform missions so they are prepared to meet the demands of local populations and face the complex threats of the 21st century?*

**Gyane:** In 2017, Lt. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz [a Brazilian officer who has served as force commander of two U.N. missions] issued a report which opened up a lot of conversation on the viability of mandates as well as the evolution of the peacekeeping instrument itself. There are numerous challenges, such as the inability of foreign troops to act decisively to protect the population when they are attacked. Peace operations are also facing a political and financial crisis. To address this, the general recommended that peace actors change their mindset. The missions must have the requisite capacity and capability — resources. He also recommended that we adapt the missions’ force strength so they have a positive impact on the community. He said we should hold ourselves accountable for preventing fatalities. Sometimes the mandate hasn’t made clear whether it’s a peacekeeping mission or a peace enforcement mission. When somebody is attacked, they come to the contingent and peacekeepers

say, “We’re not here for peace enforcement.” And, the people ask questions like, “Why are you here?”

*ADF: What can be done to change this?*

**Gyane:** You need to design the mission properly. Think about which contingents you will put together. What is their commitment to the people in that environment? I’m sure that if there was a problem in Togo and you send Ghanaian troops there, they would want to fight because whatever happens in Togo has a direct impact on them. If you get someone from Asia to come in and fight, it’s more difficult; he might not. So, the design must be right. You should get contingents that are really committed to that mission. Of course, you need the appropriate logistics to support them. The peacekeepers themselves should be very transparent. They should not take sides, and their lifestyle should not be so different from the local population. That brings resentment. You must emphasize civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) so the local population can feel that they are benefiting from the existence of that mission. For example, in southern Lebanon, the people are mainly shepherds, so the Ghana contingent to the U.N. mission sent a number of veterinary officers so they can go to houses and tend to their animals. We sent women officers to teach and give them skills. This is what is required. The population feels like they are benefiting from you.

*ADF: What can the KAIPTC do to better prepare peacekeepers to meet these challenges?*

**Gyane:** The KAIPTC was established to support the peace and security architecture of ECOWAS, the African Union and the U.N. We design our courses, our capacity building and our dialogues based on the way these organizations are thinking. As things like African-led missions come up, or [debates about] peace enforcement rather than peace-keeping, we adjust ourselves to fit into that space. We are studying how things like terrorism, cybercrime, climate change, migration and other emerging trends affect peace-keeping, and we align and adjust as these issues evolve. We also help peacekeepers to make real-time decisions, and we want to build a platform where we can share knowledge from our research with the peacekeeping institutions moving forward. We want to deepen collaboration between nongovernmental organizations and policymakers. Whatever we do will be guided by the policies of ECOWAS, the AU and the U.N.

*ADF: The AU has taken a lead role in intervening in many conflicts on the continent. Today, the AU oversees 10 peace operations with more than 70,000 men and women serving in 17 countries. Do you think African-led operations are uniquely able to address certain security threats? If so, why?*

**Gyane:** In the past we used to do mainly peacekeeping. For instance, in Western Sahara you had a berm, and you had Sahrawis on one side and Moroccans on the other side. So, you deployed troops to make sure nobody crossed. Now, peacekeeping has become complex with terrorism and other threats. Therefore, we are moving from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. When it comes to peace enforcement, as I've said, motivation of troop-contributing countries is key. If something happens in Nigeria, I would rather go and fight because I know it could affect Ghana easily. There is something for me to fight for. When you bring a European or Asian peacekeeper, what is the commitment? When the genocide started in Rwanda and it became difficult to stay in that environment, almost all the countries left. The only country that stayed was Ghana, because we understood that we needed to protect the Rwandans. Even in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission, countries from the subregion fought. From history, we see what African-led missions can do. We know Africans can do the task when given the training and the necessary resources. But it is the equipment and resources which I think the international community should come in to support. I would not advocate that the whole mission should be African. It should be African led, but the logistics, the finances, the legal systems and all that should still be managed by the international community. When you do that, then you can sustain the interest of the international community in the missions.

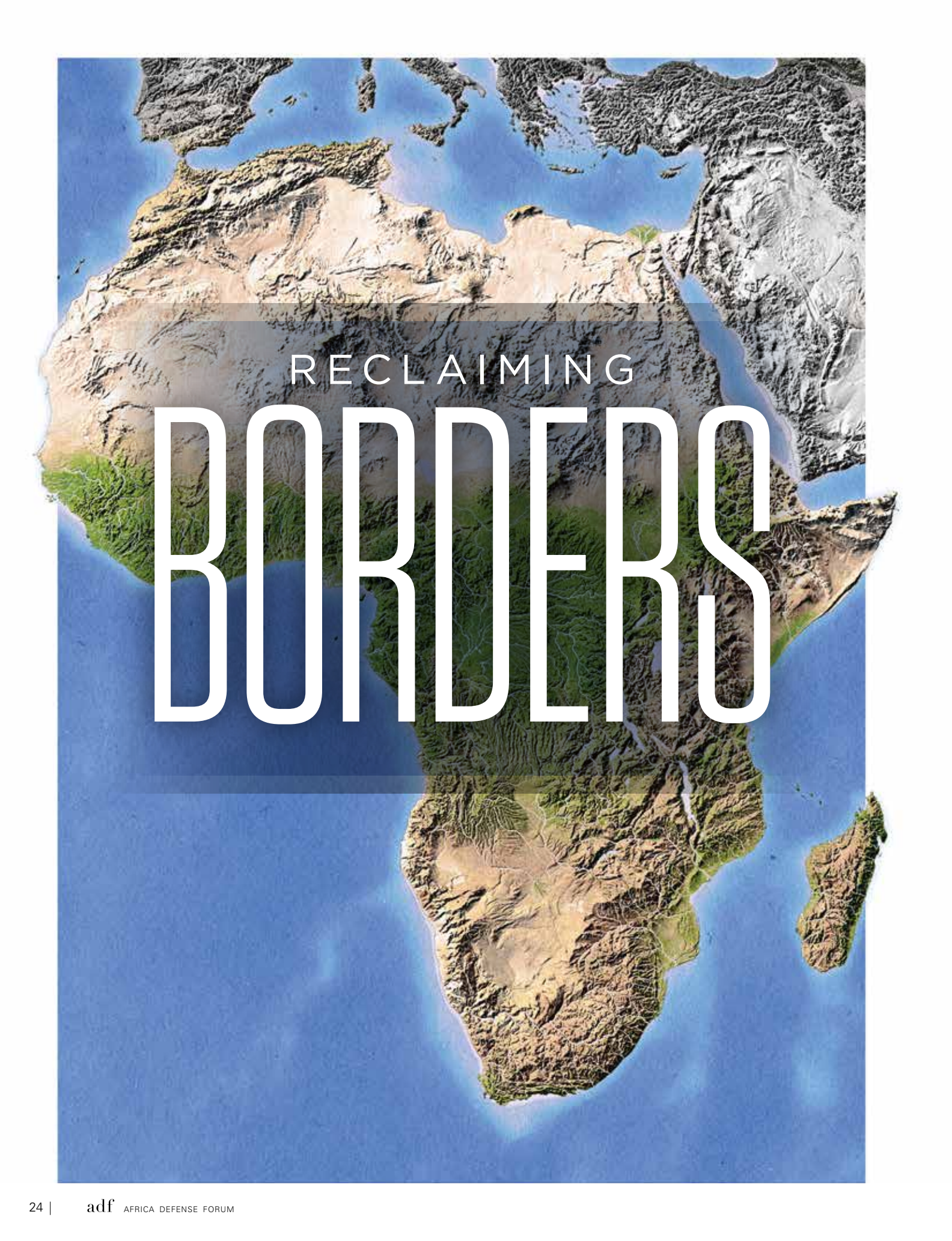
*ADF: In the past two years there has been a disturbing number of military coups in West Africa. How do you explain this trend, and what needs to be done to reverse it?*

**Gyane:** I've always said the most important things are leadership and governance. In Ghana, since 1992 [when the country transitioned to civilian rule] we've done quite well with the economy, human development, education, including free secondary school. Today, if you go to our universities, 51% of the students are women. The chief justice of the Supreme Court is a woman and so is the head of the electoral commission. It shows the development of the nation. When the governance system is strong, the nation does well. But if the governance system is weak, when elections come along, the incumbents want to hold onto power. And when things aren't going well, they mismanage diversity. Instead of diversity being a strong card, it becomes a very weak card and makes our countries very fragile. I think we have had a lot of coups because our governance systems have become weak. There is arrogance of leadership across the continent. And our institutions, especially our regional bodies, are more prone to conflict resolution rather than conflict prevention.

*ADF: West African countries, including Ghana, are facing increased threats from Sahel-based extremist groups. These groups have expressed an intention to expand to the coast and recruit in countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. All of these countries are devoting resources to protect their northern borders. What can West African countries do to work together to stop the spread of extremism?*

**Gyane:** If you look at our borders, they are so porous. If you go to the north part of Ghana, you don't know where Burkina Faso ends and where Ghana begins. People build houses by the borders. They get up in the morning to wash in one country and cross to do business in another country. Therefore, it is very important that we work together. The Accra Initiative is good, but what we need is resources. If you look at the areas near our northern borders, those are also the poorest parts of the country. We have the youth bulge there where the youth are not working, and they become vulnerable to radicalization. Although Ghana and these other countries have started deploying troops, forward operating units in the frontiers, what is also key is the CIMIC and the nonkinetic part of it. The nonkinetic work is to make sure the population has food, they have boreholes, you help them with their farming and their roads, and give them economic power. This will make them less susceptible to radicalization. It's the right initiative. ECOWAS and the AU should support Ghana and the coastal countries to protect themselves and prevent this jihadist movement.

It can be done. Six or seven years ago, the Gulf of Guinea was among the most dangerous seas in the world. Since we started working together using the Yaoundé Protocol, the maritime security has improved tremendously. We are working together to protect natural resources, sharing intelligence, taking joint operations and, with God on our side, I think we can succeed. □

An aerial topographic map of the African continent, showing terrain features like mountains, valleys, and rivers. The map is centered on the continent, with the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Indian Ocean to the east. A semi-transparent grey horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the map, containing the title text.

# RECLAIMING BORDERS



# EXPERTS SEEK SOLUTIONS AS EXTREMISTS AND TRAFFICKERS EXPLOIT NEGLECTED BORDER REGIONS

ADF STAFF

**B**order regions tend to be places of possibility and peril. They are where cultures meet. Where trade — both legal and illegal — thrives. Where journeys begin or end.

Because they often are far from national capitals, border communities typically receive little investment, and people living there are vulnerable to coercion by criminal groups or extremists.

“Borderlands in Africa are typically characterised by low state presence, mistrust between local communities and the state, and high levels of crime, insecurity and poverty,” the African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) wrote in a study of conflict management in borderlands.

The numbers show borders are a security weak spot. In North and West Africa, 23% of all violent events occur within 20 kilometers of a border. Border

violence has increased in the past decade, more than doubling between 2011 and 2021, according to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on border violence in North and West Africa. During the first six months of 2021, 60% of deaths due to violent events occurred within 100 kilometers of a border.

In fact, the OECD found that violent events generally decrease in number the farther one travels from a border.

“The concentration of violence near borders is a reminder that the circulation of money, people, and arms across the region is central to understanding the ebbs and flows of violence from state to state over time,” the OECD report said.

So, what can be done? Security professionals are examining several strategies to reclaim borders.



A marker near Tingrela, Côte d'Ivoire, indicates a distance of 1 kilometer to the Malian border. REUTERS



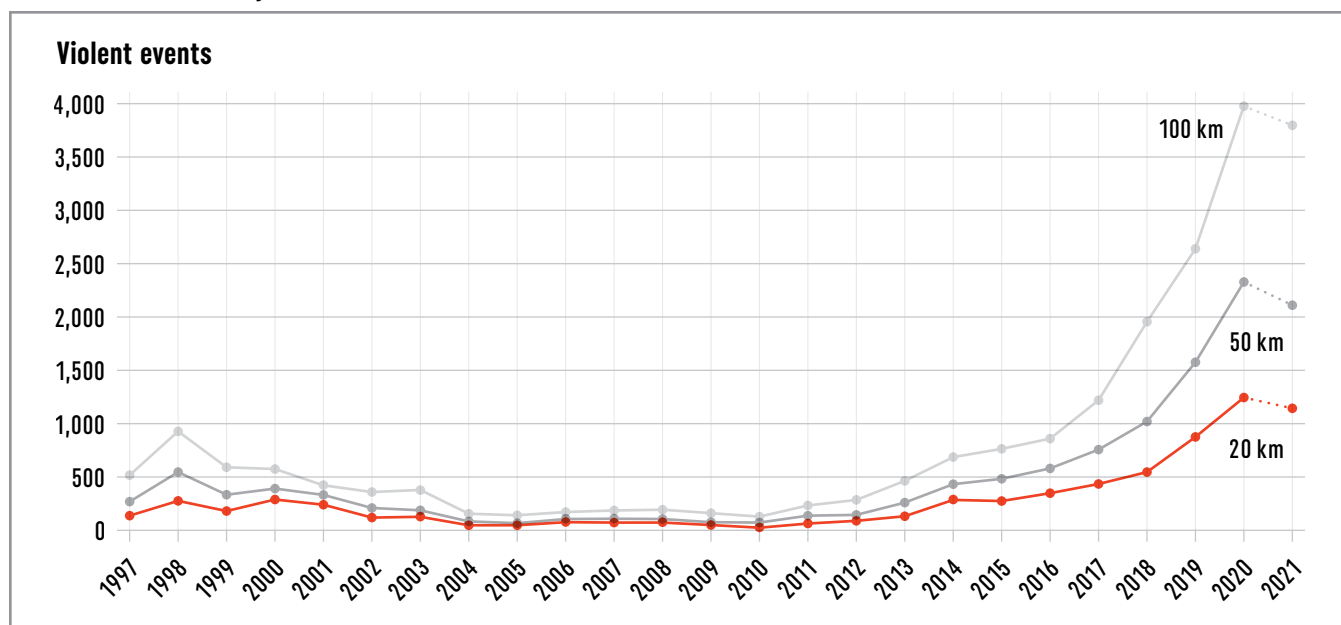
Women cross the dry bed of the White Volta River to their farms in Burkina Faso from Issakateng-Bausi, in Bawku, northern Ghana.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



As part of their border reaffirmation process, the Ghana Boundary Commission and the Land Boundary Commission of Togo organized a joint sensitization program for border communities. GHANA BOUNDARY COMMISSION

## Violent events by border distance in North and West Africa, 1997-2021



Source: OECD with data from ACLED

This chart shows a rise in violent events within 100 kilometers of a national border in North and West Africa between 1997 and 2021. ADF ILLUSTRATION

### DEMARICATION

Often countries don't agree on where borders actually lie. A survey by the African Union in 2015 found that only 29,000 kilometers of national borders in Africa representing 35% of the total border length were effectively demarcated.

This lack of clarity has security implications. There are more than 100 active border disputes between nations on the continent. These can lead to minor skirmishes between communities or all-out war between nations.

One country taking steps to address this problem is Ghana. The country's boundary commission is going through the arduous process of "reaffirming" its more than 1,000-kilometer border with Togo. This involves examining legacy documents from both nations that date to the 1920s and were written in English in Ghana and French in Togo. Surveyors from both countries are replacing demarcation pillars that have been damaged by erosion or moved because they were not drilled deeply enough. The countries are increasing the frequency of pillar placement along the border to avoid confusion.

"Because of the distances of the pillars, those communities living along the boundary are not able to determine where the boundary is," National Coordinator of the Ghana Boundary Commission Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Kotia told ADF. "They stray and farm in the territory of another country or they build houses in another country. And it's not their fault, because they do not know."

In order to educate the local population about the border process, the boundary commission held sensitization events, inviting groups from both sides of the border for dialogue. "We invited the local chiefs of Ghana and Togo, within the catchment areas for community sensitization, for us to educate them," Kotia said. "We are using the media, youth groups, women groups, traditional rulers, opinion leaders, security agencies. All the people who can lend hands or help us educate."



Trucks carrying goods prepare to pass the customs checkpoint at the Ivorian border in Tingrela. REUTERS

Ghana next will undertake the same reaffirmation process with Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Kotia believes more countries in Africa need to create boundary commissions and pass laws to demarcate borders.

"The essence of it is to prevent insecurity, and that is one of the causes of insecurity," he said.

“MOST OF THE BORDER COMMUNITIES ARE IN REMOTE AREAS, FORGOTTEN BY STATES. MOST OF THEM ARE DEPRIVED. SO, VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUPS WILL LOOK AT SUCH AREAS WHERE THERE ARE DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES AS TARGETS TO RECRUIT THEM.”

– Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Kotia, national coordinator of the Ghana Boundary Commission

## TURNING BORDERS INTO BRIDGES

A persistent complaint is that African borders are arbitrary. Drawn more than 100 years ago by colonial powers with little knowledge of the local cultures, they divide people or group them together without good reason. Pastoralists find themselves unable to move their herds freely, businesses are separated from customers and families are divided.

Dr. Wafula Okumu, executive director of Nairobi-based The Borders Institute, has worked for decades to craft effective policies relating to borders. He said security professionals need to see border communities as part of the solution to insecurity, not a problem. One thing he stressed was the need to educate border officials about the unique cultures of border regions.

“African border personnel need to change their mindset, particularly criminalizing and securitizing borderlands,” Okumu said during a webinar hosted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “They need to regard border communities as stakeholders and partners in border governance.”

He emphasized the need for “integrated border management.” This strategy includes the creation of

“one-stop border posts” where customs and border services of both countries work side by side. The goal is to simplify and streamline movement for all involved.

This is important because 43% of people in Africa rely on what is called “informal cross border trade” for income or goods. This trade typically involves vendors moving goods to market outside the formal customs process.

Some countries are acting to ease movement across borders. In 2023, Botswana and Namibia signed an agreement to let citizens cross the two countries’ 1,500-kilometer border without using a passport. The African Union has urged countries to adopt the African Continental Free Trade Area, which will facilitate cross-border trade, and the Free Movement of Persons Protocol, which would reduce barriers to African citizens crossing borders.

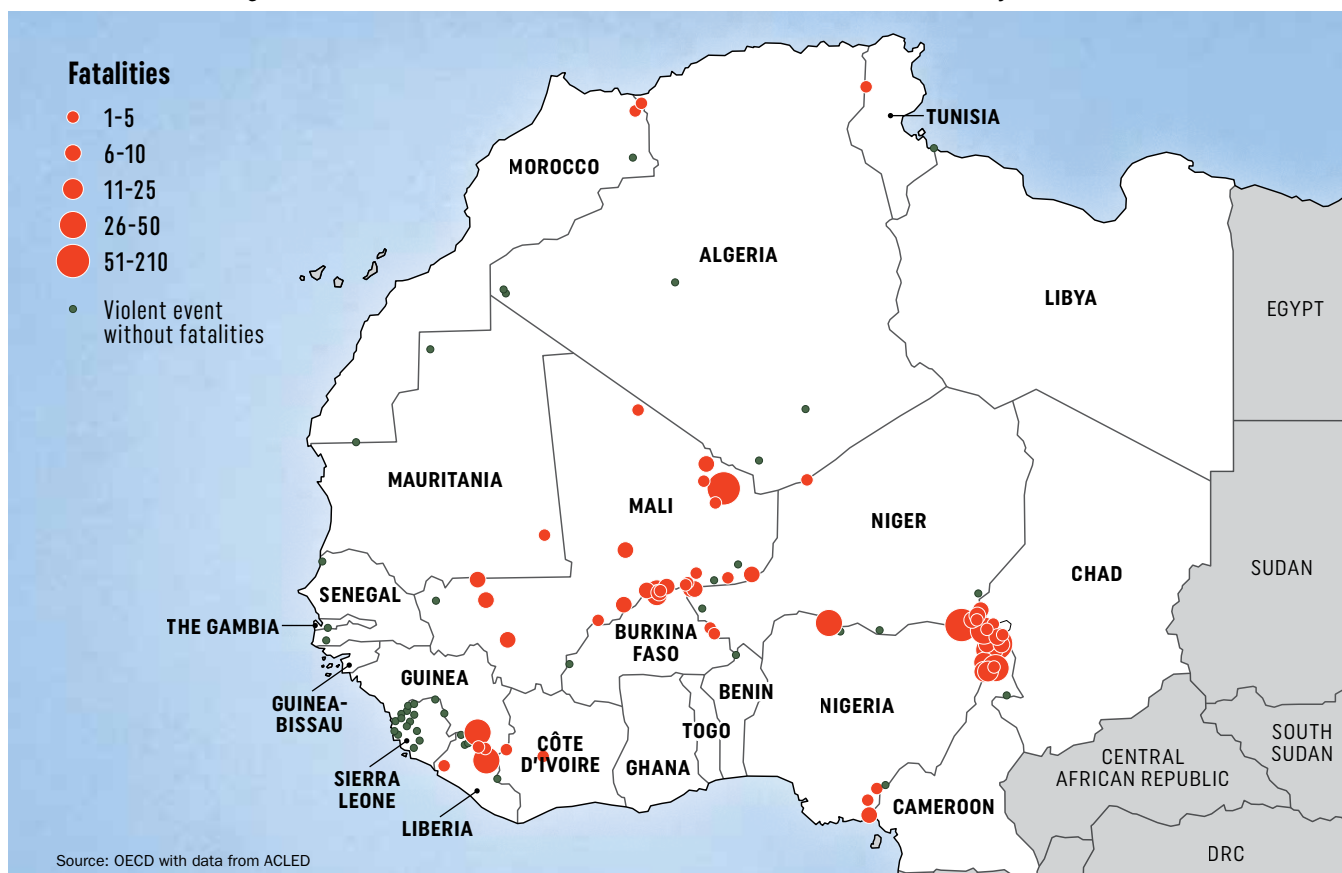
Okumu hopes there is a shift from viewing borders as barriers to viewing them as bridges to facilitate the movement of people and goods.

“Control is usually about blocking, not facilitating, easy movement,” Okumu said. “This is not free movement, but easy movement. That’s very critical.”



Beninese and Nigerian nationals prepare to cross the Niger River, which separates the two countries. REUTERS

## Deaths resulting from an event when state forces cross into another country, 1997-2021



ADF ILLUSTRATION

### STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Border regions tend to be isolated physically and metaphorically. In its study, “How Borders Shape Conflict in North and West Africa,” the OECD found that population centers in border areas of Chad, Mali and Niger do not have paved roads connecting them to a national capital. They also found a lack of medical, educational and social services in these regions.

“Insurgencies emerge when peripheral communities feel marginalized and the state is unable to maintain national cohesion,” the OECD reported.

In his three years as head of the Ghana Boundary Commission, Kotia has witnessed a similar dynamic.

“Most of the border communities are in remote areas, forgotten by states,” he said. “Most of them are deprived. So, violent extremist groups will look at such areas where there are deprived communities as targets to recruit them in any part of Africa. They can be targets.”

He pointed to two projects in Ghana that are trying to address this problem. One is the construction of a health center in the Volta Region funded by the Economic Community of West African States. The other is an effort to get road infrastructure to an informal mining community in a town called Dollar Power near the border with Côte d’Ivoire. There, 10,000 people work in unregulated artisanal mines in an area only accessible by motorbike.



A security officer speaks to a driver in Paga, northern Ghana, at the border with Burkina Faso. REUTERS

The 24-kilometer road project, which is being constructed by the Ghana Armed Forces 48 Engineering Regiment, will help authorities access the isolated region. By connecting this region to the outside world, Ghanaian authorities hope to undercut traffickers and extremists.

“The issue of deprived border communities is very fundamental,” Kotia said. “We need for governments to pay attention to deprived border communities because they can be easy targets for recruitment as far as violent extremist movements are concerned. They can also use those spaces as safe havens to launch attacks.” □

# VALUES

## PASSED ON THROUGH GENERATIONS

ADF STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**As** Senegalese citizens marked the 64th anniversary of their nation's independence, children embraced the spirit of the day. One boy donned a cap and miniature matching uniform before joining celebrations in Dakar on April 4, 2023. Although quite a bit shorter, he closely imitated the Soldiers and gendarmes gathered along a city street. As citizens lined roads to view festive processions, military and police personnel stopped to acknowledge the younger set. One boy, draped in a stole featuring Senegal's flag of green, gold and red, held a flag as he posed for pictures with doting gendarmes. The flag's colors represent the faith, spirit and sacrifice of Senegal's people and embody the national motto of "One People — One Purpose — One Faith."





*Gulf of Guinea Navies Turn to*

# **DRONES**

*for*

# **SURVEILLANCE**

FACING A MULTITUDE OF THREATS AND LIMITED RESOURCES,  
COUNTRIES VIEW DRONES AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

LT. CMDR. DJAIBLOND DOMINIQUE-YOHANN KOUAKOU, CÔTE D'IVOIRE NATIONAL NAVY





**C**oastal countries in Africa face a variety of maritime threats. These include trafficking; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; illegal immigration; and piracy. But countries often lack the resources to monitor and protect their maritime domains.

The task these countries face is enormous. If added together, Africa's coastal countries are responsible for more than 13 million square kilometers of ocean, far beyond what they can patrol with vessels and traditional aircraft. Sub-Saharan African countries have a total of 420 vessels categorized as "surface combatants," meaning ships designed for warfare on the open water. This is a significant increase since 2008, when that total was 158, according to a database produced by The Military Balance. But experts say the growth was driven by a handful of countries, and most still struggle to patrol their waters.

In light of this, nations are looking for cost-effective alternatives to expand their reach. Several Gulf of Guinea states, including Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, have turned to drones to improve maritime security, a choice that allows them to bridge a capability gap.

The relative affordability of tactical drone systems can offer savings compared to the high cost of extended sea missions that require ships and large numbers of personnel. Drone platforms equipped with advanced avionics offer operational flexibility thanks to their payloads, which can carry various sensors such as day and night infrared cameras and radars. Their light weight makes them easy to transport and adaptable to many mission conditions. But drones are not a cure-all. They have weaknesses, including a limited range, relatively slow speed and the fact that they fly at low altitudes, which increase their vulnerability to anti-aircraft weaponry.

Countries are using drones for a variety of purposes, including countering illegal fishing, maritime border surveillance and tracking pirate vessels.



Lt. Cmdr. Djaiblong  
Dominique-Yohann Kouakou,  
Côte d'Ivoire National Navy

Despite limitations, they are quickly becoming indispensable tools in the field of intelligence collection and surveillance.

### A TOOL SHOWING ITS VALUE

Militaries have used drones dating to 1937, when the U.S. developed the first radio-controlled unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), known as the Curtiss N2C-2 Fledgling, and used it for target practice. The South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research developed the first surveillance drones used in Africa. They were flown over what was then Rhodesia in 1978.

Today, drones represent a critical and versatile operational asset for intelligence gathering. Tactical drones address capability gaps such as persistence, autonomy and compatibility with the onboard weapons system, according to a 2010 paper, "Rotary-wing Tactical Drones in Contemporary Engagements," published by the Foundation for Contemporary Research. Monitoring vessel traffic in an area can be done in record time thanks to the considerable endurance of the drones. Drones also can carry automatic identification systems, which have become one of the main tools for maritime domain awareness. These tools make it possible to identify and classify unrecognized radar echoes, which provides a more complete real-time picture to professionals working in maritime operations centers.

Pirates tend to operate far from shore. A naval force alone cannot cover these areas. The use of a tactical drone with many hours of endurance will widen the areas monitored. For example, the use of aerial drones by the Premier-Maître L'Her of the French Navy was essential in locating the tanker *Monjasa Reformer*, which was attacked on March 25, 2023. Similarly, drones are integrated into a nation's system for monitoring maritime and land borders.

Drones represent a force multiplier to support law enforcement at sea and deter crime. Visit,



Dignitaries including former President Muhammadu Buhari, second from left, inspect a drone to be used as part of Nigeria's Deep Blue Project for maritime security. NIMASA



Côte d'Ivoire has recently acquired offshore patrol vessels like this one and plans to pair drones with the vessels to improve maritime security. ISRAEL SHIPYARDS LTD.

ship is all the more important in hostage-taking, when it is imperative not to provoke an extreme reaction from pirates toward their victims. In addition, the information collected during interventions becomes useful for self-assessment and after action reviews. With the risks inherent in VBSS operations, being able to provide feedback is essential to improve the effectiveness of the team. This efficiency is essential, especially when human life is threatened and urgent actions become necessary.

A growing number of African navies are investing in drone technology. Côte d'Ivoire recently acquired two offshore patrol vessels that will be paired with drones for use at sea. Nigeria relies on drones for its counterpiracy and maritime security project known as Deep Blue. The Seychelles uses two long-range surveillance drones with artificial intelligence to protect its fisheries. The Ghana Navy and the Ghana Boundary Commission use drones to track suspicious vessels and monitor the country's maritime borders.

UAVs are being used for a variety of maritime tasks such as border patrol, port security, search and rescue, and ship and cargo inspections.

board, search and seizure (VBSS) operations are one of the main missions carried out by warships in connection with the fight against maritime crime. Paired with the use of other naval assets, drones can significantly increase the individual capabilities of vessels during VBSS operations, according to a 2019 paper written by French Navy Rear Adm. Benoit de Guibert. Drones make it possible to have a clear and immediate view of the boarding, to follow the progress of it, and assess risks during these operations.

In the event of contact with pirates or tracking of a pirated ship, the drone allows continuous monitoring. This possibility of remotely monitoring a captured



The Ghana Navy takes possession of a Deltaquad Surveillance Drone during a ceremony at Tema Naval Base. The drones are used for maritime security and border surveillance. GHANA NAVY

An Airman from the Uganda Air Force prepares to launch a Raven unmanned aircraft system. U.S. ARMY



### LIMITS AND CONSTRAINTS ON DRONE USE

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea defines states' rights and obligations in maritime spaces. In its Article 19, the convention does not guarantee "innocent passage" for vessels that "launch, land or take on board" a military device in the territorial sea of a state. From a legal point of view, it becomes difficult to classify drones in a category that can benefit from the right of innocent passage, although the provisions are not explicit on this fact. As a result, the use

of aerial drones for maritime surveillance is restricted to areas of sovereignty and areas where the law of the high seas applies — that is to say in the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone and the high seas. Thus, during operations in which transnational criminals are involved, rigor is required to avoid violating the airspaces of other parties, particularly during operations close to borders or zone limits.

The development of computing and communications technologies strongly supports drone



development. In a world where these technologies break down barriers, cyber risks have increased. The use of drones at sea often relies on navigation and satellite data. Disruptive practices can jeopardize the platform. One of the most common is “GPS spoofing,” which occurs when a GPS device is diverted from its coordinates, according to a report titled, “Can a new wave of drone tech make Africa’s seas safer?” published by the Institute for Security Studies. This spoofing can cause accidents as serious as ship strikes,

## *The use of drones in the Gulf of Guinea can optimize traditional naval resources and help navies be more flexible and quicker to respond to threats.*

which could be interpreted as an act of war. In addition, terrorists can use cyberattacks to take control of equipment by deprogramming then reprogramming it. Finally, data collected by the sensors is sensitive and must be protected to avoid disclosure of classified information. Consequently, naval forces need to enact procedures for assessing and reducing cyber risks related to the use of drones in their operations so they do not compromise missions and equipment security.

### **THE NAVY OF THE FUTURE**

The use of drones in the Gulf of Guinea can optimize traditional naval resources and help navies be more flexible and quicker to respond to threats. The advantages linked to their use particularly relate to maritime security operations, such as VBSS and other missions requiring naval forces to have intelligence gathering and surveillance capabilities. But adopting new technology can have disruptive effects on navies. One consequence could be a loss of interest and investment in vessel-based surveillance missions, especially in the Gulf of Guinea where resources are limited. It must, therefore, be remembered that new tools should be adopted to make the overall fighting force stronger, not to replace it or make it obsolete. As de Guibert wrote: “It is important not to submit to new technologies, it’s better to master them to construct the Navy of the future.”

With proper planning and understanding, new technologies such as drones can be an important tool in helping naval professionals carry out their mission of providing safety at sea for commerce, travel, conservation and recreation to thrive. □

Lt. Cmdr. Kouakou is an officer in the National Navy of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire. He has more than 15 years of service and commands a warship. He has an engineering degree in naval operations from the Royal Naval School of Morocco. Additionally, he holds a master’s degree in maritime affairs from the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden. He is passionate about securing the seas with a particular emphasis on maritime technology.

# A WORLD OF TROUBLE

ADF STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ADF ILLUSTRATION

# Organized Crime Groups Such as Black Axe Start Locally, but Have an International Reach

**W**hen Interpol coordinated international raids under Operation Jackal, it targeted Black Axe, a Nigeria-based organized crime group. In the 2022 sweep, authorities arrested 75 people, searched 49 properties and intercepted bank accounts worth nearly \$1.3 million.

Authorities also seized 12,000 cellphone SIM cards and identified 70 additional suspects. Investigators in 14 countries on six continents participated: Argentina, Australia, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Nigeria, Spain, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

A few months later in May 2023, Interpol continued Operation Jackal in 21 nations to again strike at Black Axe and similar West African crime syndicates. This time, authorities blocked 208 bank accounts linked to online financial crimes, seized or froze nearly \$2.3 million, and arrested 103 people. Operations in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland were added to the original countries.

"Illicit financial funds are the lifeblood of transnational organized crime, and we have witnessed how groups like Black Axe will channel money gained from online financial scams into other crime areas, such as drugs and human trafficking," said Stephen Kavanagh, Interpol's executive director of police services. "These groups demand a global response."

At least one African security expert agrees, but he says success will be hard-won because many nations are not even aware that such groups are operating in their countries, and if so, how.

"You need a clear-cut strategy, a comprehensive

strategy," said Martin Ewi, technical coordinator of the Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organised Crime project, known as ENACT, at the Institute for Security Studies. "It's not one strategy. ... No, it has to be a comprehensive strategy where you tackle them from all over. It's a human institution. Human institutions do not survive on one thing."

The nature of Black Axe and other similar groups makes coordination a tall order for most nations.

Yet failure to address this organized criminal threat can imperil security locally, nationally and internationally, Ewi said.



The logo for Black Axe, a confraternity that has morphed into an organized crime group

## WHAT IS BLACK AXE?

Black Axe's origins are unique for a criminal organization. It formed with good intentions on July 7, 1977, on the University of Benin campus in Nigeria's Edo State. It began as a part of the Neo-Black Movement, an effort to promote anti-colonialism and pan-African spirit, according to a 2019 Harper's magazine profile.

The organization is one of many so-called confraternities that formed at the time. Sometimes the groups are referred to as cults because of the mystery that surrounds their activities and rituals. Other prominent groups are the Supreme Eiyé Confraternity, which is popularly known as the Airlords; and Maphite, an organized crime group that authorities say is an acronym for "Maximum Academic Performance Highly Intellectuals Train Executioner." Each has its roots in Nigeria.

There also are smaller, local criminal gangs, particularly in South Africa, where Ewi is based. They sport flashy names such as the Americans, the Hard Livings, Young Dixie Boys, Clever Kids, Naughty Boys and the Junky Funky Kids. They are most prominent in larger

cities such as Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria. Hundreds of similar gangs are spread across Nigeria.

Black Axe, however, is among the largest, most notorious and widespread. Some reports suggest worldwide membership as high as 30,000 or more. A BBC report indicated that Black Axe is so prevalent in Benin City that some civilians there have formed armed militias for protection.

The group is known worldwide for pioneering advance fee scams, also known as “419 fraud” for the corresponding section of the Nigerian Criminal Code. In such a scam, an operative will send out letters, faxes or emails posing as a legal, government or bank official seeking help in moving money into a foreign account. The sender promises to offer the victim a commission in exchange for payments to cover transfer fees or access to bank account numbers.

### **INSECURITY AT HOME**

Transnational organized crime groups can victimize people anywhere in the world through elaborate internet financial scams, human trafficking and drug smuggling. In that way, groups such as Black Axe pose clear-cut security threats.

But less focus is placed on how such groups can endanger security in their home nations and regions. Ewi said this phenomenon is one that poses especially vexing problems because of the lack of knowledge and study that has been done of such groups.

First of all, the groups’ origins as philanthropic groups aimed at supporting the Black power movement and combating racism provide a veneer or respectability. Also, some of the groups have criminal and noncriminal elements. “This is a key aspect of why the Black Axe movement has been able to go global the way it has gone,” Ewi said.

“Now, why did they become so popular also? Today with the hardship that many young people are facing, the huge unemployment in Africa, the fact that many young people cannot find jobs, groups like these are very, very appealing,” Ewi said. “And if you can get good membership, you can get some good organization. You are able to attract many of these young people, and the Black Axe movement, the groups such as the Maphite, groups such as the Airlords — all of them have capitalized on that.”

These dynamics are similar to those that play into recruitment for violent extremist organizations such as Boko Haram and al-Shabaab. Young people without job prospects or educational opportunities find that they can earn money and status by picking up weapons and fighting for such groups. The same is true with local and transnational gangs.







Yansakai vigilante group members turn in weapons in Zamfara State in 2019 after a brokered peace with regional gangs.

This can degrade state security in a number of ways. On the lowest level, local gangs such as those in South Africa perpetrate violence and petty crime, endangering locals and challenging law enforcement. In addition to petty street crimes and violence, larger, better-organized crime groups with more money can sway the government through political influence, bribery and other lawlessness. Black Axe has been reputed to have connections and influence in Nigerian politics.

“If more of these groups continue to grow, they pose a serious threat to the home country because they are so rich that they can buy off anyone in the home country, and the home country becomes a safe haven,” Ewi said. “If, for example, they face serious challenges abroad, they always come back home. So, their growth is a serious threat to the stability, the peace and cohesiveness of their home countries. And this is what we are seeing.”

### THE THREAT OF EXTREMIST TIES

One potential security threat posed by Black Axe and other organized crime groups is the possibility of

cooperation with violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram and its regional offshoots. The problem is that there is little to no information about whether, how or to what extent such cooperation might exist.

“There is very little information about the organization from academic sources, supporting the suggestion that the Nigerian criminal organization has not been studied, adding to the group’s reputation of secrecy,” wrote South African writer Candice Boyers for the website Chosen Narrative in 2023.

Ewi agrees. Research on the possibility of such connections is not just scant, it’s “nonexistent,” he said. It’s reasonable to consider that extremist groups such as Boko Haram would seek to link up in some way with a well-connected transnational crime group such as Black Axe, he said, pointing to some reports of cooperation between Boko Haram and bandits in northern Nigeria.

In the January 2022 article “Northwestern Nigeria: A Jihadization of Banditry, or a ‘Banditization’ of Jihad?” authors James Barnett, Murtala Ahmed Rufa’i and Abdulaziz Abdulaziz confirm that there have



Nigerian bandits in Zamfara State burned this house and killed 48 people during a reprisal against vigilantes. Some say bandits have cooperated in limited ways with Boko Haram extremists in the northeast.



Nigerian authorities recovered these weapons from bandits during Operation Safe Haven in 2022.

been some connections between Nigerian extremists in the northeast and bandits in the northwest, mainly in Zamfara State.

Connections, they write, typically take three forms: coexistence, cooperation and convergence. The article notes that Boko Haram militants have “coexisted and intermittently cooperated with bandits in the northwest, with cooperation being limited to short-term, mutually beneficial exchanges of material or skills.” Convergence, however, in which each group increasingly engages in the behaviors of the other, has not been seen. Unlike Black Axe, northwest Nigeria’s bandits are rural gangs prone to kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, local extortion rackets and looting, the authors wrote.

So, could an organization such as Black Axe find common cause with a terrorist group such as Boko Haram? Ewi thinks it is possible. He also said there are mutual benefits for both sides to cooperate. For example, an extremist group could tap into an organized crime group’s multinational network to move or procure weapons for itself or traffic other contraband for profit. Conversely, a crime group could benefit from terrorists’ payments for services rendered.

## ADDRESSING THE LAWLESSNESS

Nigerian authorities have gone after confraternity criminals at the local level on numerous occasions. In July 2021, Delta State Police Command arrested several Black Axe members and confiscated two pistols, a battle ax, a cutlass, ammunition, two laptops, six cellphones and a stolen car, according to Nigerian news blog SouthernVoice.

In September 2023, police in Ekiti State arrested 17 people on crimes including “cultism, murder, and kidnapping,” according to the Nigerian Tribune. The suspects confessed to being members of the Airlords. But such efforts might not be enough.

As groups such as Black Axe grow and test security efforts at home and abroad, their global ubiquity will make a one-dimensional effort fruitless, Ewi said. Nations will have to cooperate and share intelligence to strike at them globally.

“You don’t defeat them by fighting them in one country,” he said. “It doesn’t work. As long as they exist in one or two other countries, they will stay, replicate these cells and make them very, very difficult to defeat. So, it has to be, in my view, a global movement.” □

PLUNDERING  
**NATURE'S  
BOUNTY**



# IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, THE THEFT OF VALUABLE HARDWOOD FUELS INSECURITY

ADF STAFF

**D**espite an amazing array of natural resources, the Central African Republic (CAR) has endured years of civil war, poor governance and corruption.

Traffickers, terrorists, mercenaries and thieves are stealing its wealth of diamonds, gold and high-grade lumber on an industrial scale.

More than a third of the country is forest, contributing 13% of its export revenue, according to Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organised Crime (ENACT), a European Union project studying organized crime in Africa. But that's only the revenue from legitimate logging operations. Untold amounts of furniture-grade hardwood leave the country illegally, usually shipped to China to make hand-crafted furniture.

African countries lose \$17 billion each year in illegal logging. The United Nations has reported that Africa's share of hardwood exports to China has risen from 40% in 2008 to 90% as of 2018. Southeast Asia once had its own rosewood forests but became so depleted that loggers began plundering other parts of the world.

"Rosewood" is the name usually used to describe the hardwood leaving Africa, but it is not totally accurate. The term rosewood is used to designate several hundred species of tropical timber found across West and Central Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Some rosewood varieties are classified in China as "hongmu," a superior, furniture-grade standard.

Rosewoods are the most highly prized hardwood throughout the CAR and the rest of Africa, but loggers also harvest other species. In the CAR, a reddish-brown hardwood called sapele has become popular in China in recent years. Loggers also plunder teak, redwood and mahogany.

Hongmu furniture originally was crafted for such people as Ming emperors and the extremely wealthy. During the time of China's Cultural Revolution, such furniture was reviled and violently confiscated, with the Chinese Communist Party regarding it as "bourgeois" wealth, according to Foreign Policy magazine.

Today, rosewood is used in China for custom-made furniture, which has become popular with the middle class and is regarded as a status symbol and a long-term investment. The market for rosewood

furniture in China is estimated at \$26 billion annually.

Media censorship in China means most Chinese citizens are unaware of how big a problem illegal logging has become in African countries. "There is no genuine coverage from the Chinese side," Haibing Ma, an Asia policy specialist, told Foreign Policy.

Rosewood has become the world's most widely traded illegal wild product. Interpol says it is trafficked far more than ivory, rhino horns or pangolin scales. It sells for up to \$50,000 per cubic meter and increases in value 700 times from the logger to the end buyer.



Logging in the Central African Republic WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

The logging generally begins with the bribing of local and national CAR officials. The criminal chain starts with traffickers from the bordering countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo, Sudan and South Sudan, according to a July 2023 study by ENACT.

"The kingpins, however, are foreign nationals from Asian countries," ENACT reported. "While the CAR is the source country for illegal logging, illicit timber and products are trafficked through neighbouring countries via multiple road and waterway transit corridors."

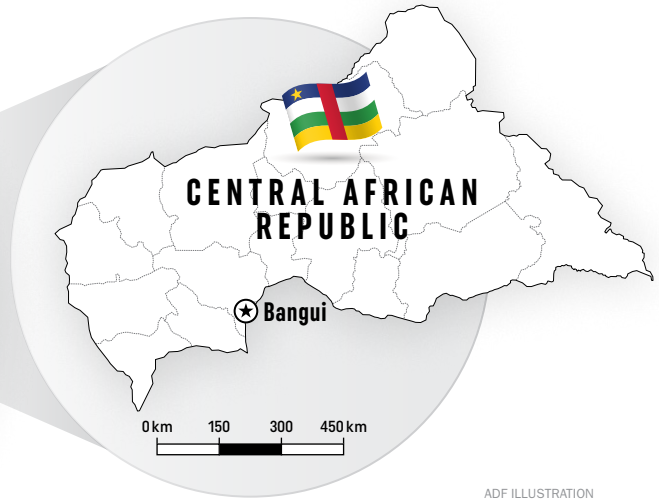
Conditions in the CAR are ideal for crime. The landlocked country has 5,200 kilometers of borders with its six neighboring countries, which makes

“ORGANIZED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY CAN HAPPEN AT ANY STAGE OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN, DURING EXTRACTION, MILLING, TRANSPORTATION, MARKETING OR PROFIT LAUNDERING.”

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– Africa Center for Strategic Studies





ADF ILLUSTRATION

border enforcement almost impossible. With negligible law enforcement, the country has attracted an array of profiteers and terrorists who want to use logging money to buy weapons.

Illegal logging can multiply corruption and crime throughout the country. Researchers from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) said logging amplifies organized crime and extremist threats and, in turn, makes governance more difficult because it involves collusion between senior government officials and criminal networks. The collusion weakens the control of natural resources.

“Organized criminal activity can happen at any stage of the supply chain, during extraction, milling, transportation, marketing or profit laundering,” the ACSS reported.

## OTHER COUNTRIES INVOLVED

Although the CAR is one of Africa’s hotbeds for illegal logging, it is far from the only African country dealing with such issues:

- In 2021, the Zambian Anti-Corruption Commission seized 47 trucks filled with illegally harvested rosewood. The ACSS reported that the wood was headed for the Namibian and Zimbabwean borders and was one of several instances of illegal logging involving members of the Zambian government.
- The ACSS also reported that in Equatorial Guinea, one top government official “profited immensely”

from the transport and export of rare hardwoods. The center reported that he sold some national forests to private companies and used a shell company linked to the Ministry of Agriculture to charge fees for processing, loading and shipping the timber.

- In Gabon, officials seized more than 390 containers loaded with Kezavingo logs, a type of rosewood, valued at \$250 million, the global



Rosewood is stacked in a forest in Guinea-Bissau. REUTERS

economy website Quartz reported in 2019. A month later, 350 of the containers disappeared, exposing the corruption and lax regulation in the logging industry there. After 200 of the missing containers were found and seized again, Gabon’s then-president fired his vice president and minister of forestry.

- In Mali, illegal loggers have harvested vast amounts of a type of rosewood known as kosso, which is particularly popular in China. Between May 2020 and March 2022, China imported

A truck driver from Guinea waits to drive loads of cut rosewood to Guinea-Bissau’s capital. REUTERS



Men load freshly cut rosewood logs onto a truck. REUTERS

148,000 tons of kosso from Mali, despite a ban on the harvest and trade of the trees, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) reported. The agency said it took 220,000 trees to produce that much lumber, filling more than 5,500 shipping containers. The EIA report noted that the illegal shipments are the result of “deeply entrenched corruption” in Mali, including invalid permits and civil servants receiving bribes.

- In mid-2023, the Nigerian newspaper This Day reported that Nigeria’s Taraba State had imposed a total ban on the logging of a type of rosewood popularly called Madrid. The governor extended the ban to include the processing and sale of the valuable hardwood. The paper noted that thousands of the trees had reportedly been cut down in the state over the previous eight years, with a large portion of the profits ending up “in private pockets rather than government coffers.”

Illegal logging in Africa long has been associated with extremist groups and criminal networks. In **Nigeria**, billions of dollars’ worth of rosewood are exported each year, much of it from forests controlled by the terrorist group Boko Haram. In **The Gambia**, exported rosewood logs are smuggled in from separatist rebels in neighboring **Senegal’s** Casamance region.

Timber trafficking networks in **Tanzania** and the **DRC** linked to militant groups in **Mozambique** have made millions of dollars per month from illegal logging, The Conversation has reported. In Senegal, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance

has funded its insurgency through illegal rosewood logging. Militias in **Liberia** and the **CAR** also have used logging to finance their operations. Global Witness has reported that armed groups in the CAR have been using the “cover of conflict” to strip the country’s rainforests.

In **Mali**, extremists use the timber trafficking issue as a means of propaganda, telling the population they will protect the country’s forests from loggers. “Supporters of the rebels have exploited the forest crisis and the frustration among the population in the Southern provinces as a way to promote their cause,” the EIA reported, according to Voice of America. “They frequently allege that only the strict discipline of the jihadist can put an end to the rosewood crisis and the circles of grand corruption it has fueled.”

## WAGNER GROUP INVOLVED

Russian Wagner Group mercenaries are getting in on the action. The group has supported various leaders in Africa, including in the CAR, Libya, Mali and Sudan, in exchange for mineral rights. In the CAR, Wagner mercenaries serve as the personal guards of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra.

The research organization All Eyes on Wagner, which investigates the group’s activities around the world, found that the CAR government gave a company called Bois Rouge a 30-year logging concession in 2021 to harvest trees from nearly 186,000 hectares — an area more than twice the size of the Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park just across the Mbaéré River. The company, while





Delivery men in China load custom furniture made from African rosewood. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

supposedly operated by a CAR citizen, also appeared at a Shanghai trade exhibition and was listed as being Russian. If Wagner exploits just one-third of the contracted land, by some estimates it could reap nearly \$900 million by selling the logs on the international market.

In 2023, CBS News secretly filmed Wagner trucks leaving the group's military base near the capital, Bangui, loaded with wood. Russian mercenaries guarded the convoy all the way to the border with Cameroon, where they were waved through.

"At the border, the drivers presented a safe passage document stamped by the CAR government," CBS reported. "The document functions like a diplomatic badge — it means vehicles cannot be searched."

ENACT said one investigative report concluded that, "In order to log the timber for almost no cost, the mercenaries have committed gross human rights abuses, including invading and 'emptying' towns and villages. Foreign mercenaries are therefore partly responsible for the instability in the rainforest region."

## STOPPING THE LOGGING

One strategy to address the problem of illegal logging has been for countries to declare moratoriums on any kind of tree harvesting. Generally, such restrictions have not worked; it's easy to get around them when state security and justice systems are in on the crimes. Several countries have imposed, then abandoned, moratoriums, saying they lacked the resources to enforce them.

Stopping illegal logging will require a resolve that few countries have been able to muster. ENACT says

the starting point would be with the highest levels of government in each country demonstrating the political will to stamp out extractive corruption in the logging sector, particularly the illegal loggers state authorities protect.

A report by The Conversation said that stopping illegal logging requires dismantling the high-level criminal networks driving it and stopping the government-embedded actors who enable it. Oversight and accountability are critical.

The Institute for Security Studies says the biggest challenge to illegal logging is stamping out the corruption that pervades the entire process. Individual countries can't do it on their own. Referring to the CAR, the institute said it would be a "Herculean task" to prevent foreign actors, businesses and enablers from illegally logging and trafficking timber.

"It will likely require pressure from the international community for sanctions against enterprises in the global timber trade," the institute noted.

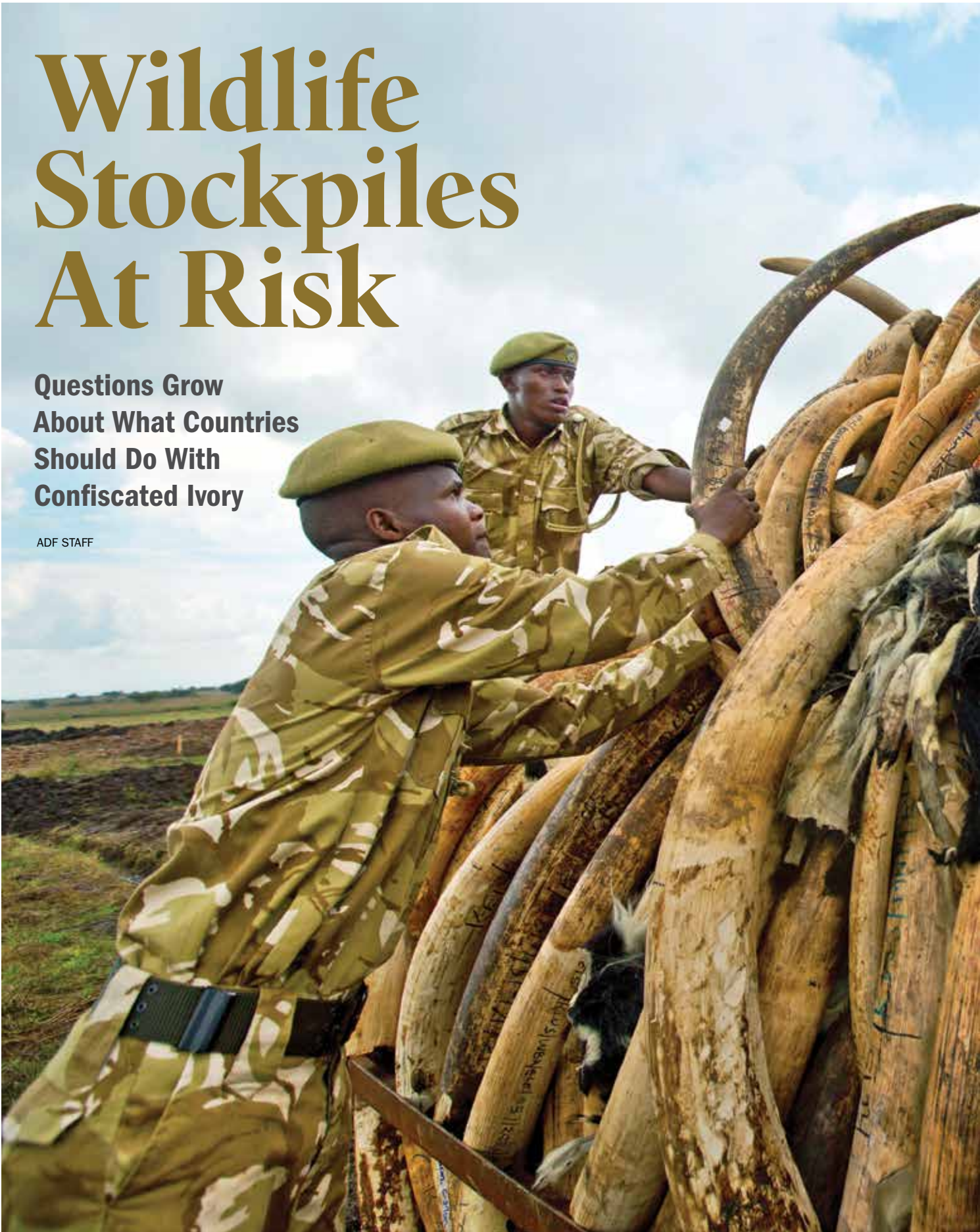
The ACSS says stopping illegal logging will require strengthening independent accountability rather than just relying on governments to do the right thing. To that end, the center said it could include deployment of inspectors general, the creation of designated forestry prosecutors with the offices of attorneys general, and the creation of subregional judicial oversight bodies.

Since the complicity of government officials hinders the power of domestic judiciaries in prosecuting illegal logging, strong external oversight is necessary, the center concluded. "This can come through domestic civil society and, in certain cases, international cooperation on intelligence sharing and prosecution." □

# Wildlife Stockpiles At Risk

**Questions Grow  
About What Countries  
Should Do With  
Confiscated Ivory**

ADF STAFF





Rangers from the Kenya Wildlife Service stack elephant tusks to be burned. More than 100 metric tons of tusks and other animal products were destroyed.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**F**or years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been plagued by international gangs slaughtering and selling parts from endangered animals.

“The DRC, which shares borders with nine countries, serves as an important transit point for the movement of trafficked parts,” the environmental news agency Mongabay reported in 2022. “The Central African nation, which hosts the largest swath of Congo Basin rainforest, is also a source country for illegal wildlife goods.”

In one case, authorities conducted investigations for three years before raiding a “stash house” in the city of Lubumbashi, seizing 2 metric tons of ivory valued at \$6 million.

Authorities in the raid said the tusks came from more than 150 elephants. The three people arrested in May 2022 were believed to be members of a major wildlife trafficking ring operating throughout Southern Africa, according to Mongabay.

Five months later, security agents arrested two men while authorities seized \$3.5 million worth of ivory, rhino horn and pangolin scales that had originated in the DRC. The men acknowledged that, from November 2019 through June 2021, they had shipped 22 kilograms of ivory from Kinshasa by cutting the tusks into smaller pieces, painting them black and labeling them as wood, The Associated Press reported.

Elephant tusks, rhino horns, pangolin scales and even donkey skins are hot commodities in Asia, chiefly in China. The tusks are carved into elaborate, expensive ornaments and jewelry, and the horns, scales and skins are used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). The demand for donkey skins alone in Asia is estimated at 5 million per year. None of these organic materials is traded legally.

Criminal groups build up stockpiles in the DRC while plotting ways to move them out of the country. The environmental investigative group Oxpickers says that what happens to seized ivory and other goods generally is unknown. DRC environmentalist Josué Aruna says such seized goods are “likely to return to the black market,” because authorities don’t disclose what they have done with them. During a Conference of the Parties for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2019, officials said they were “aware of a number of thefts of ivory from government-held stockpiles in recent years.”

Such illegal trade comes at a tremendous cost. Endangered animals are slaughtered, and hundreds of wildlife rangers have been murdered in the line of duty. The smuggling comes at the cost of good local governance, community stability and regional security.

The money from the trade also funds extremist groups. As Humane Society International notes, several African militia groups “have engaged in elephant poaching and

**A white-bellied pangolin was rescued from local animal traffickers in Uganda. The small creatures’ scales are used in traditional Chinese medicine, even though they have no medicinal qualities.** AFF/GETTY IMAGES





A woman mixes traditional Chinese medicine at a hospital pharmacy in Shanghai. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A farm manager in South Africa shows his 8-year-old donkey, Elsa. Traditional Chinese medicine can include a substance made from donkey skins. The donkey population is now plunging in countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya and South Africa. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



An official with the Head of Ports and Maritime Command in Hong Kong shows smuggled rhino horns found hidden in containers shipped from South Africa. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

used profits from [the] sale of the ivory to fund their terrorist activities.”

Countries throughout Africa struggle with handling and storing confiscated ivory and rhino horns. The conservation charity Traffic, in a report released in 2020, noted that “One of the known sources of illegal ivory is leakage from government held stockpiles.” Traffic has noted that confiscated ivory and rhino horns can end up stored in banks, patrol posts, customs offices, courts and tribunals, police stations, and other agencies. Oxpeckers reported that such agencies typically can keep the goods for an unlimited amount of time, and stocks are not inventoried.

### PROTECTING A STOCKPILE

Even when confiscated ivory and other goods don’t return to the black market, the problem remains of what to do with them. Zimbabwe, home to the world’s second-largest population of elephants after Botswana, has a stockpile of confiscated ivory and rhino horns worth \$600 million. Storage of the 130 metric tons of ivory and 6 to 7 metric tons of rhino horn is an expensive security problem because of the volume of the material.

Zimbabwe wants to sell the confiscated ivory and

rhino horn to help finance the protection of the country’s wildlife. The TRT Afrika digital channel reports that the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority has been struggling due to financial constraints in recent years. The authority is not included in the national budget and independently needs at least \$20 million annually to pay for its conservation work. The authority needs more patrol cars, surveillance drones and personnel.

Zimbabwe has been asking for the sale for two years. So far, the answer has been no.

In 1989, CITES banned the sale of ivory. At first, the ban worked, and demand for ivory in parts of the world dropped to a historic low. Humane Society International noted that “illegal trade was severely curbed and ivory carving factories in China and shops in Hong Kong closed down.” But in 1999, CITES approved a one-time sale of nearly 50 metric tons of stockpiled ivory from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to Japan. That triggered a renewed interest in ivory, and from January 2000 to June 2002, more than 1,000 African elephants were found dead, killed for their tusks.

In 2008, again with the approval of CITES, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe exported 102 metric



Indonesian officials destroy seized wildlife items, including parts of pangolins, turtles and other animals, on August 10, 2023. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

tons of government stockpiled ivory to Japan and China. Humane Society International said the sale triggered more African elephant massacres.

The society maintains that to save elephants, the sale of ivory must be illegal, with no exceptions for legal sales from stockpiles. More than 20 countries throughout the world have determined that the only sure way to keep confiscated ivory and rhino horn off the market is to destroy it, usually by burning or crushing.

Kenya was the first country to do a public burning in 1989. At that time, Paul Udoto, a Kenyan Wildlife Service spokesman, said the historic burn was a “desperate measure meant to send a message to the world about the destruction through poaching of Kenya’s elephants,” the Tsavo Trust, a conservation organization, later reported. Burning ivory is not an easy task: It takes about a week to burn an average male elephant tusk.

Conservationists and governments that support destroying confiscated goods say that the practice builds public support for the protection of endangered animals and sends a message to poachers that their work is immoral and futile. Critics say the practice not only may increase poaching by creating a perception of scarcity on the black market, but also deprives countries of the opportunity to make millions of dollars from their work stopping smugglers.

## TCM SPREADS TO AFRICA

The practice of using such things as rhino horns, pangolin scales and tiger parts in TCM goes back centuries. The animal ingredients are worthless in treating medical conditions, but their use is so prevalent in TCM, some of the creatures have become endangered. So many Asian pangolins have been slaughtered that smugglers have moved on to capturing African pangolins.

The African Wildlife Foundation reports that poachers kill about 2.7 million African pangolins each year, making them the most trafficked mammal in the world. The scales are used in TCM to treat a variety of conditions, including arthritis and cancer. The scales are made of keratin, the same material in human fingernails.

“The level at which pangolins are being trafficked is huge compared to what it has been in the past,” said Sarah Stoner of the Wildlife Justice Commission in 2020, as reported by National Geographic magazine. “It’s on a completely different level.”

The situation will get worse. China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which is financing infrastructure all over the world, has a stated goal of spreading TCM. The Environmental Investigation Agency says that “major companies and countless clinics have already been established across the continent and certain retailers plan to establish full supply chains in place, from sourcing to sales.”



Armed police in Cameroon guard illegally trafficked elephant tusks that were later burned. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

“Our very real concern is that such a huge expansion of TCM in Africa, as is happening under China’s Belt and Road initiative, will have the knock-on effect of drastically increasing demand for treatments containing wildlife,” the agency reported. It “is a prescription for disaster for some endangered animal species, such as leopards, pangolins and rhinos.”

### STOPPING THE TRAFFICKING

Conservationists and animal protection advocates say that more work is needed to stop the illegal sale of endangered animals and prevent confiscated materials from creeping back into the black market. The African Wildlife Foundation says that all controls on animal parts marketing begin with a three-pronged strategy: “Stop the killing, stop the trafficking and stop the demand.”

The Environmental Investigation Agency has a plan to stop the ivory trade, but it also would apply, in part, to other forms of animal trafficking. The plan includes disrupting criminal networks through undercover investigations, working to close all ivory markets, exposing the global hub of the illegal ivory trade, dismantling ivory trafficking syndicates and continuing to push for international laws that ban such sales.

Other agencies and experts have recommended these steps for stopping the black market sale of animal parts:

- **Increase protection for threatened species.** Malawi

is using affordable technology such as surveillance drones to support rangers as they try to protect wildlife.

- **Encourage tourism.** Investing in infrastructure so tourists can visit wildlife preserves can be a financial windfall. In addition to tourism revenue, camera-toting tourists can deter would-be poachers. Countries such as Botswana that have a strong conservation focus attract tourists who are eager to see rhinos, elephants and other animals.
- **Partner with civil society groups.** Governments have had success working with charities and environmental groups that protect endangered species. Such public-private efforts can pressure destination countries to strengthen enforcement.
- **Aggressively prosecute wildlife traffickers.** “Coordinating cross-border investigations and amassing the necessary evidence is tricky,” reports Mongabay. “Wildlife crimes are often not prioritized by law enforcement agencies or judicial authorities.” Other experts say that prosecution can only be as good as the integrity of courts systems and the professionalism in processing evidence. The advocacy group Wildlife concluded: “Corruption and/or a lack of adequate law enforcement allows organized crime and terrorism to gain a foothold in some countries and fuels the ivory trade.” □



Beechcraft T-6C  
Texan II trainer  
BEECHCRAFT

## First T-6C Trainers Arrive in Tunisia

DEFENCEWEB

**T**unisia's Air Force has taken delivery of eight Beechcraft T-6C Texan II trainer airplanes from the United States.

Tunisian Pilots began training on the planes at Textron Aviation Defence facilities in Wichita, Kansas, in late 2022. The T-6Cs will serve as the new primary training aircraft for the Tunisian Air Force and will be flown by No. 13 Squadron at Sfax Air Base/Sfax-Thyna International Airport. The use of the aircraft will be supported by a suite of devices, including a ground-based training system, an operational flight trainer and a computer-based training lab.

Tunisian Air Force students do their basic training on SF-260s. Tunisia received nine SF-260CTs and 12 SF-260WT Warriors between 1974 and 1978. About 18 SF-260s remain in use. The student pilots then move on to the jet-powered Aermacchi MB-326.

Morocco is the only other African nation that flies T-6s, ordering 24 for \$185 million in October 2009.

The T-6 is a development of the Swiss Pilatus PC-9 turboprop trainer and was developed to fill the Joint Primary Aircraft Training System role for the U.S. Air

Force and the U.S. Navy. The C model is a further refinement of the T-6A Texan II with an integrated glass cockpit, advanced avionics suite and hard-point wings that can accommodate auxiliary fuel tanks.

In addition to the hard-point wings, the T-6C's upgraded avionics include head-up displays, upfront control panels, three multifunction displays, and hands-on throttle and stick controls. The equipment mirrors the systems and capabilities of frontline strike fighter aircraft while retaining all the inherent training and flying characteristics of the T-6 trainer.

The Tunisian Air Force will receive other aircraft from Textron Aviation, with four Cessna Grand Caravans being readied for delivery. These are being modified with electro-optical/infrared sensors, operator consoles, tactical radios, video data links and night vision-compatible lighting.

The fleet of Grand Caravan EX single-engine turboprops will aid the Tunisian Air Force in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in the country. The Caravans will not be armed.



# Kenya Completes Local Overhaul of Patrol Ship

DEFENCEWEB

Kenya has rededicated the patrol vessel KNS Shupavu after a local overhaul performed by Kenya Shipyards Ltd. at a new facility at Mombasa Shipyard at Mtongwe Naval Base.

The refurbishment began in November 2021 and, according to Kenya Shipyards Ltd., involved replacing major components such as engines, generators and other machinery, and upgrading the vessel's electrical systems, navigational equipment and other onboard systems.

Workers painted the ship and renovated its living quarters. A new crane was added to launch and recover boats.

Mombasa Shipyard already had started work on the KNS Shupavu when the shipyard officially opened in December 2021. It was established with assistance from the Dutch defense and shipbuilding company Damen and includes a slip, two parking buildings and four workshops.

Kenya Shipyards said it worked closely with Damen and the Kenya Navy to ensure that the KNS Shupavu was correctly refurbished.



Employees at Kenya Shipyards work on the KNS Shupavu.

KENYA SHIPYARDS LTD.

“The KNS Shupavu can now continue to serve the nation's maritime interests for many more years, and this achievement paves the way for other naval vessels in the region to undergo similar refits in the future,” Kenya Shipyards Ltd. said.

The Shupavu's sister ship, KNS Shujaa, was refurbished by Damen Shipyards in the Netherlands and returned home in July 2018. KNS Shujaa is one of two Shupavu-class large patrol boats built by Gondan shipyard in Spain. They were acquired in 1996 to replace older vessels and are armed with 76 mm and 30 mm guns.

## Zambia Air Force Adds Helicopters for Disaster Response, Peacekeeping

DEFENCEWEB

**T**he United States has announced an \$80 million grant to supply four Bell 412EP helicopters to the Zambia Air Force.

Gen. Michael Langley, commander of U.S. Africa Command, made the announcement in mid-September 2023, saying that the grant also covers three years of service, parts and training.

Maj. Gen. Oscar Nyoni, Zambia Air Force deputy commander, said the grant will help the force better support Zambia's domestic needs, regional security and United Nations peacekeeping missions abroad.

U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Michael Gonzales said, “The contribution that the general announced today is not just helicopters. It is providing a solution for the Zambian military and the Zambian people.”

Zambia operates a diverse range of helicopters, including six troop transport and assault helicopters delivered between 2015 and 2017. The country is growing its rotary wing fleet, and in February, Zambia ordered two Enstrom 480B helicopters from the U.S. for training pilots and personnel.



The Zambia Air Force has received a grant to acquire four Bell 412EP helicopters.

U.S. EMBASSY IN ZAMBIA

The Zambia Air Force has a substantial Bell/Agusta-Bell fleet. In recent years, three Bell/Agusta-Bell 412 helicopters arrived from Italy and South Africa, joining a dozen surviving Agusta-Bell 205s.

In March, Lt. Gen. Colin Barry, Zambia Air Force commander, said the air force had procured a medium utility helicopter, which would be delivered soon for troop movement, search and rescue, disaster relief, and other tasks. The U.S. delivered a secondhand Bell 212 in June. Barry has indicated that another

two helicopters also will be acquired.

These will be used for medical support. In January 2023, the air force signed a memorandum of understanding with the Zambia Flying Doctor Services for the provision of aircrew, aircraft, maintenance personnel, and special equipment and services to contribute to health care in far-flung areas. The air force regularly uses its helicopters for disaster relief, humanitarian assistance and medical evacuation, at home and in neighboring countries, for example, in Malawi after flooding.

AFRICA CYBER SURGE II

# NETS CRIMINALS ON CONTINENTAL SCALE

ADF STAFF

**A** four-month joint operation by Interpol and Afripol involving 25 countries helped stop cybercrime schemes that steal from vulnerable people and hurt national economies. Africa Cyber Surge II began in April 2023. By August, authorities had arrested 14 people on charges of running online scams based in countries including Cameroon, Mauritius and Nigeria.

The operation came after the first Africa Cyber Surge in 2022. Both were a reminder that the rapid spread of the internet and smartphone technology across Africa has happened, in many cases, without the necessary protections to guard against online scammers and other malicious actors, according to experts.

Organizers involved with Africa Cyber Surge II said countries need to partner across borders to protect their citizens.

“Coordinated operations such as Cyber Surge are necessary to disrupt criminal networks and build individual, organizational and society-wide levels of protection,” Afripol’s acting Executive Director Jalel Chelba said in a statement.

Among the most common attacks is phishing, a cyberattack that tricks people into opening emails and text messages that unleash malicious code into their computer systems and smartphones. Another tactic is the use of ransomware, in which hackers inject code that locks down a

computer system until the owner pays to have it restored.

Africa Cyber Surge II invoked the kind of cross-border cooperation cybersecurity experts see as needed. Among those arrested were three people in Cameroon involved in the fraudulent sale of artworks worth \$850,000. They were captured with the cooperation of authorities in Côte d’Ivoire.

In addition to those arrests, the program also:

- Took down 185 internet addresses connected to malicious activities in The Gambia.
- Led Cameroonian authorities to shut down two darknet sites.
- Led Kenyan authorities to shut down 615 websites that hosted malware — software typically tied to online scams such as phishing and ransomware.

“The Africa Cyber Surge II operation has led to the strengthening of cybercrime departments in member countries as well as the solidification of partnerships with crucial stakeholders, such as computer emergency response teams and Internet Service Providers,” Interpol Secretary-General Jürgen Stock said in a statement announcing the results of the investigation.

Agents from Interpol and Afripol collaborate during a joint operation.

INTERPOL

## Ghana Armed Forces to Launch

# CYBER DIRECTORATE

ADF STAFF

**W**ith cybercrime growing rapidly across Africa, the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) plans to launch a Directorate of Cyber and Electronic Warfare Operations to protect the nation's military from cyberattacks and to expand the country's ability to detect and shut down online crime.

The GAF is part of Ghana's Joint Cybersecurity Committee, created in 2020 to identify and respond to cyber threats.

Ghana ranks among the top countries in Africa for cybersecurity. It is one of only 14 countries to sign the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection. The International Telecommunication Union's Global Cybersecurity Index ranks Ghana third behind Mauritius and Tanzania in its capacity to protect internet users' data and thwart security breaches.

Despite that, the Bank of Ghana estimates that online fraud cost Ghanaians more than \$4 million in direct financial losses in the first half of 2023. Ghana has more than 23 million internet users, meaning 68% of the population is online. A decade earlier, 2.3 million Ghanaians were online, according to the country's Cyber Security Authority.

In announcing the new program at Burma Camp in Accra, Vice Adm. Seth Amoama, GAF chief of defense staff, pointed out that security in cyberspace has become as vital to national defense as security on land, sea, air and space.

"We have a responsibility to protect our data, database, network, communications infrastructure and other assets of the GAF," Amoama said, reported the Ghanaian Times. He added that improving cyber awareness among security professionals is a top priority.

"As we take steps to protect our critical information infrastructure, we want to assure all that efforts are being made for members of the GAF to understand the cyber threats vulnerabilities, and their impact on mission readiness," he said.

Vice Adm. Seth Amoama, Ghana's chief of defense staff, speaks at the opening of National Cyber Security Awareness Month in October 2023. GHANA ARMED FORCES



## MALAWI TO USE DRONES TO SAVE ELEPHANT HERDS

BIRD STORY AGENCY

**M**alawi announced it will use drones to protect elephants from poachers in some of its wildlife reserves.

The drones will be used for surveillance in Nyika, Kasungu, Nkhotakota, Majete Vwaza and Liwonde wildlife reserves.

Malawi relies on forest guards to patrol regions that separate elephants from developed areas to make sure no poachers enter the reserves. The drones allow greater surveillance and quicker response times.

"It is envisaged that the use of drones in wildlife conservation will bring new dimensions in both protection and research," Malawi's Ministry of Tourism spokesperson Joseph Nkosi said.

The drones also will help conservationists keep tabs on herd sizes and elephant movements. "Use of drones provides a quick, easy and cost-effective way to monitor wildlife from a distance ... they can be an effective tool for wildlife research, monitoring and counting animals," Nkosi said.

Wildlife reserve officials welcomed the move, saying instantaneous information will help them find poachers before they can target animals.

"Illegal poachers know the movement of animals well; that is why they go straight and kill them. They cannot spend time hunting because they know that they may be caught," Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve Manager David Nangoma said. "So we really need strategies that are able to monitor everything that is happening in these places, even treating injured animals."

Malawians are becoming accustomed to the sight of drones flying above the country. According to [dronenews.africa](https://dronenews.africa), the country has the largest drone corridor on the continent, hosts the African Drone and Data Academy, and has drone logistics companies that deliver medical supplies to rural communities. Drones also have been used during recovery efforts after floods.

There is a growing sentiment in Malawi that pristine areas such as natural parks need to be protected from poachers and development. Apart from Malawi's parks, there are few areas in the country that have not been stripped of trees.

"Biodiversity plays a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem resilience and stability," said Boniface Chimwaza, chief environmental officer in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change. "Healthy ecosystems can better adapt to climate change impacts such as extreme weather events and provide critical services like pollination and pest control that support agriculture and human livelihood."

# NEW REPORT COUNTS COST OF COUPS

ADF STAFF

**A**s the number of coups grows across Africa, economists are tracking the cost in terms of slowed growth and lost investment. They're also looking at recent history to predict the economic impact on West Africa.

The United Nations Development Programme published a study in July 2023, "Soldiers and Citizens: Military Coups and the Need for Democratic Renewal in Africa," that shows how the costs of coups add up.

The study found that the coups "discouraged investors and curtailed economic activities." It added that the impact of coups is felt at all levels of the economy. "Food and essential commodity prices — already under pressure due to COVID-19 and, more recently, conflict in Ukraine — have been affected by the instability in all settings," the report's authors found.

The study estimated that Guinea's 2008 coup and Mali's coup in 2012 erased a combined \$12 billion to \$13.5 billion from their economies over five years, which represented 76% of Guinea's 2008 gross domestic product (GDP) and almost half of Mali's 2012 GDP.

In Burkina Faso, which recorded two coups in 2020, economic growth slowed to 2.5% in 2022 after a robust 6.9% the year before, according to The Associated Press.

Gabon's military coup in August 2023 led to a steep drop for its bonds on the international market.

"The military takeover will force investors to reassess their interest in Gabon and the wider political landscape in the region," Maja Bovcon, senior Africa analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, told Reuters.

In Guinea, immediately after Col. Mamady Doumbouya overthrew the government in 2021, the country's mining sector saw prices shoot to the highest level in a decade.

Doumbouya tried to reassure Guinea's business and economic partners. He asked mining companies to continue their work and exempted mining areas from the nightly curfew. But the sector was badly damaged.

"The excuse most coup-plotters give for overthrowing a sitting government is mostly poor economy, corruption, insecurity, and poor governance," Israel Ojoko wrote for Nigerian news website The Cable. "But they end up not adding any value."



A woman sorts her products in a shop in Siby, Mali. Countries tend to experience a range of economic difficulties after a coup.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# GHANA'S FIRST FEMALE GENERAL REMEMBERED THROUGH HER MEMOIR, 'LADY IN BOOTS'

ADF STAFF

**I**t was a life filled with firsts. Maj. Gen. Constance Edjeani-Afenu of the Ghanaian Armed Forces (GAF) was a trailblazer as a military officer, peacekeeper and diplomat.

She died in 2022, but her memoir, "Lady in Boots," was published and released during an event at Burma Camp in September 2023.

The late general's sister, Akofa Edjeani, said she hopes the book can be distributed to secondary schools across Ghana to inspire the next generation of female leaders.

"To the youth out there, especially females ... do not be afraid," Edjeani told the Ghana News Agency. "Know what you want, what you are capable of doing, and just start. Once you start, you will finish."

During 41 years of military service, Edjeani-Afenu served as the first female commanding officer and the first female brigadier general in the history of the GAF. She served in peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she was the first female team leader in that mission's history.

In her last post, with the U.N. Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, she served as deputy force commander, the first woman to hold that title in that mission.

Upon her death after a brief illness, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres praised "her tireless work to promote inclusiveness and increase the number of women in the peacekeeping operations where she served."

She was posthumously promoted from brigadier general to major general in a move approved by the president.

In an interview the year before her death, she pointed to an attribute that helped her overcome hardships.

"I think discipline will send you places because in discipline you have hard work, respect, timeliness," Edjeani-Afenu told the Ghana Peace Journal in 2021. "In life I've realized that it's easier to be disciplined than to be undisciplined ... so I choose discipline."



**Maj. Gen. Constance Edjeani-Afenu**  
U.N. MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA

## KENYAN, BRAZILIAN FORCES Team up for Jungle Warfare Course

KENYA DEFENCE FORCES

**M**embers of Kenya's Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and the Brazilian Jungle Warfare Mobile Training Team completed a three-week jungle warfare training course in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Both units served in the U.N. Stabilization Mission in the DRC. Each unit has specific skills to share relating to operating in challenging terrain and conducting counterinsurgency operations.

"Jungle warfare presents unique challenges that require specialized skills and tactics," said Lt. Col. Ambrose Mwabili, commanding officer of the Kenyan QRF. "By sharing our experiences and learning from the Brazilians, we hope to become even more effective in our mission to protect civilians and maintain peace in this region."

The course, conducted near the town of Beni in 2023, covered topics such as navigation in dense foliage, survival skills, patrolling techniques and providing medical care in austere conditions. Participants underwent grueling physical and mental challenges to prepare them for the unpredictable nature of jungle warfare.

"The diversity of our Soldiers and the expertise we have gained from operating in the Amazon rainforest make us a valuable partner in this venture," said Brazilian Lt. Col. Joao Carlos Duque, who led the mobile training team. "Together with our Kenyan colleagues, we aim to raise the bar for peacekeeping forces in jungle environments."

Through the training, the Kenyan force and Brazilian team expected to forge stronger bonds, exchange knowledge and emerge as more formidable peacekeeping units.

Kenyan and Brazilian forces participate in jungle warfare training in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

KENYA DEFENCE FORCES





Peacekeepers provide security for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## ANALYSTS WARN WITHDRAWALS HURT SECURITY

ADF STAFF

A report by the Institute for Security Studies warns that withdrawing peacekeeping missions in Africa could create a significant security gap, leading to more violence and worsening humanitarian conditions.

The report, published in October 2023, noted that since the withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali began in July 2023, insecurity has surged. “Conflict between militants and the national army has reignited, and militant attacks have increased,” the report said. “Mali’s fragile security situation could regress to 2012 levels when jihadists tried to seize several key towns, including Timbuktu.”

For more than 60 years, peacekeeping missions have been deployed across Africa. The report noted that more than 13 U.N.-led missions and about 27 Africa-led peace support missions have spent billions of dollars annually and cost thousands of peacekeepers’ lives.

In recent years, the U.N. missions to Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia have come under heavy criticism for being perceived as ineffective. In all three countries, the report said, calls for withdrawals have been driven by “local and international political pressures, unmet domestic expectations for improved security and donor funding fatigue.”

The report warns that Africa must prepare to fill the “inevitable security vacuum” when peacekeepers are no longer in place. It said that in the absence of U.N. peacekeepers, African nations must consider regional and continentwide approaches to security. Furthermore, there is a need for “frank and open discussions” between the U.N. and the African Union to fill the security gap. The report concluded that the dialogue between the two organizations “should go beyond financing peace missions to include revisiting the military-heavy approach to peacekeeping.”

## ‘DIGITAL ARMY’ FIGHTS PROPAGANDA

DEFENCEWEB

Four United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa are working to prevent and stop disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining mission credibility.

MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, MINUSMA in Mali and UNMISS in South Sudan are involved in the campaigns. The missions in the DRC and Mali began shutting down in 2023.

The initiative is designed to fight back against falsehoods that trigger tensions, violence and death, the world body noted. The U.N. is monitoring how misinformation, disinformation and hate speech can affect health, security and stability, and undermine progress toward sustainable development goals.

U.N. missions are using smartphones and editing apps along with innovative approaches to build a “digital army” aimed at combating mis- and disinformation on social media networks and beyond. U.N. missions in Africa and elsewhere report disinformation, in the case of MONUSCO as far back as 2019, via social media campaigns targeting their peacekeeping work.

“There is a war going on through social media, the radio and traditional news outlets,” MONUSCO head Bintou Keita said. “Fighting deadly disinformation has been a painful curve to learn of this new battlefield, but the mission is now proactive on social and other media platforms to help stop its spread.”

To fight disinformation, U.N. peacekeepers put new tools into the hands of civilians of all ages, including 15-year-old Blessing Kasasi in the DRC. An activist advocating for the rights of women and children, she joined a workshop in Kinshasa with 30 young people to learn about detecting “fake news” and countering it with the truth.

Workshop trainer Guillaume Kingh-Farel said disinformation is “used as a weapon of war to undermine MONUSCO’s peace efforts in the DRC.”

As such, the MONUSCO-supported workshop set out to train “a digital army capable of detecting false information” by producing content with a smartphone and editing software. The goal was to spread objective, credible information through “relay clubs” disseminating these messages through their networks.

# DESPITE SETBACKS, PEACEKEEPERS 'CONTINUE TO PROTECT LIVES'

THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations under-secretary-general of peace operations has underscored the need for stronger, more consistent and unified support from member countries for the organization to achieve its key peacekeeping goals.

Growing national divisions, combined with increasingly complex conflicts, pose a formidable challenge to peacekeeping and the maintenance of security, Jean-Pierre Lacroix told ambassadors in the Security Council chamber.

"Peacekeeping is not a magic wand to help a country return to stability, but with the support of a unified international community, political processes and peace agreements have been implemented," Lacroix said.

He emphasized that U.N. peacekeeping operations continue to play a crucial role in protecting civilians caught in the crossfire. "Even where political solutions to conflicts seem distant, peacekeepers continue to protect the lives of hundreds and thousands of civilians in countries and regions in which we are deployed," he said.

Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda remains a core priority in U.N. peacekeeping, Lacroix said, stressing the need to involve more women in political processes to forge a sustainable peace. He cited the example of the MONUSCO mission in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, whose active support for women's participation in the Nairobi Process led to significant representation in consultations between the government and armed groups.

Efforts to achieve gender parity within peacekeeping also are underway, with women constituting 25.6% of uniformed personnel. As of mid-2023, 38% of heads and 33% of deputy heads of civilian-led peacekeeping operations were women.

Lacroix emphasized the role of technology and data in the future of peacekeeping, noting the ongoing implementation of the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of U.N. Peacekeeping.



United Nations Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, left, meets with Bankole Adeoye of the African Union in early 2023.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Refugees use cellphones to record a camp in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. U.N. peacekeepers are equipping young people with smartphones and editing software to spread accurate information through "relay clubs." AFP/GETTY IMAGES



# Gulf of Guinea Countries Join Forces to Secure Maritime Domain

ADF STAFF

Shipowners operating in the Gulf of Guinea received a piracy alert in June 2023 after pirates attacked a Swiss bulk carrier vessel and injured some of its crew off Conakry, Guinea.

Four criminals with weapons boarded the ship and stole money from a safe before fleeing, according to TradeWinds, a shipping news source. It was one of the latest piracy incidents recorded in West Africa after years of declining attacks, including 81 in 2020, 34 in 2021 and just three in 2022.

To address piracy, illegal fishing and other sea crimes, Benin, Nigeria and Togo in mid-September 2023 conducted a five-day maritime security operation known as Operation Safe Domain II.

Launched from Benin's Cotonou Port Naval Base, the operation featured patrol boats from Benin and Togo, and a Nigerian aircraft. The nations are members of Maritime Zone E, part of the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security and Safety.

West Africa loses as much as \$9.4 billion annually due to illegal

fishing, mostly by China, which has the world's largest distant-water fishing fleet and the world's worst illegal fishing record, according to the IUU Fishing Index. The index monitors illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Chinese bottom trawlers catch an estimated 2.35 million tons of fish a year in the region, accounting for 50% of China's total distant-water catch and worth about \$5 billion, the Environmental Justice Foundation reported.

Commodore Richard Shammah, director of the Regional Maritime Security Coordination Centre, West Africa, said countries are becoming more aware of the economic value their waters hold, and that for a country's blue economy to prosper, its maritime domain must be secure.

"This operation is necessary so that we can have a sea line of communication and trade and no one country can do it alone, hence the collaborative effort," Shammah said during the operation. "It is my prayers that the aim and objectives of this collaboration shall

Sailors participate in Operation Safe Domain II, a joint maritime security and patrol effort that involved navies from Benin, Nigeria and Togo. GOVERNMENT OF BENIN

be achieved because it will also tend to develop capacity with our navies."

The Pew Charitable Trusts highlighted the importance of collaboration and cooperation to eliminate the scourge in a 2023 report titled, "To End Illegal Fishing, Countries Must Work Together." The report argues that regional coordination can help countries counter specific crimes such as transshipment, the practice of transferring fish from a fishing vessel to a refrigerated cargo ship. Also known as "saiko," the practice lets vessels avoid catch limits.

"Increasing regional cooperation and coordination is a hard but necessary step to help stamp out IUU fishing, improve ocean health, and bring benefits — including international credibility — to all States involved," wrote the report's authors, Katherine Hanly and Tahiana Fajardo Vargas.





## SADC Exercise in Botswana TESTS COMMUNICATIONS

ADF STAFF

**E**ffective communication is key to any successful operation, but it becomes exponentially more difficult when the operation involves multiple countries with a variety of technologies and techniques.

That fact underpinned the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) communications Exercise Dipuisano in Botswana. "Dipuisano" means "discussions" in Sesotho.

As African nations work to respond to crises with regionally organized interventions, the ability to seamlessly communicate is more important than ever. Regional economic communities such as SADC are working to improve communications standards, Brig. Gen. Oreeditse Sheriff Tsamaase of the Botswana Defence Force said during the exercise.

The two-week exercise brought together military, police and civilian representatives from 10 SADC members: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

"The exercise is important for Namibia as it provides a platform for SADC [Standby Force] to test communication equipment, which in most cases are from different manufactures with different form factors," Col. Petrus Shilumbu, spokesperson for the Namibian Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, told ADF by email. Namibia sent 21 representatives to the event.

The SADC created its Standby Force, also known as the Standby Brigade, in 2008 to respond to regional crises. It became fully operational in 2017.

The SADC Standby Force is one of five regional forces that contribute to the African Standby Force established by the African Union. The SADC Standby Force is tasked with peacekeeping in nations experiencing political disruptions. The force is designed to restore peace and to act to prevent the spread of instability from one country to its neighbors.

The force was deployed in 2021 as a counterinsurgency mission to support Mozambique in fighting terrorism and violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, the gas-rich province bordering Tanzania. That mission continues.

"The exercise realized that challenges in communications, especially on interoperability of equipment, voice procedures and the absence of standard operating procedures, do exist," Shilumbu told ADF.

**Namibian Soldiers stand at attention in Botswana during Exercise Dipuisano.**

NAMIBIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

## African Countries Join State Partnership Program

U.S. NATIONAL GUARD

**T**he U.S. Department of Defense National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) has added new partner nations in Africa in the 30th year of the program.

Malawi and Zambia have joined 17 other African nations in the program. Established in 1993, it now involves more than 45% of the world's countries paired with the National Guard of every U.S. state and territory.

The program develops enduring relationships with partner countries and carries out activities to build capacity, improve compatibility, and improve U.S. access and influence. It also increases the readiness of U.S. and partner forces to meet emerging challenges.

The SPP creates strong, strategic partnerships through military-to-military engagements, exercises and key-leader engagements. The relationships often lead to co-deployments and close civil, government and commerce ties.

Through the SPP, National Guard members train and learn with their foreign counterparts and become more aware of the global environment in which they operate.

The program will be refined and expanded in the coming months and years, said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, National Guard Bureau chief.

"We don't come with preconditions," he said. "We have no hidden agenda. We're here to advance whatever is best for both America and our allies and partners, based on shared values and common interests."



A sergeant with the Massachusetts National Guard works with Kenya Defence Forces Soldiers during a fire control alignment test on a howitzer in Isiolo, Kenya.

SGT. MILES O. ANDRADE/U.S. ARMY

Emperor Haile Selassie, wearing a cloak, reviews an Ethiopian battalion bound for Korea in 1951.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Remembering the ‘Ghosts’ of Ethiopia’s Kagnew Battalions

ADF STAFF

When the United Nations asked its member countries to intervene in the Korean War in 1950, more than 20 nations sent Soldiers to the fight. Two African nations volunteered to send troops: South Africa and Ethiopia.

For Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, the fight was a crucial one because of his nation’s history. When Italy invaded his country in 1935, Selassie had asked the League of Nations to come to Ethiopia’s aid but received no support. So, when the U.N. asked for help in Korea, he was eager to show his commitment to regional forces. His Soldiers, the Kagnew Battalions, were named after Selassie’s father’s warhorse. And they fought like no other armies.

The Kagnew Battalions had their own unique code of warfare conduct. They never left a Soldier behind, wounded or dead. No Ethiopian Soldiers were ever captured by the North Koreans or the Chinese. The North Koreans and the Chinese, who had never seen Black Soldiers before, came to fear them and their unfamiliar language, calling them “ghosts.” One scholar later pointed out that the Kagnews “had a special affinity for moving and fighting in the dark.”

Ethiopia’s Armed Forces at that time consisted of the Imperial Bodyguard Division, three army

divisions, a small air force with a few Swedish light bombers, and a provincial reserve army. The Imperial Bodyguard Division, known as the *Kebur Zabagna*, was the elite division, and the battalions destined for Korea were drawn mostly from its ranks.

Before going to Korea, troops trained for eight months under intense conditions in the mountains of Ethiopia, which had terrain similar to the Korean Peninsula.

The first battalion of Kagnews, 1,122 Soldiers, sailed from Djibouti and continued to train aboard the ship during the three-week trip. They arrived in Korea in May 1951 and were designated the EEFK, short for the Ethiopian Expeditionary Force-Korea.

The U.S. Army quickly realized that the Ethiopians needed no additional training and assigned them to the U.S. 7th Infantry Division.

Conditions were not always ideal. Many of the Ethiopian Soldiers had never seen snow and were not used to the harsh Korean winters. The Ethiopians could not speak English, and although they had military training, it was different from U.S. tactics. But on the front lines, their ferocity earned them the admiration of their fellow

Soldiers, who showed their respect by officially referring to them as the Kagnews, instead of the EEFK. In less than a year, they were heading their own operations. As the war proceeded, Ethiopia dispatched women to Korea to work as nurses.

Perhaps the most famous battles of the war were the two at Pork Chop Hill in 1953, fought while China and North Korea were trying to negotiate a cease-fire agreement with U.N. forces. At one point, as combat historian S.L.A. Marshall noted, “eight Ethiopians walked 800 yards across no-man’s land and up the slope of T-Bone Hill right into the enemy trenches” as enemy forces looked on. “When next we looked, the eight had become 10,” Marshall wrote. “The patrol was dragging back two Chinese prisoners, having snatched them from the embrace of the Communist battalion.”

In the course of the war, 3,158 Ethiopians served, with 121 killed and 536 wounded. The Kagnew Battalions fought in combat 238 times and were awarded many unit and individual citations for bravery.

When the fighting stopped, the Ethiopians had no Soldiers to collect in the prisoner exchange because no Kagnew Soldier had ever surrendered.



Ethiopian Infantryman badge

# CLUES

- 1 This land is known for its diversity, density and number of endemic plant species.
- 2 The property is one of the six floral kingdoms of the world.
- 3 It is 0.5% of Africa's land area but is home to nearly 20% of the continent's flora.
- 4 There are an estimated 9,000 plant species in the region, of which 1,736 are threatened and 3,087 are of conservation concern.





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