



# The West Africa Report

*Security and Piracy - At Sea - On  
Land - Domestic News  
and Developments for the  
International Resources Sector*

## The West Africa Report ~ SUMMARY

February 18 – March 3, 2013



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### Benin

- **3 March 2013** - Authorities in Benin have indicated that they have thwarted an attempt to oust current President Thomas Boni Yayi and to install in his place a military regime that would control the West African Nation.
- **23 February 2013** - Amidst the recent kidnapping of a French family in northern Cameroon, France on Saturday disclosed that its nationals were at risk of kidnappings or attacks in the state of Benin and have warned of a specific danger close to neighbouring Niger.

### Burkina Faso

- Travel advisory for Burkina Faso.

### Cameroon

- **26 February 2013** - With the release of a YouTube video, France's defence minister has ruled out talks with the abductors who are currently holding a French family.
- **21 February 2013** - France has denied a claim that seven members of a French family who were kidnapped earlier this week in northern Cameroon by suspected Islamist militants have been freed.

- **20 February 2013** - According to the Cameroonian government, the armed gunmen who kidnapped seven members of a French family, including four young children, have taken them across the border into Nigeria.
- **19 February 2013** - French President Francois Hollande has confirmed that seven French nationals, including four children, have been kidnapped in the northern region of Cameroon, near the border with Nigeria.

## Guinea

- **28 February 2013** - Two days of anti-government demonstrations in the capital city of Conakry has resulted in the death of one protestor and has left more than 100 people injured.
- **19 February 2013** - Youths have clashed with security forces in the capital city of Conakry one day after authorities in the West African nation praised the rare peaceful pro-democracy.

## Guinea-Bissau

- **22 February 2013** - The United Nations Security Council has extended the United Nations office in Guinea-Bissau for an additional three months.

## Ivory Coast

- **19 February 2013** - Ivorian ex-President Laurent Gbagbo has appeared before judges of the International Criminal Court who will decide whether there is enough evidence to try him for masterminding a bloody election standoff which occurred two years ago.

## Mali

- Travel Summary
- MS RISK guidance to organizations in Mali
- Breakdown of the Mali Intervention
  - **Summary** - Over the past few weeks, French-led forces have been increasingly facing guerrilla-style tactics after initially meeting minimal resistance in their drive to push Islamists from the main northern centres of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.

### *Domestic News*

- **2 March 2013** - Unconfirmed reports have indicated that top al-Qaeda leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar has been killed by Chadian soldiers in Mali just one day after Chadian President Idris Deby announced that his troops had killed another senior AQIM leader, Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, who was killed in the mountainous region of the country.
- **1 March 2013** - Efforts are currently underway to confirm the reported killing of one of the most notorious and ruthless leaders of al-Qaeda's North African wings.
- **28 February 2013** - Despite earlier government promises that French troops would begin to pullout of Mali within the coming weeks, officials in Paris have confirmed that French troops will stay in the West African country until at least July.
  - Meanwhile West African leaders have called for a regional military operation against al-Qaeda-linked rebels in north Mali to be transformed into United Nations peacekeeping mission as quickly as possible in order to secure the desperately needed funding.

## Mauritania

- Travel Summary
- **26 February 2013** - In the wake of the military mission in Mali, and the hostage incident in Algeria, Mauritanian and Algerian authorities are taking the necessary steps in order to better secure their borders.
- **21 February 2013** - Mauritania has launched a border security exercise with NATO allies.

## Niger

- Travel Summary
- **22 February 2013** - President Obama has announced that about 100 American troops have been sent to Niger in order to help set up a new base from which unarmed Predator drones will conduct surveillance in the region.

## [Nigeria](#)

- Travel Summary
- MS RISK guidance to organizations in Nigeria

### *At Sea*

#### ***Incidents***

- **17 February 2013** - Robbers in a wooden boat approached a berthed Hong Kong, China-flagged bulk carrier, the African Joy, at 0615 LT in position 06:27N - 003:23E, Berth No. 2, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria.
- **7 February 2013** (Late Reporting) - Around seventeen pirates armed with AK-47 rifles attacked, boarded and hijacked a Liberia-flagged offshore supply vessel, the Armada Tugas 1, underway at 0700 LT in position 03:40.48N - 005:53.12E, around 40 nautical miles SSE of Brass, Nigeria.

#### ***Related News:***

- **26 February 2013** - Six foreign sailors have been released unharmed by pirates who seized them off the coast of Nigeria's oil-producing region nine days ago.
- **19 February 2013** - Fifteen Russian sailors have been charged with illegally bringing weapons into the country.

### *On Land*

- **3 March 2013** - Nigeria's military has indicated that they have killed twenty Boko Haram militants while repelling an attack by the extremist group in the north-eastern state of Borno.
  - Meanwhile two militants who have been linked to a series of explosions in Maiduguri that injured four people last week have been arrested by the military.
- **27 February 2013** - Nigerian troops have indicated that they have killed a suspected commander of Boko Haram and three of his lieutenants during an operation in the northeastern city of Maiduguri.
- **24 February 2013** - Nigeria's military has confirmed that at least six people have been killed in an attack in northeastern Nigeria, a region which has seen a number of attacks carried out by Islamist extremists.
- **23 February 2013** - In the latest string of attacks, police in Nigeria have confirmed that gunmen on motorcycles have shot dead five people and injured several others in the northeastern region of the country.
- **21 February 2013** - Nigeria's Secret Service has confirmed that they have arrested a "terrorist cell" that was trained in Iran and which was planning to attack US and Israeli targets in Africa's most populous nation.
  - Meanwhile authorities have indicated that two separate suicide bombings in Nigeria's northeast city of Maiduguri have killed at least three civilians and injured many soldiers.
- **18 February 2013** - The Islamist group Ansaru has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of seven foreigners over the past weekend, which cited France's recent military intervention in Mali as the reason behind the attack.

#### *Domestic News:*

- **1 March 2013** - Nigeria's High Court has ruled that President Goodluck Jonathan is eligible to run for President in the 2015 elections.

## [Senegal](#)

- **22 February 2013** - The United States Embassy in Senegal has indicated that it has received information pertaining to a possible bomb threat in the capital of Dakar.

## [Sierra Leone](#)

- **21 February 2013** - It has been confirmed that Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma's inauguration for a second five-year terms in office will occur as planned on Friday despite opposition threats to boycott the ceremony.

## [About MS Risk](#)



*Although there are currently no travel warnings which have been issued for Benin, France has issued a warning indicating a possible threat of attacks and kidnappings occurring near the border with Niger and Nigeria. As such, MS Risk advises against any travel to the border regions with these two countries. There is currently a low threat from terrorism in Benin however terrorist attacks may occur at any place, and at any time.*

#### Domestic News:

- **3 March 2013** - Authorities in Benin have indicated that they have thwarted an attempt to oust current President Thomas Boni Yayi and to install in his place a military regime that would control the West African Nation. In a statement that was released to the media, state prosecutor Justin Gbenameto stated that a colonel and businessman have been arrested for plotting “to block the head of state from returning to Cotonou after his trip and to institute a military regime.”
- **23 February 2013** - Amidst the recent kidnapping of a French family in northern Cameroon, France on Saturday disclosed that its nationals were at risk of kidnappings or attacks in the state of Benin and have warned of a specific danger close to neighboring Niger. The recent kidnapping, which is the first case of foreigners being seized in the mostly Muslim north of the country, highlights the threat to French interests in West Africa since France deployed thousands of troops to Mali in order to oust al-Qaeda-linked militants from the northern region of the country. Since France’s warning was released, the foreign ministry has updated its travel advisory, stating that “despite the Benin authorities committing to increase security in particular areas, the risk of kidnappings and attacks exists in Benin.” France has warned its 3,700 citizens in Benin to avoid going out at night and against all travel on the main road leading from Tchaourou, about 350 kilometers north of the capital of Porto-Novo, to Malanville and the W National Park which is close to the border with Niger. The kidnapping of the family in Cameroon has brought the number of French citizens being held in West Africa to fifteen. Local police have confirmed that security forces are searching for the family who were taken into Nigeria shortly after being kidnapped. French President Francois Hollande has indicated that there was no new information relating to the whereabouts of the hostages.



Avoid ALL  
travel to part(s)  
of country



Burkina Faso

### Travel Summary:

Any citizens traveling to, and residing in, Burkina Faso are urged to exercise and maintain a high level of security awareness at all times. There is a general threat from terrorism in the Sahel region. With the recent French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened threat of retaliatory attacks that could target Western, especially French, interests throughout the region. Similarly, al-Qaeda-linked militants, who are reportedly taking shelter in the northern region of Mali, may have also crossed the border into neighbouring countries, including Burkina Faso. These men may have disguised themselves as refugees in an attempt to blend in.

Intelligence reports have confirmed that terrorists are highly likely to be planning kidnap operations in Burkina Faso. Consequently there is a heightened risk that kidnap activity may cross the northern borders from Niger and Mali into Burkina Faso. MS RISK advises against all travel to the northern region of Burkina Faso, specifically north of the town of Boulou, which is located 25km north of the capital city of Ouagadougou. This includes the border provinces of Lebara, Kenedougou, Banwa, Kossi, Sourou, Yatenga, Loroum, Soum, Oudalan, Seno, Yagha, Komondjari and Tapoa. Since 2008, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has captured over 25 hostages of a variety of nationalities, primarily European, in which a number of these hostages are still being held.



There is also a high risk of crime involving armed groups stopping vehicles (including public buses) in order to rob them. Such incidents have occurred in various parts of the country, particularly at night. As such all travel between towns by road at night is to be avoided, especially from Ouagadougou to Po where there is a heightened risk posed by bandits. This is especially severe on market days when highwaymen often operate in the hopes of catching merchants with stock or cash en route to and from the urban areas.

### ***MS RISK Guidance to Organisations in Burkina Faso:***

Although the biggest concern at this time remains to be in the northern areas of the country, specifically along the porous Mali border and at the junction of the Niger border, the attack and kidnapping that occurred in Algeria has demonstrated that such attacks can occur at any place and at any time. In turn, the attack on BP in Algeria came just days after Islamists announced that they would retaliate against French interests in the region. Consequently, it is highly likely that more attacks will take place over the coming months.

There is an increased Burkinabe military presence in the north of the country and companies should review their respective security situations and consider the following:

- Location and safety of personnel
- Security controls, communications and contingency plans at static locations
- Work tempo implications
- Journey management systems in place and working
- Liaison with the military - use of military escorts, coordination between multiple assets, confirmation that military escorts are coordinated and competent for the task.
- Reviewing all crisis management contingencies including but not limited to the following:
  - Kidnap (for ransom or ideological purposes)
  - Medical emergency and evacuation cycle for northern area
  - Interdiction of road moves for personnel and any convoys
  - Loss of communications with remote locations - enhanced comms options, access to stores if replenishment is restricted or cut off.
  - Media and public affairs contingency
- Liaising with insurers to ensure appropriate cover is in place to meet speciality risks where needed.

Companies that rely on police escorts in the northern region of the country should ensure that travel patterns do not become predictable. Varying routes are difficult due to the limited road networks, as such, it is even more important to vary the types of vehicles that are used as well as to time the journeys and to avoid travel patterns becoming widely known. This is especially critical given the current tensions that are occurring along the Mali border and the impending ECOWAS operations. All companies that are linked to the World Bank/International Finance Cooperation should familiarise themselves with the IFC Voluntary Principles on the Use of Security Forces. This applies to military, police or private security services.

Finally, unconfirmed reports have suggested that there is an elevated banditry threat that exists on the main routes south and east of the town of Fada N'Gourma en route to Pama and Diapala respectively. Road moves to these areas should be risk assessed and liaison with police should occur until the nature of the threats have been clarified. Companies with operations in the region are invited to report incidents to MS Risk in order to aid in assessing the local atmospherics.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country

*With the recent kidnapping of seven French tourists, who were kidnapped by militants near the Waza National Park in the Far North Region and whose whereabouts are currently unknown, MS Risk advises against all travel to areas of the Far North Province within 25 km of the Nigeria/Cameroon border as well as the northern city of Maroua and Lake Chad. This is due to the heightened risk of terrorist attacks, kidnappings and armed banditry. Further such kidnappings may occur. We also advise against all travel to the Bakassi Peninsula and within 20 km of the border with Nigeria in the Ndiang Division of the South West province. MS Risk also advises against all travel to areas within 40 km of the border with Chad as well as within 40 km of the border with the Central African Republic. There is general threat from terrorism throughout the country. Attacks could be indiscriminate and may occur in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. The ongoing instability in northern Nigeria has increased the potential for attacks by militants on Western interests throughout Cameroon. There is also a risk of retaliatory attacks against Western interests in Cameroon following the French military intervention in Mali. Attacks could take place at any time at locales that are frequented by Westerners, including tourist, commercial and transport facilities. There is currently an increased presence of Islamic extremism in northern Cameroon. The government of Cameroon is expected to cut fuel subsidies in the near future. This may trigger strikes and civil unrest throughout the entire country. You are advised to avoid all crowds and political demonstrations and rallies.*

## On The Ground Events:

- 26 February 2013** - With the release of a YouTube video, France's defence minister has ruled out talks with the abductors who are currently holding a French family. Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian indicated that "we do not negotiate on these terms, with these groups. What we do is use all possible means to ensure the release of hostages, be they these or others, but we do not play this bidding game because that is terrorism." Mr. Le Drian made the announcement in light of a video that was released on YouTube which depicts the hostages and their abductors who claimed to be from the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram. The video, which France's foreign minister has described as shocking, is the first image of the family to emerge since they were abducted in Cameroon on 19 February. The kidnappers, who are claiming that they are from Nigeria's Boko Haram group, have stated that they carried out the abduction in part due to France's "war against Islam," which apparently is a reference to the ongoing French military action in Mali. The more than three minute video depicts the family, including the four children, held in an undisclosed location,



surrounded by at least three of the abductors whose faces are hidden. It however is not clear when the video was taped. At the start of the video, the father of the family is reading a statement from a piece of paper, with his four children in front of him, his wife and brother beside him. One of the abductors addresses Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, stating that "if you want us to release these French citizens, quickly release all of our women you are detaining." The man also calls on Cameroon to "release our brothers." Despite claims made during the video, it is not clear if the abductors are indeed from Boko Haram. Most previous Boko Haram videos have featured suspected leader Abubakar Shekay speaking in the Hausa language which is common in Nigeria's north, however he does not appear to be in this video.

- **21 February 2013** - France has denied a claim that seven members of a French family who were kidnapped earlier this week in northern Cameroon by suspected Islamist militants have been freed. In a statement released to the media, France's foreign ministry formally "denied the information that the French hostages had been released." Rumors of their release were sparked when a Cameroonian military source said earlier on Thursday that the family, which includes a couple, their children aged five, eight, ten and twelve, and an uncle, had been found safe and well in Nigeria. The source further indicated that they had been found abandoned in a house in Dikwa in northern Nigeria, about 100 km (60 miles) from the border with Cameroon. Although France's veteran Affairs Minister Kader Arif confirmed the claims, he later retracted them, stating that he had been passed on a media report. Nigerian defence spokesman Mohammed Yerima later stated that reports of their release were false, adding that "we don't know where they are." Since the abductions, France has warned it's citizens in the far north of Cameroon to "leave the area as quickly as possible." They also advised against any travel to the areas bordering Nigeria until further notice. The defence ministry has indicated that a team of French gendarmes arrived in Cameroon on Tuesday to help with the probe, adding that they were being protected by French soldiers. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Although French officials have named Boko Haram as the likely culprits, a splinter faction of the group, known as Ansaru, which has risen in prominence in recent weeks, appears to have prioritized Western hostages and may be behind this recent kidnapping.

- **Update** - France has indicted that the abducted family has most likely been split up into two groups by their abductors. Nigerian security forces have indicated that they have been searching near the porous border with Cameroon in the country's northeast. The region is on the edge of the Sahara desert, where insurgents and criminal gangs have long operated.

- **20 February 2013** - According to the Cameroonian government, the armed gunmen who kidnapped seven members of a French family, including four young children, have taken them across the border into Nigeria. The family has been identified as Tanguy Moulin-Fournier and his wife Albane along with their four sons, Eloi, Andeol, Mel and Clarence. Tanguy's brother Cyril Moulin-Fournier was with them at the time of the kidnapping. The three adults are believed to be in there 40's. The family moved to Yaounde in the autumn of 2011 when the father had received a job to oversee the construction of a liquid natural gas plant. The abduction of the French family comes amidst fears of Islamist reprisals over France's military offensive against al-Qaeda-linked groups in Mali. It has also increased the number of French hostages abroad to fifteen - all in Africa, with at least six being held by AQIM. France is the Western country with the highest number of hostages being held, followed by the United States which has a total of nine hostages. The family was kidnapped early Tuesday morning in Sabongari which is located seven kilometers (4 miles) from the northern village of Dabanga which is located near the Nigerian border. According to a source at the French embassy in Cameroon, the family had earlier visited the Waza National Park in the northern region of the country. French energy group GDF has also confirmed that one of its employees who is based in Cameroon's capital Yaounde has been kidnapped along with his family while holidaying in the northern region of the country. Meanwhile Cameroonian security officials have indicated that "we have a strong suspicion regarding the Islamist sect Boko Haram," which has been blamed for the killings of hundreds of people in Nigeria since 2009. In the past few weeks, a number of reports have indicated that a number of Boko Haram members are believed to have trained with al-Qaeda

militants in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in northern Mali. Since the kidnapping, the French embassy in Yaounde has advised all French nationals in Cameroon's northern border to stay indoors. Though this is the first abduction of Western tourists on Cameroonian soil, there have been several hostage-takings off the coast which have been attributed to pirates in neighbouring Nigeria. In December of last year, French engineer Francis Collomp was kidnapped in Nigeria in an act that has been claimed by Nigerian radical Islamist group Ansaru, which is thought to be a splinter group of Boko Haram. On Monday, Ansaru claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of seven foreigners in a deadly weekend raid that occurred at a construction site in northern Nigeria.

- **19 February 2013** - French President Francois Hollande has confirmed that seven French nationals, including four children, have been kidnapped in the northern region of Cameroon, near the border with Nigeria. It is presumed that the kidnappers came from Nigeria. Seven tourists were abducted at around 7am local time in a village located about 10 km (6 miles) from the Nigerian



border, near the Waza National Park and Lake Chad, both of which are popular holiday destinations for Westerners. This is the first case of foreigners being seized in the mostly Muslim north of Cameroon, which is a former French colony. Although President Hollande indicated that he suspects that Boko Haram may be behind the kidnappings, no group has claimed responsibility. The rise of attacks on French nationals and interests in Africa has risen since France sent forces into Mali last month in order to help oust Islamist rebels occupying the northern regions of the country.

With the recent kidnappings, a number of Western governments are growing concerned that given the conflict in nearby Mali, Nigeria's radical Islamists may link up with groups elsewhere in the region, particularly al-Qaeda's North African wing (AQIM). Northern Nigeria is increasingly becoming afflicted by attacks and kidnappings staged by Islamist militants. There are currently at least eight French nationals who are being held by Islamist groups in Africa. Security forces in the region are reportedly searching the length of the border with Nigeria.

No restrictions  
in this travel  
advice



*Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Guinea, there is a heightened risk of spontaneous riots and violent demonstrations that may take place in the capital city and throughout the country. The country's main opposition party has announced that it will be holding protests and a national strike on 18 February. Protests and demonstrations have been continuing throughout the country and have resulted in one death and more than a hundred injured. MS Risk therefore advises any citizens in the country to remain vigilant over the coming days as such protests may turn violent. There is currently a low threat from terrorism, however with the on-going French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks targeting Western interests in the region. Guinean authorities maintain police and local militia checkpoints throughout the entire country as such you are advised to carry the appropriate form of identification (such as a passport or residence card) with you at all times.*

## Domestic News:

- **28 February 2013** - Two days of anti-government demonstrations in the capital city of Conakry has resulted in the death of one protestor and has left more than 100 people injured. The demonstrations were organized in order to protest against President Alpha Conde's preparations for legislative elections in May of this year. Officials in the country have indicated that at least 130 people were injured in the demonstrations, including more than 60 security officials. They further stated that security forces fired tear gas at protestors after opposition marchers started throwing stones at them. These protests come at a time when Guinea's opposition announced its withdrawal from the upcoming legislative elections due to the fact that they are unhappy with the election preparations.
- **19 February 2013** - Youths have clashed with security forces in the capital city of Conakry one day after authorities in the West African nation praised the rare peaceful pro-democracy. Youths in the suburb areas of the capital city erected barricades and burned car tires while chanting slogans against President Alpha Conde. Witnesses have reported that dozens were arrested and a number of people were left with injuries after the clashes occurred. On Monday, an unauthorized protest, which was called on by the opposition group, was staged in favour of free and fair elections in May. That protest went ahead without any incidents. Guinea has had a history of rallies turning violent as government forces have cracked down on protestors in the past. A protest in April of last year left ten people injured after police fired tear gas on women, while one person died and a number were left injured in a separate opposition rally that occurred in December 2011.



No restrictions  
in this travel  
advice

*There are currently no travel restrictions in place for Guinea-Bissau. In April 2012, the country's armed forces staged a coup in the capital city of Bissau. Although the current security situation remains calm, the political situation can change unexpectedly. There remains to be an underlying threat from terrorism.*

### Domestic News:

- 22 February 2013** - The United Nations Security Council has extended the United Nations office in Guinea-Bissau for an additional three months. It has also requested that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon provide recommendations on its future mandate and any possible readjustments in its support to the West African nation. In a resolution that was adopted unanimously by the fifteen-member body, the Security Council decided that the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) will continue its work until 31 May of this year. The Office, which is currently headed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Jose Ramos Horta, was established by the Security Council in 2009 and tasked with promoting stability in the country, which has been beset by coups and political instability since it became independent in the early 1970's. Last year, just days ahead of the country's presidential run-off election, rogue soldiers seized power in a military take-over on 12 April. This prompted calls from the international community for a return to civilian rule and the restoration of constitutional order. Since then, there have been a number of incidents, including an attack on a military base in October which resulted in a number of deaths. During its meeting, the Security Council reiterated its demand to the armed forces "to submit themselves fully to civilian control." The Council also urged the national authorities to take all necessary measures to protect human rights and to put an end to impunity. Additionally, the Council requested Mr. Ban to continue to work through UNIOGBIS, in coordination with other partners, on the ongoing dialogue process among political parties, "to facilitate the early finalization of a broader political agreement for the restoration of constitutional order and the holding of free, fair and transparent elections." The Security Council also called on stakeholders within the country to "deepen the internal political dialogue" to create a conducive environment for free, fair and transparent polls, acceptable to all, for a rapid return to constitutional order and the long-term stabilization of Guinea-Bissau. The Secretary-General will now submit his report with respect to the mission's future mandate and possible readjustments to the Council by 30 April 2013.

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country



*MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to parts of the country, including the western regions of Dix-Huit Montagnes, Haut-Sassandra, Moyen-Cavally and Bas-Sassa. Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. MS Risk advises companies and individuals in the Ivory Coast to remain vigilant.*

#### Domestic News:

- **19 February 2013** - Ivorian ex-President Laurent Gbagbo has appeared before judges of the International Criminal Court who will decide whether there is enough evidence to try him for masterminding a bloody election standoff which occurred two years ago. Mr. Gbagbo, who insists he is innocent of all charges, is the first former head of state to have appeared at The Hague-based court. He currently faces four charges, including murder and rape, in the wake of the Ivory Coast's disputed presidential poll in 2010. The violence resulted in some 3,000 people being killed after Mr. Gbagbo refused to accept defeat in the polls. Mr. Gbagbo appeared before judge Silvia Fernandez de Guermendi who opened the confirmation charges hearing which will effectively decide whether there is enough evidence to try the ex-President. The judge has stressed that the hearing would not be ruling on whether or not the former president was guilty or innocent of the charges.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country



## Travel Summary:

MS Risk advises against all travel to Mali. If however you remain in the country, we advise you to closely monitor the daily developments which are available in English through the BBC World Service (88.9 FM in Bamako). The Government of Mali declared a State of Emergency across the whole country which became effective from midnight on 12 January 2013. This effectively enables the government to take extraordinary measures to deal with the crisis in the North and elsewhere. Although currently no curfew has been established, changes could be announced at any time. On the ground and air assaults by French forces are ongoing in the northern regions, especially in the mountainous region near Kidal and Tessalit. You are therefore advised to avoid the regions north of Timbuktu. The Malian government has also placed severe restrictions on travel north of Segou towards the town of Mopti. Consequently, we advise everyone to monitor the local media for reports of any new measures.

In view of the deteriorating security situation in Mali, MS Risk recommends that unless you have pressing reasons to remain, you should now leave the country by commercial means. Bamako International Airport remains open.



The recent death of a senior AQIM leader will likely result in militant rebels in Mali, and possibly in other West African countries, to carry out retaliatory hit-and-run attacks in an attempt to place increased pressure on France to withdraw its military intervention. Any citizens remaining in the country are advised to relocate to Bamako and avoid the main former strongholds, including Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

Currently there is a high threat from terrorism in Mali. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. With the first suicide

bombing occurring this week in Gao, it is highly probable that such attacks will continue to be staged in the major cities and former strongholds of the al-Qaeda-linked groups.

There is also a high threat of kidnapping in Mali by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and by the splinter group, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). Although AQIM uses the northern region of Mali as an operating base, it has proven its capability of travelling long distances in order to carry out attacks, some of which have occurred in neighbouring countries. As such the kidnap threat cannot be isolated within the northern regional stronghold. In turn, criminal gangs have previously been engaged to carry out kidnappings for terrorist groups in return for financial rewards. Subsequently attacks can take place throughout Mali. In the past, a number of Westerners have been kidnapped by terrorists in Mali and in the Sahel region. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel. Victims have included tourists, NGO workers and diplomats of a variety of nationalities, primarily European. These attacks have on occasion resulted in the murder of the hostages. The recent kidnapping of a French citizen in the western region of the country has come as a shock as the area where he was taken has been perceived as being stable and under governmental control. In the past, kidnap threats have typically emanated from the Azawad region in the north and east part of the country, as such this incident in the west has caused great concern. MS Risk forecasts that there will be an increased and sustained kidnap threat across Mali and in certain border-regions for some time to come. Incidents of kidnap are likely to occur for three primary reasons:

- For Ransom - insurgents will raise finances for future operations. With the ECOWAS operation, this is accelerating as a concern.
- Human Shields - Insurgents will kidnap persons in order to deter/reduce the risk of direct action by governmental forces against them.
- Ideological - Kidnappings will occur for political purposes.

Since the coup in March 2012, and due to the ongoing political unrest, MS RISK judges that there is a continued heightened threat of kidnap for ransom in Mali and as such further attacks and kidnappings are highly likely to occur. Furthermore, although it is difficult to forecast how severe this threat will emerge, all affected organisations are recommended to review their current operations and contingencies which is in line to the previous advice which has been given. MS RISK currently advises against all travel to Mali.

#### ***MS RISK Guidance to Organisations in Mali:***

With western diplomatic missions all warning against unnecessary travel to Mali, those companies with fixed interests in the country need to take measured precautions if they have not done so already. This is especially an issue for organisations with any interest in the so-called Azawad region - that portion of the country which is under insurgent control. Preparations should include the following:

- Thinning out non-essential staff and dependents
- Restricting expat and local national internal travel
- Seeking advice from the security forces
- Ensuring journey management systems are in place and work
- Reviewing crisis management contingencies and carrying out exercises of these plans
- Registration of expatriates with relevant diplomatic missions and seeking advice on what support will be forthcoming (if any) if conditions deteriorate
- Liaison with insurers to know any exclusions or limits to existing cover

The most extreme risks will be in the Azawad region. There is expected to be military clashes there between the various insurgent groupings against the ECOWAS-bolstered Mali army force in line with the UN Security Council authorization to use force. Despite the obvious threats in the Azawad, organisations in Mali should be braced for nuisance attacks and isolated terrorist attacks in the capital of Bamako. When al-Shabaab was weakened in Somalia, these types of attacks were experienced in Uganda and Kenya. Although the two conflicts are not connected, it is logical to predict that similar tactics may evolve and be witnessed in Mali and inside contributing nations.

## Breakdown of the Mali Intervention:

- **Summary** - Over the past few weeks, French-led forces have been increasingly facing guerrilla-style tactics after initially meeting minimal resistance in their drive to push Islamists from the main northern centers of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.
- **18 February** - The United States announces that it will likely resume direct support for Mali's military after the full restoration of democracy through elections.
- **19 February** - A French soldier and more than twenty Islamist militants have been killed during clashes in the Adrar des Ifoghas mountain range. French President Francois Hollande confirmed that "a legionnaire from the 2nd foreign parachute regiment has died in a clash with Islamists in northern Mali." The soldier is the second French casualty since the intervention began in January 2013.
- **20 February** - New clashes between militants and government troops supported by French forces have erupted in Gao. Reports have indicated that a number of Islamists have returned to Gao overnight in an attempt to take control of some of the government buildings located in the city. Local residents have confirmed that armed Islamist militants have taken up positions in the mayors office. Meanwhile a car bomb has exploded near a military base in the northern city of Kidal.
- **21 February** - France's defence minister has indicated that Malian and French troops have pushed out Islamist rebels who temporarily seized the town hall and the mayor's resident in the city of Gao. Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that five Islamists were killed during the fighting and that the situation is back to normal. Al-Qaeda-linked rebels have claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack which occurred near a camp housing French troops as Malian and foreign forces battled to secure Mali's volatile north against Islamist fighters.
- **22 February** - Five people, including two suicide bombers, have died in car bombings in northern Mali just one day after fierce urban fighting between French-led forces and Islamists left at least twenty militants dead. Two vehicles targeting civilians and members of the ethnic Tuareg rebel group, the MNLA, exploded near the town of Tessalit. Three were killed in the incidents which left a number wounded.
- **23 February** - US Defence officials announce that the United States has deployed several Predator drones to Niger in order to fly surveillance missions in support of French troops battling militants in neighbouring Mali. Officials indicated that the drones will be based near Niger's capital city Niamey along with a contingent of 100 US military personnel.
- **24 February** - French President Francois Hollande announces that his country's forces are engaged in the "final phases" of fighting militants in northern Mali. Chadian army confirms that thirteen Chadian soldiers and some 65 militants were killed in clashes on Friday.
- **26 February** - A suicide car bombing has killed six government allies in the northern city of Kidal. The suicide bomber exploded his vehicle Tuesday evening at a checkpoint at an entrance into the city. Responsibility for the suicide attack has not been claimed however it is suspected to be the work of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Meanwhile the Obama administration has imposed sanctions on an Islamic rebel leader whose extremist group seized much of northern Mali. The United States State Department designated Iyad Ag Ghali, head of the Islamic group Ansar Dine, a global terrorist. The action blocks any assets he holds in the US and prohibits Americans from doing business with him. The United Nations has also added Ag Ghali to its global sanctions list.
- **27 February** - France announces that it will not formally propose setting up a UN force to take over the military mission in Mali until at least April of this year. Gerard Araud, France's UN envoy stated that French troops will hand over the mission to UN peacekeepers "when the security conditions allow it."
- **28 February** - French forces have killed Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, one of the top commanders of al-Qaeda's North Africa wing. The commander was amongst forty militants who were killed near the border with Algeria. Although these reports have not been confirmed by French, Algerian, Malian or

Chadian officials, Washington has indicated that these reports appear to be credible and that they view his death as a serious blow to the al-Qaeda wing. Meanwhile Germany's parliament has approved plans to send up to 330 troops to Mali in order to help train the West African country's military and to provide logistical support. However Germany has stipulated that they troops will not contribute to the ongoing combat operations.

- **1 March** - Military sources have confirmed that Malian troops have arrested about fifty people near Gao on an island in the Niger river that was used as a hide-out by armed Islamists.
- **2 March** - Officials in Paris have confirmed the death of one of its soldiers who was killed Saturday evening in northern Mali. The Defence Ministry has identified the soldier as 26-year-old Corporal Cedric Charenton, from the Secon Parachute Chasseur Regiment, who had been deployed in Mali since January 25. He had previously served in Afghanistan and in Gabon. This is the third death of a French serviceman since the intervention began in January of this year.
- **3 March** - French officials have confirmed that heavy clashes in northern Mali have left at least fifty rebel fighters dead. Fighting has continued near the town of Gao where Malian troops backed by French forces are hunting down any remaining Islamist rebels who were driven out from the region's main cities. French and Malian officials have indicated that clashes have intensified in the region over the past few days. This comes amidst reports that Mokhtar Belmokhtar as well as Abdelhamid Abou Zeid have been killed over the past several days. Their deaths have yet to be confirmed.

## On The Ground Events:

- **2 March 2013** - Unconfirmed reports have indicated that top al-Qaeda leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar has been killed by Chadian soldiers in Mali just one day after Chadian President Idris Deby announced that his troops had killed another senior AQIM leader, Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, who was killed in the mountainous region of the country. If both of these deaths are confirmed, then this will be a major success for the allied forces in Mali who are nearing the two month mark of the military intervention. Although these deaths will be seen as a major blow to the al-Qaeda wing, they will likely result in retaliatory attacks in Mali, as well as in Chad, as the country's troops are responsible for his death. The Chadian army has claimed that they have killed several militants, including Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Although his death has been announced on Chadian state television, officials in Mali and in France have yet to confirm the reports. A statement that was released by Chadian armed forces spokesman General Zacharia Gobongue indicated that "on Saturday March 2 at noon, Chadian armed forces operating in northern Mali completely destroyed a terrorist base..the toll included several dead terrorists, including their leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar." During the operation, weapons, equipment and sixty vehicles were also seized. The Algerian-born Mokhtar Belmokhtar is a veteran al-Qaeda leader who has been fighting as an Islamist militant for more than two decades and who is suspected of ordering the January 2013 attack on an Algerian gas plant which resulted in the deaths of thirty-seven hostages. He has claimed to have received military training in Afghanistan prior to returning to Algeria in the 1990's. He would later join AQIM, which operates across the Sahara, before breaking off in order to lead his own group. The attack on the Ain Amenas gas plant in Algeria was his group's first large-scale armed attack. Prior to this attack in January, Belmokhtar was known as "Mr. Marlboro," due to his alleged role in cigarette smuggling in the region. His death comes just one day after reports surfaced that Abou Zeid, the second-in-command of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, was killed in Mali on 22 February in the foothills of the Adrar des Ifoghas mountains. His death is still be to be confirmed through DNA testing. Both Belmokhtar and Abou Zeid have been known to be involved in a number of kidnappings. If the two deaths are confirmed, this will result in the formation of a vacuum in the chain of command for those Islamist fighters who are currently hiding in the mountainous region near Algeria. The reported killings also raise concerns pertaining to the fate of several foreign hostages who are believed to be in the two men's custody. Some fear that they may have been used as human shields during the fighting.



- **1 March 2013** - Efforts are currently underway to confirm the reported killing of one of the most notorious and ruthless leaders of al-Qaeda's North African wings. Reports surfaced earlier this week that Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, a chief of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was killed in northern Mali along with forty other Islamist militants. The killing of Abou Zeid, a longtime militant linked with kidnappings and executions of Westerners, would be a major success for French forces. Abou Zeid, a 46-year-old whose real name is Mohamed Ghedir, was often seen in the cities of Gao and Timbuktu after Islamists took control last year. An Algerian born near the border with Libya, Abou Zeid is a former smuggler who embraced radical Islam in the 1990's and who became one of AQIM's key leaders. He is suspected of being behind a series of brutal kidnappings in several countries, including British national Edwin Dyer, who was abducted in Niger and executed in 2009, and a 78-year-old French aid worker Michel Germaneau, who was executed in 2010. Abou Zeid is believed to be holding a number of Western hostages, including four French citizens who were kidnapped in Niger in 2010. He is thought to have about 200 seasoned fighters under his command, mainly comprised of Algerians, Mauritians and Malians, who are well equipped and highly mobile. Last year, an Algiers court sentenced Abou Zeid in absentia to life in prison for having formed an international armed group implicated in the kidnapping of foreigners. Five other members of his family were jailed for ten years each. He is seen as a true religious fanatic and more uncompromising than some other leaders of north African armed Islamist groups, such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the mastermind behind the January attack on an Algerian natural gas facility which left thirty seven foreign hostages dead.
- **28 February 2013** - Despite earlier government promises that French troops would begin to pullout of Mali within the coming weeks, officials in Paris have confirmed that French troops will stay in the West African country until at least July. This announcement comes amidst the tougher-than-expected resistance from Islamic fighters which has been witnessed through a number of hit-and-run attacks over the past few weeks. The announcement of France's extended involvement is in sharp contrast to the country's initial intervention which was described as a swift and limited one. By February, France's leadership had announced that France could start withdrawing its 4,000 troops in Mali in March and begin handing over the security duties to an African force. However combat in the rugged Sahara Desert mountains is growing harder, and there is a rising threat that the militants will increase suicide bombings and other guerrilla tactics as well as capture hostages. One French diplomat acknowledged this week that a French military presence in Mali is expected to remain for at least six months while two other French officials have indicated that France will remain at least until July when it is hoped that Mali will hold official elections. Currently, any French pullout in March will likely be small and symbolic, leaving behind a robust force that will try to keep the peace in Mali. France, which is winding down its eleven-year presence in Afghanistan, has now spent more than €100 million (US \$131 million) on fighting in Mali over the past six weeks. It now seems that the country is facing the prospect of another protracted and costly intervention against far-away jihadists. In the latest fighting in Mali, military spokesman Col. Thierry Burkhard indicated that about 1,200 French and 800 Chadian troops, along with an unspecified number of Malian soldiers, were closing in on an unspecified number of extremists fighters in a roughly 25-square kilometer (15-mile) zone in the Adrar des Ifoghas range near the Algerian border in northeastern Mali. The oval-shaped area south of the town of Tessalit is now the "center of gravity" for a new French operation which is involving helicopter gunships, fighter jets, mobile artillery pieces and armored vehicles. France believes that militants of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb remain to be active in the area.
  - Meanwhile West African leaders have called for a regional military operation against al-Qaeda-linked rebels in north Mali to be transformed into United Nations peacekeeping mission as quickly as possible in order to secure the desperately needed funding. Meeting in Ivory Coast's capital Yamoussoukro, presidents from West Africa's regional bloc ECOWAS backed calls from France, the United States and Mali itself for the mission to receive a UN peacekeeping mandate. Some two thirds of the 8,000 troops of the African-led mission (AFISMA) have already been



deployed to Mali. However many still lack the capacity to carry out combat operations and are currently stationed in southern Mali, effectively leaving French forces and around 2,000 troops from Chad to secure the northern towns and to track down the Islamist fighters who are hiding in the desert and mountainous regions. After months of struggling to secure funding for its deployment, international donors pledged over US \$455 million for Mali at a meeting that was held in Addis Ababa last month. With the number of troops more than doubling since deployment plans were first discussed last year, ECOWAS projects the cost of the mission at nearly US \$1billion this year. Transformation to a peacekeeping mission would ensure that funding from the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and facilitate the deployment of air assets essential for moving troops in Mali's vast northern desert. However a decision by the United Nations Security Council remains to be weeks, if not months, away. France's UN envoy has indicated that the Security Council will ask Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to report by the end of March on the possibility of creating a peacekeeping force. Despite the rapid French advance, which saw the Islamists' former urban strongholds rapidly recaptured, security on the ground in Mali remains to be tenuous, amidst a mounting wave of guerrilla raids on towns and a number of suicide attacks. French and Chadian forces are currently hunting Islamist militants in the Adrar des Ifoghas mountains, with reports indicating that French troops had killed Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, a leading al-Qaeda field commander.



## Travel Summary:

MS Risk advises against all travel to the eastern and northern provinces of the country - specifically to Tiris Zemmour, Adrar, Tagant and Hodh el Chargui. This is due to the continued high threats of terrorism. We also advise against all travel to the western provinces of Dakhlet - Nouadhibou and Inchiri. This includes the road from the port of Nouadhibou to Nouakchott. We advise against all but essential travel to the rest of the country.

Following the French military intervention in Mali there has been a heightened possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. Consequently we advise vigilance.

There have been intelligence reports indicating that al-Qaeda-linked Islamists may have disguised themselves as refugees and have crossed the border into Mauritania. Given its geographic positioning, as the country that shares a 2,300 km border with Mali, Mauritania has been one of the countries that has suffered greatly due to the impact of the counter offensive that has been taking place in Mali since January 2013. Over the last several centuries, those communities who have been living on the borders of the two countries have cultivated economic, religious and cultural relations, which in part have facilitated the ease of movement of armed Islamists from one side of the border to the other over the last several years. In turn, the presence of militant groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) or Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), has also considerably affected the country over the past several years. Mauritania has bared witness to a number of terrorist attacks. In turn, the Mauritanian army has been targeted in terrorist attacks which have left several soldiers dead in the northern regions of Lemgheitty, Ghalouiya and Tourine. Similarly, these terrorist groups have also



carried out a number of abductions of Western nationals within Mauritania's territories. Since then, these attacks and abductions have had a disastrous impact on the country. Faced with this growing situation, in 2010 authorities in Mauritania implemented a new strategy in order to ward-off these terrorist threats. The strategy was based on preventive strikes that would mostly take place on Malian territory and which would work in order to keep danger out of Mauritania. These preventive strikes were carried out by special anti-terrorism units which were trained by Mauritania's partner states including France, the United States, Spain and Britain. These measures have greatly helped in stopping the activities of terrorist groups within Mauritania. However for its neighbour, the terrorists groups continued to operating within the northern regions of Mali. The crisis in Libya only worsened the situation as it effectively enabled the terrorist groups to acquire heavy weapons which would then be used to aid the capture of towns in northern Mali. Today however the situation has greatly evolved, in part due to operation Serval which has brought together the Malian and French forces in their bid to stop the advancement of rebels towards the southern region of Mali. Following the French offensive, authorities in Mauritania ruled out the possibility of the country participating in the war however they did promise that they would ensure the protection of its borders, a position which appears to be similar to that of Algeria.

### On The Ground Events:

- **26 February 2013** - In the wake of the military mission in Mali, and the hostage incident in Algeria, Mauritanian and Algerian authorities are taking the necessary steps in order to better secure their borders. The announcement comes just days after reports surfaced that Mauritanian authorities had "confiscated large quantities of gasoline being illegally imported to the capital Nouakchott through the city of Akjoujt." A day earlier, Algerian security forces had seized an estimated 13,000 liters of fuel near the Mauritanian border. Officials have indicated that the fuel had been hidden in thirteen plastic tanks, each with a capacity of 1,000 liters. The value of the seized fuel is more than 97,000 euros. These types of operations are part of the efforts made by Algerian and Mauritanian authorities to counter the threat of terrorist infiltration from northern Mali. The vast desert region of the Algerian-Mauritanian border has been seen as a vital corridor for smugglers of weapons, gasoline and cigarettes. Smuggling activities have resulted in several clashes between criminals and Mauritanian armed forces. Evidence has also demonstrated that some smugglers have aligned themselves with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Zouerat, which is located 600 kilometers north of Nouakchott, is the largest Mauritanian city that receives contraband items from these types of gangs. As a measure to enhance the border security and to ensure the safety of those who cross the borders, Mauritanian authorities held a regional workshop in Nouakchott on February 18. The event was attended by a number of Malian and Mauritanian authorities from the major and rural councils near the border areas between the two countries.
- **21 February 2013** - Mauritania has launched a border security exercise with NATO allies. Officials have confirmed that the country launched a military exercise on 19 February, near its border with Mali. They further indicated that the exercise, known as Flintlock - 2013, included 20 countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy and the United States. Mauritanian military spokesman Col. Mohammed Ould Jiddo has stated that "this is a multinational military exercise established at the initiative of the United States and meant to enhance operations capabilities. The US African Command will be directing Flintlock - 2013, which is meant to focus on counter-insurgency.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country



## Travel Summary:

MS Risk advises against all travel to the following parts of Niger: all areas of the country north of the city of Abalak, including the Air Massif region; the province of Agadez (including the road linking Assamakato Agadez and the city of Agadez); areas of Tahoua province, north of the city of Tahoua, including the city itself; the area of Tillabéri province north of Niamey, including the road from Niamey to Gao and the road from Niamey to Menaka. We advise against all but essential travel to the rest of Niger, including the capital city of Niamey.



Due to the French military intervention in Mali, there is a possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. We advise vigilance. There is a high threat of terrorism occurring throughout the country. Attacks could be indiscriminate and can occur in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. Terrorists have also been involved in kidnaps in the region and MS Risk believes that further kidnap

attacks, such as the ones that occurred in Algeria over the past few days, are likely.

All companies that are currently operating in the north and north-west regions of the country should be aware of the increased security threats. Companies attempting road moves should coordinate them with local authorities. MS Risk does not recommend unescorted road moves east of Tahoua. There have been several military escorts operating from Tahoua to the north and north-eastern regions of the country which companies should liaise with for increased protection.

## Domestic News:

- **22 February 2013** - President Obama has announced that about 100 American troops have been sent to Niger in order to help set up a new base from which unarmed Predator drones will conduct surveillance in the region. This will effectively open up a new front in the drone wars against al-Qaeda and the group's affiliates. The new drone base, which is stationed in the capital city of Niamey, is an indication of the priority that Africa has become in American anti-terrorism efforts. Currently, the US military has a limited presence on the African continent, with only one permanent base in Djibouti which is more than 3,000 miles from Mali. In a letter to Congress, President Obama indicated that about forty United State military service members arrived in Niger on Wednesday, bringing the total number of those deployed in the country to about 100 people. A military official further indicated that the troops are largely Air Force logistics specialists, intelligence analysts and security officers. Niger signed a status-of-forces agreement last month with the United States which effectively cleared the way for greater American military involvement in the country and has provided legal protection to American troops stationed there. The agreement came at a time when Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou voiced his concerns about the spillover of violence and refugees from Mali, as well as the growing threats from Boko Haram in neighbouring Nigeria. For now, American officials have stated that the Predator drones will be unarmed and will only fly on surveillance mission, however officials have not ruled out conducting missile strikes at some point if the threat were to worsen. American officials may eventually move the aircraft to Agadez, a city in northern Niger that is closer to parts of northern Mali where al-Qaeda militants are operating.





Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Avoid all but essential travel to part(s) of the country

## Travel Summary:

Britain has advised its citizens against travelling to several regions in northern Nigeria, after the abduction of several foreigners earlier this month coupled with an increase in attacks that have been blamed on Islamist militants. On February 16, after storming the compound of Lebanese construction firm Setraco in Bauchi state, gunmen killed a security guard and abducted a Briton, an Italian, a Greek and four Lebanese workers. This was the worst case of foreigners being kidnapped in the mostly Muslim north of Africa's most populous country since an insurgency by Islamist militants intensified two years ago. Following a number of attacks and kidnappings, Britain increased its travel risk ratings to Nigeria, advising against any travel to Bauchi state and Okene city in southern Kogi state where militants last month attacked Nigerian troops who were bound for Mali. It also advised against "all but essential travel" to Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa and Katsina state. Attacks by Islamist groups in northern Nigeria have become the biggest threat to stability in Africa's top oil producer. This has been exacerbated by the fact that Western governments are currently concerned that militants may link up with groups elsewhere in the region, including al-Qaeda's North African wing (AQIM), which has been further intensified by the conflict in nearby Mali. Islamist group Ansaru has claimed responsibility for the Setraco raid in

Bauchi and the Okene attack. The group, which in the past has kidnapped other foreigners in Nigeria, has indicated that the Setraco raid was "based on the transgression and atrocities done to the religion of Allah by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali." Britain placed Ansaru on its official terrorist group list in November of last year, stating that it was aligned with al-Qaeda and that it had been behind the abduction of a Briton and an Italian who were killed during a failed rescue attempt. The group's full name is Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan, which roughly translates to "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa." It is



believed to be a breakaway group of Boko Haram, which has killed hundreds in recent months in an attempt to carve out an Islamic state in a country that is split roughly equally between Christians and Muslims.

MS Risk advises against all travel to: Borno State; Yobe State; Riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States; Warri City; and Kano City. In light of the recent kidnappings, we advise against all travel to Bauchi state. We advise against all but essential travel to: Jos City, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas in Plateau State; Gombe State; Mubi Town in Adamawa State and the area north of Mubi Town that borders Borno State; non-riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States; Abia State; Kaduna City; and Zaria City.

Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened possibility of retaliatory attacks targeting Western interests in the region, especially with the fact that Nigeria will be leading the African forces. It is therefore likely that militants from Mali may cross into Nigeria in order to carry out attacks and suicide bombings. Similarly, militants of Boko Haram may increase their attacks on Christian places of worship, as well as other sites, in protest of the intervention in Mali. France has advised its citizens to leave the northern regions of the country as well as the areas surrounding the capital of Abuja. This is due to threats relating to the military intervention in Mali. French diplomatic sources have indicated that the threat of kidnappings, coupled with Nigeria's support for France's actions in Mali, has raised the risks for French nationals.

There is a high threat of terrorism occurring in Nigeria. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including government, security and educational institutions, international organisations as well as public venues and areas such as restaurants, bars, markets, hotels, shopping centers, places of worship and other areas that are frequented by expatriates, foreign tourists and business travelers. Terrorist attacks have been known to occur on religious and public holidays. There have been regular attacks on churches in northern Nigeria at times of worship. The US government has published an Emergency Message for US citizens, detailing information that Boko Haram may be planning attacks in Abuja. This information has been assessed as being credible and attacks could occur at any time, including against international hotels that are frequently visited by Westerners. There is also an increased level of kidnap threat in Nigeria in which foreign nationals have typically been the targets of such kidnaps.

## At Sea:

### *Incidents*

- **17 February 2013** - Robbers in a wooden boat approached a berthed Hong Kong, China-flagged bulk carrier, the African Joy, at 0615 LT in position 06:27N - 003:23E, Berth No. 2, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria. One robber boarded the ship and broke into the forward store and stole the ship's stores. Duty crew noticed the robber and raised the alarm however the robber escaped with the stolen stores.
- **7 February 2013** (Late Reporting) - Around seventeen pirates armed with AK-47 rifles attacked, boarded and hijacked a Liberia-flagged offshore supply vessel, the Armada Tugas 1, underway at 0700 LT in position 03:40.48N - 005:53.12E, around 40 nautical miles SSE of Brass, Nigeria. The pirates attempted to use the vessel as a mothership. The vessel was released on 11 February, with no injuries sustained by the crew members on board. Ship stores and equipment were stolen and some off the communication equipment on board the vessel was damaged.

### *Related News:*

- **26 February 2013** - Six foreign sailors have been released unharmed by pirates who seized them off the coast of Nigeria's oil-producing region nine days ago. One Russian, three Ukrainian and two Indian sailors were taken hostage when gunmen stormed the Armada Tuah just 40 miles off the coast of Bayelsa state on February 17. The vessel is owned by Nigerian firm Century Group.

Although the pirates demanded a 200 million naira (US \$1.3 million) ransom last week, Bayelsa Police Chief Kingsley Omire has confirmed that no money was paid for the release of the hostages. A rise in piracy off the coast of Nigeria has demonstrated that gangs are willing to venture further afield and use more violent tactics. Exxon Mobil and Shell officials indicated last week that security was a major factor in making Nigeria one of the most expensive oil-producing countries to operate in. Oil and shipping companies have to hire crisis management teams, pay huge insurance premiums and possibly ransoms, as well as face possible damage to their reputations.

- Meanwhile reports have indicated that six pirates armed with automatic rifles fired on a cargo ship around 30 miles off the coast of the Niger Delta on Friday. This is at least the sixth attack off Nigeria's coast this month, making it the biggest upsurge in piracy since 2010.
- **19 February 2013** - Fifteen Russian sailors have been charged with illegally bringing weapons into the country. A court in Nigeria's main city, Lagos, has charged the crew members of the MV Myre Seadiver. They have been denied bail by the High Court, pending a final ruling which is set to take place on 25 February. In October of last year, the Nigerian navy had seized the ship, which is owned by Moscow-based security firm Moran. However Moran has stipulated throughout the duration of the case that the ship had permission to carry arms and that it had stopped in Lagos in order to change crew. The cargo on board the vessel had included 14 AK-47 rifles with 3,643 rounds of ammunition as well as 22 Benelli MR1 rifles with 4,955 rounds of ammunition. The vessel had been travelling from Madagascar to Guinea when it was seized by the Nigerian navy. Arms smuggling is a flourishing enterprise in Nigeria, which is battling an Islamist insurgency in the north of the country, and oil thefts and piracy in the south-east. **Update (25 February):** A Nigerian court has granted bail to the fifteen Russian sailors who have been detained since October over alleged illegal possession of arms. Their trial has been set for 10 April 2013. Lagos High Court judge Okechukwo Okeke has indicated that the crew of the MV Myre Seadiver should be released following a written commitment by the Russian ambassador in Nigeria to produce the suspects on demand. The judge has also ordered that the vessel be released after the payment of a bond in the sum of US \$500,000.

## On the Ground Events:

- **3 March 2013** - Nigeria's military has indicated that they have killed twenty Boko Haram militants while repelling an attack by the extremist group in the north-eastern state of Borno. An army spokesman has indicated that the militants were killed as they attempted to seize military barracks in the village of Monguno. The raid occurred when gunmen, armed with Kalashnikovs and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, stormed the military site in three trucks and eight motorcycles. No mention of any military casualties was indicated by the spokesman, however it was indicated that weapons and ammunition were seized from the militants. So far the group has made no comments regarding the latest attack in Monguno, which is located 200 km (124 miles) north of the regional capital Maiduguri, which is considered to be Boko Haram's home base where the group has been blamed for a number of deadly attacks.



regional capital Maiduguri, which is considered to be Boko Haram's home base where the group has been blamed for a number of deadly attacks.

- Meanwhile two militants who have been linked to a series of explosions in Maiduguri that injured four people last week have been arrested by the military.
- **27 February 2013** - Nigerian troops have indicated that they have killed a suspected commander of the Boko Haram and three of his lieutenants during an operation in the northeastern city of Maiduguri. According to Joint Task Force (JTF) spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa, "the

commander and his three lieutenants lost their lives during an exchange of fire.” The four suspected militants were killed on Monday in Maiduguri, which is the capital of Borno state and which is the main base of the militant group. The incident occurred when Nigerian forces were combing the city for Boko Haram fighters who have been suspected of being involved in attacks last week which the army has stated killed three civilians and left six soldiers wounded.

- **24 February 2013** - Nigeria's military has confirmed that at least six people have been killed in an attack in northeastern Nigeria, a region which has seen a number of attacks carried out by Islamist extremists. Lt. Eli Lazarus confirmed that the attack happened Saturday night in Ngalda, a town in Yobe state. So far, no arrests have been made however local residents have indicated that they suspect that members of Boko Haram had carried out the attack.
- **23 February 2013** - In the latest string of attacks, police in Nigeria have confirmed that gunmen on motorcycles have shot dead five people and injured several others in the northeastern region of the country. According to Gombe state police commissioner Mohammed Sule "five people were killed in the attack on a group of people playing cards by gunmen riding on a motorcycle." The police commissioner added that the attack in the Bagadaza neighbourhood of the state capital, Gombe city, was carried out by two assailants and that several people were injured however no figures have been provided. In recent months, Gombe has seen a number of targeted shootings, with some being blamed on Boko Haram. The latest violence occurred on the eve of local elections, however it is not currently clear as to whether or not the gunmen had a political motive.
- **21 February 2013** - Nigeria's Secret Service has confirmed that they have arrested a "terrorist cell" that was trained in Iran and which was planning to attack US and Israeli targets in Africa's most populous nation. The State Security Services (SSS) indicated that they arrested Abdullahi Mustapha Berende along with two other Nigerians in December 2012 after Berende had made several suspicious trips to Iran where he interacted with Iranians in "a high profile terrorist network." According to SSS spokesman Marilyn Ogar, "his Iranian sponsors requested that he identifies and gathers intelligence on public places and prominent hotels frequented by Americans and Israelis to facilitate attacks." The spokesman further noted that "there is conclusive evidence that Berende in collaboration with his Iranian handlers were involved in grievous crimes against the national security of this country." Berende, who will now be charged in court, has admitted to spying for Iranian counterparts. According to the SSS, he received US \$30,000 in order to carry out the operations. Berende first travelled to Iran in 2006, where he studied at an Islamic University. He would return to Iran in 2011 for weapons and explosives training. So far, Iran has not responded to the allegations. This is not the first diplomatic incident to have occurred between Iran and Nigeria. In 2004, an Iranian diplomat was arrested on suspicion of spying on the Israeli embassy in Nigeria's capital Abuja. Iran however denied any arrest. Later in 2010, authorities at a port in Lagos found a hidden shipment of artillery rockets, rifle rounds and other weapons from Iran. The shipment was supposedly bound for Gambia. A Nigerian and an Iranian face criminal charges over the shipment.
  - Meanwhile authorities have indicated that two separate suicide bombings in Nigeria's northeast city of Maiduguri have killed at least three civilians and injured many soldiers. Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima confirmed that a crowded market in the centre of the city was attacked and engulfed in flames. Witnesses have reported that soldiers quickly arrived at the scene shortly after the incident. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.
- **18 February 2013** - The Islamist group Ansaru has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of seven foreigners over the past weekend, which cited France's recent military intervention in Mali as the reason behind the attack. The incident occurred when a construction site in northern Nigeria was raided by gunmen. In an email statement distributed to a number of journalists, the group stated that it has "the custody of seven persons, which include Lebanese and their European counterparts working with Setraco" which is the Lebanese-owned company that was targeted in the attack. They further indicated that the safety of the hostages would be threatened if anyone attempted to intervene and rescue them. Meanwhile Setraco has evacuated all of its staff. Officials in the state of Bauchi, where the attack occurred late on Saturday, have indicated that their current



top priority is to secure the release of the seven hostages who reportedly comprise of four Lebanese, one Briton, one Greek and one Italian national. Greek and Italian governments have confirmed that their citizens are amongst those who have been taken hostage. Beirut has also acknowledged that two Lebanese nationals were taken however they have not matched the figure of four as has been issued by local police officials. Meanwhile the British Foreign Office has indicated that it is making inquiries into the matter before it confirms whether a Briton is amongst the hostages. Residents in the town of Jama'are, which is located about 200 km (125 miles) from the state capital, confirmed that twelve vehicles had arrived the Setraco facility on Sunday and evacuated all the staff, excluding those who are native to the town. This is the second time that Setraco has evacuated its foreign staff from the Jama'are site. Workers were evacuated last year following a rise in deadly attacks which were blamed on Boko Haram. The expatriates had only returned to the region about four months ago. Although the assailants initially struggled to gain access into the site, they shot the security guard on duty and proceeded to use explosives in order to blast a hole through the rear gate. In recent years, this raid on Setraco has been one of the worst attacks that has targeted expatriates in northern Nigeria. It may also be a sign that radical Islamist groups in the region are changing their strategy. Boko Haram, who have been blamed for hundreds of deaths in the region since 2009, have repeatedly staged attacks in the area however they have never acknowledged the kidnapping of a Westerner. Ansaru, which is seen as an offshoot of Boko Haram, have claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a French national in December 2012 in the northern state of Katsina, sparking concerns that while Boko Haram may strive on carrying out hit-and-run attacks throughout northern Nigeria, Ansaru may prioritize on the kidnapping of foreign hostages like several other al-Qaeda-linked groups that function throughout Northern Africa. The whereabouts of the French national, Francis Colump, remain unknown.

### Domestic News:

- **1 March 2013** - Nigeria's High Court has ruled that President Goodluck Jonathan is eligible to run for President in the 2015 elections. Nigeria has a two-term limit for presidents and although Mr. Jonathan has been leading the country since early 2010, following the illness and eventual death of then President Umaru Yar'Adua for whom he served as deputy, Mr. Jonathan began serving his first full term as president in 2011. The High Court's verdict comes in light of a president aspirant from within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) who argued that Mr. Jonathan's previous role as leader disqualified him. However the Abuja High Court has dismissed the argument put forth by Cyriacus Njoku's lawyer that under the constitution the same person could not take the oath of office three times. The PDP and its presidential candidate have won every election since the military rule ended in 1999. Last month, Nigeria's four main opposition parties merged to form the All Progressive Congress (APC) party in order to challenge the PDP in the elections in two years time.



No restrictions  
in this travel  
advice



*Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Senegal, MS Risk advises to avoid road travel in the Casamance region to the west of Kolda. There is currently an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. The United States Embassy in Senegal recently issues a travel warning to the capital city of Dakar, stating that it has received information pertaining to a possible bomb threat. MS Risk currently advises against all travel to Dakar until further notice. With the ongoing French military intervention in Mali, authorities in Senegal have increased security in the capital city as well as along the border with Mali. MS Risk advises that al-Qaeda militants may cross the border into Senegal and may target Western interests as well as foreigners.*

### Domestic News:

- 22 February 2013** - The United States Embassy in Senegal has indicated that it has received information pertaining to a possible bomb threat in the capital of Dakar. The US Embassy is now advising its nationals to stay away from the city centre until further notice however no additional details were provided. The threat has been confirmed by Senegalese security sources who have also indicated that the authorities have taken the “necessary measures.” Residents in the capital city have indicated that there are signs of a reinforced police presence. The United States and African governments are backing a nearly six-week French military campaign in Mali. Although no authorities have indicated the specifics of the possible attack, it is possible that hit-and-run attacks, such as those which have been witnessed in Mali over the past week, may also be initiated in other African countries, especially those who are supporting and who are directly involved in the Malian intervention. Senegal has so far sent several hundred troops to join an African force that is being deployed to Mali. France, which has about 18,000 citizens in Senegal, has not indicated that they have received any information on an impending threat.



*There currently are no travel restrictions for Sierra Leone. There is currently a low threat from terrorism. Following the French military intervention in Mali, there is a heightened risk of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. MS Risk advises companies and individuals in the Ivory Coast to remain vigilant.*

#### Domestic News:

- **21 February 2013** - It has been confirmed that Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma's inauguration for a second five-year terms in office will occur as planned on Friday despite opposition threats to boycott the ceremony. Presidential Adviser Alhaji Ibrahim Ben Kargbo has confirmed that the opposition's threat to protest the inauguration is unlikely to affect the ceremony, noting that President Koroma won the majority of the president vote last November. A number of delegates from around the world are expected to be present at the inauguration ceremony however some opposition members have threatened to boycott the ceremony, stating that there were a number of voter irregularities during the balloting. Sierra Leone's electoral body declared Mr. Koroma winner of the presidential election with 58.7 percent of the vote, defeating main opposition leader Julius Maada Bio, who gathered 37.4 percent of the total ballots. Furthermore, both local and international poll observer groups declared the election as credible.



## About MS Risk

MS Risk is a privately owned company domiciled in the Isle of Man. It is underwritten by syndicate 2525 of Lloyd's of London for special risks case management in all jurisdictions. It also acts as retained advisors to syndicates in the Lloyd's of London specialty risk insurance markets: kidnap for ransom, extortion, hijack, illegal detention, illegal war tax, malicious product tamper, terrorism, political and war risk.

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  - Training
  - Special assignments
- Crisis Response
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  - Hostile operations support to commercial interests
- Virtual Security Director service for clients lacking a full time security executive.

References are always available.

More information is found at [www.msrisk.com](http://www.msrisk.com)

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