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Man Plants Flag on Unclaimed African Land So Daughter Can Be Its Princess



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Jeremiah Heaton and his seven year-old daughter, Princess Emily, show the flag on July 2, 2014, in Abingdon, Virginia, that their family designed as they try to claim a piece of land in the Eastern African region of Bir Tawil. *David Crigger—AP*

by Jack Linshi

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hen six-year-old Emily asked her father if she could be a real princess, Virginia resident Jeremiah Heaton took his daughter's wish quite literally. No tiaras, frilly dresses or distant Disney dreams for this little girl. Heaton gave her the real deal, or at least, is trying to — the royal title of princess, complete with land for her to rule, in an 800-square-mile patch of desert in the Middle of Nowhere, Africa.

Heaton searched the Internet for *terra nullius*, or unclaimed land, and received permission from Egyptian authorities to visit a plot of land roughly half the size of Connecticut between Egypt and Sudan. Locals call the area Bir Tawil, a land unclaimed by its neighbors after a discrepancy in borders drawn in 1899 and 1902. But Heaton and his family call it "Kingdom of North Sudan," ruled by King Heaton and Princess Emily after he planted a homemade blue flag on on July 16, Emily's birthday.

"I wanted to show my kids I will literally go to the ends of the earth to make their wishes and dreams come true," Heaton told the *Washington Post*.

But claiming land designated *terra nullius* isn't first come, first served. To obtain real political authority, Heaton must receive legal recognition from Egypt, Sudan, the United Nations or other political groups. He hopes to forge positive relationships with the neighbors of the "Kingdom of North Sudan" by turning the arid desert into an agricultural production center. Most of all, Heaton is arguing that his approach to winning land is far more civil than the bloody imperialism of history.

"I founded the nation in love for my daughter," Heaton said.

[Washington Post]

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