

## September 2011

## INTERNATIONAL

**Arms trade**

Sept. 23—An annual study of the global arms trade produced by the US Congressional Research Service reports that the volume of worldwide arms sales dropped to \$40.4 billion in 2010 from \$65.2 billion in 2009. The decrease is attributed to the global economic downturn and resulting austere fiscal conditions in many countries. According to the study, 53% of all 2010 weapons sales originated in the US.

**European debt crisis**

Sept. 15—The European Central Bank, in cooperation with the US Federal Reserve and 3 other central banks, pours US dollars into Europe's banking system. Some continental banks have had trouble borrowing dollars in recent weeks amid concerns about their holdings of sovereign debt issued by nations on Europe's periphery.

Sept. 21—The Greek government, under severe pressure from the European Central Bank, the European Commission, and the International Monetary Fund, announces a new round of austerity measures, which will include pension cuts and property tax increases. Greece may not be able to meet its debt obligations beginning in the middle of October unless the troika of international institutions assisting it releases an \$11 billion tranche of aid. The austerity measures are extremely unpopular with the Greek public, and the country's 2 principal labor unions have scheduled a pair of general strikes for October.

Sept. 29—Germany's parliament approves the expansion of a European bailout fund for euro-zone countries struggling with sovereign debt, increasing Berlin's share of the package to 211 billion euros from 123 billion euros. The expansion, initially agreed upon by the EU in July, must be endorsed by individual countries. Slovakia is seen as the nation most likely to withhold its endorsement.

**Global economy**

Sept. 6—A report issued by the UN Conference on Trade and Development criticizes the US and European governments for pursuing austerity measures instead of policies designed to achieve "high employment and socially acceptable income distribution." The report warns that without altered policies the global economy faces a decade of stagnation.

**Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

Sept. 23—Over the objections of the US and Israel, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority files a formal request for the Palestinian political entity to gain membership as a state in the UN. A week later, the UN Security Council refers the request to a board of experts for evaluation. The US, Russia, and European nations meanwhile seek to arrange a resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

**AFGHANISTAN**

Sept. 13—In Kabul, the US embassy and NATO's headquarters are attacked by insurgents, resulting in the deaths of at least 16 people. The Haqqani network, a militant group, claims responsibility. Nine days later, Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, asserts that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, a spy agency, plays a direct role in supporting the Haqqani network.

Sept. 20—Burhanuddin Rabbani, the top official in Afghanistan's High Peace Council, is assassinated by a suicide bomber. The killing is seen as a potentially crippling blow to Afghanistan's already hobbled efforts to establish peace and security.

**BRAZIL**

Sept. 29—Citing concerns about fishing rights for indigenous communities, a judge suspends work on a dam in the Amazon jungle that if completed would become the world's 3rd-largest generator of hydroelectric power. The Brazilian government strongly supports construction of the dam.

**CHINA**

Sept. 9—Xinhua, China's state news agency, reports that a severe drought concentrated in the southwest part of the country has left over 12 million people short of water and has affected 14 million acres of agricultural land. The drought raises new questions about a vast government scheme to transport water from the country's south to its north.

**DENMARK**

Sept. 16—The Social Democratic Party and its center-left coalition win a parliamentary election over the Liberal Party and its center-right coalition, which had held power for 10 years. Helle Thorning-Schmidt of the Social Democratic Party is to become the nation's 1st female prime minister. Thorning-Schmidt has pledged to raise taxes on banks and wealthy individuals.

**LATVIA**

Sept. 18—In snap parliamentary elections, a pro-Russian party called Harmony Center gains the largest number of votes, 28% of the total. The result is notable because strong anti-Russian sentiment has characterized Latvian politics in recent years. It is not clear whether Harmony Center will be included in a governing coalition, which at month's end the parliament has not succeeded in forming.

**LIBYA**

Sept. 16—The UN Security Council unanimously agrees to accept the Transitional National Council, Libya's interim government, as the country's representative in the world assembly, and also to ease economic sanctions against Tripoli.

Sept. 27—NATO declares that forces under the Transitional National Council have gained control of all chemical weapons and nuclear material left over from the rule of former autocrat Muammar el-Qaddafi.

**MYANMAR**

Sept. 26—Protesters demanding that political prisoners be freed and that construction of a hydroelectric facility be halted gather in Yangon without interference from security forces. Four days later, the government announces that construction of the dam, slated to be the 1st to span the Irrawaddy River, has been suspended. Some observers see the beginnings of responsive government in Myanmar, where nominally civilian leaders took the reins of power from a military junta in March.

**RUSSIA**

Sept. 24—At a party convention in Moscow, President Dmitri Medvedev announces that he will not run for reelection in 2012,

clearing the way for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, a former president, to seek the post. Putin, if elected in 2012 and elected again 6 years later, could occupy the top spot until 2024, a prospect thought to bode ill for the development of true democracy in Russia.

## SAUDI ARABIA

Sept. 25—King Abdullah extends to women, beginning in 2015, the right to vote and to stand in municipal elections. The change is seen as a small step toward gender equality in Saudi Arabia, which in many arenas enforces strict segregation by sex. Two days after the king's announcement, a Saudi woman is sentenced to 10 lashes for having driven an automobile.

## SOMALIA

Sept. 5—The UN announces that by its reckoning 4 million Somalis have been pushed into "crisis" by a famine that has now spread into 6 sectors of the country. The world body warns that up to 750,000 people could perish in the next few months if international aid efforts are not increased. Drought, war, and political chaos have all contributed to the famine.

## SYRIA

Sept. 2—The EU bans imports of oil from Syria because of Damascus's repressive and violent reaction to demonstrations over the last 6 months. Three weeks later, Turkey announces that it has placed an arms embargo on Syria.

Sept. 12—The UN Human Rights Council estimates that 2,600 people have died over the course of the Syrian uprising.

## TAIWAN

Sept. 16—US congressional staffers are informed of an upcoming announcement that the administration of President Barack Obama has elected not to approve the sale of F-16 fighter jets

to Taiwan. The administration, which reportedly will assist in the refurbishing of Taiwan's existing fleet of fighter jets in place of making new ones available, is characterized in some quarters as having bowed to pressure from China, which regards self-governing and democratic Taiwan as a renegade province.

## UNITED STATES

Sept. 2—The Labor Department reports that the US economy neither gained nor lost jobs in August, intensifying concerns that the world's largest economy will continue to stagnate at least through the end of next year.

Sept. 21—The Federal Reserve announces that over the coming months it will sell \$400 billion of its holdings in short-term federal debt and use the proceeds to purchase long-term Treasury securities. The strategy is intended to reduce borrowing costs and thus spur economic growth.

## YEMEN

Sept. 23—The country's president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, unexpectedly returns to Yemen after spending 4 months in a Saudi hospital recovering from injuries he sustained during a bombing at his palace mosque. Over recent days dozens have been killed in gun battles pitting government troops against antigovernment forces. About 40 people die the day after the president's return as the state escalates its attacks on the opposition.

## ZAMBIA

Sept. 20—Michael Sata, an opposition leader, wins a presidential election over incumbent Rupiah Banda, tallying 43% of the vote to Banda's 36%. Sata's campaign tapped into public outrage about poor working conditions in Chinese-operated mines, but the president-elect declares after the voting that foreign investors remain welcome in the country. Banda accepts the results of the election. ■

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