



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Changes to the Global Strategic Environment

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Related Categories: Energy Security; Africa; China; Latin America

HOW CHARCOAL THREATENS TANZANIA'S FUTURE

Jumanne Maghembe, the Natural Resources and Tourism Minister of Tanzania, predicts that charcoal consumption in his country will double from 2.3 tons per year to 4.6 tons annually by 2030. Currently, charcoal constitutes 85 percent of Tanzania's total energy consumption, and such a massive increase in use will lead to a significant spike in deforestation and pollution - with long-term effects on the country's agricultural outlook. Agriculture is essential to the Tanzanian economy, constituting of 29 percent of GDP in 2015, and therefore the negative effects from soaring charcoal consumption are likely to be far-reaching for national prosperity. (*Dodoma Daily News*, April 3, 2017)

A NEW WAY TO EXTRACT WATER

Scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California-Berkeley have developed a device that can pull water from air, even air with a low humidity of just 20 percent. The device is constructed from metal-organic frameworks (MOFs), which trap water from the air. A kilogram of a MOF could amass three quarts of water a day, or enough to sustain one person. The device is simple to use, requiring only the MOF and a heat source such as solar power. While the impact of this technology in areas suffering from drought could be nothing short of revolutionary, more research is still needed before the technology can be implemented on a wide scale. (*MIT News*, April 14, 2017)

SOMALI DROUGHT PROMPTS SPIKE IN PIRACY

A recent increase in piracy in and around Somalia has been prompted in part by drought and famine, a top U.S. military officer has said. According to Gen. Thomas Waldhouser, the commander of U.S. Africa Command, the number of pirate attacks off the Somali coast peaked in 2011, before dropping to zero with the assistance of European naval patrols. However, attacks have surged anew, with recent incidents targeting vessels carrying both oil and food - a reflection of the strategic impact of Somalia's ongoing environmental hardships, which have exacerbated political tensions and grievances that had previously subsided. (*BBC*, April 24, 2017)

MEXICO'S EXPANDING BLACK MARKET (FOR GAS)

Gasoline theft is becoming a serious problem in Mexico - one that discourages foreign investment and costs the federal government more than a billion dollars per year. Gangs in Mexico, which are among the most sophisticated and ruthless in the world, siphon gas and diesel fuel by drilling into pipelines in remote areas of the country. The gangs bribe government officials and pay off local residents to make those activities possible, with wide-ranging effects. Not only does the ongoing thievery make Mexico undesirable for foreign investment, it also robs the federal government of an important source of revenue. The result is growing power for the gangs, and increasing domestic instability that places further strain on the Mexican government's hold on power. (*New York Times*, April 26, 2017)

A HUNGRY CHINA EYES GLOBAL FISHERIES

The world is fast approaching a fisheries crisis, a United Nations agency has warned. According the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, 90 percent of global fisheries have either been fully exploited or are now facing collapse due to widespread overfishing globally. China, due to its burgeoning domestic demand for seafood, is one of the most egregious offenders. Having exhausted local resources, Chinese fishermen have begun traveling farther and farther afield in search of fish, often assisted in their quest by government subsidies. China's most common target has been West African nations, where much of the population relies on fish as a primary source of protein and a staple of livelihood. But Chinese fishermen have also cropped up in other parts of the world, including Indonesia, Argentina, South Korea, and Vietnam, where they have clashed with local authorities over their predatory practices. (*New York Times*, April 30, 2017)