

**Technologies that
Can Empower
Cameroonians**



P 7

**The Astute Ink
wishes all its audience
a prosperous New Year
2026**

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Wisdom, The Truth In Communication

Seated at the Right Hand of the “father”

P 4-5



Cameroon and AFCON: A Legacy Written in Gold

info@theastuteink.com

Website: www.theastuteink.com

Announcement**The Astute Ink Newspaper Returns After a Break**

After a prolonged break brought about by resource constraints, your favourite newspaper, The Astute Ink, is back. Our return marks not just a resumption of publication, but a renewed commitment to the values that have always defined our work.

We could not have imagined that it would take this long to return after our last publication on April 22, 2022 but the challenges we faced were enormous. Today, we are grateful to say that we have overcome them, and we return stronger, wiser, and more determined.

Our comeback is driven by a clear resolve: to continue distinguishing ourselves by delivering the kind of journalism you truly need in today's media landscape—relevant, responsible, and reflective of our society.

We take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those who stood by us during the years we were absent from newspa-

per kiosks. Though we were away from print, The Astute Ink never went silent. We remained active through our website, social media platforms, and YouTube channel, where we consistently produced multimedia content for our audience. As we return to print, we reaffirm our promise to serve you with dedication and integrity. In turn, we count on your continued support through subscriptions and advertisements, which remain essential to sustaining and strengthening our operations.

We do not return as saints; we return committed to giving our best. And where you find fault in our work, we invite you to write to us at info@theastuteink.com. Your feedback will help us remain accountable and improve continuously. From the Management of The Astute Ink, please accept our best wishes for the New Year. Together, we move forward.

Management
The Astute Ink

**THE ASTUTE INK****Editorial Office**

Yaounde - Vieux Panier

Website: www.theastuteink.com

Email: info@theastuteink.com
PUBLISHER

Fonban E. Lendzemo

Tel: +237 674 77 45 46
e-mail: fonemmanuel14@yahoo.com

Deputy Publisher

Fomuso Sandra K.

Editor-in-Chief

M.J Lamtar

Managing Editor
Wirdin Blaise

North West Bureau

J.A
WEB MASTER
Beri Sela

Facebook: @Theastuteink
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Rebuilding Peace through Actions with Inclusive Reach – REPAIR is an initiative of the Network for Solidarity, Empowerment and Transformation for All (NewSETA) funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) Washington DC – USA. It is an annual youth peace and democracy series intending to deepen young people's knowledge about peace and democracy while fostering a culture of active youth participation and leadership. Based on the need to promote young people's active participation in democratic governance and political structures in Cameroon, the REPAIR series supports young activists and organizers as thought-leaders and allies in crafting solutions and new youth-focused approaches to democracy and its challenges in our society. The 2026 REPAIR series will host 40 youth leaders from the ten (10) regions of Cameroon for two (02) semesters, each lasting for three (03) days during which participants shall exchange and build knowledge, skills, and values needed in advancing peace and democracy work

Politics

Sited at the Right Hand of the Father



Inside the circle of loyalty that keeps Paul Biya in power and what the cabinet reshuffle might mean.

By Fonban E. Lendzemo

In the corridors of power in Yaoundé, proximity often speaks as loudly as authority. Few exemplify this maxim more clearly than the key figures seated close to President Paul Biya, individuals whose roles are as crucial as they are discreet in ensuring the continuity of the political status quo in Cameroon. From the Minister of State and Secretary General at the Presidency, Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, to the Director of the Civil Cabinet, Mvondo Ayolo, his assistant Babo, and Minister of Territorial Administration Paul Atanga Nji, these men occupy positions that are both influential and emblematic of loyalty to the long-standing president.

The Right Hand of the Father

Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, Minister of State and Secretary General at the Presidency, is widely regarded as one of President Biya's most trusted aides. His portfolio places him at the nexus of presidential decision-making, coordinating activities across ministries and ensuring

that the president's directives are implemented with precision. Ngoh Ngoh's tenure has been characterized by steadfast loyalty, a reputation for discretion, and an ability to navigate the complex landscape of Cameroon's political elite. For decades, he has been the linchpin in maintaining continuity within the presidency, quietly orchestrating the machinery that allows Biya to govern effectively.

Mvondo Ayolo, the Director of the Civil Cabinet, works in close partnership with Ngoh Ngoh. Often described as the president's gate-keeper, Ayolo manages access to Biya, ensures that the president's schedule is maintained, and mediates interactions with both domestic and international actors. His assistant, Babo, complements this role by overseeing the daily administrative operations within the Civil Cabinet, ensuring that the flow of information to and from the presidency is seamless. Together, Ayolo and Babo form a critical team that protects the president's time and ensures that policy decisions are executed without disruption.

Paul Atanga Nji, Minister of Territorial Administration, wields significant influence over Cameroon's political landscape. Responsible

for overseeing local governance, electoral processes, and administrative organization, Atanga Nji plays a pivotal role in maintaining the ruling party's grip on power across the country. His position allows him to coordinate with regional and local authorities, reinforcing the president's reach throughout Cameroon's diverse regions. Analysts note that Atanga Nji's strategic interventions in regional politics have often been key in forestalling dissent and consolidating support for Biya.

Loyalty as a Political Currency

What unites these figures is not only their proximity to the president but also their demonstrated loyalty. In a political system where allegiance can determine career longevity, being "sited at the right hand of the father" is both a privilege and a responsibility. Their loyalty is manifested in the execution of presidential directives, the maintenance of political stability, and their role as intermediaries between the president and other power brokers. Observers suggest that their continued presence in key positions is a signal to the wider political class: loyalty is rewarded, and disruption is discouraged.

Over the years, these men have become syn

POLITICS

onymous with continuity. In times of political uncertainty or speculation about succession, their steadfast support has helped maintain the public perception of stability within the Biya administration. Their influence extends beyond formal duties; they are often involved in shaping policy discussions, advising the president on appointments, and navigating the delicate balance between competing factions within the government.

The Anticipated Cabinet Reshuffle

With the much-anticipated cabinet reshuffle on the horizon, questions abound regarding the future of these loyalists. Will President Biya retain his inner circle of trusted aides, or will new faces be brought in to inject fresh energy into the administration? Historically, reshuffles have served multiple purposes: rewarding

loyalty, neutralizing potential rivals, and responding to domestic or international pressures. For Ngoh Ngoh, Ayolo, Babo, and Atanga Nji, their continued service will likely depend on a combination of their track record, perceived indispensability, and alignment with the president's strategic priorities.

Political analysts suggest that while some adjustments may occur, the core of Biya's inner circle is expected to remain intact. Their experience, discretion, and proven loyalty make them difficult to replace. However, the inclusion of new actors could signal a subtle shift in the administration's approach to governance, particularly in areas such as decentralization, public administration reform, and electoral management.

Looking Ahead

As Cameroonian await the president's decisions, the fate of these officials remains a topic of intense speculation. For now, their positions symbolize more than administrative authority; they represent the continuity of a political tradition rooted in loyalty, discretion, and close proximity to the center of power. Whether the upcoming reshuffle brings change or confirms the status quo, the influence of those sited closest to the president is unlikely to diminish anytime soon. In the complex chessboard of Cameroonian politics, being seated at the right hand of the father is not merely a matter of physical proximity—it is a testament to trust, a measure of loyalty, and a signal of enduring influence. As the nation watches, the next chapter in this enduring narrative will reveal how the delicate balance of power and loyalty is negotiated at the heart of the presidency.

Politics

Biya's traditional end-of-year speech was a near disaster

He repeated almost the same speech as last year, except for the announcement of a government, which he had never done before.

He spoke about the stakes of security, knowing very well that he has failed to protect the lives of Cameroonian, especially in the ongoing war in the North West and South West regions. He relies so much on the military, which is why he over-glorified the soldiers. Even in terms of recruitment, the security sector receives the highest priority.

About 2,000 soldiers are recruited every year, but when it comes to other sectors like education, paradoxically, there is no official recruitment. Even when recruitment existed, fewer than 200 teachers were hired per year. Meanwhile, many teachers have died, some have retired, and others have left the country due to push factors. Even when he recently ordered the reinstatement of teacher recruitment this year, there has still been a lukewarm attitude.

In higher education, the situation is even worse. Institutions can go for years without recruitment, and when recruitment finally happens, it may be just one lecturer for an entire department.

How can Biya talk about a booming economy when he has failed to resolve the country's security challenges? Where there is civil disobedience and boycotts in some parts of the country; Where people do not pay taxes because of ghost towns in the North West and South West; Where roads are almost out of use;

Where potable water is scarce and energy supply is poor, among many other problems.

Where, then, is the economic progress he is talking about? This is scandalous, as most Cameroonian survive only by sheer chance.

It is even more disheartening—and indeed provoking—that he mentioned a 50-billion-franc fund reserved for women and youths. Is this not another way to enrich experts in embezzlement? Who will manage the funds meant for the youth, if not the same people we already know?

Meanwhile, "living together" has turned into fighting together and deepening disunity. Clear examples include political prisoners languishing in agony, citizens fleeing the country for obvious reasons, and others hiding in the bushes calling for separation. Is this unity or division?

Why has he not pardoned political prisoners? Why can't he withdraw soldiers from the North West and South West regions?

Another striking issue in his speech was when he said he was "speaking the truth now." By implication, does this mean he used to lie to Cameroonian, since lies have become justifiable tools in political dealings? Can Cameroonian believe him now? I am in a dilemma.

Bob Marley once sang, "You can fool some



people sometimes, but you can't fool the same people all the time."

Let him match his words with actions, because until ideas are backed by action, success will remain only a dream. Wisdom, they say, is practical intelligence. Let him, for once, surprise Cameroonian who have trusted and re-elected him as their father.

by
Dr. Isidore kpa Kom

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Column

Technologies That Can Empower Cameroonians



Technology has become one of the most powerful tools for social and economic transformation.

For Cameroon, it offers practical solutions to long-standing challenges in finance, education, health, agriculture, renewable energy and employment.

Mobile technology is already driving change across Cameroon. With widespread mobile phone users, mobile money services have expanded finan-

cial inclusion, allowing traders, farmers, and informal workers to send, receive, and save money without traditional banks. Smartphones have also become essential tools for communication and small business operations.

In agriculture, digital tools and services like CAGRIB.com are helping farmers access Agribusiness loans, market prices, and farming advice. Simple platforms such as SMS services and WhatsApp groups enable farmers to share knowledge, improve productivity, and increase

incomes, especially in rural communities.

Education has also been transformed by technology. Online learning platforms and free digital resources like teachers-spot.com and checkmate-test.com allow young people to learn from the comfort of their homes. Digital education enable youths to gain valuable skills in areas like technology, design, and entrepreneurship. With better internet access, Cameroonian youth can compete globally while learning locally.

Health technology is improving access to health care, particularly in remote areas. Telemedicine, mobile health alerts, and digital health records help connect patients to medical professionals and improve health outcomes. If the use of digital integrated healthcare systems are taken seriously and implemented, this will reduce crowded hospitals and over scheduling which cause doctors to make costly mistakes.

Technology also fuels entrepreneurship. Social media and online platforms enable small businesses to reach customers, market products, and create jobs. Innovation hubs across the country are nurturing solutions to local problems.

Renewable and Green Technologies provide access to reliable electricity

which remains a challenge in many parts of Cameroon. Solar energy technologies—such as solar lamps, mini-grids, and solar-powered irrigation—offer sustainable solutions. These technologies reduce dependence on fossil fuels, lower costs for households, and support small businesses.

Green technology also aligns with environmental protection, ensuring development does not come at the expense of future generations.

Technology alone cannot transform Cameroon; it is a matter of shared responsibility. Success depends on supportive policies, affordable infrastructure, digital literacy, and a culture of innovation. Government, private sector, educational institutions, and citizens must work together to ensure technology serves the people—not the other way around.

If Cameroon invests intentionally in inclusive and practical technologies, the nation can empower its citizens, unlock creativity, and build a future where opportunity is not limited by geography or background.

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United States Accuses Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro of Narco-Terrorism at UN Security Council



by Fonban Emmanuel

The United States has delivered one of its strongest condemnations yet of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro at the United Nations Security Council, accusing him of narco-terrorism, international drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, and the systematic subversion of democracy. The statement, read by U.S. Special Envoy Mike Waltz, sharply questioned the legitimacy of Maduro's leadership and challenged the credibility of the UN itself if it continues to treat him as a lawful head of state.

According to the U.S. position, Maduro faces serious criminal charges in the United States for his alleged role in a "wide-ranging conspiracy" involving cocaine trafficking, narco-terrorism, and international arms trafficking. Waltz stated that the evidence against Maduro is overwhelming and will be presented openly in U.S. judicial proceedings, underscoring Washington's claim that the Venezuelan leader is not merely a political adversary but an indicted criminal fugitive.

In a striking departure from diplomatic language, the U.S. envoy rejected Maduro's status as a legitimate president or head of state. "Maduro was not a head of state," Waltz said, describing him

instead as an "illegitimate so-called president" who has clung to power through the manipulation of Venezuela's electoral system. The statement emphasized that for years, Maduro and his inner circle have undermined democratic processes to maintain control over the country, eroding public trust and political institutions in the process.

Central to the U.S. argument was the disputed 2024 Venezuelan election. Waltz cited a report by a United Nations panel of experts which concluded that the election "fell well short of the most basic transparency and integrity measures essential to upholding credible elections." The report, according to the U.S., described the vote as a farce, casting serious doubt on Maduro's claim to a renewed mandate.

The United States further noted that more than 50 countries, including members of the European Union and several Latin American nations, rejected the legitimacy of Maduro's re-election following the 2024 polls. These countries, Washington argued, do not recognize Maduro as Venezuela's lawfully elected president, reinforcing the claim that his continued rule lacks international democratic legitimacy.

Waltz asserted that Maduro unlawfully refused to cede power

despite losing the 2024 election, effectively defying the will of the Venezuelan people. This refusal, the U.S. contends, places Maduro outside the bounds of both domestic and international law, transforming him from a disputed leader into a fugitive from justice.

Beyond electoral concerns, the U.S. statement accused Maduro of leading what it described as a "vicious foreign terrorist organization" known as the Cartel de los Soles. According to Washington, this regime-sponsored criminal enterprise coordinates with other violent organizations to traffic drugs and destabilize the region. Among these groups is Tren de Aragua, which the United States has designated as a foreign terrorist organization.

Tren de Aragua, the U.S. said, has thousands of members and operates across borders, engaging in drug trafficking, human smuggling, extortion, and violence. The U.S. accused the Maduro regime of relying on such groups to advance its objectives, including the use of illegal narcotics as a weapon against the United States and its allies. This framing elevates Venezuela's crisis from a regional political dispute to a matter of international security, in Washington's view.

Perhaps the most provocative element of the statement was

its challenge to the United Nations itself. Waltz questioned what kind of organization the UN would be if it confers legitimacy on what the U.S. calls an "illegitimate narco-terrorist" while granting the same diplomatic treatment afforded to democratically elected leaders. This remark reflects long-standing U.S. frustration with multilateral institutions that continue to engage Maduro's government despite allegations of human rights abuses, electoral fraud, and criminal activity.

The statement underscores the deepening divide within the international community over how to address Venezuela's crisis. While the U.S. and its allies advocate for accountability, sanctions, and international pressure, other nations continue to recognize Maduro's government or argue for non-interference in Venezuela's internal affairs.

By delivering this message at the UN Security Council, the United States signaled its intent to keep Venezuela at the center of global diplomatic attention. The remarks by Mike Waltz suggest that Washington is not only seeking to isolate Maduro politically but also to redefine his regime as a criminal and terrorist entity rather than a conventional government.

As Venezuela's political deadlock persists and humanitarian conditions remain dire, the U.S. position raises difficult questions for the international community: whether engagement legitimizes authoritarian rule, and whether global institutions can remain neutral in the face of allegations that link state power to organized crime. For now, the Security Council remains a battleground not only over Venezuela's future, but over the principles that underpin international governance itself.

Sports

Cameroon and AFCON: A Legacy Written in Gold



by
Sports Desk

Cameroon's name is woven deeply into the history of the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON). Five times crowned kings of African football, the Indomitable Lions have regularly embodied the fighting spirit and collective will that define this tournament. Yet this edition has been different: some of Cameroonian football's biggest household names such as André Onana and Vincent Aboubakar were left out of the ongoing AFCON squad.

Still, Cameroon's campaign in Morocco has shown that this team remains formidable, united, and unbeaten, proving that the legacy of the Lions goes far beyond individual stars.

Since the start of AFCON 2025, Cameroon has not tasted defeat. After navigating the group stage without loss, the Lions produced a gritty performance to eliminate South Africa 2–1 in the Round of 16, a match that set up a quarter-final clash with hosts Morocco.

Against Bafana Bafana, Cameroon

soaked up early pressure and seized their opportunities: defender Junior Tchamadeu broke the deadlock in the 34th minute, and young forward Christian Kofane doubled the lead shortly after half-time. South Africa pulled one back late but Cameroon held on to preserve their perfect record in the competition thus far.

This unbeaten run, at a time when several big names are absent, says as much about team unity and discipline as it does about raw talent.

At the core of Cameroon's impressive AFCON campaign is a new and courageous leadership under head coach David Pagou, who is handling a national team for the first time in his career. Taking over from Belgian coach Marc Brys—whose tenure in Cameroon was marked by persistent controversies and public confrontations with FECAFOOT president Samuel Eto'o Fils, despite being widely seen as the preferred choice of the Minister of Sports and Physical Education. Rather than cling to established household names that had long dominated the national team, Pagou made the bold decision to refresh the squad, placing his trust in emerging talents and players hungry to prove themselves on the continental stage. For a first-time national team coach, ignoring familiar stars required cour-

age, clarity, and conviction, but the results have vindicated his approach, as Cameroon remains unbeaten in the tournament and continues to display unity, discipline, and renewed determination—clear signs that leadership built on belief and bold decisions can still drive the Indomitable Lions forward.

At the heart of this run has been Nouhou Tolo. The 28-year-old left-back who plies his trade with Seattle Sounders FC in Major League Soccer has brought calm leadership to the backline and is captaining the side with authority.

In midfield, Carlos Baleba of Brighton & Hove Albion has been a force of energy, breaking up play, driving transitions, and showing a maturity in his game far beyond his years.

Up front, Bryan Mbeumo, the Manchester United forward, has carried much of Cameroon's creative responsibility. Though he has yet to score at this tournament, his vision and link-up play have been vital—he provided the assist in the opening win over Gabon and has consistently troubled defences with his movement.

Another standout has been Danny Namaso, the forward on loan at Auxerre from Porto. His physical presence and forward runs have given Cameroon an extra dimension in attack and

helped stretch opposing backlines. These players and others stepping up demonstrate that Cameroon's strength lies not just in individual brilliance but in collective belief and tactical cohesion.

A Legacy of Collective Might
Cameroon's football history is full of moments where the team outperformed expectations. The Indomitable Lions have often turned perceived weaknesses into strengths, using tactical discipline, fierce work ethic, and unity to overcome technically superior or opponents.

This AFCON journey echoes that tradition. Without some of the most recognised names, Cameroon isn't just surviving—it's thriving.

As the tournament progresses and the quarter-final against Morocco looms, the Lions carry with them not just a quest for silverware, but the weight of history and the expectations of millions. More importantly, they carry with them the belief that their legacy is written by collective resolve, not just individual names.

In football and beyond, Cameroon's performance at AFCON 2025 is reminding Africa that legacies endure not because stars shine, but because teams grow together and refuse to yield.

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by
FONBAN Emmanuel



‘Naked imperialism’: how Trump intervention in Venezuela is a return to form for the US



Most of the Americas have suffered from interference from their powerful northern neighbour – and are usually the worse off for it

The US bombardment of Venezuela and the capture of its president, Nicolás Maduro, follow a long history of interventions in South and Central America and the Caribbean over the past two centuries. But they also mark an unprecedented moment as the first direct US military attack on a South American country.

At a press conference after Maduro’s capture, Donald Trump said that “American dominance in the western hemisphere will never be questioned again”.

But since the mid-19th century, the US has intervened in its continental neighbours not only through economic pressure but also militarily, with a long list of invasions, occupations and, in the case most closely resembling the current situation, the capture of Panama’s dictator Manuel Noriega in 1989.

Covert actions helped topple democratically elected governments and usher in military dictatorships in countries such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina, but overt US military operations have historically been confined to closer neighbours in Central America and the Caribbean.

The first direct US military attack on a South American country “signals a major shift in foreign and defence policy – one that is made explicit in the new national security strategy published by the Trump administration a few weeks ago”, said Maurício Santoro, a professor of international relations at the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

That strategy called for an “expansion” of the US military presence in the region in what it describes as a “Trump corollary” to the Monroe doctrine – the “America for Americans” foreign policy set out in 1823 by President James Monroe and later used to justify US-backed military coups in South and Central America.

While Saturday’s action was “in line” with many past operations, it is “shocking because nothing like this has happened since 1989”, said Alan McPherson, a history professor at Temple University and author of *A Short History of US Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

“One might have thought that this era of naked imperialism – of the US getting the political outcomes it wants in Latin America through sheer military force – would be over in the 21st century, but clearly it is not,” he added.

Almost every country in the region has experienced some form of US intervention, overt or covert, in the past decades. Below are a few examples.

The annexation of Texas, a former Mexican territory, sparked border disputes that led to a US invasion of Mexico, with American troops occupying the capital, Mexico City, in 1847. The war ended only with the signing of a treaty in 1848 that forced Mexico to cede 55% of its territory – an area encompassing what are now the states of California, Nevada and Utah, as well as parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming.

In 1898, the US helped Cuba in its war of independence against Spain. After the victory, the US received control of Puerto Rico and occupied Cuba until 1902, when an agreement granted the US navy perpetual control of Guantánamo Bay. US troops later occupied the island in from 1906 to 1909 and again from 1917 to 1922. After Fidel Castro’s 1959 revolution, the CIA backed the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 in an attempt to trigger an uprising.

Under the pretext of “stabilising” the country and protecting US business interests after domestic unrest that led to the repeated overthrow of Haitian leaders, the US invaded Haiti in 1915, taking control of customs, the treasury and the national bank until 1934. When an attempted rebellion threatened the dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier in 1959,

the CIA worked behind the scenes to secure his survival, viewing him as an ally in containing the influence of Fidel Castro’s Cuban revolution.

Although it ultimately never intervened, a US naval taskforce was positioned off Brazil’s coast to intervene in case there was resistance to the military coup that overthrew the democratically elected leftwing president João Goulart in 1964. In the 1970s, the CIA and the FBI directly advised the repressive apparatus of dictatorships in countries such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina in the persecution and assassination of dissidents under what became known as Operation Condor.

The US militarily backed the separatist movement that led to Panama’s break from Colombia in 1903 and, after independence, Washington retained significant influence over the Central American country. In 1989, President George HW Bush ordered Panama’s invasion by about 27,000 US troops to capture the dictator Noriega – a former CIA ally who had been indicted on drug-trafficking charges in US courts.

Hours after the strikes, in which an estimated 200-500 civilians were killed, along with about 300 Panamanian soldiers, the US installed the declared winner of the election, Guillermo Endara, as president.

It remains unclear whether a similar outcome will follow in Venezuela, which Trump has said would be “run” by the US until a “proper transition can take place”.

McPherson said it is “very rare” for US interventions in the region to be followed by “peace, tranquillity, stability and democracy”.

“US interventions almost always create long-term problems of succession,” he added.

by

Tiago Rogero South America correspondent

Source: The Guardian

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