

African Leaders to Hold Summit to Counter Boko Haram



Nigerien General Seyni Garba (C-L) speaks next to Chadian General Brahim Seid (C-R) during a press conference near the Nigerian town of Malam Fatori, which was recently retaken from Boko Haram, April 3, 2015.

ABUJA (PRESS TV) – The leaders of Central and West African countries plan to hold a summit in an effort to come up with a common strategy to counter the threat posed by Nigeria's Takfiri Boko Haram terror group.

The planned event, due to be held on April 8 in Equatorial Guinea's capital of Malabo, was announced on Sunday in a joint statement by its organizers, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). "In the face of the mounting

and increasingly bloody attacks by the fundamentalists against Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, and the serious consequences for these countries, and the real risk of destabilizing Western and Central Africa, the two organizations have decided to take action," read the statement.

The summit will be the first of its kind since Nigeria's election just a week ago, in which former military leader, Muhammadu Buhari, who has pledged to rid his nation of the terror by the Takfiri Boko Haram group, emerged victorious.

It is not clear, however, whether President-elect Buhari would attend the summit, since he will not be sworn in as Nigeria's new president until May 29, when he will officially succeed incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan.

The development comes as a regional coalition of military forces from Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon has been waging offensives against the Takfiri terror group in an effort to defeat the militancy, which has also spread across the borders of Nigeria, where Boko Haram is based.

France Halts Search for Bodies at Germanwings Crash Site



An aerial photo taken from a helicopter shows the crash site of the Germanwings Airbus A320 and its debris on the mountainside near Seyne-les-Alpes, April 3, 2015.

PARIS (Reuters) - French investigators have ended their search for bodies in the Alps where a Germanwings passenger jet crashed last month, killing all 150 people on board, a local official said on Saturday.

Prosecutors believe German co-pilot Andreas Lubitz deliberately flew the Airbus A320 jet into the mountainside during a flight from Barcelona to Dusseldorf, pulverizing the aircraft and making recovery efforts extremely complicated.

"The search for bodies is over, but the search for the victims' personal belongings is continuing," a spokesman for the local government authority in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region told Reuters.

"Lufthansa has also hired a specialist firm to remove the debris of the aircraft, under the authority of the French public prosecutor and an expert in charge of environmental supervision of the operations," he said.

Lufthansa is the parent company of the low-cost Germanwings carrier.

The identification of victims will now continue through the analysis of 150 sets of DNA found at site, which could take several weeks. The prosecutor leading the French legal probe has cautioned that the number of DNA sets does not necessarily mean all the victims have been found.

As soon as a DNA set is matched to one of the victims, the family

will immediately be informed.

Work to remove aircraft debris and clean up the site will start next week and could take up to two months, said General David Galtier, a regional French police commander in charge of the operation. Cockpit audio recordings from the first black box, recovered hours after the March 24 crash, led prosecutors to believe that Lubitz locked the captain out of the cockpit and put the plane into a steep descent.

This version of events appeared to be further corroborated by data from the second 'black box' recorder that was recovered earlier this week.

A separate German legal inquiry has pointed to mental health problems affecting the 27-year-old Lubitz.

German prosecutors said on Thursday that the co-pilot had made Internet searches on ways to commit suicide in the days ahead of the crash, as well as searches about cockpit doors and safety precautions. According to Der Spiegel magazine on Friday, the prosecutors searched the offices of five doctors whose help Lubitz had sought.

Lufthansa has said Lubitz told its flight school in 2009 he had gone through a period of severe depression.

Hundreds Return Home in Philippines as Typhoon Weakens

MANILA (Reuters) – Hundreds of people in the north of the main Philippine island of Luzon left evacuation centers and returned home on Sunday after a typhoon weakened significantly as it made landfall, although officials still warned of heavy rain and rough seas.

Once described as super typhoon Maysak as it bore down on the Philippines in recent days, the storm was carrying winds of 55 km ph (35 mph) and was rated as a tropical depression as it made landfall on Sunday morning.

"We thank God," said Alexander Pama, executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. "From a super typhoon a week ago, we now have a tropical depression. We are spared once more from a disaster."

Pama said no reports of casualties had been received as residents in coastal towns in the Luzon

provinces of Isabela and Aurora emerged from shelters to return home.

However, he warned people in low-lying areas and near mountain slopes to remain vigilant because the storm could still bring heavy rains, flash floods and landslides.

Fishing boats and small ferries were still prohibited from returning to sea.

While there were still some travel restrictions, the weakening of the storm was generally good news as millions of Filipinos began returning to the capital from beaches and mountain resorts after the four-day Easter holiday.

Maysak, which carried winds of about 250 kph (155 mph) at its peak, killed nine people as it barreled through the sparsely populated Federated States of Micronesia east of the Philippines, smashing houses and destroying crops.

Six Troops Killed in East Ukraine: Sources

KIEV (PRESS TV) – At least six soldiers have been killed in two separate violent incidents in Ukraine's restive east, military sources say.

Oleksandr Motuzanyk, a military spokesman, claimed on Sunday that four soldiers died when their military vehicle came under missile fire while crossing a bridge near the mainly Russian-speaking region of Lugansk.

Separately, two others were killed when an anti-tank mine exploded a few kilometers outside the government-held southeastern port city of Mariupol.

Also on Saturday, at least three Ukrainian soldiers were killed and two others injured when a mine exploded near the village of Avdiyivka in Donetsk region.

The latest deaths bring to nine the number of soldiers reported dead in 48 hours.

The fatalities come amid a fragile deal between the Kiev government and pro-Russians, which was signed in February to end tensions in the east.

The agreement, brokered in the Belarusian capital of Minsk, was reached after talks of the Minsk deal – as a "bluff."

The Western military alliance, NATO, has recently called for all-out backing for the Ukrainian government – including the provision of arms – by Western countries in response to what he

have repeatedly blamed one another for violating the deal.

On March 20, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement

the pro-Russia forces in the east of the country.

The two mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (L) observes a new Ukrainian-made armored personnel carrier while visiting a military base outside Kiev, April 4, 2015.

describing Kiev's claims of withdrawing its heavy weapons from the conflict zone – as required by the Minsk deal – as a "bluff."

The Western military alliance, NATO, has recently called for all-out backing for the Ukrainian government – including the provision of arms – by Western countries in response to what he alleged was Moscow's arming of

and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine have been hit by deadly clashes between pro-Russia forces and the Ukrainian army since Kiev launched military operations in April last year to crush pro-Russian protests there.

According to the UN, more than 6,000 people have been killed since the conflict in the region a year ago.



TRIPOLI (PRESS TV) – An assailant has blown his vehicle up at a security checkpoint near the western Libyan city of Misrata, killing at least six people and injuring more than 20 others.

The attack took place at the Saddada checkpoint east of the volatile city on Sunday.

Sources said one woman and her two children were among the victims of the blast at the checkpoint.

Medics also said the death toll is expected to rise as some of the injured are reported to be in critical condition.

Meanwhile, a branch of the ISIL terrorist group has claimed responsibility for the Sunday fatal bombing.

Misrata is a power base for the Fajr Libya (Libya Dawn) militia, who took over the capital, Tripoli, in the summer last year and set up their own self-declared government and parliament.

Libya has two rival governments vying for control of the country, with one faction controlling Tripoli, and the other, Libya's internationally recognized government, governing the cities of Bayda and Tobruk.

The government and elected parliament moved to the eastern city of Tobruk after Libya Dawn militia and some armed groups based in the northwestern city of Misrata seized Tripoli and most government institutions in August 2014.

GARISSA, KENYA (Reuters) – The son of a Kenyan government official was one of the masked gunmen who killed nearly 150 at a university last week, the interior ministry said on Sunday, as Kenyan churches hired armed guards to protect their Easter congregations.

Pope Francis decried Thursday's attack in his Easter Sunday service, praying for those killed by Islamist gunmen who hunted down Christians while sparing Muslims.

At one church in the Indian Ocean port city of Mombasa, worshippers were evacuated and a bomb disposal unit deployed due to a suspicious vehicle parked outside the church.

Interior Ministry spokesman Mwenda Njoka said Abdirahim Abdullahi, son of a government official in the northern Mandera county bordering Somalia, was one of four gunmen who stormed the college campus in northeastern town of Garissa.

"The father had reported to security agents that his son had disappeared from home... and was helping the police try to trace his son by the time the Garissa terror attack happened," Njoka told Reuters in a text message.

President Uhuru Kenyatta on Saturday said the planners and financiers of Islamist attacks were "deeply embedded" within Kenyan communities and urged Muslims to do more to fight radicalization.

A Garissa-based official said the government was aware Abdullahi, a former University of Nairobi law student, had joined the militant group al Shabaab after graduating in 2013.

"He was a very brilliant student. But then he got these crazy ideas," said the official.

ABUJA (Reuters) – Nigeria's delta region was hit by violence, as gunmen killed nine people and, separately, militants blew up a gas pipeline, in a sign of returning unrest to the oil producing area days after a relatively peaceful presidential election.

Opposition presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari beat incumbent Goodluck Jonathan in a landslide victory last weekend, producing some resentment in Jonathan's home region.

"Some unknown armed men invaded the Obrikom and Obor communities ... killing nine, injuring two persons," Rivers state police spokesman Ahmed Mohammad said on Saturday.

The house of a parliamentary opposition candidate, Vincent Ogbagu of Buhari's All Progressives Congress, was set on fire.

Rivers, the home of oil and gas in Africa's biggest crude producer, was expected to be a flashpoint for election-related violence, particularly due to tensions between Governor Chibuike Amaechi and the presidency after he defected to the APC.

Gunfire and explosions hit an opposition rally in February, wounding several people, and other non-fatal bomb blasts rocked the state ahead of the polls.

On election day, at least two people were killed, including a member of the military, but tensions were deflated after Jonathan's early acceptance of defeat and call for calm.