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April 15, 2020 Jacob McCarty

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TURKISH UAVS TO PATROL TUNISIAN SKIES

In an effort to bolster its domestic military capabilities, better patrol its porous borders, and improve diplomatic relations with rising regional power Turkey, Tunisia's government recently purchased a number of military drones from Turkish government-linked companies. The order also reflects a larger effort by the Turkish government to increase its arms sales footprint in North Africa. Ankara is likely also hoping that the decision will have a beneficial effect on the ongoing Libyan civil war, in which the Turkish government now has a deepening stake. (*Defense News*, March 16, 2020)

SHIFTING AIR TRAVEL REFLECTS SUDAN-ISRAEL THAW

Sudan recently authorized Latam, Latin America's largest commercial airline, to use its airspace for direct flights between South America and Israel. Based on existing airline travel routes, the landmark decision is expected to make the multiple weekly flights between Israel and South American countries (like Brazil) both significantly cheaper and considerably shorter. The authorization also reflects an important political development: a burgeoning diplomatic thaw between Jerusalem and Khartoum. Diplomatic ties between the two countries have warmed recently, as Sudan transitions past the authoritarian Al-Bashir government while Israel seeks external allies to contain Iranian influence globally (including in East Africa). The thaw also reflects Sudan's changing economic priorities. The country is hoping for rapid economic development under its new transitional government, and has increasingly turned to countries like Israel for technology and business opportunities. (*Jerusalem Post*, March 16, 2020)

INDIA DEPLOYS HURRICANE RELIEF VIA WARSHIP TO MADAGASCAR

More than 600 tons of rice were delivered to Madagascar from India via warship last month. The humanitarian assistance reflects what Madagascar's foreign minister has termed an "excellent relationship" between the two countries. India has maintained diplomatic and economic relations with various African countries for years, especially in the East and Central regions of the continent. In particular, Madagascar and India have, for over two centuries, enjoyed relations across multiple industries and platforms, including development assistance and the hosting of military installations. (*Hindustan Times*, March 12, 2020)

EUROPEAN TASK FORCE DEPLOYS TO SAHEL

A coalition of 13 countries will soon deploy special forces to North Africa. Dubbed "Takuba," or "sabre" in Tuareg, the coalition detachment is expected to boast an initial capability by this summer. The coalition is expected to support both the G-5 Sahel Task Force (made up of five West African countries - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) as well as French troops stationed in the region. The force will be based out of the Liptako region, an area of land shared by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, where the Islamic State terrorist group continues to operate. The announcement comes amid a significant uptick in regional *jihadist* activity and anxiety about a possible withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the continent. (Doha *Al-Jazeera*, March 28, 2020)

AFRICOM TO BEGIN REPORTING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) recently announced that it would soon begin reporting the civilian casualties from U.S. airstrikes in Somalia, Libya, and elsewhere in its area of responsibility. The United States has, according to human rights watchdog Amnesty International, carried out airstrikes in Somalia for more than a decade - recently increasing the number of strikes to be on par with the number carried out in Syria and Iraq. However, the announcements, to be issued quarterly, will be the first of their kind for this particular combatant command. (Amnesty International, April 1, 2020)

SAUDI ARABIA REPATRIATES ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS

Thousands of Ethiopian nationals who lived in Saudi Arabia are being sent back to their country of origin. In just the first ten days of April, the Saudi government put nearly 3,000 people of Ethiopian descent on twice-daily flights from Riyadh to Addis Ababa. While the citizenship status of those repatriated has not been explicitly stated, Ethiopians do make up a significant portion of the four million people who live in Saudi Arabia illegally.

The effort is not a new one; the Saudi government has aggressively sought to curb nontraditional migration from Ethiopia for years. However, it has taken on new significance amid the global outbreak of COVID-19. UN health officials, for instance, are concerned that the tactic may exacerbate the outbreak of the virus in Ethiopia, which has begun reporting more and more cases. What's more, the decision - although a joint one by the two governments - is nonetheless likely to further exacerbate negative sentiment in Ethiopia, where anti-Saudi government protests have taken place for years. (*Financial Times*, April 12, 2020)
