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# THE CENTRAL AFRICA REPORT



Detailed Report Focusing on Security, Domestic News and  
Developments that Impact the Central African Region

*Angola - Cameroon - Central African Republic - Chad - Republic of Congo -  
Democratic Republic of Congo - Equatorial Guinea - Gabon - São Tomé and Príncipe*

DECEMBER 29, 2014 – JANUARY 11, 2015

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# The Central Africa Report ~ Summary

*December 29, 2014 – January 11, 2015*



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## **Cameroon**

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **9 January 2015** – Cameroon’s President Paul Biya has appealed for international military help to fight Islamist militant group Boko Haram, which this week threatened to increase its cross-border raids into the country from Nigeria.
- **7 January 2015** – In a video message posted on YouTube, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has threatened Cameroon, warning that the same fate would befall the country as neighbouring Nigeria.
- **3 January 2015** – According to a senior local security official, at least fifteen people have been killed in an attack that was carried out by suspected Boko Haram militants on a bus in northern Cameroon.

## **Central African Republic**

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **8 January 2015** – A United Nations Commission of inquiry has indicated that it has found evidence of ethnic

cleansing of Muslims in the CAR, however the inquiry has noted that it has been unable to prove that genocide has occurred amidst months of unprecedented sectarian violence that has killed thousands.

- Recent violence between rival militia groups has resulted in the death of six people in the central region of the CAR.
- **7 January 2015** - Uganda's military has confirmed that a senior commander in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel movement has been taken into custody by US forces.

## Chad

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **8 January 2015** – Chad's prime minister has appealed for international aid for thousands of Nigerian refugees who fled Boko Haram attacks this past weekend, crossing the border into the Lake Chad region.
- **7 January 2015** – According to government officials, over 3,000 Nigerians have fled to Chad in order to escape attacks carried out by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

### *On the Ground Reporting*

- **8 January 2015** – On Thursday, the UN Security Council backed plans by the DRC and UN peacekeepers to begin a military campaign aimed to “neutralize” a Rwandan rebel group in the country's rugged eastern provinces.
- **7 January 2015** – On Wednesday, the DRC's President Joseph Kabila told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that his army is ready to help peacekeepers fight Rwanda rebels in the country's volatile eastern provinces.
- **6 January 2015** – Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called for determined efforts to bring warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka to justice for mass rape in the DRC four years after authorities ordered his detention.
  - UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric has told reporters that UN troops are taking up positions to support a planned offensive against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).
- **29 December 2014** – Sources have reported that a group of 83 Rwandan Hutu rebels turned themselves in on Sunday in the face of threatened action by the United Nations and Congolese troops as part of efforts to restore calm in the DRC's restive eastern region.

### *Domestic News*

- **3 January 2015** – The DRC's government announced Friday that it was ready to launch military operations against Rwandan Hutu rebels in its eastern region after most of them missed the deadline to disarm and either return home or go into exile.
- **2 January 2015** – On Monday, the DRC's President Joseph Kabila is set to convene a major political meeting in his native province of Katanga, amidst controversy that he is possibly seeking a third term in office.

### *Regional Reporting*

- **5 January 2015** – African leaders are set to meet later this month in Luanda, Angola in order to decide on action to disarm Rwandan rebels based in the eastern DRC after a deadline for their surrender expired.
  - UN officials announced Thursday that UN forces and DRC troops have seized several rebel bases in

an offensive that was launched on Monday against the National Liberation Forces (FNL), which is a Burundi rebel group.

- On Monday, following five days of intense fighting, security forces in Burundi disclosed that they have “wiped out” a group of armed rebels who launched a cross-border attack on the country from the neighbouring DRC.

## *International Developments*

- **6 January 2015** – The United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is calling for a cut of 2,000 troops in the UN peacekeeping mission that deployed in the DRC.

## Central Africa Report ~ Security Summary

**Angola** – MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to certain regions of Angola. Specifically, we advise against all but essential travel to the provinces of Cabinda, Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul. There is currently a low threat from terrorism.

**Cameroon** – MS Risk advises against all travel to the North and Far North Regions of Cameroon.

**Central African Republic** – MS Risk advises against all travel to the Central African Republic

**Chad** - MS Risk advises against all travel to the following areas: areas within 30 kilometers (18 miles) of the border with Libya, Nigeria, Niger and the Central African Republic; areas bordering Lake Chad, including the regions of Kanem and Lac to the west of the towns of Mao and Bol; areas within 30 kilometers (18 miles) of Cameroon from Lake Chad as far as Léré; the regions of Sila, Wadi Fira, Ennedi and Tibesti; the region of Ouaddaï except the town of Abéché; the region of Borkou except within 30km of the town of Faya Largeau. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to all remaining parts of the country, including the towns of Faya Largeau in Borkou region and Abéché in Ouaddaï region. Currently, MS Risk does not have any travel advisory for the capital city, N'Djamena.

**Republic of Congo** - MS Risk currently advises against all travel to the Likouala province. This is due to a large influx of displaced people coming in from neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The UNHCR currently estimates that there are around 110,000 refugees in Likouala province. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to the Pool region. There is currently a low level of terrorism in the Republic of the Congo.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo** - MS Risk advises against all travel to eastern and north-eastern DRC, including Goma. The only exception to this is the town of Bukavu, to which MS Risk advises against all but essential travel. MS Risk currently advises against all but essential travel to the remainder of the DRC. There is currently a low threat from terrorism.

**Equatorial Guinea** - There are currently no travel advisories for Equatorial Guinea, however officials have sent up preventative measures in a bid to stop the Ebola outbreak from affecting the country.

**Gabon** - There are currently no travel advisories for Gabon.

**São Tomé and Príncipe** - There are currently no travel advisories for Sao Tome and Principe. However due to the current political situation, coupled with fears of a possible military coup, MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to remain vigilant and to monitor reporting on the political situation.



# Angola

*Security Summary ~ MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to certain regions of Angola. Specifically, we advise against all but essential travel to the provinces of Cabinda, Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul. There is currently a low threat from terrorism. We advise that all international companies and organizations operating throughout Angola have strict security rules and regulations for their staff.*

## Luanda

*There is a high level of crime in Luanda. Muggings, particularly to steal mobile telephones and other valuables, as well as armed robberies can occur in any area at any time during the day and night. It is advised that you avoid wearing jewelry or watches in public places. Do not change or withdraw large sums of money in busy public areas.*

*Areas that are popular with foreigners are particularly targeted. You should avoid walking around Luanda, especially after dark.*

*Theft from slow-moving or stationary cars is common, especially in central Luanda. It is advised to keep valuables out of sight and do not use mobiles or laptops while in traffic. When driving, we wary if another car signals you to pull over. Thieves use the pretext of a minor traffic incident to get you out of your car in order to either steal the vehicle or rob you. A high proportion of the civilian population is armed.*

*If you choose to travel outside Luanda, and the provincial capitals, it is advised that you do so in the company of persons or organizations experience in local conditions as conditions can be difficult. There is a widespread of poverty, social exclusion and disease.*



## Cabinda Province

*MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to Cabinda Province. There are regular violent incidents, including rape, murder and kidnappings that involve foreigners and Angolans. Groups claiming responsibility for these attacks have declared their intention to continue attacks against foreigners.*

## Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul

*MS Risk advises against all but essential travel to the provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul. Angolan authorities are sensitive to the presence of foreigners in the diamond producing areas. Consequently all travellers to the region may be subjected to movement restrictions or detention by security forces.*

*The presence of diamonds also increases the threat of crime and banditry, particularly on roads that lead to and from these areas. Armed hold-ups do occur from time to time.*



# Cameroon

**Security Summary** ~ Cameroon has closed, air, land and sea borders with countries affected by Ebola. Flights and ships travelling from or via Ebola affected countries are banned. MS Risk advises all travellers to Cameroon to make sure your onward/return travel arrangements are flexible and to take account of these travel restrictions. These preventative measures have been taken in order to halt the further spread of Ebola.

MS Risk advises against all travel to within 40 kilometers (24 miles) of the border with Nigeria's Adamawa state and to within 40 kilometers (24 miles) of the border with Chad. MS Risk currently advises against all but essential travel to the rest of North and Adamaoua.

There have been a number of recent attacks in northern Cameroon, especially along the border with Nigeria. Officials have attributed these attacks and raids on villages to Boko Haram militants operating in Nigeria. Further such attacks are likely to occur in the coming weeks. MS Risk advises all travellers to Cameroon to avoid the northern regions of the country, specifically the areas that border with Nigeria as further attacks cannot be ruled out.

The threat of kidnapping and hostage taking remains high at this time, with further such incidents likely to occur. While officials in Nigeria have requested Cameroon to increase security along the shared border between these two countries, the border regions continue to be porous and remain a safe haven for Boko Haram militants seeking shelter from the ongoing military operation in northern Nigeria.

The killing of a Cameroonian police officer on 19 August has prompted officials in Cameroon to close its border with the Central African Republic (CAR). The death of the officer occurred after a number of Seleka fighters



*crossed over the border into Cameroon, where they were stopped by officers patrolling the border region. Despite being escorted over the border, the fighters returned and attacked the police. It is currently not known how long the border will be closed. Consequently MS Risk advises against all travel to the border regions with the CAR as it is highly likely that militant groups and pro-Seleka fighters may be patrolling the areas and may at times attempt to cross into Cameroon. On 14 May 2013, the Government of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Both Adamawa and Borno border Cameroon's far North, North and Adamaoua provinces. It is possible that military operations there might have an impact across the border in Cameroon. MS RISK advises against all travel to the Bakassi Peninsula as well as within 20km of the border with Nigeria in the Ndian Division of the South West Province. We also advise against all travel to within 40km of the border with Chad in the North and Far North Provinces. This is due to a heightened risk of banditry and armed poachers in Bouba Ndjidda National Park in the North Province. There is currently a travel advisory north of Maroula in the Far North Province resulting from the heightened threat of armed banditry and other threats associated with the borders of Chad and Nigeria. The Government of Cameroon is expected to cut fuel subsidies in the near future, which may cause strikes and civil unrest throughout the country. Finally, there have been attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, including the coastline of Cameroon around the port of Douala. Vessels travelling throughout this area have been advised to exercise extreme caution.*

## **On the Ground Reporting**

- **9 January 2015** – Cameroon's President Paul Biya has appealed for international military help to fight Islamist militant group Boko Haram, which this week threatened to increase its cross-border raids into the country from Nigeria. In a New Year speech on Thursday to diplomats at the presidential palace, President Biya stated that the Nigerian group is part of a "global" movement that has attacked Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia in its drive to establish its authority from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, adding "a global threat calls for a global response. Such should be the response of the international community, including the African Union and our regional organizations." The President noted that he regretted that a regional military force against the Islamists had yet to be established. The president's speech comes just days after at least fifteen people were killed in an attack on a bus in northern Cameroon on New Year's Day. It also comes in the wake of a newly released Boko Haram video, where the militant group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, threatened to increase violence in Cameroon unless the country scrapped its constitution and embraced Islam. Cameroon's president did not comment on the video in his speech. In recent months, Cameroonian authorities have deployed additional troops to the country's Far North region and have killed hundreds of Islamist fighters. According to the president, new laws aimed at stamping out the militants have also helped, however he noted, "although weakened by the losses it has suffered, our foe nonetheless remains capable of bouncing back."

- **7 January 2015** – In a video message posted on YouTube, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has threatened Cameroon, warning that the same fate would befall the country as neighbouring Nigeria. The video, which was posted on 5 January, directly addresses Cameroon’s President Paul Biya and comes after repeated fighting between the militant group and Cameroonian troops in the country’s far north region. In the video, Shekau, speaking in Arabic, stated “oh Paul Biya, if you don’t stop this, your evil plot, you will taste what has befallen Nigeria...Your troops cannot do anything to us.” This is the first time that Shekau has directly addressed Cameroon and it is also the first admission that Boko Haram has been actively operating in the country. Cameroon’s far north region has increasingly come under attack and on 28 December, Yaoundé deployed fighter jets against Boko Haram for the first time. President Biya personally ordered the air strike after the insurgents cross the border and seized a military camp. According to the Cameroonian government, the aerial bombardment, hailed as a new phase in the counter-insurgency, forced the militants to flee. In recent months, Cameroon’s president has made a series of strong statements against Boko Haram. In October last year he vowed to go after the group “until it’s totally wiped out.” While in May last year, he indicated that a Paris meeting of Nigeria’s neighbours was designed to “declare war on Boko Haram,” a key agreement at the summit to set up a regional force has yet to be implemented, with Cameroonian officials increasingly becoming vocal in their criticism about the lack of a coordinated response to the militant group which is increasingly posing a threat to security across the region.
- **3 January 2015** – According to a senior local security official, at least fifteen people have been killed in an attack that was carried out by suspected Boko Haram militants on a bus in northern Cameroon. A senior officer in the military BIR rapid reaction unit that is deployed in the region reported “Boko Haram elements on Thursday attacked a bus that was transporting many passengers from Kousseri to Maroua...” The officer further added that another ten people had been severely injured and taken to Maroua hospital. While Cameroonian authorities have not officially commented on the attack, which took place in the evening of 1 January, travellers who reached the town of Maroua had confirmed the incident. Maroua is the capital of the Far North region, which has seen the worst of the spill over of Nigeria’s five-year conflict. In recent months, Boko Haram, which has killed thousands in northern Nigeria over the past five years, has increased its attacks on both sides of the border, effectively forcing Cameroonian authorities to deploy thousands of troops to the northern region of the country to enforce the porous border area. These raids have also forced many Cameroonians living along the porous border to abandon their farms, which in turn have raised the risk of food shortages. Recently there has been a string of other attacks in the region, carried out not only by the militant group but also by ordinary bandits who target people traveling during the holidays.

# Central African Republic

**Security Summary** ~ MS Risk advises against all travel to the Central African Republic (CAR). Despite French troops deploying into CAR in early December, the situation throughout the country has continued to deteriorate. There have been reports of rebel activity, banditry and hostage-taking across the country. The situation in the capital, Bangui, remains fragile with reports of continued isolated killings, looting and gunfire. There is also an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks can be indiscriminate, including in places that are visited by foreigners.

In recent weeks, armed groups have increasingly targeted aid workers operating across the CAR. In November, medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres reported two incidents, in which an armed group, operating on the route that links Paoua in the north and the capital city Bangui, between the towns of Yaloké and Bossembélé, targeted a

transport trucks carrying medical and humanitarian supplies. Both vehicles were later released upon the payment of a ransom. Further such incidents are likely to occur in the area as the security situation across the country remains fragile.

Despite the French military intervention, Operation Sangaris, being launched in early December, security throughout the CAR remains unstable. MS Risk strongly advises you not to travel around Bangui after dark. At other times, it is advised that you take extreme care, and travel in groups if possible. There are armed patrols at night in Bangui and you may encounter several roadblocks, both official and unofficial, that are likely to be manned by armed personnel. We advise that you take particular care when approaching these.

## Crime





*Incidents of theft and robbery occur regularly. Armed gangs are known to operate in the outlying areas of Bangui. You are advised to take personal security precautions and be vigilant in public places at all times. Avoid carrying valuables or wearing jewelry in public. Do not walk alone at night and avoid any isolated or poorer areas.*

## On the Ground Reporting

- **8 January 2015** – A United Nations Commission of inquiry has indicated that it has found evidence of ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the CAR, however the inquiry has noted that it has been unable to prove that genocide has occurred amidst months of unprecedented sectarian violence that has killed thousands. The three-member commission of inquiry has accused both sides of war crimes and crimes against humanity and has accused the anti-Balaka Christian militia of ethnic cleansing of Muslims. The commission has warned, “the principal actors clearly retain a significant capacity to re-ignite the situation and trigger a renewed cycle of killings.” Over the past several months, thousands of Muslims have fled the CAR, with the UN describing the forced and deadly displacement as ethnic cleansing. The UN has classified the situation as a top-level humanitarian crisis. The security situation across the country remains volatile, with the commission of inquiry indicating that it was impossible to visit the central region of the country because of a “hostile and violent atmosphere.”
  - Recent violence between rival militia groups has resulted in the death of six people in the central region of the CAR. According to a police source, “five people were killed and several injured between Tuesday and Wednesday in clashes that erupted in Bambari between two anti-balaka groups for reasons not yet known. The victims were, for the most part, anti-balaka.” The sources added, “following the attacks, certain anti-balaka on Wednesday night went to the house of a local community leader and killed him, accusing him of betraying them. The attackers also burned his house.” Since June, the central trading town has been the scene of a series of violent clashes that have left 100 dead and at least 200 injured, most of them civilians. A UN commission that has been investigating the conflict in the CAR over the past two years has concluded that both camps have committed crimes against humanity, including “ethnic cleansing,” however the report noted that foreign intervention had prevented the violence from escalating into genocide. The UN commission estimates that the conflict has resulted in at least 6,000 dead and states that a priority is to “end the impunity” that has been enjoyed by rival forces.
- **7 January 2015** - Uganda’s military has confirmed that a senior commander in the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebel movement has been taken into custody by US forces. An army spokesman has disclosed that soldiers had visited Dominic Ongwen, who was being held in the town of Obbo in eastern CAR, in order to identify him. The Seleka rebel group in the CAR has indicated that it had captured Mr Ongwen during a battle that occurred near the eastern town of Sam Ouandja earlier this month. According to Seleka commander Mounir Ahmat, “he wanted to

escape but he came into the hands of our second team who arrested him.” Earlier, US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki indicated that a man who identified himself as an LRA defector had surrendered to US forces, adding, “if the individual proves to be Ongwen, his defection would represent a historic blow to the LRA’s command structure.” Mr Ongwen is considered by some to be a deputy commander to LRA chief Joseph Kony. While the International Criminal Court (ICC) wants to put Mr Ongwen on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Ugandan government however has indicated that it would prefer to try him at home. Government spokesman Ofwono Opondo has indicated that Mr Ongwen should be in Uganda by the end of the week, when he will be charged. Sources have reported that while Uganda would prefer Mr Ongwen to face justice at home, the government spokesman has indicated that government officials will liaise with the ICC, the African Union and UN on where the case would be heard. The ICC has called for Mr Ongwen to be held to account for the alleged crimes of murder, mutilation, forced recruitment of child soldiers and use of sex slaves. He is said to have commanded the Sinai Brigade, which has been blamed for some of the worst atrocities the group carried out in northern Uganda, where the LRA began its rebellion more than two decades ago. The LRA has abducted thousands of children in northern Uganda, and neighbouring countries, forcing boys to become fighters and girls to become sex slaves. In 2011, the US first deployed about 100 Special Forces in order to support thousands of African troops searching for LRA commanders. Of the top five LRA commanders for whom the ICC had issued arrest warrants, only two – Joseph Kony and Okot Odhiambo, remain at large. **Update (9 January)** – Seleka rebels in the CAR have indicated that they should receive a reward for capturing a Ugandan militia leader wanted for war crimes. According to a Seleka commander, Dominic Ongwen, a senior commander in the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), was captured after a 25-minute battle, after which they informed US force in the area. A US official had indicated at the time that Mr Ongwen had defected, before being handed over to their forces. The US had offered up to US \$5 million (£3.3 m) as a reward for information leading to his arrest, transfer or conviction.



# Chad

**Security Summary** ~ Chad has cancelled all incoming flights from or via countries affected by Ebola, including Nigeria, as a prevention measure against the spread of the deadly virus to Chad. Chad has also cancelled all flights from or via Ghana. MS Risk advises all travellers to Chad to make sure your onward/return travel arrangements are flexible and to take account of these travel restrictions.

MS Risk advises against all travel to the following areas: areas within 30 kilometers (18 miles) of the border with Libya, Nigeria, Niger and the Central African Republic; areas bordering Lake Chad, including the regions of Kanem and Lac to the west of the towns of Mao and Bol; areas within 30 kilometers (18 miles) of Cameroon from Lake Chad as far as Léré; the regions of Sila, Wadi Fira, Ennedi and Tibesti; the region of Ouaddaï except the town of Abéché; the region of Borkou except within 30km of the town of Faya Largeau. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to all remaining parts of the country, including the towns of Faya Largeau in Borkou region and Abéché in Ouaddaï region. Currently, MS Risk does not have any travel advisory for the capital city, N'Djamena.

MS Risk advises that you should only undertake travel to those parts of the country to which we advise against all but essential travel if:



- *You are confident that you have in place adequate security precautions to protect you from violent crime;*
- *The correct Chadian authorities are aware of your journey;*
- *You have in place the right permits if required;*
- *And you hold comprehensive travel insurance.*

*There is currently a low threat from terrorism.*

*Armed robberies, particularly from cars, in residential areas of N'Djamena are common, with foreigners sometimes being targeted. MS Risk advises all travellers to the capital city to remain vigilant and to take care particularly in the capital. Keep doors locked and windows closed at all times. Do not carry any large sums of money, jewelry, or other valuables. Avoid isolated or less developed areas of the city and do not travel alone at night.*

*There have been a number of kidnappings in eastern Chad involving Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers and business people. Further such kidnappings are likely to occur. MS Risk advises all travellers to this region of Chad to be vigilant and take care at all times.*

*Nearly 350,000 Sudanese and Central African refugees and 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) are living in and around camps in eastern Chad. Although the Joint Border Force between Sudan and Chad has partially stabilized the situation, banditry and violent crime in eastern Chad continues to exist. Consequently the border between Chad and Sudan is subject to closures with minimal notice.*

*The area bordering Libya is also subject to closure and is heavily land-mined. The northern regions of Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti continue to be unsafe.*

## **On the Ground Reporting**

- **8 January 2015** – Chad's prime minister has appealed for international aid for thousands of Nigerian refugees who fled Boko Haram attacks this past weekend, crossing the border into the Lake Chad region. According to Prime Minister Kalzeube Pahimi Deubet, in recent days around 2,000 Nigerians and 500 Chadians crossed the border into Chad, joining around 1,000 Nigerians who arrived several months ago after fleeing Boko Haram attacks in northern Nigeria. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has indicated that UN agencies, the Chadian Red Cross and several other groups conducted an evaluation mission this week on the area where the refugees are located. According to the UNHCR, "following insurgent attacks on five villages along the frontier between Chad and Nigeria between Dec 28 and Dec 30, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated." The agency has put the total figure of Nigerian refugees in Chad at more than 5,000. **Update (9 January)** – The UN refugee agency reported Friday that in the past ten days, some 7,300 Nigerian refugees arrived in western Chad, all fleeing recent attacks by Boko Haram militants on the town of Baga and surrounding villages in northeastern Nigeria. According to a spokesperson,

UNHCR teams in Chad are currently at the border, seeking more information on the new arrivals and their needs. The latest surge in refugees comes just days after an attack on the town of Baga left hundreds of people dead. On the ground sources have reported that the newly arrived refugees in Chad are staying with local communities in villages located around 450 kilometres (280 miles) northwest of the capital, N'Djamena. The Chadian government has requested the assistance of aid agencies to help with the refugees.

- **7 January 2015** – According to government officials, over 3,000 Nigerians have fled to Chad in order to escape attacks carried out by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Speaking to diplomats and other international officials in N'Djamena, Chadian Prime Minister Kalzeube Pahimi Deubet indicated “since mid-December we’ve witnessed a massive influx of Nigerian refugees in the Lake Chad region” bordering Nigeria. Over the weekend, hundreds of civilians fled to Chad after a series of Boko Haram attacks, in which several villages and a military base were seized. According to the Chadian Prime Minister, “to date, we’ve recorded over 3,000 Nigeria refugees and 543 ‘returning’ Chadians” fleeing “instability in certain neighbouring countries, particularly Nigeria due to Boko Haram...we fear this could lead us into an uncontrollable situation if we don’t take measures in time...the problem is both humanitarian, and one of security. The humanitarian situation is worrying and requires international support, because disease has now broke out,” adding that Chad is currently in the process of deploying forces to ensure the safety of the refugees. Michel Waibo, representative of the African Development Bank, has warned that “all partners are aware that Chad must not be overwhelmed in a way that would create problems and disorder in Africa in general, and central Africa in particular.” Boko Haram, which has declared a “caliphate” in the zones it controls in northeastern Nigeria, has increasingly been active on the borders of Cameroon and Niger.



# Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

**Security Summary** ~ The WHO has declared the DRC Ebola-free. An outbreak of the deadly disease, unrelated to the ongoing outbreak in West Africa, was first discovered in August near the remote town of Boende, in Equateur province.

The security situation in eastern DRC, including Beni and Goma, remains unstable. Ugandan rebels have killed over 100 people in and around the town of Beni. Officials have since imposed a overnight curfew on the town. Any foreigners in North Kivu, including Goma, are currently advised to keep their security situation under review. During fighting in the region in recent months, shells landed on Goma, causing a number of civilian deaths and injuries. There was also shelling around the border with Rwanda and explosions in the town of Gisenyi on the Rwandan side of the border. Further shelling may occur. You are therefore advised to avoid travelling alone and at night.

In the Katanga Province, there has been unrest and reports of fighting which occurred on 7 January 2014. The current situation remains tense across the province, particularly around the town of Pweto. MS Risk therefore advises all travellers to the region to exercise a high level of caution.

There were shooting incidents in Kinshasa on 30 December 2013. The incidents occurred around the national TV and radio station RTNC, the airport and the main army barracks and Ministry of Defence at Ngaliema. There were also reports of fighting in Lubumbashi, Katanga Province and in Kindu, Maniema Province. While



*the situation in Kinshasa now appears to be returning to normal, the situation remains to be fragile and security forces continue to be on alert.*

## **On the Ground Reporting**

- **8 January 2015** – On Thursday, the UN Security Council backed plans by the DRC and UN peacekeepers to begin a military campaign aimed to “neutralize” a Rwandan rebel group in the country’s rugged eastern provinces. A statement released by the 15-member Security Council disclosed “the FDLR has not only failed to unconditionally and fully surrender and demobilize, but has also continued to recruit new fighters in their ranks,” adding “the Security Council further recalls that the swift neutralization of the FDLR is a top priority in bringing stability to and protecting the civilians of the DRC and the Great Lakes region.” The Council has called on the DRC’s President Joseph Kabila to swiftly approve and implement a joint Congolese and MONUSCO plan “to neutralize the FDLR by commencing military operations immediately.” The statement further indicated that it is ready to consider targeted sanctions against individuals or entities found to be supporting the FDLR. On the ground sources have reported that the UN peacekeeping force in Congo has already begun preparatory operations ahead of an offensive that is aimed at dislodging the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). According to a senior UN official, the operation will involve a special unit within MONUSCO known as the intervention brigade, which is mandated to aggressively search out and neutralize armed groups, along with regular MONUSCO peacekeepers. While President Kabila told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday that his army is ready to help peacekeepers fight the FDLR, UN officials have indicated that the President Kabila’s support for MONUSCO has been lacklustre so far.
- **7 January 2015** – On Wednesday, the DRC’s President Joseph Kabila told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that his army is ready to help peacekeepers fight Rwanda rebels in the country’s volatile eastern provinces. The UN peacekeeping force in the DRC has already begun preparatory operations ahead of a major campaign aimed at dislodging the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). UN officials have indicated that active support of the Congolese armed forces is vital for success against some 1,500 seasoned FDLR combatants spread across eastern DRC, however they have also been critical of President Kabila’s support for MONUSCO, with many indicating that so far it has been lacklustre. Furthermore, the Congolese army has been responsible for several human rights violations, including a mass rape in Minova in 2012, in which senior officers have not been held accountable.
- **6 January 2015** – Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called for determined efforts to bring warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka to justice for mass rape in the DRC four years after authorities ordered his detention. According to Ida Sawyer, a senior researcher for the New York-based watchdog, “an arrest warrant alone wont stop a rebel leader like Sheka from committing atrocities,” adding “the army and UN peacekeepers should increase their efforts to arrest him before more civilians suffer.”

According to a HRW count, since authorities issued the arrest warrant for the leader of the Mai Mai Sheka tribal militia in 2011, his force has killed at least seventy people, many of whom were slaughtered with machetes. According to the rights group, “in some cases, Sheka’s fighters mutilated the bodies of those they killed and later paraded the body parts of their victims around town, while chanting ethnic slurs.” Officials from the HRW have indicated that Sheka’s group, which is active in the eastern region of the DRC, terrorised local people with systematic rape and forced conscription from communities in the unstable Walikale and Masisi territories of North Kivu province. According to HRW, some of the worst attacks occurred between August 2012 and November 2014 in and around the town of Pinga from which Mai Mai fighters abducted dozens of women and girl, many of whom are still being held hostage. DRC authorities issued the arrest warrant for Shekau after an attack in which the militia under his command and two other groups raped nearly 400 people in 13 villages between 30 July and 2 August 2010. The rebels also razed almost 1,000 homes and businesses and led about 100 people off into forced labour. Due to the rape accusations and other acts that could effectively constitute crimes against humanity, Sheka is subject to UN sanctions, which include the freezing of his assets and a worldwide travel ban. The call for his arrest comes as UN troops from the 20,000-strong MONUSCO force in the DRC took up positions on Tuesday in order to support a government offensive against another rebel group that is operating in the country’s restive eastern region – the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

- UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric has told reporters that UN troops are taking up positions to support a planned offensive against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). On Monday, UN and Congolese forces seized several rebel bases in a separate offensive that was launched against a Burundi rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL). According to a spokesman for MONUSCO in the DRC, troops taking part in joint operations against FNL fighters in the east of the country had taken several Hutu rebel strongholds. Lieutenant Colonel Felix-Prosper Basse has indicated that the bases are located in the South Kivu province, near the border with Burundi. Asked whether the operations against FNL fighters would harm the planned offensive against FDLR rebels, Colonel Patrick Opiya, the operations commander for the DRC’s military (FARDC) disclosed “this operation is a warning to FDLR that FARDC and UN forces are determined to hit hard,” adding that the operation would last forty-five days and that it could be extended if it was necessary. The UN is pushing for the disarming of dozens of rebel groups and splinter groups that continue to operate in the eastern region of the DRC.
- **29 December 2014** – Sources have reported that a group of 83 Rwandan Hutu rebels turned themselves in on Sunday in the face of threatened action by the United Nations and Congolese troops as part of efforts to restore calm in the DRC’s restive eastern region. According to provincial Deputy Gov. Feller Lutaichirwa, the rebels, who belong to the FDLR, surrendered to authorities in the North Kivu province. While this is seen as a positive sign in the region’s bid to restore security to the area, many other rebels are believed to remain at large with less than a week



to go before the 2 January 2015 deadline to surrender. The international community has given the FDLR until Friday to turn themselves in or face action by the Congolese army and the UN peacekeeping mission deployed in the DRC. The FDLR is believed to include between 1,500 and 2,000 fighters, including those suspected of having participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. They are opposed to Rwandan President Paul Kagame's Tutsi government and have for years been based in the DRC, where they have been accused of carrying out brutal attacks.

## Domestic News

- **3 January 2015** – The DRC's government announced Friday that it was ready to launch military operations against Rwandan Hutu rebels in its eastern region after most of them missed the deadline to disarm and either return home or go into exile. In a statement read on state television, the government disclosed, "the option of disarming (the rebels) by force is now inevitable and all the preparations to do so have been made." While the statement did not provide any additional details pertaining to the possible launch of a military operation, the rebels are known to operate in the North and South Kivu provinces, which lie on the DRC's border with Burundi and Rwanda. If an assault does go ahead, then the DRC's government will likely heavily rely on the UN peacekeeping mission, known as MONUSCO, as well as its Force Intervention Brigade, which is a unit within the mission that has the mandate to track down rebels. In 2013, the 3,000-strong brigade recorded significant successes when it helped DRC troops defeat Tutsi-led M23 rebels, which had seized control of areas of North Kivu province. According to sources however, "the prospects of an immediate and quick operation against the FDLR are complicated by rivalries between the various regional powers involved..." coupled with the fact that the terrain, which the rebels occupy, is known to be rugged and the group has a history of targeting civilians in revenge when they are attacked. Furthermore, the UN mission in the DRC is already stretched as it has been tasked with tracking down members of the Ugandan ADF-NALU rebel group that has been accused of killing dozens in the eastern region of the DRC in recent weeks. Despite this, the DRC has the backing of the region as international envoys for the Great Lakes region on Friday called for immediate action, with officials indicating that the lack of voluntary disarmament left no alternative to the military option, adding that FDLR rebels must now be neutralized. Rwandan officials have warned that the rebels have taken advantage of the disarmament window in order to consolidate their positions. According to the Congo's government, a six-month ultimatum set by regional leaders expired at midnight and just 300 of the estimated 1,500 rebels have disarmed. The fighters include some of the remnants of the Hutu militia that engaged in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The rebels have also been at the centre of two decades of violence that has plagued the DRC's eastern mineral-rich region.
- **2 January 2015** – On Monday, the DRC's President Joseph Kabila is set to convene a major political meeting in his native province of Katanga, amidst controversy that he is possibly seeking a third term in office. According to a source in the president's office, the aim of the meetings is to "unite all Katangans" and to "hold consultations on the subject of a third mandate for Joseph Kabila in

2016,” which would effectively call for constitutional change. Over the past several days, the president has been staying in the mineral-rich south-eastern province along with Interior Minister Evariste Boshab. According to sources, they were to be joined by about fifty parliamentary deputies and senators from Katanga. While the DRC’s president has yet to officially announce whether he will seek office for a third time, tensions across the DRC have already risen over fears that the government may choose to alter the constitution. The current constitution bars the president from running for a third five-year term however the opposition has indicated that the president’s backers are planning to either revise the basic law or to hold a census across the country, which would inevitably postpone any elections beyond 2016. Many fear that similar large-scale protests, such as those that occurred in late October in Burkina Faso, could erupt, further destabilizing the country.

## Regional Reporting

- **5 January 2015** – African leaders are set to meet later this month in Luanda, Angola in order to decide on action to disarm Rwandan rebels based in the eastern DRC after a deadline for their surrender expired. Heads of state and government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) along with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) will meet on 15 – 16 January. The deadline, which was set by African leaders, and which outlined that the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan rebel group, must either disarm voluntarily or face military action, expired on 2 January. According to South African President Jacob Zuma, who acts as the chair of the SADC security arm, since May 2014 only 337 rebel fighters have disarmed. This effectively represents approximately 24% of the FDLR’s estimated total number of fighters and according to President Zuma “the FDLR has therefore to date not complied in full with the conditions imposed by the Heads of State and Government of SADC and the ICGLR,” adding “SADC remains committed to the internationally mandated objective of neutralizing all negative forces operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the FDLR, and remains ready to play its fullest part in this regard.”
  - UN officials announced Thursday that UN forces and DRC troops have seized several rebel bases in an offensive that was launched on Monday against the National Liberation Forces (FNL), which is a Burundi rebel group. A spokesman for the UN’s MONUSCO force in the DRC has indicated that troops taking part in joint operations against FNL fighters in the eastern region of the country have taken several Hutu rebel strongholds. According to Lieutenant Colonel Felix-Prosper Basse, the captured bases were located near the Burundi border in South Kivu province. Past attacks that have occurred in Burundi’s border region have been claimed by a splinter faction of the FNL, whose full name is Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People. In 2009, the main body of the FNL signed a peace agreement with the Burundian government and have since become a political party however many rebels continue to fight and last year claimed responsibility for a number of attacks.

- On Monday, following five days of intense fighting, security forces in Burundi disclosed that they have “wiped out” a group of armed rebels who launched a cross-border attack on the country from the neighbouring DRC. According to army spokesman Col. Gaspard Baratuza, 95 of those killed were members of a rebel group that entered Burundi from bordering Congo, adding that nine rebels were also arrested from the group, which has yet to be identified. Two government soldiers had also been killed in the fighting, which started a week ago some 60 kilometres (37 miles) northwest of the capital Bujumbura. Burundian officials and eyewitnesses have reported that a group of unidentified rebels had crossed into Burundi overnight Monday from the DRC’s eastern Kivu region, which has been plagued by instability as the area is home to dozens of rebel groups. Sources have reported that troops had seized documents allowing the army to obtain information on the size of the force and the identify of their leaders however officials have not disclosed the identity of the group. Security forces then fought to prevent the rebels from reaching the Kibira forest, which is an area that has in the past been used by rebel groups as a base to launch further attacks inside Burundi. According to one military source, “the security forces, backed by the local population, surrounded the group in Murwi commune, and chased them without respite, giving them no time to recover or sleep.” Burundi’s government released information about the fighting after a civil society organization in Burundi accused government forces of quickly burying the bodies in a bid to avoid scrutiny from rights groups stating that the government had executed the rebels after they had surrendered. Vital Nshimirimana, the head of the local civil society platform Forum Pour le Renforcement de la Societe Civile (FORSC), called for investigations into reports that the army had violated the rights of those caught. Col. Baratuza however has denied these accusations, stating, “no one was killed after surrendering or after being arrested.” According to Col. Baratuza, between 180 to 200 rebels were thought to have crossed from eastern Congo into Burundi where they launched the attack.

## International Developments

- **6 January 2015** – The United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is calling for a cut of 2,000 troops in the UN peacekeeping mission that deployed in the DRC. The Secretary General made the recommendation in a strategic review of the 20,000-strong MONUCO mission, which was submitted to the UN Security Council last week. The review of the mission, which is the UN’s largest, also comes as peacekeepers are preparing to launch an offensive against Hutu rebels in the eastern region of the country. The review also comes in the wake of DRC President Joseph Kabila recently calling for a major drawdown of the UN force, suggesting that a reduction of more than half of its strength be achieved by the end of 2015. In his report to the Council, Secretary General Ban concluded that cutting more than 2,000 troops “would have negative implications for the ability of the force to implement its mandate,” adding that instead, MONUSCO should be transformed “to reflect a more mobile and agile force, able to pre-empt or respond to crises

quickly.” According to the Secretary General, such a transformation would involve supplying peacekeepers with lighter equipment and more aircraft in order to turn them into more rapidly deployable units. Mr Ban further noted that the deployment of a rapid-response brigade, composed of troops from Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania, should be extended for another year, with the unit taking the lead planning and combat role. The Congolese government has welcomed the recommendation for a more efficient MONUSCO force. According to Lambert Mende, a government spokesman, “we’ve always said MONUSCO could do better. More mobility, more agility and more efficiency – this meets our concerns.”

# Republic of the Congo

**Security Summary** ~ MS Risk currently advises against all travel to the Likouala province. This is due to a large influx of displaced people coming in from neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The UNHCR currently estimates that there are around 110,000 refugees in Likouala province. MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to the Pool region. There is currently a low level of terrorism in the Republic of the Congo.

Although crime levels are low in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, MS Risk advises all travellers to take sensible precautions in order to safeguard yourself and your belongings. We advise travellers to not walk in the streets after dark or to carry large amounts of money or valuables. The chance of being targeted by criminals is higher in the rural areas of the country. On 16 December 2013, there were reports of fighting and sporadic gunfire in Brazzaville. This is believed to have been an isolated incident as a result of resistance during a military arrest.

MS Risk also advises against all but essential travel to the Pool Region. This is due to sporadic rebel activity and armed banditry in the area. There is a very low risk of rebel attacks in the coastal town of Pointe Noire however travellers in vehicles and trains have been robbed by armed criminal gangs around the Pool region. Road travel in the Pool region requires a permit from the Congolese army.





# Equatorial Guinea

**Security Summary** ~ There currently are no travel advisories for Equatorial Guinea. Flights to/from Sao Tome et Principe, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Republic of Congo, Benin, Togo, Nigeria and Gabon have now been resumed after being cancelled as part of preventive measures against the spread of Ebola to Equatorial Guinea. Vessels travelling to/from west, central or east Africa are not being granted permission to berth or depart from Malabo Port. Equatorial Guinea has also suspended issuing visas for those intending to travel to the country from central and West Africa. Equatorial Guinea currently has no confirmed cases of the deadly virus.

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

**Security Summary** ~ There is currently no travel advisory for Gabon. Gabon has closed land, air and sea borders with countries affected by Ebola. This includes Nigeria. Flights and ships travelling from or via Ebola affected countries are banned. MS Risk advises all travellers to ensure that onward/return travel arrangements are flexible. These preventative measures have been taken in order to stop the spread of Ebola to 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.



# São Tomé and Príncipe

**Security Summary** ~ There are currently no travel advisories for Sao Tome and Principe. However due to the current political situation, coupled with fears of a possible military coup, MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to remain vigilant and to monitor reporting on the political situation.

Crime rates in Sao Tome and Principe are generally low however burglaries and armed robberies do occur. It is advised that you safeguard all valuables and cash.

Although Sao Tome and Principe is generally peaceful, economic difficulties and political rows over the handling of investments in the islands' development occasionally lead to civil unrest. MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings.

