

**Business and Politics in the Muslim World**  
**West African News Monitoring**  
**Weekly Report 102**  
**10, January-16, January 2010**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Headlines</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Detail of the news</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Political news</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Economy Development</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Geo-Politics</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Editorials</b>	<b>26</b>

**Headlines**

**Political News**

- **Nigeria:** 1. Rule of law versus tribal politics in Yar’Adua’s absence.  
2. Nigeria as a terror ground: U.S. African commander "not aware"  
3. U.S.: Nigeria unduly punished for U.K. educated and radicalized terror suspect.
  
- **Senegal:** U.N. agrees to hand over Bissau coup suspect
- **Guinea-Conakry:** Guineans welcome deal on junta chief, poll plans
- **Guinea-Bissau :** U.N. agrees to hand over Bissau coup suspect
- **Benin:** New Permanent Representative of Benin Presents Credentials to UN Secretary-General

## Economy Development

- **Nigeria:**  
Financial distrust threatens weak peace and civility in Niger Delta.
- **Sierra Leone:** Ban on lucrative logging industry.
- **Ghana:** 1. Ghana-Equatorial Guinea: Petrol deals between a democracy and a kleptocracy?  
2. Skilled Ghanaians increasing look to countries outside of Africa for work  
International Office of Migration's migration profile finds.  
3. Ghana inflation falls in Dec, rate cuts seen

## Geo-Politics:

- **Senegal:**  
Haiti-Senegal: Abdoulaye Wade reaches out to Haitians

## Editorials:

- **Is Country Prepared for an Earthquake?**
- **The Sick Man of Africa**
- **Al Qaeda linked to rogue air network-US official**

# Summary

## Political news:

### **Nigeria: 1. Rule of law versus tribal politics in Yar'Adua's absence**

The Nigerian constitutional rule of law has been respected, against fears of tribal politics, as Judge appoints Nigeria's vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, to be in charge of the country, in the absence of the allegedly recuperating president, Umaru Yar'Adua.

### **2. Nigeria as a terror ground: U.S. African commander "not aware"**

Nigeria's emergence on the US State Sponsored Terrorism list has not gone without official criticisms and ultimatums from Africa's most populous state. Claims over a possibly "rushed" United States directive, in the wake of a terrorist attempt on a plane carrying 284 people, have been rife. What influenced this crucial decision that affects a country of 150 million people? Was the decision only influenced by the mad act of one British educated and radicalized Nigerian?

### **3. U.S.: Nigeria unduly punished for U.K. educated and radicalized terror suspect.**

While Nigerians have condemned the extremism of its 23-year-old citizen, Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab, who attempted to blow up a U.S plane on 25 Dec. 2009, in Detroit Metropolitan Airport in Michigan, its good citizens have questioned the scrutiny and negative perception the country has received from the United States.

- **Guinea-Bissau : U.N. agrees to hand over Bissau coup suspect**

BISSAU, Jan 8 (Reuters) - The United Nations has agreed to hand over to Guinea-Bissau authorities a former navy chief accused of leading a failed 2008 coup in the tiny West African state, according to a joint statement issued Friday.

- **Benin: New Permanent Representative of Benin Presents Credentials to UN Secretary-General**

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou, the new Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations, today presented his credentials to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

- **Guinea-Conakry: Guineans welcome deal on junta chief, poll plans**

CONAKRY, Jan 16 (Reuters) - Guineans have broadly welcomed a decision by their military rulers to keep wounded junta chief Captain Moussa Dadis Camara convalescing abroad, leaving his deputy and an opposition leader to restore civilian rule.

## **Economical Development:**

- **Nigeria: Financial distrust threatens weak peace and civility in Niger Delta.**

A dispute between the Niger Delta communities of Nigeria and government officials over who must manage the ten percent of oil revenues promised them by the Nigerian government in a peace process that brought an end to rebel activities in the oil-rich region, threatens to reignite civil unrest in the region.

- **Sierra Leone: Ban on lucrative logging industry.**

The Sierra Leone forestry guard has warned of impending environmental hazards following the indiscriminate deforestation practices in the country. This warning has forced the government to place a ban on all wood felling and export. "Illegal logging is having adverse effect on the country's environment and depleting the ozone layer and must be stopped with immediate effect. Any violations of the logging export ban could result in court fines and confiscation of property," a statement from the presidency read.

### **Ghana: 1. Ghana-Equatorial Guinea: Petrol deals between a democracy and a kleptocracy?**

President of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills, recently held bilateral talks with President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea. And according to the west African country's national newspaper, the Daily Graphic, President Mills "impressed on the central African country to share the best practices in oil and gas industry with Ghana". This is no doubt one of the worst decisions the Ghanaian President has made yet!

### **2. Skilled Ghanaians increasing look to countries outside of Africa for work**

#### **International Office of Migration's migration profile finds.**

A migration profile of Ghana released today by IOM finds that a combination of a growing and increasingly educated Ghanaian labour force, a lack of employment opportunities for young people and the decline of Nigeria as a major destination for

Ghanaians has led to increasing migration to countries outside of West Africa with worrying implications for key sectors.

### **3. Ghana inflation falls in Dec, rate cuts seen**

ACCRA, Jan 15 (Reuters) - Annual inflation in Ghana fell again in December and is set to ease further, the statistics office said on Friday, raising expectations of more rate cuts in one of West Africa's premier economies.

Inflation fell to 15.97 percent from 16.92 percent the month before, broadly in line with a target of around 15 percent issued by the government in November.

## **Geo-Politics:**

- **Senegal:**

### **Haiti-Senegal: Abdoulaye Wade reaches out to Haitians**

The government of Senegal has offered land and reparation settlements to Haitian victims who so wish to live in Senegal, following the devastating earthquake that left over 40 thousand people dead, and hundreds of thousands desolate.

## **Details of the News**

### **Political news:**

#### **Nigeria: 1. Rule of law versus tribal politics in Yar'Adua's absence**

The Nigerian constitutional rule of law has been respected, against fears of tribal politics, as Judge appoints Nigeria's vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, to be in charge of the country, in the absence of the allegedly recuperating president, Umaru Yar'Adua.

Nigerians were fearful that the powerful northern tribe would defy the rulings of the country's constitution in order to avoid a southerner from assuming the position of president in the case of the President's demise. Doctors say President Yar'Adua is suffering from acute pericarditis, an inflammation of the lining of the heart, in a backdrop of a long-standing kidney complaint.

However, those fears of tribal politics have been laid to rest, as the rule of law has, seemingly, prevailed. According to Justice Daniel Abutu's ruling, on behalf of the

Federal Court, Goodluck Jonathan is not the "acting president" but can act as president. He would need a formal transfer of power to become official head of state. This progress has been welcomed by many Nigerians including international observers. Despite the democratic progress, political analysts have said the issue is sensitive because of the ruling party's system of alternating power between north and south. While some democrats want to see Mr. Jonathan become official head of state, northern power-brokers may be uneasy at the notion of a southerner taking over officially before the next scheduled presidential election in 2011," he was quoted as saying.

Speaking about the ruling to local reporters, a prominent Nigerian politician, Chief Nduka Eya expressed worry over the situation in the country: "We claim to be following the footsteps of the United States where we inherited this constitution and democracy, but unfortunately, we do terrible things. When President Bill Clinton went for minor surgery, the nation was informed of everything that transpired. Though, nobody is happy, that Yar'Adua is ill, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't know his state of health. Why do we have the running mate in an election...what's the idea of having a vice (President)... so there will be no vacuum in the absence of the President.

"Conferring the status of the Acting President on Jonathan will not take anything away from Yar'Adua; unfortunately, there are hawks in the polity who are toying with the fate of Nigerians. We were further insulted when a frail voice told us on BBC that he would soon be back without addressing the issue of the Acting President. What Yar'Adua has succeeded in doing is that the rest of the 140 million Nigerians should wait until he comes back before anything happens. We should wait indefinitely until his doctors' discharge him. What a shame," he added

Nonetheless, Christopher Onwuekwe, the lawyer who brought the suit against the government and government ministers has said they were satisfied. This is the first of four cases to clarify who rules while President Umaru Yar'Adua is away in a Saudi Arabia hospital.

In the other three cases brought against the Nigerian government, rights lawyer and activist Femi Falana wants all decisions taken by the cabinet during the president's absence to be annulled. The Nigerian Bar Association is demanding that he hand over power formally to Mr. Jonathan. And a rights group wants Mr. Yar'Adua declared "missing".

However, Justice Minister Michael Aondoakka, while welcoming the ruling of the Federal Court Judge, added that there was now no justification for the other three cases, due before court on Thursday, Jan. 14.

The Nigerian president on January 12, gave his first interview since going to Saudi Arabia. BBC News quoted him as saying he was in constant contact with his deputy, and was recovering and hoped to be able to return to Nigeria to resume his duties as soon as possible.

## **2. Nigeria as a terror ground: U.S. African commander "not aware"**

Nigeria's emergence on the US State Sponsored Terrorism list has not gone without official criticisms and ultimatums from Africa's most populous state. Claims over a possibly "rushed" United States directive, in the wake of a terrorist attempt on a plane carrying 284 people, have been rife. What influenced this crucial decision that affects a country of 150 million people? Was the decision only influenced by the mad act of one British educated and radicalized Nigerian?

General William Ward, in charge of Africom, U.S.-Africa military mission and therefore expected to be much aware of security issues on the continent, is seemingly "not aware" of the reasons why Nigeria was put on the list.

Questioned to this effect by Afrik.com during a press conference given Wednesday in Paris, France, General Ward indicated that he is "aware that this just happened". However, the US-Africa security specialist categorically stated that he is "not prepared to render a thought on that", i.e., what is happening on the ground in Nigeria, a country he is familiar with.

Conversely, the top U.S. official talked extensively about the situation in many African countries, like Somalia and Guinea and the challenges they face, including extremism and narcotic drugs, respectively. Although the Sahel region was of particular interest, General Ward also expressed his views on the Horn of Africa, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo...

... and Nigeria?

Their presence in crisis areas has enabled Africom come to terms with some of the fundamental security issues facing those African nations who "invite" them to help find long-term solutions. A recent Africom operation sought to help curb Sierra Leone's problems with illegal fishing activities.

"The activities continue and they continue in various locations. Kidnappings occur in the Sahel. Nautical trafficking is occurring in the West Coast of Africa. We see evidence of this moving to the east coast of Africa as well. We see activities of extremists and terrorists occur in North Africa. We see, off the coast of the Horn (of Africa, nldr) the acts of piracy continue."

They are "centres of action or activity that we have to pay attention to. Somalia, with its vast areas (and) ungoverned spaces, provide areas that permit extremism to be facilitated," the General said. And rightly so, being on the ground, it would be logical to analyse, in a more pertinent manner, the challenges that face these territories and deal

with them accordingly. “Those areas are super-highways” where “terrorists, violent extremists and criminals act unchecked,” he continued.

Despite the US top official’s open description of what is happening on the ground in difficult areas of Africa and faced with the reality of al-Qaeda cells and their relationship with al-Qaeda, for which he "takes them at their word", he was adamant on the whole subject of Nigeria or the possible threat it poses. "It is not a matter what I think, at this point in time, it is decisions that are made (...) policy decisions. I do not get involved in the policy business," he admits. Politics, if the General’s statement is scrutinized, overrides ground observation in what concerns Nigeria. "The characterizations on the ground remain policy issues," he says.

Nigeria, a success?

“We remain a command that works with partners on activities they ask us to do. We go where we are invited to go,” the General assures. And Nigeria is among a few strategic African countries that have invited Africom to work closely with its forces. In fact, some of the characterizations on the ground in Nigeria were mentioned in General William Ward’s Africom address to the American Senate, last March.

- That “Military Information Support Teams, in conjunction with DOS public diplomacy, have demonstrated success in several countries including Nigeria.

- That “In July 2008, exercise AFRICA ENDEAVOR 08 in Nigeria improved communications and information systems interoperability between U.S. and African partner nation militaries.

- That, “U.S. Africa Command has partnered with several countries in West Africa to develop plans to counter regional threats. In Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Nigeria, the Trans-Sahara Counter-terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and its military element, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM-TRANS-SAHARA (OEF-TS), are the U.S. lead programs in countering violent extremism in the Sahel.”

Although General Ward explains that he is not “an African policeman”, Africom’s role in assessing, training and helping local military units to fight extremism, and the underlying principle that, as a top security official for the region, he should be conversant with security issues on the ground and therefore be able to talk openly about Nigeria, — as he did in the case of countries that have invited Africom, — should not be written off lightly.

Considering the consequences the U.S. directive holds for "150 million people because of the behaviour of one person," — to quote Nigeria’s Information Minister, Dora Akunyili, — who spent his formative years abroad, many believe the decision was rushed.

The Nigerian government has, in the meantime, issued the Obama administration an ultimatum to remove its name from the terror list.

### **3. U.S.: Nigeria unduly punished for U.K. educated and radicalized terror suspect.**

While Nigerians have condemned the extremism of its 23-year-old citizen, Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab, who attempted to blow up a U.S plane on 25 Dec. 2009, in Detroit Metropolitan Airport in Michigan, its good citizens have questioned the scrutiny and negative perception the country has received from the United States.

Abdulmutalab attended high school in a British school in Togo. His formative years were spent at the University College London, where he was president of the University's Islamic society. He later went on to study International business in Dubai, and finally to Yemen for Islamic studies.

According to this chronicle reported by CNN, the Nigerian society has not played any role in shaping this young man's life or views. But instead Nigeria, and not Britain where Abdulmutallab was educated and where he headed an Islamic society, has been put on the list of nations for special checks.

According to Nigeria's Information Minister, Dora Akunyili, the new rule to single out Nigerians to face stiffer rules including body searches and luggage checks discriminated against 150 million Nigerians, especially as the said suspect spent his high school and college years in British schools before moving to the Middle East.

"Abdulmutallab's behavior is not reflective of Nigeria and should therefore not be used as a yardstick to judge all Nigerians. He was not influenced in Nigeria, he was not recruited or trained in Nigeria, he was not supported whatsoever in Nigeria. It is unfair to discriminate against 150 million people because of the behavior of one person," Ms.Akunyii said.

So why Nigeria?

The new extra security measures apply to flights from Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen. But the important question here is why is Nigeria on this list, and Britain isn't?

Reiterating the reported facts, the terror suspect attended a British international high school in Togo where his former classmates and teachers have said he supported extremist view points, and have confirmed his radical devotion to the Islamic faith. There, he earned the nickname- Alfa (A local lingo for Muslim cleric).

Between 2004 and 2005, he showed up in Yemen to study Islam. In September 2005, he was admitted into University College London where he studied mechanical engineering, and eventually became president of the school's Islamic society.

In August 2008, he attended a two week conference in the United States; it isn't clear what kind of conference it was. In January 2009, he undertook a master degree program in international business at the Wollongong University in Dubai. In August 2009, he returned to Yemen for Islamic studies.

### Breaking family ties

In November, the suspect's father contacted various security agencies and the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria's capital Abuja, about a text message he had received from his son that he was leaving school in Dubai "for the course of Islam in Yemen. Abdulmutallab sent his family a text message saying he had gone to Yemen to start a new life, and that it would be difficult for anyone to reach him because he had thrown his SIM card away, according to a source.

The heroic father forwarded this information about his son to the National Counter-Terrorism Center, and his son was added to a general watch list, a data base of suspected terrorists. But the U.S. officials said "the info on him was not deemed specific enough to pull his visa or put him on a no-fly list." An oversight they almost came to regret.

From these reports, it can be argued that Abdulmutallab was radicalized at the University College London where he held a debate on the war on terror as president of the Islamic society, the Wollongong University in Dubai, and an Islamic school in Yemen. The explosive device he used on the plane "was acquired in Yemen along with instructions as to when it should be used," a federal security bulletin obtained by CNN said.

The suspect, though a Nigerian was hardly ever in Nigeria as we have seen in the chronicles gathered by CNN. The Nigerian society obviously played the slightest role in educating, and shaping the ideals of the young and extreme Abdulmutallab. Shouldn't Britain and Yemen take more credit for shaping Abdulmutallab's views, perception and outcome?

"While steps are being taken to verify the identity of the alleged suspect and his motives, our security agencies will cooperate fully with the American authorities in the on-going investigations. We state very clearly that as a nation, we abhor all forms of terrorism," Ms. Akunyili, was quoted as saying.

### State sponsored terrorism?

Nonetheless, after police in Britain worked closely with U.S. investigators to uncover the full background to the incident they named Nigeria as one of the state sponsors of terror; a laughable conclusion according to many Nigerians.

To cushion the negative stigmatization of Nigeria that was imminent, a Facebook group was started to condemn Abdulmutallab. "We Condemn Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's Action: Nigerians are Not Terrorists," the Facebook group reads.

"We Nigerians cannot fold our arms and watch while the acts of just one over-bloated sun (sic) of a big-gun smears the already sodden image of our great Nation and puts the travel comfort of over 150 million in jeopardy. With the fuming retorts on the group page, any right-thinking non-Nigerian will see the real emotions and hatred of this dastardly act by well-meaning good people of a great nation," Henry Omoregie, the creator of the group told AFP reporters in an email.

Extremism must be combated in our schools, societies and religious gatherings, and security measures must be improved in every airport, irrespective of location or destination. However, racial, and national profiling must be avoided in line with civil and human rights. All nations and all people must and should undergo equal security measures and protection; if Nigerians should undergo intense airport scrutiny so should Britons.

- **Guinea-Bissau : U.N. agrees to hand over Bissau coup suspect**

BISSAU, Jan 8 (Reuters) - The United Nations has agreed to hand over to Guinea-Bissau authorities a former navy chief accused of leading a failed 2008 coup in the tiny West African state, according to a joint statement issued Friday.

"The United Nations has committed on this day, January 8, to handing over Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto to the government of (Prime Minister Carlos) Gomes Junior," the statement released after a meeting between U.N. and government officials said.

Na Tchuto took refuge in the U.N. offices in the capital in December after returning from exile in nearby Gambia on a canoe and disguised as a fisherman.

His return prompted a tightening of security, including increased road checks, in a fragile state seen as a hub of the narcotics trade into Europe.

Na Tchuto, who is suspected of being involved in drugs trafficking and who retains allies in the military, is wanted for masterminding a failed coup attempt in August 2008 against former President Joao Bernardo Vieira.

Vieira was subsequently killed by renegade soldiers in March 2009 and was replaced by an elected government that has made tentative steps towards stabilising the country.

The country of 1.5 million is one of the world's poorest, and its institutions have been weakened by the influence of Latin American drug traffickers, who have used the nation as a transit point for cocaine shipments to Europe often with the complicity of the armed forces. (Reporting by Alberto Dabo; Writing by [Richard Valdmanis](#); Editing by Louise Ireland)

- **Benin: New Permanent Representative of Benin Presents Credentials to UN Secretary-General**

Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou, the new Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations, today presented his credentials to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Until his new appointment, Mr. Zinsou was Chargé d'Affaires had been an interim at his country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York from 23 October 2008 to 28 October 2009, during which time he also served as Minister Counsellor in charge of Political and Legal Affairs, from May 2003.

Mr. Zinsou served a first stint as Assistant to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation from 2002 to 2003, having previously held the same post from 1988 to 1990. He was Deputy Director of the Ministry's Europe Department between 1997 and 2002.

From 1990 to 1997, Mr. Zinsou was First Counsellor at Benin's Embassy in Germany, covering also Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

He was Head of the Foreign Ministry's Division responsible for Germany and the Nordic countries from 1987 to 1988, and the Division in charge of Universal Political Organizations and International Non-governmental Organizations between 1983 and 1985.

Mr. Zinsou holds a master's degree in international relations, as well as diplomas from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the University of Vienna.

Born in Quidah, Benin, in 1955, he is married and has four children.

Source: UNITED NATIONS - Protocol and Liaison Service

- **Guinea-Conakry: Guineans welcome deal on junta chief, poll plans**

CONAKRY, Jan 16 (Reuters) - Guineans have broadly welcomed a decision by their military rulers to keep wounded junta chief Captain Moussa Dadis Camara convalescing abroad, leaving his deputy and an opposition leader to restore civilian rule.

The announcement on Friday, and the civilian opposition's agreement after days of wrangling on two candidates for the prime minister's job, have eased concerns at home and abroad over further violence in the world's top bauxite exporter.

"This is a very important development which is making things look up for the country," said Mamadou Bah Baddiko, head of the UFD opposition group.

"The priorities now need to be getting a grip of the state, winning the confidence of the population and ... putting the electoral process back on track," he added.

Camara's second-in-command Sekouba Konate became interim leader when Camara was shot on Dec. 3 in a botched assassination attempt by his former aide-de-camp.

Credited with restoring some order to the military, he must now decide whether Jean Marie Dore or Rabiadou Serah Diallo, is given the job of overseeing a transition to elections within six months, ending the military rule that began with a coup in 2008.

Under the agreement signed on Friday, junta members, as well as civilians involved in the transitional administration, are barred from taking part in the elections.

#### ERRATIC RULE

Having enjoyed a tide of support immediately after his coup, Camara's increasingly erratic rule and apparent desire to stand in elections fuelled opposition. He is accused of crimes against humanity for a security operation against his opponents that left over 150 people dead in September.

"This agreement gives us hope," said Naby Diallo, a trader in Guinea's capital, Conakry. "We were utterly disgusted and exhausted by the manoeuvres of these soldiers who didn't want to leave power.

"I'm hoping to be able to get my business back up and running very soon if this transition succeeds."

Some international mining firms have cut back on the number of expatriate workers in Guinea while a government document seen by Reuters last month showed that the instability had slashed the output of aluminium ore bauxite by one fifth in 2009.

The two candidates for the prime minister's job were due to travel on Saturday to Burkina Faso, whose President Blaise Compaore has acted as mediator in the Guinea crisis.

Camara left Morocco this week, hoping to return to Guinea after more than a month in hospital. However, he was taken only as far as Burkina Faso as pressure mounted on mediators to prevent a return home that many feared could spark violence.

Before the assassination attempt, analysts say Camara had been seeking to shore up his position by training a militia force dominated by people from his eastern homelands.

Although seemingly a minority, some Guineans, especially those from this region, are still keen to see Camara return.

"This deal amounts to treason. Dadis (Camara) is the victim, he has been swept aside," complained Pepe Kolie. (Writing by David Lewis; Editing by Charles Dick)

## **Economical Development:**

- **Nigeria:** Financial distrust threatens weak peace and civility in Niger Delta.

A dispute between the Niger Delta communities of Nigeria and government officials over who must manage the ten percent of oil revenues promised them by the Nigerian government in a peace process that brought an end to rebel activities in the oil-rich region, threatens to reignite civil unrest in the region.

According to the spokesperson of the Host Communities of Nigeria (HOSTCON), Dr. Mike Emuh, "the attempt in some quarters of the government and local communities to somehow manipulate the management of the expected oil funds could spark off another round of crisis in the oil producing areas of the Niger-Delta," whilst insisting that its members are capable of successfully managing the huge funds. But some quarters in the Niger Delta claim the association of oil and gas producing communities is incapable of managing the funds.

A civic right

HOSTCOM's arguments to take control of the promised Oil Equity Funds is however in line with the initiatives put forward at the 5th Edition of Africities, on Dec.16, 2009 in Marrakech, Morocco- a project which advocated for a population-focused involvement

that will empower those who have been deprived of their civic right to partake in issues that concern their own welfare, and help build social structures through a decentralization process geared towards the achievement of set Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

While some analysts have argued that the communities should be trusted with the money, to take charge of the fate of their immediate communities, the Delta State Governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, remains unsure of the decision to allow the HOSTCON body to control such enormous funds.

The governor has argued that the management of the oil funds by an independent, foreign financial institution may be more realistic and beneficial to the host communities. He has suggested that the 10 per cent oil revenue, the structure of the communities as well as the management of the Fund should be included in the PIB (Petroleum Industry Bill).

Interest or Embezzlement?

"These managers, we expect, would put the money to good use so it can yield interest. It is the interest from the investment of this money that can now be given to the communities," Dr. Uduaghan is quoted as saying.

"On the management of the 10 per cent equity, we are saying do not give it directly to the state or local government, but create a trust fund and get international fund managers to manage it because of its size," the governor added.

HOSTCON however suspects the move of having another institution come between the host communities and the 10 per cent Oil Equity Fund is a ploy by certain politicians to embezzle a substantial bulk of the money. According to a statement by HOSTCOM, the Governor Uduaghan's suggestions was a threat to national development and a call for more trouble in the Niger-Delta region.

While HOSTCOM and the Delta state governor debate whether or not the funds should be supervised by international fund managers, some observers insist either institutions would be better off than state or local government management.

5 billion dollars

As the struggle for custody of the promised oil funds continue, the Niger Delta Ministry has promised to expedite action on the establishment of nine industries and 12 modular refineries at the cost of the five billion U.S. dollars in the oil-rich region.

To enhance its credibility, HOSTCON spokesman, has reiterated the groups commitment to develop the region. The group has called on the Federal Government to hasten the approval of a proposed Pipeline Surveillance Task Force in order to checkmate oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism as well as to guaranty the employment of youths in the region.

The issue of corruption and mistrust is evident in the allocation of the oil funds. neither the community association nor the local and state governments trust each other to utilize the funds for the purposes it is intended. Thus, experts have backed the Delta state governor's argument that a foreign financial institution or the inclusion of the fund in a Petroleum Industry Bill, would be better for the people of the Niger Delta.

- **Sierra Leone: Ban on lucrative logging industry.**

The Sierra Leone forestry guard has warned of impending environmental hazards following the indiscriminate deforestation practices in the country. This warning has forced the government to place a ban on all wood felling and export. "Illegal logging is having adverse effect on the country's environment and depleting the ozone layer and must be stopped with immediate effect. Any violations of the logging export ban could result in court fines and confiscation of property," a statement from the presidency read.

According to reports, the ban has not only come as a result of environmental fears, but also as a need to check the largely unmonitored industry.

Trade and customs officials say logs of wood worth tens of millions of dollars were smuggled out of the country to the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

The ban according to some officials would have some effect on the economy, given the logging industry is a multimillion dollar industry.

Executive director of the Sierra Leone environmental group, Emmanuel Touray, said there are only 10 registered logging companies in the country, and the majority of the logging companies operate illegally. Nonetheless, previous actions taken against illegal loggers has, according to forestry officials, ended in meager fines, usually less than 500 dollars, after a protracted court case.

But the latest government initiative [the ban] is said to be the most effective punishment thus far. Conversely, most forest guard officials expect the government to draft new legislation to protect Sierra Leone's forest and environment.

According to environmental studies, deforestation presents multiple societal and environmental problems. Some of these consequences include: loss of biodiversity; the destruction of forest-based societies; and climatic disruption. Deforestation is causing a loss of biological diversity on an unprecedented scale.

Across Africa, environmental researchers have discovered that the removal of trees without sufficient reforestation has resulted in damage to habitat, biodiversity loss and aridity. The practice has had adverse impacts on the capture and storage of the atmospheric carbon dioxide. According to the experts, deforested regions typically incur significant adverse soil erosion and frequently degrade into wasteland.

Africa-Asia cooperation goes medical: Sierra Leone goes online with India  
Ethiopia, Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana are also connected with India.

The ongoing process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and exchange, is taking a new twist in Sierra Leone as doctors will now be able to send X-rays and other data for analysis in better-equipped hospitals in India.

This medical network is powered by a satellite link-up between Sierra Leone and India. The system, known as telemedicine, has been launched by Sierra Leone President Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma.

Speaking at the telemedicine launch at Connaught Hospital in the capital, Freetown, the president expressed joy at the possible benefits the project might bring, some of which include virtual classes for medical staff and online medical consultations.

"We look forward to realizing the benefits that this connection will create in the medical sector," said President koroma.

The development is said to be a welcomed development in the country as the health sector was severely broken during the 11 years of civil war that witnessed the exodus of doctors from the country, for safety.

"When this extends to the districts and other provinces, we'll be able to be in contact with our own doctors and healthcare workers," said Dr Thaim Boya Kamara, Sierra Leone's national hospital care manager.

The project is expected to connect Freetown to India, and Sierra Leonean communities; as doctors will now be able to seek second opinions from India. The project which is made possible through satellite and fibre-optic link-ups has been described as bridging the digital divide between India and Africa.

Driven by a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, political, and biological factors circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture the age of enlightenment has made cooperation easy and handy.

On February 2009, India Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee in Delhi launched a hi-tech project to connect 11 African countries with India, with an aim to provide medical education and better health care in Africa. The package also includes the opportunity for nurses to get training and virtual classrooms for about 10,000 African students annually get to earn specialized degrees from universities.

Ethiopia, Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana are also connected with India. These initiative, according to observers highlights the new era of Africa's engagement with Asia, especially China and India.

In April, African leaders held a two-day summit in India attended by 14 African leaders including Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi.

"No one understands better than India and Africa the imperative need for global institutions to reflect current realities and to build a more equitable global economy and polity," Mr Singh was quoted as saying.

President Mbeki reportedly told the summit that India and Africa had many challenges in common. "Our enemy is common. We both have poverty and underdevelopment," he was quoted as saying.

## **Ghana: 1. Ghana-Equatorial Guinea: Petrol deals between a democracy and a kleptocracy?**

President of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills, recently held bilateral talks with President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea. And according to the west African country's national newspaper, the Daily Graphic, President Mills "impressed on the central African country to share the best practices in oil and gas industry with Ghana". This is no doubt one of the worst decisions the Ghanaian President has made yet!

"President Mills indicated that his government would be delighted to learn from Equatorial Guinea the various safeguards that Ghana should put in place to prevent misappropriation of oil revenue by people in position of trust and responsibility, as well as the various interest groups associated with the industry", the paper, dated Wednesday December 9, quoted Mr. Koku Anyidoho, director of communications at the Ghanaian presidency, as saying. This statement does not only reveal a frightfully inaccurate analysis of Obiang's government but also a direction that will, much sooner than later, spell doom to the laudable but young and fragile Ghanaian democracy.

The fact that President Mills is in Equatorial Guinea not only attending a questionable Presidential inauguration but also possibly signing deals with the leader of the extremely oil rich but poverty ridden country, behind closed doors, should induce panic waves and send tempers into overdrive, especially within the free Ghanaian press. Out of 175 countries, Ghana is in 27th position, and rated above some highly respected Western European countries (France for example), on the new international press freedom index. Needless to say, Equatorial Guinea is in 158th position and not far from Somalia, which takes a dismal 164th position.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema has been in absolute control of Equatorial Guinea since 1979. His 2009 election "landslide" victory, as referred to by the Daily Graphic, was coldly calculated to silence the opposition, not only politically but economically as well. The local media sang "the president's praises" whilst taking care to pay "little attention to the opposition's activities" during the whole presidential, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) indicated on November 30. In fact, in a speech ahead of what RSF termed

as “closely-controlled elections”, Obiang announced that he expected no less than “97 per cent of the total votes”. Teodoro Obiang Nguema has never scored anything below 95 per cent of the votes in his country. An extraordinary feat, even by Afghanistan standards!

Equatoguineans should, normally, be among the most economically successful populations in the world given that their country sits in an enviable 29th position on the international income per capita index; a very high rank even by international standards. “In 2009, GDP per capita was estimated by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) at a staggering \$39,916 dollars in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, which is among the highest in the world and on par with Spain and Italy,” Arvind Ganesan, a specialist on corporate social responsibility at Human Rights Watch, wrote in an incriminating report. The report reveals that institutional corruption is the bane of the country, and it continues to rob Equatorial Guinea of an essential economic development.

Transparency International (TI) does not hide the fact that petrol money is at the heart of Equatorial Guinea being the 12th most corrupt country in the world! An investigation carried out by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to ascertain the existence of shady deals, in 2004, revealed that a total of 700 million dollars from petroleum companies including ExxonMobil Corp, Amerada Hess Corp, ChevronTexaco, Devon Energy Corp and Marathon Oil Corp had been cashed by Obiang after his U.S. bank (Riggs Bank) blurred transfer details.

“Given Equatorial Guinea’s enormous oil wealth and its relatively small population of approximately 527,000 people, the country should be a model of development. In 1991 Equatorial Guinea had some of the worst socioeconomic indicators in the world, but given the dramatic growth in GDP it would be reasonable to expect a commensurate improvement in social indicators. Sadly, that is not the case. According to the United Nations Development Programme, as of 2009 Equatorial Guinea had the third-largest gap between its per capita GDP and its Human Development Index (HDI) score, ahead of only Botswana and South Africa,” says Arvind.

Having made so much money that could not possibly be spent by several superfluously spendthrift family generations, Obiang continues to bleed his country’s economy dry. Described as a kleptocratic president by TI, the late Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now, Democratic Republic of Congo) harboured similar cash-raking instincts; instincts that pushed him to amass wealth to the detriment of his country’s economic welfare, even when that wealth served no purpose other than fuelling the growth of Swiss Banks and thereby making the Swiss richer! A report released in 2005 indicated that for each dollar given to Africa in aid, 80 cents were stolen by corrupt leaders and transferred back into Western bank accounts! In the same year, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said that an estimated “\$140 billion” has been “stolen” by “corrupt African leaders” from their people since independence. In 2004 about \$94 billion was deposited into Swiss accounts, most originating from African politicians, and in 2005 the amount increased to \$150 billion.

African leaders like Obiang, by virtue of their positions and national resources, continue to enrich the West while a majority of Africans either make do with less than a dollar a day or go on empty stomachs. Teodoro Obiang Nguema, the Late President Omar Bongo of Gabon, and Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso were, this year, implicated in a legal case that sought to incriminate them for their ill gotten wealth; a case brought against them by the French chapter of Transparency International. They were accused of stashing away millions of dollars in massive properties across France. Unfortunately, the case fell through due to circumstances that surpass the understanding of many analysts.

The irony of the Ghanaian government communiqué is all so glaring as we come to terms with the situation in Equatorial Guinea. It leaves a lot to worry about. Indeed, if this partnership is to “prevent misappropriation of oil revenue by people in position of trust and responsibility, as well as the various interest groups associated with the industry,” the Ghanaian government should look elsewhere. The laudable and strong Ghanaian press is duty-bound to question the Ghana-Equatorial Guinea petrol relationship, especially one that takes place behind closed doors!

Ghana: Skilled Ghanaians increasing look to countries outside of Africa for work International Office of Migration’s migration profile finds.

A migration profile of Ghana released today by IOM finds that a combination of a growing and increasingly educated Ghanaian labour force, a lack of employment opportunities for young people and the decline of Nigeria as a major destination for Ghanaians has led to increasing migration to countries outside of West Africa with worrying implications for key sectors.

The profile, the latest in a series to be released on 10 West African countries to help national governments devise and develop effective migration policy, found that although 71 per cent of Ghanaian migrants stay in West Africa, a growing number of Ghanaians are now to be found outside the region. Ghanaian migrants can be found in 33 countries worldwide.

The United States and the United Kingdom are the two most important destination countries for Ghanaians outside of West Africa, with 7.3 per cent and 5.9 per cent of Ghanaian migrants in these two countries respectively.

The report found that skilled migration, especially to developed countries in the north, has been accelerating since 1990. Ghana has the highest emigration rates for highly skilled people in West Africa (46 per cent), exacerbating labour shortages in critical sectors such as health and education.

The medical profession is particularly affected. It is estimated that more than 56 per cent of doctors and 24 per cent of nurses trained in Ghana are now working abroad. In education, more than 60 per cent of faculty positions at polytechnics and 40 per cent at public universities are vacant.

A lack of career development and poor working conditions are the main drivers of skilled emigration and although the government has introduced measures to improve pay for health professionals, income differentials with western countries are too large to compete. One study in 2004 found that wage differentials between nurses in Ghana and counterparts in Canada and Australia were 14 times as much. For doctors, they were 25 times as much.

The IOM profile also found that with more young Ghanaians entering the labour market than before and with an annual increase of the labour force projected at 2.9 per cent over the next 15 years, the pressure to migrate may increase unless employment opportunities for the young improve.

With an increasingly educated population, skilled emigration will remain a key policy concern for Ghana.

A positive impact of growing emigration is the dramatic increase in official remittance flows to Ghana. The Bank of Ghana estimates that remittances increased from US\$476 million in 1999 to US\$ 1.9 billion in 2008. However, the economic crisis has taken its toll with the Bank reporting a 7.3 per cent decrease in remittances in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008.

Nevertheless, the report recommends the need to create and maintain links with a diaspora estimated to range from anywhere between 1.5 million to 3 million Ghanaians in order to tap into their potential and to benefit from skills transfer, investment opportunities and remittances.

Other migration trends identified by the IOM profile, which is funded by the European Union, the Belgian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Federal Office for Migration, includes the growing incidence of return or circular migration. Of the more than 1.1 million Ghanaians who left the country between 2000-2007, only 153,000 did not return either temporarily or permanently.

And while emigration is increasing faster than immigration, Ghana nevertheless continues to be an important country of destination. Migrants from predominantly ECOWAS countries are attracted by its relative peace, security and political stability.

Source: International Office of Migration (IOM)

## **2. Skilled Ghanaians increasing look to countries outside of Africa for work**

### **International Office of Migration's migration profile finds.**

A migration profile of Ghana released today by IOM finds that a combination of a growing and increasingly educated Ghanaian labour force, a lack of employment opportunities for young people and the decline of Nigeria as a major destination for

Ghanaians has led to increasing migration to countries outside of West Africa with worrying implications for key sectors.

The profile, the latest in a series to be released on 10 West African countries to help national governments devise and develop effective migration policy, found that although 71 per cent of Ghanaian migrants stay in West Africa, a growing number of Ghanaians are now to be found outside the region. Ghanaian migrants can be found in 33 countries worldwide.

The United States and the United Kingdom are the two most important destination countries for Ghanaians outside of West Africa, with 7.3 per cent and 5.9 per cent of Ghanaian migrants in these two countries respectively.

The report found that skilled migration, especially to developed countries in the north, has been accelerating since 1990. Ghana has the highest emigration rates for highly skilled people in West Africa (46 per cent), exacerbating labour shortages in critical sectors such as health and education.

The medical profession is particularly affected. It is estimated that more than 56 per cent of doctors and 24 per cent of nurses trained in Ghana are now working abroad. In education, more than 60 per cent of faculty positions at polytechnics and 40 per cent at public universities are vacant.

A lack of career development and poor working conditions are the main drivers of skilled emigration and although the government has introduced measures to improve pay for health professionals, income differentials with western countries are too large to compete. One study in 2004 found that wage differentials between nurses in Ghana and counterparts in Canada and Australia were 14 times as much. For doctors, they were 25 times as much.

The IOM profile also found that with more young Ghanaians entering the labour market than before and with an annual increase of the labour force projected at 2.9 per cent over the next 15 years, the pressure to migrate may increase unless employment opportunities for the young improve.

With an increasingly educated population, skilled emigration will be remaining a key policy concern for Ghana.

A positive impact of growing emigration is the dramatic increase in official remittance flows to Ghana. The Bank of Ghana estimates that remittances increased from US\$476 million in 1999 to US\$ 1.9 billion in 2008. However, the economic crisis has taken its toll with the Bank reporting a 7.3 per cent decrease in remittances in the first quarter of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008.

Nevertheless, the report recommends the need to create and maintain links with a diaspora estimated to range from anywhere between 1.5 million to 3 million Ghanaians in

order to tap into their potential and to benefit from skills transfer, investment opportunities and remittances.

Other migration trends identified by the IOM profile, which is funded by the European Union, the Belgian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Federal Office for Migration, includes the growing incidence of return or circular migration. Of the more than 1.1 million Ghanaians who left the country between 2000-2007, only 153,000 did not return either temporarily or permanently.

And while emigration is increasing faster than immigration, Ghana nevertheless continues to be an important country of destination. Migrants from predominantly ECOWAS countries are attracted by its relative peace, security and political stability.

*Source: International Office of Migration (IOM)*

### **3. Ghana inflation falls in Dec, rate cuts seen**

ACCRA, Jan 15 (Reuters) - Annual inflation in Ghana fell again in December and is set to ease further, the statistics office said on Friday, raising expectations of more rate cuts in one of West Africa's premier economies.

Inflation fell to 15.97 percent from 16.92 percent the month before, broadly in line with a target of around 15 percent issued by the government in November.

"The rate of inflation for December 2009 is 15,97 percent, the lowest in 2009," government statistician Grace Bediako told a news conference, adding that most price pressure was coming from non-food items.

Speaking after the news conference, she told Reuters the downward trend was sustainable "in the coming months".

"What we've observed also from the previous years is when we enter a new year with a particular trend, we tend to follow it for some time... Barring any other situations that are contrary to what we have been experiencing, we expect it will continue."

Ghana, which is looking to reap the first benefits of oil production in late-2010, has been under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to bring inflation down from rates of around 20 percent seen in 2009.

President **John Atta Mills'** government has been helped in its efforts to tackle inflation by the gradual appreciation of the cedi against the dollar, cutting import prices.

### **OIL PRICE RISK**

Analysts now expect further cuts to the Ghanaian prime interest rate through 2010 after the central bank in November announced the first lowering in nearly three years, with a 50-basis-point cut to 18.0 percent.

"Certainly we can expect further interest rate cuts now over the course of 2010 - at least 100 to 150 basis points in the first half," said economist Markus Schneider at UBA.

"Inflation seems to be subsiding but the price of oil remains the main risk," he added.

Oil traded at around \$79 per barrel in London on Friday, with the speed of global recovery a key determinant of future world demand and prices.

Standard Chartered Bank maintained its forecast for an aggressive series of cuts totaling 400 basis points.

"Look for the authorities to front-load this easing, with a substantial cut now expected at the next MPC meeting," Africa research head Razia Kahn said of the next meeting of the central bank's rate-setting committee, a date for which has yet to be confirmed.

Ghana, the world's number two cocoa producer and one of only a few sub-Saharan African countries with a Eurobond, expects by the end of this year to be benefiting from oil revenues.

Its Jubilee field is estimated to hold as much as 1,8-billion barrels of oil. First production from the field is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2010 and output could ramp up to 150 000 barrels per day within months of that.

The relatively high level of interest rates has for months discouraged activity on the Ghanaian bourse, with investors instead preferring the attractive yields on government bonds.

## **Geo-Politics:**

- **Senegal:**

- Haiti-Senegal: Abdoulaye Wade reaches out to Haitians**

The government of Senegal has offered land and reparation settlements to Haitian victims who so wish to live in Senegal, following the devastating earthquake that left over 40 thousand people dead, and hundreds of thousands desolate.

"Senegal is ready to offer them [Haitians] parcels of land - even an entire. If it's just a few individuals, then we will likely offer them housing or small pieces of land. If they

come en masse we are ready to give them a region," Mr. Mamadou Bemba Ndiaye, Spokesperson to Senegal president, Abdoulaye Wade, was quoted as saying.

President Wade is offering voluntary repatriation to any Haitian that wants to return to Africa. According to the government spokesperson, a fertile portion of land would be given to the Haitians rather than parched desert lands, the Associated Press news agency reported.

The gesture by the Senegalese president stems from his brotherly perception of the Haitian people. According to the president, Haitians were sons and daughters of Africa since Haiti was founded by slaves, including some thought to be from Senegal.

Senegal is regarded by experts as one of Africa's model democracies; with an established multi-party system and a tradition of civilian rule. The country, despite widespread poverty and unemployment, is one of West Africa's more stable economies.

Slaves, ivory and gold were exported from the coast during the 17th and 18th centuries. Senegal's economy is now based mainly on agriculture.

The country's extension of support to the people of Haiti including the offering of fertile land has been viewed by many Africans as heroic and awe-inspiring.

Experts say sloppy construction contributed to the level of destruction in Haiti following Tuesday's earthquake.

According to London-based architect John McAslan, who has been working on a project linked to the Clinton Global Initiative in Haiti, most buildings are made of masonry - bricks or construction blocks - which tend to perform badly in an earthquake.

Head of the Appropriate Infrastructure Development Group, a US-based non-profit group that has been working in Haiti since 2006, also confirmed that there are significant problems with the quality of building materials used.

A UN official has said aid workers are dealing with a disaster "like no other" in UN memory because the country had been "decapitated". Speaking in Port-au-Prince, UN chief, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon described the situation in Haiti as one of the worst humanitarian crises in decades.

## **Editorials:**

### **• Is Country Prepared for an Earthquake? (Ghana)**

The devastating earthquake that struck Haiti recently should certainly be a source of concern for Ghana, a country known to have its own history of the natural disasters. The famous McCarthy Hill in Accra, where people continue to build all manner of structures is for instance known to be a veritable earthquake prone area.

Ghana's history says that an earthquake occurred in Axim in 1636 and the whole of East Nzema was badly shaken. It caused a widespread collapse of buildings in that area. A gold mine in Aboasi, northeast of Axim was reported to have collapsed, burying many of the miners.

Also, the 1939 earthquake in Ghana which registered 6.5 on the richter scale took the lives of 17 people and properties worth one million British Pounds were destroyed.

Additionally, the country has experienced smaller ones - earth tremors, the most recent being in 2006.

There is threat of an imminent earthquake rocking the Southern part of Ghana, especially along the coast. But the capacity of Ghana to contain even an earthquake of a lesser magnitude than that which occurred in Haiti is in doubt.

According to Mr. Joseph Ankrah, Schedule Officer for Geological Disasters, National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), an earthquake of a 6.5 magnitude will cause greater havoc in Ghana because "Ghana is not prepared for it."

True, it is not sure whether Ghana has the science and technology needed to monitor and forewarn people about an impending earthquake and once natural disasters do not normally announce their arrival, one can only hope that Ghana never experiences an earthquake again.

Pictures on CNN and other international television networks showed that not even the presidential palace, which could be stronger than other buildings in the largely poor country, was spared by the quake as parts of it caved in.

The worrying situation for Ghana is the strength of the thousands of buildings that are springing up in every part of the country. Questions certainly need to be asked as to whether our architects, planners and building engineers are doing right by their mandate by keeping in mind the possibility of an earthquake as they build where they build.

In recent times, buildings in Accra and elsewhere have been collapsing without any cause but for the fact that they were simply not built right or in the right place.

Without sounding a doomsayer, and perhaps hitting the nail on the head, one can only imagine what the impact of an earthquake, not even of the magnitude of what happened in Haiti, will be in Ghana.

Whilst we at Public Agenda pray that Ghana never lives to experience another earthquake, we implore government and the appropriate agencies to do all in their power to prepare the nation for the natural disaster which is not respecter of persons or is it nations.

## • The Sick Man of Africa (Nigeria)

While a great deal of attention has been focused on Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab—the al-Qaeda-linked Nigerian who tried blow up Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day as it was en route from Amsterdam to Detroit—it is the terrorist’s home country which policy makers and analysts in Washington and other capitals should really be worried about. Since late November, when President Umaru Yar’Adua was rushed to the intensive-care unit of a Riyadh hospital, the West African country has seen its governmental institutions grind to a screeching halt. The chief of state’s death in 2010 or even a further deterioration in his health could well lead to major instability in Nigeria; possibly even its slide toward a wholesale state failure.

Even if the possibility of such a catastrophe is remote, that it is imaginable at all should be worrisome to the international community. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [noted](#) during her visit to Abuja last August:

**The United States views Nigeria as a friend, an ally, and a partner on so many important issues, as well as an important country in Africa and increasingly, globally. Nigeria is Africa’s most populous nation, its largest producer of oil, its largest contributor of peacekeepers, a significant trading partner for the United States, and the largest recipient of American direct investment by the private sector in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

While presidential aides insist that Yar’Adua’s acute pericarditis—the condition they admit he suffers from, in addition to a long-term kidney disorder—is under control, the fact is that they have let no one, even cabinet ministers, see the president in weeks. The question of the actual state of Yar’Adua’s health was underscored last week when, one day before his own retirement, Nigerian Chief Justice Idris Legbo Kutigi, swore in his successor, Aloysius Katsina-Alu. That act has always been done by the president, and there had long been talk that the new chief justice would be flown to Riyadh and a bedside ceremony would be filmed, thus giving Nigerians the first glimpse of their president in months. Alas, Yar’Adua proved too ill for even that controlled encounter. So now, in addition to an ailing president, the country has a chief justice whose position is tenuous. (There is considerable debate among members of the Nigerian bar and in the popular press over whether anyone other than the president can validly administer the oath of office to new chief justice.)

What is telling is that the Nigerian Constitution has a provision to deal with precisely this type of situation, but Yar’Adua and his entourage have opted not to invoke it. Article 145

allows the vice president to take over presidential duties if the president is incapacitated. Despite the president's prolonged absence from the country and evident incapacity, no move has been made to transfer his authority and provide Nigeria with at least interim leadership, creating a power vacuum. Some of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan's supporters have been grouching that there is a conspiracy afoot to keep their man from power. They may be right.

One of the unwritten rules of Nigerian politics, necessitated perhaps by the country's delicate ethnic, regional and religious balance, is that there should be turns at major federal offices, so that northern Muslims and southern Christians rotate in and out of positions. Hence, when Olusegun Obasanjo, a southern Christian, left office, a northern Muslim, Yar'Adua, succeeded him. Likewise, Obasanjo's northern Muslim vice president, Atiku Abubakar, was succeeded by a southern Christian, Jonathan. Should Vice President Jonathan take over, even temporarily, and Yar'Adua fails to rally, many northerners, especially those in the incumbent president's inner circle, will feel cheated out of their full chance to control the approximately \$100 billion in annual oil and gas revenue that comes under the authority of the chief executive.

But the reluctance to admit Jonathan to the presidency may also have something to do with his own reputation and that of his wife, Patience, who has been indicted for money laundering by the anti-corruption Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. For his part, among other things, Jonathan, a onetime fisheries inspector and lecturer in zoology, has never quite explained by what feat of financial wizardry he amassed some \$2.4 million dollars—the amount he officially declared in required disclosures—during his undistinguished seventeen months as governor of Bayelsa State before ascending to the vice presidency.

Consequently, Abuja is rife with rumors of plots and counterplots. There is even serious talk of a military intervention—either by senior officers intent on keeping Jonathan from becoming president, or by junior officers seeking to throw out the political class in its entirety. Take all of this together and one could see why a number of parties may want to keep Yar'Adua, even if he is utterly incapacitated, on at least until the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primaries later this year.

The risk, however, is that without more dynamic leadership throughout 2010, the already-tenuous ceasefire with insurgents in the hydrocarbon-rich Niger Delta will not hold. Meanwhile, up north there is likely to be little political will to confront the continuing radicalization of individuals like Abdulmutallab, and violent Islamic sects. One such group, Boko Haram, ran amuck across four northern states last July, leaving about one thousand people dead in its wake. Another organization, Yan Kala Kato (also known as Maitatsine), clashed violently with police in Bauchi State last week, killing dozens and wounding hundreds.

And certainly an administration headed by a moribund lame-duck will have no energy whatsoever to undertake the electoral reforms that Nigeria desperately needs in advance of the national elections due by April 2011. Or to tackle transnational problems like

burgeoning piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, or the brutish junta that seized power in Guinea in late 2008, both situations where Abuja might have been expected to weigh in as the regional power. If anything, a rudderless Nigeria is not only a lost opportunity. It is also a threat to the interests of both its neighbors and the international community, and cannot be ignored any longer.

- **Al Qaeda linked to rogue air network-US official (Mali)**

#### NARCOTIC INDUSTRIAL DEPOT

The Timbuktu region covers more than a third of northern Mali, where the parched, scrubby Sahel shades into the endless, rolling dunes of the Sahara Desert. It is an area several times the size of Switzerland, much of it beyond state control.

Moulaye Haidara, the customs official, said the sharp influx of cocaine by air has transformed the area into an "industrial depot" for cocaine.

Sitting in a cool, dark, mud-brick office building in the city where nomadic Tuareg mingle with Arabs and African Songhay, Fulani and Mande peoples, Haidara expresses alarm at the challenge local law enforcement faces.

Using profits from the trade, the smugglers have already bought "automatic weapons, and they are very determined," Haidara said. He added that they "call themselves Al Qaeda," though he believes the group had nothing to do with religion, but used it as "an ideological base."

Local authorities say four-wheel-drive Toyota SUVs outfitted with GPS navigation equipment and satellite telephones are standard issue for smugglers. Residents say traffickers deflate the tires to gain better traction on the loose Saharan sands, and can travel at speeds of up to 70 miles-per-hour (110 kph) in convoys along routes to North Africa.

Timbuktu governor, Colonel Mamadou Mangara, said he believes traffickers have air-conditioned tents that enable them to operate in areas of the Sahara where summer temperatures are so fierce that they "scorch your shoes." He added that the army lacked such equipment.

A growing number of people in the impoverished region, where transport by donkey cart and camel are still common, are being drawn to the trade. They can earn 4 to 5 million CFA Francs (roughly \$9-11,000) on just one coke run.

"Smuggling can be attractive to people here who can make only \$100 or \$200 a month," said Mohamed Ag Hamalek, a Tuareg tourist guide in Timbuktu, whose family until recently earned their keep hauling rock salt by camel train, using the stars to navigate the Sahara.

Haidara described northern Mali as a no-go area for the customs service. "There is now a red line across northern Mali, nobody can go there," he said, sketching a map of the country on a scrap of paper with a ballpoint pen. "If you go there with feeble means ... you don't come back."

## TWO-WAY TRADE

Speaking in Dakar this week, Schmidt, the U.N. official, said that growing clandestine air traffic required urgent action on the part of the international community.

"This should be the highest concern for governments ... For West African countries, for West European countries, for Russia and the U.S., this should be very high on the agenda," he said.

Stopping the trade, as the traffickers are undoubtedly aware, is a huge challenge -- diplomatically, structurally and economically.

Venezuela, the takeoff or refueling point for aircraft making the trip, has a confrontational relationship with Colombia, where President Alvaro Uribe has focused on crushing the FARC's 45-year-old insurgency. The nation's leftist leader, Hugo Chavez, won't allow in the DEA to work in the country.

In a measure of his hostility to Washington, he scrambled two F16 fighter jets last week to intercept an American P3 aircraft -- a plane used to seek out and track drug traffickers -- which he said had twice violated Venezuelan airspace. He says the United States and Colombia are using anti-drug operations as a cover for a planned invasion of his oil-rich country. Washington and Bogota dismiss the allegation.

In terms of curbing trafficking, the DEA has by far the largest overseas presence of any U.S. federal law enforcement, with 83 offices in 62 countries. But it is spread thin in Africa where it has just four offices -- in Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt and South Africa -- though there are plans to open a fifth office in Kenya.

Law enforcement agencies from Europe as well as Interpol are also at work to curb the trade. But locally, officials are quick to point out that Africa is losing the war on drugs.

The most glaring problem, as Mali's example shows, is a lack of resources. The only arrests made in connection with the Boeing came days after it was found in the desert -- and those incarcerated turned out to be desert nomads cannibalizing the plane's aluminum skin, probably to make cooking pots. They were soon released.

Police in Guinea Bissau, meanwhile, told Reuters they have few guns, no money for gas for vehicles given by donor governments and no high security prison to hold criminals.

Corruption is also a problem. The army has freed several traffickers charged or detained by authorities seeking to tackle the problem, police and rights groups said.

Serious questions remain about why Malian authorities took so long to report the Boeing's discovery to the international law enforcement community.

What is particularly worrying to U.S. interests is that the networks of aircraft are not just flying one way -- hauling coke to Africa from Latin America -- but are also flying back to the Americas.

The internal Department of Homeland Security memorandum reviewed by Reuters cited one instance in which an aircraft from Africa landed in Mexico with passengers and unexamined cargo.

The Gulfstream II jet arrived in Cancun, by way of Margarita Island, Venezuela, en route from Africa. The aircraft, which was on an aviation watch list, carried just two passengers. One was a U.S. national with no luggage, the other a citizen of the Republic of Congo with a diplomatic passport and a briefcase, which was not searched.

"The obvious huge concern is that you have a transportation system that is capable of transporting tons of cocaine from west to east," said the aviation specialist who wrote the Homeland Security report. "But it's reckless to assume that nothing is coming back, and when there's terrorist organizations on either side of this pipeline, it should be a high priority to find out what is coming back on those airplanes." (Additional reporting by Tiemoko Diallo in Mali, Alberto Dabo in Guinea Bissau and Hugh Bronstein in Colombia, editing by Jim Impoco and Claudia Parsons)