



The West Africa Report

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



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- Security Consulting
 - Risk assessments and intelligence reporting
 - Planning and management
 - Due diligence and investigations.

- Project Management
 - Interim Security
 - Training
 - Special Assignments

- Crisis Response
 - Crisis Response
 - 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

24 hr Contact Information:

Email: operations@msrisk.com

Telephone: +44 207 754 3555

MS Risk Limited, South Suite, Ragnall House, 18 Peel Road, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 4LZ.

Tel: +44 1624 626400

Directors: S.J. Bingham, V.K. Prentice, P.O.J. Tracy.

Registered in the Isle of Man No 007435V

24 hr Global Contact: +44 207 754 3555
www.msrisk.com

The West Africa Report ~ SUMMARY

February 3 – 16, 2014



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Central African Republic

On the Ground Analysis

- **14 February 2014** – A prosecutor has confirmed that thirteen decomposing corpses have been discovered in a camp housing ex-rebels in the CAR. The corpses, some mere skeletons, were found in a disused fuel tank at a camp of former Seleka fighters.
- **11 February 2014** – On Tuesday, French troops uncovered a major arms cache, including explosives and ammunition, in a house in a northern Bangui stronghold of the anti-balaka militia.
- **10 February 2014** – Overnight, gunmen killed a politician outside his house in the capital city.
 - Meanwhile the commander of French troops in the CAR has accused a militia, known as the anti-balaka, of being the country's "main enemy of peace," which should be treated as outlaws and thugs.
- **7 February 2014** – On Friday, the United Nation's refugee agency announced that in just over a week, nearly 9,000 people, mainly Muslims, have fled the CAR to Cameroon.
- **3 February 2014** - Over the past weekend, peacekeepers stationed in the Central African Republic recaptured control of the key town of Sibut after rebel fighters had taken control of the northern town late last week.
 - Meanwhile according to the head of the French army, despite reports emerging that at least seventy-five people had been killed in a single town, the violence in Central Africa has been "partly halted."

Domestic News

- **12 February 2014** – The CAR's new interim president has declared that she will "go to war" with Christian militias who are killing Muslims.
- **5 February 2014** – The CAR's new interim president Catherine Samba Panza has re-appointed several ministers from her coup-leader predecessor's cabinet.

International Developments

- **14 February 2014** – The French presidency has announced that France will hold a meeting of its top defense committee on the CAR on Friday and will later host Chad's President Idris Deby.
- **13 February 2014** – French President Francois Hollande has called on the United Nations to fast track the deployment of peacekeepers to the CAR in order to quell the ongoing sectarian conflict.
- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Amnesty International announced that "ethnic cleansing" is being carried out against Muslim civilians in the CAR, with international peacekeepers unable to prevent the crisis. Officials at Amnesty indicated that they had documented at least 200 killings of Muslim civilians by Christian militia groups.
- **11 February 2014** – French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called on international forces deployed in the CAR to put an end to brutal attacks by the country's militias, "by force if needed."
 - Meanwhile UN chief Ban Ki-moon has spoken with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on increasing the number of European and African troops in the CAR.
- **10 February 2014** – On Monday, EU foreign ministers formally approved an EU military mission to the troubled CAR, with some 500 troops to be deployed to aid French and African Union forces already stationed on the ground.
- **7 February 2014** – The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an initial probe into war crimes in the CAR, where another lynching on Friday underscored spiraling sectarian violence.
- **6 February 2014** – According to France's Defense Minister, the initial six-month mandate for French troops deployed to the CAR is "likely" to be extended.
 - Meanwhile the UN's top envoy, and France, urged Central African authorities to punish soldiers involved in the gruesome public lynching of a suspected ex-rebel.
- **4 February 2014** – The United Nation's World Food Programme announced Tuesday that it was running out of food aid to distribute in the CAR and that it would begin flying in supplies from Cameroon.

Guinea

- **10 February 2014** – According to medics and eyewitnesses, at least twenty-one people, including three police officers, were injured in rioting that broke out after electrical power broke down in the Guinean capital on Monday.

Ivory Coast

- **4 February 2014** – The president of the Ivory Coast has extended the mandate for a national "reconciliation commission," which was set up to heal the wounds of a conflict that occurred after the 2010 contested elections and which claimed 3,000 lives.

Mali

On the Ground Analysis

- **12 February 2014** – A Malian intelligence official has confirmed that thirty people have been killed near Mali's border with Niger after a clash pitted armed villagers against members of an al-Qaeda-linked rebel group.
 - Meanwhile officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have suspended the movement of its staff in the northern desert region of Mali as a group of aid workers are moving.
- **7 February 2014** – According to officials, armed from the ethnic Peul community have massacred at least thirty Tuaregs in what appears to be a revenge attack that occurred in northern Mali.
- **4 February 2014** – An official has indicated that during a visit by France's top military officer, two rockets were fired at a French army base in northern Mali.

Domestic News

- **13 February 2014** – In what appears to be a renewed effort by the government to regain its control of the army after the 2012 coup, authorities in Mali arrested former defence minister General Yamoussa Camara.

International Developments

- **11 February 2014** – According to Mali's UN Mission and Human Rights Watch (HRW), clashes in northern Mali, which killed thirty one people last week, appear to have involved local Tuareg and Peul communities and were not the result of a terrorist attack as previously stated by the government.
- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Germany's government approved an increase to the number of soldiers sent to Mali, as

part of an EU-led mission that will train the national army.

- **3 February 2014** – On Monday, the United Nations Security Council called on Mali's government and rebels to conclude talks as soon as possible, warning that the failure to do so risked radicalizing fighters and undoing the fragile security gains.

Mauritania

- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Mauritanian prime minister-designate Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf announced the lineup of his new 26-minister government.

Niger

On the Ground Analysis

- **13 February 2014** – On Thursday, authorities in Niger released three journalists from a private radio station one day after they were detained along with a union leader who criticized President Mahamadou Issfouou.

Domestic News

- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, officials in Niger called for a Western intervention to eradicate a growing threat from Islamist fighters who have established bases in southern Libya, since the 2011 overthrow of Moamer Kadhafi, and who are now threatening security in Niger.

International Developments

- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, as France and Niger continue to pursue tough negotiations pertaining to uranium contracts, French officials admitted that Niger's demands for more revenues from uranium mining are "legitimate."

Nigeria

On the Ground Reporting

- **13 February 2014** – After launching an ambush on a military convoy in the northeast of Nigeria, Boko Haram gunmen killed nine Nigerian soldiers.
- **12 February 2014** – An attack carried out by Boko Haram militants has killed thirty-nine people in a village in the northeast of Nigeria. Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima told reporters that "up to 39 people have been killed and over 70 percent of the village has been razed to the ground."
- **6 February 2014** – Officials have indicated that at least twenty-two people were killed in a raid in central Nigeria in what appears to be the second such attack to occur in the region this week.
- **4 February 2014** – Gunmen killed about thirty people in an early morning raid on two villages in central Nigeria.

Domestic News

- **13 February 2014** – The governor of the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno has called for more troops to be deployed to the region in order to combat Boko Haram militants.
- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, officials in Nigeria announced that they will open a probe into claims of state-sponsored killings that date back to the era of military rule.
 - Meanwhile in what has widely been seen as a move linked to his expected re-election bid next year, President Goodluck Jonathan has fired four cabinet ministers, including his controversial aviation minister.
- **11 February 2014** – On Tuesday, the leader of Niger's upper chamber of parliament blocked eleven lawmakers from defecting, stating that their break from the ruling party to the main opposition would not go through until a court challenge was resolved.
- **5 February 2014** – Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan has called on his new military top brass to not disappoint the nation in their task of ending the Boko Haram insurgency.

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.

Burkina Faso – Page 8

Central African Republic – Page 10

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 – Page 16

Guinea-Bissau – There are currently no travel restrictions on 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 which border the Casamance region of Senegal, including the Sao Domingos/Mpack road. The country's elections are scheduled to take place on 16 March 2014.

Ivory Coast – Page 17

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.

Mali – Page 18

Mauritania - Page 24

Niger - Page 26

Nigeria – Page 28

Senegal – 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.

Sierra Leone – 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.

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. While the political situation remains generally stable, since February 2011, there have been an increasing number of demonstrations.

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

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.

On the Ground Reporting

- **14 February 2014** – A prosecutor has confirmed that thirteen decomposing corpses have been discovered in a camp housing ex-rebels in the CAR. The corpses, some mere skeletons, were found in a disused fuel tank at a camp of former Seleka fighters. According to Ghislain Grezenguet, lead prosecutor in the capital Bangui, the bodies “were found in different places in the tank, which suggests that the people were thrown in their alive and struggled to get out.” He added that they were found by international peacekeepers whose suspicions were aroused by the stench coming from the site. Some of the victims, whose identities have not yet been established, are thought to have died between a week and ten days ago.
- **11 February 2014** – On Tuesday, French troops uncovered a major arms cache, including explosives and ammunition, in a house in a northern Bangui stronghold of the anti-balaka militia. A French military official has indicated that currently, nothing is known about the owner of the weapons however they will be to a French camp and destroyed.
- **10 February 2014** – Overnight, gunmen killed a politician outside his house in the capital city. So far no group has claimed responsibility for the killing of Jean-Emmanuel Ndjaraoua a day after he made a speech denouncing recent violence and calling for Christian militias to be confined to barracks. According to government officials, attackers followed Ndjaraoua, a Christian representative for eastern Haute-Kotto province, and shot him several times near his home in northern Bangui on Sunday Night. According to Etienne Bazouati, another parliamentarian, “he was returning home from town and he was shot down with eight gunshots by armed men. Amy Martin, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Bangui has stated that the killing will likely put additional strains on peacekeepers as officials sought more protection, adding, “it will be impossible for troops to protect both members of parliament and the neighborhoods.” Ndjaraoua is amongst dozens of people who have been killed in sectarian clashes, which erupted in the capital city on Friday. Three lynching’s were also reported last week, prompting thousands of Muslims to flee to neighboring Chad and Cameroon. According to Martin, Muslims in the capital city are now largely confined to the PK12 neighborhood in Bangui’s northern region.
 - Meanwhile the commander of French troops in the CAR has accused a militia, known as the anti-balaka, of being the country’s “main enemy of peace,” which should be treated as outlaws and thugs. Speaking during a meeting in Bangui with the country’s religious leaders, General Francisco Soriano stated that “those who call themselves ‘anti-balaka’ have become the main enemy of peace in the Central African Republic,” accusing the militia of inciting violence by “stigmatizing” certain areas as Muslim. The remarks come as reports surfaced that a member of the country’s transitional parliament, Jean-Emmanuel Ndjaraoua, was gunned down in a drive-by shooting in the capital city. The attack, which occurred just days after Ndjaraoua condemned violence against the Muslim residents of his district before parliament on Saturday, has since been blamed on anti-balaka. The mainly Christian vigilantes have been accused of brutal attacks against Muslims after the ouster of president Francois Bozize in March 2013.
- **7 February 2014** – On Friday, the United Nation’s refugee agency announced that in just over a week, nearly 9,000 people, mainly Muslims, have fled the CAR to Cameroon. According to UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokeswoman Fatoumata Lejeune-Kaba, in the past ten days alone, 8,762 people have crossed into eastern Cameroon from the CAR, noting, “the

majority of them are Muslims who say they feared for their safety.” The latest influx has brought the number of Central African refugees in Cameroon to 20,000 since the coup was launched in March 2013.

- **3 February 2014** - Over the past weekend, peacekeepers stationed in the Central African Republic recaptured control of the key town of Sibut after rebel fighters had taken control of the northern town late last week. The commander of the African Union force confirmed that his troops had taken control of the town from former members of the mainly Muslim Seleka rebellion. General Tumenta Chomud further noted, “a Gabonese contingent from MISCA is in place in the town. It is clear that the Seleka fighters can be contained and they will be disarmed.” The announcement came just days after Seleka fighters captured the town of Sibut, which links the capital Bangui with the north of the country. The take forced hundreds of terrified residents to flee into the bush. On Friday, French troops converged on the rebel-held town in the northern region of the country. French military aircraft hovered over Sibut, which is located 180 kilometers (110 miles) north of the capital Bangui. Ex-Seleka rebels seized the town on Thursday, prompting African troops, and hundreds of frightened residents, to flee. A French communication officer indicated on that “a military operation is happening in Sibut,” while the presence of the aircraft was been confirmed by defense officials in Paris. The capture of the northern town is just the latest challenge faced by peacekeepers struggling to maintain order in the CAR. Newly installed interim president, Catherine Samba Panza has criticized the rebel efforts, stating that they were aiming to “destabilize her mandate,” adding that “at the time when the government is calling for togetherness, tolerance and national reconciliation, some of our countrymen are taking upon themselves the heavy responsibility of dividing the country.” The latest increase of violence, coupled with the taking over of Sibut, has indicated that the installation of a new government has so far failed to stem inter-religious violence between the mostly Muslim Seleka and Christian militia groups.
 - Meanwhile according to the head of the French army, despite reports emerging that at least seventy-five people had been killed in a single town, the violence in Central Africa has been “partly halted,” France’s chief of defense staff Edouard Guillaud stated during a visit to the capital Bangui that the process of disarming both sides had begun, and that “the violence has been partly halted.” However his statement has been underscored by fresh reports of fighting. According to Cassien Kamatari, a local priest, at least seventy-five people had been killed since Tuesday in fighting that occurred in the town of Boda, adding that the fighting was still ongoing. Katamari further added that his parish was sheltering 1,500 people who had fled the violence between Christians and Muslims in Boda, which is located 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of the capital city. His visit comes two months after France deployed troops into its former colony in order to stop fighting between Christians and Muslims.

Domestic News

- **12 February 2014** – The CAR’s new interim president has declared that she will “go to war” with Christian militias who are killing Muslims. Catherine Samba Panza stated on Wednesday that the militias, called anti-balaka, had “lost their sense of mission” and had become “the ones who kill, who pillage, who are violent.” The militias however are claiming that they are taking revenge for the atrocities that were carried out by Muslim rebels last year. The ongoing atrocities throughout the CAR have forced tens of thousands of Muslims to flee into Cameroon and Chad. Although Amnesty International has described the situation as “ethnic cleansing,” Ms Samba Panza has rejected this label, instead characterizing the violence as a “security problem. Many of the Muslims who have fled the country were traders or involved in the food business. Their absence has subsequently sparked a collapse in food distribution and has resulted in the worsening humanitarian crisis. Update (13 February 2014) – On Thursday, the self-proclaimed leader of the militias warned the new president not to attempt as she has vowed, to crack down on the anti-

balaka. Richard Bejouane told hundreds of militiamen gathered in Bangui that “declaring war on the anti-balaka amounts to declaring war on the Central African population.” He claims that the anti-balaka number 52,000 in the CAR, including 12,000 who are stationed in the capital. Although the anti-balaka militias were initially formed as self-defense groups in response to the abuses committed by rogue ex-Seleka rebels, who are now on the back foot following France’s troop deployment two months ago, most of the ongoing violence has been blamed on anti-balaka attacks.

- **5 February 2014** – The CAR’s new interim president Catherine Samba Panza has re-appointed several ministers from her coup-leader predecessor’s cabinet. Ms. Samba Panza, a Christian who has been tasked with restoring stability in a country torn apart by Christian-Muslim violence, has chosen to keep some key figures from Muslim rebel leader Michel Djotodia’s government, including the minister who liaises with French and African troops deployed to end the crisis. Jean-Jackques Demafouth will retain his post as security adviser for relations with African Union-led forces MISCA and former colonial ruler France’s Operation Sangaris. The new cabinet, which consists of about thirty ministers, also retains Abdoulaye Hissene, minister for youth and sports. Both Demafouth and Hissene once fought in previous rebel movements in the chronically rebellion- and coup-prone country. At least ten other members of the new cabinet were part of the previous government or held key posts under Djotodia.

International Developments

- **14 February 2014** – The French presidency has announced that France will hold a meeting of its top defense committee on the CAR on Friday and will later host Chad’s President Idris Deby. The meeting of the limited defense committee, which includes President Francois Hollande and top ministers, is to take place at 1000 GMT. The French president will then hold talks with Deby in Paris at 1700 GMT. **Update** – France has announced that it will deploy an additional 400 troops to the CAR, raising its total deployment to 2,000. A statement released shortly after a meeting of a top defence committee indicated that the 400 new soldiers will include combat troops and gendarmes who will eventually be folded into the planned EU mission. The statement also indicated that President Francois Hollande has called on the European Union to speed up the deployment of an estimated 500 troops under the EUFOR mission.
- **13 February 2014** – French President Francois Hollande has called on the United Nations to fast track the deployment of peacekeepers to the CAR in order to quell the ongoing sectarian conflict. During a telephone call with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Hollande stated that UN troops were need to help restore peace and to prop up the administration of new interim president Catherine Samba Panza. A statement released by the French presidency indicated, “the UN Security Council set a clear mandate for peacekeepers which must be quickly and firmly implemented. It’s a question mainly of speeding up the preparation of the peacekeeping operation, in close partnership with the African Union.” France is also racing to recruit hundreds of troops for the EU military mission in the CAR. According to General Philippe Ponties, who took up the post as the mission chief for the force earlier this week, the current objective is to deploy the first soldiers “as quickly as possible” in the capital Bangui.
- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Amnesty International announced that “ethnic cleansing” is being carried out against Muslim civilians in the CAR, with international peacekeepers unable to prevent the crisis. Officials at Amnesty indicated that they had documented at least 200 killings of Muslim civilians by Christian militia groups. In a report released on Wednesday, Amnesty International indicated “‘ethnic cleansing’ of Muslims has been carried out in the western part of the Central African Republic, the most populous part of the country, since early January 2014.” The report further added, “entire Muslim communities have been forced to flee, and hundreds of Muslim civilians who have not managed to escape have been killed by the loosely organized militias known as anti-balaka.” Amnesty International also stated that attacks against Muslims had been committed “with the stated intent to forcibly displace these communities from the country,”

with many anti-balaka fighters viewing Muslims as “‘foreigners’ who should leave the country or be killed.” According to the report, “they appear to be achieving their aims, with Muslims being forced out of the country in increasingly large numbers.” Amnesty International has urged peacekeeping forces in the country to “take rapid steps to break anti-balaka control over the country’s road network, and to station sufficient troops in towns where Muslims are threatened.” It called for international troops to be granted the necessary resources to achieve this, warning of a “tragedy of historic proportions” that could set a percent for other countries in the region struggling with sectarian or ethnic conflict. There are currently 5,300 African Union (AU) troops operating under a UN mandate in the CAR, with the force expected to reach 6,000 by March. France has also deployed 1,6000 troops, while the EU has promised to deploy 500 troops at the beginning of March, with the United States set to provide logistical support.

- **11 February 2014** – French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called on international forces deployed in the CAR to put an end to brutal attacks by the country’s militias, “by force if needed.” Speaking during a visit to Brazzaville in neighboring Congo, Le Drian stated, “all militias, who continue to be involved in mob violence and commit murder, must stop.” He added that French troops and the African Union-led MISCA mission in the CAR must “implement the UN resolutions, by force if needed.”
 - Meanwhile UN chief Ban Ki-moon has spoken with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on increasing the number of European and African troops in the CAR. According to UN spokesman Martin Nesirky, Ban “asked what could be done to increase support to MISCA, to accelerate the deployment of the European Union troops, and whether additional troops might be envisaged.” Nesirky added that the secretary-general “stressed that the international response must be robust enough to stop the violence and prevent what has a high potential to result in additional widespread atrocities.” He further noted that Ban “reiterated that the international community had collective responsibility towards the people of the CAR” and denounced the cycle of retaliatory attacks and sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians. The African peacekeeping-force MISCA has already deployed some 5,400 of 6,000 planned troops, and some 1,600 French soldiers are already on the ground in the CAR. In turn, the EU has promised to deploy 500 troops to Bangui at the beginning of March.
- **10 February 2014** – On Monday, EU foreign ministers formally approved an EU military mission to the troubled CAR, with some 500 troops to be deployed to aid French and African Union forces already stationed on the ground. EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton has indicated that the “absolute priority is to protect the civilian population from any further violence...and to make sure that humanitarian aid can be provided.” A statement released by Ashton indicated that the mission, known as EUFOR RCA, “will deploy as soon as possible to back the remarkable efforts of France and our African partners.” With the legal basis set, the next step will be to put together the force, which is expected to be deployed in the capital city and to provide security at the airport, which will free up French soldiers. According to one EU official, “we are nearly there” in terms of the numbers, however major EU powers, such as Britain and Germany, have declined to commit troops on the ground, preferring instead to offer logistics support. Diplomats have indicated that if the EU is unable to provide all the required troops, Georgia may be ready to supply up to 100 troops. Estonia has already indicated that it will contribute 55 soldiers to join the 1,600 French forces already on the ground. EU foreign ministers have also agreed to fund 25.9 million euros (US \$35.3 million) in order to cover the initial costs of the operation.
- **7 February 2014** – The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an initial probe into war crimes in the CAR, where another lynching on Friday underscored spiraling sectarian violence. A statement released by Fatou Bensouda indicated that his “...office has reviewed many reports detailing acts of extreme brutality...and allegations of serious crimes being committed.” The ICC chief prosecutor’s move to investigate the unrest that has plagued the nation of 4.6 million for more than a year brings yet another African case to the Hague-based tribunal. Eyewitnesses have reported that the latest victim fell off a lorry in a convoy of thousands of Muslims fleeing Christian

vigilantes in Bangui. The victim was later hacked to death, with his body left on the side of the road. International observers however have warned that this incident is only the tip of the iceberg. Reports also indicated that on Wednesday, government soldiers stabbed, trampled and pelted a suspected ex-rebel in a gruesome lynching that took place moments after a military ceremony, which was attended by the new interim president.

- **6 February 2014** – According to France’s Defense Minister, the initial six-month mandate for French troops deployed to the CAR is “likely” to be extended. The French Defense Minister stated that France has “...a six-month mandate from the United Nations. After that, its renewable. At the end of the day, there must be an actual UN mission, which means peacekeepers coming,” adding that “otherwise this country, which is subject to regular atrocities, risks falling into chaos and its very dangerous for a country in central Africa – near risk like the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, to collapse.” As about the current situation in the CAR, Le Drian stated that many problems still remained, noting that “we avoided the worst in this country of just over four million, where a quarter of the population is displaced, where there have been abuses for more than a year, repeated massacres, tragic, appalling situations, with a catastrophic humanitarian situation.” The minister further noted that the presence of French troops had brought back some stability to the capital Bangui, but not so for the rest of the country. His comments come as the United States has called for an end to the “cycle of violence” in country beset by ongoing clashes between Muslims and Christians.
 - Meanwhile the UN’s top envoy, and France, urged Central African authorities to punish soldiers involved in the gruesome public lynching of a suspected ex-rebel. UN representative Babacar Gaye stated in Bangui that Wednesday’s killing was “unacceptable” and “must be properly investigated and the culprits punished and made an example of.” On Wednesday, soldiers stabbed a man immediately after a military ceremony in the capital. They later beat him and crushed him with concrete blocks before dragging his lifeless body through the capital city’s streets. Reports have indicated that civilians later dismembered the corpse and set it on fire. The lynching, which was captured on camera, occurred just moments after new interim President Catherine Samba Panza spoke of her pride in seeing the country’s armed forces contribute to national security again. A spokesman for the French force indicated that French troops present at the ceremony were only tasked with escorting their general and had already left when the lynching began. France’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Romain Nadal has since stated “France condemns the heinous acts that followed the gathering of parts of the Central African armed forces,” demanding “a punishment that sets an example.”
- **4 February 2014** – The United Nation’s World Food Programme announced Tuesday that it was running out of food aid to distribute in the CAR and that it would begin flying in supplies from Cameroon. According to WFP spokeswoman Elisabeth Byrs, “the date when the air bridge will open has not yet been set but it is imminent,” adding that the country is on the verge of a “food security crisis,” with the UN agency’s food reserves in Bangui currently “very, very low.” As of last Thursday, Ms Byrs stated that only 120 tonnes of grain remained in WFP’s Bangui warehouses, far from enough to help those living in the capital city, where more than 500,000 people are now believed to be homeless. Ms. Byrs noted that a jumbo jet would make a round-trip daily, carrying up to 100 tonnes of food, with the aim of flying in 2,000 tonnes of mostly rice by the end of the month. It is five times more expensive to bring food in by air than by road, but the air bridge was necessary since truck drivers transporting WFP supplies had since early January balked at crossing the border without escorts. It was only at the end of January that the African-led International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA) first provided an escort, effectively allowing ten trucks to reach the capital Bangui. A new escorted convoy was expected to reach the capital on Tuesday, but it was unclear how many of the 43 WFP trucks, who are currently at the border, will make it to Bangui.

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



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.

On the Ground Analysis

- 10 February 2014** – According to medics and eyewitnesses, at least twenty-one people, including three police officers, were injured in rioting that broke out after electrical power broke down in the Guinean capital on Monday. Reports have indicated that thousands, mainly women and young people, clashed with police forces throughout the day after riots broke out in Conakry's suburbs during the morning hours. Police used tear gas, rubber bullets and batons in order to disperse the demonstrators who threw stones, burned tyres and overturned garbage bins. In response, Conakry governor Sekou Resco Camara has called on residents to stay calm and to trust that the EDG utility will soon put an end to the recurring blackouts.



No Travel
Advisory

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.

Domestic News

- 4 February 2014** – The president of the Ivory Coast has extended the mandate for a national “reconciliation commission,” which was set up to heal the wounds of a conflict that occurred after the 2010 contested elections and which claimed 3,000 lives. On Tuesday, Alassane Ouattara signed a presidential decree, effectively handing a new twelve-month mandate to the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR) to “complete its work.” The group was set up in 2011, under former Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, and at the time was given a two-year mandate, which expired in September 2013. However human rights groups and non-governmental organizations have attacked the commission for a lack of producing concrete results. In response, some members of the panel have complained of a lack of sufficient financial resources and argue that their task has been complicated by political and legal interference. A poll in December 2013, which was carried out by the CDVR, showed that 83 percent of Ivorian’s believed that reconciliation was “possible.” Three-quarters of people surveyed also believed that the justice system and army are “corrupt” and have called for deep reforms to be carried out. The Ivory Coast descended into chaos after former president Laurent Gbagbo refused to concede a 2010 election to Ouattara. This sparked five months of deadly battles. Gbagbo is currently awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges relating to crimes against humanity.

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 organizations are recommended to review their current operations and contingencies which is in line with 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

- **12 February 2014** – A Malian intelligence official has confirmed that thirty people have been killed near Mali's border with Niger after a clash pitted armed villagers against members of an al-Qaeda-linked rebel group. The official indicated that fighting erupted overnight Monday and Tuesday, adding that seventeen civilians were killed along with thirteen members of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). The villagers were from a Tuareg ethnic group that is loyal to the Malian government while the MUJAO fighters were mostly from the Peul ethnicity. The killings come on the heels of a clash that also pitted these two groups against each other last week. That incident resulted in the deaths of thirty-one Tuaregs.
 - Meanwhile officials from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have suspended the movement of its staff in the northern desert region of Mali as a group of aid workers are moving. The suspension comes just days after ICRC officials confirmed that one of its teams was missing in northern Mali. On Tuesday, one of Mali's top jihadist groups claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. On Monday, ICRC spokesman Alexis Heeb stated "we can confirm that the ICRC lost contact with one of its vehicles, with five people on board." According to Heeb, the four ICRC staff members and a veterinarian from another aid organization, went missing Saturday along with their vehicle on the road between the towns of Kidal and Gao, in northern Mali. All five aid workers are Malian citizens. Speaking on Monday, Heeb stated that currently "we don't know the reason for the vehicle going missing. It could be anything," adding, "at this stage we're exploring all possibilities. We're extremely worried and we're contacting everyone to try to localize them." A statement released by Christoph Luedi, head of the ICRC Mali delegation, indicated that the team "...was on their way from Kidal to their base in Gao. We don't know yet in what circumstances contact was lost," adding that "its important not to speculate about what might have happened, although no possibility has been ruled out." Despite not confirming the exact circumstances of the situation, including whether or not the team was kidnapped by potential al-Qaeda-linked militants, Luedi did issue what appeared to be an appeal to potential kidnapers, stating that the ICRC "...was calling for our personnel to be treated with respect so that they can perform their tasks." By Tuesday however a representative from the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), a splinter group of al-Qaeda's regional franchise, confirmed that its members had kidnapped the five aid workers. MUJAO official Yoro Abdoulsalam confirmed that the militant group had seized a 4x4 vehicle and that those aboard were "alive and in good health." The ICRC has since indicated that it is looking into the claim, with Alexis Heeb indicating that at this point he cannot confirm the claim but that the organization is "in contact" with the group and several others in Mali. For security reasons, ICRC teams make regular contact, typically every few hours, with their base when they are on mission. This particular ICRC team had done so for part of its journey. The ICRC's operations in Mali range from visiting people detained during the country's conflict to providing aid to the hundreds of thousands of people who were driven from their homes by fighting.
- **7 February 2014** – According to officials, armed from the ethnic Peul community have massacred at least thirty Tuaregs in what appears to be a revenge attack that occurred in northern Mali. According to reports, the attack occurred Thursday in Tamkoutat, which is located 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of the city of Gao. According to a local elected lawmaker, the attack was "to retaliate against the kidnapping" of one of the Peul. The Malian government has since denounced what it called "terrorist acts." A statement released by the security ministry indicated that "a dozen armed individuals cold-bloodedly slaughtered around 30 merchants on board two vehicles, one of which was torched and the other taken away by the bandits." Security Minister Sada Samake has since travelled to Gao in order to investigate the killings and to bring the perpetrators to justice. A separate statement issued by the UN mission to Mali, MINUSMA, indicated that it had sent

peacekeepers to the area. The statement further indicated that MINUSMA had counted 24 deaths and four people wounded, adding that an unspecified number of suspects were arrested by Malian security force.” Security sources in the area have indicated that those slain included a woman and child.

- **4 February 2014** – An official has indicated that during a visit by France’s top military officer, two rockets were fired at a French army base in northern Mali. Both however missed their target and caused no casualties. According to Remi Libessart, a French military spokesman, the attack occurred Thursday morning while Adm. Edouard Guillaud was at the camp near the airport in Gao. The spokesman further added that the two rockets landed away from the site, noting that it currently remains unknown who is responsible for firing them.

Domestic News

- **13 February 2014** – In what appears to be a renewed effort by the government to regain its control of the army after the 2012 coup, authorities in Mali arrested former defence minister General Yamoussa Camara. He has since been charged with attempted murder over the deaths of twenty-one paratroopers who disappeared two years ago and whose bodies were discovered last December in a mass grave in Diago in south-western Mali near the capital city. According to a senior military official, Mr Camara “...tried to cover up the deaths of some of the 21 missing paratroopers by writing their names on a list of military reinforcements sent to the north to make it seem as though they had died there during the war,” adding that “a letter he signed had been discovered and he has been arrested.” Mali’s former junta chief General Amadou Sanogo had named Mr Camara defence minister after the coup, a post he held until last year when he became a leading military adviser in the presidency.

International Developments

- **11 February 2014** – According to Mali’s UN Mission and Human Rights Watch (HRW), clashes in northern Mali, which killed thirty one people last week, appear to have involved local Tuareg and Peul communities and were not the result of a terrorist attack as previously stated by the government. Last Sunday, Mali’s Security Minister, Sada Samake, claimed that al-Qaeda-linked extremists ambushed two vehicles full of civilians on Thursday. State Television indicated that twenty-five people were killed in the ambush, along with six others in a Tuareg camp not far from the ambush site more than 100 kilometres (62 miles) east of Gao, near the Niger border. However Human Rights Watch (HRW) senior researcher Corinne Dufka has stated that sources in the region indicate that the government’s description of the violence was misleading. She instead blamed “a cycle of communal violence that long predates the most recent dynamic involving armed Islamist groups” and urged the government to bring the perpetrators to justice. If officials at the UN and HRW are correct, then last week’s incident is the most significant to occur between the Tuareg and Peul communities in the area in years.
- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Germany’s government approved an increase to the number of soldiers sent to Mali, as part of an EU-led mission that will train the national army. Under the decision, which must still be backed by the Bundestag lower house of parliament, up to 250 Bundeswehr soldiers may now join the mission. Germany currently has around 100 personnel on the ground in Mali. According to Germany’s new Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who had already signaled plans to boost the training in mission in Mali, “this is about training and, above all, the protection of the trainers too.” The cabinet also extended, until February 2015, the German contingent’s mandate in the European Union Training Mission (EUTM), which began overhauling Mali’s army in April in a bid to aid the West African nation take over from foreign troops.
- **3 February 2014** – On Monday, the United Nations Security Council called on Mali’s government

and rebels to conclude talks as soon as possible, warning that the failure to do so risked radicalizing fighters and undoing the fragile security gains. Over the past weekend, members of the UN Security Council visited Mali in order to assess progress in the country a year after France deployed thousands of troops to end the northern occupation. Since then, the al-Qaeda-linked militants have been scattered, nationwide elections have been held and a UN peacekeeping mission has been launched however talks between Bamako and the northern rebel groups, who have their own political demands, have stalled despite the new government's mission to unite the region with the rest of Mali. Speaking shortly after completing their two day visit to Mali, members of the Security Council stated "we urge the parties to engage in inclusive discussions in order to find a sustainable solution without preconditions," adding that "it is imperative to start these discussions as soon as possible with a clear timetable." According to the Security Council members, local authorities, armed groups and civil society leaders indicated over the weekend that they wanted the talks to go ahead. Two Tuareg and an Arab-led group signed an interim deal last year. This interim agreement effectively enabled nationwide elections to be held over the summer. As part of the agreement, newly elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita must now complete talks, which will be aimed at ending recurrent rebellions by mainly Tuareg rebels who have called for independence for the desert northern region of Mali.



Mauritania

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

- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, Mauritanian prime minister-designate Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf announced the lineup of his new 26-minister government. According to reports, almost half of the outgoing government ministers retained their posts in the new government, which was drawn up following days of consultations between Laghdaf and Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel-Aziz. A new Ministry for Mauritanian Expatriates was also introduced, while some junior Mauritanian politicians were given ministerial posts in the new cabinet. The formation of the new government came after Laghdaf submitted his government's resignation last week. Mauritanian governments typically submit their collective resignations following legislative and municipal polls, both of which were held in December 2013.

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 Analysis

- **13 February 2014** – On Thursday, authorities in Niger released three journalists from a private radio station one day after they were detained along with a union leader who criticized President Mahamadou Issoufou. On Wednesday, police arrested the Anfani radio station's editor in chief Abdoul-Razak Idrissa, and two journalists, Haoua maigari and Moussa Hassane, as well as union leader Ismael Salifou. Mr. Salifou was accused of making insulting remarks about the president and inciting ethnic hatred during an interview that was broadcast on January 22. According to police sources, the journalists were held as accomplices. Grema Boukar, director general of Anfani, confirmed the releases, stating that "the three journalists employed by my radio states were released. They were brought before the prosecutor of the Niamey correctional tribunal this afternoon and he decided there was no case to answer." The director general added that Mr Salifou was also released. Since late January, two politicians and a member of the civil society have been briefly detained on charges including slander, inciting ethnic hatred and plotting against state security. They have all since been released.

Domestic News

- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, officials in Niger called for a Western intervention to eradicate a growing threat from Islamist fighters who have established bases in southern Libya, since the 2011 overthrow of Moamer Kadhafi, and who are now threatening security in Niger. A statement released by Niger's Interior Minister Massoudou Hassoumi indicated that "the powers who intervened to overthrow Colonel Kadafi – after which Libya became the main sanctuary for terrorists – need to provide an after-sales service," adding that "it would be totally legitimate for France (and/or) the United States to intervene to eradicate the terrorist threat in the south of Libya." The Interior Minister also recently commented that US intelligence chief James Clapper had been right to highlight the extent to which sub-Saharan Africa had become a "hothouse" for extremists." The US intelligence assessment, which was released in December 2013, warned that a power vacuum in Libya, where the government is struggling to counter well-armed militias, was fueling extremist groups across the region, posing an "acute" terror threat that neighboring countries lack the capacity, and sometimes the will, to counter. Kadhafi, who had ruled Libya as a dictatorship from 1969, was toppled by a popular uprising that was backed up by Western military action. In part of the growing insecurity in Libya, Niger had had to contend with numerous Islamist attacks and kidnappings on its own soil, some of which have threatened the security of its uranium production. Update (10 January 2014) - Despite an appeal for intervention from neighboring Niger,

on Monday officials in France announced that, for the time being, they ruled out Western military action against Islamist fighters in southern Libya. Asked about Niger's recent call for action, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius stated Monday that there was no question of putting foreign troops into a region that the United States has identified as an increasingly worrisome new haven for al-Qaeda-linked militants. However the French Minister further noted that while France has ruled out Western military action, Western powers are aware of the problem and are drawing up plans in order to help the Libyan government deal with this issue. Speaking in Paris, Mr Fabius stated "...we are going to have an international meeting in Rome at the beginning of March to give Libya more help because its true that there are terrorists gathering in the south." Mr Fabius further indicated that officials from Britain, Germany, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and the United States were all involved in talks on aid the Libyan government, adding "we have to fight terrorism everywhere....That does not mean we have to have people on the ground, it means we have to help governments that want to get rid of terrorism, which is the case with the Libyan government." The response by officials in France comes after Niger last week called on the West to finish the job they had begun in Libya by dealing with those Islamist groups that have established bases in the southern region of the country since the 2011 overthrow of former dictator Moamer Kadhafi. The call by the Niger government comes shortly after an annual intelligence report, released in December 2013, which indicated that the United States had stated that southern Libya had become an "incubator" for terrorism in a "hothouse" region and described a possible intervention as "within the bounds of the possible." A poor, but mineral-rich former French colony, Niger has had to contend with numerous Islamist attacks and kidnappings on its own soil, some of which have threatened the security of its uranium production.

International Developments

- **5 February 2014** – On Wednesday, as France and Niger continue to pursue tough negotiations pertaining to uranium contracts, French officials admitted that Niger's demands for more revenues from uranium mining are "legitimate." Development Minister Pascal Canfin told the National Assembly that France and Niger had agreed to reach a deal by the end of February on the amount of royalties paid by state-owned French nuclear giant Areva on its mining operations in Niger. The Minister indicated that the new deal would effectively enable Niger "to increase the amount of fiscal revenues that it has a right to," adding that "Niger's demands are considered legitimate by the government, unlike by the previous government." After Areva's contract to operate mines in Niger, the world's fourth-largest uranium producer, expired at the end of last year, the two sides have been negotiating a new contract. Areva has operated the mines since the early 1970's. Under deals signed between Niger and France in 1961 and 1968, Areva pays royalties on extracted ore of just 5.5 percent. The government in Niamey however now wants to apply a 2006 mining law that extends tax breaks for foreign companies to Areva, which has thus far been exempt. If the 2006 law were applied, its tax rate would rise to twelve percent. Taking a tough stand with Niger's former colonial ruler, Minister of Mines Oumarou Hamidou Tchiana has accused Areva of "taking advantage" of previous governments to "practice their greed." In response, France's Development Minister Canfin has indicated that officials in Paris want to find a "new balance" in the deal that would be "compatible with the development of Niger," which is mired in poverty and ranks last on the United Nations' Human Development Index. The stakes of the deal however are critical for both Niger and France as the state owns 80 percent of Areva, where nuclear power provides 75 percent of electricity.



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

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

Nigeria

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

- **13 February 2014** – After launching an ambush on a military convoy in the northeast of Nigeria, Boko Haram gunmen killed nine Nigerian soldiers. According to Maina Ularanu, a local government official in the area, the soldiers were responding to a distress call late Wednesday in the Madagali area of Adamawa state when they were bombarded by Islamist rebels armed with anti-aircraft weapons mounted on the backs of 4x4 trucks. Ularanu indicated that “there was heavy fighting yesterday evening between soldiers and Boko Haram gunmen,” adding that the Islamists “ambushed a military convoy on a mission to avert a planned attack...on Izhe village.” Ularanu also noted that the fierce gun battle that followed the Boko Haram ambush caused “casualties on both sides,” however he has not provided any details. The clash is the latest in Boko Haram's extremist insurgency. On Tuesday, in neighboring Borno state, at least 51 people were killed in two separate attacks that have since been blamed on the militant group. The deadliest raid struck the town of Konduga, where scores of gunmen razed more than half the village, spraying gunfire on fleeing civilians and killing 39.
- **12 February 2014** – An attack carried out by Boko Haram militants has killed thirty-nine people in a village in the northeast of Nigeria. Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima told reporters “up to 39 people have been killed and over 70 percent of the village has been razed to the ground.” He told survivors “Boko Haram are better armed” than the Nigerian military. He has since called for more troops to be sent to Borno State, which has been the epicenter of the Islamist insurgency, which has killed thousands since 2009. The attack, which occurred late Tuesday, occurred in the village of Konduga and has been blamed on the Islamist militant group. According to residents, scores of gunmen stormed the town before sundown in a convoy of 4x4 trucks, spraying gunfire into homes indiscriminately. Reports have also indicated that the militants set fire to hundreds of houses as well as the local markets, with multiple witnesses indicating that residents who fled the village amidst the onslaught have been too scared to return.
- **6 February 2014** – Officials have indicated that at least twenty-two people were killed in a raid in central Nigeria in what appears to be the second such attack to occur in the region this week. According to eyewitnesses, gunmen opened fire in the predominantly Muslim village of Mavo in the Wase local government area of Plateau state at about 2:00 AM (0100 GMT). Although security forces in the area arrived on scene to investigate the incident, the gunmen returned in the early afternoon, shooting villagers and burning houses. It currently remains unclear who carried out the attack however on Tuesday, about thirty people were killed in two mainly Christian villages in the nearby Riyom district in a similar raid. During that incident, more than fifty houses were burnt. The interim administrator of Was council, Zkari Haruna, and state police both confirmed the attack however neither have provided exact casualty figures. So far, there also has been no comment

from the military.

- **4 February 2014** – Gunmen killed about thirty people in an early morning raid on two villages in central Nigeria. Police in Plateau state, which has been hit by repeated communal violence, confirmed the attack but could not provide details of casualties. According to one witness, the attack occurred at about 3:00AM (0200 GMT) and the gunmen “started shooting sporadically, killing innocent villagers in their sleep.” The witness added that nineteen people were killed in Rajat and another eleven in the Atakar village, adding that more than sixty houses were razed in the attack, while tens of others were injured. Both villages are located in the Riyom local government area of the state. Last month, local authorities indicated that ethnic Fulani herdsmen were suspected of killing thirty-four people in a similar raid. State Information commissioner Yilijap Abraham indicated that thirty-four people were killed, twenty-four injured and 600 people displaced in the attack by gunmen on Shonong village on January 6. During that raid, fifty-six houses were also burned. Plateau State lies in Nigeria’s so-called Middle Belt, where the country’s majority Muslim north meets the predominately Christian south. More than 10,000 people are thought to have died in Plateau and neighboring Kaduna state since 1992. In December last year, Human Rights Watch (HRW), reported that since 2010, another several thousand have been killed. Many of the grievances are centered around perceived favoritism and/or discrimination amongst Hausa-Fulani Muslims and Christian groups, as well as disputed over cattle grazing rights.

Domestic News

- **13 February 2014** – The governor of the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno has called for more troops to be deployed to the region in order to combat Boko Haram militants. Kashim Shettima made the pledge during a visit to the town of Konduga, where thirty-nine people died in an attack on Tuesday. Residents have reported that a mosque and more than 1,000 homes were also razed to the ground.
- **12 February 2014** – On Wednesday, officials in Nigeria announced that they will open a probe into claims of state-sponsored killings that date back to the era of military rule. This has raised the hopes that perpetrators will finally be brought to justice. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) announced that a public inquiry would be held into complaints it had received “bordering on allegations of state-sponsored killings or assassinations.” Reports have indicated that the inquiry will likely cover the period from November 1995, when Nigeria was under military rule, until the present day civilian administration. The formal announcement comes after the military rule turned civilian head of state Olusegun Obasanjo accused President Goodluck Jonathan of training a private army to carry out political “hits.” Although Jonathan had denied the charge, which was made last December in an eighteen-page open letter which criticized his administration, he has since ordered an investigation. According to the NHRC, claims will have to be submitted for consideration within three weeks, with hearings held on a yet to be determined date. The organization’s chairman, Chidi Okdinkalu, has indicated that the inquiry is designed to deliver justice for those that have been affected by the alleged abuses.
 - Meanwhile in what has widely been seen as a move linked to his expected re-election bid next year, President Goodluck Jonathan has fired four cabinet ministers, including his controversial aviation minister. Chief government spokesman Labaran Maku confirmed the move, stating that “those who were asked to go by the president” were aviation minister Stella Oduah, police affairs minister Caleb Olukolade, junior finance minister Yerima Ngama and Godsdoy Orubebe, the minister for the oil-producing Niger Delta Region. Nigeria’s aviation minister has faced criticism, including for her responses to a series of deadly plane crashes since 2012. In October 2013, she was accused of purchasing, with public money, two armored vehicles at an inflated cost of US \$1.4 million (1.03 million euros). The allegations were later probed by the presidency and parliament, which effectively made Mrs. Oduah a target of intense media scrutiny. The President’s People’s Democratic Party (PDP)

has been racked by in-fighting and in recent months has suffered a wave of defections to the main opposition group. While the President has not yet announced his candidacy for the vote, which will take place next February, Jonathan is trying to rework the PDP in order to forge a party that is united behind him ahead of the 2015 elections.

- **11 February 2014** – On Tuesday, the leader of Niger’s upper chamber of parliament blocked eleven lawmakers from defecting, stating that their break from the ruling party to the main opposition would not go through until a court challenge was resolved. Senate leader David Mark, a heavyweight in President Goodluck Jonathan’s Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has been lobbying the group to reverse its decision to defect, which was announced in a letter made public on January 29. The PDP has challenged the Senate defections in a federal court by seeking to have the seats declare vacant on the grounds that party-switches violate the will of voters. If the defections will be allowed to go through, they will cut the PDP’s majority in the 109-seat Senate by 26 seats, with the PDP down from 73 to 62 and the APC up from 33 to 44. Over the past several months, the president has suffered a number of political blows, including a mass defection of lower house lawmakers to the All Progressives Congress (APC), which effectively stripped the party’s parliamentary majority.
- **5 February 2014** – Nigeria’s President Goodluck Jonathan has called on his new military top brass to not disappoint the nation in their task of ending the Boko Haram insurgency. On Wednesday, the Nigerian president told the officers in Abuja that “the war against terror must be won in this country” and that he was convinced the government had selected “the right team to salvage this country at this time,” adding “you must not disappoint Nigerians.” The previous chief of defense staff, along with three heads of the army, navy and air force, were dismissed on January 16, just two days after a car bomb targeted a market in Maiduguri, killing nineteen. The capital of Borno state was also targeted in early December last year, when Boko Haram fighters stormed military installations near the city’s airport. Currently, the fight against the militant group, which has been deemed an international terrorist organization by the United States, is Nigeria’s most pressing security concern. Since 2009, thousands have died in Boko Haram attacks against schools teaching a “Western” curriculum, churches and elsewhere as well as in the counter-insurgency operations which were launched by the government last May.