

Week of 5 October – 9 October

AI FOR ALL GLOBAL BRIEF

1. GLOBAL SIGNALS — LABOR, GOVERNANCE & SOCIETY

A \$300 Million Smuggling Case Shows Where AI Chip Controls Leak: Through Third Countries

US prosecutors have charged Greg Lui, the 38-year-old owner of California-based Earthmade Computer, with conspiring to violate export controls, outbound smuggling and money laundering over more than \$300 million worth of servers built with Nvidia AI chips. According to the charges, the servers were first exported to Malaysia and Singapore, which do not require licenses for these chips, and then sent on to buyers in China, with false paperwork given to US manufacturers about their final destination. One purchase alone covered 27 servers with Nvidia H100 GPUs for about \$7.6 million.

Lui was arrested on October 1; the alleged scheme ran from 2023 and continued until at least mid-August this year. The FBI and the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security announced the case with prosecutors in the Central District of California. If convicted on all counts, he faces more than 20 years in prison.

Why it matters: Export controls are written in Washington but enforced in shipping hubs. For Malaysia, Singapore and other transit economies building their own AI industries, each case like this raises the odds of tighter licensing on their imports — a cost that falls on their legitimate data centers, startups and researchers as much as on smugglers.

Sources: [Transport Topics](#) | [South China Morning Post](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- A US appeals court has ruled for the first time on AI training data: the Third Circuit held that ROSS Intelligence's use of Thomson Reuters' Westlaw headnotes to train a competing legal-research tool was not fair use, while leaving open how the reasoning applies to generative AI. [\[source\]](#)

2. INFRASTRUCTURE & COMPUTE

Lesotho Becomes the First Country to Apply the UN's AI Blueprint — Starting With What It Needs, Not What It Builds

The United Nations Blueprint for National AI and Data Strategies, designed for countries with limited resources and launched on Digital Cooperation Day on September 21, has its first user. Lesotho will run Phase One of a National Compute Roadmap from 2026 to 2029, assessing demand for computing, energy, connectivity, data governance, skills, financing and institutional models — as well as the environmental and social effects of data centers — before committing to hardware. The roadmap builds on a draft produced at a workshop in Maseru in August.

Prime Minister Samuel Matekane has framed the test as whether infrastructure investment delivers concrete benefits to people. The work is coordinated by the UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies with UNDP, UNICEF, ITU, UNESCO, the World Bank and the OECD, and draws on practitioners from Senegal, Ethiopia and Guinea. No budget or capacity target has been published yet.

Why it matters: Africa holds about a fifth of the world's population but less than 1% of its operational data center capacity, and large projects have stalled when power needs outgrew the grid. Starting from what people and public services actually need is a cheaper way to avoid buying the wrong infrastructure — and a template other small countries can now use.

Sources: [iAfrica](#) | [Ecofin Agency](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- Kenya's proposed \$1.5 billion Hercules AI data center in Mombasa would come with its own LNG-fired power platform, with GE Vernova involved; financing, capacity and schedule remain unsettled. [\[source\]](#)
- Google has signed 3.6 gigawatts of power agreements with Constellation in the US PJM region, including a 20-year, 890-megawatt nuclear deal backed by \$4.3 billion of upgrades at 11 reactors. [\[source\]](#)

3. EDUCATION & HUMAN CAPACITY

Orange Pledges AI Training Grants for About 200,000 Young Egyptians

After a meeting between President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Orange Group CEO Christel Heydemann on September 27, Orange announced training grants for around 200,000 young Egyptians in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data analytics and cloud computing, leading to internationally recognized certifications. The group also committed €25 million to support Egyptian startups working in AI and advanced technologies, and plans to equip several universities with technology labs.

Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is the government partner. Application procedures, eligibility and start dates have not yet been published.

Why it matters: At this scale, the program could reach a meaningful share of young Egyptians entering a job market where AI and cybersecurity skills increasingly decide who gets hired. Its value will depend on details still missing: who can apply, how places are allocated outside Cairo, and whether certifications lead to jobs.

Sources: [TechAfrica News](#) | [Egyptian Streets](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- UNDP and the GSMA have signed a partnership to support African-led AI, including AI in African languages, linking the GSMA's mobile-industry networks with UNDP's timbuktoo initiative and university innovation pods; the announcement discloses no funding, pilot numbers or compute amounts. [\[source\]](#)

4. CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

South Africa's Hit-Makers Found Their Music Inside AI Generators. Now One Is Telling Producers to Give the Mic Back.

A searchable database published by The Atlantic in June showed which artists' recordings had been used to train the AI music generators Suno and Udio. South African names featured prominently: Kabza De Small, DJ Maphorisa and Spirit Pride, with Nasty C the highest-placed local hip-hop act — included without the artists' knowledge or consent.

On October 4, Zakes Bantwini took the argument to his own industry. “Tone down the AI vocals,” he urged DJs and producers on X, saying the world is full of real voices waiting for a chance and asking them to give those singers the microphone. The response split: some producers said vocalists are hard to reach, while others argued that using AI is simply the cheaper route.

Why it matters: For South African vocalists, the threat is concrete: losing paid sessions to synthetic voices that may have been trained on their own scene's music. The decision is being made studio by studio, long before any court or regulator weighs in.

Sources: [Briefly News](#) | [Gearnews on The Atlantic's database](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- Earlier this year, Wits University in Johannesburg showcased five projects pairing artists and engineers from seven African countries to preserve and re-create traditional music with AI, alongside a panel on how the continent's music industry can keep control in the AI era. [\[source\]](#)

5. REGIONAL LENS — AFRICA & THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Qatar Keeps Its National AI Compute at Home

Qai, Qatar's national AI company, will host its GPU infrastructure in a certified data center run by MEEZA, a Qatari digital infrastructure provider, under an agreement announced on October 4. Qai will deploy latest-generation high-performance GPUs supported by MEEZA's high-density power, with MEEZA providing operations, monitoring and lifecycle management. Services will run from facilities inside Qatar, keeping data under Qatari jurisdiction and national data-protection and cybersecurity rules.

The agreement covers an initial deployment; financial terms, GPU numbers and duration have not been disclosed.

Why it matters: Small states are choosing to host national AI capacity on domestic operators rather than rent it from global cloud providers. For Qatari public services and businesses, that means their data stays under national law — a model other mid-sized economies weighing sovereignty against cost are watching.

Source: [Gulf Times](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- Southeast Asia is starting to count the costs of its data center boom, with Thailand pausing projects and Malaysia's grid under pressure; “at what cost and at what speed?” asks Mark Manantan of La Trobe University. [\[source\]](#)

6. OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS

African Energy Week Opens Its First Track on AI and Data Centers

African Energy Week 2026, running from October 12 to 16 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, has added a dedicated AI and Data Centre track for the first time. It covers the energy needs of data centers and the use of AI in grids and power systems, bringing together the two industries whose decisions now shape each other across the continent.

Registration is handled by the organizer, with all-access, conference-only, group and South Africa-based passes; prices have not been published.

Why it matters: Who powers Africa's data centers, and at whose expense, is being decided in rooms like this. For engineers, utility staff, investors and policy advisers in Cape Town this week, it is a chance to be part of that conversation rather than read about its results.

Sources: [Capmad](#) | [iAfrica](#)

ALSO THIS WEEK

- Last call: applications for the free, eight-week online AI, Ethics and Climate Governance Fellowship for early-career Africans, run by Emerging Climate Frontiers and the Young Africans Research Academy, close on October 16 at 23:59 GMT. [\[source\]](#)

ONE SIGNAL WE ARE WATCHING

Demand before hardware. This week, the most useful AI decisions were about what to build, where and for whom. Lesotho became the first country to apply the UN's AI blueprint, starting with a roadmap of what its people and public services need before buying any compute. Qatar chose to keep its national AI capacity on a domestic operator, under its own laws. Thailand paused data center projects to weigh their cost. A \$300 million smuggling case showed how chip rules written in Washington land on transit economies. And in South Africa, an artist asked his own industry to choose human voices over synthetic ones. The signal to watch is whether countries and communities can set these terms before the hardware, the contracts and the habits arrive, rather than after.

AI for All Global Brief is a publication of Tomorrow Foundation.