

Africa

US, Nigeria hold military summit

UAE ends training Somali military

DUBAI, April 16, (Agencies): United Arab Emirates (UAE) is ending a military training programme in Somalia in response to the seizure of millions of dollars and the temporary holding of a UAE plane by Somali security forces last week.

The UAE has trained hundreds of troops since 2014 as part of an effort boosted by an African Union military mission to defeat an Islamist insurgency and secure the country for the government backed by Western nations, Turkey and the United Nations.



Mohamed

Analysts say Somalia whose president is Mohammed Abdullahi Mohamed relations with UAE are strained by a dispute between Qatar and Saudi because Mogadishu has refused to take sides. Arab states have strong trading links with and influence in Somalia, but that is offset by the sway of Qatar and its ally Turkey, one of Somalia's biggest foreign investors.

A government statement on Sunday followed a similar announcement by Somalia on April 11, in which Mogadishu said it will take over paying and training the soldiers in the programme.

"The UAE has decided to disband its military training programme in Somalia which started in 2014 to build the capabilities of the Somali army," said the statement on the UAE's state news agency WAM.

About \$9.6 million in cash was taken from the UAE plane on April 8, Somali police and government sources had said. The UAE said the money was to pay for salaries for Somali soldiers as part of an agreement between the two countries.

The statement said a seizure incident contravened agreements signed by both countries.

WAM said the UAE has been paying the wages of 2,407 soldiers in addition to building training centres and a hospital. It said the UAE is supervising a counterintelligence maritime police force in Somalia's semi-autonomous region of Puntland.

The UAE is also building a military base in Somaliland, another semi-autonomous region of Somalia.

ous region of Somalia.

US, Nigeria hold military summit: Military top brass from across Africa on Monday kicked off a conference co-hosted by the United States aimed at boosting cooperation between countries fighting extremist groups.

The African Land Forces Summit brings together "land force chiefs from across Africa for candid dialogue" to improve security, said the US Army in an April 10 statement.

Military leaders from almost every country on the continent — including Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya and Rwanda — were in Nigeria's capital of Abuja to exchange notes on threats in Africa, from Al-Shabaab in the east to Boko Haram in the west.

Under Weah, media on edge: With one Liberian newspaper facing a \$1.8 million defamation case and a BBC journalist fleeing the country, there has been no honeymoon period for the press under the new government of President George Weah.

Accused of wanting to muzzle the media, the former footballer-turned-politician has attempted to reassure journalists saying they would have a "200 percent freedom of expression and press freedom under my government".

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), however, has expressed concern over the \$1.8 million in defamation suits against Front Page Africa, a Liberian newspaper that has carried critical coverage of successive governments.

7 aid workers freed in S. Sudan: South Sudan's rebels said on Sunday they had released seven aid workers detained for nearly three weeks in the country's Central Equatoria region on accusations of spying for the government.

Rebel spokesman Lam Paul Gabriel told Reuters the workers were released to a UN delegation near the border with Uganda and Ugandan police witnessed the handover.

South Sudan has been gripped by conflict since 2013 after a disagreement between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar deteriorated into a military confrontation.



People place candles and pray at the site where councilwoman Marielle Franco and her driver Anderson Pedro Gomes were killed a month earlier, during a protest in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on April 14. Thousands of Brazilians took to the streets to demand answers in the death of Franco, whose slaying is seen by her backers as a political assassination. (AP)

Lat/Am

Maduro gets boost from Morales: Bolivia's President Evo Morales made a flying visit to Caracas for talks with embattled President Nicolas Maduro on Sunday, a month ahead of controversial polls set to give the socialist leader a second term.

Morales' visit provided a rare international show of support for Maduro in the wake of the Summit of the Americas in Lima last week, during which the United States and leaders from across Latin America warned the May 20 vote would lack legitimacy and credibility.

Venezuela's main opposition is boycotting the vote on the grounds that there are no guarantees that it will be free and fair.

The leftist Bolivian leader was received with full military honors at Maduro's presidential palace.

"We are anti-imperialist and no-one is going to blackmail us," Morales said in brief statement to reporters after the one-hour meeting. (AFP)

Vizcarra begins presidency: Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra kicked off his presidency with a 57-percent approval rating, according to an Ipsos poll published in a local newspaper on Sunday.

A former vice president, Vizcarra took office on March 23 after his predecessor, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, resigned in a graft and vote-buying scandal.

The Ipsos survey, published in El Comercio, showed 13 percent of Peruvians polled disapproved of Vizcarra. But 30 percent declined to answer — a sign many were still undecided about him.

Most Peruvians could not name Vizcarra two weeks before he was thrust into office in Peru's worst political crisis in nearly two decades. A civil engineer by training, Vizcarra had been doubling as vice president and Peru's ambassador to Canada.

Vizcarra has risen to power amid high frustration with elected officials following a graft scandal involving the Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht that has tainted most of the political class. (RTRS)

Guatemala hands ICJ border row: Guatemalans voted overwhelmingly Sunday to send a centuries-old border dispute with neighboring Belize to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for final resolution, according to preliminary referendum results.

A total of 95.89 percent voted "yes," with votes from over 92 percent of polling stations accounted for, said Gustavo Castillo of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.

Polls closed at 6:00 pm (0000 GMT) after 11 hours of voting, which took place "without reports of security incidents," tribunal president Maria Eugenia Mijangos said.

But despite 7.5 million Guatemalans being summoned to the ballot box, the vote was marked by low turnout.

The border disagreement, whose roots go back two centuries, has seen tensions spike from time to time. Two years ago Guatemala mobilized 3,000 troops along the densely forested unmarked border zone after an incident in which a Guatemalan teenager was fatally shot. (AFP)

Lula still leads in polls: Even imprisonment hasn't knocked former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva out of the lead in Brazil's presidential race.

A poll released Sunday by the Datafolha institute shows the center-leftist with a 2-1 advantage over his nearest rival under one election scenario.

It's the first survey of Brazilians since da Silva's April 7 jailing on corruption and money laundering charges.

He is appealing the conviction, but it could lead electoral courts to rule him ineligible for the ballot. (AP)

'Act on narco border': The kidnapping and killing of two journalists and their driver has thrown up an uncomfortable truth for Colombia and Ecuador, analysts say: that their long-neglected border has become a drug traffickers' nirvana.

The two governments sent troops into the dense jungle area to hunt for the killers and re-establish control over a region analysts say has become a key corridor for the supply of cocaine to the United States.

Ecuador's Interior Minister Cesar Navas said Sunday he had sent 550 police and troops, backed by tanks and a helicopter, to take "total control" of the border town of Mataje, where the journalists were kidnapped. (AFP)



Maduro



Morales

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