



MS | RISK

West Africa Report

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

December 22, 2014 – January 4, 2015

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

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

- Security Consulting
 - Risk assessments and intelligence reporting
 - Planning and management
 - Due diligence and investigations.
- Project Management
 - Interim security
 - Training
 - Special assignments
- Crisis Response
 - Crisis management
 - Business continuity management
 - Hostile operations support to commercial interests
- Virtual Security Director service for clients lacking a full time security executive.

References are always available. More information is found at www.msrisk.com

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Summary

December 22, 2014 – January 4, 2015



Follow us on Twitter @ MS Risk_Security for regular updates on topical security events and issues.

Sahel Region *Regional Reporting*

- **24 December 2014** – Heightened efforts to free several Tunisian hostages in Libya highlight a growing security problem for the Sahel-Sahara zone. Hostage-takings continue to rise.

Benin *On the Ground Reporting*

- **23 December 2014** – Benin Republic's parliament is set to vote on a media bill that threatens to jail journalists for insulting the president or other government officials.

Burkina Faso

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – Burkina Faso will hold elections in ten months time.
- **31 December 2014** – The Burkinabe government says it has no proof that ousted President Blaise Compaore stole the equivalent of nearly £51 million from state coffers when he fled to Ivory Coast.
- **30 December 2014** – Hundreds of people have demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport to demand the resignation of the minister Moumouni Guiguemdé.

The Gambia

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – A failed coup attempt has prompted the arrests of several dozen Gambian nationals.
- **1 January 2015** – Gambian forces went house-to-house in search of opponents after the long-time leader blamed "terrorist groups" for staging a coup attempt earlier this week.
- **31 December 2014** – Government forces have set up checkpoints on the Denton Bridge into the capital to search people following a failed coup attempt.

Regional Reporting

- **31 December 2014** – The Gambia has closed its land borders with neighbouring Senegal following a failed coup attempt against President Yahya Jammeh.

Guinea

On the Ground Reporting

- **30 December 2014** – The two-year-old boy whose death started the current Ebola outbreak may have contracted the deadly virus by playing with bats in a hollow tree.
- **29 December 2014** – Guinea has seen a drop in reported malaria cases this year by as much as 40 percent this year; however it is probably a result of people being too scared to go to health facilities and not getting treated for malaria.

Guinea-Bissau

On the Ground Reporting

- **1 January 2015** – Four officers suspected of participating in a failed military coup against Gambia's strongman President Yahya Jammeh have taken refuge in Guinea-Bissau.

International Developments

- **24 December 2014** – The government of China will provide Guinea Bissau with military equipment worth approximately \$4 million US.

Ivory Coast

On the Ground Reporting

- **26 December 2014** – The trial has begun in Ivory Coast of the ex-first lady, Simone Gbagbo, for her alleged role in post-election violence in 2010.
- **22 December 2014** – Former Ivory Coast rebels whose support helped bring Alassane Ouattara to power are increasingly wreaking havoc.

International Developments

- **22 December 2014** – The International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor asked judges to combine the trials of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo and his close ally Charles Ble Goude as their cases alleging post-election violence are nearly identical.

Liberia

On the Ground Reporting

- **29 December 2014** – Liberian health officials have warned that dozens of new Ebola cases have erupted in Liberia near the border with Sierra Leone, marking a setback amid recent improvements.
- **24 December 2014** – A fourth member of the UN mission in Liberia has been hospitalised after testing positive for the virus.

Domestic News

- **31 December 2014** – Liberia temporarily lifted a curfew imposed to curb Ebola in an effort to let church-goers attend New Year's Eve services
- **29 December 2014** – Almost 50 new Ebola cases have erupted in Liberia.
- **24 December** – Liberia's Ebola death toll has reached a reported figure of 3,376, the highest recorded number of deaths yet from the disease.
- **22 December 2014** – The U.S. will complete the last of its Ebola treatment units in Liberia by the end of December.

Mali

On the Ground Reporting

- **30 December 2014** – Two years after the cities of northern Mali were freed from the control of terrorist groups, more than 100,000 refugees are still living outside the country.
- **29 December 2014** – The United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has strongly condemned rocket attack on its camp in the northern city of Tessalit.

Mauritania

Domestic News

- **25 December 2014** – Mauritania's courts have condemned a man to death for "insulting the prophet."
- **24 December 2014** – A court began proceedings against anti-slavery campaigners "inciting violence, disrupting public order, contempt for authorities and membership of a non-recognized organization".

Niger

Domestic News

- **31 December 2014** – Former parliament speaker Hama Amadou goes on trial in absentia Friday over a baby trafficking case.
- **29 December 2014** – Niger State Police have arrested two suspected kidnappers for abducting a man at gun point.

Regional News

- **30 December 2014** – Nearly 1,400 displaced Nigeriens who illegally entered in Algeria have returned home since the beginning of the repatriation operation in.
- **29 December 2014** – Nigeria's Yobe State Governor has visited Niger Republic to persuade over 4,000 residents who fled the Boko Haram crisis to return.

International News

- **1 January 2015** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian paid a surprise visit to a military outpost in northern Niger.

Nigeria

On the Ground Reporting

- **4 January 2015** – Boko Haram has seized a town and key multinational military base in north-eastern Nigeria. Baga was the last town in the Borno North area under government control.
- **3 January 2015** – Suspected Boko Haram militants have kidnapped about 40 boys and young men in a raid on a remote village in north-eastern Nigeria.
- **1 January 2015** – Several people were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a church in the north-eastern Nigerian city of Gombe.
- **31 December 2014** – The German Foreign Office has disclosed that two Germans were shot dead while making on a private outing on a motorbike.

- **31 December 2014** – Soldiers opened fire on a woman when she refused to stop for a search outside the Bolari military barracks in Gombe. The shooting triggered an explosion of the suicide belt she was wearing under her veil.
- **31 December 2014** – At least six people were killed and others were injured when a suicide bomb went off in a bus in Fika in Nigeria's northeast Yobe state.
- **30 December 2014** – Suspected Islamist militants opened fire in a town in northeast Nigeria, killing at least 15 people.
- **23 December 2014** – Pirates have hijacked a military gunboat and three soldiers are missing after an ambush in the southern oil-rich state of Bayelsa.
- **22 December 2014** – At least twenty-six people have been killed in attacks that were carried out in two major cities in northern Nigeria on Monday.

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – The Nigerian Army has reportedly dismissed 203 soldiers after a secret midnight court martial for allegedly disobeying a direct order from their commanding officer.
- **1 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan has vowed to defeat Boko Haram after a series of attacks blamed on the group in recent weeks.
- **30 December 2014** – Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has said poverty is growing “like a hurricane” in Nigeria while elected officials are living opulent lifestyles.
- **24 December 2014** – The army has stated that all vehicle movement in Nigeria's north-eastern Borno state has been banned from Christmas Eve to Sunday morning to prevent attacks by militant Islamists.
- **23 December** – 100 soldiers are to be court-martialled by the Nigerian military for a number of offences relating to the on-going fight against Boko Haram terrorists.

International Developments

- **24 December 2014** – A leading Nigerian human rights group is asking the UN to aid in stopping the mass executions of soldiers sentenced to death by firing squad for refusing to fight Islamic militants.

Sierra Leone

On the Ground Reporting

- **31 December 2014** – The Ebola virus is still spreading in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone.
- **29 December 2014** – A Christmas lockdown in northern Sierra Leone, aimed at preventing new Ebola infections in the country with the world's most cases, ended on 29 December.
- **24 December 2014** – Sierra Leone's attempt to finally contain Ebola this Christmas with a five-day lockdown was dealt a setback after staff at a hospital went on strike.
- **24 December 2014** – Sierra Leone's northern district of Port Loko, the area with the highest rate of Ebola transmission, plans a three-day lockdown over Christmas as it seeks to contain the disease's spread.

- **22 December 2014** – Ebola patients at a treatment centre in Sierra Leone have been given a heart drug that is untested against the virus in animals and humans, a move that has prompted UK medical staff at the centre to leave.

International Reporting

- **3 January 2015** – A British nurse who was diagnosed with Ebola after returning from Sierra Leone is now in a critical condition.

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Ghana

An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease has been confirmed in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Liberia. There currently are no confirmed Ebola cases in Ghana. MS Risk advises all travellers to Ghana to take the necessary precautions including maintaining strict standards of hygiene and avoiding eating bush meat.

Although there is currently no travel advisory for Ghana, the country has seen an increase in violent robbery in 2013. Throughout 2014, there have been a number of cases of violent robberies involving foreign nationals who have been attacked and robbed while travelling in taxis after dark. There have also been incidents where an assailant has been concealed in the trunk of the taxi. Recently, a number of foreign nationals in Tamale have been attacked and robbed by machete wielding individuals. MS Risk advises all travellers to the Tamale area to travel by private car and to avoid walking on the roads, or using a motor scooter or bicycle after dark.

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 Chieftaincy 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.

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Senegal

On 17 October 2014, the World Health Organization declared Senegal Ebola-free. An Ebola outbreak has been confirmed in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Mali. While Senegal has been declared Ebola-free, due to the intensity of the ongoing outbreak, a second outbreak of Ebola in Senegal cannot be ruled out. MS Risk advises all travellers to the region to remain cautious.

MS Risk advises all travellers to avoid all outdoor rallies and demonstrations as they may turn violent. 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 – Page 49**Togo**

There is currently no travel advisory for Togo. There have been several riots and protests that have taken place in Lome over the past several days. Protests have been organized to garner support for the opposition's call for constitutional changes that would bar the president from seeking a third term in office in next year's presidential elections. Further protests are likely to take place in the coming weeks. MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings anywhere in the country as they could quickly become violent.

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.

Sahel Region

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

On 8 August the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. The current Ebola outbreak affects Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. Some airlines have suspended flights to the affected countries due to the deteriorating public health situation. MS Risk advises to carefully assess your need to travel to these countries. If you do decide to travel, we advise that you make sure you have adequate arrangements in place for onward travel/exit and have adequate emergency health provisions.

There is a very real threat of kidnap to westerners in the Sahel and surrounding regions. The Sahel region includes Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger; however the kidnap threat extends to other countries, including Algeria, Cameroon, Libya and Nigeria. Following the military intervention in Mali, which was launched in January 2013, the threat of kidnap and terrorist attacks has increased, with further attacks highly likely to continue.

There are currently around six hostages being held in the Sahel and surrounding regions. Victims in the region have included construction workers, NGO workers, tourists and diplomats of various nationalities, primarily European. Some hostages have been killed.

Regional Reporting

- **24 December 2014** – Heightened efforts in recent days to free several Tunisian hostages in Libya highlight a growing security problem for the Sahel-Sahara zone. The fortunes earned from kidnappings have been a boon for terrorist organisations. Hostage-takings in the Sahel region rose by 150% between 2008 and 2009, and have increased in recent years. The international community is now aware of the risks in the Sahel-Sahara region, which has fallen prey to multiple groups with access to a steady supply of weapons. The spread of hostage-taking as a revenue-raiser for terrorist organisations is a major security concern, as underlined in a recent report from the Mediterranean Company for Analysis and Strategic Intelligence (CMAIS). In addition to the smuggling of cocaine from Latin America, armed groups in the Sahel region are making money from kidnappings, even those conducted in other countries, CMAIS head Mountacir Zian noted. "Hostages are a big financial godsend for terrorist

groups and give them a lot of media attention." Operations are increasingly targeting civilians in public places. After several states targeted by terrorist groups agreed to pay ransoms, kidnappings spiked across the region. Khalid Chegraoui, a professor and researcher at the Institute for African Studies, suggests that hostage-taking provides an inexhaustible supply of funds - much more than terror groups could obtain through trafficking. Three years ago, AQIM's income from ransoms in the northern Mali region had already reached US \$65 million. The abduction strategy embraced by Sahel-Saharan terror groups leaves civilians and expatriates civilians highly vulnerable. "The ransoms demanded from European countries range between 200,000 and 10 million Euros," CMAIS chief Zian noted. "These amounts enable jihadists to finance their activities, train new recruits and spread their propaganda by producing publicity materials such as videos and magazines. The armed groups that are present in this region and benefit from this income include AQIM, Boko Haram, Ansar al-Dine and the El Mourabitoun," Zian added. "Kidnappings are a way for terrorist groups to fund their activities. But they are also a political tool to exert pressure on major powers, as we have seen with the execution of American nationals." According to CMES head Mohamed Benhammou, hostages are now being not just to raise money but also as "a weapon to force governments to give in. I think we are seeing a new phase in the proliferation of these groups," Benhammou said. "And each group has its own method. The future looks difficult with the return of jihadist fighters to their countries of origin," he added.

Benin

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary

Although there is currently no travel advisory for Benin, MS Risk advises all travellers to the country to remain vigilant, especially in areas bordering Nigeria. There is currently an Ebola virus outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. While Benin currently has no confirmed cases of the Ebola virus, MS Risk advises all travellers to remain cautious, including maintaining strict standards of hygiene and avoiding eating bush meat. There is a confirmed outbreak of Lassa fever in the northern town of Tanguieta. In recent weeks, there have been a number of protests carried out in Cotonou, with civilians demanding that the government schedule local elections that have been repeatedly delayed. Similar protests have been carried out in other cities and towns across the country. Further demonstrations are likely to occur. MS Risk advises all travellers to Benin to avoid all protests as they may turn violent with minimal notice.

There is a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally from groups or individuals motivated by the current conflict in Iraq and Syria. Attacks could be indiscriminate and can occur in places where foreigners gather. There have been incidents of mugging, personal assault and carjacking in Cotonou. Armed robberies have also been reported in other areas, most notably in those regions that border Nigeria.

On the Ground Reporting

- **23 December 2014** – Benin's parliament is set to vote on a media bill that threatens to jail journalists for insulting the president or other government officials. The Committee to Protect Journalists calls on parliament to scrap any measures in the bill that could send journalists to prison for doing their jobs. "We urge parliament to reconsider and amend all provisions in the bill that potentially criminalize the work of journalists," said Peter Nkanga, CPJ's West Africa Representative. The government-authored "Information and Communication Code" bill includes about a dozen articles that impose varying prison terms of up to three years for acts deemed defamatory, offensive, or insulting to a public figure, including through words, gestures or images. Publicly insulting Benin's president is punishable with a maximum six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of a 10 million CFA francs (about £12,000). The bill can be voted on any time until the parliamentary session ends in early 2015.

Burkina Faso

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

Burkina Faso has elected a new interim president, Michel Kafando, who took office on 21 November 2014. He has named Lieutenant Col. Isaac Zida his prime minister. The president will be in power until November 2015, when presidential elections are due to take place. While an interim civilian leader has been put in power, the security situation across the country remains fragile, and violent protests may occur. MS Risk advises all travellers to Burkina Faso to avoid all demonstrations and protests as they may turn violent with minimal notice.

There is currently an Ebola virus outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. While there currently have been no confirmed cases of the Ebola virus in Burkina Faso, MS Risk advises all travellers to remain cautious, including maintaining strict standards of hygiene. As a precautionary measure, Burkina Faso's environmental ministry has banned all special hunting for bats, which is the main carrier of the deadly virus.



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. 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 AQIM and MUJAO, may cross the northern borders from Mali 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.

Crime

There is a high risk of armed groups stopping vehicles, including public buses, in order to rob them. Such incidents have occurred in various parts of the country, particularly at night. 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 Organizations 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.

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – Interim President Michel Kafando said the country will hold elections in ten months time. “Our meeting with the national electoral commission allows us to expect elections from the beginning of October 2015.” Kafando said. He will meet with political parties and civil society groups to begin planning for elections. Burkina Faso’s army took charge when Blaise Compaore fled on 31 October after protests against his bid for another term in office. Kafando, a former foreign minister and ambassador to the United Nations, was appointed head of state by a committee of representatives from the army, religious and civil-society organizations. Kafando dropped the suspension of Compaore’s party, Congress for Democracy and Progress, allowing them to prepare for elections but also said that the government may prosecute former members of the government for corruption. The government will also help the family of former President Thomas Sankara to find his grave. Sankara was assassinated in the 1987 coup in which Compaore came to power.
- **31 December 2014** – The Burkinabe government says it has no proof that ousted President Blaise Compaore stole the equivalent of nearly £51 million from state coffers when he fled to Ivory Coast. Economy Minister Jean Gustave Sanon said, “After checking the treasury and the accounts, my colleagues have not flagged any [missing funds] could be linked to the former president.” He added that all ministries would be required to carry out audits to ensure that no funds are siphoned off.
- **30 December 2014** – Hundreds of people have demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport to demand the resignation of Minister Moumouni Guiguemdé. The minister has been accused of being a former prisoner, but refuted this allegation on Sunday. Staff of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, supported by citizens, chanted slogans against Mr. Guiguemdé and called on the Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida to remove him from office. Moumouni Guiguemdé is accused of being imprisoned in the United States for fraud and forgery. According to clippings brandished by the demonstrators, Moumouni Guiguemdé is a fugitive from justice. Reportedly, in the United States during the 1990s, he was sentenced to a prison sentence of four and a half months and to pay a

\$5,000 fine by the American justice in a corruption case. Guiguemdé responded, "I have not been in prison. I was arrested and (...) released." He claims that he was never convicted.

The Gambia

No Travel Restrictions

Security Summary



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 Gambian government has reopened the country's border with those nations currently affected by the Ebola outbreak. Health officials will continue to screen people entering the country from Ebola affected countries. There are currently no confirmed Ebola cases in the Gambia.

There were reports of gunfire in the early hours of 30 December in the capital, Banjul. The situation is currently calm; however visitors should avoid public gatherings and monitor local media for developments. The blockade at Denton Bridge has now been lifted and returned to a checkpoint, reopening access to Banjul. There are other checkpoints currently operating in Banjul. Travellers should expect their vehicle to be searched if stopped by security forces.

The Casamance region of south-western Senegal remains affected by incidents involving presumed separatist groups and by incidents of banditry. An outbreak of the Ebola virus has been confirmed in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. While there have been no confirmed cases of the virus in The Gambia, as part of efforts to prevent the deadly virus from spreading into the country, Gambia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has set up a task force to control the border areas. MS Risk is currently advising all travellers to the country to maintain a high level of vigilance. There is an underlying threat from terrorism. Travellers to the country are warned to remain vigilant as attacks can take place at anytime and anywhere.

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – A coup attempt in Gambia prompted the arrests of several dozen Gambian nationals. An intelligence source said the suspects are being held in "four villas" near the Gambian capital Banjul following interrogations relating to an attack on the presidential palace. Authorities were reportedly led to a shipping container full of weapons and explosives by one of the participants in the attack, and a military official said the three main suspects including the ringleader were killed. The president denied that the attack was mounted by sections of the Gambian military. "The Gambian armed forces are very loyal as far as we are concerned - there isn't any single participation of the armed forces

except nullifying the attack. So this cannot be called a military coup - this was an attack by a terrorist group backed by some powers that I would not name." He later accused dissidents in the US, UK and Germany. The US government has denied that it had any role in the alleged coup attempt.

- **1 January 2015** – Gambian forces went house-to-house in search of opponents after the long-time leader blamed "terrorist groups" for staging a coup attempt earlier this week. Jammeh alleged that the coup plotters had received backing from some foreign countries. He said, "I live for the Gambia and I will die fighting for the truth. No human being can do anything to me, my government, or the Gambia. It was not a coup. It was an attack by dissidents based in the US, Germany and United Kingdom." After hours of fighting, forces loyal to Jammeh gained the upper hand, killing five insurgents. It was not immediately known how many casualties were suffered by the military. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for "a transparent investigation" into Tuesday's events that respects human rights, due process and the rule of law. Jammeh is one of Africa's most vocal anti-gay leaders and has previously threatened to behead sexual minorities found in his country. The U.S. government recently removed Gambia from a trade agreement in response to human rights abuses.
- **31 December 2014** – Shops and banks reopened a day after gunfire erupted around the presidential palace. Government forces set up three checkpoints on the Denton Bridge into the capital to search people as they headed into work and check identity papers. President Jammeh was in France or Dubai when violence broke out in an attempted coup. Jammeh, 49, took power in a coup 20 years ago and since then has stifled dissent in his impoverished West African nation of 1.9 million. He has faced increasing criticism from abroad over issues ranging from human rights to his claim he can cure AIDS. The government foiled a coup plot in March 2006 and Amnesty International said in the wake of that incident it feared some of the alleged coup plotters may have been executed without trial. On Tuesday the capital was in lockdown and state radio played traditional music. An announcer read a government statement playing down the incident, details of which remained unclear. Witnesses in central Banjul said that security forces were stationed on street corners and patrolled streets after several hours of shooting earlier in the day. In 2014, the European Union withdrew millions of dollars in aid after Jammeh signed into law an act that could imprison homosexuals for life. In 2012, he was criticised for executing nine people being held in prison.

Regional Reporting

- **31 December 2014** – The Gambia has closed its land borders with neighbouring Senegal following a failed coup attempt against President Yahya Jammeh. Intelligence sources in Gambia said that the security forces have sealed the border as a precautionary measure, however officially there has been no confirmation of this. The news comes as President Jammeh, who has ruled The Gambia since a bloodless coup in 1994, claimed that the plotters who sought to overthrow him launched their attack from Senegal. Dakar has not commented Jammeh's claim. The Gambian leader was abroad when the violence erupted. Banjul remains off-limit to civilian car and human traffic. Only military officers are

being allowed to enter or leave the city. Residents are remaining indoors and security forces are deployed in strategic locations in other towns.

Guinea

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



Security Summary

MS Risk currently advises against all but essential travel to Guinea, except for those who are involved in the direct response to the Ebola outbreak.

World Health Organization (WHO) officials have reported that transmission across Guinea is slightly increasing. Some airlines have suspended flights to the affected countries due to the deteriorating public



health situation. MS Risk advises all to carefully assess your need to travel to Guinea. If you do decide to travel, we advise that you make sure you have adequate arrangements in place for onward travel/exit and have adequate emergency health provisions. Due to the Ebola outbreak, general medical facilities throughout the country are currently under particular strain. Dedicated healthcare facilities for Ebola can also be under pressure and many medical facilities expect to be paid up-front. Enhanced screening measures have been introduced for outbound passengers at Conakry airport. Delays are likely to be experienced at Guinea's land border crossings, particularly

those with Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is due to enhanced screening measures. Guinea-Bissau has closed its land borders with Guinea in a bid to prevent the deadly virus from spreading.

There is currently a low threat from terrorism. 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 Reporting

- **30 December 2014** – The two-year-old boy whose death started the current Ebola outbreak may have contracted the deadly virus by playing with bats in a hollow tree, a study has found. Scientists who visited the village of Meliandou, in Guinea, found that Emile Ouamouno and other children used to play with and sometimes hunt the bats, which are believed to carry Ebola. A team of researchers from universities in Germany, Sweden, the Côte d'Ivoire, Canada and the UK published their findings in journal EMBO Molecular Medicine following the four-week trip in April. Emile died in December, followed by his sister and mother. The virus has since spread to Liberia and on to Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Spain, the USA and Britain. The study said, "Villagers reported that children used to play frequently in this hollow tree. [They said] it burned on March 24, 2014 and that once the tree caught fire, a 'rain of bats' started and a large number were collected for consumption." Only a stump now remains of the tree but when the scientists tested samples of soil and ash at the base, they found traces of bat remains. In the live bats captured, no trace of Ebola was found, but previous tests have shown that the species found can carry the disease. In the space of four months after Emile's death, his village buried a total of 14 residents and the disease began to spread through human-to-human contact. Meliandou lies at a crossroads between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, giving the disease easy access to these three worst-affected countries.
- **29 December 2014** – Guinea has seen a drop in reported malaria cases this year by as much as 40 percent this year; however Dr. Bernard Nahlen, deputy director of the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative, says the decrease is probably a result of people being too scared to go to health facilities and not getting treated for malaria. "It would be a major failure on the part of everybody involved to have a lot of people die from malaria in the midst of the Ebola epidemic," Nahlen said. "I would be surprised if there were not an increase in unnecessary malaria deaths in the midst of all this, and a lot of those will be young children." An estimated 15,000 Guineans died of malaria last year; 14,000 of them were younger than five. In comparison, about 1,600 people in Guinea have died of Ebola, according to the World Health Organization. Malaria is the leading cause of death in children under 5 in Guinea and, after AIDS, the leading cause of adult deaths. Ebola and malaria have many of the same symptoms.

Malaria is caused by bites of infected mosquitoes; Ebola can be contracted only via the bodily fluids of an infected victim — hence doctors say they have had to stop pricking fingers to do blood tests for malaria. Meanwhile, malaria sufferers fear being quarantined in Ebola treatment centres, and health centres that are not equipped to treat Ebola are turning away patients with Ebola-like symptoms. WHO figures from Gueckedou show that of people coming in with fever in October, 24% who tested positive for Ebola also tested positive for malaria, and 33% of those who did not have Ebola tested positive for malaria.

Guinea Bissau

No Travel Restrictions

Security Summary

There are currently no travel restrictions for Guinea-Bissau. An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease has been confirmed in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Liberia. While there currently are no confirmed Ebola cases in Guinea-Bissau, the country has taken preventative measures, including closing all land borders with Guinea. MS Risk advises all travellers to Guinea-Bissau to take the necessary precautions including maintaining strict standards of hygiene and avoiding eating bush meat.

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. While political tensions in Guinea-Bissau remain calm, this could change at any moment. All travellers to the country are advised to monitor the political situation and remain vigilant at all times. MS Risk advises against all travel to the north-western regions of the country, specifically those which border the Casamance region of Senegal, including the Sao Domingos/Mpack road.



Regional Reporting

- **1 January 2015** – Four officers suspected of participating in a failed military coup against Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh have taken refuge in Guinea-Bissau. They arrived Wednesday evening in Bissau and turned themselves in to military authorities, according to an anonymous military source. The source did not explain how the fugitives had reached Guinea-Bissau, which is to the south of Gambia, but separated by Senegal. A group of heavily armed men led by an army deserter attacked the presidential palace in the Gambian capital Banjul before dawn on Tuesday, but were repelled by forces loyal to Jammeh. Jammeh was on a private visit abroad at the time of the coup attempt. Three suspects, including the alleged ringleader identified as Lamin Sanneh were killed.

International Developments

- **24 December 2014** – The government of China will provide Guinea Bissau with military equipment worth approximately \$4 million US, according to an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Chinese Ambassador to Guinea Bissau, Wang Hua, and the Secretary of State for Public Order, Domenico Sanca. The Chinese government is committed to providing free military equipment to

Guinea Bissau worth 20 million Yuan. The variety and quantity of equipment will be defined in a memorandum to be signed separately by both parties.

Ivory Coast

No Travel Restrictions



Security Summary



On 14 December, the government increased troop deployments across the Ivory Coast, and particularly in the northern and western regions of the country, in response to an increase in banditry and overall insecurity during the Christmas holiday season. On 11 December, bandits killed a man in Meagui (Bas-Sassandra region) and robbed a minibus en route to Abidjan outside Bouna (Zanzan region). MS Risk advises all travellers to the Ivory Coast to take extra care if you are planning any road journeys over the upcoming holiday period.

An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease has been confirmed in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Liberia. While there currently are no confirmed Ebola cases in the Ivory Coast, the country has taken preventative measures and is at a particularly high risk as it borders Guinea, and Liberia, two countries that have been severely affected by the current outbreak. A previous ban on all flights from countries that have been affected by the outbreak has now

been lifted. MS Risk advises all travellers to the Ivory Coast to take the necessary precautions including maintaining strict standards of hygiene and avoiding eating bush meat.

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. As of 21 November 2014, there is a curfew in place from 10PM to 5AM in the town of Bondoukou, which is located in the north-eastern region of the country. The curfew has been put in place in response to a high number of robberies that have been occurring at night. There is an underlying threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by foreigners.

On the Ground Reporting

- **26 December 2014** – The trial has begun in Ivory Coast of the ex-first lady, Simone Gbagbo, for her alleged role in post-election violence in 2010. The wife of former President Laurent Gbagbo has been charged along with 82 supporters of her husband, including former Prime Minister Gilbert Ake N'Gbo and Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) party head Affi N'Guessan. Nearly 3,000 people died in violence in 2010 when Laurent Gbagbo refused to cede power to his rival Alassane Ouattara, who was declared the winner of a presidential poll. Simone Gbagbo was arrested in 2011 after troops stormed a bunker in which she and her husband had taken refuge, following a military assault on their residence in Abidjan. Mrs. Gbagbo has been held under house arrest for three years and is charged with "attempting to undermine the security of the state". Former President Laurent Gbagbo is awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC), facing four charges including murder, rape and persecution. Mr. Gbagbo is the first former head of state to have appeared at the ICC.
- **22 December 2014** – Former Ivory Coast rebels whose support brought President Alassane Ouattara to power are increasingly wreaking havoc, with the government seemingly unable to rein them in. A spokesman for the Ouattara government acknowledged that there have been violent incidents, but added that the government is in control. The incidents began when a former rebel leader was arrested, leading to a strike by former rebels who have since been integrated into the army. The spokesman linked these demonstrations to a post-electoral crisis. Ouattara came to power after a four month standoff with Laurent Gbagbo, who refused to step down from power in the 2010 presidential elections. Pro-Ouattara forces, with the help of French troops helped to force Gbagbo out. The rebels who helped to steer Ouattara to power are the same people defying the current government. Many believe that the government is avoiding confronting these leaders due to fears that it will roll the country back into chaos. Critics are accusing the government of giving the rebel leaders certain privileges. Ivory Coast will hold its next presidential elections in 2015.

International Developments

- **22 December 2014** – On Monday, the International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor asked judges to combine the trials of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo and his close ally Charles Ble Goude as their cases alleging post-election violence are nearly identical. In a filing, the top prosecutor at The Hague-based court, Fatou Bensouda, indicated they shared a common plan or purpose and acted jointly to implement this plan, which led to the attack against the civilian population." In his petition, Bensouda further noted "it is in the interests of justice and judicial economy to join the cases against Mr Gbagbo and Mr Ble Goude...the vast majority of the witnesses and other evidence to be relied upon by the prosecution relates to both accused." Gbagbo's refusal to concede defeat after presidential polls in late 2010 sparked a bloody five-month stand-off in the West African country, with some 3,000 people killed in the post-election violence. Gbagbo is alleged to have fomented a campaign of violence in an attempt to stay in power after he was defeated in his bid for re-election by Ivory Coast's current President Alassane Ouattara. During the conflict, Ble Goude, garnered support for the incumbent with speeches that urged mass mobilization against what he called pro-Ouattara "rebels" and their foreign backers. Prosecutors at the ICC have indicated that Goude commanded men that murdered, raped and burned hundreds of people in violence that involved both sides and that ended only after Gbagbo's arrest. Ble Goude was arrested in January 2013 in Ghana and was extradited to the Ivory Coast however it wasn't until March 2014 that he was sent to the Netherlands in order to face prosecution at the ICC. Gbagbo is being held in The Hague, where his trial is set to begin in July 2015. No charges have been filed against Ouattara's backers.

Liberia

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



Security Summary

MS Risk currently advises all but essential travel to Liberia, except for those who are involved in the direct response to the Ebola outbreak. Cases of the Ebola virus have been confirmed across Liberia, including in the capital city. A nationwide curfew has been lifted.

On July 27, the government announced that all borders of Liberia have been closed, with the exception of major entry points including the Roberts International Airport, James Spriggs Payne Airport, Foya Crossing, Bo Waterside Crossing and Ganta Crossing. The Liberia Airport Authority has also introduced enhanced screening measures for both inbound and outbound travellers at airport facilities. In August, British Airways announced that they were suspending flights to Liberia and Sierra Leone until the end of this year. This is due to the deteriorating public health situation.



Some other airlines have also suspended flights to Liberia. MS Risk advises all to carefully assess your need to travel to Liberia. If you do decide to travel, we advise that you make sure you have adequate arrangements in

place for onward travel/exit and have adequate emergency health provisions. Due to the Ebola outbreak, general medical facilities throughout the country are currently under particular strain. Dedicated healthcare facilities for Ebola can also be under pressure and many medical facilities expect to be paid up-front. The Liberian Airport Authority has introduced enhanced screening measures for both inbound and outbound travellers at airport facilities. MS Risk advises all travellers to maintain strict standards of hygiene, avoid contact with symptomatic and deceased patients, avoid contact with live or dead animals and avoid consumption of bush meat

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. There is a low threat from terrorism.

On the Ground Reporting

- **29 December 2014** – Liberian health officials have warned that dozens of new Ebola cases have erupted in Liberia near the border with Sierra Leone, marking a setback amid recent improvements. The flare-up is due to a number of factors, including people going in and out of Liberia and traditional practices such as the washing of bodies. Forty-nine Ebola cases were reported in western Grand Cape Mount County between December 1 and 25, Liberia's Assistant Health Minister Tolbert Nyenswah said. "In a very small population, an increase in the number of cases raises high level of concerns that we need to take very seriously as people of Liberia and people of Grand Cape Mount in particular," he said. Nearly 3,400 people have died from Ebola in Liberia over the past year with nearly 8,000 cases total, though health officials say the situation has improved, especially in the capital, Monrovia.
- **24 December 2014** – A fourth member of the UN mission in Liberia has been hospitalised after testing positive for the virus. The UN member tested positive on Tuesday and was immediately transferred to an Ebola treatment unit, Karin Landgren, the special representative of UN chief Ban Ki-moon said. A UN statement referring to the United Nations Mission in Liberia said the mission had stepped up surveillance "to ensure that all people who came into contact with the staff member while symptomatic are assessed and quarantined." The statement added that "All UNMIL staff considered 'at

risk' are being isolated. The vehicles used to transport the patient and locations they visited while symptomatic are being decontaminated." UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called for recovery efforts to be stepped up in west Africa to rebuild shattered economies, get children back in school and begin caring for Ebola orphans.

Domestic News

- **31 December 2014** – Liberia has lifted a curfew imposed to curb Ebola in an effort to let church-goers attend New Year's Eve services. Worshippers should avoid over-crowding and touching to prevent contagion, the deputy information minister said. Health agencies did not comment directly on the one-night suspension, but warned against complacency. Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf ordered the lifting of the curfew so that the traditional New Year's Eve services could be held. Liberia is a deeply religious society, where Christians make up the majority and attendance at church is a key part of life. Confirming the lifting of the curfew, from midnight to 0600 GMT, Mr Jackson said it would come into force again the following night and anyone who broke it would be arrested. The World Health Organization said people should keep up "social distancing" measures. Medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said that while progress had been made in curbing the disease, it was of "great concern to everyone at MSF that the population is now much less vigilant about Ebola and health promotion messages are being pushed aside."
- **29 December 2014** – Almost 50 new Ebola cases have erupted in Liberia, harming the fight against an outbreak which has now infected more than 20,000 people across West Africa. Medics had hoped they were finally beating the disease in Liberia after infection rates began to fall last month amid a global disaster appeal. But officials said 49 new cases had been identified in one part of one county, stating the spread was partly due to the tradition of washing loved ones' bodies before they are buried. Medics have been battling with locals to halt the tradition, which the World Health Organisation (WHO) previously said caused more than a fifth of fresh Ebola cases. Liberia's Assistant Health Minister Tolbert Nyenswah said the new cases had been reported between December 1 and Christmas Day in the western part of Grand Cape Mount County. The region on the border with Sierra Leone had previously reported just 18 new Ebola cases in the three weeks leading up to December 24, the date of the WHO's latest full death toll update. The 49 new cases in Liberia represent a significant increase, however, because there were thought to have been just 121 new infections in the three weeks to December 24. The country where 3,384 people have died of Ebola had been seeing a drop in the number of new infections since mid-November.
- **24 December** – The World Health Organization has recorded that as of December 18, Liberia's Ebola death toll has reached a reported figure of 3,376, making it the highest recorded death yet from the disease. WHO said 19,340 total infections have now been reported, including 7,518 deaths. US Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, stated that Liberia presently has the upper hand over the disease, but indicated that the situation can change quickly and that complacency is another challenge the outbreak region faces in the weeks ahead. He added that one worrying

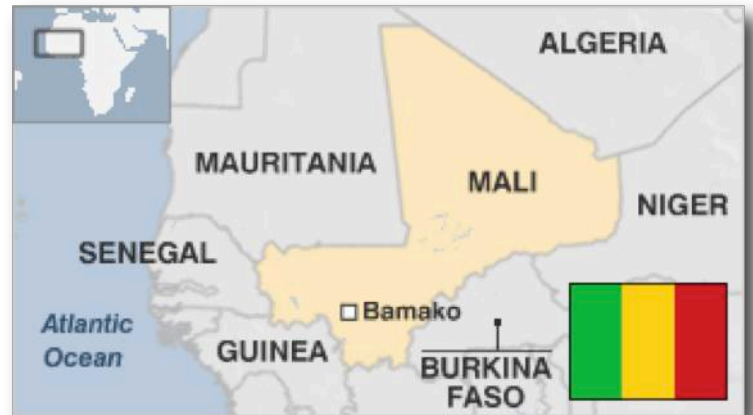
indication he saw in Monrovia was a belief by some that the urban Ebola treatment centres aren't safe, driving certain individuals to seek care in other districts, which can spread the disease and complicate contact tracing as people hire taxis or use other transportation to carry sick family members out of the capital. On the positive side, a new cemetery is opening in Monrovia, which should ease the need to cremate Ebola victims, a practice that goes against cultural practices and that health officials think may have led to clandestine burials, which are known to spread the disease.

- **22 December 2014** – The U.S. will complete the last of its Ebola treatment units in Liberia by the end of December. The military task force has been involved in the building of 14 treatment units, in addition to the treatment unit completed before the 101st Airborne Division arrived. Four of the units were built by Army and Liberian engineers. Contractors hired by the Army and U.S. Agency for International Development built 10 others with the assistance of the military task force, officials said. On Monday, U.S. and Liberian forces finished work on a treatment unit in Gbediah, Liberia, and are set to transfer the facility to an American-based contractor. The number of new confirmed Ebola cases in Liberia has shrunk to just three a day from 52 at the height of the epidemic. The United Nations World Health Organization said 19,340 confirmed, suspected or probable cases of Ebola had been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone since the outbreak began in the summer, and 7,518 people have died of the disease in those countries. General Volesky, 101st Airborne Division commander, said the U.S. effort now is focused not just on fighting the current outbreak but also making sure Liberia would be ready to combat a future Ebola outbreak as well.

Mali

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

Summary



further cases of Ebola have been reported. Mali will be declared Ebola free on 18 January 2015 if no additional Ebola cases are recorded.

MS Risk strongly advises against all travel to the northern parts of Mali and along the border with Mauritania. This is due to ongoing military operations in the region and the increasing threat of attacks and kidnappings targeting westerners. Despite ongoing military operations, Mali continues to face significant security challenges due to the presence of extremists and militant factions that continue to operation in the northern region of the country.

In October, Mali reported its first cases of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic. In mid-December, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that all quarantined patients have been released from hospital and no

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.

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 neighbourhoods 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 neighbouring countries. As such the kidnap threat cannot be isolated within the northern regional stronghold. In turn, criminal gangs have previously been engaged to carry out kidnappings for terrorist groups in return for financial rewards. Subsequently attacks can take place throughout Mali.

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 country, as such this incident in the west has caused great concern. MS Risk forecasts that there will be an increased and sustained kidnap threat across Mali and in certain border-regions for some time to come. Incidents of kidnap are likely to occur for three primary reasons:

- For Ransom - insurgents will raise finances for future operations. With the 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

- **30 December 2014** – Two years after the cities of northern Mali were freed from the control of terrorist groups, more than 100,000 refugees are still living outside the country. Many of those now residing abroad are in Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso, the UN reported. According to Touareg writer and journalist Intagrist El Ansari, these refugees are unable to return to their homes and property because of poor "security conditions". "Terrorist groups have carried out several murders, massacres, and kidnappings of citizens in that area, accusing them of spying for the Malian, Mauritanian, or French army or of collaborating with the international forces that are there to provide security," he said. Further worsening the situation, al Qaeda has recently issued an Islamic ruling aimed at local residents stating that young people working with relief organisations operating in northern Mali will be in danger of revenge. Refugees in neighbouring countries pin high hopes on the outcome of the current Algeria-sponsored negotiations.
- **29 December 2014** – The United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has strongly condemned rocket attack on its camp in the northern city of Tessalit. According to preliminary reports, at least 9 rockets were fired at the camp, which the UN Mission shares with Malian army and French Barkhane troops. No casualties were reported. David Gressly, the Mission's Office-in-Charge, said the perpetrators of these crimes must be brought to justice and reaffirmed the UN's determination to continue its work for peace and stability in Mali.

Mauritania

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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

Security Summary

Summary

Due to the current Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, Mauritania has closed some of its southern border crossings. MS Risk advises all travellers to the area to check with local officials. Mauritanian authorities have decided to deny entry to citizens arriving from those African countries that have been affected by the current Ebola outbreak.

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.



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 travelling to Mauritania to take particular caution in the region of Inchire (Akjoujt is the capital) 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 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.

Domestic News

- **25 December 2014** – Mauritania's courts have condemned a man to death for "insulting the prophet", a human rights group said, a day after the country opened the trial of an anti-slavery activist. Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir, 28, was arrested a year ago for writing an article about the Prophet Mohammad and the caste system, an extremely sensitive subject in a West African country with deep social and racial divisions. He claims his article has been misinterpreted. The prosecution asked for the death penalty to be carried out in accordance with Islamic sharia law and recommended he be shot. Mauritania last applied the death penalty in 1987.
- **24 December 2014** – A court in the southern town of Rosso began proceedings on Wednesday against anti-slavery campaigner Biram Ould Dah Ould Abeiday and six members of his organization for "inciting violence, disrupting public order, contempt for authorities and membership of a non-recognized organization". Biram Ould Abeiday, a former presidential candidate, was arrested last month during a peaceful march. He could face a prison sentence of up to five years. Human rights campaigners and the European Parliament have called for his release. Mauritania became the last country worldwide to legally abolish slavery in 1981 and still has the highest prevalence worldwide of slavery per head of population, according to the Global Slavery Index 2013. President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz denies slavery exists in his country, saying that only the consequences of this former practice exist.

Niger

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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. As of 28 November, a curfew is in place in the whole of the region of Diffa. The curfew prohibits the movement of motorized vehicles from 8PM until 6AM. 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 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.

Domestic News

- **31 December 2014** – Former parliament speaker Hama Amadou, a fugitive arch-rival of Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou, goes on trial in absentia Friday over a baby trafficking case. Amadou and his wife are among 20 people accused of involvement in the trafficking of dozens of babies from Nigeria. Amadou fled to France in August after parliament authorised his questioning by the authorities, saying the case is part of a smear campaign in the run-up to the next presidential election in 2016. He said, "No evidence has been provided to substantiate these allegations of child trafficking." The case in Niger revolves around some 30 babies, including a set of twins, who were trafficked from Nigeria to Niger through Benin. The leader of Niger's ruling party accused Amadou's wife of travelling to Nigeria "and bringing back two children to which she claimed she gave birth". Around 20 people from political, business and military circles have been arrested since June on charges of falsifying the identity of a child's mother -- an offence which carries a sentence of up to eight years in prison. The suspects were all released on bail pending their trial. Political tensions in Niger have sharpened since Amadou joined the ranks of the opposition in August 2013, becoming Issoufou's main rival. A warrant was issued for his arrest after he fled to France. A new parliament speaker was elected in November to replace him. Amadou's party has accused the government of trying to "harass, isolate and take down Hama by all means possible." The government, however, insists the affair is a purely criminal one.
- **29 December 2014** – Niger State Police have arrested two suspected kidnappers for kidnapping a man at gun point in Madalla, Suleja. They were said to have demanded a ransom of N30 million on their victim from his family. The two suspects have been named as Austin Arikpo, 25 years old from Cross Rivers State based in Ogun State and Abdulraman Adamu, 22 years old, a vigilante member based in Madalla. Police Public Relations Officer Ibrahim Abiodun Gambari said the mastermind of the crime, Iwelalor Chilota Aka Owolabi, remains at large. "The mode of operation of the gang is to target people based on their personalities, outlook and the type of cars they drove. Henry Christian was kidnapped in a Murano Jeep car while dropping a friend [...].The suspects drove to the area in a Honda Accord and forced Henry into the car at gun point and took him to an unknown destination before report reached the police." Upon receiving the report, police command swiftly found and arrested the two suspects. Authorities recovered a locally made double barrel gun, one dane gun, 4 knives, 25 expended cartridges, 2 screw driver, pliers, sealing tape and bandage used to tie the mouth of the victim.

Regional News

- **30 December 2014** – Nearly 1,400 displaced Nigeriens who illegally entered in Algeria have returned home since the beginning of the repatriation operation in December. President of the Algerian Red Crescent Saida Benhabiles (CRA) said the repatriation operation, temporarily suspended, "will pursue as from 6th January" while reaffirming that "it is by no means a mass expulsion of the suffering people. The repatriation operation follows the request made by the Government of Niger to Algeria to help repatriate its nationals to end their suffering." Benhabiles added that convoys of returnees do not exceed 300 people; each receives a clothing and food kit before being transported upon comfortable buses to a reception centre in Tamanrasset. Once in Tamanrasset, a consular service is available with the support of the Embassy of Niger to deliver passes to those nationals once identified. Ambassador of Niger to Algeria, El Hadji Mahamidou Yahaya, hailed Algeria's efforts to support Niger nationals, recalling that his country asked the Algerian authorities to repatriate his compatriots.
- **29 December 2014** – Yobe State Governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Gaidam, has visited Niger Republic to persuade over 4,000 residents of the state, who fled the Boko Haram crisis, to return. Gaidam visited Maine Soroa in Niger Republic to see more than 4,000 Gaidam, Kanamma and Yunusari residents that fled to Niger recently as a result of the attacks on their towns by Boko Haram militants. Governor of Diffa region, Alhaji Yakuba Usman revealed that over 4,000 people were offered shelter in the area. Around 1,385 out of the refugees have been housed and fed by Niger Government; the remaining refugees have lived with friends and relatives in Maine Soroa town. Addressing the refugees, Gaidam promised that the state government would extend support to them, but asked them to return home, noting that more military operatives would be deployed in the area to beef up security. Some of the displaced persons expressed regret that security forces fled their towns as the terrorists invaded their communities, calling for intervention of the government to enable them to return to their homes. The governor expressed his condolences to the families of those killed in the attacks and the people of the town, describing the attacks as wicked, sinful and brutal.

International News

- **1 January 2015** – French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian paid a surprise visit to northern Niger Thursday, to visit a base being built to combat the growing flow of weapons and jihadists from neighbouring Libya. Le Drian travelled from Chad to Madama, a desert outpost about 100 kilometres from Libya, where he saw in the New Year with troops at a French base. Madama is situated on the route used by jihadists and arms smugglers in southern Libya to reach northern Mali and Niger. In an address to French soldiers in Chad's capital N'Djamena the previous day, Le Drian called on the international community to act to prevent Libya from becoming a "sanctuary for terrorists." Madama will serve as a forward base for French counterterrorist operations in the Sahel.

Nigeria

Avoid ALL travel to part(s) of country

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



Security Summary

Summary

On 20 October 2014, the World Health Organization declared Nigeria Ebola-free. An Ebola outbreak has been confirmed in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Mali. While Nigeria has been declared Ebola-free, due to the intensity of the ongoing outbreak, a second outbreak of Ebola in Nigeria cannot be ruled out. MS Risk advises all travellers to the region to remain cautious.



Boko Haram's Islamic State

In the past two weeks, Boko Haram has increased its tempo of attacks, carrying out deadly terrorist attacks across the north-eastern region of Nigeria on a near daily basis. Further such attacks are likely to continue as the holiday season approaches.

Over the past several weeks, Nigeria has been rapidly losing control of large areas of the northeast to Boko Haram, which is attempting to carve out an Islamic State. With reports surfacing on 12 September 2014 that the militant group has

“completely surrounded” the city of Maiduguri, if the Nigerian military fails to carry out military operations to secure the area and reinforce the capital city, it is highly likely that Borno state, along with some areas of neighbouring Adamawa and Yobe states, will fall to the militant group in the coming weeks. Boko Haram appears to be carrying out a two-pronged assault, from the northeast to the southeast, with militants likely to be reinforcing the captured areas prior to taking over Maiduguri. Boko Haram was founded in Maiduguri in 2002, making the state capital a high value target for them. Boko Haram have seized territory along at least two of the main approaches to the capital city, while their control of towns and settlements to the south and near the border with Cameroon have effectively cut off the Nigerian military, preventing them from responding quickly and carrying out operations to recapture the area. In recent weeks, Boko Haram militants have destroyed several key bridges, including one on the road from Biu to Maiduguri, a bridge near Gamboru Ngala that links Nigeria to Cameroon, a bridge in Potiskum that links Maiduguri and Damaturu to Abuja and a bridge in Yobe that links to the southern areas of Borno and Adamawa. Some of the destroyed bridges were strategically linked to Maiduguri and have now made it difficult for the Nigerian military to reinforce Maiduguri and other towns in Borno state.

Further out, in Borno, Boko Haram are believed to have seized Gamboru Ngala, Dikwa, Gwoza and Marte. Bama has also been reported captured by the militants however the Nigerian military and some locals have contested these reports. Damboa, which was seized in July, has since been reported to have been retaken. In Adamawa state, Madagali has been captured while in Yobe, Buni Yadi has been taken. Other communities in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, which are believed to have been seized or heavily contested, include Banki, Kerawa, Ashigashiy, Ngoshe, Pulka and Goniri. Further seizures of towns in the area, and which border Cameroon, cannot be ruled out at this time.

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. 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.

There is currently a high threat from terrorism. Over the past few weeks there have been a number of explosive attacks in Damaturu, Kano, Jos, Kaduna, Abuja and Lagos. Further such attacks are highly likely to occur. MS Risk currently advises all travellers in Nigeria to avoid public places, especially where crowds gather.

Northern Nigeria

Travelling anywhere in the northern region of Nigeria is extremely dangerous as there is a high risk of travellers being kidnapped or caught up in a terrorist or other violent incident. While taking the right precautions will aid in reducing the risks, this will not eliminate them all together. MS Risk advises all travellers to the northern region of the country to not maintain regular patterns of travel or movement.

If you live in northern Nigeria, you are advised to review your security regularly and to strengthen it accordingly. Due to the risks, particularly of terrorism, having increased in the past few years, good security two years ago is unlikely to be adequate now.

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.

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

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

- **4 January 2015** – Boko Haram has seized a town and key multinational military base in north-eastern Nigeria. A senator in Borno state said troops had abandoned the base in the town of Baga after it was attacked on Saturday. Residents of Baga, who fled by boat to neighbouring Chad, said many people had been killed and the town set ablaze. Baga was the last town in the Borno North area under government control. It hosted the base of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), made up of troops from Nigeria, Chad and Niger. Residents who fled to Chad said they had woken to heavy gunfire as militants stormed Baga early on Saturday, attacking from all directions. They decided to flee when they saw the MNJTF troops running away. Communications with the town were cut off and exact information about casualty numbers could not be confirmed. Confirming that the military had abandoned the base, he said people's frustration knew "no bounds" over the apparent fact that the military had not fought back. "There is definitely something wrong that makes our military abandon their posts each time there is an attack from Boko Haram," the senator said.
- **3 January 2015** – Suspected Boko Haram militants have kidnapped about 40 boys and young men in a raid on a remote village in north-eastern Nigeria, residents say. Malari residents said gunmen had come to the village in pick-up trucks and ordered all males to come out and listen to a sermon. The young men were then rounded up and taken into a nearby forest. People who fled Malari and arrived in the state capital, Maiduguri, Friday said the men had been taken on New Year's Eve. Last month,

suspected Boko Haram militants stormed another village, Gumsuri. A survivor said 33 villagers had been killed and about 200 people kidnapped.

- **1 January 2015** – Several people were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a church in the north-eastern Nigerian city of Gombe. The bombing came hours after a female suicide bomber was killed outside the Bolari military barracks, also in Gombe, on New Year's Eve. The male bomber, who was on a motorcycle, struck outside an evangelical church in the Tudun Wada area of the city at about 9 a.m. local time, as worshipers attended a New Year service. The explosives strapped to his body detonated as he was having a heated argument with church volunteers who had set up a barricade some distance from the church to screen people and prevent any attack by the Islamist militant group Boko Haram. Some people near the bombing were injured but no casualties were reported. The botched bombing was the first violence this year to hit a region that has been wracked by a five-year deadly uprising by Boko Haram militants.
- **31 December 2014** – The German Foreign Office has disclosed that two Germans have shot dead last Saturday while making a private outing on a motorbike. The men were identified as engineers who worked with the large Nigerian construction company Julius Berger. The company's international arm has its headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany. Both originated from Germany's north-eastern state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania. The Foreign Office provided no further details, saying the German embassy in Abuja was seeking clarification in close contact with Nigerian authorities. Nigerian police were expected to release details on Thursday.
- **31 December 2014** – Soldiers opened fire on a woman who refused to stop for a search outside the Bolari military barracks in Gombe. The shooting triggered an explosion of the suicide belt she was wearing under her veil. The woman ignored orders by soldiers at the gates of the military barracks to stop at a distance for screening, and instead strode toward them. A witness reported, "The soldiers opened fire on the woman and the suicide belt concealed under her hijab exploded, killing her." Security at the barracks has been reinforced since last June, when a female suicide bomber blew herself up as she was stopped outside the barracks for screening. The bombing killed one soldier and injured another.
- **31 December 2014** – At least six people were killed and others were injured when a suicide bomb went off in a bus in Fika in Nigeria's northeast Yobe state. The state has frequently seen attacks by Boko Haram militants, although no group immediately claimed responsibility for the bus attack. A witness said, "A suicide bomber, I think he was on his way to bomb the market in Fika ... but unfortunately while he was still in the bus to the market the bomb strap on him exploded and killed six people. This happened early this afternoon at about 1 p.m. (1200 GMT)." Yobe is one of three Nigerian states put under a state of emergency by President Goodluck Jonathan last year as an insurgency by Boko Haram intensified.
- **30 December 2014** – Suspected Islamist militants opened fire in a town in northeast Nigeria, killing at least 15 people. The attack targeted Kautikari, near the Cameroon border, just 6 miles from the village

of Chibok, where more than 200 schoolgirls were abducted in April. They remain captives. A survivor reported, "They were about twenty, well-armed. They came in four-wheel drive vehicles and some motorcycles. Initially, I thought they were soldiers. The man running behind me was gunned down as I was fleeing. Afterwards, there were 15 people lying dead in the streets." Suspected Boko Haram gunmen kidnapped 172 women and children and killed 35 other people this month near the same area.

- **23 December 2014** – Nigeria's military disclosed Tuesday that pirates have hijacked a military gunboat and three soldiers are missing after an ambush in the southern oil-rich state of Bayelsa. Spokesman Col. Mustapha Anka has indicated that a team on patrol was ambushed Sunday on the Santa Barbara River, an area that is known to be a pirate hotspot. The spokesman confirmed that a search-and-rescue operation to locate the missing soldiers is ongoing. In October, pirates in the same region attacked a military escort for a barge carrying oil. They killed three soldiers and took off with a military gunboat. Pirates operating in waters off Nigeria are known to steal oil and carry out kidnap for ransoms.
- **22 December 2014** – At least twenty-six people have been killed in attacks that were carried out in two major cities in northern Nigeria on Monday. According to officials and eyewitnesses, the first attack occurred at the Dukku motor park on the outskirts of Gombe city, capital of Gombe state, at roughly 10:50 AM (0950 GMT). The explosion went off as people were boarding a nearby bus. At least twenty people were killed in that attack. Authorities have indicated that the bomb had been planted near a bus that was waiting to fill up. On the ground sources reported that shortly after the attack, a crowd had formed around the bus station, with several locals throwing stones at the security services. Anger has risen across northern Nigeria amidst growing complaints that the security services have repeatedly failed to contain the on-going violence. The second explosion occurred late afternoon at a market in Bauchi city, the capital of Bauchi state. The attack occurred at roughly 5:00 PM (1600 GMT) however officials have not confirmed that a bomb was responsible. At least six people were killed. Authorities have warned that the death toll from both attacks is likely to rise in the coming days. No group has claimed responsibility for the two attacks however both targeted cities have been previously hit by Boko Haram. The militant group has also in the past claimed a number of attacks at bus stations, often targeting people who are heading to Nigeria's mainly Christian south. The attacks come in the wake of a new video released, depicting dozens of people being executed at a school dormitory. In the newly released video, images are shown of people being made to lay face down before being shot dead. There is currently no independent confirmation that Boko Haram is behind this video and it remains unclear where or when it was made however the video bears the militant group's insignia and shows gun-wielding men chanting "Allah is great" and speaking in the Kanuri language that is associated with the group's fighters. Boko Haram militants are also known to often target educational establishments. Violence in the north-eastern region of Nigeria is escalating ahead of the holiday season and the 14 February 2015 presidential elections, with many concerned that voting will be impossible in large parts of the region. Over the past several months, the situation in north-eastern Nigeria has been worsening however Nigerian authorities appear to be ignoring the situation on the ground. President Goodluck

Jonathan, who is running for a second term in office, has on several occasions claimed that Boko Haram's defeat was imminent, even as the violence has continued to escalate. Last week's kidnapping of 185 people, who were taken on 14 December from the town of Gumsuri in Borno state has highlighted the severity of the crisis and recalled the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls from a school in the town of Chibok in April. At the time, President Jonathan vowed that such a mass abduction would not happen again.

Domestic News

- **1 January 2015** – The Nigerian Army has reportedly dismissed 203 soldiers after a secret midnight court martial for allegedly disobeying a direct order from their commanding officer. One anonymous soldier said the group were dismissed for asking for support equipment, following the army's plan to convey them in a tipper for an operation in Bama and Gwoza, two strongholds of Boko Haram insurgents. The soldier, who is originally of the 19th Battalion in Okitipupa in Ondo State, but attached to the 7th division in Maiduguri, said the army detained them for over 90 days before dismissing them after a midnight trial. He said they are owed up to five months in unpaid salaries. Army spokesperson Brigadier General Olajide Laleye could not be reached for confirmation.
- **1 January 2015** – President Goodluck Jonathan has vowed to defeat Boko Haram after a series of attacks blamed on the group in recent weeks. Earlier on Thursday, at least 10 people were injured by a suicide bomber near a church in Gombe, north-east Nigeria. A day earlier, 11 people were killed when a bomb went off on a bus heading from Gombe to neighbouring Yobe state. Mr Jonathan said the group had caused "agony" in the country. They killed at least 2,000 civilians in 2014. President Jonathan said in his new year's address, "I want to assure you that the terrorists will not get away with the atrocities, they will not win. We will bring justice to the savage terrorists known as Boko Haram. They will be defeated." Jonathan, who is up for re-election in February, has made similar pledges before and has faced criticism for failing to stop the militants.
- **30 December 2014** – Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has said poverty is growing "like a hurricane" in Nigeria while elected officials are living opulent lifestyles. The former VP, who released a New Year statement from his Abuja campaign office, said it was unfortunate that in the face of extreme hardship, some Nigerians were still living opulent lifestyles inconsistent with the realities on ground. His statement said, "I am fully aware of the tough challenges of existence facing the ordinary Nigerians, but democracy offers us the opportunity to use the power of our votes to bring about the desired change. While poverty is accelerating like hurricane in the land, our elected leaders are living opulent lifestyles inconsistent with the hardships of the ordinary voters. Democracy is as good as those who practice it, elective offices should be perceived as an opportunity to offer selfless service rather than personal enrichment." He urged Nigerians to see the New Year with renewed optimism, and be active participants in the struggle to bring about change by democratic means.

- **24 December 2014** – The army has stated that all vehicle movement in Nigeria's north-eastern Borno state has been banned from Christmas Eve to Sunday morning to prevent attacks by militant Islamists. Neighbouring Yobe has barred vehicles from entering or leaving the state. The move is aimed at preventing Boko Haram from transporting explosives in cars or using motorbikes to carry out hit-and-run raids. Similar bans were imposed during previous Christian and Muslim festive seasons and most people heeded them by walking to religious services or the homes of relatives. Army spokesman Colonel Sani Usman said security reports indicated that Boko Haram planned to launch "massive attacks" during the Christmas period in Borno, especially on the state capital Maiduguri. Boko Haram militants have targeted churches during previous festive seasons. The militant group's insurgency has been most intense in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, the three states where a state of emergency was imposed last year to beat back the militants. However, the group has stepped up attacks, seizing large swathes of territory in Borno and capturing hundreds of people, including women and children, during raids on towns and villages.
- **23 December** – About 100 more soldiers are to be court-martialled by the Nigerian military for a number of offences relating to the on-going fight against Boko Haram terrorists. A source has disclosed that 118 soldiers have been transported from Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, to face charges in Abuja, a week after 54 soldiers were sentenced to death for refusing to fight Boko Haram. It is not clear when the troops will be arraigned before the court martial, the sources said. Unlike their colleagues who were convicted last Wednesday, the soldiers awaiting trial are not accused of mutiny. Army spokesperson Olajide Laleye said he was unaware of the development. Sources also said that the soldiers are accused of relatively minor charges including loss or misplacement of rifles during operations against Boko Haram. The allegations follow repeated reports of troops fleeing Boko Haram fighters and abandoning their weapons for the militants in Borno and Adamawa States. Boko Haram militants have flaunted arms they claimed were seized from government forces in several videos. The 54 soldiers who were earlier sentenced to death belonged to the 111 Special Forces battalion attached to the 7 Division of the army in Maiduguri. They are to die by firing squad, the military court ruled last week. The soldiers were accused of disobeying a direct order from superior officers to take part in an operation aimed at dislodging Boko Haram terrorists from Delwa, Bulabulin and Damboa in Borno State. The soldiers said they refused to take part in the operation because the Army did not provide them with the required combat and support equipment needed for such operations. The convicted soldiers have been moved to Lagos to await appeal, pardon or execution.

International Developments

- **24 December 2014** – A leading Nigerian human rights group is asking the UN to aid in stopping the mass executions of soldiers sentenced to death by firing squad for refusing to fight Islamic militants. Fifty-four troops received death sentences in mid-December, 12 were condemned in September and 45 more soldiers, including a few officers, await their fate in ongoing courts-martial. The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project said Wednesday the courts-martial held in secret were "a mockery of justice" and ignored issues raised by the condemned men that "suggest lack of transparency, accountability and general deficiencies" in the handling of the security budget and arms purchases. Defence attorney Femi Falana has charged the group of 54 was convicted because they embarrassed Nigeria's military by demanding weapons to fight extremists. He also said the soldiers were justified in not going on what he said would have been a suicidal mission. Nigerian soldiers have complained that the Boko Haram insurgents are better equipped, that officers steal some of their salaries, and that some soldiers are colluding with the extremists.

Sierra Leone

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



Security Summary

MS Risk currently advises all but essential travel to Sierra Leone, except for those who are involved in the direct response to the Ebola outbreak.



On 30 July, President Koroma declared a State of Public Emergency over the current Ebola outbreak. A number of measures have been implemented throughout the country. The government has closed all schools and banned public gatherings in Kailahun district. All vehicles and their passengers entering and leaving Kailahun district must undergo screening by the authorities at checkpoints. MS Risk advises all travellers to maintain strict standards of hygiene, avoid contact with symptomatic and deceased patients, avoid contact with live or dead animals and avoid consumption of bush meat.

Violent incidents have taken place under cover of crowds in the streets of Freetown. Over the weekend of 25 – 27 July, there were reports of demonstrations and local disturbances occurring in Kenema and Freetown. These events were related to the Ebola outbreak. Further such protests and disturbances cannot be ruled out. MS Risk advises all travellers to Sierra Leone to

follow local news reports, be alert to any developments and avoid all large crowds and demonstrations as they may turn violent. 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. MS Risk therefore advises all travellers in the country to exercise due caution when travelling by road throughout the season.

On the Ground Reporting

- **31 December 2014** – The Ebola virus is still spreading in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone. The number of known cases globally has now exceeded 20,000, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The death toll has risen to 7,905 following 317 fatalities recorded since it last issued figures on 24 December. The number of known cases, including fatalities, totalled 20,206 at year-end. Sierra Leone accounted for 337 of 476 new laboratory-confirmed cases since 24 December. They included 149 in Freetown, the highest incidence in the capital in four weeks. However, the number of cases in Sierra Leone over a three-week period has fallen below 1,000 for the first time since 28 September, suggesting the spread of the disease is slowing. In neighbouring Guinea, the three-week total rose for a second week to 346, suggesting the epidemic is growing there.
- **29 December 2014** – A Christmas lockdown in northern Sierra Leone, aimed at preventing new Ebola infections in the country with the world's most cases, ended on 29 December. The five-day lockdown was part of intensified government efforts to contain the epidemic. Many public Christmas and New Year celebrations were banned. Markets and shops were shut in the country's north and travel between districts was strictly forbidden, with the exception of Ebola health workers and authorised personnel. Except for Christmas Day Mass, no public gatherings were allowed. Ebola infections have increased in the Kono district in the country's east. The National Ebola Response Centre (NERC), it said Kono had recorded 21 new Ebola cases on December 26 and 27. Local officials quoted said the government had sent 11 more ambulances Sunday to Kono, which before had a fleet of only three. Sierra Leone, which has overtaken Liberia as the country with the most infections, counted 9,409 cases and 2,732 deaths on December 27, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on 29 December. On Christmas Eve, the death toll had been 2,655 and there were 9,203 cases.
- **24 December 2014** – Sierra Leone's attempt to contain Ebola over the holidays with a five-day lockdown was dealt a setback after staff at a hospital went on strike. Pregnant women in Sierra Leone's third largest town have been left without health care after doctors, nurses and support staff downed tools, claiming they are owed more than £70,000 by the government in outstanding Ebola hazard payments. The Magbenteh community hospital in Makeni sees around 30 pregnant women a day, but on Christmas Eve sent patients home and refused to admit new ones. They said the government has not been paying the \$45 a week hazard payment since September despite aid flooding into the country. Following several strikes over non payment of risk allowances, the government last week switched

from cash distribution to an electronic phone payment system through the Airtel phone network. Henry Conteh, the staff representative, said "People here are struggling, some are going hungry because they have not been paid and then they went out and got or borrowed Airtel phones just to fulfil the requirements and then no money arrives. They feel that they are being provoked, they are very angry." The charity that runs the hospital is running out of money and over the last three months has paid only 50% of staff's basic pay. The Swiss Sierra Leone Development Foundation has appealed for aid since the Ebola outbreak began. It runs the only hospital in the area dealing with maternal health care, which is perceived as risky because of the exposure to blood and bodily fluids.

- **24 December 2014** – Sierra Leone's northern district of Port Loko, the area with the highest rate of Ebola transmission, plans a three-day lockdown over Christmas as it seeks to contain the disease's spread. Sierra Leone is the worst-hit country in West Africa with over 9,000 cases. The rate of infection is fastest in the capital Freetown and the neighbouring province of Port Loko, where 44 out of a total 58 new cases were reported on Wednesday. "Port Loko will do a lockdown and a house-to-house campaign to find the sick," said OB Sisay, an official in the National Ebola Response Centre. He said the new measures would start at midnight on Wednesday and could be extended into the new year. Sierra Leone has also banned Christmas parties and other festivities nationwide in an effort to stop the epidemic.
- **22 December 2014** – UK medical staff at a treatment centre in Freetown have left after Ebola patients were given a heart drug that is untested against the virus in animals and humans. The move that has been deemed reckless by one senior scientist. A team of 14 British doctors, nurses, and paramedics stopped working at the Lakka treatment centre in Freetown because of their concerns over what they considered the experimental and potentially dangerous use of the drug, and other safety issues. The treatment centre is run by Emergency, an Italian NGO set up by heart surgeon Gino Strada, to bring world-class cardiac surgery to some of the poorest parts of Africa. Emergency seeks to give patients the standard of care they would get in Europe, but UK volunteers sent to work in Lakka in late November felt Emergency's approach was too ambitious and may have contributed to a death rate higher than at some other centres. Emergency has stopped using the drug, amiodarone, after a request from DfID, which had been alerted by the British medics. It says it is planning a formal trial. Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust, which is funding drug trials starting in West Africa, said it would be reckless to use amiodarone, which affects the heart, other than under strict conditions. "This is the sort of terrible consequence of not having a logical, sensible approach. I think it is reckless not doing this in carefully controlled conditions." Farrar believes it is vital that well set-up clinical trials should be carried out in the epidemic to discover treatments that work.

International Reporting

- **3 January 2015** – A British nurse who was diagnosed with Ebola after returning from Sierra Leone is now in a critical condition. The Royal Free Hospital said it was "sorry to announce that the condition of Pauline Cafferkey has gradually deteriorated over the past two days". Cafferkey, a public health nurse, was diagnosed with Ebola in December after volunteering with Save the Children in Sierra Leone. She was given an experimental anti-viral drug and blood from disease survivors. Cafferkey had travelled home via Casablanca, Morocco, and London's Heathrow Airport, where she was screened for the disease. She told officials she believed a fever might be developing. Her temperature was taken seven times in total, six of which were within 30 minutes, and was normal each time, so she was allowed to fly home to Scotland. Cafferkey was part of a group of up to 50 NHS healthcare workers who volunteered in Sierra Leone. She was later placed in an isolation unit at Glasgow's Gartnavel Hospital after becoming feverish, and has been transferred to London's Royal Free specialist treatment centre. Officials from Health Protection Scotland have spoken to all 71 people aboard the British Airways flight from Heathrow to Glasgow that Ms Cafferkey took. All 101 UK-based passengers and crew aboard the Royal Air Maroc flight from Casablanca to Heathrow have been contacted by PHE officials. The remaining 31 international passengers on the flight were being tracked by international health authorities.



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