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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

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[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

Second Russia-Africa Summit Ends With Commitments Toward Cooperation Across Key Sectors

[255 words]

The second Russia-Africa Summit for Peace, Security, and Development concluded in the Russian city of St. Petersburg on July 28. The two-day summit was attended by official delegations from 49 African countries and included 17 heads of state. The summit yielded various agreements and a [joint declaration](#) for cooperation on issues including security, trade, energy, and climate change.

Speaking to Peoples Dispatch during the course of the summit, activist and analyst Kambale Musavuli [said](#), “[T]he message that people should read is that Africa is at the center of the change of the world, Africans are taking agency that did not exist before when we had the Berlin Conference.”

The meeting was held following the [expiration of an agreement](#) allowing the export of grain from Ukraine via the Black Sea. Addressing the summit’s plenary, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that of the 32.8 million metric tons of cargo that had been exported from Ukraine under this agreement, over 70 percent had gone to “high and above-average income countries, primarily to the European Union.” Meanwhile, countries including Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan had received less than 3 percent of these exports.

Putin announced that Russia would be ready to supply between 25,000 and 50,000 metric tons of grain for free to Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea within the next three to four months. He also said that matters related to agricultural production on the African continent, including support in the form of transfer of technology, had been discussed.

Thousands Rally in Support of Niger’s Coup Leaders as Western-Backed ECOWAS Threatens Military Intervention

[354 words]

The military junta which took power in Niger [warned](#) on July 31 that France might militarily intervene with [authorization](#) from the ousted government’s foreign minister to restore Mohamed Bazoum to the presidency.

Thousands have mobilized to the streets to welcome the military takeover, sloganeering against their former colonizer—“Down with France,” “Foreign bases out.” Protesters reportedly tore out the plaque on the French embassy in the capital Niamey and torched its door on Sunday, July 30.

[Imposing a no-fly zone](#) and [freezing Niger’s assets](#) in its central and commercial banks, the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) said on July 30 that it will “take all measures necessary,” including “the use of force,” to restore Mohamed Bazoum to the presidency.

Bazoum was taken captive and removed from office on July 26 in a coup led by the head of the presidential guard, General Abdourahmane Tchiani.

After taking office in April 2021, Bazoum instituted an internet shutdown for 10 days while the security forces cracked down on protests and arrested hundreds, amid accusations of irregularities.

In November of that year, militant mass demonstrations tried to stop the movement of a French army convoy through the country from Ivory Coast to Mali. French soldiers and the Nigerien gendarmes escorting their convoy fired shots and tear gas, [killing two Nigeriens and wounding 18](#).

Impervious to popular sentiment against France in Niger and other former colonies in West Africa, the democratically elected Bazoum, touted by the BBC as [“a key Western ally,” welcomed](#) into Niger the French troops ordered out of Mali.

In Mali, French troops had withdrawn by August 2022, six months after the military government, which had similarly consolidated power with two popular coups, demanded they leave. Tens of thousands took to the streets of the capital Bamako in celebration.

Later in August that year, 15 civil society organizations came together to form [“M62: Sacred Union for the Safeguard of the Sovereignty and Dignity of the People.”](#) The M62 Movement’s coordinator, Abdoulaye Seydou, [said](#) at the time that the French troops, deployed as a part of Operation Barkhane, have “killed more civilians than terrorists.”

Crisis in Ecuador Following Spurt of Violence and Rumors of a Government Deal With Gangs

[246 words]

Just weeks ahead of Ecuador’s [early general elections](#), the country is facing an unprecedented crisis due to a spike in violence and allegations of deals made between the government and criminal groups. Videos have circulated on social media depicting students ducking for cover in schools amid gunfire between drug trafficking gangs in Esmeraldas, assassination attempts against public officials, and public messages from heavily armed gang leaders announcing peace agreements.

The developments have ignited deep concern across the country and deepened the ongoing political crisis, made acutely worse when [President Guillermo Lasso](#) activated the [cross-death measure](#) on May 17, which dissolved the country’s National Assembly, and called for early general elections.

Heavy criticisms have been leveled at the government of Lasso amidst rising insecurity across the country. Luisa González, the presidential candidate for the leftist Citizen Revolution Movement party, stated: “That it is the leaders of criminal gangs who are

speaking out only means one thing: the gangs are in control of the country and not the president of the Republic.”

Following the eruption of violence and the declaration of a state of emergency, criminal gangs operating in Ecuador announced through videos released on social media that they had reached an agreement on a period of peace in the country. They alluded to the fact that the peace pact had also been signed with the national government and the police. Meanwhile, the right-wing government of incumbent President Guillermo Lasso denied any type of agreement with criminal gangs.

El Salvador Authorizes Mass Trials of up to 900 Prisoners

[248 words]

El Salvador’s Congress passed a reform of the Law Against Organized Crime on July 26 that increases penalties for people named as leaders of criminal groups and also allows mass trials. It also allows for provisional detention for up to 24 months without trial. The measure was approved with 67 votes out of a possible 84 in the Legislative Assembly.

The reform, proposed by President Nayib Bukele, comes in the context of the state of emergency approved in March last year in the Central American country following a wave of violence that Bukele’s government said was caused by a dispute between rival gangs. Bukele has requested the extension of the state of the emergency 16 times. Over 70,000 people have been detained during the period of emergency rule, accused of belonging to or collaborating with criminal groups.

Under the new rules, the government is allowed to “submit accused persons to a single criminal proceeding for belonging to the same terrorist structure or criminal group.” Mass trials can have up to 900 people in the dock simultaneously. In addition, gang leaders had their maximum sentence increased from 45 to 60 years in jail.

Human rights organization Cristosal criticized the move and said the reforms in the new law hit hardest those who “live in poor areas and have informal work.”

Cristosal [stated](#) on July 27, “The reforms could lead to greater impunity, given that collective trials would favor punishing gang membership over crimes such as homicide or extortion.”