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SOLUTIONS



# AFRICA NEWSBRIEF

Week 51

# Welcome to this week's edition of the Africa Weekly Brief

Each week, we bring you a selection of the most significant political, security, and economic developments across the continent. Key stories that reflect the dynamics shaping Africa today.



This week's topics:

- 1- LOBITO CORRIDOR: ANGOLA RECEIVES A STRONG BOOST FROM THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA
- 2- MALI: JUDGE ORDERS RETURN OF GOLD TO BARRICK MINING
- 3- MOROCCO: THE CAN 2025 HAS KICKED OFF
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## 1. LOBITO CORRIDOR: ANGOLA RECEIVES A STRONG BOOST FROM THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA

Funded by both the American government and the South African development bank, this \$753 million loan is intended for the renovation of 1,300 kilometers of railway tracks and the purchase of new locomotives. This major investment was promised by Joe Biden at the time to counter Chinese influence over African mines.



On December 17, the United States signed a \$553 million loan to modernize the strategic railway line of the Lobito Corridor, connecting this Angolan port to the border with the DRC, which is rich in minerals, according to the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the Angolan government.

Announced last year under the administration of former U.S. President Joe Biden, this loan, supplemented by \$200 million from the Development Bank of

Southern Africa (DBSA), aims to renovate 1,300 kilometers of railway and purchase new locomotives. The loan includes investments in “railways, workshops, signaling systems, and rolling stock,” according to the Angolan Ministry of Transport, thus significantly strengthening the capacity, efficiency, and reliability of the logistics corridor.

“Central Africa is rich in resources essential to American industries, notably strategic raw materials for the tech and defense sectors,” explains the DFC in a statement. “DFC investments help ensure the reliability of supply chains and prevent China and other strategic competitors from gaining control,” it adds.

### **Competition with China Goes Through Lobito**

The Lobito Corridor, a project also supported by Europeans, is expected to dramatically reduce the transport time of minerals between the DRC or Zambia and the coast, from 45 days currently by road to 40 to 50 hours by train.

During President Biden’s visit to Angola in December 2024, a senior American official expressed confidence that Donald Trump would support this project: “You cannot claim to be competing with China and not support what is happening here.”

## 2. MALI: JUDGE ORDERS RETURN OF GOLD TO BARRICK MINING

Canada's Barrick Mining has officially resumed operational control of its Mali gold mine, according to a company memo.



Barrick will resume production gradually and will focus on mandatory training for employees and contractors, according to the memo sent by Sebastiaan Bock, Director of Operations for Africa and the Middle East.

The two sides reached an agreement last month to resolve their dispute over Barrick's operations in the West African country after two years of negotiations. The disagreement over the implementation of a new mining code introduced by the military-led government led to Barrick suspending operations at its gold mining complex in January, and a Malian court-appointed provisional administrator taking control in June.

A judge in Mali had ordered the return of three metric tonnes of gold worth about \$400 million to Canada's Barrick Mining. It was seized by military helicopter in January from the company's Louollo-Gounkoto complex following a confiscation order by a judge. The gold has reportedly been held since then in a bank vault in the country's capital, Bamako.

Also under the deal, Barrick agreed to pay a \$437 million settlement and withdraw its arbitration claims against Mali.

The government, in return, will drop its charges against the company and four Barrick employees detained since November last year have been released.

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### 3. MOROCCO: THE CAN 2025 HAS KICKED OFF

The Africa Cup of Nations is not a tournament like others. Organized every two years in an African country, it celebrates the continent, its youth, and its passion for football. The last edition took place in Côte d'Ivoire; the next one will be held in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

But the Moroccan edition aims to reach a new level. The numbers speak for themselves: 36 European channels will broadcast the matches, a first; the games will be broadcast in all 54 African countries; more than 5,000 applications for accreditation from international journalists have been submitted, along with hundreds of influencers from around the world.



In this context, security becomes a central element of the celebration. "A major sporting event is no longer just played on the field. It is played beforehand, in a country's ability to ensure fluid, invisible, reassuring

security," summarizes a sports geopolitical expert. Without it, there can be no celebration, nor a lasting positive narrative.

The African police cooperation center will thus welcome representatives from the security services of the 23 qualified countries, teams of observers tasked with accompanying supporters, as well as representatives from CAF, FIFA, and also from Spain and Portugal, looking towards the 2030 World Cup. "What changes today is the logic of pooling resources. We no longer secure an event alone, we secure it in a network," observes a specialist in international security arrangements.

### **The experience of Qatar 2022 and the 2024 Olympics**

Morocco is not discovering these issues. Its expertise is recognized and tested, already called upon during the World Cup in Qatar in 2022 or in the context of the Paris Olympic Games in 2024.

With CAN 2025, Rabat is not just organizing. It structures, pools, and exports a model. "Sport has become a diplomatic language in its own right," summarizes an analyst. "It allows projecting an image of stability and control without going through traditional diplomatic channels."

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#### 4. BENIN: AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT, INSIDE THE INFORMATION WAR

On December 7, Benin experienced a coup attempt led by Lieutenant-Colonel Pascal Tigri. While the physical events unfolded in Cotonou, a parallel battle erupted online. Social networks were flooded with fake news, much of it coordinated from neighboring countries, particularly Burkina Faso and Niger.



#### Key Players and Tactics

Kemi Seba, an activist and adviser to Niger's president, was a leading voice online, spreading false claims that President Patrice Talon had been overthrown and urging public demonstrations. Seba is now wanted internationally by Benin for inciting terrorism and revolt.

Fake news included fabricated interviews, such as one with Tigri on a newly created website, [beninnews.info](http://beninnews.info), which falsely claimed French support for the coup. This site was traced to Niger.

Many viral videos and photos supporting the coup were either taken out of context or generated by artificial intelligence. One widely shared video featured an AI-generated Tigri claiming the coup was ongoing.

### **Benin's Response**

The National Digital Investigation Center (CNIN), led by cybersecurity expert Ouanilo Medegan, launched a counter-offensive. They created a WhatsApp channel, “Anti Fake News Benin,” to debunk misinformation and educate the public.

CNIN’s investigations revealed that most accounts spreading disinformation were based in Burkina Faso and Niger. The campaign intensified in early 2025.

### **Regional Context**

Burkina Faso, under Ibrahim Traoré, is suspected of orchestrating fake news campaigns targeting both Western and African governments. The Rapid Communication Intervention Brigade (BIR-C) in Ouagadougou has previously targeted Côte d’Ivoire’s leadership, especially during elections and major events.

The Burkinabe National Intelligence Agency (ANR) has reportedly received support from Russian information warfare specialists, further complicating the regional information landscape.

### **Conclusion**

The attempted coup in Benin was not just a domestic crisis but part of a broader, coordinated information war in West Africa. Benin’s authorities are actively fighting back, but the episode highlights the growing role of digital disinformation and cross-border influence in regional instability.

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