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POLISH PLAN FOR \$400 MILLION WALL ALONG THE BELARUSIAN BORDER



*Current Razor Wire Fence Along the Poland-Belarus Border
Image Credit: CNN*

By Clay Penegar, Europe Deputy

Since August, the Polish-Belarusian border has seen increased tensions between the two nations over the mass attempts of migrants to pass through Belarus into Poland. This sudden influx of migrants was perceived by Poland and other EU member states as an act of vengeance for the placement of sanctions on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. In response, the Polish government authorized a state of emergency, the creation of a barbed-wire fence, and the deployment of more guards along the border.

So far, there have been an estimated 16,000 attempted migrant crossings into Poland. Additionally, on October 8, Polish patrols reported shots fired from Belarusian forces along the border, but no one was injured. As a result, Poland's government has formed a \$400 million plan for a wall spanning the border to prevent further migrant passage. On October 14, the Polish parliament passed a bill that authorizes the pushback of migrants across the border. Additionally, the wall bill passed through the lower house, although it still needs the approval of the Senate.

If the bill is to pass through the Senate, it can be estimated with moderate confidence that migrant crossing attempts will slow along the Polish border. However, it may result in the redirection of migrant flow into less-guarded neighboring nations. On the other hand, if the Senate does not vote in favor of the plan, migrant crossing attempts will likely persist, and relations with Belarus will worsen.

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*The Taliban's Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttagi
Image Credit: Euronews*

Strengthening of Taliban-Iranian Relations **By Kevin Joyce, Middle East Deputy**

On October 8, the Iranian government and the Taliban met to negotiate and sign an official trade deal. Trading hours at two of the main Afghanistan-Iranian trading ports have increased from eight hours a day to twenty-four hours a day. They hope this deal will help boost tariff collection and improve the road system for both countries.

Details of the Taliban-Iranian trade deal center on developing a gas pipeline between the Iranian city of Dowqarun and the trade port of Islam Qala on the Afghan-Iranian border. Future meetings will focus on major roadwork projects, oil matters, and security programs between both countries. It is suggested one of the main drivers of the Iranian government's interactions with the Taliban is to profit from the oil they cannot sell on the global market due to sanctions. We can predict with high confidence that this agreement will continue strengthening Taliban-Iranian relations.



*Trade Route Between the Iran-Afghanistan Border
Image Credit: Tehran Times*

Top Leader of Boko Haram Splinter Group Reported Dead **Casey Mazzone, Africa Desk**

Abu Musab al-Barnawi, a leading figure in a terrorist organization known as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has died, according to Nigeria's top military commander. Barnawi's death was not confirmed by ISWAP and, to many Nigerians, the chief's statement is not conclusive evidence.

The ISWAP is an offshoot of the Boko Haram insurgent group that has been fighting against the Nigerian Armed Forces for 12 years. In 2016, ISWAP splintered off from Boko Haram and has since spread throughout West Africa. In contrast to Boko Haram, which often targets civilians, ISWAP focuses attacks on military forces. Both terrorist organizations have caused about 30,000 deaths, created political instability, and left millions dependent on aid. If reports about Barnawi's death are true, he will be the third Islamist leader in the region to die this year. However, even before this alleged incident, ISWAP has lacked a solid leadership structure for years.

It can be stated with moderate to high confidence that the threat from the Islamist insurgency in Western Africa is far from over. While it is possible that Barnawi is the latest ISWAP leader to be killed this year, it is unlikely that the Islamist insurgency will subside, due the lack of structured leadership being ISWAP's standard even before such deaths.



*Prominent Leader of the ISWAP, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, Giving a Speech in 2018
Image Credit: The New York Times*