



# The West Africa Report

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

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MS Risk has a dedicated team of researchers, a 24/7 hotline service and a pool of trained and experienced consultants to support client needs.

MS Risk supports clients in a variety of business sectors with the following services:

- Security Consulting
  - Risk assessments and intelligence reporting
  - Planning and management
  - Due diligence and investigations.
- Project Management
  - Interim security
  - Training
  - Special assignments
- Crisis Response
  - Crisis management
  - Business continuity management
  - 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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## The West Africa Report ~ SUMMARY

23 December 2013 – 5 January 2014



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### Cameroon

- **2 January 2014** – Seven people, including two Cameroonians soldiers, have been killed in an attack that was carried out by an armed group from the Central African Republic (CAR).
- **31 December 2013** – According to an official statement by French President Francois Hollande, a French Roman Catholic priest kidnapped in Cameroon on 13 November 2013 has been released

### Central African Republic

#### *On the Ground Analysis*

- **3 January 2014** – Christian and Muslim leaders in Bangui have issued a joint statement calling for a UN peacekeeping force in order to prevent an all out war from breaking out in the CAR.
- **1 January 2014** – Gun battles between rival militias in the CAR's capital Bangui on Wednesday have killed one person and sent hundreds fleeing to a makeshift camp near the airport.
- **31 December 2013** – As French and African soldiers struggle to contain the sectarian violence, Christian militiamen attacked a Central African army base in the capital Bangui on Tuesday.
- **28 December 2013** – On Saturday, hundreds of Chadians prepared to flee to their home country after facing repeated attacks and threats from majority Christians in the CAR.
- **26 December 2013** – On Thursday, French troops were out in force in the CAR's capital after clashes that killed at least a dozen civilians and five Chadian peacekeepers.

- Meanwhile, the Red Cross has indicated that it had recovered some 40 bodies on the streets of Bangui as the United States expressed alarm at the latest eruption of fighting in the CAR.
- **25 December 2013** – Amidst growing tensions between Chadian and Burundian forces, and reports that Chadian forces have sided with former Seleka rebels, a spokesman for the MISCA force deployed in the CAR indicated on Wednesday that Chadian troops will be redeployed from the capital Bangui.
  - Meanwhile around a dozen French tanks deployed Wednesday at Bangui's airport as intense gunfire in adjoining neighbourhoods caused a panic amongst residents.
- **24 December 2013** – According to the commander of the Burundian contingent, Burundian and Chadian troops from MISCA, the African force deployed in the CAR, exchanged fire in Bangui.
- **23 December 2013** – African peacekeepers shot dead a protester in the capital of the CAR on Monday, a killing that is likely to exacerbate tensions in a country where UN-mandated troops are struggling to stem sectarian violence.

#### *Domestic News*

- **2 January 2014** – Francois Bozize, the former leader of the CAR, has denied backing Christian militias that have wreaked havoc in the country.
- **24 December 2013** – On Tuesday, the CAR's president made a new appeal for peace to stop the sectarian killings that have terrorized the country.
  - Meanwhile French soldiers have been accused by the Muslim population of siding with the Country's Christian population as they attempt to disarm the Seleka rebels, leaving the Muslim population defenceless against many Christians who seek revenge for Seleka excesses.

#### *International Developments*

- **3 January 2014** – On Friday, officials at the United Nations indicated that the number of people uprooted by the conflict in the CAR is nearing one million, with half of the residents of the capital Bangui driven from their homes.
- **2 January 2014** – During a visit to the CAR, France's Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian vowed on Thursday that France's military mission in the CAR will not suck in its troops in an expanding role.
- **27 December 2013** – As French troops seek to clamp down on violence, the United Nations indicated on Friday that it will speed up planning for a possible UN peacekeeping force in the CAR.
- **23 December 2013** – On Monday, the European Union (EU) banned the export of arms and the sending of mercenaries to the CAR.

## Guinea-Bissau

- **28 December 2013** – Guinea-Bissau's attorney general has ordered the arrest of recently-resigned Interior Minister who has been suspected of being involved in the boarding of a group of Syrians with allegedly false passports on a flight to Portugal.

## Mali

#### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **30 December 2013** – Officials at the United Nations announced on Monday that French and Chadian troops have destroyed almost six tonnes of explosives and weapons that were found in Mali's northern desert area.
- **24 December 2013** – Malian authorities have arrested the former head of the Islamic police in the northern town of Gao, accusing him of imposing a hard-line form of Sharia law during a 10-month occupation by al-Qaeda-linked rebels.

#### *Domestic News*

- **1 January 2014** – Officials in Mali have dismissed candidates from three constituencies for stuffing ballot boxes in a parliamentary election meant to complete the country's transition to democracy after a 2012 army coup.
- **31 December 2013** – During a New Year greeting on Tuesday, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wished 15 million Malians "peace, nothing but peace."
- **28 December 2013** – A statement released by Mali's government has indicated that officials have launched an investigation into ousted president Amadou Toumani Toure for "high treason."

#### *International Developments*

- **3 January 2014** – An advance group of fourteen Dutch soldiers is set to leave for Mali on Monday in order to prepare for the arrival of 350 soldiers who are joining the UN peace mission.
- **31 December 2013** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has announced that France will reduce the number of its troops deployed in Mali by 60% over the next three months.
- **23 December 2013** – As a reward for the strife-torn country's gradual return to democracy, the United States has restored privileged partner status to Mali.

## Mauritania

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **30 December 2013** – According to judicial sources, over the past forty-eight hours, Mauritanian police have arrested thirty radical Islamists.

### *Domestic News*

- **31 December 2013** – According to state media reports, Mauritania is to set up a special tribunal to prosecute suspect's accused of involvement in slavery.
- **23 December 2013** – According to results released on Sunday, Mauritania's ruling UPR party has won a ruling majority in parliament after a second round of legislative elections.

### *International Developments*

- **25 December 2013** – An African Union (AU) observer mission to the Mauritanian municipal and legislative polls, led by former Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, has recommended that the Mauritanian government should create an environment which will enable more women to participate in the country's political process.

## Niger

- **3 January 2014** – On Friday a company spokesman announced that French state-controlled nuclear group Areva has closed its two uranium mines in Niger for a month of maintenance while it negotiates with the government over the renewal of its licences.
- **28 December 2013** – On Saturday, in the first major rally against President Mahamadou Issoufou's rule since his 2011 election win, thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets in the Niger capital Niamey to protest corruption and media censorship.
  - Meanwhile France's Defence Ministry has indicated that a commando paratrooper in Niger has been killed when a fellow soldier's weapon fired accidentally.

## Nigeria

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **30 December 2013** – Police and health officials in the northeastern state of Borno indicated on Monday that twelve people have died in a suspected Boko Haram attack on a wedding party.
  - Elsewhere, four people were reportedly killed in the village of Kwajaffa, also located in Borno, on Sunday, raising fears of fresh attacks in the majority Christian community and others nearby.
- **27 December 2013** – In a video released on Friday, Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, has claimed responsibility for a daring December 20 attack on a military barracks in the restive northeast.
- **24 December 2013** – Witnesses reported on Tuesday that a military offensive in northeastern Nigeria, which killed more than 50 Islamist militants, has destroyed four villages and left corpses scattered in bushes, with some civilians among the dead.
- **23 December 2013** – According to police and witness accounts, gunmen have kidnapped a Lebanese businessman in the northern Nigerian city of Kano after militants stormed his factory.
  - Meanwhile a spokesman for the Nigerian army indicated on Monday that Nigeria's troops have killed over fifty Islamists and destroyed more than 20 vehicles during a massive hunt for fleeing Boko Haram insurgents who attacked an army barracks in a town in the northeastern region of the country.

### *Domestic News*

- **31 December 2013** – On Tuesday, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan called for greater national unity in 2014, urging compatriots to build the work of their predecessors as the county marked its effective centenary.
- **30 December 2013** – On Monday, as the country prepared to mark the centenary of the unification of north and south, Nigeria's President was urged to hold talks on the future of Nigeria.
- **23 December 2013** – On Monday, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan ordered a probe into a rash of allegations, including the creation of a political hit squad, which have been levelled against him by former leader Olusegun Obasanjo.

## Senegal

- **1 January 2014** – The owner of one of Senegal's largest media groups was detained overnight after accusing President Macky Sall of building up wealth through the corruption.

## Sierra Leone

- **2 January 2014** – The United Nations-baked Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) has ended its operations after eleven years of ensuring accountability for crimes committed during the country's decade-long civil war.

## About MS Risk

## Security Summaries for West African States

**Benin** - Although there is currently no travel advisory for Benin, MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to remain vigilant. There is currently a low threat from terrorism. There have been incidents of mugging, personal assault and car-jacking in Cotonou. Armed robberies have also been reported in other areas, most notably in those regions that border Nigeria.

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**Equatorial Guinea** - There are currently no travel advisories for Equatorial Guinea. Compared with other countries in the region, the level of violent crime is low; however there are regular reports of petty theft which has affected both visitors and expatriates. MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid walking around Malabo and Bata at night and to avoid travelling by road after dark. Although the political situation has been calm in recent years, you should be aware that political events can lead to an increased presence of police, military or security forces on the streets. Consequently you should avoid any political rallies, demonstrations or large public gatherings. There is a low threat from terrorism; however you should be aware that attacks can occur at any time and place, including those frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers.

**Gabon** – There is currently a low threat from terrorism. Crime is on the rise in Gabon, particularly in Libreville and Port-Gentil. There have been robberies, armed attacks and rapes. Consequently MS Risk advises you to take sensible personal security precautions and maintain a high level of vigilance in public places. Avoid isolated or poorer areas of towns and walking alone at night. There have been a number of car-jackings in Libreville. There have been armed robberies of commercial shipping in the Gulf of Guinea.

**Gambia** – There is no travel advisory for Gambia, however MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid travel by road from The Gambia to the Casamance, in the southern region of Senegal. The Casamance region of south western Senegal remains affected by incidents involving presumed separatist groups and by incidents of banditry. There is an underlying threat from terrorism. Due to the French military intervention in Mali, coupled with the Gambia's stated commitment to participate in the intervention, there is a possibility that retaliatory attacks against Western interests in the region may be carried out. Travellers to the country are warned to remain vigilant as attacks can take place at anytime and anywhere.

**Ghana** - Although there is currently no travel advisory for Ghana, the country has seen an increase in violent robbery in 2013. In May, an expatriate's vehicle was stopped by an armed individual who forced his way into the car demanding money. On being paid, the individual left the vehicle. In a separate incident, an expatriate was robbed of her wallet while attempting to pay a taxi driver. There have also been reports of two Westerners being shot while driving alone at night. In a separate incident, two westerners were robbed at gunpoint while at a restaurant. Both incidents occurred in the Accra Area however there have been reports of robberies in the Tema area which in one case resulted in the death of a Westerner. There have also been reports of foreign nationals being held at gun-point in their homes and while walking in the street. Most armed robberies occur at night however there have been some reports of such incidents occurring during daytime. A common tactic has been to deliberately cause a minor road traffic accident in order to force the targeted vehicle to stop. As a result of ongoing local Chieftancy and land disputes, isolated inter-ethnic violence and civil unrest can occur at any time, including in the Northern, Upper East and Volta regions. A dusk to dawn curfew has been put in place on the Hohoe community in the Volta region. This is due to communal clashes over the exhumation of the Chief Imam of Hohoe. If you are considering travelling to the Northern Region, MS Risk advises you to remain alert to the potential of new outbreaks of flooding which is common in the Upper West, Upper East and Northern Regions during the rainy season, which spans from March to November. We advise that you monitor the local weather reports and expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

**Guinea** - Violence has broken out in Kankan, in the "Upper Guinea" region in the east of the country. At least three deaths have been reported since 14 December as well as a number of injuries and destruction of property. MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid this region of the country as further instability is likely to continue. The results of the 28 September legislative elections have been released, with the final results being confirmed on 15 November. So far, there have been reports of one death and several injuries as a result of riots that occurred in Conakry over the weekend of 16 and 17 November. Further riots and spontaneous demonstrations are possible, consequently MS Risk advises to remain vigilant, to monitor local media and to avoid large gatherings. There is currently a low threat from terrorism. Nearly 100 people were reported to have been killed in July in an outbreak of ethnic violence in the "Guinea Forestiere" region in the far south-east of Guinea. A large number of injuries were also reported and properties destroyed. Areas of Guinea that border Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone are often tense and have an increased military presence. Therefore, MS Risk advises against all travel to the regions bordering the countries listed above. There have been regular reports of robberies on the routes Mamou, Faranah, Kissidougou, Guekedou, Macent and Nzerekore. MS Risk advises all travellers on

these routes to remain vigilant and to avoid travel after dark. Official and unofficial checkpoints may be set up along these routes. Vehicles and passengers are submitted to checks on documentation and baggage. It is advised that you approach such checkpoints with caution, as corruption and extortion are common at roadblocks. Occasionally, checkpoints can be a pretext for armed robbery. Road travel is hazardous during the rainy season, which occurs from May to October. Torrential rains can cause floods and landslides. MS Risk advises you to monitor the local weather reports and expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

**Guinea-Bissau** – Page 19

**Ivory Coast** - MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to the western regions of Dix-Huit Montagnes, Haut-Sassandra, Moyen-Cavally and Bas-Sassandra. Since August 2012, there have been a number of shootings around the capital of Abidjan. Attacks have mainly occurred at night with the targets usually being police and military officials. Further such incidents cannot be ruled out at this time. Consequently MS Risk advises those in the capital city to remain vigilant at all times.

**Liberia** - MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to parts of Liberia, specifically those regions of the country that border with the Ivory Coast. There is a high level of crime in Monrovia, including armed robbery. The Liberian National Police has a very limited capability to prevent or detect crime, or to provide emergency response in any part of the country. Foreigners have been mugged in the Mamba Point and Sinkor areas of Monrovia (including Sinkor beach in broad daylight) where most international visitors stay. The roads from Monrovia to Roberts International Airport, the port town of Buchanan and to the border with Sierra Leone at Bo Waterside, and to the border with Guinea at Ganta, are mainly paved and in reasonable condition. Most other roads outside Monrovia are unpaved. Driving and road conditions will significantly deteriorate during the rainy season, which occurs from May to November. Many roads during this time become impassable. MS Risk advises against all travel at night outside of Monrovia, except to or from Roberts International Airport. This is because roads are treacherous and all the roads are unlit. Furthermore, vehicles often do not have any lights. As a result, travellers after dark are more vulnerable to being robbed at an illegal barricade. Liberia has become increasingly stable since the internal conflict ended in 2003. However the security situation remains fragile. Furthermore, although Liberian President Charles Taylor is currently serving out a long prison sentence in the UK, following his conviction by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor's supporters have warned that UK travellers in Liberia may be at risk of reprisal. Consequently MS Risk advises all British travellers to be extra vigilant and to avoid discussing any political issues. There is a low threat from terrorism. There is a possibility that retaliatory attacks could be carried out in Liberia, this is due to the country's participation in the intervention in Mali. UNMIL peacekeepers are deployed to the main population centers around Liberia, and patrol the main roads.

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**Niger** - Page 28

**Nigeria** - Page 30

**Senegal** – Page 35

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**Togo** - There is currently no travel advisory for Togo. Crime is on the rise in Lome. Local authorities warn of a rise in violent robberies and car-jacking incidents that target both foreigners and Togolese alike. Togolese authorities have also warned motorists to only stop for individuals in uniform, particularly after dark. You should avoid travelling alone where possible even within Lome city limits, especially after dark. There is a possibility of retaliatory attacks in Togo, due to its participation in the intervention in Mali.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country



Burkina Faso

**Security Summary**

Any body traveling to, or residing in, Burkina Faso is urged to maintain a high level of security awareness at all times

*Threats and Concerns*

There is a general threat from terrorism throughout the Sahel region. Although there are currently no known Islamist operatives in Burkina Faso, the country’s shared border with Mali may enable such elements to gain access. Furthermore, such militants may have disguised themselves as refugees in an attempt to blend in and to cross the border without detection. The regional Islamist elements that could threaten Burkina Faso include: al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar al Dine, Ansar al Sharia and Boko Haram.



*Kidnapping Threats*

There is a heightened risk that terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), may cross the northern borders from Mali and Niger into Burkina Faso in order to carry out kidnaps. MS Risk therefore advises against all travel to the areas of Burkina Faso north of the town of Boulsa, which is 25 km north of the capital of Ouagadougou. We particularly advise against all travel to the regions that

border Mali and Niger. Since 2008, over 25 Westerners have been kidnapped in the Sahel region, and a number of these hostages continue to be held. AQIM operates directly or through criminal gangs who carry out kidnappings on their behalf or pass on their kidnap victims in return for payment.

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



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

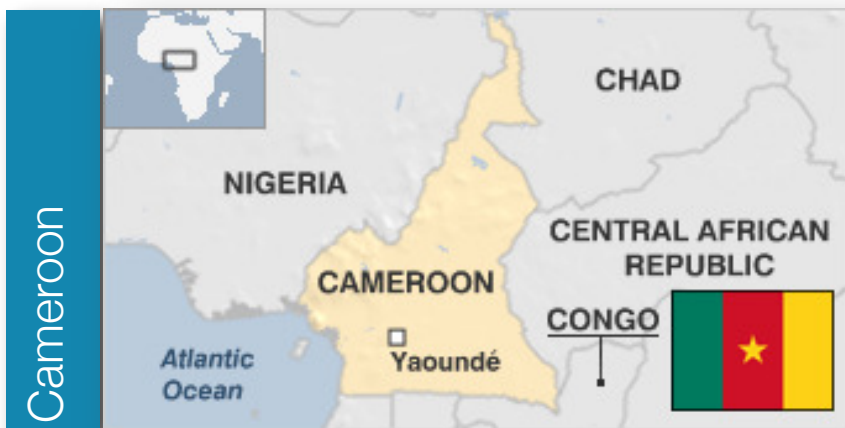
Although the biggest concern at this time remains in the northern areas of the country, specifically along the porous Mali border and at the junction of the Niger border, the attack and kidnapping in Algeria has demonstrated that such attacks can occur at any place and at any time. In addition, the attack 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

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

Finally, unconfirmed reports suggest there is an elevated banditry threat 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 has been clarified. Companies with operations in the region are invited to report incidents to MS Risk to aid in assessing local conditions. Liaising with insurers to ensure appropriate cover is in place to meet special risks where needed is also strongly advised.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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

## Security Summary

With the recent kidnapping of a French priest in northern Cameroon, who has recently been released, MS Risk advises against all travel to the North and Far North regions of Cameroon. The threat of kidnapping and hostage taking remains high at this time, with further such incidents likely to occur. While officials in Nigeria have requested Cameroon to increase security along the shared border between these two countries, the border regions continue to be porous and remain a safe haven for Boko Haram militants seeking shelter from the ongoing military operation in northern Nigeria.

The killing of a Cameroonian police officer on 19 August has prompted officials in Cameroon to close its border with the Central African Republic (CAR). The death of the officer occurred after a number of Seleka fighters crossed over the border into Cameroon, where they were stopped by officers patrolling the border region. Despite being escorted over the border, the fighters returned and attacked the police. It is currently not known how long the border will be closed. Consequently MS Risk advises against all travel to the border regions with the CAR as it is highly likely that militant groups and pro-Seleka fighters may be patrolling the areas and may at times attempt to cross into Cameroon.



On 14 May 2013, the Government of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Both Adamawa and Borno border Cameroon's far North, North and Adamaoua provinces. It is possible that military operations there might have an impact across the border in

Cameroon. MS RISK advises against all travel to the Bakassi Peninsula as well as within 20km of the border with Nigeria in the Ndiain Division of the South West Province. We also advise against all travel to within 40km of the border with Chad in the North and Far North Provinces. This is due to a heightened risk of banditry and armed poachers in Bouba Ndjidda National Park in the North Province. There is currently a travel advisory north of Maroula in the Far North Province resulting from the heightened threat of armed banditry and other threats associated with the borders of Chad and Nigeria. The Government of Cameroon is expected to cut fuel subsidies in the near future, which may cause strikes and civil unrest throughout the country. Finally, there have been attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, including the coastline of Cameroon around the port of Douala. Vessels travelling throughout this area have been advised to exercise extreme caution.

## On the Ground Reporting

- **2 January 2014** – Seven people, including two Cameroonian soldiers, have been killed in an attack that was carried out by an armed group from the Central African Republic (CAR). According to a security official, the raid took place in the village of Ondiki, in eastern Cameroon, near the border. The attack occurred when “a group of armed attackers coming from neighbouring CAR targeted a small military base.” According to a local administrative official, “Cameroonian soldiers fought back. The toll is seven dead. They are two soldiers, a leader of the Muslim community in the village and four of the assailants.” Military sources have also indicated that the attackers were believed to be members of the mainly Muslim Seleka rebel coalition that put the CAR’s current president Michel Djotodia in power last year. Although late last year, Djotodia dissolved the Seleka rebel group, amidst fears of mounting sectarian violence, the rogue rebels continue to carry out attacks throughout the CAR and in the neighbouring border regions with Cameroon. In recent weeks, Cameroonian security officials have indicated that they have arrested several Seleka rebels. Eastern Cameroon, which is also home to thousands of refugees who fled the on-going conflict in the CAR, frequently comes under attack by Central African armed groups. The area is also used as a rear base. On 16 November 2013, seven people, including a Cameroonian soldier, were killed in an attack blamed by officials in Yaoundé on forces from across the border. While the Cameroonian authorities recently reinforced their military strength in the CAR border region, as well as in the northeast, on the frontier with Nigeria, this latest attack has proven that Cameroon’s eastern border continues to be porous, with similar attacks likely to occur in the coming months.
- **31 December 2013** – According to an official statement by French President Francois Hollande, a French Roman Catholic priest kidnapped in Cameroon on 13 November 2013 has been released. In the official statement, Mr Hollande thanked the authorities in Cameroon and Nigeria for their help in getting the priest released. His message also expressed special thanks to Cameroon’s President Paul Biya. Gunmen in northern Cameroon near the border with Nigeria kidnapped Fr Georges Vandenbeusch, 42. The armed Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram, which operates in the area, later indicated that it was holding him hostage. According to a French diplomat, the priest was released early on Tuesday in northern Cameroon, stating “he is now on a plane with the Cameroonian army and will be handed over to the French ambassador in Cameroon.” No further information about his release has been made public. Mr Hollande has indicated that French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius is set to fly to Yaoundé, Cameroon in order to bring Fr. Vandenbeusch back to France as soon as possible. The president added that six French nationals remain hostage in Mali and Syria. The release of Fr. Vandenbeusch came one day after the Nigerian army announced on Monday that it had begun a major ground and air offensive against Boko Haram close to Bama, which is near the porous border with Cameroon. **Update (1 January 2014)** – Fr. Vandenbeusch, who was held captive for seven weeks by Islamic militants, indicated that he was “in great shape,” and thanked those who helped secure his release. Describing his time in captivity, Fr. Vandenbeusch indicated that it was a period of “terrible boredom, sadness and anger because I’m very fond of the parish where I worked,” adding, “I was

under a tree for a month and a half.” However he noted that despite being kept in “rustic conditions,” he had not been mistreated. While the circumstances of the priest’s release remain unclear, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who arrived in Cameroon in order to pick the priest up, has insisted that France, who has often been accused of paying ransoms for hostages despite still government denials, had not paid for the release of the priest. Fabius instead told journalists “the French government does not pay ransoms. There were discussions.” Reports have indicated “the priest offered medical service to six members during his period of captivity,” as such “the leadership of Boko haram decided to release the priest on compassionate grounds and having benefited from his medical expertise.” President Francois Hollande will meet Fr. Vandenbeusch when he arrives in France on Wednesday morning at the military base of Villacoublay near Paris.

**Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country**

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

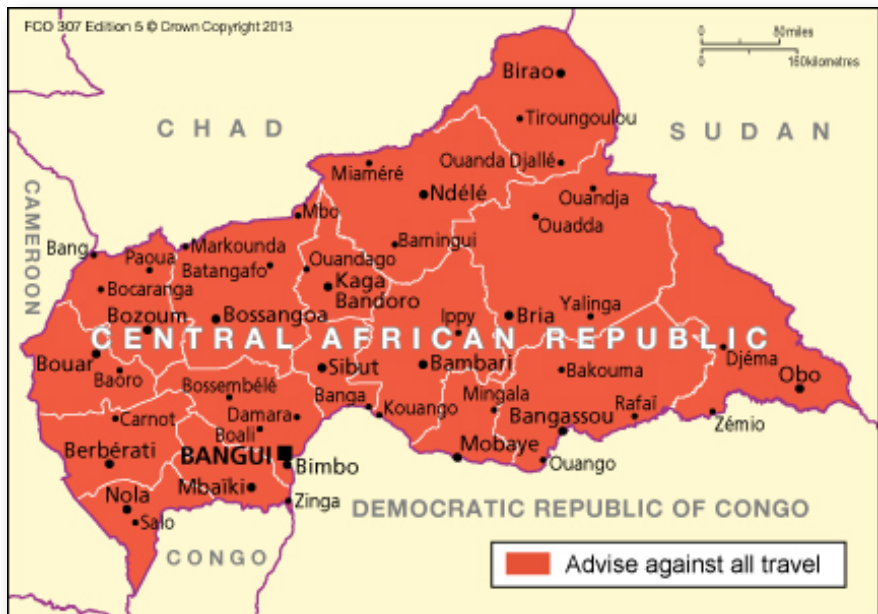


**Central African Republic**

**Security Summary**

MS Risk advises against all travel to the Central African Republic (CAR). Despite French troops deploying into CAR in early December, the situation throughout the country has continued to deteriorate. Reports of violence, looting and human rights abuses across the country have increased and fighting in Bangui alone has reportedly led to the deaths of over 400 people. There is also an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks can be indiscriminate, including in places that are visited by foreigners.

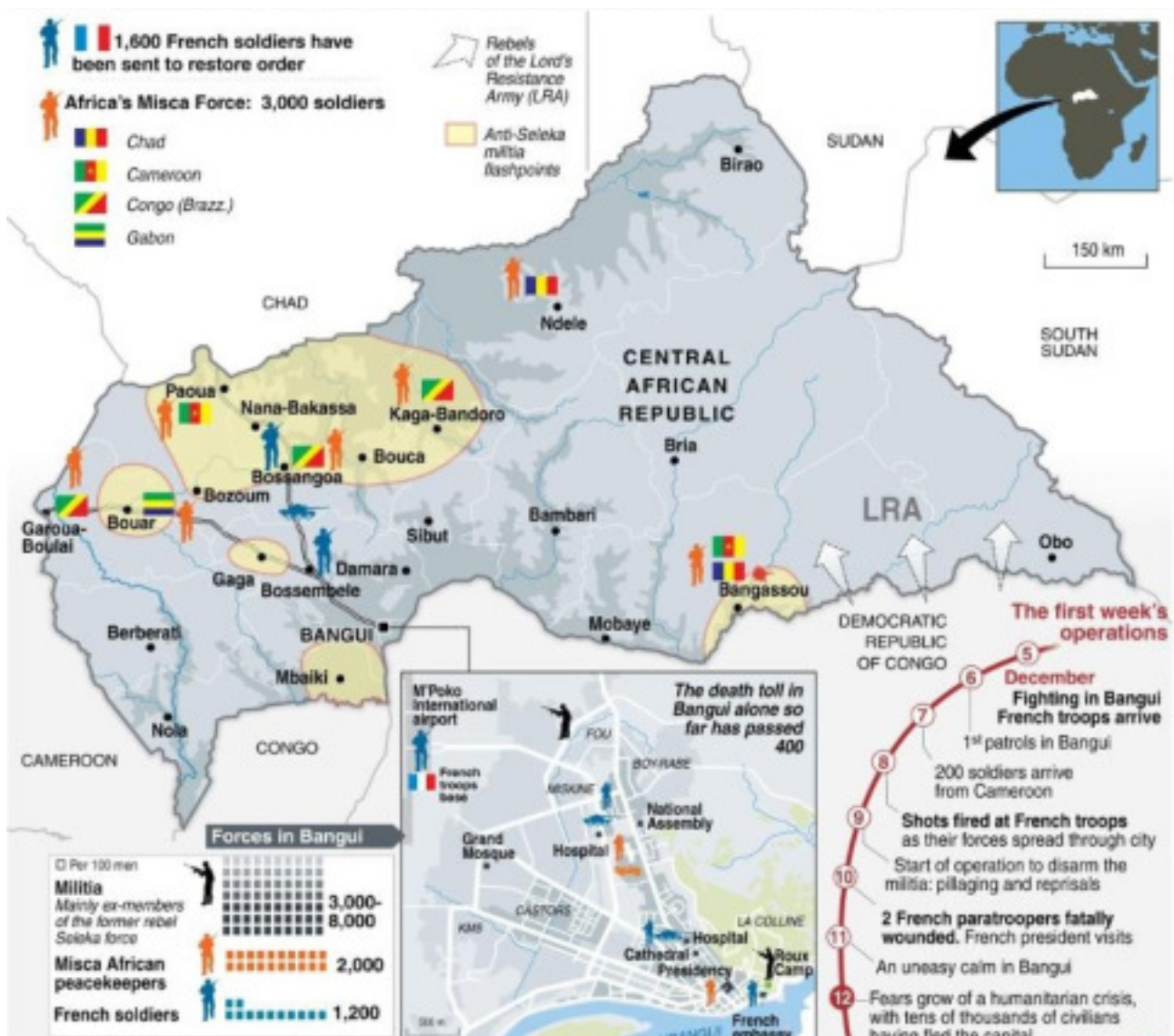
The armed rebel coalition Seleka has renewed its offensive against President Francois Bozize's government and has taken control of the capital, Bangui. With Michel Djotodia officially sworn into office on August 18, security throughout the



country has continued to deteriorate. Reports of rebel activity, banditry and hostage-taking have occurred across the region. In the capital, Bangui, the security situation also remains fragile with reports of continued looting and gunfire. On 22 November 2013, the CAR's interim government announced a curfew from 10PM to 5AM. It is therefore advised that you should avoid being on the streets during this period. At other times, MS Risk advises that you should take extreme caution and travel in groups whenever possible. There are armed patrols at night in Bangui and roadblocks - both official and unofficial - that are likely to be manned by armed personnel and particular care should be taken when approaching these. Despite the French military intervention, Operation Sangaris, being launched in early December, security throughout the CAR remains unstable.

Any individuals in the country are advised to leave now. Anyone who remains should take all necessary precautions and stay in a safe place with sufficient stocks of food and water. If the situation deteriorates further, leaving the country by commercial means will likely become increasingly difficult. Currently regional country flights have been suspended. We advise anyone remaining in the country to keep up to date with local political developments and to avoid all political rallies, demonstrations and large public gatherings.

### The Peacekeeping Operation in Central African Republic



## On the Ground Reporting

- **5 January 2014** – A hand grenade attack on a Bangui market Sunday left four people injured, including two women and a Burundian soldier from MISCA. According to reports, the grenade was thrown by an unidentified assailant into a crowd at the market in the Kokoro neighbourhood. The incident comes after three days of relative calm in the capital despite rumours of a possible imminent attack by Christian militias in Muslim areas, supported by members of the armed forces loyal to deposed president Francois Bozize.
- **3 January 2014** – Christian and Muslim leaders in Bangui have issued a joint statement calling for a UN peacekeeping force in order to prevent an all out war from breaking out in the CAR. Despite the intervention of French and African troops, the situation in the country remains uncertain. In the joint appeal, Mgr Dieudonne Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, along with Omar Kobine Layama, Imam of the CAR's capital, stated that “the Central African Republic remains on the verge of a war with religious aspects,” adding that “nearly half of the population desperately needs aid.”
- **1 January 2014** – Gun battles between rival militias in the CAR's capital Bangui on Wednesday have killed one person and sent hundreds fleeing to a makeshift camp near the airport. The latest violence came ahead of a visit by French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to the CAR, where 1,600 French troops and 4,000 African peacekeepers are attempting to curb escalating religious violence. According to witness reports, machine gun fire could be heard near the camp as new clashes broke out between Christian's militias and the former Seleka rebels. Reports have indicated that in the space of an hour, three wounded children and thirteen adults were taken to an improvised hospital in the camp run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF), with one later dying. Around 100,000 people displaced by weeks of violence have sought refuge near the main French army base located near Bangui's airport. In turn, over the last month, the retaliating violence by Christian vigilantes and rebels from the Seleka coalition that helped Michel Djotodia become the country's first Muslim President is believed to have killed more than 1,000 people. On Monday, the UN children's agency warned about “unprecedented” levels of violence against youngsters in the country, indicating that at least two children had been beheaded. With violence increasing in the CAR, officials at the UN have indicated that they will speed up planning for a possible UN peacekeeping force to the CAR following a plea from French President Francois Holland for the world body to play a bigger role in the troubled country.
- **31 December 2013** – As French and African soldiers struggle to contain the sectarian violence, Christian militiamen attacked a Central African army base in the capital Bangui on Tuesday. According to General Mahamat Tahir, vigilantes attacked a military position at the PK-11 crossroads on the northern outskirts of Bangui. He further added that the attack, the second in as many nights to be carried out by so-called anti-balaka groups, caused no casualties. Reports have indicated that gunfire was heard throughout the night in Bangui while witnesses holed up in their homes reported exchanges of fire in the central Ben Zvi neighbourhood in the hours just before dawn.
- **28 December 2013** – On Saturday, hundreds of Chadians prepared to flee to their home country after facing repeated attacks and threats from majority Christians in the CAR. Witnesses reported a number of Chadians piling into a convoy of several dozen cars and taxi in the capital Bangui. French peacekeepers kept protesters at a distance from the convoy. A first convoy of Chadian civilians left on Friday. Military and humanitarian officials have indicated that at least one civilian was killed and several children were wounded when Chadian soldiers protecting the convoy threw grenades into the crowd.
- **26 December 2013** – On Thursday, French troops were out in force in the CAR's capital after clashes that killed at least a dozen civilians and five Chadian peacekeepers. The circumstances of the deaths of five Chadian peacekeepers in Bangui remain unclear, with a spokesman for the African Union force stating “yesterday the city was in total chaos and this chaos lasted until the end of the night. Today we are trying to understand what happened.” Chaos gripped Bangui after heavy arms fire on Wednesday, which resulted in thousands of panicked residents seeking shelter

at the airport, where French and African peacekeepers are based. According to Bangui's main hospital, the latest wave of violence has resulted in the deaths of at least twelve people. An official indicated that "the Red Cross brought at least a dozen" bodies to the hospital morgue, adding that 46 people had been brought in with knife or gunshot wounds. According to French Lieutenant Colonel Sebastien Pelissier, around 600 French peacekeepers were on patrol on Thursday, focusing on the restive neighbourhoods of Gobongo, near the airport, and Pabongo, in the southern part of the city.

- Meanwhile, the Red Cross has indicated that it had recovered some 40 bodies on the streets of Bangui as the United States expressed alarm at the latest eruption of fighting in the CAR. French troops increased patrols after a bloody Christmas in the CAR's capital. Five Chadian peacekeepers were also killed in an outbreak of heavy fighting on Wednesday. US Secretary of State John Kerry has stated that Washington was "alarmed" by the fighting in recent days and urged the country to quickly hold elections. In a statement, Kerry indicated "the continued sectarian fighting only deepens the country's wounds and makes reconciliation more difficult," adding that the US was "deeply disturbed" by the discovery of 20 bodies in a mass grave in the capital on Thursday. It currently remains unclear whether these figures were included in the death toll that was given by Red Cross officials. On Wednesday, International Committee of the Red Cross spokesman David Pierre Marquet indicated "around 40 bodies have been recovered for the moment, and first aid has been given to around 30 people wounded." He further noted that another 60 or so bodies were recovered on Monday, a day that was marked by escalating tensions after African peacekeeper fired into a crowd of protesters. Marquet also indicated that the ICRC did not yet have a complete death toll since the increased violence began.
- **25 December 2013** – Amidst growing tensions between Chadian and Burundian forces, and reports that Chadian forces have sided with former Seleka rebels, a spokesman for the MISCA force deployed in the CAR indicated on Wednesday that Chadian troops will be redeployed from the capital Bangui. Lieutenant Colonel Ndong Toutoune announced "the whole Chadian contingent will be sent to secure the north in the next few days." The spokesman did not elaborate on how or exactly where the Chadian troops would redeploy. The Chadians face accusations by many in Bangui of complicity with the mostly Muslim Seleka rebels who overthrew President Francois Bozize in March in the predominantly Christian country.
  - Meanwhile around a dozen French tanks deployed Wednesday at Bangui's airport as intense gunfire in adjoining neighbourhoods caused a panic amongst residents. According to reports, the tanks took their positions at around 4:15 PM (1515 GMT) at the entrance to the airport, where French and African peacekeepers are based. The move came after atomic weapons fire and explosions shook several parts of the city. The heavy machine gun fire was apparently not directed at the airport but was especially intense in the nearby PK12 area. Hundreds of panicked residents could be seen fleeing the area towards the central region of the capital city. Since sectarian violence erupted earlier this month, tens of thousands of people have taken refuge at the airport's grounds. The sectarian violence has already claimed hundreds of lives. According to Amnesty International, some 1,000 people have been killed since December 5, mostly by Muslim ex-rebels but also as a result of Christian reprisal attacks.
- **24 December 2013** – According to the commander of the Burundian contingent, Burundian and Chadian troops from MISCA, the African force deployed in the CAR, exchanged fire in Bangui. Lieutenant-Colonel Pontien Hakizimana, head of the Burundian contingent in MISCA, has indicated that his men were disarming former rebels when Chadian forces from MISCA threw a grenade and opened fire on them, prompting Burundian forces to return fire, wounding three Chadians. Chadian troops within the 3,700 strong MISCA African force have been accused by force commanders and by French troops deployed in Bangui of siding with the former Seleka rebels which the force is supposed to disarm. A military source in Bujubura has indicated that relations between the Burundians and Chadians have been strained ever since the Chadians in the MISCA



force had been deployed outside the capital while the Burundian forces have been tasked with securing the capital city. Burundi currently has 850 troops deployed in the CAR, 5,500 troops as part of the African Union force deployed in Somalia and has plans to deploy a contingent in Mali.

- **23 December 2013** – African peacekeepers shot dead a protester in the capital of the CAR on Monday, a killing that is likely to exacerbate tensions in a country where UN-mandated troops are struggling to stem sectarian violence. The incident occurred when Chadian soldiers opened fire on stone-throwing protesters who accused them of complicity with rebels. Reports have indicated that the incident occurred when two 4x4 vehicles with AU troops from Chad approached the demonstrators, the latter started throwing rocks in their direction. The soldiers responded by firing their weapons in the air and towards the crowd, killing at least one person and wounding another. French troops quickly intervened to evacuate the victims. Several hundred Christian demonstrators had massed outside Bangui's airport, calling for the departure of President Michel Djotodia, a former rebel who became the first Muslim leader of the majority Christian nation after a coup in March. The protesters also demanded the departure of Chadian troops within the African Union's MISCA force, which, alongside French forces, is battling to restore order in the country. Many in the mostly-Christian capital Bangui have accused Chad of masterminding the Seleka rebellion behind the coup that has unleashed waves of violence.

## Domestic News

- **2 January 2014** – Francois Bozize, the former leader of the CAR, has denied backing Christian militias that have wreaked havoc in the country. In an interview broadcast on Thursday, the former leader also called on the current president who deposed him to resign. During the interview, Bozize indicated that "it is the Seleka who brought disorder to the country, misery and death. The anti-balaka phenomenon has appeared following abuses committed by the Seleka in the country." The former leader added "that's what triggered the appearance of the anti-balaka. From my position, I did not create a so-called anti-balaka rebellion." Asked whether he condemned the atrocities perpetrated by the Christian militias, Bozize responded, "that's what you say. I'm not on the ground. That's what the press says. If they have committed atrocities, then I condemn them." During the interview, Bozize also called on Djotodia to resign "so that the situation can be brought under control once and for all." French President Francois Hollande has called for new elections to be held this year. Bozize had not ruled out returning to the CAR and running in any future vote, stating "nothing is stopping me from being a candidate or not...But let's clear up the security situation in the country." Bozize currently remains in exile in an undisclosed location.
- **24 December 2013** – On Tuesday, the CAR's president made a new appeal for peace to stop the sectarian killings that have terrorized the country. Michel Djotodia, former Seleka rebel leader who seized power in a coup in March, called for an end to the "massacres" as violence has increased between the Muslim and Christian populations. Surrounded by local religious leaders from both the Christian and Islamic faiths, the interim president banned all illegal demonstrations in Bangui and accused ousted president Francois Bozize and his supporters of being behind the violence, which "massacres innocent Central Africans."
  - Meanwhile French soldiers have been accused by the Muslim population of siding with the Country's Christian population as they attempt to disarm the Seleka rebels, leaving the Muslim population defenceless against many Christians who seek revenge for Seleka excesses. Overnight Monday, gunfire erupted in the mainly Muslim PK5 neighbourhood in Bangui, where two Muslims had been lynched earlier and their bodies mutilated. On Tuesday, residents reported that Christian militias had carried out the attack. In the run up to Christmas Eve, activity was relatively normal in the capital city as some stores broadcast Christmas songs from loudspeakers and salesmen offered red Santa Claus hats at dusty crossroads. Due to the on going night curfew, churches will hold Christmas Eve mass in the afternoon.

**International Developments**

- **3 January 2014** – On Friday, officials at the United Nations indicated that the number of people uprooted by the conflict in the CAR is nearing one million, with half of the residents of the capital Bangui driven from their homes. According to Babar Baloch, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, “the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic remains dire, as insecurity is making the delivery of humanitarian relief ever more difficult as the number of people displaced within the country has now surpassed 935,000.” The figure includes those who fled their homes during a March 2013 coup and earlier strife, as well as on-going sectarian clashes. Baloch also told reporters that attacks on civilians, looting and the presence of armed groups in locations to which people have fled severely limiting aid agencies’ access to those in urgent need. Baloch further added “some 512,672 people are currently sheltering in 67 sites in the capital, Bangui, or living with host families. This represents more than half of Bangui’s total population. Some 60 per cent of those displaced are children.” Over the past week, the number of people seeking shelter around Bangui’s airport has doubled to 100,000. While the airport itself is secured by French troops, enabling aid supplies to be flown in, humanitarian organizations have struggled to maintain operations even in its immediate area due to looting and violence.
- **2 January 2014** – During a visit to the CAR, France’s Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian vowed on Thursday that France’s military mission in the CAR will not suck in its troops in an expanding role. Although Le Drian had predicted that last month’s deployment of 1,600 French soldiers to the former French colony to help an African force there would prove as successful as France’s mission in Mali, so far, clashes, looting and sectarian violence have continued throughout the country. While France insists that its UN-mandated mission to the CAR is clearly defined and will not be open-ended, efforts to persuade European partners to contribute soldiers to the mission have fallen short. Although several countries are currently providing logistical support, both the United States and Britain are supplying military transport aircraft, many are uncertain about putting boots on the ground. In turn, the French deployment, which is focusing on disarming both the ex-rebel Seleka members, which are mostly Muslims, and the Christian vigilantes, has already lost two soldiers. Consequently many now believe that the French presence will have to be boosted given the on-going violence.
- **27 December 2013** – As French troops seek to clamp down on violence, the United Nations indicated on Friday that it will speed up planning for a possible UN peacekeeping force in the CAR. The announcement was made in New York after French President Francois Hollande called on the world body to “play a still bigger role” in the troubled country, where heavy patrols of armoured vehicles and French soldiers could be seen in the capita. More than 1,000 people are believed to have been killed in three weeks of sectarian violence in the capital city alone. A UN statement released shortly after a call between UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Hollande indicated “further consultations with members of the UN Security Council and with the African Union will be expeditiously undertaken in the coming days.” A statement released by the Elysee office indicated that Hollande had told the UN Secretary-General that France was “aiming to protect the entire Central African population from attacks against it, without distinction.” The statement further noted that the French President requested that the United Nations “play a still bigger role” in the CAR’s transition to democracy and that he thanked Ban for UN moves to strengthen MISCA, the African Union force that is deployed in the CAR.
- **23 December 2013** – On Monday, the European Union (EU) banned the export of arms and the sending of mercenaries to the CAR. The ban follows a UN Security Council resolution this month, which requires all countries to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materials to the landlocked nation. The EU ban covers financial and technical assistance, including mercenary personnel, however it exempts materials used solely for international peacekeeping efforts and by French forces who are deployed in the CAR. Speaking in Brussels last Friday, French President Francois Hollande stated that the 28-nation EU would decide next

month on a joint operation in the CAR in order to support the French military intervention, which was launched earlier this month.



No travel  
restrictions

*There are currently no travel restrictions to Guinea-Bissau. Although the security situation is currently calm, the current political situation remains uncertain throughout the country and the possibility of civil or military unrest in Guinea-Bissau remains high. MS Risk advises against all travel to the northwestern regions of the country, specifically those that border the Casamance region of Senegal, including the Sao Domingos/Mapack road. The country's elections have been scheduled for 16 March 2014.*

## On the Ground Analysis

- 28 December 2013** – Guinea-Bissau's attorney general has ordered the arrest of recently-resigned Interior Minister who has been suspected of being involved in the boarding of a group of Syrians with allegedly false passports on a flight to Portugal. The incident resulted in Portuguese flag-carrier TAP suspending flights between the two nations when one of its aircraft from Bissau arrived in Lisbon on 10 December with a group of seventy-four refugees. Antonio Suka Tchama, who is believed to have facilitated the Syrian's embarkation, announced his resignation over the affair on December 18 however at the time, he did not admit to any wrongdoing. A statement from Attorney General Abdu Mane, which ordered Tchama's arrest, indicated that the government has "...evidence that it is the minister who demanded, directly threatening the station manager, the forced embarkment of 74 Syrian refugees on board a TAP flight." Mr Tchama was the second senior government official to lose his job over the affair, after then-foreign minister Fernando Delfim da Silva announced that he was resigning in protest against the implication of government officials and police wrongdoing. Seven police officers have also since been suspended and a judge-led inquiry into the incident has been set up. The incident has also sparked a diplomatic row between Guinea-Bissau and its former colonial power.

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



## Security Summary

### Summary

MS Risk advises against all travel to Bamako. We also advise against all travel to the rest of Mali, especially to the northern regions of the country. Although Bamako is generally calm, the situation throughout the rest of the country is still volatile. Presidential elections were held on July 28 and August 11, and President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and his new government took office in September 2013.

If you are in Bamako, MS Risk advises you to maintain a high level of vigilance, to keep a low profile and to stay alert to the local political developments. We also advise that you avoid sensitive areas, including military installations and large gatherings of people. Night time checkpoints continue to operate in Bamako, largely controlling access to military and government facilities. Checkpoints are in place from approximately 9PM until dawn.



During the rainy season, which runs from May until October, torrential rains can cause floods and landslides, and may result in houses collapsing. In late August, there were reports of flash flooding that occurred in Bamako. The neighborhoods of Bankoni, Taliko, Lafiabougou, Djicoroni Woyowayanko, Lafiabougou Bougouba and Bougoudani were all hit by floods during the rains storms

which lasted most of the day. MS Risk advises anyone in the capital city to monitor the local weather reports and to expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.

## *Terrorism*

There still remains a high threat from terrorism in Mali. No curfew is currently in place however MS Risk advises those in the country to monitor the local media for reports of any new measures.

Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places that are frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. 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 neighboring 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.

There have been incidents of armed banditry, car-jacking, and kidnap in the northern regions of Mali. Bandits and smugglers are particularly active across the Mali-Algeria, Mali-Burkina Faso, Mali-Mauritania and Mali-Niger borders and pose a threat to travellers, especially after dark. Authorities in Mali have provided the following numbers in case of emergencies:

- 80 00 11 14
- 80 00 11 15
- 20 22 13 35
- 20 23 95 15
- 20 23 95 11

## *Kidnapping*

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 county, 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 impending 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.

## *Local Travel*

Although the military intervention has regained control of the major northern cities in Mali, the situation remains tense in the region and there continues to be a high risk of retaliatory action by terrorist groups. MS Risk advises against all travel to the northern region of Mali, especially to the cities/towns of Gao, In Khalil, Kidal, and Timbuktu as well as the surrounding areas. Landmines have been used by groups operating in the north and northeast of Mali.

Night-time checkpoints continue to operate in Bamako. These checkpoints largely control access to military and Government facilities. Checkpoints are in place from approximately 9PM until dawn. MS Risk advises to keep vehicle and personal identification documents with you at all times while travelling by road. Furthermore, approach security checkpoints slowly and comply with instructions that are given.

## **MS RISK Guidance to Organizations 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 organizations 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

## **On The Ground Reporting**

- **30 December 2013** – Officials at the United Nations announced on Monday that French and Chadian troops have destroyed almost six tonnes of explosives and weapons that were found in Mali's northern desert area. A statement released by the UN indicated that the Chadian soldiers, from the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping mission, were patrolling an area near the Algerian border with troops from France's Operation Serval when they made the discovery. The statement

indicated “on December 28 and 29 a Chadian MINUSMA battalion and its liaison and support detachment from the Serval force have unearthed two large caches of weapons and ammunition located about 150 kilometres (95 miles) southwest of Tessalit.” The statement also indicated that the destruction of 5.7 tonnes of ammunition nitrate and some 40 grenades had dealt “another severe blow to the resources of terrorist groups.” The discovery of the six-tonne explosive cache in northern Mali is the second significant haul to be discovered in the past three months. The first cache was discovered after French soldiers discovered and destroyed a vehicle containing nearly a tonne of explosives near the northeastern town of Anefis in September. The UN’s announcement came on the eve of the visit of French Defence Minister Jean\_Yves Le Drian to Mali as part of a three-day tour focusing on security. The French Defence Minister will also visit Chad and Niger.

- **24 December 2013** – Malian authorities have arrested the former head of the Islamic police in the northern town of Gao, accusing him of imposing a hard-line form of Sharia law during a 10-month occupation by al-Qaeda-linked rebels. Major Colonel Abdoukay Coulibaly, military commander in Gao, confirmed that Aliou Mahama Toure was detained on Monday close to the town where he had imposed a reign of terror until its liberation by French forces in January 2013. Toure, one of the leaders of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), gained notoriety for ordering the amputation of hands and feet of people convicted of robbery and other crimes in Gao.

## Domestic News

- **1 January 2014** – Officials in Mali have dismissed candidates from three constituencies for stuffing ballot boxes in a parliamentary election meant to complete the country’s transition to democracy after a 2012 army coup. The West African country’s constitutional court was flooded with complaints of electoral fraud from rival parties following the first round of legislative elections that were held in November. A total of nine candidates on lists for constituencies in Nara, Niono and Gao were affected. The dismissals however did not change the overall outcome of the elections, which gave a victory for President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita’s RPB party, which gained 67 of a total of 147 seats in Parliament.
- **31 December 2013** – During a New Year greeting on Tuesday, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wished 15 million Malians “peace, nothing but peace.” During the televised address, the president stated “I only want peace, nothing but peace in all regions of Mali, in all communities of Mali, which must take control of their development in a state that will no longer be a Jacobian, a centraliser, but rather a distributor and regulator.” During the address, President Keita also noted that one of the country’s biggest challenges in 2014 would be to build “a well-trained republican army equipped to respond to security threats,” adding that “the other challenge is that of total and permanent return of state control over the entire territory.” The president also called for the MNLA to be confined to camps, as agreed in a peace accord between the separatists and the state ahead of his August election, and said their laying down of arms was the only route to a lasting peace. The president also thanked “all those who helped liberate and bring relief to our people,” singling out French President Francois Hollande and his Chadian counterpart Idris Deby, whose army was at the forefront of the operation alongside French troops.
- **28 December 2013** – A statement released by Mali’s government has indicated that officials have launched an investigation into ousted president Amadou Toumani Toure for “high treason.” A statement released late Friday indicated that Toure, who was unseated by a military coup in March last year, has been accused of having “facilitated the penetration and installation of foreign forces in the country, notably by not offering them any resistance.” The statement has accused Toure, who was in power for ten years, of having “deliberately destroyed or damaged a tool for national defence,” and having participated in “an attempt to demoralise the army.” Toure was overthrown by a group of mid-level army officers who believed that he had failed to provide support for their fight against armed Tuareg separatists. The coup eventually toppled a country that was once heralded as one of West Africa’s most stable democracies. The coup precipitated a crisis in which



al-Qaeda-linked groups seized control of the country's northern region, ruling with a brutal version of Islamic law until a French-led military intervention in January 2013 forced them out. In the months that followed the coup, and a failed counter-coup in April 2012, junta leader Amadou Sanogo's then-headquarters in the central town of Kati were the scene of abuses and killings carried out against soldiers seen as loyal to Toure. Sanogo was arrested on 27 November 2013 and charged, along with fifteen other people, mostly fellow soldiers from his inner circle, for alleged crimes during the coup and its aftermath. The government has since indicated that Sanogo has been charged with complicity in kidnappings, however sources close to the judge in the case have indicated that the charges also include murder, complicity to murder and kidnappings.

## International Developments

- **3 January 2014** – An advance group of fourteen Dutch soldiers is set to leave for Mali on Monday in order to prepare for the arrival of 350 soldiers who are joining the UN peace mission. Reports indicated on Friday that the group will oversee the establishment of a camp and will ensure that the infrastructure is working properly. The rest of the groups will deploy in March and should be operational by April. The Dutch troops will be stationed in the desert near the town of Gao as well as in the capital of Bamako. According to the Dutch Defence Ministry, the troops will focus on gathering information and training local forces.
- **31 December 2013** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has announced that France will reduce the number of its troops deployed in Mali by 60% over the next three months. Le Drian, who is currently visiting Mali, indicated that a force of 1,000 would be left in place. The 1,000 French troops left in Mali will focus on fighting the al-Qaeda-linked groups that are still targeting the vast desert northern region. Speaking to reporters, Le Drian stated “we will remain by the side of the Malian army, and also MINUSMA, for as long as it takes.” At the height of the crisis, France deployed 4,500 troops to its former colony. France intervened militarily in January 2013 in order to oust Islamist militants who had taken over the north of the country. In July, France handed over security responsibilities to the UN force in Mali, MINUSMA, which had incorporated West African troops who backed the French offensive. While MINUSMA was due to number 12,000 by now, the current number of troops is still less than half of that.
- **23 December 2013** – As a reward for the strife-torn country's gradual return to democracy, the United States has restored privileged partner status to Mali. The decision was revealed in the annual revisions to the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which takes into account improvements or setbacks to democracy in those African countries that are included in the programme. AGOA was launched by the US Congress in 2000 and establishes a programme of economic and commercial cooperation with Africa up until 2015. The agreement facilitates African exports for the US market to support developing economies. The return of Mali to the list of countries benefiting from the programme comes after a tumultuous year that included elections to return to civilian rule after the 2012 military coup. The AGOA list is revised each year. US President Barack Obama removed Mali from the privileged status list following the coup and took similar action against Guinea-Bissau.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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

## Security Summary

### Summary

MS Risk advises against all travel to the provinces of Tiris Zemmour, Adrar, Tagant, Hodh el Chargui, Dakhlet-Nouadhibou and Inchiri. We also advise against all travel to the northern and eastern regions of the country, especially the desert areas north of Oualata-Tichit-Ouadane-Zouerat line, as well as the border areas with Algeria, Mali and Morocco. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to the rest of the country, which includes travel along the Nouakchott-Nouadhibou corridor which comprises of the north-south arterial road that runs between these two cities and which passes through Nouamghar. This is due to extremist groups and armed smugglers that are active in these areas, which has resulted in high threats of terrorism as well as a heightened risk of banditry and kidnapping.

On 22 August, officials in Mauritania announced that they have postponed the October 12 elections by six weeks after a coalition of opposition parties indicated that it would boycott the polls in an attempt to cause the vote to fail. Despite the opposition boycotting the elections, on 23 November



2013, parliamentary and local elections were held in Mauritania. Election results have been released, with the ruling party winning a majority of seats.

## *Terrorism*

Following the French military intervention in Mali there has been a heightened possibility of retaliatory attacks that may target Western interests in the region. Attacks could be indiscriminate and by occur in places that are frequented by foreigners. Consequently we advise vigilance.

## *Kidnapping*

There is a high risk of kidnapping throughout Mauritania and Westerners are the favoured target. In the past, hostages have been held captive for several months before being released. MS Risk advises anyone traveling to Mauritania to take particular caution in the region of Inchire (Akjoujt is the capita) as well as in the areas that border Mali and Morocco.

For companies with employees remaining in Mauritania, MS Risk advises you to arrange a trustworthy escort that is familiar with the country. The use of varied and unpredictable routes and schedules when moving from one location to another is also highly advised. Exercise a high awareness of personal security at all times and monitor the local developments.

## On The Ground Reporting

- **30 December 2013** – According to judicial sources, over the past forty-eight hours, Mauritanian police have arrested thirty radical Islamists. Reports have indicated that the militants, who were arrested following instructions from the State Law Office in the capital of Nouakchott, had already been detained in the past. They were freed after agreeing to renounce violence under an offer made to them by the government in January 2010.

## Domestic News

- **31 December 2013** – According to state media reports, Mauritania is to set up a special tribunal to prosecute suspect's accused of involvement in slavery. The decision has been made in a bid to eradicate the trade in the West African state. The Mauritanian Information Agency has reported that a judicial committee, chaired by President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, met on Monday and "decided to create a court to try crimes of slavery." Mauritania was the last country in the world to abolish slavery, in 1981, and since 2012, its practice has been officially designated a crime, with those convicted liable to 10 years in prison. Forced labour is particularly a sensitive issue in Mauritania, where anti-slavery charities are very active, especially SOS Slaves and the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Struggle against Slavery (IRSS), which support victims in court. A Nouakchott court found six people guilty of slavery in November 2011, in the first such convictions in Mauritania, and many other cases have been waiting to go to court, with the suspects often accused by NGO's of "collusion with slave owners." However legal action has in the past taken place in normal criminal courts and campaigners have argued that the government has failed to acknowledge the extent of the trade.
- **23 December 2013** – According to results released on Sunday, Mauritania's ruling UPR party has won a ruling majority in parliament after a second round of legislative elections. The Union for the Republic party had gone into Saturday's election with already a victory in the November 23 first round after a boycott by several opposition parties. According to Sunday's results, which decided an outstanding 26 seats, the UPR now holds 74 seats in the 147-member National Assembly. Allies from smaller parties push its total legislative hold to 108 seats. The opposition has 37 seats, 16 of them taken by an Islamist party, Tewassoul, which took part in the elections for the first time.

This latest election has been seen as a test of strength for President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz five years after he came to power in a coup and four years after he won a widely contested vote.

## International Developments

- **25 December 2013** – An African Union (AU) observer mission to the Mauritanian municipal and legislative polls, led by former Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, has recommended that the Mauritanian government should create an environment which will enable more women to participate in the country's political process. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Mr Ouyahia, who monitored Mauritania's national elections in November and December, stated that the measure would put the country on the international map as one, which encourages gender parity. Since 2006, the law in Mauritania requires only twenty per cent of female representation on the list of candidates for national and municipal assembly polls. During the first round of legislative elections, which were held on 23 November, women won about 35 per cent of the seats available at the National Assembly.

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



Security 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 Tillaberi province north of Niamey, including the road from Niamey to Gao and the road from Niamey to Menaka; areas within 40 km of the border with Nigeria in Diffa, Zinder and Maradi provinces. MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to the rest of Niger, including the capital city of Niamey. There remains a high threat from, including kidnapping, in Niger. On 1 June 2013, three guards were killed and twenty-two inmates escaped from the main prison in Niamey during an attack by suspected Islamist militants. Travellers in Niamey should continue to monitor developments and be alert to announcements and remain vigilant at all times. On 23 May 2013, a military barracks in the town of Agadez and a uranium processing facility near the town of Arlit, approximately 150 miles north of Agadez, were attacked. A number of people were killed and injured. The terrorist group which claimed responsibility for the two attacks has publicly threatened to carry out further attacks in Niger.



On 14 May 2013, the Government of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in its northern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Both Borno and Yobe border southern Niger. Consequently there is a risk that instability may spill over the border from Nigeria to Niger. There is a high threat of kidnapping from terrorist groups including AQIM and MOJWA. These groups have kidnapped Westerners in Niger and in the wider Sahel region, including in Niamey and the north and west of Niger. Further kidnappings are likely to occur. There is a threat of retaliatory attacks in Niger, due to the country's participation in the French-

led intervention in Mali. Levels of crime are high, especially in the capital city of Niamey. Thefts, robberies and residential break-ins can occur at any time. Banditry, smuggling and other criminal activity is common in border areas, especially after dark. Bandits are thought to be operating in the border area with Nigeria, south of Zinder. MS Risk advises avoiding crossing the border with Nigeria during the hours of darkness.

Since May 2013, outbreaks of cholera have been reported in several places in Niger. As of 25 November 2013 a total of 577 cases, including 13 deaths, have been reported.

## On the Ground Reporting

- **3 January 2014** – On Friday a company spokesman announced that French state-controlled nuclear group Areva has closed its two uranium mines in Niger for a month of maintenance while it negotiates with the government over the renewal of its licences. Niger, which is the world's fourth-largest uranium producer, is trying to extract increased royalties from the French group, with the mines operating in a legal limbo after the expiry of their licences on 31 December 2013. Confirming reports, the company spokesman indicated that Areva's Somair and Cominak mines have been closed since mid-December and will remain closed until mid-January. The mines' 10 year contract expired on 31 December however on 27 December, officials in Niger issued a decree that potentially provides a legal framework for them to continue operating for now.
- **28 December 2013** – On Saturday, in the first major rally against President Mahamadou Issoufou's rule since his 2011 election win, thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets in the Niger capital Niamey to protest corruption and media censorship. Demonstrators chanted "down with the regime," and "no to dictatorship," as they gathered outside parliament, with some carrying portraits of ex-president Mamadou Tandja, who was ousted in a military coup in 2010 but who remains a popular figure in the West African country. The protest, which was organized by an alliance of opposition parties, marks the first large street demonstration against the current president since he came to power. According to sources close to him, President Issoufou is expected to run for a second term in 2016. Opposition leader and former premier Seini Oumarou condemned "the bad governance and corruption" in a country with worsening food security, education and health systems. He also lashed out at the government's opaque oil deals with foreign firms and the ruling Nigerian Party for Democracy and Socialism's control of the media. At an opposition meeting shortly after the rally, Oumarou stated "we are witnessing the organised looting of our national resources." He also accused the current president of trying to build up "a war chest" to secure victory in the 2016 presidential polls. The opposition gathering was attended by former president Mahamane Ousmane, who ruled from 1993 until his ouster in a coup in 1996.
  - Meanwhile France's Defence Ministry has indicated that a commando paratrooper in Niger has been killed when a fellow soldier's weapon fired accidentally. Cpl. Thomas Guillebault was part of a force based in the Niger capital of Niamey that is supporting French troops fighting Islamist militants in neighbouring Mali. A statement released by the Defence Ministry indicated that 21-year-old Guillebault was killed Thursday in Niamey by another French soldier who accidentally fired his weapon. The statement indicated that French gendarmes, who are deployed with the force, will investigate the circumstances of the accident.



Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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

### Security Summary

#### Summary

In November, a French national was kidnapped in northern Cameroon, near the border with Nigeria, by suspected Boko Haram militants. It is currently believed that the French national has been taken across the border into Nigeria and is likely being held captive in the northern region of Nigeria. MS Risk advises all to avoid travelling to the northern regions of the country, especially to the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, which are currently under a state of emergency. Continued kidnappings of foreign nationals, especially French nationals, is highly likely to continue.

There have been reports of a security incident involving gunfire that occurred in the Apo district of the capital city of Abuja on the morning of 20 September 2013. The incident may have involved suspected Boko Haram militants. Consequently any travellers in the capital city are reminded to remain vigilant at all times as further attacks may occur with minimal warning.

On 14 May, the Nigerian Government declared a State of Emergency in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. That state of emergency has now been extended for an additional six months. Since the announcement, military operations have been going on in all three states and curfews have been put in place in parts of Maiduguri, Borno state and Adamawa state. Curfews can be imposed, amended and lifted at a short notice.



Consequently you should be alert to announcements made by the respective State Governments and you are advised to monitor any developments in the affected states. There may be an increased threat of retaliatory attacks elsewhere in Nigeria following the commencement of military operations. MS Risk advises against all travel to: the Riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States; Warri city, Kano city, Okene City.

We advise against all travel to Adamawa State, Borno State, Yobe State, Gombe State and Bauchi State. This is due to the frequent violent attacks which have been occurring over the past months. More recent attacks have increasingly focused on public places, including bars and restaurants. These attacks have resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries. We also advise against all travel to Kano City and Okene City, which has also seen a frequent number of high levels of violence.

We advise against all but essential travel to Kano state, Kaduna State, Jigwa State, Katsina State, Sokoto State, Zamfara State, Kebbi State, Jos City, Riyom and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas in Plateau State; Okene Region of Kogi State. These areas have witnessed an increase in violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to Mubi Town in Adamawa State and the area north of Mubi Town that borders Borno State where there has also been a rise in violent attacks. We also advise against all but essential travel to the non-riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States, Abia State, Kaduna City, Zaria City.

Companies with workers in northern Nigeria, even in areas which are not subject to specific advice against travel, will require a high level of security. In light of the recent kidnappings of Westerners, employers are advised to review their security arrangements and to ensure that compounds are protected.

There is a high threat of terrorism occurring in Nigeria. A bomb attack that occurred at a bus station in Kano city on 18 March 2013 resulted in multiple casualties. 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.

### *Kidnapping*

Although recent incidents of kidnapping have mostly occurred in northern Nigeria, MS Risk advises that such kidnappings can take place anywhere in the country.

- On 16 February 2013, after storming the compound of Lebanese-owned construction firm Setraco in Bauchi state, gunmen killed a security guard and abducted a Briton, an Italian, a Greek, two Lebanese and two Syrian workers. The British construction worker is believed to have been killed along with the six other foreign nationals. 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.
- In December 2012, a French national was kidnapped by armed men in Katsina State in northern Nigeria, reportedly from a residential compound.



- In 2012, a Lebanese national was kidnapped in Kaduna State. His Lebanese colleague was killed during the abduction
- In January 2012, a German national was killed in Kano city. He was killed on 31 May 2012.
- In May 2011, a British national and an Italian national were kidnapped together in Kebbi State. Both hostages were killed in Sokoto on 8 March 2012.

## *Threats and Terrorism*

Attacks by Islamist groups in northern Nigeria have become the biggest threat to stability in Africa's top oil producing country. 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. These concerns have been further intensified by the conflict and military intervention in nearby Mali.

## On The Ground Reporting

- **30 December 2013** – Police and health officials in the northeastern state of Borno indicated on Monday that twelve people have died in a suspected Boko Haram attack on a wedding party. The attack, which occurred on Saturday, happened when two gunmen on a motorcycle opened fire in the mainly Christian village of Tashan Alade, located 230 kilometers (140 miles) from the Borno state capital Maiduguri. According to police commissioner Lawan Tank, “the attackers, who were obviously Boko Haram insurgents, arrived at the open-air venue of the party around 2:00PM (1300 GMT) and opened fire, killing seven people and injuring five others.” The commissioner further noted that “the gunmen fled immediately and escaped before security personnel could be alerted due to the remoteness of the village.” Witnesses to the attack have reported that the gunmen pretended to be guests and opened fire as cash was given to the newlyweds in a traditional Nigerian custom. Reports have indicated that both Christians and Muslims attended the wedding. People injured in the attack were later taken to a hospital in Maiduguri, where a number died from gunshot wounds.
  - Elsewhere, four people were reportedly killed in the village of Kwajaffa, also located in Borno, on Sunday, raising fears of fresh attacks in the majority Christian community and others nearby. Kwajaffa is located near the Sambisa Forest, where Boko Haram militants have been engaged in fierce fighting with the military. There were also reports of further deaths in the village of Warabe, located near Sambisa Forest.
- **27 December 2013** – In a video released on Friday, Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, has claimed responsibility for a daring December 20 attack on a military barracks in the restive northeast. While seated on a mat surrounded by a group of armed men, Shekau confirmed “our fighters stormed the Bama barracks,” adding “this is a victory from Allah.” Boko Haram militant stormed the barracks in the town of Bama in a convoy of trucks before sunrise, opening fire on the soldiers inside before setting fire to the compound. Several witnesses reported that the gunmen kidnapped soldiers as well as women and children. The Nigerian military has not released a death toll from the barracks attack and rescue agencies have largely been barred from working in the northeast since a state of emergency was declared in the area in May. According to the defence ministry, more than 50 “terrorists” were killed when ground forces backed by fighter jets pursued the fleeing Islamists after the raid. The attack in Bama was the second major strike on the military in the northeast this month and was seen as a reminder that more than seven months into a military offensive aimed at crushing the insurgency, Boko Haram remains capable of striking high profile targets.
- **24 December 2013** – Witnesses reported on Tuesday that a military offensive in northeastern Nigeria, which killed more than 50 Islamist militants, has destroyed four villages and left corpses

scattered in bushes, with some civilians among the dead. Although the defence ministry has indicated that the operation was launched in response to an attack last Friday by Boko Haram insurgents on an army barracks in the town of Bama, in Borno state, with defence spokesman Chris Olukolade identifying those killed as “terrorists,” residents have reported that an unknown number of civilians also lose their lives as the military bombarded the fleeing rebels. Residents have also reported that the military onslaught “completely burnt down four villages,” specifically Awaram, Ali-Ali, Suwabara and Kashimri, all of which are located in the state of Borno.

- **23 December 2013** – According to police and witness accounts, gunmen have kidnapped a Lebanese businessman in the northern Nigerian city of Kano after militants stormed his factory. Police spokesman Magaji Majiya has indicated that police have launched a manhunt to arrest the attackers, adding that a man and woman were wounded when the militants opened fire as they took the man hostage. On the grounds sources have reported that police in Kano have mounted checkpoints throughout the city as they attempt to track down the hostage takers. Police officials have identified the Lebanese national as Hassan Zein. Zein, the Managing Director of M.C. Plastic Company, was seized in the early hours of Monday from the company’s premises in the Sharada Industrial area of Kano. So far no group has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. While officials have indicated that there are suspicions that militant Islamists carried out the attack, the possibility that a criminal gang took the man hostage for ransom cannot be ruled out at this time. This is not the first reported incident of a foreigner being kidnapped in the northern town of Kano. Last year, a German engineer, Edgar Fritz Raupach, was abducted in Kano by militant Islamists. He was later killed during a security force operation to rescue him. While it was not clear which group had abducted Mr. Raupach, a video purported to be from al-Qaeda’s North Africa wing, AQIM, demanded at the time that Germany free a woman jailed on terror charges in return for his release.
  - Meanwhile a spokesman for the Nigerian army indicated on Monday that Nigeria’s troops have killed over fifty Islamists and destroyed more than 20 vehicles during a massive hunt for fleeing Boko Haram insurgents who attacked an army barracks in a town in the northeastern region of the country. Early on Friday, Boko Haram gunmen had stormed the Mohammed Kur Barracks in Bama, spraying it with bullets before torching the compound. A statement released by Major-General Chris Olukolade indicated “although a good number of the insurgents escaped with bullet wounds while some have been arrested, over 50 of them died in the course of exchange of fire with ground troops in the ongoing operations to apprehend fleeing terrorists.” Major-General Olukolade further indicated that the military lost 15 soldiers, mostly from the attack, while some died during the pursuit around the border with Cameroon. He also noted “a total of five civilians also died during the attack.” The military is set to search for more insurgents who may be on the run.

### *Domestic News*

- **31 December 2013** – On Tuesday, Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan called for greater national unity in 2014, urging compatriots to build the work of their predecessors as the county marked its effective centenary. The president further indicated that the amalgamation of the separate protectorates of northern and southern Nigeria by the British former colonial rulers on 1 January 1914 was the birth of the nation. In his New Year message, Jonathan stated “for us therefore today is not just the beginning of a new year but the end of a century of national existence and the beginning of another,” adding that “it is a moment for sober reflection and for pride in all that is great about Nigeria.” Jonathan, who is expected to seek re-election in 2015, acknowledged the country had faced “challenges” but always pulled through, hailing Nigeria’s diversity as a source of strength, not division. Countering some critics who believe that the union was doomed to fail and is the root of the country’s problems; Jonathan stated “the amalgamation of 1914 was certainly not a mistake but a blessing.” He concluded his New Year message by stating that “as we celebrate 100 years of nationhood, we must resolve to continue to work

together as one, united people, to make our country even greater,” adding “I assure you that our administration remains fully committed to the progressive development of our country and the consolidation of peace, unity and democratic governance in our fatherland.”

- **30 December 2013** – On Monday, as the country prepared to mark the centenary of the unification of north and south, Nigeria’s President was urged to hold talks on the future of Nigeria. The Movement for New Nigeria (MNN), a civil society group composed of a number of different ethnic groups, indicated that a national dialogue was the only way of resolving contentious issues that were gripping the country. During a news conference in Nigeria’s commercial capital Lagos, MNN leader Timi Ogoriba stated that it would be a “monumental disaster” if the president walked away from the promised talks. Nigeria is currently facing a range of problems from endemic corruption to the sharing of its vast oil wealth and a bloody Islamist insurgency, as well as long-standing ethnic, sectarian and religious differences. The current president is also facing a political crisis after the defection of a number of high-profile state governors from his ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the loss of his parliamentary majority. The PDP is riven with infighting amidst claims that Jonathan disregarded an unwritten rule to rotate the presidency between a candidate from the majority Muslim north and mainly Christian south. In October, Jonathan set up a committee to look at how to take representations and promised that the process of hearing grievances would begin early in the New Year.
- **23 December 2013** – On Monday, Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan ordered a probe into a rash of allegations, including the creation of a political hit squad, which have been levelled against him by former leader Olusegun Obasanjo. The allegations were put forth by Obasanjo, who served as president from 1999 – 2007, in a penned open letter to Jonathan. The letter, which accuses President Jonathan of training a private militia to assassinate political rivals, was made public on 2 December. A founding member of Jonathan’s Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Obasanjo also accused the current president of gross incompetence and urged him not to seek re-election in 2015. Obasanjo’s letter has dominated headlines throughout this month, with the current president indicating that he was compelled to publicly reply as the missive posed “a threat to national security.” In response to the accusations, Jonathan also indicated that “perhaps the most invidious accusation in your letter is the allegation that I have placed over one thousand Nigerians on a political watch list, and that I am training snipers and other militia to assassinate people.” Jonathan has dismissed the charges as “baseless” and “incomprehensible,” and is demanding that Obasanjo offer proof. In turn, Jonathan has “...directed the security agencies and requested the National Human Rights Commission to carry out a thorough investigation of these criminal allegations and make their findings public.” While Nigeria has been gripped by the bitter public feud between the two politicians and one time allies, this incident has mounted further pressure on Jonathan to declare his plans for the 2015 polls.

No travel restrictions



Although there are currently no travel restrictions for Senegal, MS Risk advises avoiding road travel in the Casamance region, to the west of Kolda. The Casamance region of south-western Senegal (between the southern border of Gambia and the northern border of Guinea-Bissau) remains affected by incidents involving armed separatist groups and banditry, particularly in the regions of Bignona and Sindian. There has been an increase in clashes between the Senegalese army and suspected elements of the armed separatist group Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). MS Risk advises against all road travel in the Casamance region to the west of Kolda, other than on the main road from Ziguinchor to Cap Skiring (which is often used by groups of tourists during daylight hours) and on the road north of the Guinea-Bissau/Senegal border, from Sao Domingos to Ziguinchor (N4 bis). If you travel on either of these roads, you should do so only during daylight hours and monitor the local security situation before travelling. Severe water shortages in Dakar have led to a number of demonstrations in the suburbs. Youths have blocked some roads with burning tyres and have clashed with police. MS Risk advises travellers to avoid all demonstrations and to leave any affected areas at the first sign that unrest may develop. There have been a number of deaths and injuries. There is currently an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers. 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 they may target Western interests as well as foreigners.

### On the Ground Analysis

- 1 January 2014** – The owner of one of Senegal's largest media groups was detained overnight after accusing President Macky Sall of building up wealth through the corruption. According to officials at Walfadjri, Sidy Lamine Niass, founder and CEO, was taken into custody on Monday after being summoned to a police station in Dakar. He was kept until he was bailed on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters as he left a court in Dakar, Mr Niass stated, "I think the religious leaders, the press and all Senegalese," without elaborating. His detention stems from an interview he gave that was broadcast on Saturday by his television station. During the interview, Mr Niass indicated that he had evidence of "illicit enrichment" by Sall who was elected as president in March last year. While officials have not indicated what charges have been brought against him, local media reported that he was being investigated for "disturbing public order and insulting the head of state" as a result of the programme. Niass, whose company runs a newspaper and several radio stations as well as the television channel, was first summoned by police officials in Dakar on Saturday, however after his release, he indicated that that order had been cancelled. Speaking to reporters as he headed to the police station on Monday, Mr Niass stated "I am going to respond to this second summons, which is not legal but political. The government is trying to intimidate us." It remains unclear if a date has been set for a further court appearance. Mr Niass has been outspoken in his criticism of the various regimes that have run Senegal since the country gained its independence in 1960.



No travel  
restrictions

*There is currently no travel advisory for Sierra Leone. Violent incidents have taken place under cover of crowds in the streets of Freetown. There are also occasional small riots between rival groups of youths in the central and eastern areas of Freetown. If you encounter such an incident, you should leave the area immediately. There is a low threat from terrorism. There is a possibility that retaliatory attacks may be carried out in Sierra Leone. This is due to the country's participation in the intervention in Mali. During the rainy season, May to October, roads can become extremely difficult, even for off-road vehicles. On 9 August a bridge in the capital city of Freetown collapse due to a landslide caused by heavy rain. At least six people were killed in the accident. MS Risk therefore advises all travellers in the country to exercise due caution when travelling by road throughout the season.*

## Domestic News

- 2 January 2014** – The United Nations-baked Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) has ended its operations after eleven years of ensuring accountability for crimes committed during the country's decade-long civil war. The SCSL, an independent tribunal that was set up jointly by the UN and the Government of Sierra Leone, was mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the country since 1996. Based in the capital city of Freetown, the Special Court carried out a number of trials since it was established in 2002. These trials included various leaders as well as former Liberian President Charles Taylor. The trials also witnessed first-ever convictions for attacks against UN peacekeepers, forced marriage as a crime against humanity and for the use of child soldiers. In a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the staff at the SCSL, stating that "the United Nations is proud of its partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone in establishing the Special court, which ensured accountability for the unspeakable crimes committed during Sierra Leone's over a decade-long civil war, and thereby greatly contributed towards establishing peace and stability and in laying the ground for Sierra Leone's long-term development." The SCSL has been succeeded by the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone, which will deal with matters arising from the on-going legal obligations of the tribunal which could include applications made by convicts for early release or judicial review of their convictions. Judges may also be called on to preside over any contempt of court proceedings.