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## AFRICA - CHINA

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President Omar al-Bashir is giving up his old address. He isn't moving to The Hague, to face charges of war crimes in Darfur; instead, he is moving into a new Presidential Palace built and paid for by the government of China. Over one million Chinese citizens currently reside in Africa, working on one project or another. The Chinese have been particularly active in West Africa. The rebuilding of the Dakar-Niger Railway will have a substantial impact economically. Mali has relied on the current unpredictable, broken-down, ancient railway since the recent civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. The conflict ended in 2010, but the previously lucrative transportation link between Bamako and Abidjan has yet to be re-established, at least in any truly effective manner. The Chinese project will provide Mali and her neighbor Niger, with access to the port of Dakar. Also, the Chinese intend on building a rail link to the capital city of Sierra Leone, Freetown, which also happens to be a port. Modernizing the transportation networks in West Africa, to include providing land-locked Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad direct access to a choice of port facilities, will transform these economies. The rail link from Bamako to Freetown will be more

expensive (\$8 Billion), as most of the work will be from scratch. The rail link from Bamako to Dakar is still basically intact, but will need major repair and replacement work (1.4 Billion). Since the Chinese are not pressuring their banks to provide the necessary financing for these projects because of their philanthropic nature, China will expect some sign of "appreciation". It might include a vote in the United Nations, or the inside track on contracts for yet-to-be discovered oil or mineral deposits.

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## AFRICA – U.S.

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It appears as though the Nigerian military is getting a bit sensitive to criticism. In December 2014, the Nigerian Army cancelled the final stage of U.S. training for a new Nigerian Army Battalion. The move was in response to U.S. officials not including raw data in Intelligence Reports that were provided to Nigeria, for fear that the raw data, which included source revealing information, would be compromised. TFG has strong reason to believe that the Nigerian military has been infiltrated by Boko Haram, and the U.S. government network of clandestine sources is telling the same story to the U.S. military. A disturbing number of confidential sources in northeast Nigeria have been singled out



and killed, which supports the accusation that raw data has been leaked to Boko Haram.

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#### CAMEROON

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Since the start of the new year, Boko Haram guerillas have conducted numerous raids from Nigeria into Cameroon. During the raids, Boko Haram didn't appear to have any particular target. People were robbed, and many were shot in the street. Most disturbing have been the reports of children being kidnapped. Locals fear that Boko Haram no longer has children to target in Nigeria, as they have either been assimilated or moved further south. This would explain the attacks into Cameroon and the missing children. Unconfirmed reporting from northeast Nigeria claim that Boko Haram has started a children's army, in the same fashion as the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. This would explain the recent trend towards kidnapping boys as well as girls. The Cameroon Army has established a presence in Mokolo in the Extreme Nord Province in an effort to prevent the continuation of these incursions by Boko Haram.

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#### SAUDI ARABIA

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With the death of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and the crowning of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, TFG

believes that the most powerful trio of leaders in the Saudi Kingdom are Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Prince Mutib bin Abdullah. Bin Nayef is Minister of the Interior, bin Salman is Minister of Defense, and bin Abdullah is Minister of the National Guard. Each one of these Ministries is considered vital in any power struggle that is sure to ensue as King Salman, who is 80 years old, begins to deteriorate health-wise. Prince Salman, who is the King's son, also was appointed to the Presidency of the Royal Court, which, for all practical purposes, makes him first Chancellor for his father's government. Prince Mutib, who attended Sandhurst Military Academy, was expected by many to ascend to the throne, if only because his father was the late King. But King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz made many decisions regarding his family that will continue to impact the leadership of the Kingdom for years to come. In fact, Prince Mutib is not the oldest surviving member of his family.

Any hopes that Mutib had of replacing his father directly were probably not realistic. But at 61, he will remain a part of any succession conversation for a decade or two. Prince Mohammed bin Nayef graduated from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon in 1981, and trained with the FBI from 1985 to 1988. Because of his background, his affinity to



the United States is assumed. At 55, TFG considers Prince Mohammed bin Nayef to be the most favorably positioned following the ascension of King Salman.

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#### RUSSIA

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Ratings agency Standard and Poor's downgraded Russia's credit rating to junk status for the first time in a decade. This negative movement was directly related falling oil prices, the collapsing value of the Ruble, and sanctions enacted because of Russian intervention in Ukraine. The ratings agency was quoted as saying the Central Bank of Russia "faces increasingly difficult monetary policy decisions, while also trying to support sustainable GDP growth". Much of the problem could have been avoided, if Russia had taken advantage of the situation when the economy was strong and the price of oil was high. That would have been the ideal time to enact much-needed reforms.

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#### ARGENTINA

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The controversy surrounding the death of State Prosecutor Alberto Nisman continues to dominate

the news in Buenos Aires. Nisman was one day away from presenting the results of his investigation into Kirchner's activities following the 1994 terrorist bombing in Buenos Aires. President Christina Kirchner has made contradictory comments regarding the death of Mr. Nisman, which has only fueled speculation by her political rivals that someone close to Kirchner, or possibly even Kirchner herself, as involved.

Although Kirchner was hoping for something to distract the people of Argentina from reviewing her Presidency (Kirchner is in the last year of her term) and noticing the dissected, overloaded and bankrupt bureaucracy that used to be the Argentinean economy, this is not the type of distraction she would have preferred. Kirchner has made a habit out of playing the victim, and mastered the role so well, that she cloaked her own country in the guise of victim. She even managed to claim injury after the death of Nismas, by asserting that whoever was responsible was attempting to "get at her and damage her government". As of the last week of January, the case was under investigation.



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## DISCLOSURES

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